



# Climate strike or not? Intersectionality of age and culture encountered by young climate activists in Taiwan

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## Abstract

While the mainstream discourses of global climate strikes focus on the issue of generational justice, the experience in the context of East Asia has been under-researched. This study explores the local experience and interpretation of this movement among the young activists in Taiwan. The results show that climate strike is currently impossible in Taiwan. This study discusses this from the intersectionality of age and culture, namely, obsession with academic performance, low awareness of the right to strike, and parental intervention. It also highlights the strategies that young activists employ to reduce these barriers.

## Keywords

Climate strike, Fridays for Future, intersectionality, culture, age

## Introduction

The “Global Climate Strike” movement, or the “Fridays for Future (FFF)” ([Thunberg, 2019](#)), is not only a climate movement, but also a movement that fights for children’s rights and addresses generational conflicts. It has attracted 14 million participants worldwide, according to the *Fridays for Future* website. However, the movement has been confined mostly to Europe and the Americas, such as Sweden, Canada, the UK, Germany, Italy, Australia, USA, and Argentina, with only a few events happening in East

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Asia ([Fridays for Future, 2021](#)). Why does the distribution of this global movement vary greatly in different areas? Do East Asian children care less about the climate change, or do they encounter a more disadvantageous environment than European children? [Henrich et al. \(2010\)](#) pointed out that leading psychological journals worldwide are insufficient in global representativeness, as most of their papers focus on the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) societies, a phenomenon also applicable to climate activism research ([Bowman, 2020; Holmberg & Alvinius, 2020](#)).

This study addresses the structural challenges that young climate activists in East Asia encounter, as well as their response to and interpretation of global climate activism. The study takes into account different regional conditions, with the aim of broadening the literature on youth politics and intersectionality in the context of the non-Western world.

While children have demonstrated different kinds of political resistance, their actions have been largely left out in the mainstream literature on environmental and social issues ([Cele & Van der Burgt, 2015; Doyle and MacGregor, 2013; Kallio and Häkli, 2011; Karlsson, 2018; Lee and So, 1999; Mehta and Ouellet, 1995](#)). The existing child-related environmental studies have focused on their environmental education, knowledge, and attitude ([Christensen and Knezek, 2015; Karpudewan et al., 2015; Leppänen et al., 2012; Rousell and Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2020](#)). Some studies have looked into their environmentalism at home, which have also constrained our understanding of children to the private sphere ([Gentina and Muratore, 2012; Larsson et al., 2010](#)). There have been studies on young climate strikers' perspectives in the United Kingdom ([Bowman, 2020](#)), and some have looked into children's protests on climate change through the analysis of documents and social media ([Boulianee et al., 2020; Holmberg and Alvinius, 2020](#)).

While global climate strikes originated from Northern Europe as a progressive childhood-climate movement, highlighting children's power and rights, they encounter a higher blockade in East Asia, given the prevalence of an authoritarian style in parenting and the stress on children's academic performance ([Ang and Goh, 2006; Lan, 2019](#)) ([Ang and Goh, 2006; Lan, 2019](#)). In this study, an intersectional lens facilitates the discussion of multiple oppressions that hinders young activists' rights and agency in an East Asian context.

Kimberle [Crenshaw \(1989\)](#) coined the concept "intersectionality," featuring a multi-dimensional framework, in place of a single-axis one. With black women as her subjects, she argued that traditional notions of gender are based on the social standing of middle-class white women. Intersectionality takes into account subordination and discrimination to which black women are subjected, offering a lens to examine multiple disadvantages in social structures ([Havvind et al., 2015](#)). The discussion on intersectionality has extended from gender and race to other social categories, such as age, sexuality, nationality, religion, and class ([McQueeney and Girgenti-Malone, 2018; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006](#)). One under-researched intersectional disadvantage is culture. Cultural context has been identified as an aspect of intersectionality that affects children's struggles and vulnerabilities ([Nadan and Korbin, 2018](#)). Drawing from her experience working with African-Caribbean female immigrants, [Dixon \(2019\)](#) argued that cultural identity should be taken into account, in order to provide more culturally informed and socially just services in a pluralistic society. The concept of intersectionality has been proposed to

facilitate understanding of the complexity of cultural factors in child maltreatment from an ecological framework (Nadan et al., 2015).

