The Impact of Climate Activism on Youth Identity

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ABSTRACT

Climate change poses significant mental and emotional challenges for young people, influencing their sense of identity and agency. While climate activism provides a means for youth to assert leadership, engage in political advocacy, and build community, it also brings stress, isolation, and intergenerational conflict. This study investigates how activism shapes youth identity, examining the psychological, social, and political dimensions of their engagement. Through qualitative and quantitative approaches—including biographical narratives, case studies, and surveys—this research highlights the dual nature of climate activism as both an empowering and burdensome experience. Findings indicate that activism fosters resilience and collective identity but also exposes young activists to societal resistance and emotional distress. Addressing these challenges requires better institutional support, inclusive education on climate justice, and stronger policy responses to youth demands.
Keywords: Climate activism, youth identity, climate justice, mental health, intergenerational conflict, collective action, political participation, environmental advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

There is a paucity of research examining the ways that children and young people cope with climate change, yet it is widely acknowledged that they will be disproportionately affected. argue that mitigating the impacts of climate change requires "broader and braver" forms of success-oriented action by all sectors of society. Extensive review of the emerging literature about the mental health implications of the climate crisis. This review also revealed a pronounced geographical bias in the existing research. Most of the research has been conducted in high-income countries, and there is very little evidence assessing how climate change impacts the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people living in low- and middle-income countries. The rapidly growing body of research on children and young people (aged 6–25 years) that suggests they are already deeply distressed about the future, and in many cases feel betrayed by the generations above who have failed to adequately address the unfolding crisis. Amplifying these concerns is evidence that increasing numbers of Australian children (aged <14 years, mean = 10.8 years) are being hospitalised for feelings of despair and hopelessness at the ongoing destruction of their future [1].

Background and Rationale

International research increasingly highlights the adverse psychological effects of climate change on children and youth, manifesting as anxiety, depression, grief, and feelings of helplessness. However, there is a significant gap in understanding how these groups cope with such challenges and what effective support systems exist. While coping strategies have primarily focused on immediate disasters, the gradual nature of climate change introduces unique difficulties and opens up research gaps. Limited studies explore coping mechanisms among children and youth, along with ways to support them better and potential positive outcomes. Despite this, few findings translate into practical educational or therapeutic resources for those dealing with climate anxiety and ecological grief. Certain groups may face heightened vulnerability and barriers. Studies in Far-North Queensland (FNQ) highlight various cultural,

emotional, social, and economic factors influencing local children's and young people's responses to climate change. Rather than being passive victims, they actively engage in mitigation efforts and co-create knowledge. Nonetheless, activism can lead to feelings of frustration; a notable intergenerational 'war' discourse exists within this context. This research emphasizes the need for inclusive climate responses that recognize and support the active roles of young people, alongside the importance of education on their visibility and representation [2].

Scope and Objectives

Fires are devastating regions, with rising temperatures leading to hundreds of deaths in the UK and millions displaced globally. This alarming scenario was highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2021, warning of potential disasters in twenty years without immediate action. Currently, the situation is worsening rapidly. Evidence of climate 'tipping points' has already resulted in extreme weather conditions, such as the heatwaves affecting Germany and Canada in 2021. To limit global warming to the target of 1.5C, drastic measures, including curbing deforestation and financial support, are essential. Indian negotiators have urged wealthier nations to increase their annual contributions to $1 trillion for global south nations, yet this still falls short of adequately addressing climate issues. Over the past two decades, temperatures have risen by one degree, and the outlook suggests potential catastrophe ahead. Youth worldwide have expressed long-standing concern for the climate, with a significant movement emerging over the last two decades demanding urgent action. This youth activism views climate issues through various social lenses, including racism and economic injustice. In September 2021, a historic protest saw around one hundred million students and workers participate. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg became Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2019, representing the growing influence of young climate advocates. This group has positioned itself as a moral authority in climate discourse, facing increasingly aggressive backlash from right-wing media [3].

