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Conversations on grief and hope: a collaborative autoethnographic account exploring the lifeworlds of international youth engaged with climate action

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Abstract: This paper explores the lifeworlds of international youth involved in climate and/or environmental social action, narratives that have been largely absent from a literature that has tended to focus on 'traditional' youth activists located in the urban Global North. Written as a novel collaborative autoethnography involving youth as co-authors, the paper a) collectively reflects on the stories of youth from different countries and cultures on their journeys towards climate action, and b) foregrounds an emotional framing to examine these experiences. The youth co-authors, whose experiences are the focus of this paper, form part of innovative international Youth Advisory Board, set up to provide peer support to youth new to climate and environmental social action, as part of our British Academy Youth Futures-funded participatory action research project. We examine the youth's narratives exploring opportunities and barriers they have navigated, their inspirations and the intersections with a range of other socio-cultural factors.

Keywords: youth; climate action; international; activism; participatory

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Introduction

Climate change is a severe threat to humanity and the natural world. Scientific evidence unequivocally shows that human activity is rapidly warming the planet and unless drastic efforts are taken to limit greenhouse gas emissions, impacts on societies will be catastrophic, with more extreme weather, famine and rapid biodiversity loss across the globe (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC 2018; 2021). In 2015, 196 Parties signed the Paris Agreement, a legally binding treaty that came into force in 2016 with a clear goal to limit global warming to below 2°C, and preferably to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels (UNFCCC 2023). However, evidence shows current actions are not sufficient or rapid enough and consequently we are on the path to significantly overshoot these global temperature rises. Importantly, the IPCC's Working Group 1 Report (IPCC 2021) illustrates that we are already dangerously close to surpassing 1.5°C of warming, leading the UN Secretary-General to say it is 'a code red for humanity' (UN 2021) to act.

The climate emergency is also an ongoing injustice, with those least responsible for contributing to the crisis both most at risk from its impacts and least empowered to make required adaptations and systemic changes (Robinson 2019; Islam & Winkel 2017; UNICEF 2015). The crisis' unjust nature is both between and within countries, with poorer nations and communities, along with Indigenous peoples, particularly at risk (Givens *et al.* 2019; Hallegate *et al*. 2015). Chancel (2022) has recently highlighted that 'since 1990, the bottom [economically disadvantaged] 50% of the world population has been responsible for only 16% of all emissions growth, whereas the top 1% has been responsible for 23% of the total'. Whilst 'developing' countries in the Global South with high CO_2 emissions do exist, substantial proportions of their emissions result from their supply of exports and labour for countries in the Global North (Prell & Sun 2015). Issues of inequality and poverty are also compounded by, and intersect with, social categories and identities such as race, age, social class and gender (Pellow 2016).

Systemic climate inaction is maintained by rich societies in the Global North, which have 'climate/environmental privilege' (Norgaard 2012; Williams 2020), delaying action, and which, at present, are relatively isolated from the direct impacts of climate change (though these impacts are increasing). The political will to act is lacking and there is widespread disconnect amongst citizens, even those with awareness of climate change, who feel that its impacts are happening to somebody else and in a distant future (McAdam 2017). This disconnect is fuelled by significant sections of the media (mainstream and social) which at times dismiss experts who warn of the dangers of the climate crisis and platform climate denial, misconceptions and 'fake news' (Willis 2020; DeNicola & Subramaniam 2014). Across the globe, climate activists risk

their freedom, and sometimes lives, to protest, whilst they are maligned as dangerous, deviants and extremists. Even open democracies such as the UK are seeking to limit rights to protest, justifying these changes by the disruptions caused in part by recent climate change protests.

For many people in the Global North, climate change is perceived to have little pertinence or pose little direct threat, leading to a reluctance to change (McAdam 2017). This future/distant framing of climate change, alongside the negative positioning of collective activism, permeates public consciousness. This divides opinion and fuels denial whilst hiding structures of power that filter information, disenfranchising many from engaging in climate action. Further hierarchical and unequal power relations further inhibit collective action (Sovacool 2018; Woroniecki *et al* 2019) leaving youth, Indigenous peoples and poorer communities at significant risk of injustices. For instance, the climate movement in the Global North is perceived to be very white (Walker 2021), and as also having a 'class problem', being the terrain of white middle-class '*Guardian readers*' who have the 'luxury' of being concerned about climate change because their lives are not otherwise precarious or immediately under threat (Willis 2020). Uncritical framings of climate change as future-oriented pit this 'future' problem as unimportant compared to fighting against more imminent concerns of working-class people and poor communities including a lack of jobs, job insecurity, low wages, unaffordable housing and food poverty (Happer 2019). The growing discourse of environmental sustainability can also alienate and marginalise the lived experiences of poorer communities. Increasingly linked into discourses of moral consumer and lifestyle choices, social and cultural practices that feel unashamedly white and middle class are championed as those that will save the planet. This ignores the forced necessity of 'sustainable' lifestyles of poor and working-class communities through lower incomes and more localised living in the Global North (Bell 2020) as well as the Global South. It also ignores ongoing social action struggles of environmental defenders and Indigenous peoples around the world (Irlbacher-Fox & MacNeill 2020).

A growing research literature has also highlighted *climate anxiety*, broadly defined as a negative cognitive and emotional response to concerns about climate change (e.g. Clayton & Karazsia 2020). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in climate-engaged children and youth (e.g. Hickman 2021; Halstead *et al.* 2021). Indeed, Hickman's (2021) findings highlighted that climate anxiety and dissatisfaction with government responses are widespread in children and youth in countries across the world, and is now impacting their daily functioning. 84 per cent of those surveyed admitted to being at least moderately worried by climate change.

Despite these significant challenges, and diverse people and communities pushing for more rapid climate action, there is still scant (though growing) literature on

the real-life experiences of people campaigning for climate action, especially in the Global South. Researching these journeys is important, as they help us to understand how people discover the movement and what it means to be active citizens, illuminating routes into sustained climate action, and discovering what support is needed. To address this research gap, we use collaborative autoethnography (CAE), an innovative method that allows us to collectively reflect on the often-emotional personal stories of nine youth from different countries and cultures on their journey towards climate action. From these narratives we identify opportunities and barriers that youth navigate, recognising how age, gender, socio-economic status and culture influence how youth[1] come to act in addressing the greatest global challenge.

We first contextualise our research by discussing the role of youth and the importance of emotions in climate action. We then explore our unique methodological approach and contextualise the youth who co-authored this paper. A series of discursive 'provocations' are used to share experiences of youth climate action. Finally, we consider broader implications for action on climate change and climate injustices.

Emotions and youth climate action

Knowledge and awareness of climate change is important. However, evidence demonstrates that knowledge on climate change is not directly correlated with climate action for a significant majority of people (Morris *et al.* 2019). For many decades, science communication has operated with a knowledge deficit approach, an assumption that the underlying issue is that people do not fully understand what is happening, and that once they do, this will lead to action (Suldovsky 2017). This has typically not been the case. Moreover, there is also evidence that knowledge of the issues without a clear sense of agency and self-efficacy can also discourage action (Heald 2017), including for youth (Hickman *et al.* 2021).

In Jones *et al.* (2021) we explored this inaction conundrum through an emotional framing, comparing the process of becoming aware of climate change to loss and bereavement. We made the case that a person's emotional journey towards climate action echoes the five stages of grief model from Kübler-Ross (1969). We argued that it may be represented by a 'wave of change' (Jones *et al.* 2021: 39), whereby shock and denial leads to fear and anger, with all of these disrupting our emotions, before

[1] We use the term 'youth' throughout to refer to the youth involved in this paper and on the project's Youth Advisory Board with this being the preferred term internationally when working with people up to the age of 30 although we recognise that others use 'young people' to refer to the same age group and therefore we are sensitive to the way others use it throughout.

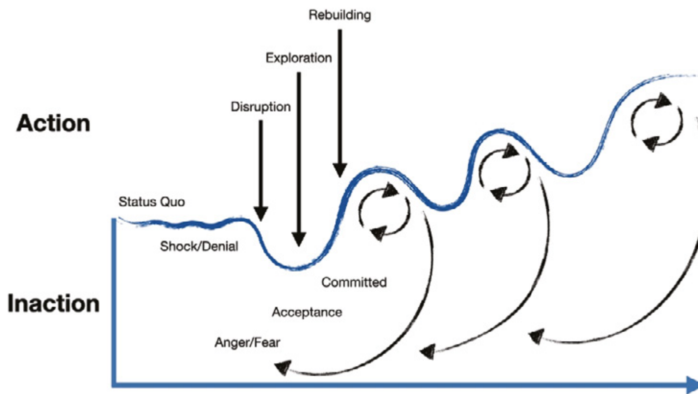

Figure 1. Wave of Change in a Sea of Emotion (from Jones *et al*. 2021).

acceptance of the issue, which in turn leads to a commitment to action that typically involves exploration and rebuilding (as shown in Figure 1). Much like the grief cycle, this is not linear, and events, emotions and thoughts, for example, can push us back into previous stages.

As the climate crisis accelerates, research is increasingly seeking to understand reasons for climate (in)action (Gifford 2011), with some beginning to explore links between emotion and inaction. For instance, Stanley *et al.* (2021) used national survey data in Australia to show how 'anger' maps onto climate action better than 'depression'. This supports our own view that different emotions evoke different climate responses and are thus deeply intertwined (Halstead *et al.* 2021; Jones *et al.* 2021). However, in Jones *et al.* (2021) we argued that whilst negative emotions, such as depression and anger, are important sensitising steps towards action, action is most likely to happen when linked to both a positive, and possible, vision, allowing a 'story of transformation' (Willis 2020: 94) to emerge and making the actor feel empowered rather than powerless. Emotions are therefore key to understanding climate (in)action (Gustafsson *et al.* 2009; Ojala 2015) but whilst the affective dimensions of injustices and social movements are growing (Barford 2017), they are still under-explored (McAdam 2017).

