

A rhetorical perspective on youth environmental activism

Hannah R. Feldman

Abstract

As “alternative” [Maesele, 2009, p. 56] science communicators, young people (of pre-voting age) have an important role to play in the climate communication arena. Youth have access to rhetorical resources associated with evidence-based and emotional appeals. However, they are challenged by political, media and public entities on their ability to effectively engage with politicised scientific issues. Their credibility and authority to speak on climate issues are challenged. This piece takes a rhetorical lens to a current youth climate change advocacy case study, the *School Strike for Climate*. I argue that Australian youth are criticised for being politically inexperienced in attempts to silence them from speaking out about Australian climate change policy. Implications for science communicators working in the climate change space, and the *Strike* participants themselves are discussed.

Keywords

Environmental communication

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.22323/2.19060307>

Submitted: 21st October 2020

Accepted: 6th November 2020

Published: 24th November 2020

Introduction

The *Skolstrejk för Klimatet* or *School Strike for Climate* movement, founded by then-16-year-old Greta Thunberg in 2018, has steadily increased in numbers since 15 March 2019, when over a million young people across 125 countries walked off the ‘job’ — school studies — to demand global political action on climate change. What makes this movement so special? Unlike other environmental activist movements, *School Strike* is attended by, developed and run by predominantly school aged people.

In looking to Greta Thunberg as a representative of modern youth resistance [Holmberg and Alvinus, 2019], we see a new generation of climate activism emerging for young people termed “abstract progressive resistance” [Holmberg and Alvinus, 2019, p. 78]. Previously, we have taken youth resistance to be largely focused on *distinct* actors — rebellion against family members, school teachers and

so on. In the *School Strike for Climate* movement, however, we see a shift in youth resistance toward *abstract* actors [Holmberg and Alvinus, 2019]. This includes targets of the *Strike*, such as the legal, political, and economic ecosystems, as well those that the *Strike* defends, such as the environment, future generations, or underprivileged voices.

Exploring the *School Strike* movement, we see government personnel, non-scientific publics, environmentalists and opinion leaders vying for opportunities to dominate discourse and media communication generated by the *Strike* events. In this ecosystem, distinct actors are enabled to step in to speak for the abstract, including individual *School Strikers*. Since no one actor may speak for, say, the environment, the economy, or even youth, distinct actors employ rhetorical strategies associated with logical, emotional and ethical appeals to strengthen their own position, and to discredit the positions of others.

In this piece, I draw on my own experiences as a researcher of the *School Strike for Climate*, as well as interdisciplinary research findings and theories drawn from the fields of science communication, youth studies and political sciences to examine the rhetorical ways in which the *School Strike for Climate* movement has constructed a campaign grounded in scientific evidence (logos) and emotion (pathos). Following this, I also explore how opponents are systematically attempting to discredit the movement's by challenging the authority of youth as spokespeople for the planet and policy (ethos).

Critiques on the authority of youth

The *School Strike for Climate* movement has built a rhetorical narrative heavily based on the logic of climate science and strong appeals to emotion, particularly through use of apocalyptic narratives in their communication. Researchers working in the area of rhetorical studies argue that this is especially powerful in integrating "the traditional persuasive appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos" [Spoel et al., 2008, p. 60]. The *School Strikers* exhibit this narrative through catastrophic visions of their future such as "Stop denying the Earth is dying" [slangers, 2019], "This is an emergency, stop burning down the house" [Anonymous, 2020e], and "You'll die of old age, I'll die of climate change" [K6ka, 2019]. These narrative visions position them to make emotionally charged demands from the movement such as "What are you going to say to your grandchildren when they ask YOU 'what did you do to try and stop this?'" [SS4C Australia, 2020]. Similarly, campaign slogans such as "Fund our future, not gas" [SS4C Australia, 2020] position the *School Strikers* outwardly as economically vulnerable, while those in power put them at risk. This builds upon the pathos of youth, where children are often seen as innocent and in need of protection [Meyer, 2007].

Researchers argue that there are significant problems associated with apocalyptic climate change messages used by activists to motivate action [see, for example, Hornsey and Fielding, 2019]. However, compared with other activist movements, *School Strikers* are mainly criticised for their authority to speak on environmental and political issues. For example, public commentary refuting *Extinction Rebellion* (a concurrent but separate environmental activist movement), focusses primarily on climate science. Top comments on Fox News articles [Chakraborty, 2019] often include statements about 'natural climate cycles', critiques of peer review, or contributors boasting excessive meat consumption and CO₂ generation. *Extinction*

Rebellion protestors are criticised for their belief in the existence and severity of climate change and whether their tactics are reasonable given that climate science is still questioned in some circles. While that's not to say that their authority is never challenged, primarily it is their evidence-based and emotional appeals that are the focus of criticisms.