Understanding Youth Identity

In Latina Ritual Leadership, I showcase Ava, a high school activist who organizes resistance through cuentos de escuela, exploring identity, performance, and ritual leadership. In her senior year, students compete with speeches for scholarships. Ava's speech, "Why We Can't Live in a Monoculture," addresses colonization and the narratives we share, revealing high school activism as a challenge to dominant stories. She demonstrates how organizing acts as a ritual, transforming the script. Ava remains conscious of what defines a good leader and presents a narrative learning map that confronts internalized oppression while advocating for politics that can reshape schooling. She shares communication from district administrators about forming an association with a unionized faculty member. Bridging Appalachian religious empathy with cuentos de escuela and her coach's support, she navigates community revitalization efforts, focusing on the interests of the oppressed. Though she has read various authors, the true value lies in her connections and the ethos reflected in her coach's nurturing words for marginalized people. Her appeal, unlike the formal corporate rhetoric she's been taught, is rooted in a warm, familiar dialect reminiscent of communal gatherings against financial exploitation. The Coloniality-Modernity-Dependency practices in education attempt to bind identity to a linear Eurocentric framework. In contrast, Circular-Time in Community Spaces addresses these challenges through non-Western practices, with Ritual Leadership serving as a vital framework for community engagement. This text interprets Ava's journeys as she transforms experiences into mestiza discourses—performing ritual actions while resisting educational restructuring. Central to this narrative is Ava's growth in recognizing how her stories repair the disconnections in a context marked by coloniality [4].

Definition and Components

A social issue as complex and daunting as climate change has the potential to redefine identity on a mass scale, especially for youth. Youth growing up within the folds of the climate crisis have a unique opportunity to participate in this process. Since the late 2000s, learning more and more about the human destruction of the world through Earth resources and the changing climate dissipates the sense of agency associated with positive identities and with success in crafting a secure social identity. At the margins there is a double bind. When doom is genuinely acknowledged, it conflicts with action based around the assumption of a liveable future, and when it is not, the authenticity of the involved person is called into question. Hope is not lost but pushed down, there are glimpses of the days before first hearing of climate change, but eventually the truth of a collapsing world comes back into focus. At the centre is a feeling of witnessing a seemingly inevitable crisis that everyone else is doing nothing to stop or is even worsening. Meanwhile, from the mid-2010s newspapers and TV channels begin to pick up the narrative of youth climate activism, and there are moments of inspiration. The actions performed by young climate activists do not directly improve the conditions of an increasingly shaky and unfamiliar world, but what they do

achieve is a kind of mental lifting of relief for the first time in a decade. In a drawn-out tightrope act of procrastinating, feelings of anticipatory nostalgia arise about an endangered future that will hinge on that past desire to actively ignore the red flags of climate change, or the cowardice of not being able to disentangle the web of the necessary comforts of life [5].

Developmental Stages

Youth climate activists often report feeling isolated and anxious, and have a sense of overwhelming responsibility. It is well known that adolescents in general experience greater mood instability and less emotional control. The combination of age and the nature of activism to prevent an existential threat can lead to feelings of overwhelming anxiety about an uncertain future. Before the COVID-19 crisis, 68.11% of state school students aged 8 to 17 in Western Australia were taught about sustainability at a school level, but lacking information on collective action and rights-based approaches. Since the pandemic, 43.07% of children and young people in WA miss learning about climate change in school. Youth climate activist groups offer a shared space to connect with like-minded peers, reduce feelings of isolation, and reduce the feeling that no one cares about climate change. Importantly, therapists say that it is very important for young people to talk about their feelings with people supporting them. Young people receive therapeutic support through youth climate activist groups to support their mental health and develop confidence skills to talk about how climate change(s) affect them and listen to the impact it has on peers. Puberty and the final stages of identity formation generally occur around the ages of 14 to 18. Therefore, the voices of adolescents must be taken seriously in the discussion about climate change. However, 46.89% of young people aged 13 to 18 have received negative comments when they speak up about climate change, with 2 out of 3 from family members or friends. The satisfaction of maximum responsibility is often the result of the lack of an alternative child. When young climate activists speak up, they are commonly asked what they do, which creates feelings of pressure between individual actions as a perfect way to deal with the climate crisis against systemic emotional concerns [6].

