Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies
Revue interdisciplinaire des études canadiennes en France

88 | 2020
« Grâce à elle(s) ? » : le rôle des femmes dans la construction du Canada

Childhood, ecological feminism, and the environmental justice frame

Enfance, écologie féministe et le discours sur la justice environnementale

Bridget Stirling

Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/eccs/3632
DOI: 10.4000/eccs.3632
ISSN: 2429-4667

Publisher
Association française des études canadiennes (AFEC)

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 June 2020
Number of pages: 221-238
ISSN: 0153-1700

Electronic reference
Bridget Stirling, "Childhood, ecological feminism, and the environmental justice frame", *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies* [Online], 88 | 2020, Online since 01 June 2021, connection on 01 June 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/eccs/3632 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.3632

Childhood, ecological feminism, and the environmental justice frame

Bridget STIRLING, University of Alberta

Canadian feminism has focused mainly on children as vulnerable persons or as an aspect of maternal policy. I argue that, instead, Canadian ecological feminists must view children as distinct environmental citizens, furthering the interests and needs of both children and women as groups whose voices are often silenced in environmental justice discourses even as they disproportionately bear the weight of environmental harms.

Le féminisme canadien s'est concentré principalement sur les enfants en tant que personnes vulnérables ou en tant qu'aspect de la politique maternelle. Je soutiens qu'au lieu de cela, les féministes écologiques canadiennes doivent considérer les enfants comme des citoyens de l'environnement à part entière, favorisant ainsi les intérêts et les besoins des enfants et des femmes en tant que groupes dont la voix est souvent réduite au silence dans les discours sur la justice environnementale, alors même qu'ils souffrent de manière disproportionnée de l'impact des dommages environnementaux.

One of the central figures of environmental discourses is that of the child. This is not to say that children's voices are at the centre of environmental social movements; while children are frequent participants in environmental projects and tend to show a high degree of interest in questions of environmental protection, they are rarely the voices that lead the environmental debate. Rather, the child serves to stand in for the future; children become a form of symbolic replacement for future generations and a repository for the hopes and fears of adults. In this way, environmental discourses reinforce the not-yet-human status of children and childhood, reifying children's futurity while continuing to render children's personhood unintelligible.

While many environmental justice advocates have called for a forward-thinking interpretation of distributive justice that includes the interest of future citizens, I argue that to be truly democratic, environmental justice must consider temporality as more than simply the futurity of environmental decision making; to offer environmental justice, we must also consider Adam's (1996) call for temporal democracy, grounded in a relational, care-oriented understanding of what it means to live in connection with people and with nature.

Drawing on feminist scholarship on care-based ethics of relationality, I propose that we need to develop a temporally democratic model of environmental justice that includes the interests of children in their present and future lives as well as the interests of generations past and future.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is unevenly applied to children, who are often viewed as future citizens in need of protection rather than

as rights-bearing persons in the present. This reflects a tension in Canadian constructions of human rights between liberal rationality and care-based ethics, in which rights are a part of an equal citizenship bound up in interdependent relationships of need that structure society, one that can be understood through feminist political theories of care (TRONTO 2013; MCGILLIVRAY 2011; WALL 2008; HELD 2006). Complicating this tension is the unclear demarcation of adulthood in Canadian law and society, representing a structural model of childhood in which childhood is that state of non-subjectivity against which adulthood is defined, rather than a developmental stage (CASTANEDA, 2001). Children become symbolic spaces for adult values and adult hopes to be reproduced in a heteropatriarchal system; the constitution of childhood as a space within which adult desires are imposed over children's interests reflects the construction of childhood as futurity, rather than as lived present. As Wall (2019) highlights in his call to move from childhood studies to childism, patriarchy is rooted in the dominance of a figure who is not only male but also adult. This means that to adequately respond to patriarchal dominance, feminism must consider the role that adults' relationships to children play in structures of power.

Canadian feminism has focused mainly on children as vulnerable persons or as an aspect of maternal policy, reflecting Burman and Stacey's observation of both the gender-free and anti-feminist nature of northern childhood studies and the failures of northern feminisms in addressing questions of childhood and initiatives for children (2010). As Taylor (2019) underscores, feminist childhood studies offer an important space to think with the problems of the Anthropocene, opening avenues to counter the masculinist conceits of this era. I argue that Canadian ecological feminists must view children as distinct environmental citizens, furthering the interests and needs of both children and women as groups whose voices are often silenced in environmental justice discourses even as they disproportionately bear the weight of environmental harms. By disentangling children from women in our approach to ecological feminism, we make space for the advancement of the interests of both by seeing feminism and childism (WALL, 2019) as allied -isms that can respond to environmental concerns.