One of our central arguments concerning mobilisation on climate action was that there is not only a need to foreground emotions, but that we need to seek hope through looking horizontally for leadership from those already engaged in climate action, including youth (Jones *et al.* 2021). We believe youth are best placed to lead given they are amongst those 'showing the way despite having more barriers to overcome' (Robinson 2019: 143). Sanson & Burke (2020: 343) argued that the climate crisis is 'an issue of structural violence and intergenerational justice' whereby youth will face the devastations of climate change caused by generations

before them. This injustice is at least three-fold, as they are amongst the least responsible for climate change, yet are most at risk from its impacts and the least empowered to make the necessary systemic changes across most hierarchically and generationally ordered societies (Robinson 2019; Barford *et al.* 2021). Youth have increasingly gained knowledge of this injustice, resulting in a growing youth movement calling for climate action. Since 2018 Greta Thunberg has emerged as a key figurehead, based upon her own climate action of direct protest that inspired the global movement #FridaysforFuture (Wallis & Loy 2021). Globally, the youth climate movement has made clear its discontent with adults' poor stewardship of the Earth (Bandura & Cherry 2019) and September 2019 saw the largest school climate strikes in history. However, in 2020, COVID-19 curbed the momentum of the youth climate movement (Civicus 2020), although it has continued to build globally (Parker 2020), notably via online connectivity. Whilst awareness of youth's concerns and the movement has grown, some politicians and media outlets have simultaneously sought to discredit both youth's evidence and youth activists themselves (Trajber *et al.* 2019; Pinheiro 2020). This appears to increase when youth are perceived to be moving beyond notions of 'dutiful', through 'disruptive' and into 'dangerous' forms of political and social dissent (O'Brien *et al.* 2018), which challenge power and the status quo of neoliberalism and capitalism (Klein 2014).

Despite these barriers, youth across the globe continue to address the climate crisis through varied forms of activism, social action and climate action leadership (Krieger 2020). As such there is a growing body of literature focused on climate activists, especially since the significant wave of youth climate action from 2019 (Sloam *et al.* 2022). Yet there is still relatively little research enabling us to learn from youth's varied journeys towards that action (Sloam *et al.* 2022), especially with a global perspective, given most of this research has focused on the experiences of youth concentrated in the urban, Global North (Walker 2020; 2021). Moreover, such studies have revealed that those involved in climate activism within this urban Global North were more likely to be well educated, concentrated in cosmopolitan locales, and from more affluent backgrounds (Henn *et al.* 2022; Neas *et al.* 2022). Such research therefore has a tendency to focus on 'action' in the form of traditional activism linked to protest and political participation (Sloam *et al.* 2022; Boulianne & Ohme 2022; Gaborit 2020; Haugestad *et al.* 2021), that might also be perceived to focus on predominantly 'white' discourses of what 'action' looks like (Flanagan *et al.* 2022; Walker 2021). Otherwise, they focus on the types of personal (and collective) actions linked to specific contexts of Westernised, 'democratic', capitalist societies, such as exercising consumer choice via 'buycotts' (Pikard 2022) and so-called 'everyday activism', including making green transport choices such as bike

rather than car use, cutting down on meat consumption as well as eating more local/ seasonal produce and convincing others to do the same (Navne & Skovdal 2021). Other research has explored youth action in non-white, poorer and disadvantaged communities in the Global North (Flanagan *et al.* 2022) and there is also a growing body of research focused on youth action within the Global South highlighting the importance of place-based and context-specific examples of action (Vogel *et al.* 2022; Börner *et al.* 2021). However, still scarce in the literature are accounts focusing on youth across many countries and contexts (with a few exceptions, notably Fisher 2016; Eide & Kunelius 2021), especially those where youth are in conversation with each other. This paper attempts to address this gap whilst also addressing the gap identified by Neas *et al.* (2022), that most studies about youth climate activism are written by adults about youth, rather than with them.

Several studies have noted the importance of emotions in youth climate action. For example, Bright & Eames (2022) and Martiskainen *et al.* (2020) explored emotions as motivations for climate action amongst strikers/strike leaders, whilst others have highlighted the importance of emotions within their studies of local, place-based climate action and adaptive practices (Börner *et al.* 2021). Halstead *et al.* (2021) set the scene for exploring these dynamics, particularly through a collaborative approach to capturing and co-creating the written accounts of a young person's emotional journey. However, the work explored only a singular, young, UK-based climate activist, so there remains a need for this approach to go beyond understandings that only situate youth climate action as white and in the Global North (Jones *et al.* 2020). Therefore, in developing this paper, we concur with Börner (2023: 2) 'that we need to learn from the experiences in the global South for promoting (emotional) resilience when facing natural hazards' and learning to live with climate change. Herein we add to this growing and important literature, offering important insights specifically in those areas where literature is still relatively scant. We do this through dialogue with our international Youth Advisory Board in a project focusing on youth participation in climate action in Vietnam.

Methodology

The objective of this paper and its underpinning research is to explore the lifeworlds of international youth involved in climate and/or environmental social action. This involves a) collectively reflecting on the stories of youth from different countries and cultures on their journey towards climate action (exploring opportunities, inspirations and barriers) and b) foregrounding an emotional framing to examine these experiences. The paper utilises an innovative collaborative autoethnographic approach. We

draw on the lifeworlds of nine youth engaged in climate-related social action, who have all co-authored this paper. They are all members of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) for our British Academy funded project exploring the dynamics of youth participation in climate action in Vietnam.

Collaborative autoethnography

Autoethnography seeks to investigate the personal experiences, usually of researchers, as the primary 'data'. However, as Chang (2016: 108) notes, 'the purpose of autoethnography, at least from the social science perspective, is not only to tell personal stories. It intends to expand the understanding of social realities through the lens of the researcher's personal experiences'. Chang goes on to add 'personal stories become vehicles for social critiques through which readers gain understandings of autoethnographers' social realities and of the social forces contextualizing their experiences' (109). Autoethnography can utilise autobiographical data such as memories, memorabilia, documents about oneself, official records, photos, interviews with others and ongoing self-reflective and self-observational memos, amongst other sources (Chang 2016). Collaborative autoethnography (CAE) involves more than one person sharing life stories and experiences whilst engaging in a process of critical self-reflection and dialogue to seek out connections and explore differences on a shared focus or social reality (Roy & Uekusa 2020). Chang *et al.* (2013: 24) argue that this collaboration is a strength because 'the combination of multiple voices to interrogate a social phenomenon creates a unique synergy and harmony that autoethnographers cannot attain in isolation'. We make a novel extension to the CAE approach by disrupting the traditional researcher-participant relationship: those whose experiences are explored in the study are also involved as researchers and authors. This has important, but as yet not fully explored or realised, benefits over some more traditional, researcher-led methods of enquiry. This is because the collaboration goes well beyond 'member checking' (other forms of qualitative research that simply asks participants to check what is reported is accurate) (Pennington & Hughes 2017) approaches utilised in other forms of qualitative research. Instead, participation is self-directed rather than filtered solely through the analytical gaze of researchers.

Levels of involvement in CAE can vary from full collaboration across all elements of the process, through to partial forms of collaboration, for instance limited to the initial scoping/pooling of experiences, to analysis, or to writing. Inevitably, such a process with many voices that attempts to democratically value all of them equally requires a clear framework to manage logistical dimensions (data collection, analysis, writing, etc.). It also brings challenges, such as those related to ethics and power (Hernandez *et al.* 2017). Supporting relationship development (especially where it may not already exist) and ensuring participants have ample opportunity to commu-

nicate is an important part of CAE (Chang *et al.* 2013). CAE is an iterative research approach: as Chang (2016: 119) notes, one 'cannot overemphasize' the process of iteration, which we adopt herein.

Our research broadly followed the stages outlined by Chang *et al.* (2013) in containing a mixture of individual and collective writing/reflection time. However, before these stages began, we refined our framework for exploring youth's lifeworlds focused on their environmental and climate-related social action. We had already identified emotions as key motivators for youth action, as theorised in Jones *et al.* (2021) and Halstead *et al.* (2021). Indeed, this is emerging as an important conceptual and theoretical area across different disciplines when focusing on climate action (see Bright & Eames 2022). However, we were mindful that Jones *et al*. focused on developing these understandings conceptually and Halstead *et al*. focused on a single young UK-based climate activist. We therefore shared these papers with our international YAB as a starting point for collaboratively designing an appropriate framework for exploring the members' own journeys. Drawing on CAE to write this paper reflects the point that YAB members are not 'typical' research participants. They have joined a project specifically to advise both the academics and youth participants. All contributing youth are co-researchers, co-authors and co-creators of the critical discourse shaping the paper. CAE was thus felt to be the only approach that would respect and capture this co-creation. Importantly, as strong advocates for youth, utilising an approach that fully foregrounds and values youth contributions as full co-creators and co-researchers (Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell 2019) also recognises that 'authorial responsibility' provides the youth a further opportunity for 'action' (through authorship) (Dunlop *et al.* 2021). At this point, it is important to clarify that the choice of the term lifeworlds throughout relates directly to both the method of CAE but also importantly about what this process enabled access to, youth's accounts of their own experiences. Routed in phenomenology and first used by Husserl (2002), the concept of lifeworlds evolved to take account of subjective and relative standpoints that are self-evidenced and grounded in people's experiences of the everyday and everyday phenomena contained within (thus in this case, the experience of being involved in climate action).

The first step was for the youth to generate the questions that would shape the discussions to discover and share their individual lifeworlds. Thus, during our first online meeting in early 2022, YAB members were invited to co-create prompts that would frame their individual written narratives. These prompts were turned into a set of questions that were sent around all YAB members on a digital survey tool (Microsoft Forms), to individually reflect upon and answer (hereafter referred to as the 'survey'). Two more online workshops followed in which all YAB members were invited to reconvene and reflect on everyone's responses, exploring similarities and differences, identifying themes, and then considering how these could be analysed

(see details below). Finally, we progressed to the report-writing stage. A first draft of the paper without the discussion or conclusion was written by core members of the research team and circulated to all YAB members and the wider research team. All YAB members were invited to edit and comment on the written narrative, to enable all participants to reflect on their lifeworlds, to reshape, add to and reformulate the writing. This offered further meaning-making opportunities across the wider team.

All meetings were held on the online platform Microsoft Teams to enable international collaboration. The workshops were informal and included the opportunity to speak and write comments in the chat and via the free online digital whiteboard collaboration tool Mural (https://www.mural.co/). This allowed participants to contribute to discussion points in real time. Mural was also used to start formulating themes arising from the discussions. Other virtual collaboration tools were also used to facilitate participation at different points including shared documents through Microsoft or Google as appropriate. The workshops were recorded to enable recollection of conversations and capture verbatim responses.