Climate Activism: Concepts and Movements

This research examines the impacts of participation in the youth climate justice movement in Western Australia (WA) on participants' identities. A grounded theory approach reveals that engaging in climate activism enables children and young people to redefine themselves as climate warriors, fostering a new personal environmentalism. This identity evolution heightens their awareness of individual and collective responsibilities to promote sustainability. Through collaboration with like-minded peers, participants develop a stronger sense of self and agency. They learn to translate their individual identities into collective youth identities that challenge societal norms imposed by family, education, and culture. Additionally, taking on activist roles equips these young individuals with public speaking skills to advocate for the movement in media and organize weekly protests. The convergence of crises, such as bushfires and droughts exacerbated by climate change, frames this identity formation. This qualitative research captures the lived experiences of children and young people in WA, investigating their social contexts before, during, and after their involvement in climate justice activism. By centering the voices of the youth, this study addresses a gap in research that often overlooks their perspectives. Young climate activism encompasses efforts by young people to forge a new world that acknowledges climate change and addresses historical injustices impacting marginalized communities [7].

Definition and Types

A growing number of young people across the globe have begun to engage in climate activism. While widespread and varied, until the present moment little scholarship has quantified their activities across time and place. Contributing a socio-spatial analysis of young climate activism in Sydney, Australia since the 2000s, this article examines how young people understand and intervene in the production of the place-based climate futures. Interview data collected from 27 youth climate activists in 2016 is supplemented by a social survey of youth activists and participatory mapping exercises undertaken in 2016. Conceptualizing young people's climate imaginaries as a unique set of visions and transformative activities, the findings emphasize the dearth of municipal level accountability, adaptationalist governance at local scales, and the mental health impacts of grant-oriented climate choir activities. Recasting dominant framings of youth climate activism as overly proleptic, this article aims to engage an emerging academic interest in young people's geographies. Starting with the movement's foremost youth leader, the article has defined young climate activism as the practices of young people who are part of the making of a new world that acknowledges the climate is changing and addresses the legacies of colonialism and war. Young people are the bearers of desirable future worlds. They carry the hopes, dreams and anxieties of what could be. Drawing from recent research on youth in the times of the climate crisis and

foregrounding the terms of climate justice and harrowing, the article has sought to explore the climate imaginaries of today's young activists and how these shape their resistance and hope in the midst of a fundamentally changed world [8].

Historical Context

The ongoing and rapidly worsening climate and species crisis is having an unprecedented impact on generations of young people, and future generations, and their place in the world. Children are growing up with the terrifying certainty of multiple interconnected crises ahead, experiencing and witnessing changes to their environment which are difficult for older people to comprehend. While so far understanding of the mental health effects of the climate crisis and effective supports has been quite limited, there is a growing body of literature and young people and their families have been calling for more to be done. This section provides a comprehensive review of the numerous structural aspects of the climate crisis (extreme weather events, temperature changes, food and water insecurity, new and emerging diseases and pathogens, and more) and the psychological responses to them. Young people are more likely to cope and be hopeful about the future if they focus on and develop and mobilise collective as opposed to adaptation or optimism strategies; one of the striking features of the many millions of young people worldwide who now participate in or support the many youth-led climate strikes. The concept of climate strikers, and those who support them, collectively, not just as activists but as an emergent global social movement, is thus used as a basis to consider the potential for how Generation Z, as an archetype, is developing an entirely new, even epochal, relationship to activism and political participation. The existing literature on children and young people and climate change, mental health, and activism tends to focus either solely on problematization of daunting climate fears, anxieties, and existential dread, or putatively individual stress and coping responses (feelings of impotence; resultant depression; and deleterious outcomes such as eating disorders and suicides). There has been little attention afforded to the population-scale mobilizations of contemporary forms of youth-led climate activism which, together, underscore the ways the climate crisis becomes a collective health crisis, and consequent to youth as those most at risk to 2040 [9].