In contrast, young people taking part in the *School Strike* are criticised for their right to have an opinion about climate change, given their age. Public comments regarding *School Strikers*, again from Fox News, focus on their lifestyles and youth. For example:

- “Are they willing to give up their iPhones and iPads?” [SnarkysMachine, 2019]
- “schools should . . . show these children what they are being propagandized to support” [ScarcelySaved, 2019]
- “Okay . . . protest over now (sic). Everyone pile back into the diesel powered buses for the ride back to our air conditioned homes and schools.” [baggerrider179, 2019]
- “Can't we educate our children without having to use them or scare them about the planet coming to an end. I mean they are just little kids after all. Seems mean and wrong to use them like that.” [deesquare, 2019]

These comments avoid directly engaging with the movement's goals and attempt to remove the agency of *School Strikers* (and their voice in climate change discourse) by challenging the ethos of youth. While perhaps not entirely “opinion leaders” [Cox and Pezzullo, 2015, p. 189] directly influencing the government or media, these non-scientific and non-governmental publics provide insight into how the *School Strike for Climate* is discussed in non-sympathetic public spheres.

Young people as emotional science communicators

Regardless of non-scientific publics responses to the movement, *School Strike for Climate* participants are “alternative” [Maesele, 2009, p. 56] science communicators. *School Strikers* strengthen their legitimacy to speak on climate issues by drawing on structures of respected adult power, such as labour unions and scientific institutions. For example, *School Strikers* demand a ‘just transition’ from non-renewable resources, a term coined first by US labour union movements and now used across climate adaptation, including in the Paris Agreement of 2015/16 [Healy and Barry, 2017]. They also have avenues for more formalised backing, as thousands of scientists wrote a letter in support of the youth movement, specifically stating that their scientific basis is sound [Warren, 2019]. This academic language and backing from scientists can strengthen the credibility of the overall communication [Scheufele, 2014], providing some counter to critiques of their authority.

School Strikers are also independently communicating about climate science. Climate Sign Archive, a digital repository of *School Strike for Climate* signage, provides a huge range of placarded scientific messages: from the simple and direct “Listen to the science” [Anonymous, 2020b] or “United by nature, guided by

science" [Anonymous, 2019d]; to word play such as "The oceans are rising and so are we" [Anonymous, 2019c] and "Fight climate change or die frying" [Shine, 2019]; right through to humour in "2 degrees by 2020, not the hot date I wanted" [Anonymous, 2019a], "When I said I'd rather die than go to math class, that was hyperbole, a**holes" [Anonymous, 2019e], and "Just cause [Scott Morrison] is dated as the dinosaurs, doesn't mean we have to end up like them" [Anonymous, 2019b]. Each of these placards engage with and rely on the logic of scientific findings or process. Looking to the work of Bankes [2016], we see that while science communicated via meme, comedy, or cartoon might not contain in-depth technical concepts, it doesn't mean that it's not valid science communication. Throughout the *Strikes*, visual popular culture references such as memes and cartoons have been a common way to express environmental sentiments. Young people are taking what they know about science — whether it be sea level rise, atmospheric temperature increases, or extinction of the dinosaurs — and using it to engage with other participants or observers at protests in a language they know best.

Young people are also strategically using emotional appeals in their communication of the *School Strike* message. As Cox and Pezzullo [2015] state, "an important component in successful [environmental] campaigns is the construction of messages that are framed in terms of values that are important to those the campaign is aiming to reach" [2015, p. 199]. Further, values are strongly linked to pro-environmental behaviours, and environmental campaigns can call on egoistic, self-oriented values (health, prosperity), social-altruistic values (community wellbeing, future generations), and biospheric values (environmental concerns) to generate support for the movement [Stern and Dietz, 1994; Cox and Pezzullo, 2015]. We see these value based appeals in the *School Strike* movement, for example in the communication of participants such as "Fires and smoke, Aussies choke!" [Anonymous, 2020a], "Stop selling our water, land, resources" [Anonymous, 2020c], and the emotionally charged "The koalas screamed as they burned" [Anonymous, 2020d].