Ethics, power and positionality

Participation on this paper was voluntary on top of wider commitments to the work of the YAB supporting our broader Vietnam-based research project. Choosing or declining participation did not impact engagement with other YAB work. A significant ethical issue was that YAB members who chose to be full co-authors would forgo the opportunity for anonymity; however, all participating YAB wanted to be named. In addition, whilst most participating youth were aged over 16 (with most over 18), younger members were also involved at the outset (though all were over 16 once the writing/editing/submission process was complete). Informed consent and ethical permission were originally sought for engagement with the wider project by all youth and parents/carers where necessary (including signing up to a digital protocol for online/digital research). This received ethical clearance through the University of Hull's processes and was in coherence with BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018). However, further specific amendment permission was also sought prior to publishing this paper including the permission for using real names throughout alongside co-authorship. Following best practice the ethical process was ongoing through verbal assent in workshops and meetings. The opportunity to read the paper was also offered and formed part of the consent process. Whilst these cover procedural notions of ethics, our process was underpinned by a strong ethos of doing no harm and supporting an inclusive and participatory environment. This is why several methods were utilised to facilitate contributions from all members, while also respecting that not all

members wanted to contribute equally to all elements and making it clear that this was acceptable.

Importantly, this collaboration also includes academic researchers from universities in both the UK and Vietnam. Whilst there are some important differences between these groups (e.g. in relation to power, status and life experiences), what unites the researchers and YAB members is our focus on and commitment to climate action. Many of the researchers did not start their careers in climate-focused research, instead following a path towards developing a critical consciousness of the need for climate action, a process Freire (1970) more broadly calls 'conscientisation'. To this end, all the researchers' work has become increasingly focused on climate action and, for most, that journey has been an emotional one. As such the researchers also have a strong positionality on climate action. Given this existing interest and research, it was important to ensure that the balance of power was as equitable as possible from the outset in providing existing work as a stimulus and starting point, but with YAB members developing the key areas to focus on and included in all aspects of the process and reflection. However, whilst such actions can facilitate trust in the evolving collaboration, existing views and experiences shape interactions, interpretations and create meaning, which are important in understanding the dynamics of the collaboration. Details of YAB contributors are provided in Table 1, which illustrates how some YAB members took part in all activities, while others chose to be in just some, allowing them the flexibility and time for reflection as part of the process.

YAB membership and co-authors

A pre-requisite for applications to join the YAB were that its members would be engaged in climate or other environmental social action. They should also be aged 14–29 at the time of applying (the definition of 'youth' in Vietnam). This was because the YAB's prime focus was to offer a) a youth lens to the research team with youth social action at the forefront and b) peer-to-peer learning opportunities to the youth participants of the research project located in Vietnam. To recruit YAB members, an application pack and form were developed and published on the University of Hull's website. The pack asked applicants to detail their experience relating to social action, what they would be able to offer the project and what they hoped to get out of it. We then circulated details through social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook groups linked to youth climate action) and existing social and professional networks, including those linked to youth and/or climate action such as iWill, YOUNGO and Earthday. YAB membership was thus self-selecting. Youth had to be engaged in social action and interested in longer-term participation in the project. They also were likely to have

access to or be part of existing networks (or have contacts with people who were) focused on youth social action. As a research team, we had no pre-conceived ideas as to the size of the YAB beyond manageability and workability as this was an innovation on our part to ensure youth involvement throughout. We received 16 applications by the deadline (though we were later approached by and accepted another youth to the YAB who became an active member). We made a team decision to invite all 16 to join the YAB based on reviewing their applications, seeing the diversity of home countries, interests and experience, plus allowing for the expectation that commitments would change and we were likely to lose membership along the way for a project spanning over two years. Applications were received from England, Wales, France, Rwanda, Senegal, Hungary, Vietnam, India, USA, Cambodia, Malaysia and Australia. Of those initial 16, 14 (plus the youth who joined slightly later making 15) went on to have some engagement with us in the YAB; we lost two at the outset (from Australia and Hungary). Levels of experience varied from those running their own social action initiatives supporting others and their own eco-focused businesses, through to those nearer the start of their journey into social action.

Nine of the 15 engaged YAB members identified as female, and six as male. Whilst we explicitly welcomed the representation of diverse backgrounds, countries and experiences and applications from youth of different ages, backgrounds, races and religions (and made clear we could support a variety of learning needs and physical abilities), we did not collect any information on socio-economic demographics of the youth, given that our selection process focused on social action engagement. We also advertised and communicated during the YAB exclusively in English. As all participation on the YAB was voluntary and working across multiple time zones it often meant finding times suitable for all to attend was challenging and levels of participation varied but throughout we have had a core group involved in meetings as and when available and able to contribute (as shown in Table 1). Involvement in this paper was again entirely voluntary and reflected to some extent, though not entirely, active engagement in the YAB at the time of working on this paper.

This paper does not make any claims to generalisability for youth engaged in climate action, and moreover, this is not its intention. What the paper does offer is an insight into youth climate action, taking a diverse global perspective of youth engaged in various forms of action across different social, political and cultural contexts and presenting these insights through an innovative working 'with' rather than doing research 'to' or 'on' youth.

Table 1. YAB members

YAB member	Age[3]	Country of origin	Actions (self-drafted)	Completed 'survey'	Participated in workshops	Contributed to paper drafting/ editing
Diep	24	Vietnam	Interested in how science can support climate change mitigation and adaptation. Currently a researcher in the Euro-Mediterranean Center for Climate Change. Research focuses on evaluating climate-related risks and vulnerabilities and impacts of extreme weather events on coastal ecosystems. Interested in the use of decision support systems and nature-based solutions in coastal planning and climate strategies.	Yes	Yes (one)	Yes
Huong	29	Vietnam	Works for a non-profit organisation as an income generation officer. Very interested in solutions to mitigate and respond to climate change, especially in the agricultural sector.	Yes	No	No
Mae	16	Malaysia	Harnesses the power of policy, storytelling and technology to champion the role of Indigenous knowledge in strengthening resilience against environmental degradation. Led youth mobilisation efforts for a campaign to re-gazette the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve. Founded The 14% Project, a network of young Malaysians at the forefront of the fight for equitable Indigenous participation in natural resource management. Recognised as a WWF-Malaysia Eco-Champion, Malaysian Intervarsity Public Policy Competition winner and National River Care Fund grantee for her leadership in river conservation. Member of the Malaysian Youth Parliament. EarthEcho Youth Leadership Council member.	No	Yes (one)	No

[3] Age at the start of the project/joining the YAB rather than at time of writing/editing/publishing the paper. The youth parameters used for the project was ages 14–29, the parameters used in Vietnam where the project is set. The decision was also made that members would be able to remain involved, even if they passed the upper age limit within the duration of the project.

Table 1. (continued)

YAB member	Age	Country of origin	Actions (self-drafted)	Completed 'survey'	Participated in workshops	Contributed to paper drafting/ editing
Amy	17	UK	At age of 12, co-founded and co-ran the educational charity Kids Against Plastic with younger sister. Since then, Kids Against Plastic has engaged a team of over 240 young people around the world as part of the KAP Club, and its Plastic Clever scheme has had over 1,500 schools and numerous cafes and businesses sign up since its launch in early 2019. Plus, we've collected over 100,000 pieces of plastic litter along the way and developed an app to log it.	Yes	No	No
Esther	14	UK	Mainly works in the environmental and education sectors, attempting to ensure that young people have a seat at the table and a space where their voices can be heard. This work includes reducing inequality in education and taking action help prevent climate change.	Yes	Yes	No
Sam	25	UK	Works in both academic and non-academic contexts to understand how to steward societal transformations for overcoming the world's growing interlinked environmental and social crises, including climate change. A transdisciplinary social scientist based at the University of York with the FixOurFood project, first as a Research Assistant and currently as a PhD researcher. FixOurFood aims to understand how a transformation towards a regenerative food system could be achieved in Yorkshire and beyond. Research Associate with Global Assessment for a New Economics (GANE), which aims to synthesise new economic thinking that challenges the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Has worked with numerous British nature conservation NGOs, including the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts, and with the University of Cambridge to produce its Biodiversity Action Plan. Activism is mostly online, involving a lot of tweeting, posting, sharing, email-writing, petition-signing and donating; has produced guides and given presentations on these methods. Has also joined climate marches.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Charlotte	23	UK	Currently runs a digital platform all about children's wellbeing on the basis of seven key themes, one of these being Sustainability. Believes the awareness we provide to children at a young age is crucial for them to instil healthy values in terms of caring for the environment and what they can do to combat climate change. Reflects on personal actions in daily life in regards to climate change and the small actions that can make a difference. For example, switching to a reusable water bottle, washable make-up remover pads, recycling, avoiding fast fashion and signing petitions for action.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dinh-Long	27	France	Mainly working on: 1) climate education (with the belief that we can only take relevant action once we understand the problem) for youth at any phase of their climate advocacy journey, and; 2) building a community of young climate activists (with the belief that we can only take sustained action if we are surrounded with inspiring and like-minded people). Within a team, developing many fun and interactive workshops for youth to learn about climate and climate-related issues and to understand what actions they can take, and, with all the youth participants, foster connections, peer-to-peer learning and mentorship, in order to build a safe space for ongoing interaction.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Khang	20	Vietnam	Has participated in previous project working with academics from Japan in Vietnam focused on beach/coastline engaging in action such as collecting rubbish, soil core, marine debris in the mangrove and mudflat with the quadrat method.	Yes	No	No

Data analysis and analytical framework: exploring youth participation in climate action

All data generated were subjected to a form of iterative thematic analysis that moved between inductive and deductive analysis, exploring both 'semantic' (evident in narratives themselves) and more 'latent' themes to aid interpretation across the group (Braun & Clarke 2006). Given our focus on action, we drew on a review and reconceptualisation of youth participation frameworks by Cahill & Dadvand (2018), who use their new framework to explore critical understandings of what participation involves, directly linking them to practical responses of participation and youth action. What results is their 'P7 model' which focuses on seven interacting domains, the seven Ps, which are: i) Purpose, ii) Positioning, iii) Perspective, iv) Power relations, v) Protection, vi) Place and vii) Process. This model (outlined in Figure 2) explores the different dimensions of participation and, in our view, overcomes many of the shortcomings of other models that perceive participation as moving linearly, and without a focus on action. Thew *et al.* (2022) adopted the framework of Cahill & Dadvand (2018) to explore young people's lived experiences of the UN's climate change negotiations, arguing that the last of the Ps, 'process', focuses predominantly on issues of methodology rather than analysis and interpretation. As such, they replaced the final P with 'psychological factors' which they felt was key in exploring youth participation in issues linked to the environment and climate change. Given our concern with emotions and participation in action, we adopted Thew *et al.*'s (2022) 'psychological

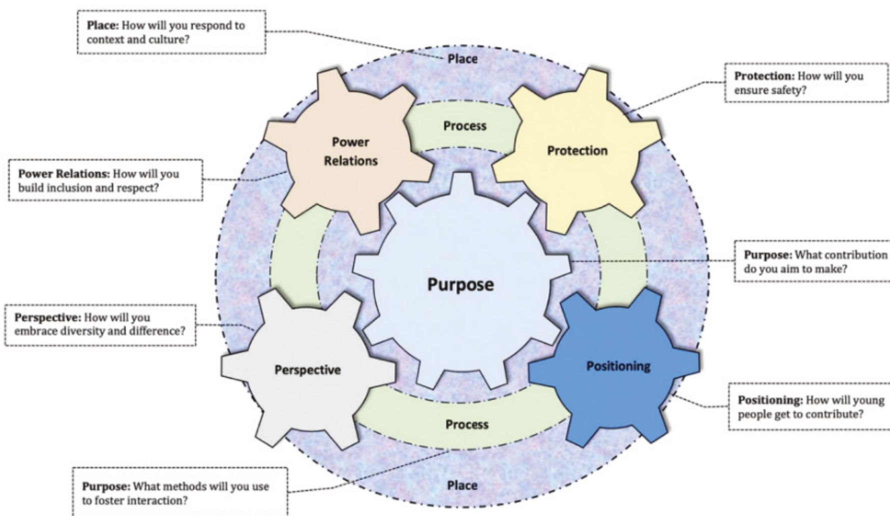

Figure 2. Cahill & Dadvand's (2018) P7 Model.

factors' but also kept Cahill & Dadvand's (2018) 'process', as we felt it was nonetheless important for exploring how action is taken. We therefore adopted a 'P8' version of the model to make sense of the different narratives, actions and interactions that result from the journey.