Intersection of Youth Identity and Climate Activism

Climate activism has become a key identification mode for young people, who are organizing locally and globally to demand urgent climate action. This study explores climate activism's role in forming a new youth identity, revealing that it is a gendered and racialized construct. Members experience the group differently based on color and ethnicity, affecting their opportunities and challenges in becoming activists. We also examine the personal impacts of climate activism and reasons for young people's involvement in this often disempowering endeavor. Findings indicate that perceived leadership, mentorship, and informed networks are crucial for youth engagement in climate activism. However, many barriers and enablers are frequently overlooked both in movements and research. Results emphasize the need for the public and policymakers to recognize and support the personal growth and leadership of young climate activists [10].

Psychological and Sociological Perspectives

The recent rise in youth environmental activism is partly a response to the significant influence of young climate change survivors and the moral outrage of Stoneman Douglas High School students after the 2019 mass shooting. Psychologically, excessive focus on climate change can harm young activists' well-being and identity. Sociologically, this passion may lead them to embrace post-materialist values as they contemplate their long-term identity connected to climate issues. A study at a Northeastern U.S. university indicated that collectivist, politically engaged students were more likely to practice psychological distancing, protecting their well-being and identity. As Butterfly Warp Drive's influence grows, passionate youth activists might face negative psychological effects from self-imposed expectations, complicating their personal development [11].

Challenges and Opportunities

In making sense of the findings, an important aspect of climate action among young people emerges: the ambiguous role of youth activism. On one hand, involvement fosters a strong self-conception as individuals wanting to protect the environment, while on the other, it can lead to significant stress and feelings of powerlessness due to the inability to change environmental decline. This ambiguity presents challenges but also reveals strengths and opportunities for the environmental movement. Older generations may struggle to understand why youth choose activism. Youth is defined by a transitional period to adulthood, where certain experiences and skills are anticipated. Many young leaders in the environmental community do not identify as activists. Becoming an activist early is influenced by the current historical-political context rather than just personal choice [12].

Research Methodology

Climate change mitigation is widely recognized by governmental scientific bodies as requiring behavioural changes, including a decrease in meat and flying consumption, and an increase in active and public transportation, and the use of efficient and fewer automobiles. It is also widely recognized that the coordination of these behaviours is nontrivial and can have irreversible effects on Earth's ecological system. Recognizing this, young people have been requesting more government intervention, greater scientific dissemination, and better corporate practices. A significant increase in sustainable behaviour changing literature might be due to great youths' action and sustainable moving movements over the past years. There is a comprehensive systematic analysis and meta-analysis side-by-side with a correlative correlation study. Young people not only throughout the globe turned to the streets on more than one instance to request full act on the climate crisis but also took it upon themselves to emphasize that action is undertaken. Many reports indicate that young people living in filthy lands are most at ventures. Developed nations would therefore concentrate all the costs of their division of greenhouse gases between now and 2030, reducing them by 45 percent. Owing to the early harmful impact of climate change, the concept of adequately funding was determined by extensive evaluation and reports. It is an obliged part of the accord. In addition to the need for mitigation, great emphasis is placed on the adaptation to climate change. Established countries must provide economic support to poor countries in the area of strong effect on the climate crisis, so that these lands can shield themselves in the form of food, cleanliness, drinking, as well as health. In recent decades, eating faux meat and less meat have become more environmental. Herein, climate change is very relevant because of the involvement of food consumption. An instantaneous eleven manners environment-friendly actions composite measure revealed that the predator of faux meat and meat consumption was very close to the increased participant who picked up faux meat and consumed less meat. This is consistent with further study that uncovered faux meat and a correlation existed between a willingness to fly less consumption. Interestingly, the lack of the from-flight travel demographic method between the two studies, therefore, there is a higher chance that the results provided herein are explained by controlled dietary intake. Reduced such consumption measures were about six times the commitment rate. This is consistent with other research showing a very short-term increase in after-flight activity and sustainable tourism. While no difference was detected between groups and demographic prediction, results show that non-binary gender identification is a good predictor of faux meat consumer and reduced from leather [13].