Background

Despite Canadians' self-perception as global environmental leaders, Canadian greenhouse gas emissions are among the highest the G20 nations, ranking only behind Australia in 2019 (CLIMATE TRANSPARENCY 2019). Although Canada's total emissions only constituted two percent of global emissions in 2019, the country's impact far exceeds its fair share of carbon pollution in an era of climate crisis. Canada also ranks among the last in progress

towards its Paris climate targets, despite bold claims of global climate leadership by Canadian politicians on the international stage. As Adkin (2016) notes, fossil fuel companies are deeply embedded within the Canadian – and in particular, Albertan – petrostate, shaping not only energy but also environmental policy and the narrative that Canadian oil and gas production is a positive aspect of Canada's climate response within a structure of "petrofied" climate policy that emerges primarily from Alberta, Canada's largest oil-producing province (ADKIN 2016) to shape national climate discourses.

However, despite Canada's inadequate action towards its Paris targets, deep tensions around the politics of energy and climate are central to the current Canadian political context. The politics of interprovincial pipeline projects have been at the centre of national political debates in recent years, in particular in disputes between the bitumen-producing provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan and potential receiving provinces of British Columbia and Quebec, who expressed environmental concerns over climate change and the impact of oil spills. Following on the federal government's decision in May 2018 to purchase the Trans Mountain Pipeline system and the accompanying expansion project for $4.5 billion, accompanied by court battles and new legislation that would affect energy project construction, pipeline politics in particular became central to the energy and climate discourse in Canada leading into the 2019 federal election.

These tensions played out oddly in the final electoral results, with approximately two-thirds of Canadian voters embracing parties whose platforms called for stronger climate action (the Liberals, New Democrats, and Greens) and two-thirds for those who wanted more pipelines built (the Liberals, again, and the Conservatives). This strange tension is reflective of a Canadian public that is deeply ambivalent about climate action, with a September 2019 Ipsos poll showing that while the majority of Canadians want climate action, only half of them are willing to spend any money to achieve it. The poll reflects a deeper conflict around the balance between environment and economy, one that forms the foundation of Canadians' general inaction on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lack of demand for meaningful policy action.

Amid this immobilization, a few groups stand out in their demands for climate action. Indigenous communities, for example, are one of the most substantial forces in opposition to pipeline development in British Columbia, where several First Nations are engaged in court cases to attempt to halt pipeline construction as well as in protests and blockades to stop construction on their lands. Local municipalities are also strong voices in opposition, alongside environmental activists and groups such as Greenpeace, Extinction Rebellion, and

Climate Justice organizations. The loudest group, however, may be those without substantial legal or political power: Canadian children.

As in many places around the world, the Fridays for the Future climate strikes have taken hold in Canada, building from a few thousand students in early 2019 to the massive international mobilizations on September 29 that saw millions take to the streets, including the Montreal march led by the teenage Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg that brought out more than half a million participants locally and tens of thousands out in other cities across Canada. Then, on October 18, 2019, Greta Thunberg led the march into the heart of Canadian climate and energy debate: Edmonton, Alberta, on the steps of the provincial legislature, surrounded by a crowd of as many as 10,000 people, most of them children or young adults.

In the face of inaction, Canadian children are acting to seize our attention. School strikes are not simply protests; they are symbolic withdrawal from the normal systems in which we expect children to participate. Much as when adult workers strike, students refuse participation to show resistance to a system that isn't responding to their demands. Much as disenfranchised groups have done for centuries in the face of structural power, children must find other mechanisms to be heard outside of legal and political avenues open to the adult world. In an era of intersectional feminism, it would seem inevitable for Canadian feminists to ally with Canadian children; however, the structural nature of childhood and feminism's own ambivalence towards entangling the lives of women and children too deeply may be at work in Canadian feminism's relative silence on the politics of childhood and climate justice.

Childhood as structure

As compared to the individual child, sociologies of childhood have begun to understand childhood not simply as a temporal or developmental state of the individual child, but rather as a type of structure. Qvortrup (2009, 645) notes that, contrary to the individual child, "[…] childhood as a structural form is defined in terms of economic, social, political, technological, cultural, and other parameters at the social level."