The narrative that follows is from a mixture of the initial responses from the workshops in which we collectively explored the questions, reflected further and analysed. We present these around six 'provocations' that prompted thinking and discussion. We use the word 'provocations' because our purpose in asking questions was not to have them answered, but rather to provoke critical reflection and to a large extent, polemic, speculative and deeply personal reflections (Mills 1998) that were also in keeping with the autoethnographic approach deployed. Moreover, as Brewis & Bell (2020: 534) note:

> In everyday language, a provocation is a form of action or speech that, often intentionally, gives rise to strong emotional reactions – usually negative or unwelcome ones, in particular, anger… By opening up spaces in academic journals to provoke – emotions, thoughts and ideas – we are also speaking to the importance of being moved by what we write and read.

Thus, in line with the wider emotional framing within this paper, Brewis and Bell are arguing that the 'provocation' has an important role to play in academia because:

> Being moved emotionally forms an important basis for learning (Höpfl and Linstead 1997) and change, enabling us to be moved by thoughts and ideas, develop our thinking, pedagogical and organisational practices, as well as our ethical commitments and actions (534).

The lifeworlds of youth engaged in climate action

Provocation 1: Why does climate change concern us?

We began by exploring the motivations of the YAB, which we feel addresses the first four 'Ps' – namely Purpose, Positioning, Perspective, Place and how these enter into the YAB's lifeworlds, providing their contextual situations and how this, and their experiences, have shaped their views.

First, we detail the initial survey responses, with Huong saying:

> *I live in Vietnam, one of the countries suffering the most from climate change. Climate change affects the daily lives of our people and their livelihoods. As an Income Generation Officer working for a non-profit organization, my work is related to livelihood develop-*

> *ment for people in mountainous and rural areas. I am very interested in solutions to mitigate and respond to climate change, especially in agriculture, and sustainable production and consumption solutions to limit negative impacts in the future.*

Diep added:

> *Climate change concerns me because it is what is actually happening. We humans are a part of the ecosystem, whose activities are affected by climate change and vice versa. In recent years, there have been extreme events happening with higher frequency and intensity such as heatwaves, wildfires, flooding, and so on, that have never been recorded in modern history.*

Khang similarly noted extreme changes in their locality, stating: 'Climate change results in many of the extreme weather events.'

This was an account shared by Mae:

> *The Indigenous identity is inextricable from the natural world. As a part-Kenyah by ethnicity, my own childhood growing up next to the Baram River in Sarawak, Malaysia was shaped by the belief that life begins and ends in water; that our ancestral connections lie with the river. Today, through my work with Orang Asli communities in Peninsular Malaysia, I witness first-hand the devastating implications that climate change has on native sacred lands.*

Dinh-Long added:

> *I'm lucky enough not to be too exposed to climate change personally. But all the climate news, natural disasters (especially those happening in France or Vietnam) always make me very sad and angry.*

As well as observing what is already happening, a key concern expressed in the survey was the trajectory of change because of the climate crisis. Youth also shared concerns surrounding the scale of widespread inaction and how societies were inadequately addressing the climate crisis. In this regard Amy stated:

> *Climate change concerns me for a few reasons, but mainly because of how huge an issue it is, in both its causes and its effects. This includes seeing the intersectionality of different environmental issues with climate change and what needs to be done to address each, and also seeing the scale of the devastation that could occur if we don't do enough to further prevent climate change.*

Sam followed this theme, adding:

> *It disrupts my peace of mind to know that the climate is becoming more dangerous to humans and is contributing to population declines and extinctions of other species… Robin Wall Kimmerer's way of saying that eco-anxiety is linked to knowing that the Earth is not loving us is something that resonates with me – we are steadily losing the Indigenous reciprocity between humans and the Earth that has helped to maintain a*

> *hospitable climate for life to flourish. I'm appalled at the human greed and selfishness that drives continued climate breakdown and inaction to address it, and the lies and conspiracy theories that are spreading despite the urgency of the crisis – powerful interests are trying so hard to cling on to business-as-usual. Climate change also concerns me because of how huge and pervasive it seems, reinforcing a sense of individual powerlessness. I hate the sense that things are gradually getting worse – steadily, but too slowly for it to really kick humanity into action. I'm tired of living in an era of spiralling negative change. I want to return to the 'constant change', the reliable, regular, comforting change of the seasons.*

Esther broadened the discussion on the wider impacts on biodiversity:

> *As with many, if not most, other young people, climate change is a massive concern to me, not only as it poses a threat to my very future and the future of my whole generation, but also due to the immense threat that it creates for the whole planet and all of the many species that call it home. Climate change is not only life-threatening and devastating, but it is also largely avoidable if we act immediately.*

Following on from the survey data, we gathered with the YAB to analyse the data, focusing on the differences between the international and UK-based responses. Charlotte said that she has seen climate change events elsewhere but: 'it doesn't feel as though the UK have had it here as significantly as other places.'

However, she recognises that:

> *the warmer weather we have been getting is probably climate change. I have seen on TV big extreme weather events and how these are devastating to futures. The future generations, how is this going to affect the children?*

During the subsequent editing of the paper Dinh-Long, added to the conversation: 'I also feel the same way being in France. Now that I live in Asia, it is a bit different, but growing up until my 20s, I definitely had the same feeling.'

Sam agreed, suggesting that:

> *climate change impacts are not as strong here in the UK as in the rest of the world. But as a naturalist I notice that the seasons here are being disrupted and that worries me. On a personal level you feel guilty as you are not experiencing the impacts first-hand... there is less incentive to act… both from individuals and governments.*

In contrast with this perceived lack of action, Diep voiced how what she experiences has a huge impact on her life:

> *I feel responsible to help the farmers and to help with knowledge. That is why I chose my career to help develop communities. Developing countries tend to suffer more from climate change. They are much more vulnerable as they don't have the resources.*

Diep has chosen to study climate change as she has seen extreme climate events impact the Mekong Delta over recent years, explaining: 'Farmers suffer from weather

in Vietnam, and they don't know what they can do. There is not enough support or resources.'

Sam moved on to say that he felt: 'Not sure if it's guilt but more grief for what's going on around the world … the government in the UK has a massive responsibility that it is not living up to.' He concluded that, for him: 'influencing others to change their behavioural norms is one of the most powerful things to do.'

The above discourse highlights a strong and collective narrative of concern for environmental changes, both present and future, that are linked to climate change. These are positioned alongside clear concerns on the urgency for action to address these challenges. For those based in the UK, climate change is presently seen as something more at a distance from their everyday lives, albeit causing significant concern for what is to come, alongside empathy for others elsewhere facing the issues now.[2] Experiences of other YAB members around the world, notably Diep, Khang, Huong and Mae, speak to how climate change is already strongly impacting their communities, and therefore proximity to climate change appeared significant in understanding motivations and urgency.

Provocation 2: What steps have you taken towards climate action?

We moved on to explore what steps and actions the YAB members had already taken as individuals towards climate/environmental action, addressing Process, Purpose, Power, Positioning and Protection. Charlotte, who is relatively new to engaging with the climate crisis, told us that her actions so far had included 'joining the YAB board, going on a climate change course, discussing climate change in my children's wellbeing platform and with friends and family.'

Esther however has been engaged for much longer:

> *I have been a climate activist for around 4 years now, with my action spanning from small-scale projects in my local community to national projects attempting to make large and meaningful change. Much of this action has been communication-based, attempting to inspire and help other young people to raise their voices and start taking even just small action for the climate, but some has been hands-on, for example by tree-planting. Some of the work that I am most passionate and excited about is the work I do giving out grants to projects around the country as part of the Youth Advisory Board for the Green Influencers Scheme. This has allowed me to hear about, and be inspired by, many different projects being started all over the country by other like-minded young people desperate to make change.*

[2] Since writing the paper, the UK, along with much of Europe, has seen and widely experienced record heatwaves.

Like Esther, Amy also chose to engage others into action:

> *Along with my sister, I run an environmental charity called Kids Against Plastic, which we started when we were 10 and 12. Our charity is focused on education and action against plastic pollution. We run our Plastic Clever scheme to support different sectors to take action to reduce their use of single-use plastics, which has been adopted by over 1,300 schools, as well as by cafes, businesses, councils and festivals around the world. And we also have a Club of over 180 kids globally that we support with their own action against plastic pollution.*

Amy's action expanded from concerns over plastics to wider climate change communication, culminating in publishing a book titled *Be Climate Clever* in 2023.

