

Fighting Back:
Youth and Climate Change Resistance
In Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

Young people's climate change protests in Aotearoa have been reported in the media but little is known about their personal experiences of resistance or the climate justice they seek. This study of a cohort of rangatahi engaged in a range of climate change resistance from environmental restoration to standing for political office addresses that gap in the research. Young climate activists are often portrayed as angry and bitter at older generations for failing to address climate change and bequeathing them a dangerous and uncertain future. This research finds however that these young people do not blame older generations for the climate crisis and have no time for intergenerational squabbles. They lay the blame squarely at the feet of the fossil fuel industry and its enablers and believe that the strength needed to fight the climate crisis comes from all generations collaborating to challenge the hegemony of the 'Big Oil' and big business dominated power structure that enables the despoiling of the environment and the exploitation of peoples. They seek structural reform to deliver equitable outcomes for all; climate justice for these rangatahi is social justice. This research argues that their voices should be prioritised in the policy debates and decisions that will determine the future they will have to endure but many of the policy makers will not.

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CHAPTER 1

“Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great.”

- Nelson Mandela

Introduction

Young people are afraid for their future. A growing number fear that the much-predicted catastrophic climate change is devastating the planet and shortening their lives (Daalder, 2019; Thomas, Cretney, & Hayward, 2019; Tucci, Mitchel, & Goddard, 2007). ‘Climate change’ is in the title of this thesis but it is clear that what the world is experiencing is a climate *crisis* that carries with it an existential threat to all life on Earth (Lenton et al., 2019). Responding to what they see as a lack of political will to address the climate crisis, young activists around the world have initiated social movements and become politically active to try and achieve reforms aimed at limiting climate change harm (Bilal, 2019). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the global School Strike 4 Climate movement, for example, inspired thousands of school children to join public demonstrations (Deguara, 2019; Thomas, Cretney & Hayward, 2019) and a growing number of rangatahi (young people) are standing for political office motivated by climate change agendas (Action Station, 2019; Cardwell, 2019; Swarbrick, 2019; Thomas & Handford, 2019).

Climate change & criminology

While these developments are documented in the media there is limited academic research into the motivations, actions and demands of rangatahi in Aotearoa resisting climate change. Through interviews with young New Zealanders engaged in climate change and environmental activism this thesis provides new insights into the just responses they seek. It examines how criminology can contribute to the consideration of rangatahi as victims seeking climate change justice in a deteriorating and increasingly precarious environment.

Their resistance is considered from a green criminological perspective and specifically the concept of intergenerational justice. In the context of climate change this justice lens applies the principle of intergenerational responsibility, whereby the present generation must ensure environmental equity for future generations (Weiss, 2008, as cited in White, 2015; White, 2015; White & Heckenberg, 2014). In recent years green criminology (GC) has moved criminological study beyond the narrow focus of the criminal law to a wider range of harms – actions or omissions that are harmful but not illegal - including everyday acts that contribute to climate change. This broader perspective of crime and justice views action that contributes to climate change as an injustice against future generations (Agnew, 2012; White & Heckenberg, 2014).

A leading criminologist warned that “climate change will become one of the major, if not *the* major, forces driving crime as the twenty-first century progresses” (Agnew, 2011, as cited in White & Heckenberg, 2014, p. 101, author’s emphasis). White and Heckenberg (2014) urge criminologists to give immediate attention to the impact of climate change on the social and ecological landscapes. As an existential threat to life on Earth, it is argued that the lack of action to curb climate warming is the greatest environmental crime of all (Kramer & Michalowski, 2012; White, 2011, 2012). Moreover, those with most to lose from the existential threat of climate change are today's young people and the generations that follow, who will inherit a world profoundly affected by climate change. Exploration of the specific challenges as perceived by rangatahi in the face of the looming environmental upheaval is therefore an important subject for study.

The ‘emperors’ fiddle while the world burns

The young anxiously watch the developing crisis in real time – the extreme weather events and increasingly urgent calls for global action (IFLAS, 2020, 2021a; IPCC, 2021a). But it was a full decade ago that Ban Ki-moon, then United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, called the economic growth model of rampant natural resource consumption that was causing the climate crisis a “global suicide pact” (United Nations, 2011, para. 3). In the 10 years since, and in the more than 50 years since scientists first sounded the alarm about the dangers of

global warming, the pace of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions causing the globe to heat up has accelerated rapidly (IFLAS, 2020; IPCC, 2021a, 2021b; Stoddard et al., 2021). Now the current UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called a “Code Red for humanity” (McGrath, 2021, para. 3) in response to the latest UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report (IPCC, 2021a). The IPCC, the pre-eminent world climate authority (Harvey, 2021), called for immediate and radical cuts to the GHG emissions causing global warming. However, even if such cuts are made it is now too late to prevent sea rise, possibly for millennia, and warming temperatures for decades. These ‘baked in’ changes mean mass migrations and retreats from coastal regions, worsening weather-related disasters, crop failures, famines and a litany of downstream impacts – and that is the best-case scenario (Donovan, 2021; IPCC, 2021a; Levin, Waskow & Gerholdt, 2021). Studies of historical changes in the Earth’s temperature show the consequences of greenhouse gas increases. The warmest period in the last 56 million years was an increase of 5-8 degrees Celsius caused by volcanic activity that resulted in disruptions to ocean currents, oceans acidified and starved of oxygen and mass extinctions. Scientists say that the warming that is occurring now is much faster than in that period (Barham, Hovikoski, & Fyhn, 2021). Global weather patterns are already being violently disrupted, and with recent and unprecedented fires and floods across Europe, North America and Asia, are among the consequences of a changed climate to date (King & Lichtenstein, 2021).

The IPCC (2021a) warned that nowhere on the planet is safe from these changes and here in Aotearoa is no exception. Here too the dangers are no longer distant in time or in place. Neighbouring Pacific islands are losing the battle against rising seas. In the devastating Australian bushfires of 2019-2020, ash from across the Tasman coated South Island glaciers and New Zealand sunsets glowed orange through the smoke haze. Our farmers are reporting seasonal changes never seen before, while the 2017 Christchurch Port Hills and 2019 Nelson fires (Brownlie, 2020; Christchurch City Council, n.d.) had provided us with a glimpse into our future. New Zealand may be faced with many thousands of refugees fleeing global conflicts brought on by droughts, famines and freshwater shortages, seeking a safe haven here (Renwick, 2020). Our manaakitanga would be tested at a time when we are struggling ourselves with crises on many fronts.

Although our relative remoteness and temperate climate zone will help us avoid some of the worst planetary climate change consequences we will battle more extreme weather events, crop failures, water crises and dislocation of communities due to sea level rise (Corlett, 2021; Meduna, 2015; Renwick, 2020). Today's young people, with limited ability to affect decisions about the future they face, will bear the brunt of the climate changes already underway and the consequences of policies and actions of today's political leadership. They have reason to be afraid, and even angry. Because of what they view as the destructive greed of big business and the failure of leadership to act on the known threats to their future wellbeing they face a future defined by increasing climate extremes that will impact every aspect of their lives (IPCC, 2021a; Thomas et al., 2019; Thomas & Handford, 2019; Thunberg, 2020). While Covid-19 lockdowns have curtailed some of their activities, and redirected anxieties elsewhere since 2020, many young people are becoming increasingly active in recent years as awareness of the climate crisis has grown. Their activism has increased in Aotearoa as it has across the globe. Signs brandished at School Strike 4 Climate protests in 2019 and 2020 demanded justice and directed blame at older generations along with business and governments:

"You'll die of old age – We'll die from climate change"

"Planet over profit"

"If you did your job we'd be at school".

The research

The rationale

While the protests of young climate change activists are documented in the media there is as yet limited academic research into the significance of young people's climate change resistance in Aotearoa. Nissen (2019c) explores her observation of a contemporary rise in student activism in Aotearoa in the context of a perception of generations of "apathetic or

politically disengaged” (Nissen, 2019c, p.9) students compared with the “radicals” (Nissen, 2019c, p.8) of previous generations. O'Brien, Selboe & Hayward, (2018) investigate how young people can effect change through various means of dissent; ‘dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous’ activism. That framework of dissent was also adopted by Meunier (2021) to examine the impact of youth climate activism in the US. However, there is limited understanding of young activists’ specific motivations, their experiences of activism, the actions they seek, their hopes or fears for their own futures in a climate changed world. Currie and Deschenes (2016, as cited in Hickman, 2020) argue the young should be at the centre of debates because they have a much greater stake in the future than their elders. In the context of the challenges that lie ahead for the young, their voices should be paramount in decisions around climate change policy and strategies.

O'Brien, Selboe & Hayward (2018) argue for more research in specific geographic and social contexts into different modes of activism and whether the young feel pressed to take over responsibility from adults for climate change action. “While many adults behave as children, protecting their toys and games as the climate continues to warm” (O'Brien, Selboe & Hayward, 2018, p. 42) many young people suffer from extreme anxiety about climate change (Hickman, 2020). de Froideville (personal communication, September 27, 2021), for example, reports that many young people now appear as either apathetic or nihilistic about the future and that some consider having babies as ‘selfish’. This research will go some way to addressing the gap in knowledge of young people’s climate change activism in Aotearoa and the implications for intergenerational justice. It will provide a greater understanding of the concerns of rangatahi and how those concerns could inform climate change policy decisions that will impact the many future challenges they will face. According to UN Secretary-General António Guterres no group is more effective at pushing leaders to change than young people, and that when the young march “the world follows” (Guterres, 2020, 0:40).

Research objective

The objective of this research is to explore the climate change activism of rangatahi in Aotearoa through an intergenerational justice lens and to understand what young people seek as a just response to their concerns and demands. The thesis draws upon the motivations, experiences and concerns of a cohort of young people engaged in a range of climate change and environmental¹ activism in Aotearoa. The research seeks answers to a range of fundamental questions relating to climate change and young people's response to it and covers five main areas:

1. Motivations – What are your main concerns about climate change or the main reasons that prompted you to become involved in climate change resistance?
2. Climate change resistance or activism – How are you responding to climate change issues? What actions are you taking? What barriers do you face?
3. Outcomes – What impact has climate change activism had? What outcomes are you seeking?
4. Intergenerational justice – What would be a just response to young people's climate change concerns?
5. Impact on your behaviour and wellbeing – How are you personally dealing with your climate change concerns?

The motivation for this research comes partly from a strong personal concern and anxiety around climate change and environmental issues in general. An Honours-level paper in GC where I, as a much older student, was exposed to the concerns of the young, was the inspiration to study the climate activism of young people. The subject would bring together two primary areas of interest; social justice and environmental harm, both of which are fundamental to this research. With the knowledge that climate change is an existential threat and that the young and future generations are most at risk, I sought a research topic that would highlight the challenges they face and enhance understanding of what they seek from older generations. The objective of the research is to investigate how young people in Aotearoa are responding to the challenges of climate change, what barriers they face in

¹ The concepts of climate change and environmental harm can be difficult to separate (Brisman & South, 2015; White & Heckenberg, 2014) and each is often both a cause and an effect of the other. The two concepts are often referred to interchangeably in the literature and by the young activists.

their resistance and what they want from older generations and those in leadership positions. The research will determine what intergenerational justice would look like for young climate activists in Aotearoa and draw attention to their demands for a just response to their concerns. Critically engaged research that explores the perceptions of those who will be most affected offers the opportunity to challenge orthodox thinking about crimes and harms. This research may therefore provide the opportunity to extend the concept of victimhood - that is currently tied to retrospective assessments of harm - in relation to the perceptions of future harm by young climate change activists in Aotearoa. The objective is also to deliver insights into intergenerational climate justice as a contribution to a new and developing body of research on climate change justice.

Thesis overview

By drawing on the concerns and experiences of young climate activists in Aotearoa this thesis aims to promote understanding of the particular challenges facing young people in this climate crisis. Rangatahi and future generations will have to live with the consequences of today's climate-related policy decisions so it is important that their views and priorities can influence those decisions. To facilitate this their concerns should be a focus of public and political debate. Criminologists have an important role in identifying and highlighting issues where the young and future generations may be seen as victims of climate-related injustices. The primary focus of this thesis therefore is to learn from the young climate resisters themselves and, through analysis of the interview data, to highlight the role criminology can play in the consideration of climate change justice for young people in Aotearoa.

This introductory chapter provides the context for this research and outlines the research objectives, identifying a gap in knowledge this research seeks to address. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature, presenting the accepted science on climate change and informed and scientific predictions of the significant challenges that young people and future generations are likely to face. It provides an historical framework for the participant interviews with a review of the growth in climate change activism and young people's

resistance. Chapter Three addresses the worldview that sits behind this research and that influenced both the theoretical approach and selection of methodology. It then introduces the theoretical framework for the research, exploring the development of green criminological thought and the concept of intergenerational justice, the conceptual underpinning of the research. Chapter Four discusses the methodology employed for the research and its challenges, setting the scene for the research findings to follow. Chapters Five and Six present the research findings in a series of broad themes that emerged following analysis of the interview data. That is followed by a discussion of what action and changes rangatahi want to see; what intergenerational justice would look like for young climate activists in Aotearoa. Finally Chapter Seven concludes this thesis with a summary of the findings and their contribution to contemporary criminology literature. In closing it makes recommendations for potential further research to advance the contribution of criminology to the critical issue of justice for young people in the climate change resistance space.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

“we have become powerful without becoming commensurately wise”

(Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot, 1994)

Introduction

It is beyond the scope of this research to revisit all the latest scientific evidence of climate change. It is accepted science that climate change is happening, it has been caused by human activity – largely GHG emissions from fossil fuels – and there is very little time left for the world to act to mitigate the worst potential outcomes (IFLAS, 2020, 2021a; IPCC 2021a, Stoddard et al., 2021). To address the issue of intergenerational climate justice for rangatahi in Aotearoa this chapter will start with exploring literature that addresses the potential consequences of climate change for young people. It will then review what is known about the growth of climate change activism and young people’s resistance and the response in the public discourse. It will then go on to investigate the forces identified behind the perpetuation of climate harm to understand who and what young people are battling to achieve climate justice, and the likely outcome of the failure of leadership to act to address the climate crisis. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key findings from the literature to place this research in the context of the challenges youth climate change resisters face from climate change and its consequences in their struggle for intergenerational climate justice.

An uncertain future

“We won’t die of old age, we’ll die from climate change”

(Sign held at a protest march, Taylor & Murray, 2020, para. 21)

The dominant narrative emerging from most sources is that the future is dire. According to the UN “Climate change is the greatest threat facing the world’s children and young people” (UNICEF, 2021, p. 2). For the first time in August 2021, UN agency UNICEF published a children’s climate risk index, essentially showing the chances for children in different parts of the world to survive climate change. The children of today and of the future are particularly at risk from the threats of climate change. Not only will they be living through the worsening crises but they are especially vulnerable to climate hazards. UNICEF executive

director Henrietta Fore explained that children need more food and water per unit of body weight than adults and have less chance of surviving extreme weather events (Carrington, 2021). UNICEF reported that a billion children are at extreme risk from impacts of the climate crisis and Fore described the situation for them as “...almost unimaginably dire. Virtually no child’s life will be unaffected” (Carrington, 2021, para. 5).

It is not only the Global South that is experiencing health impacts already from global warming. In the US higher temperatures are exacerbating illnesses ranging from seasonal allergies to heart and lung disease. For young women contemplating having children pregnancy means greater vulnerability to heat and the air pollution that is being made worse by climate change. Heat and the particulates from fossil fuels are indicated in premature birth, low birth weight and stillbirth (Holden, 2019).

In a survey of young adults in the US 96 percent were “very” or “extremely concerned” about the well-being of their existing, expected, or hypothetical children in a climate-changed world (Schneider-Mayerson & Leong, 2020). One 27-year-old woman said she could not bring a child into this world to have them to try and survive what may be apocalyptic conditions. A 31-year-old said that although she dearly wanted to be a mother she did not want to bring children into a dying world. Some parents regretted having children because of fears for their future under climate change. In 2020 more than 1000 clinical psychologists signed an open letter warning of acute climate related trauma on a global scale (Taylor & Murray, 2020) and a survey revealed that more than half of child and adolescent psychiatrists in England were seeing patients distressed about the state of the environment (Watts & Campbell, 2020).

Eco-anxiety²

Research shows that growing numbers of adults and children throughout the world are suffering from climate-related stress and anxiety. The number of adults in the US who identified as “alarmed” more than doubled between 2015 and 2020 from 11 percent to 26 percent (Cook-Shonkoff & Berley, 2021). Unsurprisingly the rates are highest amongst disadvantaged groups. Eco-anxiety is experienced differently by children and young people

² Eco-anxiety is a contested term. Psychotherapist Caroline Hickman (2020) argues it is not a mental illness but rather a rational response to an existential threat.

in different parts of the world. Young Kenyan environmental activist Elizabeth Wathuti says a common fear she hears from fellow students is that they will die from climate change rather than from old age. She says Africa is already experiencing the impacts of climate change so the fears are about how much worse it will get (Taylor & Murray, 2020).

Research indicates children and young people have been frightened about climate change for some time (Marks et al., 2021). What often causes them most fear is seeing their elders failing to take action or to take their fears seriously – or even worse, criminalising their activism and labelling their anxiety as mental illness (Hickman, 2020). What they most want is for adults to engage with them (Hickman, 2020; Marks et al., 2021). Academic and psychotherapist Caroline Hickman has conducted research and worked with children and young people for some years on their anxieties around the climate and ecological crises. She reports having sobbed following research interviews as children tell her they feel abandoned by a world that seems cruel and indifferent (Hickman, 2020) and she tells of one child's reaction to the lack of global response to the crisis.