In addition, the theoretical debates on intersectionality have shifted from identity classification to the analysis of social structure, which identifies how structural oppression and inequality are created and maintained to marginalize some social groups (Castán Broto and Neves Alves, 2018; Collins and Bilge, 2016). For the issues of environment and climate change, Malin and Ryder (2018) proposed a “deeply intersectional environmental justice” concept to highlight the cultural and contextual dimension of environmental injustice, in order to look for sustainable solutions through policy reformation.

When applying the concept of intersectionality to childhood studies, Alanen (2016) noted that we should pay more attention to the diverse intersectional oppressions and struggles in childhood, which are often neglected in existing studies. There have been intersectional studies on childhood, such as the intersectionality of identity and emotional experience among racial minority girls in high school (Haavind et al., 2015), and intersectionality of gender and disability in education (Nguyem and Mitchell, 2014). Yet, few studies have explored the experiences of youth in East Asia in the movement of global climate strikes, and the intersectional challenges they have encountered.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience with and interpretation of this movement among young climate activists in Taiwan, a very different context compared to Northern Europe where the global movement started. Young people in Taiwan face stronger social bondage, a more authoritarian parenting style, and higher expectations for academic performance from parents and society (Chua, 2011; Johnston and Chen, 2010; Lan, 2018; Pong et al., 2010; Waters, 2017). Hence, students in East Asia, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, spend longest hours in school, compared with other countries (Craw, 2018). After school, many Taiwanese students still continue their studies in cram classes (Chen and Lu, 2009; Liu, 2012; Yang, 1996). This study situates the climate strike movement in a society that puts stress on academic performance and diplomaism, discussing the structural challenges that young climate activists encountered from within an intersectional framework. The study further explores young activists’ political resistance to and negotiation of these challenges, as well as their perspectives on the notion of global climate strikes. It is hoped that these findings will enrich the literature on intersectionality regarding East Asian childhood.

## **The study**

The study conducted interviews with 15 young climate activists, including six initiators and nine participants of the FFF movement in Taiwan in 2019 (for details, refer to Table 1). Interviewees were junior- and senior-high students, plus one college student (ages 12–23). Six interviewees were novice activists, while others were veterans. Given their similar age, they were inspired by Greta Thunberg’s speeches and actions publicized in the media.

Interviewees were recruited from the field through snowball sampling, and the Facebook group “Fridays for Future Taiwan.” The study pinpointed the small sample, which included the majority of the FFF-movement student initiators in Taiwan, via

**Table 1.** Profile of participants in this study.

Name	Gender	Age	Role in the FFF movements
Lilian	Female	12	Participant
Mark	Male	13	Participant
Megan	Female	15	Participant
Yi-Yue	Female	16	Initiator
Sean	Male	16	Participant
Patty	Female	17	Participant
Diana	Female	17	Initiator
Ho-wey	Male	18	Participant
Bruce	Male	18	Participant
Peggy	Female	18	Initiator
Jessy	Female	18	Participant
Anne	Female	18	Initiator
Tim	Male	18	Initiator
Wayne	Male	18	Participant
Fey	Female	23	Initiator

checking information on the FFF website, local news, and contact with local environmental groups. The small scale of the movement's student initiators highlights the difficulties for students to organize climate actions in Taiwan. The study focuses on the disadvantageous situations that they faced in Taiwanese society, so adult organizers (teachers and NGO workers, and others) were excluded from the samples, except one university student who is a young adult. The study received ethical approval from the National Taiwan University and consent from participants and their guardians, when the former were minors. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and thematic analysis was employed to generate emergent themes from immersion reading (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### *Climate actions rather than climate strikes*

Four major climate strikes occurred in March, May, September, and November, 2019, globally. In response, several Taiwanese students undertook related activities, including soapbox speeches, singing, playing a video of Greta Thunberg's TED Talk, shouting slogans, and holding signs on schoolyards. Most of the interviewees took part in events either in March or in May. All activities in Taiwan, however, were presented as climate "action," rather than climate "strike." This paper discusses this phenomenon, and analyzes the obstacles by young activists in the following sections.