Esther and Amy's actions have centred on beginning their own charities or initiatives, whereas Huong, Diep, Dinh-Long and Sam have chosen careers or studies that directly have an interaction with themes addressing the environment and/or climate change. Huong outlined how she had been:

> *Proposing initiatives and solutions to reduce environmental pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in agricultural production, such as raising earthworms to treat livestock waste, using organic fertilizers in farming, using renewable energy in production or using drip irrigation systems in cultivation to save water.*

Huong has also been involved in activities such as:

> *Organising training courses on good agricultural practices for farmers, proposing livelihood groups and working with cooperatives to pack products with environmentally friendly packaging such as leaves and paper bags.*

Mae drew upon the ways she communicates climate change around climate justice, especially for Indigenous people:

> *Storytelling is a cultural cornerstone of my Kenyah heritage, and I seek every opportunity to catalyse change through my voice. Whether I am presenting policy recommendations to the State Assembly, or leading climate justice workshops in Jakun and Temuan settlements, stories give meaning to the science I sometimes struggle to convey, allowing me to connect and find common ground. Film is another medium that I harness to capture and amplify Orang Asli narratives. Recording fieldwork with the Center for Orang Asli Concerns and volunteering for the Freedom Film Network's production of 'Klinik Ku Hutan' has allowed me to create visual stories that highlight the intersectionality of climate change and the need for more inclusive climate action approaches. Having represented Malaysia at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, the HKU International STEM Symposium, and other innovation exhibitions, I am also motivated to create social impact at the intersection of technology and the environment.*

Diep outlined how climate action has been central to her career choices, as well as some personal changes:

The biggest step I have taken so far is to engage in a career of a researcher in climate change and extreme event studies, considering the interactions between human and nature. I have also reduced red meat and milk in my diet to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from the food I consume. I also buy groceries locally.

Finally, Dinh-Long said:

I have joined many different climate trainings and workshops, I have designed several training courses on climate, oceans, biodiversity and trained hundreds of youth on these topics through my full-time work. I have also designed and implemented a few programs to support youth, in the long run, to understand climate change and take individual and collective action and to support them to scale up their actions.

He also highlighted changes to his lifestyle:

to make my lifestyle more sustainable – I am always cycling, consuming less stuff, trying to reduce meat, buying second-hand, and also host a podcast where I interview changemakers taking action for the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] – many of them on SDG13: Climate Action.

Sam further adds to the multiple ways in which people can take action, by discussing how his activism is linked to a range of online actions:

I'm subscribed to emails from lots of campaign organisations... Via these organisations I take actions such as signing petitions, emailing my MP/businesses/other organisations, contributing to Twitterstorms, sharing actions on social media and donating – especially to crowdfunded legal challenges. I've taken part in marches. I'm largely vegan, for environmental reasons, and don't drive – I tend to walk, cycle or take public transport – and fly extremely rarely. I'm a very conscious consumer, taking care that the products I buy have a minimal environmental impact (even if this means paying more). I also buy a lot second-hand from charity shops and don't tend to buy a lot of new 'stuff'. I've dedicated my academic and working career to overcoming crises such as the climate crisis, especially from the perspective of nature conservation and transforming economics and food systems.

During the workshop and analysing the survey answers, Diep, with agreement from others, articulated that these actions could be categorised as '…a personal or collective level and then on an activist or systemic level – like individual and then community.'

Dinh-Long highlighted that each level of action 'influences the other, and the 3 levels of action are needed.'

Towards the end of the discussion, the group concluded that they feel as though action would depend on the characteristic of the person. Sam voiced that he '… feel[s] more confident in workshops rather than public speaking. I'm inspired by public speakers but I do not feel I could do that.'

Diep noted that '….my actions are at a personal level and from within my career as I am introvert and do not like speaking on stage.'

Dinh-Long followed this up in later revisions of the paper, questioning whether Sam's form of action would work in every context *saying* 'while I admire Sam's action to reach out to his MP, I wonder to what extent this is possible in other contexts, like in Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.'

Esther felt that her:

> *… momentum and activism increased due to networks and meeting more people involved through the pandemic. I feel as I get older I am becoming an influencer for others to activism by helping other young people to find their route to taking action. When I was younger it was more about what I could do, such as planting trees."*

She feels her experiences help her do this and recognises that her age enables her communication with others. Reflecting on this, Sam acknowledged that 'my actions have changed by moving from the natural sciences to the social sciences. I think more about economics. The problems I deal with are all about people and more firmly in the social sciences now.'

Overall, the group concluded that long-term action on the climate is important to make a difference, but that people tend to have a fight or flight response to this. In collectively exploring actions already being taken, there is a sense that action is varied and includes the changes individuals make to their own lives, including lifestyles and consumption, individual 'activism' such as signing petitions and campaigning, all the way through to following career paths or making education-focused choices that address the climate change crisis and/or engaging with – and sometimes setting up – their own initiatives/charities focused on supporting others.

Provocation 3: What are your inspirations for action?

We moved on to explore inspirations, addressing who or what inspired, and in some cases supported, the YAB to take action. Here we cover the Ps Purpose, Power, Process and Positioning. Specific role-models to action were noted by several YAB members. Khang said 'Greta Thunberg, who is a young environmental activist, inspired me to take action to defend our environment.'

Amy added:

> *The main inspirations for me and my sister were Melati and Isabel Wijsen – we watched their TEDx talk when we were just starting our campaign, and were so motivated by the difference they achieved as young girls of similar ages when they began.*

Sam extended his reflections beyond specific people, drawing upon his emotional responses:

> *The urgency of the crises we're facing, and anger at the lack of political action, inspires my action. My love of the natural world, and people such as George Monbiot, who fearlessly address issues that no-one else seems brave enough to talk about, also inspire me.*

Huong added a different flavour in her response – flagging the local community she works with as inspirational saying 'people around me who have good actions to the environment inspire me. Programs and communication campaigns to raise awareness about the environment and climate change are initiated by NGOs and youth organizations.'

This was similar to Mae, who was inspired by 'the leadership of the Indigenous communities that I work with, whose work I hope to continue and build upon. Even in the face of environmental destruction and development aggression, their determination to protect their lands and waters is fierce and unyielding.'

Charlotte felt her journey was inspired by 'becoming more aware of what was happening, not particularly a who, more just knowledge passed from other individuals.'

Esther articulated that:

> *"For me, there was no single lightbulb moment that made me decide to take action, but instead the accumulation of interest and concern as well as the momentum of what I had already started to do driving me forwards. I first started taking action simply because I wanted to make a petition and I was concerned with the number of single use plastic bottles being thrown away in my school so I thought I would combine the two. I suppose the inspiration for this worry about the plastic came from many sources – David Attenborough's Blue Planet Series, my parents' own interests and concerns for the environment and the news I was seeing around me about the planet to name a few. But I guess it was really by chance, and the incredible charity Action for Conservation who do so much work in helping young people to take action, that is why I am where I am, which is why I am so passionate that other young people should find the same opportunities and be helped to see how they can make change – 6 in 10 young people say that they are keen to help others and/or the environment; however, 35 per cent say that they don't know how to get involved and that they've never been asked.*

These experiences are echoed by Diep in a situated way. She said:

> *I do not have any specific role model to be inspired. The actions I take are from my observations. Back in time in Vietnam, I saw farmers suffer from droughts, floods, saline intrusion, etc. It made me want to be a researcher in the field of water and coastal management to support farmers and authorities in making decisions. The more I study and go abroad, the more I see that not only poor farmers in the Mekong Delta, but we humans all over the world are suffering from the climate crisis, even in developed countries like Germany or Australia. Also, from films and documentaries I watch on Netflix. That forces me to take personal actions to cope with climate change.*

Whereas for Dinh-Long, understanding the science and what could be done was a key motivation:

> *Understanding the problem automatically made me understand what possible solutions are. Then, meeting a lot of changemakers, discovering what they do, gave me a lot of inspiration. Calculating my personal carbon footprint helped a lot, especially putting it into perspective with the Paris Agreement, where the global average footprint needs to decrease to 2tCO2eq/person/year by 2050 to align with the 1.5°C target.*

In the workshops, we delved into the significance of people and events in shaping behaviours and inspiring action across the YAB. In response, Sam said that:

> *Some people are particularly inspiring… Seeing people being fearless to take action helps inspire people. Who else would be talking if George Monbiot wasn't? The danger is that we get complacent with these role models doing the heavy lifting, but equally, they're needed for motivation.*

In response, Esther commented that momentum and engaging others was important to these journeys:

> *There are not many routes for young people into activism. Once you've started taking action, momentum means you can carry on. The network grows. So it's important to share opportunities with other young people, make sure it's not the same young people raising their voices again and again. It is better to broaden the conversation to others.*

These discussions allowed the group to talk about the facilitating factors that have contributed to their action. Esther highlighted that:

> *My parents have been supportive and inspiring, providing transport. Without them, I wouldn't be taking the action I am. That's why it's important to encourage other people to take action. Home environment is an important factor.*

However, for Charlotte, who is at a different stage in her journey compared to the others, said of her future that her 'intimate circle don't get it so I don't find as much support here. As a parent myself in the future, I would approach climate change more responsively.'

Esther added that 'once you connect with networks, then the networks become a stronger source of support. Over time this has changed the relationship with my parents and I am now finding my own opportunities without them.'

As we continued to explore the theme of family, Amy said her support was 'mainly my parents. They encouraged me and my sister to first start taking action as part of our charity, introducing us to environmental issues in the first place, and have helped and advised us along the way.'

The topic of creating a community, whether local groups, national groups accessible through social media or charitable groups, was a theme that drew resonance across the YAB. Sam mentioned 'community organisers and campaign organisations', Huong highlighted 'consultant NGOs, donors, local authorities and social media', whilst Khang chose to cite interactions with 'environment volunteers'.

Esther further detailed and highlighted her interactions, stating:

> *So many charities and organisations as well as individuals have helped me in taking action. As an ambassador for both Action for Conservation and the #IWill campaign, I have been exposed to and being offered so many opportunities that I otherwise could not have dreamed of finding and the help from these organisations has been extraordinary and life-changing.*

Diep highlighted the importance of financial support and the accompanying privilege, access to education and networks that have supported her journey:

> *There are a lot of funds that help me develop my career for climate actions, both nationally in Vietnam and internationally to support my Master's study in Europe. There are forums, conferences, seminars and webinars to share knowledge on climate change. There are youth communities that support in taking action together. And there are social media and internet access that enable me to find knowledge, to answer my questions and to access groups and communities for climate actions.*

Dinh-Long spoke at length about collective community-based interactions, highlighting how important these are in motivating and inspiring him, including 'a Climate Fresk Workshop, Movers Workshop on Climate Action and Movers Community and meeting like-minded people. Being surrounded with a community of like-minded people is inspiring.'

The YAB found this important in overcoming the negative emotions they sometimes experienced when tackling the climate crisis. Additionally, when exploring the comments in the workshops Esther added that 'social facilitators are vital for inspiration, but organisations can provide money/food etc. When we have money, we don't think about it as much because it's just 'there'. Which is perhaps why there's a focus on social facilitators in these responses.'

And Charlotte suggested that 'getting inspired by other people is helpful for facilitation. Sustainable products are also an important facilitation. Can I afford it and is it accessible in my area? I think once you've got people on board, once you've addressed the financial barrier, hopefully the intrinsic motivation connected with the project would become strongest.'