In summary, the *School Strike for Climate* campaign marks a deliberate use of science to boost its credibility, discuss the climate and appeal to the emotions of those watching on through values and the inherent pathos of youth.

Deficit models of political engagement

Given the above examples of the *School Strike* campaign, why then are *School Strikers* so heavily criticised on the basis of their right to speak on the issue of climate policy, alone? Here I draw on literature from political studies to show that young people are often criticised for being deficient in their knowledge on — and hence their ability to engage with — the broader political system [Bessant, 2020]. Through this lens, the *School Strikers* are not only challenged on their authority to speak on environmental issues, but political issues as well. As Scheufele [2014] notes, "public communication about modern science is inherently political, whether we like it or not" [2014, p. 13586], and this certainly applies to the *School Strike for Climate*.

Of the September 2019 *School Strike for Climate* events, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison cautioned against "raising the anxieties of children in our country" [Biddulph, 2019, 0:15]. He spoke of his own children, and how he hopes to give them the opportunity to "make up their own minds" [Biddulph, 2019, 1:01] while

also imploring people that adults and *School Strikers* need to “get a bit of context and perspective” [Biddulph, 2019, 1:21] before taking to the streets. Many Australian state leaders and Education Ministers also publicly took the position that students should be in school instead of protesting, framing protestors as uneducated, and other critics suggested that the *School Strikers* were faces for an adult-driven agenda, rather than crediting them with the protest themselves [The Fifth Estate, 2019]. Even political figures that supported the *School Strike* did so without actively supporting their authority. One progressive politician said of the September 2019 protests that “Education is also bigger than the classroom. It is based on life experience. That is, in part, the importance of being confident and passionate enough to form beliefs and being prepared to stand up for them” [The Fifth Estate, 2019]. While taking a commendably strong position of support, focusing on the deficit in education of young people and on climate change as a ‘belief’ still does not engage with the protest movement’s demands for scientific evidence-based action, nor position youth as knowledgeable enough to engage with climate change policy.

So despite the increase in opportunities for public participation in environmental policy in the 2010s [Yearley, 2014], enfranchisement of young people in climate politics is repeatedly denied in Australia. Young people face significant challenges when they attempt to involve themselves in politics, as they are considered lacking in the civic experience to make rational choices in the political sphere [Bessant, 2020]. This public deficit narrative has consistently appeared in the science communication arena since the 1990s [Trench, 2008], although evidence suggests that increasing scientific literacy does not result in deeper or greater engagement with science [Scheufele, 2014]. Evidence that formal civic education leads to more effective civic engagement is highly debated. Despite a lack of clarity around the outcomes of civic education, youth political engagement is still seen as something that is acquired in a top-down fashion, bestowed upon youth by parents, schools, or more knowledgeable adults [Andersson, 2015]. Even in areas of environment policy, deficit thinking dominates, as non-scientific publics are seen as unable to engage until certain levels of knowledge are acquired [Bulkeley, 2000].

By focusing on protestors’ age and lack of perspective or education, critics of the *School Strikers* are able to attack them for their ability to speak on the issue via a commonly accepted deficit attitude toward young people’s engagement with polity. Of the rhetorical approaches available to critique the *School Strikers*, the ethos of youth can be swiftly and efficiently discredited through focus on their exclusion from adult systems of governance.

The importance of climate change messengers

The importance of familiar and trusted messengers of climate science has been long discussed in science communication, social psychology, and protest literature. Environmental messaging is most effective when it comes from a communicator with whom we can identify with [see, for example, Schultz and Fielding, 2014; Samuelson, Peterson and Putnam, 2003; Nolan et al., 2008]. Put differently, if norms of a social group are pro-environmental, and we see ourselves as part of that group, then we’re more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour ourselves [Fielding and Hornsey, 2016].

However, shared points of identity between young protestors and their

governmental “primary audience” [Cox and Pezzullo, 2015, p. 185] are few, and this is also likely to influence the credibility of the *School Strikers*. Young environmentalists are, at their eldest, high school or early university educated. Many rely economically on familial units, and many can not yet participate in official democratic life. In short, they are most likely to appeal to other young environmentalists, or others with low societal power, and have little in common with older political decision makers. This poses particular challenges for climate science communication: in-group messaging plays a key role in effective communication strategies, so a group of youth and marginalised others that are positioned as ‘everybody’s out-group’ may be more swiftly dismissed than others across the activism spectrum. In political landscapes, non-voters have little currency to buy change in the system and this is a challenge for the *School Strike for Climate* movement.