“What I don’t get is why everyone isn’t running around the streets screaming in fear, that’s what they should be doing if they knew how bad it was going to get, how bad it already is in some places in the world. Instead I’m told by grown-up’s (sic) to stop worrying and go back to school. All they have to do is look at what’s going on, I don’t get it, why can’t they see it?! They say I’m the one with the problem because I’m scared; but I’m even more scared because they are not scared. They should be. I’m living in the twilight zone! Help me! (14-year-old).”
(Hickman 2020, p. 412).

Hickman's subjects reported severe anxiety. Children told her that they needed the truth from adults and if they perceived adults lying to them they would not trust them and could not engage with them about their concerns. Many advised they had given up trying to discuss the crisis and often hid their anxiety to stop parents worrying about them and to maintain reasonable relationships. Alternatively a minority became very angry with parents, blamed them for inaction and were barely able to maintain workable relationships with them.

Other research also shows that young people's climate change anxiety is linked to feelings of abandonment and that older generations and those in power have betrayed them by not tackling the climate crisis. The first large-scale global study of children and young people's climate anxiety, and their feelings about governments' actions covered 10,000 young people aged 16-25 years from 10 countries, including both developed and developing nations. Marks et al. (2021) reported almost 60 percent were very or extremely worried about climate change with nearly a half of those surveyed reporting climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning. Anxiety was associated with fatalism – that society is doomed and they have no future because of government inaction. Climate change distress, when there is inadequate response can become a chronic stressor and affect the psychological and neurological maturing of young people at a critical time in their development. The researchers called it an “emerging public health crisis” with a significant and long-term effect on the mental health of the young (Marks et al., 2021, p. 3).

Although there was no research specifically related to eco-anxiety in Aotearoa, recent mental health surveys conducted by the New Zealand government showed that mental distress and anxiety is increasing in the population over time but more so in younger people. And more younger people than older cohorts suffer from severe anxiety and mental distress. One in five New Zealand adults aged 15 years and over are diagnosed with a mood and/or anxiety disorder. Mental distress is highest amongst 15 to 24-year-olds and the proportion of New Zealanders with high levels of mental distress is trending upwards over time (Health Promotion Agency, 2020).

Inequity in Aotearoa

Even without climate change the future is a challenging place for the young in Aotearoa. Because of rising inequality the risks are greater for the disadvantaged, marginalised, minorities, Māori and children (Rashbrooke, 2021). From 1985 to 2005 income inequality in New Zealand rose faster than in any other developed nation (Rashbrooke, 2021). Government spending decisions during the pandemic have helped to increase that gap. Hickey (2021) estimates that the wealth of Aotearoa's richest rose 50 percent in the nearly two years since the start of the pandemic whereas workers and beneficiaries who rent are worse off because of job losses and reductions in hours, along with rent increases and

inflation in costs of petrol and food. Looking ahead, Spoonley (2020) writes that demographic changes mean fewer young people are growing up to take over income and security generation from aging parents who are living longer. And that is under the current relatively stable system of government and social security, yet to be tested by overlapping climate related crises. Thomas et al. (2019) stress that climate justice means that all climate solutions must reduce social inequalities rather than entrench them and caution that responses to crises can often erode democratic freedoms. They noted that Aotearoa's response to climate change had already been happening with little public debate, including increased Defence spending partly justified on the grounds of climate change threats.

COVID-19 – the (sour) cherry on top

Young people growing up in Aotearoa now will be increasingly exposed to more disease and infection than their forebears. Human activity causing habitat destruction and global warming is the cause of new disease-causing viruses in the human population (Carrington, 2020). As we encroach even further into the last remaining wild habitats the opportunities increase for wildlife to come into contact with people and farmed animals and transfer viruses. The warming climate also causes species to migrate and spread viruses to new hosts. The UN advises 75 percent of all emerging infectious diseases come from wildlife and such disease outbreaks are rising (Carrington, 2020). In recent times Ebola, bird flu, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), Rift Valley fever, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus and Zika virus were all zoonotic diseases, crossing from animals to humans. Some, including Ebola at 50 percent fatality rate and Nipah at 60-75 percent, have much higher fatality rates in humans than COVID-19 (Carrington, 2020; Jowell & Barry, 2020; Wylie 2020). As the First World heats up diseases such as mosquito-borne malaria are spreading further north and south of the equatorial regions (Young, 2021). This is a threat to populations of humans and other animals that have not encountered these diseases before and not developed immunity. This threat will continue to increase with global warming creating yet another challenge for rangatahi living with mounting disease risks and a health system that will struggle to cope with multiple new threats. COVID-19 affected wealthy countries early on in the pandemic and a massive global effort swung into action developing vaccines ready for use in under a year – something unheard of and not thought possible previously. By contrast malaria has been known about for well over 100 years, still kills

around half a million people every year and yet there is no effective vaccine. According to Otago university malaria researcher Bruce Russell, “Companies are not interested in protecting developing world countries” (Young, 2021, 11:45). In their selfishness and hubris, First World countries have left themselves exposed, under global warming, to Third World challenges of disease, famine and the breakdown of social structures that maintain stability. And it is the young of today and tomorrow who will suffer the most.

Grief for the natural world

There is increasing recognition of the impact on mental health of intense grief at the loss of species and habitats. For example, research on Inuit in Northern Canada and farmers in the Australian Wheatbelt showed that habitat loss was driving the destruction of people’s culture, history, ways of life and livelihoods; their complete sense of identity and purpose. This was causing both acute and chronic grief symptoms similar to those suffered when loved ones die (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018). With the acceleration of climate change driven environmental disasters the rates of anxiety and grief are predicted to rise and this is likely to particularly affect children and young people growing up in the shadow of looming ecological collapse (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018). Despite the grief and anxiety young people are already experiencing however, large numbers have turned up to street protests throughout the world and are engaging in active climate change resistance in a variety of ways.

The young rise up

(“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words...you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!”

Greta Thunberg to world leaders at the 2019 UN climate action summit in New York)

The unapologetic young activist, Greta Thunberg, whose lone strike sparked the global School Strike movement encapsulates the anger and frustration of many young people who have followed her into the climate change activist movement. University lecturer Ingrid Horrocks (2020) spoke of the hope she and friends have in this “new, angry, articulate, radicalised generation” (p. 189) then noted that a colleague pointed out that they, [the parents’ generation] were “pushing change back, again, on to them” (Horrocks, 2020, p.189). Thunberg specifically identified the older generation as the target of young people’s anger, calling on the young to use their anger to fuel their activism. Speaking at the World

Economic Forum in Davos in 2019 she told young people to *“hold the older generations accountable for the mess they have created...and say to them you cannot continue risking our future like this”* (Roussell & Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, 2019, para. 4).

Scholars contend that the global School Strike 4 Climate movement lifted climate change activism out from within the environmental movement that had started back in the 1970s and has limped along in the decades since, failing to make any significant impact on resource extraction and GHG emissions (Banerjee et al., 2015; Colman & Mathiesen, 2021; Watts et al., 2019). Indeed, it has raised public awareness, facilitated global growth of activist organisations such as the high-profile Extinction Rebellion, and engaged a generation of young people in a way that science and academia could not. Young indigenous activists have come to the fore challenging the power structure that has marginalised them and dismissed their knowledge and connection to their lands. Māori climate activist India Logan-Riley was amongst young indigenous activists who attended COP26 in Glasgow in October 2021. Their anger and frustration at inaction by global leaders was evident. Citing indigenous peoples’ knowledge of the land and the success they have had at stopping fossil fuel projects in North America for example, they called on world leaders to listen to indigenous peoples.

“... we know what we are doing, and if you are not willing to back us or let us lead, then you are complicit in the death and destruction that's happening across the globe... honour our knowledge and get in line or get out of the way” - India Logan-Riley (COP26: Māori climate activist..., 2021, para. 16, 17).

At the previous COP in Madrid in 2019 a group of indigenous leaders was shoved aside by security and organisers prompting an angry response from young activist Kera Sherwood-O'Regan, Kāi Tahu, attending with a group of indigenous women. They were left out of the official programme and Sherwood-O'Regan maintained they were there simply as tokens, for the photo opportunities (Neilson, 2019). And yet we understand that indigenous cultures hold the key to solving many of our systemic problems (Breeze, 2021c). Many of these cultures and their ancient ways of understanding the world are being extinguished along with the diminishing natural environments they exercise guardianship of.

Response to activism

Activists here in Aotearoa generally do not risk their lives as many do in developing countries. Between 2002 and 2017 the death toll for activists across 50 developing nations during the course of defending their environments and lands in disputes around resource extraction was an estimated 1,558 (Butt, et al., 2019). Young activists in wealthier countries will attract negative attention nevertheless, and from powerful sections of society. An example can be seen in the case of Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who accused Greta Thunberg and other climate strikers of causing needless anxiety in Australian children. Similarly, in the UK, one MP tabled a bill attempting to ban teachers from raising climate change in schools because of rising anxiety around the issue and that discussion of it was not healthy (Murphy, 2019). Hickman (2020) says such examples show what is behind the growing concerns she has observed in young people about “feeling dismissed and belittled when they’ve tried to get help from professionals and parents” (Hickman, 2020, p. 413) and not knowing who they can turn to or even safely discuss their anxieties with. Safe and supportive spaces and others, including professional therapists, they can talk to can help young people feel their feelings of anger or depression are acceptable and rational. Having to suppress these feelings or having them dismissed can make them fear they are suffering from mental illness rather than having a rational response to very real crises (Hickman, 2020).

It can also be observed that there is little in public discourse that prepares people for the extent or severity of the challenges ahead. When the media focus on climate change and its impacts it is mostly about extreme weather events and other geo-physical impacts like sea level rise. Ironically it is possible our young people would experience a more truthful glimpse into the future from some of the climate fiction that is increasingly finding its way on to screens and into bookshops. It is in the creative and literary arts where the warnings are loudest and tell a story that takes hold in the heart as well as the mind, in a way that scientists’ data and grim predictions may not. Not just in apocalyptic ‘end of days’ type blockbuster movies but in the thoughtful essays, novels and non-fiction of thought leaders like Margaret Atwood (2015) and Barbara Kingsolver (2012). In New Zealander Kirsten McDougall’s *She’s a Killer* (Black, 2021), the world’s climate is in crisis and New Zealand, in

the near future, is being divided and reshaped by the arrival of immigrant ‘wealthugees’, privileged immigrants who seek refuge in Aotearoa from the worst effects of climate change. These rich expats buy residency and live in luxury protected by armed guards and served by a local underclass (Black, 2021). Reports of wealthy Americans purchasing ‘doomsday escapes’ and building ‘billionaire bunkers’ in parts of Aotearoa reveal there are potential truths in these fictional accounts (Carville, 2020; Osnos, 2017). Reid Hoffman, a LinkedIn cofounder estimates that at least half of his fellow Silicon Valley billionaires have ‘apocalypse insurance’ in the form of remote luxury bunkers or hideaway properties (Osnos, 2017). Meanwhile billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson spend their fortunes in space possibly planning to build off-the-planet luxury bubbles.

In the final throes of this research a disturbing representation emerged of yet another failure by most of the mainstream media to take the opportunity to headline and seriously debate climate change risk. The dark comedy disaster film, *Don’t look up*, a very apposite satirical representation of the global power structure’s response to the climate crisis was released. In an allegory for climate change it features a comet on a path to destroy the Earth. The film was celebrated by climate activists but panned by many critics and much of the mainstream media, arguing that climate change is much more complicated than a comet. Emily Atkins (2022) in her excellent newsletter *Heated*, “for people who are pissed off about the climate crisis” considers however that the film’s absurdity is deliberate and an accurate portrayal of the neo-liberal power structure’s complicity in the headlong rush towards climate disaster. [Spoiler alert] She said it would have been even more accurate if the comet had only initially wiped out “poor, brown countries” (Atkins, 2022, para. 11) with just the uber-rich and powerful ultimately surviving. The film’s message has largely been lost on media that Monbiot (2022) argues are complicit in perpetuating the interests of the powerful forces preventing climate change action (Kalmus, 2021; Monbiot, 2022). Monbiot calls the film “a powerful demolition of the grotesque failures of public life” and saves special contempt for the media, “the sector whose failures are most brutally exposed” (2022, para. 1). The creative arts it seems can go places that the majority of the mainstream media we rely on to keep us informed fear to go.

Carrying on toward a system collapse

The lack of action on climate change is a problem that concerns many commentators. Although reports say that public concern about the climate is at an all-time high (World Resources Institute, 2021) none of this has succeeded in shifting the dial of emissions down at all. One of the only times that has happened was during the first COVID-19 lockdowns when much of the industrial world and global travel ground to a halt (Roston, 2021). Something that was beyond our control succeeded where global leadership could or would not. Following the lead of the young School Strikers, there is a growing urgency in calls from scientists and scholars for global leadership to act to address the crisis (IFLAS, 2020, 2021b; IPCC, 2021a; Stoddard et al., 2021). In 2020-2021, 130,000 civil society leaders and scholars and more than 300 scientists across 50 countries signed an open letter to world leaders demanding they take action (Face the Climate Emergency, n.d.). They pointed out that if all countries actually reached the emission reductions they have set as goals, we would still be heading for a catastrophic global temperature rise of at least 3-4°C and therefore leadership had already given up on the possibility of handing over a decent future for coming generations. They argued that climate and environmental justice cannot be achieved while we ignore the social and racial injustices and oppression that have laid the foundations of the modern world.

“We are facing an existential crisis, and this is a crisis that we cannot buy, build, or invest our way out of. Aiming to ‘recover’ an economic system that inherently fuels the climate crisis in order to finance climate action is just as absurd as it sounds. Our current system is not ‘broken’ – the system is doing exactly what it’s supposed and designed to be doing. It can no longer be ‘fixed’. We need a new system...that’s no longer an opinion, it’s a fact based on the current best available science.” (Face the Climate Emergency, n.d., para. 11).

Despite the increase in such demands from both civil society, science and academia the thermo-industrial machine grinds on. Increasingly researchers and academics now argue that preventing the degree of climate change that is an existential threat to life on Earth is

only possible if the fossil fuel-based thermo-industrial system collapses quickly rather than any gradual phasing out – even if that were possible (Gras, 2017; Steinberger, 2018). The giant fossil fuel companies underpin our entire interconnected and interdependent industrial, technological and economic system. Our infrastructure and cities are built by and for them, our markets function for them, and our governments are dependent on them. Even most so-called clean-tech and green energy depends on fossil fuels for producing components and infrastructure. These powerful forces are barriers to climate justice for young people in Aotearoa and everywhere else.

Green lies and false hope

Commentators argue a green energy transformation, even if that were possible, would not solve the climate crisis (Mulgan, 2019). As Santa Barbara (2021) points out only a rapid and significant drop in humanity's resource consumption would go any way towards addressing these threats. Those who argue for clean energy as the answer simply want to maintain current unsustainable consumerist lifestyles. While most advocates for environmental and climate change action support green energy and green consumerism a growing number argue that exchanging one pattern of consumption for another is just a way of preserving the industrial economy that is at the heart of the environmental crisis. Max Wilbert, author of *Bright Green Lies* argues that much of the current approach to dealing with climate change is fundamentally flawed and doomed to failure. The focus of green energy technologies does not challenge the paradigm that the natural world is a resource for humanity to exploit and consume, but rather to replace fossil fuels to allow the current consumerist system to continue. "The aim is not so much to sustain the planet, the aim is to sustain industrialisation" (Amyx, 2021, 22:00).

The focus on individual consumers to be the agents of change continues with the complicity of media and some academics, absolving those who hold the real power of the responsibility to act. We are exhorted to shun plastics, eat less meat and dairy, convert to EVs, when some of the supposedly 'greener' alternatives are actually worse for the environment. Arguing that because more than 70 percent of greenhouse emissions relate to household consumption perpetuates the premise that it is consumers who can make the big difference to emissions and continues to absolve the real offenders – big oil and the downstream

suppliers of household goods and services that do not offer realistic alternatives (Chai, 2021). It also maintains disproportionate pressure on the young, as the inheritors of environmental harms and climate change impacts, to take responsibility for action to prevent climate catastrophe.

The focus on the individual that the neo-liberal western culture perpetuates has enabled the giant corporations responsible for much of the environmental harm leading to climate change to abdicate responsibility and shift it on to individuals (Bosco-Ellen, 2020; Brisman, 2019). The environmental movement in fact facilitated this by getting on board with the focus on individual action – from recycling domestic rubbish and changing lightbulbs to directing consumer choices towards environmentally preferable electric vehicles for example. The narrative was that these small individual choices would be enough to save the planet from catastrophic climate change and governments and big business were let off the hook. As recently as July 2021 a UK government spokesperson exhorted citizens to freeze leftover bread and stop rinsing dishes before putting them in the dishwasher in order to address the climate crisis. Meantime that government approved a new oil field in the North Sea that would take the reforestation of the whole of England to offset (Thomas-Smith, 2021). In a perfect expression of the neo-liberal ideology the failure of the green movement was the offloading on to individuals the responsibility for countering the real problems of wealth and power distribution that lie at the heart of many of the world's greatest challenges, including climate change.