In summary, this provocation resulted in a range of responses, with inspiration being multi-layered and personal as well as collective experiences resonating with everyone. Many of the YAB members highlighted how opportunities and enablers

within their social environments assisted them in starting and continuing their climate journey. Community was a powerful tool, notably to work within and be valued by – an important theme in terms of maintaining activist momentum. The group began to hint at social capital as a facilitator, explored further in Provocation 5 and the Discussion.

Provocation 4: What spaces for action are available to you?

Here we explored the spaces the YAB have available to take action, mapping to Place, Power and Positioning. Many of the YAB felt as though online spaces were a good place for them to take action. Sam explains 'it feels like I've got a lot of spaces available to me, especially online. I know I'm able to contact my MP and that they will respond – even though their responses are often disappointing!

Extended networks also came up as an important space to take action. Charlotte detailed how she speaks about 'climate change and sustainability on my children's wellbeing platform, at my workplace and among my family and friends.'

This resonated with Diep, who shares details on climate action in her *'personal life, on social media and within my networks.'*

Khang's primary space for action is her university, whilst Dinh-Long's spaces are community-based: 'I belong to a Movers Community, and through my personal project (Life Line Podcast), through my social networks and through individual actions at home, I can take action.'

Mae found space within her local heritage and championed this within both community and political spaces. Like Mae, Esther and Amy have also created spaces to have their voices heard in wider organisations and through global networks, speaking to diverse audiences in a range of ways. Amy highlights how her action takes place in her 'own charity Kids Against Plastic, but also organisations such as the #IWill campaign, UNESCO Green Citizens, and advisory roles I have as part of businesses and organisations.'

Esther's spaces encompass, and are realised through, her role as:

> *an ambassador or board member for many national organisations as well as being a passionate and vocal figure in the local community. I believe that I occupy spaces where I can reach out to many other young people as well as having the support from these organisations to take action to the members and the young people who they reach out to.*

In the workshops, Sam highlighted that 'it is important to reach out to spaces that DON'T usually talk or engage with climate.'

Esther's comments resonated with this and she shared that:

> *…the spaces that I am currently taking action are important but are with a lot of like-minded people. For me taking action in school is different because it's a more diverse*

> *group. When you open up to make change in those spaces, you do make yourself vulnerable. It's nerve-racking but it's so vital to engage people who weren't previously in the conversation.*

Sam added 'I agree with Esther – be brave! The most powerful thing you can do is to change other people's norms – be relentless!' Charlotte then joined into the discussion to add her view that 'it is really brave that Esther takes action at school. Spaces that are more uncomfortable are more important to get the message out there'.

However, Charlotte added that 'online spaces are important to me – my wellbeing platform is online. I put some stuff on Facebook. The best spaces are those where other people get it. Like the YAB group.'

As well as focusing on space for action, we also explored how and where youth do not have the opportunities and space to take action and/or share their voice. Drawing upon their own personal experiences within their communities, we explored this further to address Power, Place, Perspective, Positioning and Protection. As relayed above, Charlotte has struggled with her support network when engaging with the climate crisis, reiterating that though she has a voice, she struggles to use it in what she considers to be the *right* way. Indeed, in Dinh-Long's case, he feels his voice is strongest within his chosen community where he says he:

> *feels fortunate that my community lets me have a voice. Community is a broad word that can mean a lot. Movers Community: as a core member of the community, I contributed to building it, so most people in the community know me and I've also been in charge of developing the climate curricula for the community. So people use it – even without knowing me, they would use the curriculum to learn more and mobilise their community! My friends: they usually know the work that I'm doing, and that I've been doing this forever so it gives me some credibility. I also have a prestigious degree which maybe gives me some more credibility.*

As Dinh-Long articulates, community is a multidimensional word, with these youth being a part of many communities, both those they are almost automatically enrolled into (i.e. family, place they live, cultural heritage) and those they forge themselves (i.e. friends, online places, professional/environmental networks). Esther reflects on her self-sought community, what she called her 'circle', revealing that her *'community has been so incredibly supportive in helping me to take action and have a voice. Though, I still think that it is a challenge to be seen by some, such as the local MP, in anything other than a tokenistic light.'*

Returning to her local community and those she works with to support directly, Huong reflects that trust has been gained over time: 'The community gives me the opportunity to share and listens to me because they trust me. And then when they find that what I suggest can help them in their production and their life, I help apply it.'

For Amy, she is leading within her community:

> *With it being our own charity, we're leading the young people we work with, so we have the loudest voice. So for us it's almost been a case of doing the opposite, and trying to support the kids we work with to start to find their voices from a young age. We were incredibly lucky to get the support from family and friends to start our own action, and now we're trying to do the same for other kids and share the platform we've built.*

Sam, who finds 'power' and 'purpose' using online spaces feels less confident in relation to his local community's allowance and acceptance of his voice: 'I would find it hard to speak out about this kind of thing in my community, but that may be just because of the kind of person I am rather than the community.'

This vulnerability and indeed life experience varies across the YAB. Diep reflects on her position: 'When I was in Vietnam working within communities, the voice of young females was less heard. We do not tend to lead when there are meetings in community.'

Charlotte agreed stating that 'It can be hard to speak out in some communities where I don't feel confident'.

Esther concluded that getting people to gain confidence in you, your message and actions, does not happen overnight and that 'it's about building yourself into the community. You need to prove that you're worth listening to! Once you have, you do have a voice. I now have an important role in having an opinion about town direction etc. but I am also providing opportunities for other young people and giving them a voice.'

The YAB members occupy a range of spaces for their engagement and activities. Interestingly some of the YAB have created their own spaces – both online and with new structures that engage others. Community was again a key theme that emerged from the discussion, with some societal barriers such as age, ethnicity and gender appearing. Confidence to speak in public spaces was not innate in many of these youth, and some took alternative actions to compensate for this, diverting away from traditional forms of activism. These themes feed into Provocation 5.

Provocation 5: What barriers have you faced when taking action?

Following on from the above, we explored questions around the various hurdles faced by the YAB in taking action, addressing Power, Place, Perspective, Positioning, Protection and Process. As previously illustrated, Diep sees many barriers in her community because of her gender and age:

> *I would say prejudices on female and young people are a barrier. I don't face any barriers in taking my personal actions, but on my career, I do feel it. Opinions of females are less valued, even more with a young female. When coming to community meetings, the voices of woman are less heard and appreciated.*

Indeed, being taken seriously causes Sam to worry:

> *Politicians are failing to take the demands of young people seriously. Fear of violence from people who've been fed so much disinformation by powerful people interested in maintaining the status quo. During the pandemic, there have been additional barriers from restrictions on large gatherings.*

Mae felt similar notions within her personal action and through many of her projects:

> *In Malaysia, existing environmental policies don't really prioritise multi-stakeholder coordination between the government, NGOs and the public. Public participation measures in development projects and natural resource management are not always implemented, excluding minority/vulnerable groups from decision-making processes. For instance, even though Indigenous peoples are the primary frontliners of the climate crisis, our communities are hardly ever consulted by environmental management bodies, decreasing our capacity to defend our stakes and contribute our traditional knowledge toward climate resilience strategies.*

Khang feels a lack of opportunity for youth engagement can act as a significant barrier that manifests in a range of ways: 'Small organizations do not always act as a big inspiration for youth in engagement. There is a lack of [re]sources like funding and members, but a clear strategy.'

Whereas Amy explains that time has been a big barrier for her: 'Primarily, lack of time. Until this last year – and from this September – all of my environmental action has been balanced alongside school, which has been limiting of how much I can do as part of our charity (frustratingly!).'

Esther suggests time has similarly been a barrier but also the lack of space for the youth to have a voice:

> *I suppose the main barriers and hurdles that I've faced in taking action is finding the time. Although my activism is really important to me, I do find it hard sometimes to ensure that I can balance it with my schoolwork and that I have enough time to do the work that I want to be doing. Another hurdle that I've had to face is the tokenism that much of society has when it comes to action that young people take and the lack of voice that is given to young people compared to other groups. However, I think that as young people we are changing this perspective, be it with famous individuals such as Greta Thunberg or collectives such as the Youth Strikes For Climate movement.'*

In a more general sense, for Charlotte and Huong, education, knowledge and the sheer scale of climate change were the biggest barriers to engagement. Charlotte stated: 'I have found a lot of people around me find that they do not have the energy or bandwidth to deal with climate change as they think it is too big of a topic to digest.'

Huong added that:

> *The awareness and interest of some classes of people on environmental issues and climate change are still limited. There are economic impacts and trade-offs with convenience. For example, the use of plastic bags brings more convenience in daily life, nylon bags are cheaper than paper bags. Living habits and production habits are not environmentally friendly.*

For Dinh-Long, the ways in which societies are set up make even his individual choices difficult to achieve and thus act as a significant barrier: 'Some habits that are difficult to reduce, such as eating meat, sometimes you HAVE to have some single-use plastics, convincing your friends to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles ... it is very difficult to stop flying as my family lives on another continent too.'

Towards the end of the discussion, Sam noted that 'Time is a theme arising here. I make my own time – however I recognise that I am at a different life stage to others on the YAB. Those at school face additional barriers.'

Sam moves on to say that:

> *It's easy in the UK to think that 'oh it must be such a struggle elsewhere' but when you look, some amazing things are actually happening. If the actions of others elsewhere were more visible we would see how far behind we are in the UK. There are other places doing amazing things. Government has a huge influence.*

Charlotte suggested that 'Interest seems to be a UK point of view; our older generation and our politicians are not so motivated. But in Vietnam for example there seems to be more of a whole-country action from what I have seen.'

Charlotte also referred to barriers more broadly and how action can sometimes be more difficult for some, noting that some members of society ' … need to focus on food, for example, if you are from a working-class background, you have less bandwidth for other things.'

Here, Sam added that he 'feels lucky' as he considers himself middle-class: 'Those in the working classes face different issues and immediate needs that take priority. This is the reason we campaign for key systematic change that currently acts as a barrier.'

On the subject of class and politics, Esther added that '… [we] can't necessarily have big policy change, but that we have to trust politicians and try to vote in sympathetic politicians'.

The YAB thus shared several barriers to their own personal action, with time being a common theme given other commitments, choices and trade-offs. Barriers to the actions led by others fed into interesting discussions, notably in terms of a lack of voice given to youth. The YAB also recognised challenges for individual action alongside a need for systemic changes.

Provocation 6: What are your hopes and fears for climate action?