Feminist scholars of childhood have highlighted this understanding of childhood as a structure, rather than a life stage, which allows us to view childhood as socially produced, with childhood constructed as the other against which adulthood can be understood (CASTANEDA, 2001; BURMAN and STACEY, 2010). Rosenbury (2015, 10) notes that "Childhood is not simply a

social construction; it is the construction that makes the category of adult possible."

Kjorholt notes that childhood is increasingly constituted as a symbolic, targeted space in which values are reproduced:

> The symbolic value makes children vulnerable to being targets for policies and initiatives that support certain ideological values that are seen as important, more so than contributing to real empowerment and change of children's conditions of life. (KJORHOLT 2013, 249)

This symbolic aspect is emphasized in an atmosphere of increasing social, economic, and political change (KJORHOLT 2007), and, I argue, this includes environmental change and its associated political, social, and economic discourses and effects. The constitution of childhood as a space within which adult values are imposed over children's interests reflects the nature of childhood as understood as one of futurity, rather than of a lived present.

Theories of displacement and futurity

Qvortrup describes outcome or displacement theories of childhood as a way to begin to understand the shifting of children's wellbeing from the present to the future by viewing their interests only "in the light of their becoming" (2009, 639). This displacement enables the shifting of children's interests into their adult futures, rather than their childhood present, structuring childhood as a form of futurity and children as a form of human becoming, rather than human being. This becomes particularly problematic when childhood is framed as a site of investment: "[…] to the extent that children are made into objects of investments, they are gradually deprived of their subjectivity" (2009, 639). By shifting the interest of children from the present to the future, children's present citizenships become unintelligible through discourses that view childhood as a site of investment in the future, rather than as present citizens deserving of present care and concern.

Kraftl suggests that children are often figured in relation to futurity as the future of a utopian society, shaping

> […] the broader assumption that children somehow represent 'the future,' and that therefore our hopeful intentions for them should be geared in terms of a vague, medium-to-long-term, large-scale temporality and spatiality. Generationally, then, children represent a rather widespread hope that the next stage of social development might – usually in some unspecified way – be better than the last. (KRAFTL 2009, 76)

Hope is central to adult narratives about childhood, something that can be given to children by the (adult) world, and vice versa, often without explanation or justification (KRAFTL 2008). Kraftl emphasizes the futurity of hope as ascribed to childhood:

> Children and young people – whether babies or teenagers – have been represented for decades as the 'future' of society. Conversely, they have also been the locus of anxieties about the future of society (some kind of lost hope). (KRAFTL 2009, 75)

Jenks (2005) describes this construction of children's futurity as intimately tied to modernity. However, in late modernity, this has become a kind of nostalgic futurity that connects childhood with a hoped-for future that returns to a more innocent time. Jenks relates the construction of the child within late modernity to Beck's risk society, noting that this is critical in understanding how adults now understand and relate to children as a form of nostalgic vision of the child as a meta-narrative of society itself. In the late modern, children have become the guardians of our future, rather than those whose futures require guarding.

Research on childhood and environmentalism tends to reinforce the view of children's environmental education as being primarily oriented towards the development of environmental knowledge and concern in adults, grounding children's relationship with the environment once again in their futurity as human becomings. Dillon, Kelsey, and Duque-Aristizabal criticize this approach to environmental education:

> This model, though acknowledging a variety of influences on the development of children and adults, hints at a technical rationality view of education: a view which would advocate children being exposed to particular sets of experiences and given certain knowledge which lead to positive attitudes as a means of their developing into an environmentally sensitive and active citizenry. (DILLON, KELSEY, and DUQUE-ARISTIZABAL 1999, 396)

Gurevitz (2000) notes that the tendency to examine the impact of environmental experiences in childhood through the memories of adults should be viewed critically as they are inevitably influenced by social constructions of children and nature. This tendency for adult recollections to be coloured by social constructions of childhood transforms memory to nostalgia. This reflects Jenks' (2005) claim that, in late modernity, adult hopes for the futures of children are caught up in nostalgia as well as futurity.