Despite this, *School Strikers* may be having an impact on the communication landscape via construction of their own “mediated reality” [Scheufele, 2014, p. 13588], a space where non-scientific publics are exposed to (and engage with) climate change through media or other non-academic third parties. While *School Strikers* are not the media, their demonstrated influence on media discourse via event coverage is significant. Further, discussing controversial scientific topics in the public sphere can “interfere with [the communication] ecosystem in ways that are not easy to anticipate” [Nerlich and McLeod, 2016, p. 485]. As important as it is to consider the content of the *School Strike* messaging, and which audiences this may or may not connect with, it is equally important to be cognisant of the contribution young people are making to the full climate activism arena.

Implications for Strikers and research

It may be unfortunate that *School Strike for Climate* critiques are not levelled at policy or climate change discourse. However, criticising young people and dismissing their right to speak may in fact strengthen the rhetoric that young people are vulnerable [Meyer, 2007]. Simply by virtue of being young, any antagonism directed at them can be viewed as an attack on children, unjust. But an activist movement’s purpose is to “raise an issue to prominence, change the way we think about it, and affect policy on the issue” [Ottinger, 2016, p. 90], and attacks of this nature give the *School Strikers* greater access to rhetorical resources that appeal to emotion, as well as greater media exposure. Given that issues the *School Strikers* discuss receive more news media coverage when politicians comment on them, any rhetorical engagement at all can be seen as a strong outcome for the movement.

For science communication more broadly, the criticism and dismissal of young people advocating for action on climate change could have unintended consequences. As Fähnrich [2018] notes, “the role of alternative science communicators and their strategic use of science might be fraught with risks and could even threaten the overall credibility of science” [2018, p. 15]. How far does this apply to the *School Strike for Climate*? This activist movement uses scientific knowledge to pressure governmental decision makers to act on climate change, but their message is blocked and distorted, based on little overlap between their own identities and those who watch them. Even though their scientific claims are consistent with others doing work in the environmental communication space, it is possible that a strong enough attack could also negatively impact the credibility of other actors in the environmental communication space.

Most importantly, the political tactics to discredit young people could have the biggest negative impact on *School Strikers*, themselves. Bessant [2020], working in the youth citizenship research area, cites Taylor [1994] who notes that real harm can come as a consequence of treating young people as underdeveloped simply because of their age. Repeatedly being stereotyped can also have a backfire effect, “influencing how young people see themselves and in turn how they do or do not act” [Bessant, 2020, p. 13]. Supporters of the *School Strike for Climate* movement (both internal and external) need to be cognisant of the rhetorical tactics at play from their opponents, and see these provocations as a strength of the movement, rather than damaging critiques.

Taking a rhetorical perspective can shed light on how communication of the *School Strike for Climate* is shaped by appeals to emotion and scientific evidence-base, as well as how it is critiqued on the credibility of youth to speak on topics such as climate change policy. Via the *School Strike for Climate*, science communicators have an opportunity to integrate and collaborate with political and youth studies, particularly in the area of “situational politics” [Andersson, 2015, p. 968], acknowledging that civic or political engagement, much like scientific engagement, is not simply achieved by a top-down dissemination of information. In doing so, at least in the academy, the *School Strike for Climate* activists can be acknowledged as alternative and influential science communicators in their own right, rather than dismissed as ‘too young’ to participate.

References

- Andersson, E. (2015). ‘Situational political socialization: a normative approach to young people’s adoption and acquisition of political preferences and skills’. *Journal of Youth Studies* 18 (8), pp. 967–983.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2015.1020926>.
- Anonymous (20th September 2019a). ‘2° by 2030. Not the hot date I wanted’. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/20-september-2019-anonymous-1>.
- (20th September 2019b). ‘Just ‘cause ScoMo is dated as the dinosaurs, doesn’t mean we have to end up like them’. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/20-september-2019-anon-3>.
- (20th September 2019c). ‘The oceans are rising. So are we!’ [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/zf5hj5fzw2atzb3wl5e3hnrrjklm33>.
- (19th March 2019d). ‘United by nature, guided by science’. [Protest sign]. *The Fifth Estate*.
URL: <https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/climate-change-news/what-our-leaders-said-about-the-school-climate-change-strike/>.
- (20th September 2019e). ‘When I said: I’d rather die than go to maths class? That was hyperbole, assholes’. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/20-september-2019-anonymous-3>.
- (4th February 2020a). ‘Fires + smoke: Aussies choke! But how good’s the cricket? # No more fossil fools’. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*.
URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/mxtl6n76afbnpzfn8rebfcpdh49y6-ydmaj-5p9dy>.
- (4th February 2020b). ‘Listen the Science’. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*.
URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/wlfj53a5m8t187542xel9kd74ngdkw-j3t4x-9395t-wazny-y5gxn-r9m4z-r9tyd>.