Qualitative Vs. Quantitative Approaches

Qualitative, particularly biographical, analyses interrogated individual stories of involvement with Fridays for Future. Research often gave voice to the activists, yet youth were predominantly discussed in general categories. Many PhD theses deal with the Fridays for Future movement, mainly from a psychological perspective. This work instead offers an analysis of the narratives of 25 (former) activists and their lived experiences with Fridays for Future by investigating the strategies they employed to reconcile (and subsequently alter) the competing expectations and norms of multiple social environments, i.e. family/friends, school, and movement. Fridays for Future can be seen as a form of boundary work, where young protesters demarcated themselves from others. Biographical narratives of activists highlighted the adaptation of individual behaviour to shifting expectations of the social environment. Activists navigated the expectations of various relevant social worlds to sustain their actions. Accountability pressures were central concerning the Fridays for Future movement causing some to withdraw while others sought to manage these pressures. Disengagement from Fridays for Future while modifying personal behaviours or involvement in other forms of activism. Movements' strategies to sustain and foster commitment, including supportive group environments and clear sets of norms, and a focus on policy changes, as opposed to individual habit changes. The latter might be frustrating and ultimately unsatisfying [14].

Case Studies and Surveys

One young UK climate activist described a key moment in their journey as when schoolmates asked about climate change, prompting "shocked" reactions from staff. This highlights shifts in public understanding and the breakdown of barriers that previously isolated fossil fuel elites from the growing consensus on human-caused climate change. The rise in personal narratives about climate impacts, such as wildfires in the US and Canada, flooding in Benin, and the effects of climate on skiing in Austria, aligns with increased public awareness since 1982, creating opportunities for advocacy. Survey data from Switzerland indicates that activists enhance their credibility through personal connections. The dismantling of barriers also affects narrative consistency in defending legitimacy. This underscores the power of alternative media as a challenge to mainstream perspectives and the advocacy efforts of groups like the

NUS in the UK and communities at the Climate Summit in Copenhagen. Positive narratives emerge from these contextual changes, reflecting connections among wider public and epistemic communities. To respond to Methodology call questions, three narrative instances demonstrate how supportive actors affirm the activism's impact through primary research such as interviews, participant observation, and content analysis, examining key moments and issues that motivated their involvement [15].

Key Findings and Analysis

There are a multitude of factors contributing to rising mental health problems among young people. In a rapidly changing world, young people navigate the challenges of school, family and peers, while also forming a sense of self and future. While this has always been complex, there is mounting evidence that children and young people today are also deeply anxious and worried about the challenges of the future. This future is visualised in many uncomfortable truths including the unprecedented scale of extinctions, the rapid increase in natural disasters and the impacts of the economic system in which they are embedded. Climate change compounds these issues, with many children and young people experiencing stress around its various dimensions including extreme weather events, impacts to food security and personal health, concerns about wildfire, sea level rise, loss of homes and displacement. In addition, researchers also highlight how for many the issue of climate change underpins a meta-global anxiety, linked to a sense of hopelessness about securing a future at all. In such a context it is probable that children and young people may feel more unwilling to consider their horizons, make plans for their lives or invest in building a future at all. The precarity of climate injustice may also drive young people to participate in various forms of activism to with the damage that is yet to be inflicted on their worlds and lives. The economic system that causes climate change is also one where austerity, insecure jobs and rising inequality are driving a generation of young people to the brink. Many young activists have expressed the importance that collective, shared futures hold for their own sense of self, well-being and future. But with the 'end of the world' before them, these shared futures can look particularly bleak. Founded in March 2019, Extinction Rebellion Junior (XRJ) has emerged as one such prominent youth political activist movement in the UK. They are a group of young people under the age of 18 involved with XR who campaign for climate change legislation in local councils. Recruiting with the help of a school strike organisation, they work in their local area to persuade politicians to act on the 'climate emergency'. Similarly, a member of the Scottish Greens with experience in local political activism has documented efforts to support their son in school activism and letter writing campaigns to council regarding road building and austerity. For many young people active within XR or broader environmental politics, rebellious anti-government activity should be seen as opposed to the disciplined and professionalised brand of local activism seeking gains in electoral politics. Yet, it is clear that efforts to make life outside electoral politics look like "deviance" or "violent extremism" also have a significant gendered aspect [16].