Taylor connects adults' forward-looking nostalgia of childhood to the entanglement of our ideas of childhood with that of unspoiled nature, with its roots in Rousseau's interconnection of nature and childhood: "Loss, danger, purity, contamination, protection and recovery are all recurring tropes that are reiterated within and across the parallel discourses of wilderness and childhood innocence" (2000, 429). This, Taylor states, creates a form of mutually supporting essentialist assumptions about both nature and childhood.

Stephens (1994) also reflects this concern about essentialist and generalizing assumptions about children as more intimately connected to the natural world than other people, echoing criticisms of ecofeminist discourses that place women as uniquely connected to nature. Additionally, she cautions against assumptions that all children's experiences of the environment can be generalized, noting that the danger of seeing the world's children as "[…] generic, natural and innocent beings in generic natural environments is that we lose a sense of the specificity of children's lives in particular geopolitical locations and social contexts" (1994, 11). The consideration of social context, I believe, must also include consideration of the specific time in which children live, rather than a generalized, speculated future.

Futurity in environmental discourses

Adam notes that environmental politics in late modernity include a significant temporal element as environmental risk is distributed forward in time as well as across space:

> This global experiment, however, is temporally, spatially, and socially neither predictable to any degree of certainty nor controllable. Rather, the open-ended future is busily being constructed (and thereby foreclosed) with the conceptual and political tools of bygone centuries without a means to be held accountable to citizens outside the limited framework of terms of government, let alone future generations. (ADAM 1996, 327)

Sze and London (2008) observe that the principles of environmental justice have come to include a recognition of both the temporal and physical scale of environmental impacts alongside recognition of the complex histories and inequalities involved in environmental injustices, such as colonialism and imperialism. This reflects one of the key principles of environmental justice movements: that of distributive justice, or the idea that environmental benefits, harms, and resources should be equitably distributed across populations.

As noted by Benford (2005), environmental justice has shifted from only functioning as a collective action frame to also functioning as a master frame in

environmental discourses (while still maintaining its role as a collective action frame). This, Benford states, is an effect of the frame's flexibility and inclusivity, allowing it to be taken up by movement actors to fit multiple dimensions of environmental concern. This flexibility is in part related to environmental justice's foundation in social justice, rather than in ecological movements, and therefore its concern with both procedural and distributive justice. This both benefits and challenges the movement's ability to create meaningful change, but, Benford argues, the movement's potential lies in its ability to produce radical critiques of social systems.

One area in which environmental justice's radical critiques look to challenge is in the inequitable temporal distribution of environmental benefit and environmental harm. However, this interest in temporal distribution is often expressed in terms of equity for future generations of unborn citizens. This reflects the increasing connection between the discourses of environmental justice and sustainability:

> International calls for justice considerations to be incorporated into sustainability policies usually focus on intergenerational equity and on intragenerational equity between what have been traditionally referred to as the core, industrialized nations in the North, and the peripheral, developing nations in the South" (AGYEMAN, BULLARD, and EVANS 2002, 85).

This construction of intergenerational temporal distribution and intragenerational spatial distribution has become a core element of environmental justice discourses within what Agyeman and Evans (2004) refer to as just sustainability.

Some scholars of environmental justice and sustainability argue that this focus on future generations is essential to genuinely sustainable development. Vasconcellos Oliveira argues that sustainability discourses must distinguish between goals that support proximal future generations (defined as within three generations of the current adult cohort) and distant future generations, with a distributive justice approach emphasizing minimizing harm the most for those generations that are most distant, claiming that:

> it is not enough to promote equal sharing of eco-socio-economic resources and burdens, within the present and near-future generations to guarantee that future people enjoy desirable living conditions. Wellbeing equality among generations might compromise the necessary ecological balance,

> especially with growing demographics. (VASCONCELLOS OLIVIERA 2018, 9)

However, Nijaki (2015) highlights the challenges in balancing intergenerational and intragenerational equity in public decision making, noting that these interests may significantly conflict with each other in some circumstances. Gaba (1999) describes this tension as reflecting a moral relationship between the present and the future, stating that the key distinction is between:

> those actions that have irreversible consequences that will be experienced more than two generations in the future" and that actions with shorter term consequences "may be properly seen as raising the same concerns that apply to disputes among existing humans. (GABA 1999, 251-252)

Gaba's view suggests that the interests of proximal future generations might be considered as being essentially contemporaneous to present generations in considerations of environmental justice, allowing us a way to think through the problems of futurity as applied to children and the environment.