- Anonymous (4th February 2020c). 'Stop selling our water, land, resources'. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/mxtl6n76afbnpznfn8rebfcpdh49y6-ydmaj>.
- (4th February 2020d). 'The koalas screamed as they burned'. [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/wlfj53a5m8tl87542xel9kd74ngdkw-j3t4x-9395t-wazny-y5gxn-r9m4z>.
- (4th February 2020e). 'This is an emergency! Stop burning down the house!' [Protest sign]. *Climate Sign Archive*. URL: <https://www.climatesignarchive.com/archive/zg5ycjmk53dzadmr64edpfigned7faz>.
- baggerrider179 (21st September 2019). 'Re: 5 inconvenient truths about the "climate strike"'. [Comment to the article]. *Fox News*. URL: <https://www.foxnews.com/science/5-inconvenient-truths-about-the-climate-strike>.
- Banks, E. (2016). 'The dangers of 'Miss Information': science and comedy in South Park'. *JCOM* 15 (02), C02. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.15020302>.
- Bessant, J. (2020). 'From denizen to citizen: contesting representations of young people and the voting age'. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies* 3 (3), pp. 223–240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-020-00014-4>.
- Biddulph, S. (1st October 2019). 'Morrison a 'bad dad' for denigrating young climate protesters'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. URL: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/morrison-a-bad-dad-for-denigrating-young-climate-protesters-20190930-p52w63.html>.
- Bulkeley, H. (2000). 'Common knowledge? Public understanding of climate change in Newcastle, Australia'. *Public Understanding of Science* 9 (3), pp. 313–333. <https://doi.org/10.1088/0963-6625/9/3/307>.
- Chakraborty, B. (8th October 2019). 'Aggressive climate change protests hit major cities in Europe, Australia, more than 300 arrested'. *Fox News*. URL: <https://www.foxnews.com/world/climate-change-activists-europe-australia-arrested>.
- Cox, R. and Pezzullo, P. G. (2015). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, U.S.A.: SAGE.
- deesquare (21st September 2019). 'Re: Rebecca Friedrichs: global climate strike protests — just part of hysterical climate alarmism in our schools'. [Comment to the article]. *Fox News*. URL: <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/global-climate-strike-protests-climate-alarmism-rebecca-friedrichs>.
- Fährnich, B. (2018). 'Digging deeper? Muddling through? How environmental activists make sense and use of science — an exploratory study'. *JCOM* 17 (03), A08. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.17030208>.
- Fielding, K. S. and Hornsey, M. J. (2016). 'A social identity analysis of climate change and environmental attitudes and behaviors: insights and opportunities'. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, p. 121. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00121>.
- Healy, N. and Barry, J. (2017). 'Politicizing energy justice and energy system transitions: fossil fuel divestment and a "just transition"'. *Energy Policy* 108, pp. 451–459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2017.06.014>.
- Holmberg, A. and Alvinus, A. (2019). 'Children's protest in relation to the climate emergency: a qualitative study on a new form of resistance promoting political and social change'. *Childhood* 27 (1), pp. 78–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568219879970>.
- Hornsey, M. J. and Fielding, K. S. (2019). 'Understanding (and reducing) inaction on climate change'. *Social Issues and Policy Review* 14 (1), pp. 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12058>.