Big oil³ and their acolytes in power

Greed and denial

Activities that have generated the climate crisis are fundamentally criminal in their nature. Analysis by the Climate Accountability Institute, the world's leading authority on big oil's role in the escalating climate emergency, shows that the big oil companies, 20 of which are responsible for more than one third of all greenhouse gas emissions in the modern era, have

³ 'Big Oil' is a term, often used pejoratively, to describe the world's six or seven largest publicly traded oil and gas companies or the industry as a whole. It emphasises their economic power and influence on politics, particularly in the US, and is often associated with the fossil fuel lobby. The term is analogous to the generic 'Big Business' and to others such as Big Steel and Big Tech that describe industries dominated by a few giant corporations (Wikipedia, n.d.).

known for over half a century that their products are driving the planet towards a dangerous and unstable climate future (Taylor & Watts, 2019). In 1977 one of Exxon's own scientists warned the company's top executives that CO₂ from the use of fossil fuels would cause global warming and endanger life on Earth. The company quickly responded with a rigorous research programme over more than a decade which it abruptly halted to change tack and work at the vanguard of climate denial. It helped to block laws and international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Banerjee et al., 2015, Colman & Mathiesen, 2021).

Denial is also a climate generating crime, albeit an indirect one. Historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway (2010) explain how a loose-knit group of high-level scientists, with extensive political connections, ran effective campaigns to mislead the public and deny well-established scientific knowledge over four decades. They demonstrate how the ideology of free market fundamentalism, aided by a too-compliant media, has subverted public understanding of some of the most pressing issues of our era (Hamilton, 2010; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). They argue that certain huge corporations and very wealthy individuals greatly benefit from the status quo and will stop at nothing to ensure they maintain their power, at the expense of the planet and the rest of its citizens.

Money and politics

Big money has always played a huge part in US politics, and with a politicised judicial system, legal decisions heavily favour big business. It is estimated that lobby groups spend up to US\$1 billion every year to fight climate legislation. The escalation in CO₂ emissions in recent years may be partly linked to even greater influence of wealthy individuals, the fossil fuel lobby and other industrial interests after a US Supreme Court ruling in 2010 allowed corporations and lobby groups to spend unlimited amounts on elections. This led to the rise of super PACs (political action committees) of the wealthiest donors and a flood of spending from secretive groups, which don't disclose their donors (Lau, 2021). The oil and gas industry spent an estimated \$23.6 million in federal elections in 2006 – a figure that ballooned to \$138.8 million in 2020. And this does not account for contributions from dark money groups. These large sums of money and lobbying efforts have managed to fight off climate change legislation (Lau, 2021).

Possibly the most potent representation of that power is the World Economic Forum. While arguing, somewhat cynically, in its 2020 manifesto (Schwab, 2019) that a company serves employees, communities and society at large along with its shareholders it states that the best way to achieve that is “by policies and decisions that strengthen the long-term prosperity of a company” (Schwab, 2019, para. 1).

The ‘Davos cluster’⁴

International climate change scientists and scholars (Stoddard et al., 2021) explored the three decades of global political posturing on climate change mitigation and the abundance of research on the causes and impacts of climate change, searching for the reasons behind the failure to reduce emissions. Perversely it seemed, global CO₂ emissions had instead risen 60 percent since 1990 (Stoddard et al., 2021). Covering influences from climate governance through economics, inequity and lifestyles the researchers found that the common dominating element in the failure to address emissions was the important central role of power.

“Such power has come to shape debates, control institutions, and describe the boundary of the paradigm within which most societies implicitly operate. It is within this rarefied world that questions of global governance, geopolitics...militarism and...interests of the fossil fuel industry can be said to reside, caricatured [here] as the Davos cluster”
(Stoddard et al., 2021, p.658).

Stoddard et al. (2021) concluded that entrenched and unchallenged geopolitical and industrial power and mindsets of “financial reductionism” (p. 679) were barriers to climate change mitigation. The free market economic model prioritised profits over loss of life and environmental harms, the interests of the rich over the poor, and current generations over those who have to live with the future consequences of industrial pollution and harm.

Systemic collapse

⁴ Davos is a Swiss ski resort and home to the annual, invitation-only, World Economic Forum, which engages “the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas” (<https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum>)

According to international energy and finance analyst Nicole Foss all human political systems exist to extract wealth from the periphery and concentrate it at the centre and capitalism is extremely effective at this. To keep growing the centre you need a constantly expanding periphery to suck resources from but if you cannot keep expanding the system will collapse like any Ponzi scheme (Happen Films, 2016).

“Our current system is a planet-killing Ponzi scheme... a giant casino”

Nicole Foss, writer, researcher and systems analyst (Happen Films, 2016, 00:20).

With political and business leadership unwilling or unable to mount a rational response to the climate crisis it is becoming apparent that citizens and communities will be on their own, needing to implement their own strategies for survival. A growing number of international scholars support that view, warning that because of the corporate-driven failure of leadership and institutions to respond to climate change, the response to the climate crisis must be community-led. Communities and civilian-led organisations must lead their own climate emergency response, independent of governments and multinational corporations (IFLAS, 2020, 2021a; Ripple et al, 2021; Servigne & Stevens, 2020).

Recent research shows that half of British and French people believe that society will soon collapse which suggests that they are aware of the precariousness of our current existence but largely unwilling or unable to engage in open and public discussion of, and preparation for, potential systemic collapse. However there is evidence that governments are requiring departments and militaries in particular to prepare for economic and social disruption (Bendell & Read, 2021; Read, 2021).

Stoddard et al. (2021) and Read (2021) envisage only two possible future scenarios. They believe a critical tipping point in global systems has already emerged and that 1) societies will instigate rapid changes to emissions that will disrupt the entire thermo-industrial structural complex or, 2) climate change will impose chaotic impacts that bring down the current power structures. Should the prediction of these scientists and researchers be realised rangatahi would face a turbulent future within which to seek climate justice. A system that requires perpetual growth on a planet of finite resources cannot survive indefinitely. Those climate activists who want to bring down the system may get their wish,

but it may not be from their actions. And while many of the power elite may be casualties of such a collapse, some will have secured sufficient advantage to protect them and theirs from the maelstrom in the wake of systemic collapse (O'Connell, 2020). And if these leading scientists are right and the only thing that will enable the planet to heal and avoid apocalyptic destruction is for the system to collapse – in either a partially managed way or by nature taking furious control - then anything that shores it up is counterproductive.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the scene for the rest of this thesis by examining the literature that identifies the specific risks and challenges of climate change for young people and how many have responded to these challenges with their global activism movement. The impact of climate change and ecological breakdown is not shared equally, within nations, throughout the world or between generations. This review of the literature has shown the inequity and discrimination of the global power structure impacts every challenge that rangatahi face from climate change, in particular from deteriorating mental and physical health outcomes. It demonstrates the rational response of children and young people to the climate crisis – many are fearful and anxious and some are terrified – contrasting with the hubris and disdain of those who control the levers of power. The chapter drew on understandings of how the fossil fuel powered global economic structure, and the governance and political systems that enable it, has created the climate crisis and stands in the way of mitigating its impacts. The chapter concludes that the powerful elite that exert global control to their exclusive advantage block any significant attempt to disrupt the system that maintains and expands their wealth and power – potentially ensuring their own demise by perpetuating a system predicated on growth in a world of finite resources. How might a criminologist interpret this grim picture? The following chapter investigates the criminological theories that can help to illuminate the development of the climate crisis and the challenges rangatahi face.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the development of relevant theories and how they relate to young people's climate change resistance. It explains the rationale for the adoption of a green criminological framework for research focused on the concept of intergenerational justice. The chapter explains how this theoretical paradigm can illuminate and help us better understand the 'wicked problem'⁵ of climate change and the concerns and responses of climate change resisters. The focus of the research is climate change harms that are not necessarily crimes and the injustices they cause for young people. One of the key research questions asks what climate justice would look like for young people in Aotearoa which therefore locates the research within the broad perspective of critical criminology. Issues of harm and social justice, rather than those acts labelled as crimes by the state and administered by the criminal justice system, are the domain of critical criminological thought (Bradley & Walters, 2011; Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2015). Green criminology (GC), as previously observed, is a relatively new area of criminological research that sits within the broader, overarching framework of critical criminology (Brisman & South, 2014; White, 2013a). A perspective, rather than an explanatory theory, GC focuses on issues relating to the environment and social harms in the broadest sense. It considers harms from an ecological perspective as well as in legal terms and is directed at exposing environmental and ecological injustice (White & Heckenberg, 2014).

Critical criminology's concern with climate change has parallels with Marx's writings on the exploitation of the Earth and the theory of metabolic rift, an analysis of the main ecological crisis of his time; the problem of declining soil fertility within a capitalist agricultural system (Foster, 1999; Lynch, 2020; White, 2018). This concept was further developed in

⁵ A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that's difficult or impossible to solve—normally because of its complex and interconnected nature. Wicked problems lack clarity in both their aims and solutions, and are subject to real-world constraints which hinder risk-free attempts to find a solution. <https://www.interaction-design.org/>

Schnaiberg's (1980; Gould, Pellow & Schnaiberg, 2004, 2008; Lynch, 2020;) treadmill of production theory which asserts that a capitalist system inevitably leads to an ever-increasing demand for natural resource extraction to fuel economic growth. This results in a constantly deteriorating environment and worsening conditions for workers. According to the treadmill theory, the rapid growth in capital investment and resource consumption following WWII led to widespread ecological destruction which in turn gave rise to the early environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Gould, Pellow & Schnaiberg, 2008). That early environmentalism featured in the social disruption of the 1960s with its human rights and anti-discrimination movements; a culturally revolutionary period that was fertile ground for the nascent critical criminologies (Gould, Pellow & Schnaiberg, 2008; Michalowski, 2016; Schnaiberg, 2004).

A critical criminological approach to crime and harm

By the late 1960s groups of radical criminologists who questioned the orthodox criminology of the time were emerging in the US the UK and Australia (Michalowski, 2016). This new radical or critical criminology sought to focus attention on the social injustices and inequalities that disadvantaged the poor, women, racial minorities, and other marginalised groups. This followed a progression from Sutherland's pioneering work in the 1940s with his ground-breaking exposé of white-collar crime; the most influential early research into wrongdoing at scale by big business and influential elites (Michalowski, 2016). For critical criminologists, this period marked the beginning of attempts to break from the discipline's mainstream focus on conventional property and interpersonal offending, and mostly poor, disadvantaged perpetrators (Brisman & South, 2018). Critical criminologists sought to illuminate the inherent injustices in the power imbalance in capitalist society that favoured political and economic elites and discriminated against women, people of colour, minorities and the marginalised (Cohen, 1988; Taylor et al., 2013; Michalowski, 2016).

Orthodox or mainstream criminology with its focus on state-defined crime and criminals has been constrained by the priorities of the dominant political, social, and economic ideologies and power structures (Chambliss & Seidman, 1971; Michalowski, 2016). This meant

orthodox criminology paid little, if any, attention to acts that resulted in large scale harms affecting many groups of people, and some of the worst acts of injustice, but which nonetheless avoided the stigmatising effects of being officially labelled 'crimes'. Interpersonal offences such as assaults and conventional property offences and drug related offending received far more attention from criminologists than corporate, state, and organisational harms even in cases where the latter were criminalised (Michalowski, 2016). While individual or small group crimes could impact, albeit severely, a limited number of people, wrongful acts by powerful state or corporate entities could harm thousands or even millions of people (Michalowski, 2016; White & Heckenberg, 2014). For example we could compare the impact of street crimes, burglaries and even acts of terrorism with that of state-sponsored genocide and the pollution and environmental harm caused by the fossil fuel industry.

According to Lynch and Stretesky (2014), criminology itself risks colluding in the perpetuation of these greater harms if it does not pay attention to the deviance of the powerful actors and the hegemonic understanding of crime that protects the powerful and prevents the powerless from seeking justice (see also Michalowski, 2016; Michalowski & Kramer, 2006; White, 2018). Critical criminologists seek out and question the processes and practices upon which laws are constructed and enforced that maintain prevailing power relations and subsequent social inequalities.

In his introduction to the 2013 40th anniversary edition of *The New Criminology: For a Social Theory of Deviance* the distinguished and influential critical criminologist Jock Young (2013) traced the conceptual development of critical criminology. Young completed this, his last work, shortly before he died, concluding that although critical criminology had broadly increased its scope and had expanded its boundaries over the decades it had much important work to do. An era of neoliberal politics and ideology has facilitated the rise of the richest one percent and a dramatic fall in the collective wealth of the majority. He argues we are in a class war where the rich use all means, whether legal or illegal, to increase their advantage and privilege. A key role of critical criminology, then, lies in uncovering the true nature and effects of market-driven society, and, according to Young (2013), the most relevant criminological work in this respect takes place within critical

criminology. He argues that “the one-dimensional orientation of orthodox criminology” makes minor shifts “but shows little insight or inclination to make genuine advances” (Young, 2013, p. xlvii).

Green criminology and the prioritising of ‘harm’

GC emerged out of growing concerns in the latter half of the 20th century about the degradation of the natural environment but encompasses broader issues of injustice resulting from humankind’s relationship with the natural world (Brisman & South, 2012; Kramer & Michalowski, 2012; White & Heckenberg, 2014). Lynch and Stretesky (Lynch et al., 2015) conceived GC as a theoretical approach linking the forces of capitalism with environmental destruction and justice issues in the radical Marxist tradition. Within this framework Schnaiberg’s (1980) treadmill of production illustrates how the capitalist system visits the burden of ecological destruction unequally upon poor and disadvantaged communities and countries (Lynch et al., 2015).

While the term ‘green criminology’ emerged in the 1990s the growth of environmental concerns this century increased the focus by critical criminologists on ecological harms, whether legally permissible or not (Michalowski, 2016; White & Heckenberg, 2014). Arguing that crimes are socially constructed and therefore constantly made and unmade (Lynch & Stretesky, 2003) some critical criminologists went as far as calling for replacing the term ‘criminology’, because of its fundamental link with, and services rendered to, the criminal law, with the study of ‘zemiology’ from the Greek word ‘zemos’ for harm (Michalowski, 2016; White, 2013a). The zemiological movement of the late 1990s was significant for scholars seeking to move beyond the conventional criminological focus on legally defined crime and explore areas of harm generation (Boukli & Kotzé, 2018; Hillyard et al. 2004; Pemberton, 2016). GC also encompasses many of the environmental harms that are not addressed within orthodox criminology. Many such harms are everyday acts by many actors and global scale harms where it can be impossible to clearly trace the original source (Agnew, 2012; Brisman and South, 2014; White & Heckenberg, 2014). Brisman and South (2012) highlighted what they saw as a further limitation of orthodox criminology, its

retrospective orientation (Garland, 2001), and the need for a more forward-looking GC given the prospect for future harms from environmental wrongdoing.

A leading contemporary authority on GC, Rob White (Millie, 2018), helped produce the first comprehensive introductory text for GC (White & Heckenberg, 2014). They described their vision for the field to be defined as broadly as possible, encompassing insights into every aspect of environmental wrongdoing. Under this broad criminological umbrella GC embraces many perspectives and differing priorities from harms affecting humans to those damaging the entire ecosystem. A number of the perspectives they outline are relevant when considering issues of environmental and intergenerational justice for young people. Eco-global criminology for example is concerned with the transnational nature of environmental harms, highlighting the global impact that transgressions anywhere in the world can have such as the impact of CO₂ emissions on climate warming and the pollution of the oceans by plastic waste. While GC's introductory focus may be environmental crime, critical green criminologists argue that environmental harm should be considered a 'crime' regardless of legal status (White & Heckenberg, 2014).

Intergenerational justice

Recognising young people and future generations as victims of environmental harm is an important issue for criminology. While victims and the damage caused by environmental crime or harm far exceed those from everyday street crime (Lynch, 2020; White & Heckenberg, 2014) environmental harms are rarely criminalised (Monod de Froideville, 2021; White & Heckenberg, 2014). White and Heckenberg's (2014) framing of an eco-justice perspective within GC is the most useful starting point for examining issues of intergenerational justice for young climate resisters. The value of this approach is in its focus on actual harm rather than a legal constructivist perspective that changes with time and between jurisdictions (Lynch & Stretesky, 2003; Lynch, 2020). A justice framing is based on the notion of rights, fairness and egalitarian principles and an eco-justice perspective refers to the general focus of GC on exposing instances of social and environmental injustice (White, 2013a). While an eco-justice perspective also considers issues of harm and justice in

relation to non-human animals and the natural world, its concept of environmental justice and human rights - whereby everyone has the right to a healthy environment - is the most relevant to this research. Environmental justice is concerned with human health and wellbeing and how they are impacted by the activities of the economy and social structures. It includes the concept of intergenerational justice under which each generation has responsibility to ensure environmental equity for future generations. Each generation should preserve the quality and diversity of the natural world so that they do not jeopardise the existence and quality of life of each subsequent generation (Weiss, 1992, 2008; White, 2008, 2013a, 2018; White & Heckenberg, 2014). This is perhaps exemplified in kaitiakitanga, or guardianship, the concept of each generation's temporary stewardship of the whenua that is a significant principle in te ao Māori.