Environmental justice, decision making, and childhood

Kjorholt draws our attention to the need to consider the symbolic role of childhood in discourses about the livelihood and rights of children, noting that:

> the hegemonic character of global discourses on children's rights to participation, tied up with the increasingly symbolic character of children and childhood, makes it highly pertinent to include analysis of the ideology and moral values that these discourses represent. (KJORHOLT 2007, 40)

Similarly, Nolte-Odhiambo emphasizes that the sheltering effect of futurity acts to benefit childhood but not the lives of everyday children:

> Whereas the Child as a figure of futurity is sheltered from the present-day violence of class, race, gender, sexuality, capitalism, and neoliberalism, real children and their presents as well as futures do not enjoy this shelter, even as a symbolic war is waged presumably on their behalf and to protect their innocence. (NOLTE-ODHIAMBO 2016, 148)

Adultism (WALL 2019) functions as intersectional with the other forms of oppression experienced by children, erasing those aspects of children's lives as childhood is taken up to serve adult needs.

Children's lives are subsumed by the appropriation of childhood for adult purposes, while children themselves come after adults in decisions about their own lives. Qvortrup (2009) describes a form of temporal win/lose equation, in which children and adults may win/win, lose/win, win/lose, or lose/lose, and suggests that in the case of an environmental decision in which children win and adults lose, adult society will favour the response that benefits adults. This risks placing the interests of children second to the interests of adults and adulthood, leading to the neglect of children's interests and the instrumentalization of childhood in political discourses, including those around the environment. Children become a nodal point through which environmental discourses contest meaning, rather than persons with environmental interests and concerns of their own. Kjorholt describes nodal points as "'floating signifiers which other discourses' fight to cover with meaning," (2007, 37) placing children in marginal positions. Kraftl additionally notes that "[…] childhood remains an intentional point of articulation for poignant, powerful statements whose goals are to promote global values such as peace and tolerance." (2009, 83) Childhood, then, becomes a symbolic space in which adults inscribe their hopes for the future overtop of the present-day voices and needs of children.

I argue that this signification of childhood within environmental justice discourses is tied to themes of utopianism in environmental discourses of justice and sustainability. Harlow, Golub, and Allenby highlight these themes of utopianism in environmental discourses, noting that this reflects the contradictory goals often encapsulated within sustainable development discourse: "The ability to address social justice in concert with environmental conservation and regeneration while maintaining capitalist economic growth is a utopian vision built on the remnants of utopian past" (2013, 278). Similarly, childhood in policy-making is often tied into utopian ideals, as noted by Kraftl (2008; 2009). Kjorholt states that "Childhood is to an increasing degree constituted as a symbolic space representing particular moral values in an era of extensive economic, social, and political change" (2007, 39). Childhood becomes a space on which to inscribe the ideals of adult worlds, placing adults' hopes ahead of children's lives and needs.

Adult hope invested in childhood's potential may lead us to the dangerous condition of assuming that future generations will be able to solve the problems of the present, particularly in light of Qvortrup's (2009) assertion that in the case of a conflict between the interests of present-day adults and children's future interests, adult interests are likely to win. In this case, we risk the displacement not only of children's interests and potential into their futures, but also adults' environmental risk-taking, pinning our hopes on children as the problem-solvers for our present-day harms. This represents an unjust distribution

not only of environmental risk, benefit, and resources, but also of environmental responsibility and reclamation onto the lives of humans becoming.

Kraftl describes the immense inequality of placing present hopes on the future lives of children:

> […] pragmatic forms of hope are those that inflect attempts to identify – and sketch out a concrete program to change – contemporary social realities. Once again, such hopes have their place, and maybe instrumental sparks for much-needed social change. Yet to be pragmatic, generic-affective articulations of childhood-hope must again rely on future oriented, paternalistic, logical, and universalizing constructions of childhood. (KRAFTL 2008, 85)

To place all of our environmental hopes on children as future citizens allows us to continue to ignore children's role in the environmental present, continuing to relegate childhood to a space of becoming, rather than being, and denying children citizenship and voice despite the real and present effects of environmental injustices on their daily lives.

Towards a temporally democratic model of environmental justice

We are then left with the question: how do we begin to imagine an environmental justice that is both temporally democratic and sensitive to children as human beings, rather than human becomings? One possibility is to begin to consider children not as future citizens whose best interests are associated with their futurity as environmentally-conscious adults, but rather to include children in the circle of those we considered present and engaged stakeholders in environmental justice and sustainability.