Personal Growth and Empowerment

Climate change can feel overwhelming for young people, often leading to feelings of powerlessness. However, youth have taken to the streets, with millions participating in global marches inspired by Greta Thunberg, who embodies the "Greta Effect." The author's personal account from Western Australia highlights her journey in becoming involved with the School Strike 4 Climate (SS4C) after being inspired by Greta. Engaging in these movements helps combat feelings of isolation and connects young people who share similar views on climate change. Raising awareness about climate issues can empower individuals and communities to act together. Understanding the implications of global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius is crucial. Climate activist movements foster community, friendships, and support networks. Initially feeling like a social outcast for advocating environmental issues, the author found belonging through SS4C. This experience marked her first involvement in a global movement, building a social network as a way to collectively address the climate crisis and work towards a common goal [17].

Community Engagement and Social Bonds

Youth voices and action on climate change are at the forefront of environmental policy, protest and change-making efforts in Australia. These efforts are essential given the widespread social, economic and environmental implications of climate change and as the tension between mining and conservation is evident across western Australia. WA, and particularly the Kimberley region, is a frontline where urgent action for climate justice is needed. Alarmed by signs of accelerating heating such as prolonged drought, record-breaking heatwaves and the worst coral bleaching on record, farther widened the emerging anxiety among young generations. Such anxieties triggered against the backdrop of extant worry about economic futures and much slower action on the anthropogenic causes, provides a combustible

circumstance where many young persons feel self-authorised to engage beyond their schools and family in a social exercise. So, to amplify this concern, a strategic approach is taken to connect the community understanding of youth activism with that extant in the respective academic policy [18].

Implications for Policy and Practice

Climate activism among youth is rising worldwide in response to future uncertainties. While school strikes dominate media attention, various activism forms exist. In some regions, under-18s face repercussions for their efforts to promote climate action. Young individuals in Southern and Northern Hemisphere countries have taken legal action against governments on climate policies. Despite some support, government responses remain slow. Youth activism significantly influences personal, familial, social, and educational aspects of young people's lives. A research agenda addressing youth identity and citizenship in relation to activism is proposed, focusing on policy implications. Qualitative case studies of young activists in Perth, Australia, highlight the need for supportive environments from families, schools, and activists. The findings underline the necessity for mental health professionals to develop frameworks to aid young activists [19].

Educational Strategies

Young people increasingly perceive their ability to impact the world positively, fueling youth climate activism in Australia and globally, posing a threat to governments and industries linked to environmental degradation. Despite efforts to marginalize young environmental activists experiencing eco-anxiety, their collective action remains strong, employing diverse strategies such as legal challenges and lobbying, alongside street protests. It's essential to understand how climate activism, identity, eco-anxiety, and hope intersect among youth within educational settings, and how Public Education partners can effectively respond to young activists, irrespective of school policies on climate strikes. In Western Australia, youth participate in climate activism through various means, and some may choose not to engage due to climate anxiety. It's crucial to avoid blaming all young protesters for non-participation, as individual circumstances vary. There is a notable lack of evidence regarding how young people confront their fears related to climate change and the necessary support mechanisms within schools. Climate change education and activism occur in multifaceted ways, not just limited to environmental science. Insights from young people's experiences highlight the need for a diverse approach in public school responses that prioritize student safety, mental health, and relevant curriculum. Reshaping narratives during a climate crisis to empower students is vital for their mental well-being [20].

Youth Involvement in Decision-Making

Youth are not only affected by adult decisions but also actively shape social life. Schools play a crucial role in building youth civil identity. In the context of climate crises, youth voices are vital to political ecology. Young people, often marginalized and lacking voting rights, remain unseen. Recent years have seen increased visibility for youth activism, particularly following global climate strikes influenced by a young activist. This activism, rooted in a leftist underground scene since around 2016, has developed outside adult oversight and mainstream media. Unlike other youth movements, climate activism focuses on public action and media visibility. In Timor-Leste, media policies and crackdowns have restricted civil communities' political spaces to oppose the establishment. Demonstrations and public debates are less frequent due to fears of being seen as anti-development, jeopardizing financial support from the government. Cross-border learning has enriched understanding of youth activism and young leader identities. Closing ceremonies often highlight cultural events unrelated to project activities, yet they can reflect local discussions on power and marginalization [21].