To address the issue of intergenerational justice for the young it needs to be established that they have been harmed or that a crime or wrong has been committed against them. Williams (1996, p. 21; White & Heckenberg, 2014, p. 175) defined environmental victims as those from past, present, or future generations who suffer because of change including "psychosocial" change to the environment, inflicted by "deliberate or reckless, individual or collective, human act or act of omission". White (2015) identifies nation states and transnational corporations as both the perpetrators of and responders to climate change and provides Michalowski and Kramer's (2006, p. 15) definition of state-corporate crime: "illegal or socially injurious actions that result from a mutually reinforcing interaction between (1) policies and/or practices in pursuit of the goals of one or more institutions of political governance and (2) policies and/or practices in pursuit of the goals of one or more institutions of economic production and distribution". Kramer and Michalowski (2012) and White (2015) argue therefore that climate change is a classic example of state-corporate crime and that state and corporate agencies act together in causing harm by denying human activities are causing climate change; resisting efforts to reduce GHG emissions; resisting progressive adaptation to climate change; and by nationalistic and self-serving responses to social disruption from climate change that excludes the disadvantaged. White (2015) concludes that failing to act to prevent global warming is criminal and yet the harmful activities continue which is the essence of ecocide. Using White's analysis then, the criminal

actors are states and corporates, the crime is ecocide, and the victims include the young and future generations.

My review of the literature revealed little in criminological scholarship specifically focused on intergenerational justice in the context of environmental harm and climate change, although it is referenced within GC texts such as White & Heckenberg (2014). There is more to be found in the fields of sociology and psychology, suggesting the potential for future cross-disciplinary research in this area. Relevant sociological scholarship includes research into young people's climate activism, O'Brien, Selboe and Hayward (2018) for example, and Skillington's (2019) examination of the adequacy of modern democracy in the face of climate change and issues of intergenerational justice. Psychological research includes Sanson and Burke's (2020) research on climate change as an issue of intergenerational justice and structural violence against children and Hickman's (2020) considerable body of work with children on eco-anxiety. This gap in GC research on intergenerational justice emphasises the need for more empirical GC studies plus the potential for inter-disciplinary as well as cross-disciplinary work with the social sciences and earth sciences.

A critical criminology of climate change

Rob White's work in GC has led him to call for a distinct criminology of climate change, publishing the first work to declare its subject matter *Climate Change Criminology* (White, 2018). With a focus on the structures of power and social division and calling for a crime of ecocide the work is clearly located within critical criminology and GC. It is the first criminological work of this scope on what, according to White, is the most important global issue facing humanity today. Despite this, criminology has focused little attention on climate change until recently (Agnew, 2012; Kramer, 2013; Kramer & Michalowski, 2012; Lynch and Stretesky, 2010; White, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2018). With the main focus still on conventional crimes White (2018) argues that criminology is failing to address its most significant challenge with the most vulnerable communities already suffering the consequences of climate change – and much worse yet to come. He encourages research collaboration within criminology and across disciplines acknowledging the scope and

breadth and the urgency of the climate change challenge (Millie, 2018; White 2018). Finally, he calls on criminologists to support radical action for change, citing the progress that militant action delivered for the anti-slavery, civil rights, and women's liberation movements.

Goyes (2019b) takes this support for activism a step further calling for a green activist criminology, necessitated by the enormity of the environmental crises that demand immediate action. He refutes the argument that activism is incompatible with science citing feminist theory and cultural criminology as illustrating how neutral and objective science in this field is untenable. Elevating knowledge based on neutrality discredits much non-Western science, reflecting a Global North hegemony. Goyes (2019b) argues further that neutral experts overly focus on methodology while postponing action, while academic activists advocate faster action to address harms. A decade ago Ruggiero (2011, p. 94) claimed that GC was "closer to environmental political activism than it is prepared to recognise". Today there is a growing number of criminologists and environmental scientists leaving academic impartiality behind and embracing an activist role alongside White (2018), Goyes (2016, 2019b), Lynch (2019) and Kramer (2013, 2016). Notable amongst them are outspoken leading UK climate scientist Kevin Anderson (Breeze, 2021a, 2021b) and New Zealand freshwater ecologist Mike Joy (Joy & Knight, 2020), both of whom publicly admonish their governments, state agencies and commercial entities for causing environmental harms and lack of progressive action.

White and Heckenberg (2014, p. 297) advocate challenging the structural and criminological status quo and "making the world a better place". Theirs is a call for criminological activism in the face of the scale and urgency of the climate and environmental crisis. Lynch (2019, p. 58) echoes that call in quoting Marx (in the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach): *"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it"*. In order to change the world, Lynch argues, criminologists also need to contribute empirical research on ecological harm making a convincing case for change.

“For criminologists, the role responsibilities are clear. We need to engage ourselves as public intellectuals and in political action, to assume the mantle of stewards and guardians of the future and to prioritise research, policy and practice around climate change themes. The biggest issue in the history of humankind demands nothing less than this” (White, 2018, p. 149).

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the development of the critical criminologies that led to green criminology, the theoretical framework for this research. These criminologies contest the orthodoxy that views crime as only that which is criminalised under the existing criminal law and criminal justice system of the day and draw the link between state/corporate power, cultural representations of that power and the environmental destruction that has led to the climate crisis. Theoretical perspectives underpinning this research were linked back to Marx’s demonstration of capitalism’s exploitative relationship to nature (Foster, 1999; Lynch 2020). The concept of intergenerational justice under the broad umbrella of GC was explained as the approach chosen to explore young people’s climate change resistance in Aotearoa. Also covered were more recent propositions in critical criminology relevant to this research that demonstrate the evolving contemporary nature of this critical approach to the discipline; the proposal of leading green criminologist Rob White (2018) for a criminology of climate change, and Goyes’ (2019b) advocacy for a green activist criminology.

Some criminologists working within traditional theoretical frameworks focus on the need to address harms through reform of the current system, working with existing institutions to improve regulation and enforcement for example. Others in the critical Marxist tradition seek solutions in the prospect of social transformation by challenging the ecocidal activities of globalised capitalism and the nation states that enable it (White & Heckenberg, 2014). This research acknowledges that an orthodox criminological approach has not delivered an effective response to environmental harm thus far but that does not mean efforts should not continue for as long as those institutions and the current system prevail. A critical, green

criminological lens is required however to address the issue of intergenerational justice for rangatahi facing the climate challenges of today and the future.

This examination of the critical criminologies that underpin this research concludes that these most recent developments in the field; a criminology of climate change and a green activist criminology are important areas for criminology to prioritise while environmental harms and the global temperatures continue to rise. Climate change and environmental destruction will become the issues dominating all aspects of life, crime, and harm (Lynch, 2019; White, 2018). This research focuses on justice for young people resisting climate change, so while my focus is centred on developing the concept of intergenerational justice under the umbrella of green criminology, these more nuanced critical perspectives offer important insights contributing to the argument developed in this thesis. The research, with the caveat that it is a study of perspectives among a small group of activist young people, will contribute to both new perspectives and add to the limited body of empirical GC work needing more attention (Lynch, 2019; White, 2018). The following chapter will discuss the method chosen for this research and how this theoretical underpinning informed that choice.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

This chapter explains the rationale for the research and the selection of the key research questions relating to young climate change resisters. It explains the worldview that influenced the approach to the subject and the adoption of the methodology, outlines and explains the methodology, and the research design. The chapter also describes and explains the process employed to recruit participants and ends by introducing the participants. Chapter 1 established that from a critical green criminological and eco-justice perspective the young and future generations should be seen as victims of climate change resulting from the harmful activities of powerful state and corporate actors (Vegh Weis & White, 2020; White, 2015). Despite the scale of the climate crisis, environmental and climate change harms are rarely criminalised (White & Heckenberg, 2014), prompting leading critical criminologists to call for urgent research that makes a case for changes to typical responses to climate harms (Goyes, 2019b; Kramer 2016; Lynch, 2019; Millie, 2018; White, 2018). This research pays heed to those calls in that it aims to understand the demands of young climate change resisters and the kinds of changes they seek from an intergenerational justice perspective. This focus determined the research questions.

The research questions

Primary:

- How are young people in Aotearoa New Zealand resisting climate change and what do they want to achieve with their resistance activities?

Supplementary:

- What responsibility do young climate activists attribute to previous generations for the climate crisis?
- Is climate change a cause of intergenerational division or conflict?
- What would intergenerational climate justice look like for these activists?
- What matters most to young climate resisters?

- What has been the impact on them of their concerns about climate change?

Research method

Creswell (2008) argues that it is important to consider and state the assumptions or philosophical worldviews that influence the approach to a research topic and adoption of a particular research framework and methodology. He explains worldview as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17, as cited in Creswell, 2008) and more simply as a general understanding of how the world operates. In the context of academic research theoretical frameworks and methods are also heavily influenced by the discipline of the researcher (Creswell, 2008; Neumann 2000). In my case, a strong personal interest in environmental issues and climate change and how these impact on young people and future generations, together with a general concern for social justice, lay behind this choice of research topic and the methodological approach taken.

A qualitative approach was considered the method most aligned with the critical theoretical framework for this research. Baškarada and Koronios (2018) argue that critical approaches have an ethical component, aimed at illuminating dominant ideologies in order to improve conditions for humanity. Denzin (2016) contends that while traditional qualitative inquiry involved interpreting the world, contemporary qualitative research scholars are obliged to undertake ethical work, to expose and resist injustice and make a positive difference in the world. This research aims to highlight climate injustice from the perspective of young people in Aotearoa and thus identify opportunities for positive change. To those who would argue that critical social science research using qualitative methods cannot be impartial and therefore has a strong influence on research outcomes, Baškarada and Koronios (2018) claim that all scientists employ value judgements of some sort to select relevant problems and facts. It does not necessarily follow that the resulting findings are entirely subjective. Arguing that the dominance of positivism and quantitative research methods in the natural sciences was adopted as a role model for the social sciences, thus denying human agency and the capacity for researchers’ and subjects’ critical self-reflection, Baškarada and

Koronios (2018) urge critical social scientists to undertake more significant qualitative research to consolidate the methodology's standing and contribute to positive change.

Qualitative research generally sits within a social constructivist paradigm and most often employs an interpretivist approach to engaging with research data (Creswell, 2008). Rather than starting with a theory to test against findings social constructivist researchers develop a theory or understanding from in-depth engagement with participants using open-ended questioning to draw out or inductively develop a pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2008; Crotty, 1998). Social constructivist research thus prioritises the participants' views of the research subject with the researcher drawing meaning from the data collected. Participants' views are contextualised, seen as having been informed by cultural norms and their social environment, experiences and relationships and such research often addresses human relationships and interactions between individuals (Creswell, 2008). The issue of intergenerational climate justice for rangatahi and their attitudes to the climate change responsibilities of older generations is a relatively unexplored area of inquiry so it was important that the research method provided the flexibility to respond to themes that emerged in data collection. The research objective also required a methodological approach that prioritised the views and understandings of the participants. Therefore, using an interpretivist approach within a social constructivist paradigm was determined as the most appropriate methodological approach for this research.

The concept of intergenerational justice may not have been familiar to all of the targeted research participants so it was important to be able to have a conversation where they could be drawn on what was most significant to them in terms of climate change justice. In hindsight employing a quantitative method, capturing typically binary and therefore less nuanced responses, would not have delivered the unanticipated data and insights supplied by participants. This confirmed the value of the qualitative social constructivist approach employed.

Research ethics

Because the research involved personal interviews an ethical approval was sought and obtained from Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (#28584). A key consideration for the committee's deliberations was the interview subject matter, which had the potential to cause anxiety and distress (Hickman, 2020; Marks et al., 2021). The climate science outlined in Chapter 1 presages the end of the world as we know it unless drastic and urgent action is taken to reduce GHG emissions. However, even the best-case scenarios deliver major negative impacts within the lifetimes of today's young people. That there was a difficult future ahead was a subject that needed to be approached with sensitivity and care, especially with the younger participants of the group whose maturity would be less developed than those who were older. Moreover, the participants were all identified as concerned about climate change and active in a variety of ways in resistance and protest and therefore would be likely to have some knowledge and understanding of the climate crisis. In recognition of the potential for triggering effects a document (Appendix B) was offered to all participants containing a list of available support and advice services.

Recruiting a sample

The aim was to recruit 10-12 participants to allow time for the data-gathering and analysis required for the research. The initial intention was to aim for a larger number from a broad spectrum of young climate resisters. Having been advised to limit the number of participants this initial intention was revised and proved invaluable when recruitment proved much more challenging than expected. Moreover, the lower number of participants allowed me to conduct in-depth conversations and gather the kind of rich, textured data from which meaningful insights could be extracted. The challenges I experienced during recruitment are addressed under the 'Challenges and limitations' section later in this chapter.

Eleven participants ranging in age from 16 to 30 years were purposefully recruited as individuals engaged in a variety of climate change resistance practices including protesting, campaigning, environmental work and standing for public office. The cohort was to include

those still in school to capture individuals involved in the School Strikes 4 Climate movement through to young adults engaged in campaigning or other environmental initiatives. The recruitment process identified a range of young climate change resisters whose perspectives were of interest to this research. This purposive sampling method is especially useful for achieving the manageable volume of rich data appropriate for the scope of this study (Ames, Glenton, & Lewin, 2019; Robinson, 2014).

Participants were identified from media coverage of climate change activism and publicly available online records of members of climate change and environmental advocacy organisations. They were initially contacted via email using publicly available contact details and through environmental activist groups such as School Strikes 4 Climate, Extinction Rebellion and 350.org. The initial email gave details of the research and advised that participants' identities and that of their organisations would be kept confidential. Confidentiality was important to the research to allow the participants to speak freely and not feel compromised in any way in order to achieve the most insightful and revealing data. Given the relatively small sample size, naming the climate and environmental action groups that participants are involved with could lead to their identities being revealed. To protect participant anonymity the names of these various groups and organisations have been withheld.

Without exception however the participants expressed their willingness to speak on the record. Nonetheless, all were given pseudonyms in the research and anonymity preserved in the storing of data in accordance with university ethics requirements. Any other details that could identify participants have been withheld. Anonymity would also avoid any potential legal or employment risks to participants and encourage the articulation of uninhibited, open and honest views. It was important to the integrity of the data that participants felt free to express views that may be critical of people close to them, of activist organisations, institutions, public figures, and current or potential employers.

The participant cohort that resulted from the recruitment process comprised individuals from across the spectrum of young climate change resisters. It included those with a high public profile who identified as very engaged in the politics and protests around climate change, through to those who expressed their concerns through environmental remediation work. Although the original intention was to focus on the views of a small number of the most active, I was satisfied that the final cohort of participants facilitated a greater appreciation of the climate change concerns of a broader range of young people. This point is expanded upon under the 'Challenges and limitations' section below.

Participants

The data for this study was collected from 11 young people aged from 16 to 30 years, six young women and five young men. They came from throughout Aotearoa and three were overseas at the time of the interviews. They are identified here by pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and listed in the order that the interviews were conducted. Their ages are given as at the time of their interviews.

Leah

Leah is 23 years old and identifies as Māori and female. She is employed full-time in the public sector.

Amy

Amy is 18 years old and identifies as Asian and female. (Amy's specific ethnicity could possibly identify her so is withheld here). She is a full-time tertiary student.

Eva

Eva is 25 years old and identifies as New Zealand/European and female. She is a full-time post-graduate student.

Grace

Grace is 16 years old and identifies as New Zealand/European and female. She is a secondary school student.

Liam

Liam is 16 years old and identifies as New Zealand/European and male. He is a secondary school student.

Paul

Paul is 25 years old and identifies as Pākehā and male. He is employed full-time in conservation work.

Sam

Sam is 30 years old and identifies as tauiwi and male. He is employed full-time in environmental work.

Jack

Jack is 22 years old and identifies as Pākehā and male. He is a part-time tertiary student and employed part-time in conservation work.

Lucas

Lucas is 26 years old and identifies as Caucasian and male. He is a recent graduate looking to work in conservation science.

Becky

Becky is 16 years old and identifies as New Zealand/European and female. She is a full-time student.

Emma

Emma is 26 years old and identifies as New Zealand/European and female. She is employed full-time in the public health sector.

Data collection and analysis

Five interviews took place between November 2020 and January 2021 and a further six between July and September 2021. The five-month gap was due to personal reasons that necessitated a three-month suspension of thesis study. All 11 participants took part in one semi-structured in-depth interview which lasted between one and one and a half hours. COVID and personal restrictions meant that all interviews were conducted via Zoom. I would have preferred interviews in person as I believed that would help me to establish rapport differently with the participants and to read non-verbal signals during the interview with ease. I was also concerned about any anxiety that discussion of the subject matter might create and that this would be easier to discern and address in person. I recognised however that given the recruitment challenges (detailed below) it was a great deal easier to secure commitment to Zoom interviews especially as participants were located throughout Aotearoa and three were offshore at the time. I was new to using Zoom but the participants were all very familiar with the technology and comfortable in the space.

All interviews were recorded under the terms of the ethics approval and with the expressed consent of the participants. Occasional 'freezes' and outages disrupted the conversation flow but were minimally distracting. I did find that the online mode required greater concentration to read non-verbal signals which meant I felt slower than otherwise to follow a line of thought. I found the relationship between researcher and participants to be very

transactional; there is limited opportunity for manaakitanga and for getting to know the person behind the views expressed which potentially limits insights into the participants' views. At the completion of the interviews I was left feeling that I was just getting to know the individuals and face-to-face meetings may have opened the door more easily to further conversations that could benefit any future research. I did find that one advantage of conducting Zoom interviews was the efficiency: both myself and each participant were focused on the topic; there was no travel required; both participants and I were comfortably in our own environments; and the entirety of the time was devoted to the interview.