Stephens proposes considering children as a type of special environmental interest group, asking:

> How might a focus on children's own experiences and understandings of these changes make possible new insights into the nature and significance of current transformations in global ecology and in biological and social reproduction? (STEPHENS (1994, 5)

Barratt Hacking, Barratt, and Scott (2007) note that children's concern about the environment is not only related to their environmental futures, but also their environmental present. The inclusion of children as a category of stakeholder is not an uncommon practice in current environmental discourse; however,

children's meaningful participation in these projects is not always clear. Kjorholt notes that in the case of children, especially those from the global South,

> children are often used as symbolic participants more than empowered actors enacting real influence, and […] participatory projects for young people might turn into 'prestige projects' serving as tokens for certain political decisions, rather than realising children's actual interests." (KJORHOLT 2007, 32)

Perry-Hazan (2016) notes that in interactions between policy makers and child participants in policy discussions, adult policy makers' responses to children were predominantly either fawning – consisting of excessive compliments, applauding, or praising children in ways children perceived as patronizing – or dismissive – responses that disregarded children's opinions, ridiculed, corrected, or admonished. Perry-Hazan and Nir (2016) additionally highlight the risks of framed participation, which only grants decision-making power to children within the constraints of adult-defined boundaries.

These constraints on the decision-making participation of children make it clear that a focus on child participation is not sufficient to ensure the democratic inclusion of children in environmental justice discourses; instead, I turn now to the idea of a temporally democratic model of environmental justice that considers children not only as voices, but as citizens with both present and future temporal interests within a model of distributive environmental justice, shaped by feminist political theories of care.

This reflects Adam's (1996) call to democratize time as a type of intergenerational and relational democracy. Adam's principles of temporal democracy require an attentiveness to the livelihoods, safety, and rights of non-voters past, present, and future, as well as the interests of those persons able to vote in the present. As Adam notes, this consideration is hinted at in discourses of sustainability and human rights, but the tension between past and future citizens continues to be troubled ground in environmental decision making.

This, Adam suggests, will require a relational approach to temporality: "Once we recognize our world as inextricably interconnected, and once we understand nature as an extension of self and cultural activity, such time-politics becomes rational and the temporalization of democracy desirable" (1996, 335). This relates to feminist discourses on care and relationality and the rights of children, which attempt to reinterpret childhood not as adulthood's other, but rather as a particular type of social position within a network of interdependence and relationship.

CHILDHOOD, ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAME

Wall (2008) notes that considering children's rights within a network of human relations and responsibility shifts from adult-centred rational individuality to a child-inclusive structure of relational interdependency. Feminist political theorist Tronto describes this model as *caring with*, noting that: "caring needs, and the way in which they are met need to be consistent with democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all" (2013, 23). To be truly democratic, Tronto's all must include children.

While Held (2006) moves care for children to the centre of the responsibilities of a caring society, Tronto moves children into the space of who can be conceived as an equal citizen with equal rights by thinking of equality as grounded in the idea of citizens as care receivers within a social structure of interdependence as the foundation for human equality.

Tronto notes that equal neediness does not mean that all people have the same needs, but rather, that we should understand equal citizenship as bound up in interdependent relationship of need that form a society. This reflects McGillivray's (2011) call to view rights as markers of relationship in resistance to models that ground rights only in adult rationality. Wall (2019) highlights how reconstructing interdependent social relations is vital to political expansion and creativity, shaping new ways to think about who is a political and social actor to include children.

This relational model allows for children to become political actors, and thus, to become meaningful participants in environmental politics. Bartos (2012) calls our attention to children's own caring practices towards the environment as a way of understanding an environmental politics of childhood, noting that children's practices of care illustrate their values, concerns, and political interests and can be considered in the ways that children maintain, continue, and repair their own worlds. The political and environmental concerns of children should not only be understood through what they say in adult spaces of political discourse, but also in children's lived relationships to the world around them in the present. This shifts the environmental experiences of childhood from being primarily about the way that environmental experience and education shapes children as future environmental actors into being about children's relationships to and concern for their environmental present. Canadian children's large-scale organizing and participation climate justice action, the leadership of Indigenous girls as water protectors, and the simple day-to-day practices of children in their homes and schools illustrate this form of care in action.

