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Dr. Panu Pihkala (b. 1979, he/his) from the University of Helsinki is a leading expert in interdisciplinary eco-anxiety research. He has often written about education. Pihkala has published monographs in Finnish about eco-anxiety (2017) and ecological emotions (2019), and his articles in English are often cited by scholars from various disciplines. Among other positions of trust, Pihkala serves as a leading advisor for the Finnish national project on social and health sector responses to eco-anxiety (www.ymparistoahdistus.fi). He has been awarded several prizes in Finland for his public work around eco-anxiety, including several education awards.

When students protest: secondary and high schools

Edited by: Judith Bessant, Analia Meja Mesinas and Sarah Pickard; Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2021

Reviewer: Dr Monica Green (Federation University, Australia)

When Students Protest: Secondary and High Schools (Rowman & Littlefield publishers) is part of a trilogy that focuses on student political action via the act of protesting. As the editors — Judith Bessant, Analia Meja Mesinas and Sarah Pickard — note, the main aim of the three-volume set is to amplify the voice of young people and position them as key leaders of social and political action. A key intention of this book is to advance a new understanding of why students protest and how student action has been responded to by educational leaders, politicians, media and the general public more broadly. Despite the recent emergence of high school student protest action via the global climate action movement and in popular culture, this book is a cogent reminder of the extended history of student protests. Materializing more than a century ago when 3000 students from 13 Beijing colleges initiated a strike and subsequent reform movement throughout China in 1919, (see Chapter 1, p. 3), the reader is reminded about the long history of young people's protest actions. As this book argues however, such historical actions have been largely overlooked, both in popular imagination and by scholars. As the editors argue, the wider student protest movement has been substantially informed by a continuous wave of global political action by young people and students, most notably in the recent School Strikes for Climate, initiated and led by the Swedish student Greta Thunberg. Given young people's opinions and experiences have largely gone unnoticed, both editors and authors offer a critical reminder about (and immersion in) the impact of young people's active responses to social, political, economic and environmental issues on a global scale.

The book's explicit focus on young people and their capacity to insert themselves in diverse societal issues via the protest movement is both timely and insightful. Too young to vote and often frustrated by a sense of betrayal by their governmental leaders, student activism — as defined and

represented in the book — positions youth as outspoken action-oriented citizens who pursue opportunities to defend their future via collective processes and participation. Such a portrayal lies in stark contrast with the often taken for granted perception of who children and young people are: ‘adults in waiting’ with limited capability of ‘proper’ political thought and action. Countering such interpretations via diverse examples, this book provides impressive illustrations of how young people have come to express their global collective voice to demand action on climate justice, political freedom, gender, growing social inequality and civil rights, to name but a few. Herein lies a great strength of the book: the explicit disruption of taken for granted assumptions about students being too young to have opinions. On this note, the repositioning of young people as activists within and across each of the book’s chapters is both significant and refreshing. Notably, they are represented as leaders, thinkers, strategists, organisers and savvy democratic participants.

The stories embedded within each of the chapters are important: firstly, because they provide a previously uncaptured snapshot of historical and contemporary student activism; and secondly because they are a poignant reminder of how young people know they stand to bear the brunt of increasing catastrophes, poor political leadership, dysfunctional governments and misinformed decision-making. Considering these realities, it stands to reason why contemporary young people are pushing for generational change. As the book highlights, their activist momentum is informed by the overarching intention to centrally position themselves in democratic discourse, conversations and decision-making in the places where they live. To this end, *When Students Protest* effectively and powerfully draws the reader’s attention to young people’s hopes and visions for a better world. Such processes, as represented across the book’s 12 chapters, signify to the reader how youth are inspired and empowered to become active economic agents and stakeholders seeking to shape their own future. In acknowledging such endeavours, the book encourages the reader to engage with the ideas, stories, hopes and concerns youth hold about sustaining themselves, the planet and their communities.

As student activism continues to gain ground, it is refreshing to see a collation of academic writing that interrogates the meaning and implication of what student activism is, and how it is embodied and enacted in diverse locations: the broader take home message being that youth are and must be understood as central stakeholders in society’s unfolding events. As the editors bring to our attention, even in the COVID-19 pandemic years of 2020–2021/2022 (a time where communities throughout the world have been relegated to their homes and literally kept off the streets), young people have rallied in creative and unprecedented ways, utilising new, alternative and creative ideas and tools to create innovative platforms for political and environmental expression. Taking this ingenuity and political commitment to its fullest capacity, another of the book’s strengths is its focus not only on the importance of why students protest, but its description of the rich diversity of student politics across the world, as underscored by a nuanced portrayal of global student activism across countries such as Hongkong, Australia, China, Germany, Bangladesh, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and the USA.

While a book like this might not entice a cover-to-cover reading, teachers, academics and teacher educators alike will find pedagogical and historical inspiration from across all chapters, which in their unique way, interpret the momentum and impact of globally diverse student activism.

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