### **Teachers frowning on “strike”**

The most common challenge cited by young climate activists in this movement was a requirement by teachers to remove the word “strike” from all the printed materials. As all the climate actions took place on schoolyards, students had to abide by the instruction of teachers, resulting in the use of the title “climate action” or “Fridays for Future” for their initiative, and avoiding the term “strike.”

Yi-Yue (female, 16): When I presented the proposal to my teacher, explaining its origin from a school strike initiated by a Swedish girl, the teacher immediately asked me not to use the term “strike,” saying that it’s too sensitive. She also asked us not to use the word “strike” with other students during our activity.

Many initiators were senior-high seniors, for whom the initiative turned out to be a one-off event, due to their preoccupation with preparation for college entrance examinations.

Peggy (female, 18): The pressure of examinations is a big challenge, especially for us, senior-high seniors. At that time, I had to prepare for a mock exam in 2 days and another important exam in 50 days.

Peggy pointed out the intensity and stress of consecutive examinations in preparation for college entrance examinations in Taiwan, which is referred to as “examination hell,” a phenomenon plaguing most East Asian countries ([Lee and Larson, 2020](#); [Ono, 2007](#)). Taiwanese senior-high seniors have to take a litany of examinations in preparing for the college entrance examinations, exhausting their time and energy and making it virtually impossible for them to engage in climate actions. This demonstrates the disadvantageous situation that young activists who are under legal age encounter. Despite the fact that they have access to international information, Taiwanese high school students particularly face the intersectional challenge of age and the culture of diplomaism. As minors, they are not entitled to freely make decisions. In a society emphasizing academic performance, high school students are exhausted by the non-stop examinations, which help to prepare them to enter an excellent university. Hence, they have little time of their own.

Yet, the busy situation is similar for university students. Fey, a graduate student, noted that, given their heavy load for study, she was only willing to organize a soapbox event for students to express their voices on campus. Even though there were funding resources for student events, obtaining these resources involved time-consuming and tedious effort, according to Fey.

Fey (female, 23): The simplest way is a soapbox. Our idea was to make it as simple as possible, because I was writing my dissertation and preparing for an exam. When we planned it, we wanted it not to involve paperwork. Hence, the most difficult part is the budget, which is zero. Therefore, we need a low-cost and high-efficiency way.

In addition, the Taiwanese students were reluctant to take leave for attending climate events, as local schools expected full attendance in classes. Class attendance is taken into account when evaluating students' school performance, with awards given for full attendance. Students' "leave for public affairs" could be possible only if they get an invitation or a proof from external institutions. This school norm of full attendance, therefore, creates strong social control and a high expectation that students should always stay at school. Absence from class to attend climate events without permission is a punishable act, according to Sean (male, 16), a climate-action participant.

Sean: the education system in Taiwan is that you get a deduction in performance scores if you are absent from class.

Attendance evaluation becomes a means for teachers to have control over student behavior. Absence from class is often regarded as an act of disobedience by teachers, entailing adultism and discrimination against these young climate activists, regardless of the justification for their cause.

Peggy: If you do not go to school, you would be marked as absent no matter what. They (teachers) only follow the policy and think that a student going on strike is wrong because they are not doing what a student should do.

The heavy work load and the punishment of absence could explain why student activists in Taiwan have opted for climate actions on schoolyards, rather than staging a strike disrupting class attendance. As Taiwanese students are susceptible to blame for misbehavior, it is very difficult for them to engage in individual resistance. Therefore, many interviewees believe that young climate activists should resort to collective resistance, rather than acting individually. Dianna (female, 17) organized a climate event, featuring a parade and a short speech at lunchtime on campus. She expressed that it was very difficult to stage a student strike in Taiwan, which would be labeled as truancy.

Dianna: If we want a student strike in Taiwan, we need to recruit enough people to support it, then it can be called a student strike. Otherwise, it would be regarded as skipping class.

Moreover, Tim (male, 18) suggested that Confucianism has been deeply internalized as a social norm, and thus, people do not want to strike.

Tim: Many people are reluctant to strike, due to the discouragement of Confucianism, which is still quite influential in the society (...) I know other people may think the climate issue is a good thing, but they cannot overcome the barrier in their hearts.