- K6ka (2019). “‘You’ll die of old age I’ll die of climate change” — Climate Strike Toronto 20 Sep 2019.jpg’. [Photograph]. *Wikimedia Commons*. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22You%27ll_Die_of_Old_Age_I%27ll_Die_of_Climate_Change%22_-_Climate_Strike_Toronto_27_Sep_2019.jpg.
- Maesele, P. (2009). ‘NGOs and GMOs: a case study in alternative science communication’. *Javnost — The Public* 16 (4), pp. 55–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2009.11009014>.
- Meyer, A. (2007). ‘The moral rhetoric of childhood’. *Childhood* 14 (1), pp. 85–104.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568207072532>.
- Nerlich, B. and McLeod, C. (2016). ‘The dilemma of raising awareness “responsibly”’. *EMBO reports* 17 (4), pp. 481–485.
<https://doi.org/10.15252/embr.201541853>.
- Nolan, J. M., Schultz, P. W., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J. and Griskevicius, V. (2008). ‘Normative social influence is underdetected’. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34 (7), pp. 913–923.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208316691>.
- Ottinger, G. (2016). ‘Social movement-based citizen science’. In: *The rightful place of science: citizen science*. Ed. by D. Cavalier and E. B. Kennedy. Tempe, AZ, U.S.A.: Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes. Chap. 5, pp. 89–103.
- Samuelson, C., Peterson, T. R. and Putnam, L. L. (2003). ‘Group identity and stakeholder conflict in water resource management’. In: *Identity and the natural environment*. Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.: The MIT Press, pp. 273–295.
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/3644.003.0017>.
- ScarcelySaved (21st September 2019). ‘Re: 5 inconvenient truths about the “climate strike”’. [Comment to the article]. *Fox News*. URL: <https://www.foxnews.com/science/5-inconvenient-truths-about-the-climate-strike>.
- Scheufele, D. A. (2014). ‘Science communication as political communication’. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111 (4), pp. 13585–13592.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1317516111>.
- Schultz, T. and Fielding, K. (2014). ‘The common in-group identity model enhances communication about recycled water’. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 40, pp. 296–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2014.07.006>.
- Shine, R. (21st September 2019). ‘Fight climate change or die frying’. [Protest sign]. *ABC News*. URL: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-21/climate-strike-signs-highlight-call-to-action-by-youth/11534228>.
- slangers (15th March 2019). *Here’s Lucy Ward with her incredible sign. She’s 11. #ClimateStrike*. [Twitter post].
URL: https://twitter.com/_slangers/status/1106355541868109826?s=20.
- SnarkysMachine (21st September 2019). ‘Re: 5 inconvenient truths about the “climate strike”’. [Comment to the article]. *Fox News*. URL: <https://www.foxnews.com/science/5-inconvenient-truths-about-the-climate-strike>.
- Spoel, P., Goforth, D., Cheu, H. and Pearson, D. (2008). ‘Public communication of climate change science: engaging citizens through apocalyptic narrative explanation’. *Technical Communication Quarterly* 18 (1), pp. 49–81.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10572250802437382>.
- SS4C Australia (2020). *School Strike 4 Climate Australia*.
URL: <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/>.
- Stern, P. C. and Dietz, T. (1994). ‘The value basis of environmental concern’. *Journal of Social Issues* 50 (3), pp. 65–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1994.tb02420.x>.

- Taylor, C. (1994). 'The politics of recognition'. In: Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition. Ed. by A. Gutmann. Princeton, NJ, U.S.A.: Princeton University Press, pp. 25–73.
- The Fifth Estate (19th March 2019). 'What our leaders said about the school climate change strike'. *The Fifth Estate*.
URL: <https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/climate-change-news/what-our-leaders-said-about-the-school-climate-change-strike/>.
- Trench, B. (2008). 'Towards an analytical framework of science communication models'. In: Communicating science in social contexts. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, pp. 119–135.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8598-7_7.
- Warren, M. (2019). 'Thousands of scientists are backing the kids striking for climate change'. *Nature* 567 (7748), pp. 291–292.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-00861-z>.
- Yearley, S. (2014). 'Environmentalists as communicators of science: advocates and critics'. In: Routledge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology. Ed. by M. Bucchi and B. Trench. 2nd ed. London, U.K. and New York, U.S.A.: Routledge, pp. 113–124.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203483794.ch9>.

Author

Hannah R. Feldman is a Ph.D. candidate in science communication and sessional academic at the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science at the ANU. E-mail: hannah.feldman@anu.edu.au.

How to cite

Feldman, H. R. (2020). 'A rhetorical perspective on youth environmental activism'. *JCOM* 19 (06), C07. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.19060307>.



© The Author(s). This article is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution — NonCommercial — NoDerivativeWorks 4.0 License.
ISSN 1824-2049. Published by SISSA Medialab. jcom.sissa.it