Future Directions and Areas for Further Research

Youth climate activists are both influenced by and influencing the climate crisis. The rise of green technologies coincides with declining wages, rising unemployment, and various environmental crises, creating a complex scenario. Research indicates that youth climate activism plays a vital role in shaping identity and self-concept, similar to other projects focused on the future. Studies on young climate activists often focus on specific countries or regions, demonstrating how context shapes political participation. The varying levels of engagement among young activists highlight the impact of different global political and economic conditions on their political views and actions. A comparative analysis of youth climate activism in Indonesia and Germany may enhance understanding of the engagement differences between Global North and South youth [22].

Longitudinal Studies

There is always an early adaptator that one follows when an innovation is diffused within a population. It could be that in the case of the BCYC, collective processes of 'usual' anticipation occur. BCYC is active in youth-oriented social justice matters. Climate change is not directly their focus. Additionally, the BCYC

work requires the city to develop a just transition plan, rather than BCYC implementing systemic change themselves. On the other hand, SFE's theory of change and work is directly related to changing the system. Therefore, SFE is likely already more open and encouraging to an expansion of the use of systems thinking. Social media creates a rapid diffusion of information. Social media is a mechanism by which 'useful' information (or ways of thinking) can spread through populations rapidly. It could be that individuals were more attracted to SFE than BCYC from the outset because the organization's approach was more aligned with their preexisting beliefs. Alternatively, whether the organizations helped

participants internalize certain ways of reasoning or conditioned them to parrot the discourse used in the BCYC and SFE is a question for future research. While kinship care surrounds the BCYC, the understanding among the participants is more sophisticated and translates more frequently into the discourse advocated by the organization. The study included many more participants from SFE than BCYC, opening up the possibility for more variance in the SFE answers. strcatenates are employed for a greater understanding of the data through trend descriptions. The SFE participants span a broader range of ages and number of years removed from the organization, making collective patterns harder to discern. Findings must be interpreted with caution. Some participants may be more adept than others at identifying and explaining their views. Responses are formulated as part of a larger group rather than appearing spontaneously. The questions may not have been answered thoroughly, excluding a more elaborate analysis. The protocol has previously self-reported results, while others are broad research inquiries. The more accessible, definite questions are the ones answered concisely [23].

Global Perspectives

The increasing impacts of climate change call for more research about climate activism, especially youth involvement, and also the impact this has on mental health and perhaps on identity. Climate Justice Union South-West WA is a group founded by and mainly made up of youth who lobby for action on climate change at the local, national and international level 17. Understanding more about the experiences, self-perception and political identity of these young people would inform the ongoing development of this coalition and its supports. Data was collected from three interviews with young climate activists in SJ, additionally, inferences were drawn from SJ youth climate activists' social media posts. Although times and places were different, these findings are discussed in the context of existing work, especially relevant research about youth climate activism in Western Australia and anxiety about climate change in youth [24, 25]. Polarisation is a pressing societal issue which influences the way individuals and groups perceive their own identity (proper identity) and diverge from others' ways of identifying them (attributed identity). Polarisation fuels the social imaginary in which youth are seen as agent—an upsetting potential that must be managed—and causes alienation from the older generations that foster these perceptions, leading in turn to a refusal of legacies and to the rise of oppositions such as "boomers" vs. "young" and adults vs. youth [26, 27].

CONCLUSION

Climate activism plays a crucial role in shaping youth identity, offering young people a sense of agency and purpose while also exposing them to stress and societal opposition. The movement enables youth to engage in political discourse, advocate for environmental justice, and foster collective resilience. However, the emotional toll of activism, including frustration, burnout, and intergenerational tensions, highlights the need for greater institutional support. Schools, policymakers, and mental health professionals must collaborate to provide young activists with resources that sustain their engagement without compromising their well-being. Despite its challenges, youth-led climate activism remains a powerful force for change, inspiring a generation to fight for a sustainable and equitable future.

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CITE AS: Sarah Sachar (2025). The Impact of Climate Activism on Youth Identity. EURASIAN EXPERIMENT JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, 7(1):151-160