In the same vein, Patty (female, 17) noted that she liked to take part in climate action on Fridays if it's time for elective courses, but was unwilling to do so at the expense of attendance of classes on major subjects, such as English.

Patty: I would not do it during classes on major subjects. If the event takes place during the English class, I won't do it. Even if I want to go, I still think I should go to the class.

These quotes show a culture of obsession with educational attainment in a society that underscores preoccupation of Taiwanese students with studying constraining their climate actions. It is in fact a common phenomenon among East Asian countries, which can be ascribed to Confucianism, disciplining people's moral standards, thoughts, and behaviors. [Foucault \(1977\)](#) remarked that Confucianism has fostered a self-governmentality in individuals' thoughts and behaviors. Hence, success in academic study remains a priority on the agendas of teachers, parents, and even children themselves, eclipsing extracurricular events. Strike is intrinsically in conflict with the longstanding quest for academic performance ([Baumann et al., 2019](#)).

### *Low awareness on the right to strike*

The impossibility of a student strike in Taiwan should also be considered from a historical and legal context. The history of social and environmental movements in Taiwan is short, with their inception dating back to 1987 when Taiwan ended its 40-year rule under martial law ([Ho, 2010, 2011; Hsiao, 1999](#)). Despite receptiveness to environmental movements among local people, environmental strikes never took place in Taiwan, due to restrictions, such as legal bans on strikes by teachers, civil servants, and employees in the military ([American Institute in Taiwan, 2020](#)). In addition, labor unions and movements have been quite weak in Taiwan ([Congiu, 2011; Minns and Tierney, 2003](#)). There have been only two major college student movements in the modern history of Taiwan, namely the Wild Lily Student Movement in 1990 and Sunflower Student Movement in 2014 ([Chen and Yen, 2017; Hsieh and Skelton, 2018](#)). The Anti-Black Box Curriculum Movement in 2015 was the first movement involving high school students, resulting in a student death by suicide ([Wang, 2017](#)). The youth-led global climate strikes have been embraced by youth in countries where strike is common, but the idea of strikes and student movements is alien to Taiwanese youth, and social acceptance of general strikes is very low, let alone a student strike.

Avoidance of strikes by young Taiwanese climate activists should not be considered as obeying submissively. Instead, it is actually a calculated move, taking into consideration the special local situation. Some students compared their situation to previous social movements they witnessed in their lifetime, and believe a high school student strike is more difficult and riskier. This prevalent ageism puts them in a more vulnerable situation.

Jessy (female, 18): Student strikes are a sensitive subject in Taiwan. Labor strikes are very rare in Taiwan. The number of labor strikes has increased in the past years. However, strikes always incur criticism in the news. Hence, striking is not a good option in Taiwan, in view of the public's unfavorable response.

Anne (female, 18): Student strikes have a negative image in the Taiwanese society, as many parents believe that students should focus on study, rather than wasting time on extracurricular events.

The phenomenon highlights a lack of civil-resistance awareness in Taiwan, in sharp contrast to Europe where the right to strike is a powerful form of civil resistance (Congiu, 2011; Minns and Tierney, 2003). In addition, these quotes highlight the ageism the youth encountered. The informants are aware of their vulnerability as youth and students in their society. They think their society does not have empathy for their young age; instead, students are easily criticized or blamed by the public. Social pressure and constraints tend to prevent Taiwanese youth from developing a *sense of entitlement*, a term employed by Annette Lareau (2011) for children from middle-class families in contrast to children from working-class or poor families. From an intersectionality perspective, it is very difficult for Taiwanese young people to feel entitled to strike, different from societies where strike is a common social event and children's rights prevail.

In addition, the idea of children's rights is still a rather new concept in Taiwan, as the Taiwanese government did not implement the UNCRC until 2014. In a society where children's rights are still an alien concept, the sense of children's entitlement to children's rights has yet to be developed among children.

### ***"The pressure from parents is really terrible"***

High school students pointed to parents as an obstacle in the path toward climate actions. For example, despite support from many students after posting news from Greta Thunberg on the student group's Facebook page and encouragement from an environmental worker, Dianna, a high school student, decided not to stage a climate strike, mainly due to pressure from her parents and others. Her parents demanded that she stop engaging in any activism, and concentrate on studying instead. In addition, she worried about the pressures and complaints from other parents.