Our final discussion point across the surveys and within the workshops focused on hopes and fears for the future of climate action, addressing Purpose, Perspective, Positioning, Process and Protection. Allowing this space to explore the future is especially important to explore the role of emotions and, as illustrated in the narratives thus far, there is genuine fear being experienced. Yet, as outlined below, hope and courage also shine through. On these themes Sam began by describing how he:

> *… fear[s] that we'll need to experience a number of acute catastrophes before there is strong political action to mitigate climate change – the pandemic and the Ukraine war seem to corroborate this notion that humanity needs crises before transforming … I feel grief and anger that we may have already passed some planetary thresholds that it may be impossible to come back from … I also fear that disinformation, right-wing populism and authoritarianism may hinder action on climate change, and that we'll end up with a kind of techno-optimist response that just creates new environmental and social problems.*

However, Sam feels 'hope in the rise of grassroots movements crying out for transformation, and that up-and-coming generations are increasingly sick of political inaction. It's got to be reflected in the results of democratic elections eventually.'

Charlotte built on this narrative stating: 'I hope at some point people do take notice and we can address the climate emergency with the abundance of support it needs. I fear this won't happen and it will affect future generations badly.'

Amy responded and built on these points, sharing that she remains optimistic:

> *I'm hoping that we see delivery of climate action promises by governments and business before 2030 that keep the 1.5 warming target in reach. This decade will be really telling of what our future planet and environment will look like, and whilst it's been encouraging to see plans and targets for reducing warming already, I'm worried that they're just words. Climate change is not a new issue, it's been around for decades and we've still done very little to prevent it in this time. It seems to be human nature to leave crises to the last minute before frantically dealing with them, and whilst we've managed to just pull it off so far, this approach will clearly not work with climate action. So, I'm trying to remain realistically optimistic of a cleaner future for the time being, and work for delivery of the action needed to reach it.*

Esther, however, was a little more cautious in terms of optimism for climate action although still felt hope, saying:

> *Who knows. Currently it is hard to feel optimistic, especially with the government particularly in this country [the UK] as well as in many others making little long-lasting*

> *and impactful change or even aims to prevent the climate catastrophe we face. However, we must feel hopeful otherwise why are we taking action? There is time to curb the crisis and I believe that with so many people across the world working hard to make change we can stop the climate crisis in its tracks if we work together with the common goal of saving this planet and protecting the futures of my generation.*

Diep added that:

> *"With the sustainable goals set by UN and other international conventions, countries are working to achieve it. Even though I think it's not easy to revert the climate and the ecosystem, I do hope we humans could be more responsible for our actions and could improve the situation. However, I suppose that developing and low-income countries will be the ones whose suffer most from climate change and biodiversity loss. It is because most of them are agricultural countries, that depend mostly on climate and natural resources. Additionally, they don't have that much technological and financial capability to cope with climate change.*

Dinh-Long added points on a similar theme, highlighting that he is:

> *surrounded by young changemakers working hard to make the world a better place – at individual, collective and systemic levels – so I'm very hopeful. While designing all the trainings related to climate, analysing the different net zero pledges from corporates or countries, looking at different greenwashing cases, it does make me scared, but I'm not losing my optimism.*

Such hope fuelled by youth was shared by Mae, who said:

> *"I hope that the broadening youth participation in climate policy processes will allow youth to hold public and private authorities liable through inclusive participation in policy formulation, which is essential to address different legitimate needs, reduce risks of policy failure, and open ways for transformational strategies and game-changing partnerships. I am also hopeful that this type of youth empowerment will promote greater international collaboration and harness the whole-of-society approach to scale up climate action.*

Huong, in sharing a vision of the future, suggested that 'Cities will have more trees. People travel by public transport using clean energy. Large green forests [where] animals roam. Humans can live in a safe environment, without serious environmental disasters.'

Diep also shared that she feels that 'Hope and fears can go together… [and] … when we see action, we feel more hope. When we see disasters we feel more fear, but this can motivate us to take action. So they're closely related.'

Building on this, Sam explains how his viewpoint '… shifts in response to political and environmental change. It's hard to think of a time before the climate crisis, and I feel as though this has defined me as a character. I see myself as being positive, but I can get into the cycle of negativity'.

Charlotte concluded the discussion with: '… hopes are there because we know what we need to do – we just need to do it. It seems to be that the more you know, the more you fear. You almost need the fear and worry to drive action … the world will literally need to be on fire for people to wake up!'

This provocation invoked a range of engaged input across the YAB. The YAB thoughtfully discussed the complex relationships between hopes and fears related to climate change and climate action, concluding that emotion is important for determining and shaping action both for themselves, but also within the groups they interact and interface with.

Discussion

The thematic workshops and discussions detailed above allowed a range of emotions and perceptions to surface. There are similarities shared across the discussions between the YAB members, notably in terms of their motivations of engagement towards the action they were taking. However, a range of differences were also expressed in the details of their individual journeys, which seemingly resulted in different emotions concerned with their fears and hopes. Based on Cahill & Dadvand's (2018) model, and taking inspiration from Thew *et al.* (2022), we structure our discussion around the modified P7 model, which allows identification and exploration of intersecting factors that shape the YAB narratives. In a similar approach to Thew *et al*., the analytical model and framework we adopt herein allows us to explore the broader context in terms of Power and Place and how these intersect and interact with the engagement structures these Ps create, especially regarding Purpose, Positioning, Perspectives and Protection (Thew *et al.* 2022). Considering each of the Ps below allows us to examine the factors shaping the YAB's views, which provides a useful analytical lens. We therefore discuss the themes from the workshop and discussions, drawing from theory and prior work to explore wider implications. Finally, it is important to re-emphasise that this paper is co-authored with the YAB, and their ideas to the interpretations as they emerged within and across this thematic discussion are embedded throughout.

Psychological Factors

The YAB discussed the role of emotions in terms of climate action and activism. Emotions were seen as important, with fear a motivational, but not a sustaining, part of action. Instead, the YAB saw hope and aspiration as key to positive actions that make a long-term difference. Thew *et al.* (2022: 17) suggest that framing psychological factors helps to 'illuminate the intersections between youth's participatory experiences

in formal processes and their daily lives'. With similarities to Thew *et al.* (2022) we believe we surfaced and thus identify the same dynamics in the YAB discussions. We found a range of intersecting fears and worries in relation to climate change, with discussions suggesting this was not only concern for their futures but concern for other people's futures too (Brügger *et al.* 2020; Kowasch *et al.* 2021; Ojala 2012). The workshop discussions however had significant elements of positive visions and hope embedded within the discourses. This is aligned with other recent work on youth climate activism, which has detailed hope as essential for sustainability of climate-related activism and advocacy (MacKay *et al.* 2020; Börner 2023).

Budziszewska & Głód (2021) also detail how projections and feelings of hope concerning climate action helped build self-confidence and empowerment in youth participants. These are not new concepts: Klar & Kasser (2009) discuss the psychological importance of participation, with activism being associated with higher psychological wellbeing, at least for conventional, as opposed to what they termed high-risk, activism. Moreover, Curhan *et al.* (2006) highlighted how the psychological outcomes of participation can be linked to people feeling positive about themselves, the overall process they are engaged with, and their relationships with other actors. This final point resonates with the workshop discussions, in which the importance of community was elevated.

Indeed, for sustained climate advocacy the YAB reiterated the importance of finding like-minded communities with whom they learn, take action and share similar feelings and emotions. This is similar to Mort *et al.* (2018) who, in working with flood-affected young people, found that a sense of collective action promoted wellbeing and agency. This appeared necessary because conversations also divulged the loneliness that can ensue from climate action. Thus, overcoming this relied on the key psychological motivation of action in a supportive and safe community. This is particularly important as climate action may also require drastic lifestyle changes which might not be compatible with the lifestyle of some of the YAB members' 'historical friends', family members, or existing communities, who had not always been supportive of the YAB members' journeys. Having a supportive community to retain a sense of hope and optimism is, in the words of Dinh-Long: 'so, so, sooo important in order not to feel alone versus the rest of the world.'

Purpose, Positioning and Power

The YAB discussions, which intersected the elements of Purpose, Positioning and Power, often related to climate narratives – that is, the stories surrounding climate change and what they meant for people. Climate narratives were returned to throughout the workshop, with several YAB Members referring to negative perception of

climate action portrayed as a threat to current lifestyles and that climate action means sacrifice. Indeed, Thaller *et al.* (2020) have discussed how perceptions of sacrifice are potent drivers of inaction in the general population. Moreover, Chung *et al.* (2019), found community acceptance of a need to act on biodiversity issues that in turn impacted pro-environmental behaviour, yet no such willingness for any kinds of sacrifice existed for addressing broader climate change mitigation. The YAB spoke eloquently about the need for a positive vision of a sustainable future, which could address these shortcomings (Nairn 2019; Thaller *et al.* 2020), making a strong link back to the psychological factor of hope.

Power was an implicit theme throughout the discussions, notably when discussing barriers to, spaces for and levels of action. A lack of power can prevent people and communities from taking climate action, with feelings of powerlessness consistently found to negatively influence conservation behaviours (Corner *et al.* 2015). Thaller *et al.* (2020) suggest perceptions of powerlessness, perhaps at times displayed by the YAB, can serve as an excuse for inaction. Such powerlessness can minimise the cognitive dissonance arising from climate-unfriendly behaviour and high levels of environmental awareness, which remains a key challenge in environmental policy (Kollmuss & Agyemann 2002). However, the YAB's feelings around power are not unfounded. Climate change is messy, commands the action of many people from all walks of life and is largely in the hands of politicians and large corporations. The YAB displayed clear awareness of this and articulated many of the obstacles they had faced as members of the public, youth and, for some, as females. Mae, in particular, highlighted the structural obstacles for Indigenous people. Having knowledge of where one lacks power may discourage action, although it appears that this was channelled positively by some, particularly those YAB members who decided to create their own spaces, both on and offline, forming charities, taking ownership and evolving their own view of action and power.

The YAB also demonstrated an awareness of the interface between social class and action. As noted by both Charlotte and Sam, there was a sense that focusing on climate change was easier for the middle classes because they did not face as many structural barriers within their everyday lives compared to the working classes. Here, they also acknowledged that the climate movement, particularly in richer, consumerist Global North countries like the UK, might be perceived by some to have a 'class problem'. Climate action may be seen as the terrain of the white middle-classes who are perceived to have the 'luxury' of being concerned about climate change because their lives are not otherwise precarious or immediately under threat (Willis 2020). This perception is not helped by consumer framing of the sustainability agenda, that can alienate and marginalise the lived experiences of working-class people, especially where middle-class social and cultural practices are championed (and marketed) as

those that will save the planet. However, the often-significant cost implication, as highlighted by Huong and Charlotte, as well as the forced necessity of 'sustainable' lifestyles of working-class people through lower incomes and more 'local' living, run the risk of fetishising poverty (Bell 2020). This is similar to the Global North/South divide, where low-income countries with high rates of poverty and reliance on agricultural or manufacturing practices for economic growth, are framed as high CO_2 emitters – even though many of these unsustainable practices are to meet the consumer demand of high-income countries (Prell & Sun 2015). This resonates with much of the work Mae is doing in Indigenous communities.