An interview guideline was used to elicit particular elements of participant's experiences that were relevant for the research. I noted key points during the interviews but largely focused my attention on the conversation with each participant, relying on the recordings to provide the detail. After the first couple of interviews I found that my interview guide, and the schedule of questions, was too prescriptive for a qualitative interview of approximately an hour's duration. I found that it inhibited a natural flow to the interviews and could potentially prevent participants getting to the most important issues for them in their own time and on their own terms, while preventing access to what I considered the most insightful information for the thesis. I found that I was too focused on the questions and sub-questions making up the schedule rather than letting the conversation develop organically. Consequently, for the remaining interviews the schedule of questions was edited down and confined to three or four main themes most relevant to the research. I found this generated better, more insightful responses and allowed the participants to explore their views more deeply and supply more detail on what was most important to them.

Immediately following each interview I made notes of the key themes that emerged and the highlights and initial insights from each conversation. In the weeks following the interviews I transcribed the recordings and further refined the range of key themes. To help facilitate a closer analysis of the interview data, I developed a set of initial codes from my notes, adding to them from points that arose as I scrutinized each transcript. Once all the interviews had

been coded, I collated the coded data into broader thematic groups and checked them against the themes I had noted following each interview. I then identified the themes that were most significant and relevant to the research thus providing a framework for the presentation of the findings.

Challenges and limitations

Recruiting participants proved more difficult than I had anticipated. After the direct email and social media contacts resulted in only three interviews from 20-plus initial requests and follow ups I recognised that many in the age-group I was targeting do not respond to email or social media contact from someone not already connected to them. I am much older than those I interviewed, not active on social media and had no personal connection to any of the proposed participants. Initially I sought to recruit the most high-profile activists and, as determined by their name recognition and media coverage of their activism, did succeed in securing interviews with two that could be placed in that category. However, I needed to widen the recruitment net and sought the assistance of staff at education institutions, workplace contacts and activist groups. This snowballing method of securing interviews via third parties known to the participants was the most effective one I employed, and through it I managed to recruit a further eight participants for the research. I received feedback from the institutions and groups I contacted, and from the participants, that many in this demographic were under considerable stress because of COVID related disruptions to their study, work, and life in general. So rather than being reluctant to participate in the research per se their priorities understandably lay elsewhere. Fifteen potential participants agreed to interviews but four dropped out with no particular reason given; contact was lost during busy periods in the academic year so I can only assume that study pressure intervened. The final participant cohort contained two who were high profile activists and a further four who were currently, or had been previously, active protestors or involved in activist organisations. The remaining five were engaged in various environmental activities, study or work in environmental or climate change related areas.

A further challenge was in attempting to achieve the ethnic diversity I sought. Only one of the participants identified as Māori. Given the kaitiaki status of Māori, and my responsibility to conduct research under the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi⁶, it was important to prioritise Māori voices. Pasifika activists have particular and urgent concerns with many of their homelands under threat from rising seas. Unfortunately, despite several efforts, I was unable to secure any Pasifika participants. Age and gender diversity was not a problem although initially I received more responses from young women which supported advice from several participants that young people's climate activism was substantially dominated by young women. However the eventual gender balance of participants only marginally favoured female with six female and five male participants. Four were in their teens and seven ranged in age from the early 20s through to 30 years old. Only one participant identified as Māori and one as Asian (identifying the specific nationality could compromise anonymity) and the balance of the sample identified as Pākehā, tauiwi, New Zealand/European or Caucasian.

Two points are relevant in considering the limited diversity of the sample. Firstly, there was some congruence in the data collected from the participants engaged in more active protest with those resisting climate change in other ways which allowed for the development of consistent themes and alleviated concern I had about the extent to which the data offered meaningful insight into young climate resisters' views and concerns. And secondly I acknowledge that in being exploratory research conducted for an MA thesis there are inherent limitations in terms of its scope, sample size, and time frame.

The research method proved successful for obtaining the depth and richness of data I was seeking. Furthermore, the difficulty in securing interviews with those I had initially identified

⁶ The Treaty of Waitangi, signed by representatives of the British Crown and Māori rangatira in 1840, established the Crown's ability to make and exercise law in Aotearoa (in the English version) at the same time as it guaranteed Māori sovereignty over land, people and taonga (in the Māori version). While which of its two versions should outweigh the other remains a hotly contested issue, it is generally accepted that the Crown has a responsibility to act in partnership with iwi, to ensure that Māori can participate in everyday life as citizens, and that taonga is protected. These tenets require Pākehā researchers in Aotearoa to consult with Māori communities when designing research that can be foreseen to specifically affect Māori, to include Māori voices as far as it is possible to do so, and, to abide by Māori tikanga or customs where appropriate.

became an advantage in that the scope of the research was broadened. By including a wider spectrum of young people who are actively anxious about climate change and the environment, rather than only the most prominent in activism, a more comprehensive understanding is achieved of how young people in Aotearoa view intergenerational climate justice and what they demand from their elders and leaders. The following chapters aim to reveal that story from the perspective and in the voices of the young people themselves.

CHAPTER 5

The burden, blame & bulwarks against despair - the voices of Aotearoa's young climate resisters

Introduction

Young people's environmental activism has become increasingly visible in the mainstream news media, both in Aotearoa and internationally. Coverage of the School Strikes 4 Climate protests in particular have demonstrated the concerns that young people have about the wellbeing of the planet and the viability of their future. Less is known however of the climate action of young people beyond such high-profile protests or of the specific actions and outcomes rangatahi seek. The aim of this research was to discover the range of ways in which rangatahi are resisting climate change and what they want to achieve from their resistance actions. The research adopted the lens of intergenerational justice to explore how rangatahi viewed the responsibilities of older generations to deliver just climate change outcomes. A key objective of these inquiries was to conceptualise climate change justice amongst rangatahi and to articulate the actions they required from their elders and leaders in response to their climate activism.

The young people I spoke with were thoughtful and considered, and largely sad and anxious about the climate change crisis rather than angry. While there was frustration at lack of leadership on climate change responses there was also no realistic expectation that political leaders would take timely and meaningful action and, with few exceptions, little blame was attributed to their elders and previous generations for the harms contributing to climate change. Instead, any anger and accusations were directed at the fossil fuel industry and the industrial capitalist machine that spawned and directed the rampant consumerism of today's dominant Western neo-liberal culture. Other key findings included an ambivalent attitude towards the value of protests to deliver the outcomes the participants want – partly because of doubts over the efficacy of protest action against the climate change challenges but also because of concerns about personal repercussions from protest activity. One finding consistent across all participants was the importance of nurturing nature in their lives as both a bulwark against personal anxiety and despair, and as a positive active response to climate change. Closely connected to the significance for participants of supporting the natural world, was recognition of the value of mātauranga Māori in offering powerful knowledge and understanding with which to prepare for and respond to climate change. The participants identified what they viewed as the most significant climate change challenges and the changes they believe should be prioritised to address and mitigate them. Finally, despite all the dire predictions

and seemingly insurmountable challenges, the participants nonetheless described themselves as hopeful, rather than despairing, for the future.

This chapter will examine the key findings within the following themes:

- No one is going to rescue us
- We don't blame the boomers
- The quiet activists – the healing power of nature
- The risks and (sometime) rewards of protest

No one is going to rescue us

A majority of the participants felt that they and their generation were under pressure to solve the crisis and that such feelings and perceptions caused anxiety, a sense of responsibility and sometimes helplessness in the face of such a huge challenge and threat. Grace (16) talked about how her parents' generation, in their 40s, had *"done enough talking...they know about climate change, 'oh yes it's an emergency'...not acting as if it's an emergency...get so caught up in day to day, their jobs and families"*. Liam (16) found when working on the School Strikes that many older people supported the movement *"...but when we tried to get them involved... [some made comments like] 'we'll leave that up to the younger generation, that's their problem now. It won't be in my lifetime'."* Participants believed that growing awareness of the climate crisis in younger people together with concerns about their future would drive change.

"The basic knowledge of climate change and what needs to be done about it is starting off way younger. Young people are growing up having witnessed the School Strikes movement...taking back some power at a young age and organising while in school. That's a shift for sure...they now don't need older leaders telling them how to do it...online platform use [for organising] is huge."
(Eva, 25)

The participants accepted that as their generation had to deal with the consequences of environmental destruction, *"...we have to clean up the mess"* (Becky, 16).

Governments won't fix it

The research participants generally agreed that citizens cannot rely on political leaders to take the necessary action to address climate change. They had little trust or faith in governments to make the rapid changes needed now. Jack (22) cited a meeting with an MP who dismissed the suggested options for action as “too radical”. Jack felt *“hopeless and powerless”* in that moment and took up activism to *“feel a sense of agency”*. While governments will not lead the change, he said they will *“follow the people...if it [change] is happening and they can see support for it then they will follow”*.

“Organisationally our systems are geared towards maintaining the status quo. It's quite difficult to alter policies and strategies within a culture that is geared in a certain way - to privilege a certain demographic... Even when there is a mandate to change things the system is geared to inertia, to resist change.”
(Leah, 23, elected to public office in recent elections)

Leah argued that the problems were structural and systemic and by the time political leaders made change it was almost too late. *“The climate crisis will require us [political leadership] to be responsive and agile and we are not...we are super-paralysed in our responses...we need societal and cultural change and that whole of society change reflected in government.”* She described that as *“Te Tiriti not Westminster”*, or the *“bottom up”* Te Tiriti o Waitangi decision making approach of inclusivity rather than Aotearoa's adopted top-down British system of government. She warned that it takes more than one player getting a ‘a seat at the table’ of decision making power to change things in a system geared to maintain the status quo.

Despite these hurdles Leah was stoic in confronting the reality of climate change and the need for her generation to step up to the challenge. *“Some things are locked in. It's a waste of time being despairing...these are the cards we are dealt and we just need to deal with it.”*

The incentives to act were huge *“because if we don't there will be a loss of biodiversity that can only be found here”*; the weather will be *“a shit-storm all the time”* and together with sea level rise they would all contribute to a future that will be *“hugely terrifying”*.

Jack and Grace both believed that people held the power to drive change. Jack felt the people would eventually move governments to change. *"If it's happening and they [government] can see support for it then they will act."* He cited the balloon and rock metaphor for a theory of political change (Hammond, n.d.) used by campaigners to plan how they engage with politicians and supporters. The metaphor visualises politicians as like a balloon tied to a rock. You can bat them but they only move a little to the right or left. Instead you move the people – the rock - and that takes the balloon with them. However Grace believed that even when the people were pushing for change *"...governments are driven by money...I have more hope in individuals making change"*. Even if there were law changes *"...they won't always work...people won't necessarily follow...it's a cultural shift rather than top down from the government or legal system."*

Anxiety, depression, helplessness

"If I look too far ahead it looks apocalyptic" (Eva)

Most of the participants suffered from climate change related periods of anxiety, depression or feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Emma (26) said that like a lot of activists she started with what she could do in her own life to make changes.

"I had the belief that if everyone does a little bit we're going to make a big change, so started reducing plastics and started a recycling initiative at school. By the end of uni I understood that that wasn't enough."

She was putting a lot of pressure on herself to fix the problem and her mental health suffered. After a negative experience at a protest Emma became disillusioned and gave up on any activism for a couple of years believing there was no hope: *"I stopped caring...no picking up rubbish on my walks and trying to be a good influence on other people... tried to ignore the anxiety I felt about climate change...I felt so helpless and didn't know what to do to control it. I felt there's no role in this for me...I'm not a scientist."*

She did not think she could make a difference but at the same time felt guilty for not being involved in activism but after her time out she did re-engage.

“it took being involved in an environmental movement again that made me feel I had value...made me feel this isn’t going to fix everything but it’s something. I definitely feel helpless at times but I don’t have that anxiety anymore...think I’m doing what I can and that’s all I can do until it’s too late...not too late yet so we keep going. Being involved in activism is a good way to deal with anxiety in general...meeting like-minded people who have the same concerns and passions and the same values.” (Emma)

The majority of the participants found that getting involved in activism of some kind and finding a community of people who shared their concerns was a positive way to alleviate anxiety. Lucas (26) suffered from climate-related anxiety, of *“just living daily with this knowledge”*. He felt a lot of guilt about his own carbon footprint, having done a lot of air travel, and that drove him to make changes to his own lifestyle. He questioned the impact on his mental wellbeing of being driven to factor climate into almost every decision he makes: *“...that can be exhausting”*. He wanted to have children but *“it does scare me...it’s a challenging moral question”*. His anxiety had limited his enjoyment of things like sports; the climate cost of teams flying internationally to compete had impacted his ability to enjoy the games. He had looked for new more sustainable activities to bring him joy including surfing and making his own bread. *“I need to do something otherwise I’m just going to be anxious.”* Lucas found that joining a group that was successful in achieving change - getting organisations to divest from fossil fuels - was highly motivating and it really helped him by finding others that shared his concerns.

Conversely, participants’ anxiety was exacerbated when they were not listened to and their concerns dismissed by authority figures in a position to make change. Jack experienced greater anxiety and a sense of hopelessness following the fruitless experience of trying to get action from an MP in response to a weather disaster than he felt during the disastrous storm that sent waves crashing into his neighbourhood.

“It was futile in that meeting...because of the dismissal...‘this is not possible, that’s not possible...what you’re asking is radical’. That’s not radical. What is radical is continuing to use fossil fuels and what they’re doing to the climate.”
(Jack)

Both physical environmental realities and the virtual world were drivers of anxiety. Liam was confronted every day going to school in his coastal community and watching as the foreshore was eroded away. *"Places that matter will disappear...it's scary the limited time we have."* Becky similarly found social media messaging induced anxiety. *"I can't think about it [climate change] too much...can be overwhelming. The best way to combat [the anxiety] is taking action in your own life."* She has done tree planting and community clean-ups, and walked to school rather than take the bus. Grace said she tried not to watch the news at night because the negativity *"did me more harm than good...[I] need positive messaging, something to fight for."*

Amy (18) found that most of her generation were not sufficiently aware of how bad climate change was to be overwhelmed by it, and that those who had more knowledge were more deeply affected. While she coped well herself, her wellbeing was affected by her understanding of the crisis. She had particular anxiety about the loss of wildlife. *"I have a friend who finds it [climate change] so overwhelming that she would rather not know. She sees a counsellor...Receiving counselling is pretty common [for issues including climate anxiety]."*

We don't blame the boomers

"Our best chance of fighting it is together" (Leah)

Although participants expressed anger and frustration at the lack of action on climate change, none directed that anger at older generations. They all agreed there was a need for generations to work together in the fight for the climate, and several felt it unfair to blame previous generations for what they did not know.

"I don't buy it [blaming older generations for the climate crisis]. You can't care about the environment until you're in a position to care about it. My grandparents didn't care...with their upbringing there was no way they could have cared." (Paul, 25).

Paul noted that his generation was lucky to be in a position to be able to consider how our lifestyles now were impacting the world around us.

“That puts us [younger generation] at an advantage, not disadvantage, because we are able to stop and think ‘are we consuming too much plastic or burning toxic chemicals?’. I don’t think past generations had the luxury [of lifestyle and knowledge] to worry about it.” (Paul)

Similarly, Eva did not like making “generational generalisations” or apportioning responsibility that way because “lots of the movements I’ve seen span the generations...Some of the most awesome campaigners I know are older.” She finds it more useful to draw a distinction between “those who have money and power and those who don’t” rather than creating a generational divide. Amy agreed that it was misguided to generalise about generations. “Some older people are really ignorant [about climate change] but some are at the forefront of activism. The generations above us didn’t get as much exposure to information.”

Liam agreed that addressing climate change was a collective responsibility. “There’s no point in blaming the older generation...let’s move on. We’ve all been part of this issue, we’ve all contributed. What can we do collectively to fight this?” (Liam)

And Sam (30) also agreed that climate change was not an issue of intergenerational injustice. “I don’t think you can separate the generations like that – by whose to blame.” Criticism could just as easily be levelled at younger generations:

“We’re hard-wired to use...to progress and grow...if older generations hadn’t done what they did my generation would.” [This generation is] “into instant gratification...want some kai, go to the shop. Older generations were doing the paper bags and glass milk bottles which we’re now cycling back to. So some of what we’re doing now was just natural...how it was for older generations.” (Sam)

Reiterating the same point, Leah also noted a need to avoid inter-generational division: *"We want all generations to be on board...we don't want it to be a divisive issue"*. She recognises lots of frustration from younger people about decisions older generations made but does not share that frustration.

"It's hard to know what you don't know. Knowing about climate change is quite mainstream now and many of my generation are aware of it. That's a privilege we have and it means we have a responsibility to act. Getting upset at older generations is not very helpful. We need to get all generations on board." (Leah)

Leah who was elected to office aged 23 pointed to a constituency of older people who also want to see change in order to *"rise to this challenge [of climate change]"*.