Dianna: I posted the news of Greta and many people were asking whether there would be a strike. After consideration, I thought it was not right (to strike). We face heavy pressures from parents (...) I am fine with the pressure from teachers, but the pressure from parents is really terrible so I decided not to strike and replied with my plan (of campus activities).

High school students in Taiwan have very limited freedom, and endure high expectations of their academic performance from their parents. In addition, this pressure is not limited to the family. There is also collective pressure on students and schools. Peggy's experience is a typical case in Taiwan, as the principal and teachers changed their attitude toward climate actions under heavy parental pressure.

Peggy: Parents kept calling the school to express their concern about the reported strike (...) The principal was unhappy and faced enormous pressure, especially in view of the effect the

event would have on the school's reputation and interest. When you organize an event, people think you represent the school.

Students in Taiwan are subjected to collective expectations, which encourage them to behave as "good students," meaning those who study hard. In a collectivist society such as Taiwan, institutional control (e.g., family and school) on children's behaviors is strong, as individuals are regarded as representatives of institutions. Therefore, schools, alongside young climate activists, are subject to pressures from parents and society. Previous studies have shown that authoritarian parenting is often associated with high academic expectations for children among ethnic Chinese parents worldwide (Chua, 2011). Studies on different classes of parents in Taiwan have illustrated these parental anxieties and resulting different parenting styles (Lan, 2019). In Taiwan, college entrance examinations cause anxiety among many parents, reflecting their concern for children's academic performance. By contrast, European adolescents often enjoy parental support for their pro-environmental actions (Collado et al., 2019). Some interviewees in this study attributed their environmental awareness to family education in their early and middle childhood. Yet, their parents' primary concerns shift from environmental education to children's academic performance during their high school years. Hence, although, compared to younger students, high school students have more capacity to voice themselves, the Taiwanese climate activists demonstrate the intersectionality of age and culture. The culture of diplomaism makes the period of high school particularly challenging, as parents' high anxiety toward academic performance reduces parental support to environmental actions, and therefore, high school students' freedom to take part in any non-academic activity is very much restricted.

### *Strike is unsuitable to Taiwan*

While youth in other parts of the world support climate strikes, young Taiwanese climate activists have been reserved and skeptical towards the idea. All the interviewees in the study agreed that climate strikes are unsuitable to Taiwan and most admitted that they did not plan to stage a strike from the outset. Sean pointed out that, given the preoccupation with studying among parents, students, and the entire educational system, most students are indifferent to environmental issues.

Sean: What parents and students care most about is academic performance. As a result, environmental issues only take a back seat. We would not speak up or strike for the environment. This is a problem in the whole educational system.

Anne stated that her choice to avoid a strike was due to a number of reasons. First, the event would be held on campus. Second, there was conformance to the suggestion by the FFF website for young climate activists to organize events in a form comfortable to them, not necessarily a strike. Third, as a moderate person, she favored climate action to raise climate awareness, rather than a strike.

Anne: I am not against a strike, but I think this term is not suitable for an activity on campus. Also, a strike is likely to elicit opposition from parents.

From an intercultural perspective, Ho-wei (male, 18) indicated that originating from Europe, a climate strike is not suitable for East Asia. He compared Western culture with that of East Asia, where students face a very different context.

Ho-wei: It is very difficult for Taiwanese students to engage in a climate strike, given their heavy schoolwork and the unfavorable cultural atmosphere.

Ho-wei continued to express that the fact that Greta Thunberg drew more attention than scientists and NGOs in this field, despite the latter's effort for decades, surprised, and even confused, him. He ascribed the worldwide publicity for Greta Thunberg to her position as a white girl living in Sweden, which would have been impossible, had the movement been initiated by a girl in East Asia.

Ho-wei: I think Greta's publicity is related to her personality and background, being a white girl living in Sweden. Her voice has a large and fast impact. It's an outcome which is unlikely in the case of Taiwanese indigenous people.