Gender also appeared to intersect the power that youth felt they had (and had realised by others). This was most clearly articulated by Diep, who suggested that being both young and female meant community members did not value her opinions, at the very least making her journey to purposeful action more complex, with numerous systematic societal barriers faced. Gender and power are inherently intertwined, with feminist literature making these connections abundantly clear (Kenny 2007; Okin 1989). In relation to climate change, there is a growing body of evidence that highlights women's muted voice in climate decision-making processes, despite the fact that women are some of the most impacted by climate change (Shahbaz *et al.* 2022; Sultana 2014). In Diep's experience, this marginalisation appears to be compounded by her age – and leaves her voice, and that of many female peers, excluded from decision-making processes. With her work taking place in Vietnam, a conservative, hierarchical and patriarchal society underpinned by Confucianism, these barriers are likely magnified compared to those in more liberal (yet still hierarchical and patriarchal) societies such as the UK where the other female respondents resided.

The social and political differences between countries extends beyond gender, however, and interacts with all citizens' available routes to influence and take action. Such action and the locale of power is critically dependent on the political environment and definition of activism within that context (e.g. Marquart-Pyatt 2012, 2018), with rights to protest being non-existent in some countries, for example. This was perhaps most strongly surfaced in Dinh-Long's response to Sam who said that writing to his local MP was a key action for him, to which Dinh-Long queried to what extent this was possible, and how much of a difference it would make in other countries with higher authoritarian control and negative views of activism.

Place, Perspectives and Protection

In discussing inspirations for their activism, the YAB drew upon both individuals and communities. Many highlighted the importance of role models, ranging from supportive family members to internationally known individuals at the forefront of the

environmental movement. There is a growing evidence base that highlights the correlation between parental and child pro-environmental behaviours, with many parents being the gatekeepers to knowledge and opportunities (Evans *et al.* 2018). This parental support appeared to be leveraged by many in the YAB, but others felt resistance within their social circles. For them, and indeed those that *did* have familial support, they drew upon environmental figures, and the devastating facts of climate change. Some of the YAB nodded to David Attenborough and the BBC's *Blue Planet II* series as highlighting many of these concerns to them (a finding consistent with others, e.g. Halstead *et al.* (2021); Hynes *et al.* (2021) – though admittedly the findings of Hynes *et al*. suggest the programme highlighted the issue, but did not necessarily transfer to behavioural change), whilst others pointed towards individual activist figures such as Greta Thunberg. Recent research into the role of individuals in social change has highlighted how exposure to Greta Thunberg predicts intentions and willingness to engage in collective action to address climate change (Sabherwal *et al.* 2021). However, expressions of anger in some climate activist approaches have resulted in some commentators describing the current period as a new "age of dissent". This framing comes with negative stereotypes, leading the public to view such activists as militant and eccentric (Bashir *et al.* 2013). Discussions with the YAB were measured, however, and the view of climate activists was positive, instead highlighting how they demonstrate possibilities and a new way of living, push back against the status quo and inspire. These figures are an important motivator in youth climate action.

In addition to particular individuals, some of the YAB highlighted how they took inspiration and found protection in the communities within which they interacted. As previously discussed, collective action is increasingly regarded as a vehicle for both social change, and for minimising the mental health impacts that the climate crisis is ensuing on many (Halstead *et al.* 2021; Jones *et al.* 2021). The fact that many of our YAB found inspiration in their social networks, using this to find hope and as a focus for continued engagement, is thus of little surprise to us. We therefore suggest that finding a safe place to execute activism, and a place to reap the benefits of collective agency, is a useful tool in continued and meaningful engagement. We continue the theme of place below.

Place, Process and Proximity

According to Massey (1994), 'place', and its conceptual partner 'space', might usefully be seen as a complex set of time-sensitive inter-relationships that involves both domination and subordination – yet again another theme unable to detach from power. In considering how place influences the experiences of YAB members, Massey's approach enables us to think about the ways in which YAB members felt able to legit-

imately act – or rather, where they felt 'safe' and comfortable engaging in action, as well as where they did not. For some members (e.g. Amy and Esther), the community in which they lived was the place and space that felt comfortable for action, whereas for others, such as Sam, online spaces offered an important arena. Often, subordination and domination are extremely nuanced. From birth, through adolescence and into adulthood, our social, cultural and political context shape our experiences as well as understandings of self and agency (Bandura 2000). This transfers over to how we view our opportunities for climate action. Hodkinson & Sparkes (1997) helpfully refer to this process for young people as their 'horizons for action', that is, what they can see (or their horizon) is always shaped by the position they are in (their experiences), thus shaping what options are available to them. These are invariably different for everyone. For instance, family and supportive networks were clearly important for supporting and enabling action (as picked up by Amy and Esther). Being able to partake in a group of like-minded people who care about the environment and climate change can act here as a supporting mechanism for action (Bouman *et al.* 2021). Nevertheless, whilst sometimes operating as a facilitator, a horizon or outlook can also be constrained by boundaries (physical, spatial, cultural, etc.). Valentine & Sadgrove (2013) refer to something similar when they discuss 'containing narratives'. For example, being a young person in a hierarchical society can contain and restrict opportunities for action, or gender might also act as a containing narrative (such as for Diep). Likewise, these can also operate invisibly by closing people off to others who are not like them, whereby people may remain stuck in silos or echo chambers.

Linked to this and within 'Place' we might also think of a sub-P – proximity, both spatially and temporally. McAdam (2017) for instance makes a strong argument that climate change often fails to mobilise people into action because they see it as something that happens in the future and/or far from a place that affects them. Scannell and Gifford (2013: 62) similarly highlight at least part of the problem lies in 'perceptions of psychological distance' with such distance existing in 'temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical (i.e. real vs. imaginary) dimensions'. These arguments are used to explain the (lack of) engagement with climate action, but we suggest that the *type* of climate action YAB members engaged in might also be shaped by the perceived proximity to tangible/physical manifestations of climate change.

For example, Diep and Mae have seen the impact of climate change on their local community, and thus focus on societal mitigation, adaptation, awareness and decision-making within these local communities. Conversely, many of those in the UK who understand that the biggest impacts are felt elsewhere, focus on raising awareness and personal mitigation to reduce their carbon footprints and create an overall more sustainable livelihood. Dinh-Long's positioning is interesting, with his work transcending education, personal actions, digital and face-to-face and NGO

adaptation and mitigation activities. Whilst Dinh-Long is currently residing in Cambodia, he expresses how news of climate impacts in Vietnam (a country with which he has a strong family heritage) and France (where he grew up but no longer resides) appear to evoke stronger feelings of sadness and anger than news elsewhere. Though explaining he has seen few climate impacts first-hand, his emotional attachments appear to extend beyond physical proximity and draws upon more emotional and social dimensions. This social dimension is also visible in Mae, who draws upon her Kenyah heritage as reason for working directly with Indigenous communities.

The conversations underpinning this paper took place before the record-breaking heatwaves and drought that have since occurred in the UK and much of mainland Europe from 2022. Particularly when compounded by the ongoing economic cost of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and subsequent soaring food and fuel prices, these more severe climate impacts are starting to be felt more acutely in many countries. How this interacts with youths' action requires ongoing investigation. Furthermore, this analysis does not intend to suggest that one action is more important than another, more that in tackling climate issues close in temporal, spatial, social and hypothetical proximity to the individual or community, negative emotional responses (i.e. psychological factors) such as fear and hopelessness, can be turned around to those that are more positive and associated with positive action, providing a sense of hope and agency.

Conclusions

This paper utilised an innovative method of CAE between academic researchers and youth from across the globe. In doing so, we have circumvented the researcher/researched imbalance, and created a robust paper to aid future work with youth either engaged in climate action, who wish to be engaged, or whom we as researchers and practitioners hope to engage. In framing this process within a P8 model made up of i) Purpose, ii) Positioning, iii) Perspective, iv) Power relations, v) Protection, vi) Place, vii) Process and viii) Psychological factors – informed by Cahill & Dadvand (2018) and Thew *et al.* (2022), such a method has offered several contributions to the knowledge base of youth climate action. These are two-fold: firstly, informing our understanding of youth motivations towards climate action within an emotional framework; and secondly, how CAE can itself be used as a tool to work with youth in exploring their lifeworlds to reach insightful conclusions.

Despite the wide social, cultural, geographical and political differences that this group of youth have experienced, there are common themes arising from their reflections. Each youth's action was somewhat driven by a sense of hope, even where this was multi-layered and embedded with fear for the future. This reinforces previous

findings by the academic authors that, indeed, such emotions are essential as we tackle the ongoing and future climate crisis. Further, finding one's 'place' was also key, be that within existing circles or looking further afield online and/or in other climate action-oriented spaces. These places fostered a sense of hope, one that offered both collective and individual agency. It also appeared that youth's place more generally in the world, that is, the physical space in which they reside, influenced the type of action they took, with actions linked to issues that appeared to pose the biggest threat to them and their communities, or that were within their influence. This reinforces the importance of proximity to climate change in taking action. However, we have built upon this to argue and suggest that proximity does not just influence whether or not someone takes climate action, but the type of action they take.

Several barriers to action were also highlighted, most often linked to the dimension of power (or lack thereof). The lack of power afforded to youth, and to women as was the case for some of our youth, appeared to influence both the actual action they could take, and their sense of agency. We believe this is somewhat manipulated by the socio-political conditions that surround the youth, with these narratives – particularly in relation to gender – being stronger within some countries than others.

Overall, these findings and underpinning discourse highlight a need to utilise emotions, from fear to hope, to leverage action. They also highlight the need for situated understandings of climate change, whereby the physical, temporal, social and hypothetical proximity of climate change is brought closer to individuals. Importantly however, in encouraging youth into climate action, the actions made available to them need to utilise this such that youth increase their agency and self-efficacy.

Working as collaborative auto-ethnographers was a powerful approach in highlighting a suite of relationships and perceptions. The process took time, iteration and periods of clarification and reflection that resulted in improved understanding from all parties involved. However, we all strongly believe in the method's power and would encourage others to build on these approaches and findings, particularly when working with youth whose lifeworlds and experiences will often remain beyond the remit and understanding of adult researchers and traditional, adult-led, non-collaborative research.

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