While Lucas was *"upset"* at people not acting on climate change this was not directed at specific generations either. *"There's a lot of misdirected anger towards previous generations. It's not their collective responsibility to have done something...I'm part of a generation still not doing enough."* He said the fault is with *"a broken system where the cost to the environment and to people is not factored in to calculating profits."*

Despite agreeing that blame for climate change inaction should not be attributed to older generations several participants did express frustration with parents and others who were aware and possibly even sympathetic but took no action. Grace felt that environmentalism had somehow skipped a generation with her parents and that those in their age-group (40s) grew up during the explosion of materialism and consumerism and got caught up in their jobs and daily lives. Grace believed that generation knew about climate change and had many opportunities to change things in their lives and businesses and yet did not. She felt that, by comparison, a lot of her grandparents' generation had a better understanding because they grew up in a simpler time when, for example, *"they got their milk in glass bottles"*. She met lots of older people more her grandparents' age working in her forest restoration groups.

Worse still was encountering the doubters and deniers. Becky (16) reported that while she had positive discussions with people her own age about climate change *"...doubters tend to be older. It's difficult having conversations with authority figures as a younger person...[they] can be patronising:*

‘I know more just because I’m older’”. Because her generation had been raised “with climate change as a central concern, it has a better chance of being prioritised when we’re in positions of power.” She found it frustrating that at her age there was only so much she could do and yet there were people in power who could make the necessary changes but do not. *“I don’t like to feel anger towards people I don’t know but...a lot of the older generation don’t [worry about climate change] because they don’t have to deal with the consequences – we do...we have to clean up the mess.”*

Emma described the risks involved in having conversations with those who dispute what you say about climate change.

“The likes of some older people in the fossil fuel industry...you need to have the facts at your disposal to have a rational response and an intelligent conversation...[there’s the] risk of offending someone whose life and livelihood has been in that industry. I’ve had a few like that and typically with people who are older.”

She had however noticed changes in older generations’ awareness in recent years. Her parents’ attitude had shifted to one of acceptance of the reality of climate change, albeit with no motivation to fight for any changes. Her parents got their news and information from mainstream television and newspapers so Emma thought the attitude change might be a reflection of more information being provided via in these channels. *“The difference in consumption of media by different generations has an impact.”*

Emma saved her criticism for inaction on climate change for the fossil fuel companies, and to a lesser extent the media, and not for her parents’ generation and those even older. *“I don’t blame older generations. Most people wouldn’t have been reading the IPCC reports or scientific papers but getting their information from the news, and if the news isn’t telling them that it’s something they should worry about then why would they take action?”* She felt that knowledge of the issues was not widespread until now and that is why there was more pressure and talk of action now. The lack of media coverage and focus on climate change until recently was also to blame for inaction on the crisis, but mainly *“I am angry at the oil companies and the misinformation they have put out.”*

Big oil, big business

It was impossible to miss the anger and frustration these young people felt towards the fossil fuel industry.

"I feel deceived, upset and angry about our addiction to oil and the people who were aware and have continued to profit off death and suffering. That they're ok with that is infuriating." (Lucas)

"They [big oil companies] had known for decades about the climate problem from fossil fuels and they just continued." (Eva)

Jack believed that the big polluters - big business and big oil - understood that their dominance was secure until and unless political leadership made big changes. That is why *"they [oil companies] pour billions into their campaigns"*. He said they made huge political contributions, especially in the US, and ran big business campaigns placing responsibility for emissions reductions on to consumers. Jack referenced Shell's 2020 twitter poll asking people what they were willing to do to reduce emissions (Yoder, 2020). Unsurprisingly he said it backfired spectacularly with responses including things like 'not spill thousands of gallons of oil into waterways'. A BP marketing campaign in the early 2000s helped to push the concept of the personal carbon footprint. *"Oil companies love to hear how private citizens plan to save the planet."* (Jack)

"Oil companies are the main culprits...we need to hold these big companies to account for the massive damage they're causing to our planet". (Leah)

"I feel angry at the petrol companies...that produce fake reports and plastics companies that shared false information." (Emma)

Emma and Leah thought that corporates and 'big oil' have been very successful in transferring responsibility for environmental and climate change action to individuals. They argued that people have been exhorted to do away with plastic bags, recycle and manage their personal carbon footprints. *"A lot of emphasis is placed on personal action in the climate change debates but the discourse doesn't often translate into collective action."* (Eva)

Paul held a different view, however, placing much greater store on personal responsibility for fossil fuel consumption. *“It’s all very well to blame ‘the man’ [big business] but everyone needs to be willing to change their lifestyle. It’s chicken and egg. You have to have demand, buy-in, from the population first.”*

Jack believed there was a new climate denial [by governments and the fossil fuel industry] - not denying that it is happening but just as insidious – saying that [tackling it] is too hard. This new denial was equally effective at delaying or preventing climate change action.

“First they said it’s not happening. Then they said it’s happening but it’s not really bad. Then they said it’s not us.” (Jack)

His point was that this new denial says it is happening, it is bad and there is nothing we can do, but, countered this strategy by pointing out that every single degree of emissions means more storms, floods and lives lost. *“Every single thing we do does matter. It’s never all or nothing.”*

The quiet activists

Participants had mixed views about the value and impact of protest actions even though most had taken part in protests. Some ambivalence was driven by the fear of reprisals, and anxiety about getting arrested and the potential impact on future employment and career options. A sense of community and shared responsibility from involvement in activism and protest was a positive for several participants. Others, however, had negative experiences that curtailed their activism or they were ambivalent about the kinds of actions of some protest organisations. The participants agreed that rather than shock tactics, it was necessary to bring people with you.

Like the other participants Lucas believed in a *“gentle approach”*, leading by example. *“Rather than tell people what to do I try and live a sustainable life and tell people things that have worked for me.”* He also suggested sharing information such as giving someone who is less interested in the issues a relevant book or sharing a film. For others, as for several of the participants, attending a lecture could be a turning point in their understanding of the climate crisis and the motivation to take

personal action. *"...the more information, discussion and activity in general has an exponential effect."* (Lucas). He thought awareness was growing and some actions by people to reduce their footprint was becoming more mainstream but *"...I worry that this is just generating anxiety and not moving the needle enough to solve the problem."* He cited the recent controversy over the All Blacks rugby team securing a sponsorship deal with oil and plastics giant INEOS. Despite high profile New Zealanders and climate activists publicly denouncing the deal it went ahead. Lucas said this kind of response still seemed to be the norm with government decisions also. *"People get upset and the government says 'we're listening to you' but nothing changes. Government organisations just go ahead and do what's most profitable."*

Several participants favoured their form of 'quiet activism'; individual contributions to improving the environment, involving working in nature or on personal projects rather than communal activism. Paul queried the value of *"Going for a walk down Queen Street for climate change so that people who follow you online can see that you care...it's easy to be an armchair or online warrior but not actually change anything about the way they live."* He saw greater value in personal lifestyle choices and actions than what he saw as *"attacking others in a false self-righteous exercise or virtue signalling"*.

Several participants were sceptical about the level of commitment from some of those who joined protest marches. Some mentioned that many young people joined protests *"for the fun of it"* (Emma) or to create havoc and were not committed to the cause of action on climate change.

"Leaving school to go and stand on the street... I personally don't think that is the best form of action. A lot of the people who went [on the School Strikes] are not actually taking action in their own lives...do that then go home and drive a car around or something...McDonald's wrappers and other rubbish left in the streets...It doesn't sit right with me...would have been better if people had a school strike and went and planted trees all day or cleaned up beaches." (Becky)

Sam described himself as *"a day-to-day grassroots activist...not so involved in physical protests...I try to make the environment, the world around me, better wherever I am."* He tried to lead by example in a friendly way, *"...things that people can relate to, growing vegetables and giving them to people."* He had a transformative experience relating to nature at a university camp and thought about how

he could keep that relationship with the natural world going back in urban life. He went to some environmental group meetings. Someone told him, *“You can’t care for something unless you love it – fall in love with it and then take care of it.”* He researched science communication and learned that it was important to *“...pick the right entry points for people. The big picture of climate change is too challenging for a lot of people...have to pick a gateway...for me it was thinking about waste...not everyone can do everything.”* He said it was important to keep things positive.

The examples participants gave of the activities they engaged in suggest the opportunity to broaden the definition of activism. Eva, for example, pointed out that there are many people who have raised awareness of climate change issues through science or art or other pursuits who would not necessarily identify their activities as activism, and yet they had actively contributed to a shift in public opinion and awareness. Committing to public office with a social justice and environmental agenda is the activist path Leah chose. When she stood for election Leah thought that the best way to effect change was to get some power within the system, to be a part of the structure. However she found it hard to be one player in a system that’s geared to maintain the status quo. She did however point out that:

“...there are many opportunities in this position to agitate – to get people to think about things critically ...what systemic change we need to start reversing the impacts on the environment...The key to this position is not necessarily the work you do in it but the opportunities you take to challenge people to think differently.”

The healing power of nature

Some participants, although self-identifying as climate resisters for the purposes of this research, were happy to identify themselves as ‘quiet activists’; coping with their anxieties about climate change by living lives more connected to nature, pursuing the things that had personal and local meaning and influence. The majority of participants had engaged in some nature-based conservation activity that contributed to their feeling of mental wellbeing. It was learning about regenerative agriculture from a film that really sparked Grace’s environmental passion and climate activism. It was a big realisation finding out how degenerated much of the world’s soil was and that regenerative agriculture could not only help solve climate change but everyone would benefit from healthier food. Her activism was all nature-based, including bush restoration and marine biology

education. She realised from this that laws and regulations would not change anything. *“Get young people to care about nature...educate the children...then they will look after the planet.”* She said getting people involved with nature did not have to be about saving the world but through involvement they begin to care.

Paul’s experience illustrated the significance and power of spending time in nature; how that can impact commitment to protecting the natural world. Everything becomes *“...more real when it’s personal”*. He did not start out with an environmental motivation but that came as a consequence of his work on conservation projects on the land.

“What motivates me most is the connection that people have with the land they occupy or govern, whether they are tangata whenua or not...gives the work deeper meaning. What’s the point in caring about climate change if we haven’t looked after the land sufficiently to support life?” (Paul)

The lifestyles of the people he worked with were *“...a lot more connected to the land...often more self-sufficient with food...meat from hunting...not necessarily a climate change commitment but [contributing] through connection to the whenua. Taking pests...pigs and deer...out of the bush.”*

Several participants had formative experiences leading to a deep concern for the natural world and an understanding of the critical role nature played in human health and the interdependence of humans and the rest of the natural world. Lucas said he was very fortunate to spend holidays in national parks as a boy which triggered his environmental interest and that led to his career choice. Sam also described his university camping experiences as having led to his career choice working on the land.

Jack pointed out how a transition to a low-emissions future would benefit not only the planet but greatly improve people’s lives. By slowing things down, reducing what have become 70-hour work weeks and more for many people, they would have time to walk rather than use cars, time for their communities and time for the health-giving benefits of working and relaxing in nature.

The risks and (sometime) rewards of protest

Risks

The experiences of participants engaged in protesting was very much dependent on the community they were part of. If they were protesting against the views held by the mainstream of their community they experienced a degree of backlash or 'othering'.

Emma identified 'othering' from mainstream viewpoints as one of the potential downsides of involvement in protest action. *"[There is] already a negative view about environmental activists...seen as a bit taboo...the hippies...seen as a movement of dreamers who don't contribute anything to society."* She was concerned at being involved with any protest action that reinforced that image. *"I don't think it's productive. I believe in peaceful non-violent protest. It can be disruptive as long as there's a point to it, or else it's not going to be taken seriously."* She cited Extinction Rebellion protest actions such as 'die-ins' [where a group of protestors lie down and 'play dead' in a public or targeted organisation's space] as effective at getting media attention but not at providing solutions to the crisis.

"To be able to continue with activism I really can't focus on the negative. I need to focus on the hope, the ways forward...rather than turn people off...Extinction Rebellion is amazing at getting big numbers and striking visual images but I'm not sure about the long-term impact...for me personally, I can't be too morbid."
(Emma)

Participants shared their difficult experiences of trying to engage those who disagreed with them over climate change issues. Liam described his local community as *"conservative"* and said it could be difficult when trying to engage with farmers: *"...their industry is one of the key emitters causing climate change...There's a lot of denial in the rural community."* He regrets that some high-profile role models including politicians continue to deny some of the realities of climate change. *"We were told we're just kids, we don't know the truth...our MP has much more experience than you. It's very frustrating."*

Even more distressing for some of the young protestors was receiving abuse from their peers when the protestors were seen to be acting against the interests of a local farming community for example.

"It can become quite daunting and overwhelming when you have your own classmates telling you you're a liar. It gets difficult and frustrating if your peers don't understand and support you. You can start to doubt the value of what you do...it affects you mentally." (Liam)

Liam believed it was important that schools provided and supported opportunities for climate activism so young activists have the backing of a like-minded community.

While some protests were designed to cause disruption some participants struggled with the thought of causing problems for other people, even when that was the objective. And the reputations of activist organisations could be damaged if people got involved who were more interested in creating havoc than promoting a cause.

"I'm not super radical. All my actions are weighed up against what impact they will have on people. Some activists think a little bit of discomfort doesn't matter in the long term because we're looking to make a bigger difference. My threshold for discomfort I cause is fairly low." (Emma)

Emma was put off protest action by one event that ended badly with negative media coverage. At university she met some young individuals who *"just wanted to cause mayhem with no real objective...it's ok to cause some harm or disruption but there needs to be a strategy behind it."* She got a bit disillusioned, gave up on active involvement in climate change advocacy for a couple of years, and suffered a period of depression where she felt there was nothing to be done. *"I got really morose...thought 'oh well, it's [climate change] going to happen"* and there was nothing she could do.

Jack had been involved in campaigning against fossil fuels. He said some campaigners were being watched and followed. *"They were spying on us. They like to make you feel you're tiny and your actions don't work."* The surveillance in this case was by an oil company. Activists who speak out and got involved in illegal and even legal activities face consequences. Jack said he would never get a job in MFAT [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade] for example. *"They won't trust you for security reasons. That disincentivises a lot of people who contemplate activism."* He said while you might be

spied on generally it was not life-threatening here [in New Zealand]. However we did not have to look too far back to recall the death of a Greenpeace activist in the Rainbow Warrior bombing. Activism could cause other problems; Jack warned that activists might have trouble getting jobs in politics and business.

“It really threatens people’s career options...it’s not that sinister sounding but it is a really big issue...Often people don’t want to be spokespeople because they might find themselves calling out a company they might want to work for in the future. Campaigners talk about it all the time. Some people work in the public service so they don’t want to speak in public. Often those who know a lot about climate change issues don’t want to get involved in activist organisations...sometimes they’re not allowed to as public servants.” (Jack)

Adding to a self-perpetuating cycle of disadvantage Jack explained that those from already marginalised communities who had most to lose from climate change were also most at risk from engagement in activism.

“[People from] Māori and Pacific communities who engage in activism are much more at risk from police than I [a Pākehā male] am. If I got arrested I’m probably gonna get treated pretty well. I know my rights much better than a lot of vulnerable communities do...Climate activism is not safe...especially illegal actions are being very white-led... because of the way police have treated Māori communities in the past.”

Because of the risks many people with relevant education and knowledge excluded themselves from climate activism. Many of the employment options for a lot of those with relevant post-graduate qualifications were in the public service or connected organisations. Jack: *“I made the decision to be happy to be involved [in activism] and call people out. I prefer to work in the NGO space anyway.”*

“I’ve been studying so employment is not an issue but I’m aware of the risks and probably wouldn’t join the most extreme climate groups...some fear of being arrested” (Lucas). However he “admired” other more extreme protests and possibly would get involved given “the right circumstances”. Working in the field of conservation he did not see that any employment would “get in the way of

being an activist". He added that he would not want to work in a place that *"would be upset that I had concerns about climate change"*.

One participant pointed out that at institutions like universities students could protest and do things that staff often could not or would not because staff might be concerned it would affect their employment. Those who protested within a tertiary environment accepted that students were generally more privileged than other demographics and that their treatment by police and other authorities might have been quite different in other situations.

Some very practical concerns like exposure to the elements, arrangements for food, water and toileting became quite critical and concerning during protests that involved occupations over longer periods of time. The potential legal consequences were a major concern to overcome before one participant took part in a protest occupation. Trespass notices could have an impact on work or study. It was considered very important that in any active protest situation that protestors should be well-briefed and it should be agreed beforehand what risk level everyone was prepared for; to get arrested or not for example. Training was important because unplanned actions could reflect badly on the protest organisation and result in negative media. Advice from participants was that those wanting to get involved in protest actions should ensure the protest group was well organised and covered off all the critical issues beforehand.

Participants pointed out that disappointing outcomes were a regular reality that they needed to deal with and that activism required the resilience to keep on fighting despite the setbacks. One participant cited an industrial pollution proposal they had opposed which, despite receiving 14 times more objections than supports, was approved anyway. And more of a risk posed by activism involvement rather than protest itself was the risk of ridicule and feeling of shame when representing a country seen not to be acting ethically in the face of climate change challenges. When attending a COP meeting, for example, one of the participants felt ashamed when people said they had heard about "your awful agricultural policy" .

None of the participants had encountered particularly intimidating responses from authorities in any climate change protest action. Leah did not find the police presence at the School Strikes protest

threatening in any way but noted police action at past land rights protests had definitely been intimidating. Amy did warn, however, that tougher authoritarian responses were a risk if young people's rebellion increased as a result of government not acting on their concerns.