His comments shed light on the intersectionality of social inequalities in activisms, which is very much related to the issue this paper aims to address. He highlights that, in addition to her courage and personality, her gender, nationality, and race shape a privileged position for her to have a voice and to be listened to. On the contrary, youth in different social categories (gender, race, geographical location, age, and class) may encounter disadvantaged situations.

For example, Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate accused the media of racism after finding her being cropped out of a photo taken with her white peers in a climate action ([The Guardian, 2020](#)). The intersectionality struggle can also be seen in the testimonies of climate activists in earlier stages, such as Severn Culis-Suzuki, a Canadian woman, and Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a Marshallese living in Hawaii. Severn Culis-Suzuki gave a famous speech on children's efforts in combating climate at the climate summit in 1992. Yet, Kathy endured more intersectional struggles, including racism and geographic location, when championing the cause of her country, the Marshall Islands, which faces an existential crisis due to climate change ([Jetnil-Kijiner, 2013](#)). Compared with children from white, middle-class families, children with different ethnic backgrounds, geographic locations, and cultures encounter multiple intersectional disadvantages, which should be addressed.

Moreover, Fey, a graduate student who organized a climate event and helped high school students in doing so, remarked that a strike risks diverting the focus of climate events, which aim to arouse public awareness of climate change, by incurring blame on students for negligence of their duty, which is to study. Fey stressed the importance of considering local conditions and local discourses in environmental movements.

Fey: In a strike, public attention in Taiwan would be on the controversial practice itself, rather than the environmental issue. No one would care about what you say or climate change. They

would focus solely on the strike, and blame students for not fulfilling their duty ... We cannot transplant the foreign practice directly to Taiwan. When we discuss environmental issues, we must take local conditions into consideration. It must be grounded.

Climate actions must be compatible with local conditions, making adjustments in form, language, and agenda, according to Peggy, who selected plastic pollution as the theme of the climate event she organized. She was aware that the issues of climate change, including the emission of greenhouse gasses, have not received adequate attention in Taiwan. Hence, she chose a topic that could connect better to people's daily lives.

Peggy: Different from Greta's focus on climate change, we appealed to the common concern about plastic pollution of the ocean among local people. Taiwanese people are not concerned with the amount of carbon emissions.

These remarks manifest young Taiwanese climate activists' attitudes towards climate strikes and how they transform a global climate movement into local actions, in order to fit local conditions.

### ***Implementation strategies***

Despite the disadvantageous conditions discussed above, young climate activists have embraced several strategies to organize climate events. The most common practice to skip the need for permission from school authorities is the holding of climate actions in the public areas of schoolyards or campuses, such as corridors, lobbies, sports fields, or areas in front of schools, in their free time, including morning self-study sessions, breaks, and lunchtime. Diana, for instance, held a climate action during lunchtime in a school lobby, giving short speeches, holding signs, and shouting slogans, without use of a microphone.

Diana: That is a space that everyone can use. I didn't bother to inform the school administration of the event, in order to avoid all the troublesome and inefficient paperwork.

Another activist, Tim, stood outside the school gate, giving short talks and holding signs as his classmates passed by entering the school. He did not inform the teacher in charge of student affairs until a short time before the event, leaving the teacher no time to object to the event.

Some activists make alliances with pro-environment teachers. While most activists avoided applications or informing teachers, Peggy, a vocational high school student, managed to win the support of the head of her department for her climate action. Peggy skillfully informed the head of her department, who is a pro-environmentalist, about her plan, skipping her class teacher, who is strict. She linked her plan with the environmental project that they had previously undertaken, and explained how this event can cultivate students' international perspectives, which is favored by teachers. Eventually she held the event during morning self-study sessions, introducing the global climate movement

inspired by Greta Thunberg, aiming to raise environmental awareness among her classmates. The event attracted over 100 students and teachers.