Taylor offers hope that in returning children to their present existences, we can also return ourselves into relationship with the natural world within a model of environmental justice:

> For if we can resist the nostalgic longing to recapture that Peter Pan in Neverland childhood, if we can refuse its seductive promise to absent all imperfections and impurities, we might be better able to focus on the rich tapestries of children's real lives as an abundance of heterogenous presences: human and more-than-human. Ironically, it would seem that such a move to re-presence might at the same time reintegrate that 'lost child' back into the imperfect, real and messy world of fascinating 'socionatures' that we all embody and coinhabit. (TAYLOR 2011, 431)

Taylor, then, offers us a way to move past the imagined connection of childhood and nature into the reality of children's present lives and a relationality that includes children, adults, and the natural world in the present.

Conclusion

The futurity of childhood has enabled us to disconnect children from the present by imagining them as living within a nostalgic, innocent, generalized future, displacing both children's interest in environmental protection and our hopes for resolutions to environmental risks into the future lives of children as adult citizens as well as into the lives of more distant, unborn generations. Childhood as the site of adults' utopian imaginings has distanced us from relationship with and responsibility toward children's present concerns and has allowed us to continue to view children as human becomings, rather than human beings who should be viewed as equal stakeholders in environmental decision making. By re-centering children not only as stakeholders, but also as equal participants in a form of temporalized environmental justice, we make room for children to speak and participate in an other-responsive interdependency that sees distributive justice principles as including temporal justice, not merely in imagining forward, but also in considering the ways in which the structure of childhood affects the temporal experiences of children in the present.

This leads to consideration of how environmental justice research might begin to consider children's own experiences of their futurity within environmental discourses and how mechanisms for children's voices might begin to offer more than symbolic inclusion for the interests of children, especially for very young children who may be viewed as belonging even less in the discursive spaces of adult decision-makers than the youth voices who currently manage to

make their way into the conference hall, often through vocal self-advocacy and pressure on international organizations to include them on the agenda.

Is there a way forward for the interests of the very young, not only as stakeholders in our environmental futures, but also as very real present-day citizens whose lives are affected every day by the effects of environmental injustices and who are also those who will have to live with those impacts long after those who currently get a voice will be gone?

Reallocating that power and privilege fits within the Canadian feminist project, if feminism is also able to confront the power that women hold over children in a heteropatriarchal system that places children at the bottom of the familial hierarchy. Women's lives and children's lives are entangled through biological and familial relationships, but to begin to view children as distinct environmental citizens offers a way to reimagine those relations as interdependent. It would also allow feminists to work in solidarity with the cause of children in resistance to environmental harms that place both women and children at the greatest risk.

References

ADAM, Barbara. 1996. "Beyond the present: Nature, technology, and the democratic ideal." *Time and Society* 5 (3): 319-338.

ADKIN, Laurie E. 2016. *First World Petro-politics: The Political Ecology and Governance of Alberta*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

AGYEMAN, Julian, Robert D. BULLARD and Bob EVANS. 2002. "Exploring the nexus: Bringing together sustainability, environmental justice, and equity." *Space and Polity* 6(1): 77-80. doi: 10.1080/13562570220137907

AGYEMAN, Julian and Bob EVANS. 2004. "'Just sustainability': The emerging discourse of environmental justice in Britain?" *The Geographical Journal* 170(2): 155-164.

BARRATT HACKING, Elisabeth, Robert BARRATT and William SCOTT. 2007. "Engaging children: Research issues around participation and environmental learning." *Environmental Education Research* 1 (4): 529-544.

BARTOS, Ann E. 2012. "Children caring for their worlds: The politics of care and childhood." *Political Geography* 31: 157-166.

BENFORD, Robert. 2005. “The half-life of the environmental justice frame: innovation, diffusion, and stagnation.” In *Power, justice, and the environment: A critical appraisal of the environmental justice movement*, edited by Pellow, D. N. and Brulle, R. J. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

BURMAN, Erica and Jackie STACEY. 2010. “The child and childhood in feminist theory.” *Feminist Theory* 11(3): 227-240.

CASTANEDA, Claudia. 2001. “The child as feminist figuration: toward a politics of privilege.” *Feminist Theory* 2(1): 29–53.

CLIMATE TRANSPARENCY. 2019. *Brown to Green: The G20 transition towards a net-zero emissions economy*. Climate Transparency, Berlin, Germany.