Rewards

"You stop being a victim when you start taking action" (Liam)

Collective action was seen by all participants as a positive force and that it could achieve more than *"...just changing your lightbulbs and that sort of stuff" (Eva)*. Eva got involved in a fossil fuels divestment campaign when she became aware through a public lecture *"...of where culpability [for climate change] lay and of the potential of collective rather than individual personal action."* The campaign succeeded in getting a large institution to divest from fossil fuels and she discovered that a well-managed organisation and campaign could be very successful at undermining social licence for the likes of fossil fuels.

Emma emphasised that having a strategy and an end goal, such as shutting a mine, gave the best opportunity for protest to succeed. She also noted the success of fossil fuel divestment campaigns giving the example of the default Kiwisaver funds no longer investing in fossil fuels: *"...doing away with the social licence to be affiliated with the fossil fuel industry... it's exciting to see businesses wearing their divestment badge proudly...[but] it's not great to think it's driven by intrinsic capitalist values – that is, to attract more customers"*.

Jack took up climate activism after getting a dismissive response from an MP to a weather disaster affecting his community. *"...made me feel so powerless...don't ever want to feel that way again. That's why I do activism...to feel that sense of agency"*. He too really valued the sense of community and relationships that came from involvement in the climate justice movement which he found *"almost as important as the end goal"*. *"The process of empowerment is one of the most important things about campaigning."* Several participants referred to the sense of agency they got from being part of a movement. Jack added that activism could also be *"really helpful in dealing with the grief...channelling rage and anger into building something positive and hopeful. I definitely feel better when I'm doing something about an issue than sitting feeling sad."* He found one of the

greatest rewards in seeing new people come into activist movements, finding friends, building relationships and a sense of community. *"Self protection won't solve anything...the best resistance is working together as a community"* rather than in self-interest.

Leah hoped climate change activism gets more disruptive with more people involved especially with the school strikes: *"...because they disrupted life in a way that was hard to criticise because it's kids – a really powerful way to disrupt people's lives"*. She believed that the school strikes were important because they brought families on board that might otherwise not have engaged with the issue:

"And for some people street protest is all that they have. It's an important right that needs to be protected. I hope it [climate change] protest grows as people grapple with the grief of what is lost and what is to come." (Leah)

Emma agreed that the School Strikes were positively received *"instilling the value of collective activism with the young"* and gained lots of attention. *"The government can't ignore 500,000 people asking for something."*

Liam got involved with School Strikes 4 Climate in the lead up to the most recent national elections and believed the activism had a positive outcome on the elections in terms of raising climate change as a priority and securing support for policies prioritising the environment. He believed the most effective outcome of the School Strikes movement was being able to meet with politicians and candidates during the election year and bringing young people, who would be most impacted by climate change in the future, to the table. *"It's a good time to hold politicians to account."* He qualified this by questioning whether politicians' pronouncements are just *"empty words"*. *"I don't know if they really see the reality of climate change or make decisions based on the popular vote..."*. He also initiated an environmental movement at his school to introduce better environment practices and community clean-ups. *"Having joint action like School Strike provides good support – knowing you're not the odd one out."*

Emma also valued the sense of being part of the activist community. She explained the positive role that recognition and encouragement had in giving young people the confidence to take leadership roles and engage in activism. *"Being singled out at a young age as a potential climate leader"*

motivated me to keep involved in activism...prior to being acknowledged I saw myself as an imposter in that space.”

In seeking answers to the research questions about intergenerational climate justice for Aotearoa’s young climate resisters this chapter presented and discussed a range of initial themes that emerged from the participants’ interviews: they felt the weight of responsibility for dealing with the climate crisis but did not blame older generations – they reserved their anger and condemnation for ‘big oil’, industry and/or the ‘system’; they suffered from climate change related anxiety and most found strength and solace in nature; they had mixed views of the value of protest but found valuable support and community in activist and environmental organisations.

The following chapter will cover where our participants look for inspiration in dealing with the crisis; what issues to resolve are of greatest importance to them; and why, given all the challenges, they still have hope. Chapter 6 will consider these themes:

- Mātauranga Māori – look here for answers
- What matters most:
 - structural change, a just transition, inequity, justice, education, media responsibility
- Why we have hope

CHAPTER 6

Priorities, pathways and...hope

Introduction

In the previous chapter we learned from the research participants that they sought solidarity from older generations in addressing the climate crisis and they have little faith in political and business leadership to drive the needed changes. In looking for more answers to the question of what intergenerational climate justice rangatahi seek this chapter covers where they think we should be looking for answers and what they believe are the climate challenge priorities. The chapter concludes with why, despite the challenges, the participants have hope for the future.

Mātauranga Māori

Several participants referenced mātauranga Māori specifically as the source of deep knowledge and understanding of the natural world that Aotearoa should look to as we try to heal the environment and prepare for climate change. Others, particularly those who worked on the land or within nature, talked about values and relationships with the land that are more akin to a te ao Māori perspective than a global capitalist view of the land as a resource. However there was concern that Māori disadvantage and limited access to decision-making fora would restrict the valuable leadership Māori could demonstrate in this space.

Emma believed most responses to climate change should be Māori led:

“We have a lot to learn about Māori respect for the land but they are the most disadvantaged. How can we expect them to lead the work when they come from a position of disadvantage?” (Emma)

Sam pointed out that the environmental crisis was a result of the short-term profit-driven thinking of the global capitalist system. *“We’ve got to stop thinking of just one or two generations... the Indigenous approach of thinking about the future for at least seven*

generations.” This aligns with the Māori principle of kaitiakitanga, or guardianship, whereby we are just stewards, caring for the land and environment on behalf of our tūpuna and for all future generations. Sam also referenced the spirit of manaakitanga experienced by all who visit a marae; that this should guide our response to the challenges of climate change. In that spirit we would find strength in connection, building strong communities with, for example, community gardens and food forests and be prepared to welcome and share what we had with climate refugees.

However Sam warned about treading carefully when wanting to cherry-pick aspects of Māori culture that suited us when trying to address a systemic problem like climate change.

“Appropriating the value that Māoritanga has to offer in building resilience against climate change is tricky because of the intergenerational trauma that Māori suffer [from the impact of colonisation]...When Pākehā want to adopt anything from Māori culture it must be done respectfully and carefully.”
(Sam)

He pointed to the richness of Māori spiritual connection to the environment. Provided that it was guided and led by Māori he said we would be foolish to go forward without tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori leading Aotearoa’s response.

Leah explained that the issue of intergenerational justice in the context of climate change would be different from a Māori perspective than from a global capitalist view. *“Most Indigenous people have a deep connection to the Earth”* and that extended to wanting to protect and preserve the natural world for future generations. So it was deeply painful for Māori to see the environmental loss and devastation that would be passed on. *“It will be personally and emotionally devastating to watch the environment be degraded by our actions...”*. The strong ties from generation to generation within the concept of whakapapa was central to the Māori belief system. Leah drew strength from the support of her kaumātua; *“There’s nothing my kaumātua wouldn’t do for me.”*

What matters most to young climate change resisters

Structural change

The need for structural change to a low carbon economy was the standout priority for the majority of participants. There was recognition that this would be painful and that initiatives like job replacement and training were needed to ensure a just and equitable transition. They believed it was not possible to have just outcomes, fair to everyone, when the system was structurally geared to privilege one demographic against others.

While there was agreement that political leadership had failed thus far the participants were divided on whether the changes needed in response to climate change would eventually come from political leadership or be driven by the people. Leah believed political leadership change would not achieve the needed outcomes. A whole of society change was necessary and would then be reflected in government, not the other way round; thus for Leah change needed to be *“Bottom up not top down...systemic change has to be a push from people.”* She questioned whether our Westminster-based “top-down” political system delivered the best outcomes for Aotearoa.

Lucas however believed change *“from below”* was not happening fast enough. *“People are dying from climate change so I’m dissatisfied with governments’ response ... I’m hopeful that activists from outside will be able to infiltrate governments and businesses and be able to influence policy from within.”* But he feared that the system itself corrupted even those who might want to make changes. By the time anyone gets to a position of power they had been institutionalised and *“jaded”* and *“especially politicians become compromised”*. This reality prevented *“the real systemic change that the world needs which is to stop growth at all cost”*. He believed the current capitalist structure would not allow decarbonising the economy fast enough to meet any of the global temperature goals because *“people make decisions based on growth. It’s what people vote on.”*

Leah also identified growth as a critical problem.

“This capitalist society is premised on limitless growth which is clearly not sustainable...All the things we have from capitalism that have made life convenient need to be chucked out the window...we need to re-evaluate the way we live...change assumptions about the material possessions and conveniences we really need.” (Leah)

Despite many younger people now being more aware of climate change than previous generations, all generations continued to contribute to it with our carbon intensive consumer-oriented lifestyles. Liam noted the insidious and entrenched nature of the capitalist economy *“with the younger generation still wanting all the material goods”*.

Leah acknowledged some inconveniences and discomforts in our daily lives, like moving to public transport for example, were necessary to make the changes needed. The personal choices we made every day were important but she said they could only go so far:

“...when a small number of massive perpetrators [of harm] in this world get away with a lot of the worst impacts on our climate...so I’m trying to have an impact personally but recognising that [the barriers] are structural and systemic...Organisationally our systems are geared towards maintaining the status quo so it’s quite difficult to alter policies and strategies within a culture that is geared a certain way – to privilege a certain demographic. Our institutions, central and local government, are geared that way. Change at the top [representation in government] is almost too late. You need a green lens throughout all organisations at every level rather than politicians at the end saving the day.” (Leah)

Institutions were structurally resistant to change and even when there was a public mandate for change it took so long to get something done. Planning and infrastructure were really big challenges. Leah: *“It’s not so much public resistance to change as it is supplying the*

good options.” She gave public transport as an example. “It’s hard to blame people for using private vehicles when public transport infrastructure is not in place.” She believed people would make the right choices if they had good options.

“The climate crisis requires us to be responsive and agile and we are not. Everything takes too long. We are super-paralysed in our response.”
(Leah)

Lucas believed the government should devote every possible resource towards setting up green sustainable energy infrastructure and that it was pointless expecting every individual to reduce consumption or change their lifestyles without government intervention. Thus for Liam, *“We’re just working within the system we’re given.”* He felt that if the real cost, including the environmental costs or ‘externalities’ of oil and all products including food, was reflected in consumer prices then people would be motivated to find more sustainable ways of living. As Liam put it *“...the common language is money. People will keep living the way they are as long as it’s financially sustainable”*. While other participants agreed with applying the full lifecycle costs to consumables there was also concern about the unfair impact on low income demographics and that those with higher disposable incomes would be afforded more choices.

Just transition

The inequity of income disparity would become even more striking as jobs were lost from sunset industries in the transition to a low carbon economy. Most participants referenced the need for a just transition with several emphasising the need to help people transition from redundant jobs and industries by creating new employment pathways and to provide support within industries to change to sustainable low-carbon, non-polluting practices. Amy considered a just transition was the key to getting wider support for change. Because of the urgency of the challenge Amy thought there was a *“need to act fast but [the government] shouldn’t neglect people who lose jobs. People shouldn’t be left behind just because they worked in the fossil fuel industry”*. She believed that wealthy countries needed to take the

lead in this transition and support poorer countries: *“Wealthy countries have the responsibility to lead the way in providing solutions...and make it possible for the Third World to follow”*.

Emma advised that to bring people with you it was important to think about everyone's future including fossil fuel workers, farmers and others whose jobs might disappear, and to provide them with a vision of a future where their needs would be met.

“There needs to be a plan for what comes next for people who lose their jobs in transferring away from fossil fuels.. I think about the West Coast a lot...small towns that have no other industry...to make the transition [we] need to show commitment to people affected...There's not enough attention on this...I want to see a plan.” (Emma)

Emma believed the politicians needed to go into communities and look at how people could be retrained *“...and included in the new world we want to build. People get upset and angry because they don't feel included”*. She cited coalminers and farmers whose families had been in these industries for generations and their occupations were a huge part of their identity. For Emma *“No change will happen until everyone feels included or a majority of the population can see how they can be included in the change.”*

Liam agreed on the importance of government support for farmers to transition to more sustainable practices. Leah stressed the need to consider that in rural areas many people were employed in carbon intensive industries like forestry and farming and would need to find new jobs. A lot of those people were Māori and Pasifika who were already disadvantaged in many social and economic respects and would face even more hurdles in a rapidly changing world.

Jack also emphasised the need to bring people with you in the transition. When campaigning he thought it important to *“...try to connect with people’s intrinsic values, for example talking to farmers about how climate change might affect them”* and that government needed to help in the transition to regenerative farming. A just transition would mean a living wage and good clean jobs for everyone who wanted them, for example in renewable energy, planting trees, pest control, public rail and other public transport. Jack argued that if people had security they would not worry about coal mines closing and gas exploration ending.

“Slowing society down...localise things rather than flying across the world and the country...give people more time...not having to worry about doing 70-hour weeks...people who have more time reduce their emissions, have time to walk, to use public transport, garden and grow their own food...spend time in nature...develop relationships with neighbours and their community.” (Jack)

Emma had particular concerns for marginalised youth and others who struggled to meet their basic needs now, before even bigger challenges hit.

“Until you deal with these basic life needs you can’t expect people to face climate change challenges. With basic human rights of food and shelter not being met the other issues are just not important to them...if we want people to care and be able to act their basic needs have to be met first... a basic level of income...and then they can deal with other stuff.” (Emma)

One participant was aware of a young person who had been through a lot of trauma and been homeless. They were subsequently helped into skills training in conservation and as a result developed a huge passion for the environment and restoring it. Once their basic living needs were addressed they were able to engage with a work programme. Emma, for example, was of the view that:

“The priority is to lift the most disadvantaged and that lifts everybody...allows everyone to then focus on the big global issues.”
(Emma)

Inequity

Participants were aware of the inequitable impacts of climate change both locally and globally, agreeing that those most affected have the least power to effect change. Emma’s main concern was how it would affect the marginalised, and those with disabilities and the inequitable effect on Māori as they started from a position of disadvantage. Amy noted that Indigenous people throughout the world were marginalised so the impact of climate change was worse for their communities.

Leah was also concerned that the poor and already disadvantaged, including many Indigenous communities, would be impacted the most with climate change destroying the homes of many in low-lying communities in some Pacific Islands and in Bangladesh for example. She pointed out that many Māori communities were in coastal low-lying areas in New Zealand and would face relocation. As she put it *“Our towns and cities are planned in ways that it will be poor people impacted the most, such as in some low-lying areas in South Auckland”*. Jack agreed that the most disadvantaged, like many in the Pacific Islands, were already bearing the brunt of climate change. He condemned the fact that the global responses including the talks at the COP meetings were being led largely by the rich countries and *“...by old rich white men. No matter how good they are they don’t have those lived experiences.”*

The loss of Pacific Island homelands resulting in forced migrations and many homeless climate refugees was of great concern to Liam: *“We need to do everything we can for our Pacific Island neighbours, to save them, their culture and their homelands...welcome them, inclusively invite their cultures within our society.”* He believed climate justice meant honouring obligations to our Pacific neighbours. Acknowledging the inequity in his privileged

position, Lucas said that while he currently lived by the coast he had *“the luxury of being able to move but many people can’t,”* which worried him a great deal.

Eva cited the injustice of climate change causing the most harm to the people who had done the least to cause it. She identified inequity – the greater impact on the marginalised - alongside species extinction as her greatest concerns about the impact of climate change. She had a physical disability and had great concerns that justice and equity for disabled and Indigenous people *“sit way behind in priority”* when it came to climate change issues like disaster management; *“You feel quite powerless if you think too much about it.”*

Justice

Participants challenged whether an intergenerational perspective was the fairest or most useful lens through which to view climate justice.

“It’s hard to think in terms of justice for a generation because of the range. There are some very privileged young people out there and there are some very disadvantaged young people. The transfer of wealth is not based on age but on a whole lot of other things.” (Leah)

Leah argued that the best way to deliver justice was *“collective thinking versus individual thinking”* which required transforming the individual success-based neo-liberal culture. She suggested that older people in privileged positions could use their votes for those who do not or cannot yet vote– for the future of young people. Retirees with time and money could use their privilege for those without that privilege – for young families without wealth.

Eva believed it was not possible to separate the issues of climate justice, social equity and social justice from the problem of unsustainable growth that was inherent in the capitalist economic system. Jack agreed pointing out that you *“can’t look at emissions reductions without looking at the justice implications”*. The poorest would be hardest hit by the

transition. He pointed out the injustice of First World countries having grown their wealth off the back of fossil fuels and now Third World countries were being required to reduce the use of those same resources they needed to make economic and social progress.

Education

A common experience for the participants was exposure to environmental programmes at primary level but little at high school other than initiatives established by the students themselves. There were exceptions where at least one participant described the influence of a teacher who was interested in environmental and climate change issues. Lucas noted the privilege he had of a good education and having a teacher who communicated climate change and human over-exploitation well and this had furthered his interest in climate science and led to graduate studies and pursuing a career in the field. But participants noted that the lack of any specific focus on climate change at high school was a glaring deficiency and wasted opportunity to better inform and support students and prepare them for the challenges they would face.