Similarly, Anne “packaged” her plan and consulted with a pro-environmental teacher who teaches Earth Science before finalizing her plan and sending it to the school administration for approval. The plan explains the origin of the climate movement, while keeping her plan distant from the notion of “strike.” The school administration gave the plan a green light, in addition to giving her a leave to prepare for the event, which attracted over 150 attendees. This event was the largest event documented in this study. These two examples show that making alliances with teachers at school seemed to be a valuable strategy for implementation.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The Fridays for Future Movement provides a rare opportunity in manifesting localized interpretations and implementations of a global youth movement. This paper looks into youth’s experience and interpretations of local climate actions in Taiwan, to reflect on the mainstream discourses of global climate strikes, and to understand why the climate strike is impossible for Taiwanese students. Comparing climate actions in Taiwan to the global climate strikes that have originated in Europe, this paper illustrates how the intersection of age and culture is salient in affecting young Taiwanese activists’ decisions and actions. First, ageism makes them vulnerable to criticism from adults. These young activists are aware of their disadvantaged situation, due to their young age, as well as their social role as students. Given their status as minor, parents and teachers have strong power over them. Second, high school age youth in Taiwan have particularly limited freedom to participate in any non-academic activities, which is intersected with Taiwanese culture.

The study identified three dimensions of cultural disadvantages, including obsession with academic performance, low awareness of the rights to strike, and parental intervention. This cultural intersectionality creates multiple barriers, erected together by teachers, parents, and media, preventing any attempt for young activists to freely participate in the climate movement. This cultural oppression can be manifested as tangible school regulations and laws, or as intangible social norms. The intersectionality of age and culture creates a challenging environment for young activists in Taiwan to respond to global climate “strikes.” Hence, they excluded holding strikes, and found ways to circumvent these obstacles when organizing climate events on campus to raise awareness.

The author finds that global movements need to be considered in their own context to understand intersectional struggles, while also highlighting the strategies young activists employ in the reduction of barriers. The study argues that the notion of climate strike, originating from Europe, may not be applicable to other regions, including Taiwan, where it is very difficult for young climate activists to stage a strike, due to social stigma, given its association with class skipping, misbehavior, and negligence of study. To mitigate these difficulties, young activists carefully consider the local context, and transform this global movement into local events that are more acceptable for the society and their own disadvantaged situations. Their approaches and objectives are adjusted. With campus activities, the primary goal is to arouse the public’s environmental awareness, which is

relatively low. Their target audiences are teachers and students, while in the global climate strikes, such as Greta Thunberg's strike outside the Swedish parliament and the street protests in many countries, all have aimed to pressure politicians to act upon climate problems.

This study echoes previous studies that identify cultural context as an aspect of intersectionality that affects children's struggles and vulnerabilities ([Nadan and Korbin, 2018](#); [Dixon, 2019](#), [Nadan et al., 2015](#)). The study developed the idea of cultural intersectionality, rather than race or nationality, for two reasons. First, the problem is not unique to Taiwan. Instead, it is a common phenomenon in East Asia, where children encounter similar intersectional disadvantages, compared to children living in other cultures. Hence, the problems cannot be reduced to race or nationality.

Second, previous intersectionality studies have focused on social identities, such as gender, class, sexuality, and nationality. This identity lens might shift our understandings to individuality, neglecting the structural oppressions embedded in the culture. Cultural aspects of intersectionality, which are more difficult to observe and record, tend to be overlooked, but they still suppress and control people's choices, opportunities, as well as *sense of entitlement* ([Lareau, 2011](#)).

Finally, I would like to highlight the young activists' agency in this action. From a superficial perspective, young climate activists in Taiwan are rather submissive, avoiding staging strikes, towing the line with school policies and social norms, and resorting to other climate actions instead. However, from a cultural perspective, the non-strike climate actions in Taiwan are in fact an act of agency that enables the implementation of climate events in this context, by critically reflecting upon the global movement and actively transforming it into feasible local actions by the youth. Feminist literature in Mexico manifests that docility and submission could be a means for local religious women to attain greater mastery over the self ([Molina, 2008](#)). The study also finds that the strategies local young activists have skillfully adapted have contributed to the reduction of barriers.

This paper focused on the discussion of intersectional issues in local climate actions in Taiwan, as a comparison to global climate strikes. Other intersectional issues such as gender, race, and class were not included in this paper. The class issue was not salient in this study, but good academic performance seemed to become a resource for students to negotiate with teachers and parents, which could be related to class indirectly, as well as the culture of diplomaism. In terms of gender, youth of both genders acted in this movement, yet, this paper also observed gender differences in their strategies. These issues could be further investigated in future studies.

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