DILLON, Justin, Elin KELSEY and Ana Maria DUQUE-ARISTIZABAL. 1999. “Identity and culture: Theorising emergent environmentalism.” *Environmental Education Research* 5(4): 395-405.

GABA, Jeffrey M. 1999. “Environmental ethics and our moral relationship to future generations: Future rights and present virtue.” *Columbia Journal of Environmental Law* 24: 249-288.

GUREVITZ, Rachel. 2000. “Affective approaches to environmental education: Going beyond the imagined worlds of childhood?” *Ethics, Place and Environment,* 3(3): 253-268. doi: 10.1080/713665905

HARLOW, John, Aaron GOLUB and Braden ALLENBY. 2013. “A Review of Utopian Themes in Sustainable Development Discourse.” *Sustainable Development* 21(4): 270. https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1002/sd.522

HELD, Virginia. 2006. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

JENKS, Chris C. 2015. *Childhood*. London: Routledge.

KJORHOLT, Anne T. 2007. “Childhood as a symbolic space: Searching for authentic voices in the era of globalization.” *Children’s Geographies* 5(1-2): 29-42. doi: 10.1080/14733280601108148

KJORHOLT, Anne T. 2013. “Childhood as social investment, rights, and the valuing of education.” *Children and Society* 27: 245-257. doi: 10.1111/chso.12037

KRAFTL, Peter. 2008. "Young people, hope, and childhood-hope." *Space and Culture* 11(2): 81-92.

KRAFTL, Peter. 2009. "Utopia, childhood, and intention." *Journal for Cultural Research* 13(1): 69-88. doi: 10.1080/14797580802674860

MCGILLIVRAY, Anne. 2011. "Children's rights, paternal power and fiduciary duty: From Roman law to the Supreme Court of Canada." *International Journal of Children's Rights* 19: 21-54.

NIJAKI, Laurie K. 2015. "Justifying and juxtaposing environmental justice and sustainability: Towards an inter-generational and intra-generational analysis of environmental equity in public administration." *Public Administration Quarterly* 39(1): 85-116.

NOLTE-ODHIAMBO, Carmen. 2016. "Disidentifying with futurity: The unbecoming child and its discontents." In *An Inquiry into Childhood Belongings*, edited by Bohlmann, M. Lexington Books: Lanham, MD.

PERRY-HAZAN, Lotem. 2016. "Children's participation in national policymaking: "You're so adorable, adorable, adorable! I'm speechless: so much fun!"" *Children and Youth Services Review* 67: 105-113.

PERRY-HAZAN, Lotem, and Tal NIR. 2016. "The framed right to participate in municipal youth councils and its educational impact." *Children and Youth Services Review* 69: 174-183.

QVORTRUP, Jens. 2009. "Are children human beings or human becomings? A critical assessment of outcome thinking." *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali* 117(3/4): 631-653.

ROSENBURY, Laura. A. 2015. "A feminist perspective on children and law: From objectification to relational subjectivities." In *International Perspectives and Empirical Findings on Child Participation: From Social Exclusion to Child-Inclusive Policies*, edited by Gal, T. and Duramy. Oxford, Oford University Press.

STEPHENS, Sharon. 1994. "Children and environment: Local worlds and global connections." *Childhood* 2: 1-21.

SZE, Julie and Jonathan K. LONDON. 2008. "Environmental justice at the crossroads." *Sociology Compass* 2(4): 1331-1354. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00131.x

TAYLOR, Affrica. 2011. “Reconceptualizing the ‘nature’ of childhood.” *Childhood* 18(4): 420-433. doi: 10.1177/0907568211404951

TAYLOR, Affrica. 2019. “Countering the conceits of the Anthropos: scaling down and researching with minor players.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education:* 1-19. doi:10.1080/01596306.2019.1583822

TRONTO, Joan C. (2013). *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. New York: NYU Press.

VASCONCELLOS OLIVIERA, Rita. 2018. “Back to the Future: The Potential of Intergenerational Justice for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.” *Sustainability* 10(2):427. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020427

WALL, John. 2008. “Human Rights in Light of Childhood.” *International Journal of Children's Rights* 16: 523-543.

WALL, John. 2019. “From childhood studies to childism: reconstructing the scholarly and social imagination.” *Children's Geographies*. doi: 10.1080/14733285.2019.1668912