Liam felt that climate change education at school was currently largely a matter of luck. *“What teachers address depends a lot on the individual teacher rather than any direction from the Ministry.”* Becky said the teachers argued that there was no time, they were too busy with the curriculum and getting the students to achieve their credits. Becky’s school *“didn’t allow attendance at the School Strikes 4 Climate”* and those who went were considered truant. Becky thought that *“Schools need to be supportive and push climate activism and awareness with students.”*

Emma described a programme at primary school that was driven by a teacher’s interest, *“...things like picking up rubbish, treading lightly on the environment, planting trees, composting – small level stuff.”* Along with other participants Emma also found that climate change was not in the curriculum in her high school. What they did have was dependent on the interests of individual teachers which in her case involved an ‘environmental week’ with

relevant activities. However, because there was little formal teaching she gained little understanding of climate change at school:

“There’s a huge opportunity where climate change could be introduced into the curriculum, especially in science and social studies...Also, if there was more education in schools it would help to make it more socially acceptable to talk about.” (Emma)

Emma’s cohort of friends had never been exposed to climate change information which made it an easy issue to avoid in their daily lives.

Liam also believed that climate change education would support action for change.

“Students would take their knowledge to their parents... [climate change] becomes the issue that everyone discusses based on the facts not myths...From the School Strike 4 Climate perspective one of the biggest things Government should be focusing on is climate education.” (Liam)

He added that the School Strikes movement wanted climate change taught in years 1-10 then incorporated within all NCEA subjects. With some young activists having received abuse from their peers Liam said this highlighted the need for more and better climate change education even for this generation of high school rangatahi that have been more exposed to the issue. He found school debating experience helped him to be able to see the opposite perspective: *“It helps to understand and sympathise with where [climate deniers] are coming from.”*

Participants emphasised the education and workforce training needed to support the demand for infrastructure change and development. Leah, for example, suggested that we needed to train more ‘homegrown’ planners and engineers and be less reliant on these skills coming from overseas because: *“We don’t promote those professions here.”* Leah also

argued for the need to develop the expertise to effect the transition to a *“super-localised low carbon future”* and that educating rangatahi now about climate change was important so that difficult future decisions might be easier. It was also important to her to be promoting young people’s connection to the Earth through mātauranga Māori - different ways of knowing, and by drawing on Māori and Pacific myths and creation stories.

Participants also agreed on the importance of climate change education to help counter any misinformation that is disseminated through various media and other sources.

Media responsibility

There was a general belief by participants that media platforms were part of the systemic problem and structure that had to be changed to address climate change; that media funding by big business perpetuated the profit-driven system at the heart of the climate crisis. Emma believed the media had failed to get factual information to the general public and had colluded in spreading the propaganda of the petrochemical industry. She felt the media had an important role to play that included providing role models for young people to see how they could contribute in the climate change space and in promoting the types of jobs they could work towards.

Independent and public service media helped to mitigate the big business bias however. Emma said she found it important to use a trusted source and received her news from Radio New Zealand: *“I don’t have time to do my own research so I’m trusting these journalists. When climate news is reported accurately it makes a big difference.”* She thought that media played a role in a generational divide in awareness and belief in climate change; that some older people would get unreliable information from the likes of talkback radio that would reinforce their beliefs. Older generations might have had less exposure to climate change information through their media consumption. She believed social media played a part in younger people having greater awareness and that the social media platform TikTok was an important source for young people sharing information online.

Citing an example of the influence of media, one participant noticed that when her father listened to a lot of talkback radio his opinions became more extreme. His access to a range of media was much more limited than hers. She had also noted the possible influence of increased news coverage of climate change on a growing acceptance by her parents of the fact of climate change. For this participant, *“The media have responsibilities...it’s crucial.”*

Why we have hope

“Fear stops people acting and there’s heaps we can do so I try to focus on that.” (Leah).

Despite the grim news and their understanding of the scale of the climate challenge, without exception the young participants all had hope for the future. This was partly because they felt they needed to have hope to keep living their lives and that fear was paralysing, but also because they could see changes staring to happen in the zeitgeist. Even though change was slow and not sufficient Jack believed sentiments had changed.

“We can see change – there is more awareness [of climate change] now... I’m totally hopeful. There are people doing incredible things each day we don’t hear about...we feel cynical and often the media doesn’t cover the amazing work...see what movements like Sunrise and others are doing...”
(Jack)

Leah noted that the fact she got elected to public office at 23 indicated a level of support for the young across generations. With more younger people elected in the last local body and national elections their impact would start to be felt: *“That’s really helpful I think. Local bodies especially are at the forefront of the climate response.”* She was aware of more conversations about change and the way we do things, including recognition of historical injustice, beginning to happen in our institutions. She cited media company Stuff’s Tā Mātou Pono (Our Truth) initiative addressing the history of racism in Aotearoa and apologising for biased and unjust coverage:

“For me as an Indigenous person I loved what they did but I’m not looking for an apology...Apologies are awesome but it’s important that we have a critical conversation about the way we do things. It doesn’t have to be a Māori worldview but we have to look at everything we consume, the whole-of-life cycle, in a circular way... That everything we do has a consequence”. (Leah)

Leah stressed that acknowledging the past was a start but there was little point unless we changed the way we did things. She added that the discussion about systemic change was happening more frequently as people spoke about constitutional change and the role of the Treaty (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) in forming a constitutional basis for Aotearoa.

Jack believed there was great power in people working together and building community. While he thought it was terrible that much of the trillions of dollars of global Covid-19 economic recovery money was going into big business and not to economic transformation there was increasing awareness of this and that was building a public mandate for change.

“Things like the Green New Deal⁷ used to be radical...not so now. People are demanding rent freezes etc., things not feasible under different conditions before Covid. People’s sentiments are changing.” (Jack)

Grace was hopeful for the future because she believed New Zealand had a *“privileged position”* and she was therefore more worried about other countries. Liam also gained hope from considering that New Zealand was in a fortunate position and had the potential to *“lead the way”* in addressing climate change: *“I have hope for a new generation of politicians. We may have a chance of battling locally but globally not so much.”* Amy shared their hope because she believed we still had the potential to make dramatic change; *“...conservative [leaders] just need to make way for more progressive leadership to*

⁷ The term Green New Deal has been used to describe sets of policies that aim to make systemic change emphasising environmental and social equity and justice.

transform systems". Leah agreed that change would come; "I personally remain hopeful that we'll make the changes we need to in order to survive", while Lucas hoped that "...it would be nice to get there when there's less of a crisis."

While acknowledging the urgency for action, Eva believed there'd never be a time to give up hope. *"People still say there's hope with the tiny amount of time left to act...there will always be something we can do."*

This chapter concluded the presentation of the views of the young participants, focusing on the changes they wanted to see prioritised in our response to climate change. The following chapter will discuss their views in the context of the literature on young people's climate change resistance and what their responses tell us about how they view intergenerational climate justice. It will highlight their wish to engage with older generations against the fossil fuel interests and structural inequities they identify as barriers to climate justice. Finally it will summarise the key implications of the research arguing for the needs of rangatahi to be prioritised as they move into a future world vastly more challenging and unstable than the past.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter discusses the young participants' experiences and perceptions of climate change resistance. It analyses their views and opinions on responses to the challenges of the climate crisis detailed in the previous two chapters. The analysis is presented in the context of the key research objective; to illuminate and better understand what rangatahi climate resisters seek in terms of intergenerational climate justice and their concerns about the future at a time when the urgency of the climate crisis is building. In recognition of the limited volume of international research, and the near complete absence of research focused on the Aotearoa context, this thesis also addresses a gap in the literature. Leading critical criminologists have called for urgent research addressing the need for action in response to climate harms (Goyes, 2019b; Kramer, 2016; Lynch, 2019; Millie, 2018; White, 2018) and this study makes a small contribution to the literature in response to that call. Older generations, especially those in leadership and governance roles, are confronting hard questions about the legacy we are leaving for our young and future generations. The young have the most to lose and yet their voices are seldom prioritised in climate policy debates despite the high profile of Greta Thunberg and the School Strikes movement she initiated. The COP26 meetings, for example, had very few young official delegates to the main meetings with youth delegates relegated to secondary fora (Gerhardt, 2021; IFLAS, 2021b). Acknowledging the limitations of this exploratory study, this research finds that a significant range – in age and experience – of young climate resisters reject the blaming of older generations for the climate crisis and lay the fault squarely at the feet of the fossil fuel industry and its enablers. The climate justice they seek prioritises a just transition to a low-carbon future and structural change to deliver equitable outcomes for all. Intergenerational justice for these rangatahi means structural justice. What they ask from older generations is collaboration in working with them for a new society that prioritises community and equity in facing the challenges of tomorrow's climate challenged world. This research privileges the voices of the young resisters and places their concerns at the centre of the conversation, acknowledging their need to be heard and the importance of a genuine incorporation of their priorities and contributions to decisions that are critical to their future.

The analysis of the research findings is presented here under a series of themes that were identified and discussed in the previous two chapters. The analysis is followed by a broad summary of the findings and a brief comment on the contribution they make to the literature. Following this, recommendations are made for future research that can add further insight to the needs of communities, and young people in particular, in preparing to meet the challenges of climate change. In concluding this research the chapter considers the implications of this study for policymakers and those making decisions for and about our rangatahi and the climate-changed future they will inhabit.

It's up to us

Growing up with the knowledge of climate change, and with the School Strike protests over the past two years, the research participants feel the weight of responsibility to deal with the crisis. While hoping for meaningful national and global responses to climate change the young people in this study had no illusions that governments would deliver needed changes and believe that governments and powerful interests have too much invested in the status quo. A growing number of international scholars support that view, warning that because of the corporate-driven failure of leadership and institutions to respond to climate change, the response to the climate crisis must be community-led (IFLAS, 2020, 2021b). Young activists attending COP26, especially indigenous delegates, came to the same conclusions (Gerhardt, 2021; IFLAS, 2021b).

Blame 'Big Oil' not the boomers

Although they feel it has been left to them to *"clean up the mess"* (Becky) of environmental destruction these rangatahi felt little anger towards older generations, even on the occasions such as when an older person said to Jack, *"we'll leave that up to the younger generation, that's their problem now. It won't be in my lifetime"*. This lack of blame or anger was the most unexpected finding of the research. A review of the literature suggests a consistently angry activist movement of young people (Carrington, 2019; Daalder, 2021b;

Gerhardt, 2021; McNern, 2019), but only the youngest participants in this study expressed anything close to anger at older generations. One of them, Becky (16), was probably the most angry but even then she was restrained; *“I don’t like to feel anger towards people I don’t know”*. The general attitude of these young people was that they are more aware and are more knowledgeable than previous generations and have a greater incentive to deliver change. They acknowledge that many older people have shown leadership in and contributed to environmental activism. What they want from all generations is to join with them in the battle against climate change and the powerful forces that prevent the decarbonisation of the fossil-fuelled global infrastructure. The intergenerational justice these rangatahi seek is a dismantling of the power structure that escalates inequality (Servigne & Stevens, 2020; Stoddard et al., 2021) and destroys future prospects for them and subsequent generations. Prioritising the interests of current over future generations is inherent in the free market economic model that privileges the present-day power elite (Stoddard et al., 2021). While the anger the participants feel for the fossil fuel industry that underpins the prevailing economic model was almost palpable, they also feel anger is unproductive. These activists are more motivated by working for equitable outcomes and by their connection with and care for the environment. They spoke about climate and other environmental issues interchangeably.

Quiet activists – the healing power of nature

Explaining his relationship with nature, Sam advised that you needed to love something before you could care for it. Successful US campaigner Daniel Sherrell (2021) also found that in his climate activism there was greater power and motivation to act in loving the things you might lose than in loathing whoever is trying to take them away. Similar sentiments were expressed by most of the young activists in the study who are more motivated to fight climate change by their love for the natural world and their concern for social equity and justice than by their anger at fossil fuel interests. Sam and Paul, who both work in environmental restoration, understand that should national and global systems collapse under the weight of climate and environmental crises and their economic impacts, those who have connected with nature in deep, practical and sustainable ways will be in better positions to thrive. They will be more capable of supporting themselves, their whānau and

communities independent of outside supply systems. Climate scientist Tero Mustonen (Breeze, 2021c) supports the focus of activists on working in nature. While he says it is already too late for governments and leaders to act, and they will do nothing anyway, there is a pathway to planetary repair through rewilding and by deepening our custodial relationship with nature. He says whatever can be saved, no matter how small, is valuable.

Sam and Paul both referenced the Predator Free⁸ programme as an example of the potential for nature-based programmes to engage communities in environmental projects and for people to experience the healing power of nature. They say the programme offers hope with many non-Māori also feeling the connection to the whenua and recognising we are not separate – and that our wellbeing is closely connected to the wellbeing of the land and the entire natural world. Predator Free is the most ambitious project of its kind in the world and has achieved huge buy-in from citizens. Throughout the country thousands are engaged in large scale projects in towns and cities as well as in forests (Hansford, 2021).

Anxiety & depression

The power of being in nature to alleviate anxiety could be a double-edged sword however with all of the young people citing their sadness and some despair at the loss of species and habitats and ongoing destruction of the natural world. Leah expressed sadness that future generations would not get to experience the natural world as she has. Most of the participants had suffered from periods of climate change related anxiety, depression or feelings of hopelessness and this was worst when their concerns were dismissed by authorities or those they perceived had the power to take mitigating action. Collective processes that validated young people's concerns and engagement with any form of activism from work in the community to protesting can help the young deal with anxieties around climate change (Hickman, 2020; Nairn, 2019). Emma, Lucas and Jack had all been motivated to join an environmental group as an antidote to anxiety. Liam commented that

⁸ Predator Free 2050 is an ambitious goal to rid New Zealand of the most damaging introduced predators that threaten our nation's natural taonga, our economy and primary sector.
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/>

“You stop being a victim when you start taking action” echoing the acknowledgement by victimologists that regaining agency and sovereignty over one’s life-course is what characterises a ‘survivor’ (Monod de Froideville, 2021; Pemberton et al., 2019). The success of fossil fuel oil industry campaigns at pushing personal responsibility for climate mitigation has delivered a ‘double whammy’ to this generation of young people; not only having to deal with the consequences of catastrophic fossil fuel-induced climate change but the guilt and anxiety of personal responsibility for contributing to it by the thermo-industrial lifestyle they were born into. Lucas mentioned his guilt at his own *“carbon footprint”* and how it was fuelling his anxiety. Since the 1960s the fossil fuel industry has successfully funded campaigns such as *Keep America Beautiful* in the US (Buranyi, 2018) to place responsibility for dealing with environmental harm squarely on the shoulders of consumers. This manner of neoliberal responsibilisation is a tactic routinely adopted by corporate elites when seeking to avoid liability for their harmful actions (Waters, 2019).

The participants’ positioning of their anxiety and grief alongside accounts of agency and motivation are reflected in the work of young climate activist Daniel Sherrell. In his acclaimed debut book, *warmth – coming of age at the end of our world* (Sherrell, 2021), he described how he struggled with the binary of grieving or organising, that he could “weep” or “work”, that they were mutually exclusive. He concluded in his book, essentially a love letter to his imagined future child, that grief was necessary to resistance and possibly the only thing that made a real fight possible. He acknowledged that many would advise activists to steel themselves against the chaos to come, but that was exactly what the apologists for big oil do; “...clenching their teeth against fact and feeling” (Sherrell, 2021, p. 246).

The COVID-19 pandemic pervaded most aspects of the research process and participants frequently referenced it, the disruption to their lives and how it added to their overall anxiety levels. On the one hand it was a distraction from climate change issues and supplanted the latter in immediate priority, but on the other it underscored for some participants the fragility of systems and structures in their lives that had hitherto seemed

solid and unchangeable. This awareness then spilled over into climate change concerns. Some mentioned that COVID had disrupted their activism plans and the momentum that, for example, School Strikes 4 Climate had gained. One participant was suffering from long COVID which was having a severe effect on her life to the extent that her normal functioning was very much limited. This included her ability to engage in active resistance to climate change.

Activism takes different forms

The participant cohort divided itself loosely into two groups: one with a strong belief in the value and power of everyone doing their own individual lifestyle changes and the other with an equally strong belief in the strength of an activist community working together. There were crossovers with most seeing the value in both but also personally favouring one approach over the other. In part, the difference seemed to be that the one group drew all their strength and validation from the work within nature itself whilst the others drew strength and relief from anxiety from working in a like-minded group. This illustrates that activism takes many forms which deliver value in many different ways. Group activism and marching in the streets does not appeal to everyone who cares about climate change and the environment but it may raise awareness and create pressure on decisionmakers. Likewise working with your hands in the soil is not for everyone but contributes in a tangible way to redressing environmental harm. In addition to changing their lifestyles and working together as activists against climate change, these young people were also consciously bringing climate change concerns into their workplaces or choosing study and careers in areas that address the crisis or related social issues.

It emerged in the discussions with these rangatahi that there may be two distinct broad groupings within the wider movement of young people's climate change activism. The first includes many who are concerned and join protests but essentially continue to live their lives largely unchanged and unaffected by climate change worries. That is not to deny those

in this group have a level of anxiety or attempt to make lifestyle changes, but rather an acknowledgement of the insidious reach of consumptive materialism into every aspect of our lives. The second group are those who live every day in full knowledge of the climate change challenges and this knowledge is profoundly affecting their lives.

The risks and rewards of protest

-Risks

While participants had generally not felt threatened while taking part in protests, and only one had had a personal, non-threatening confrontation with police, they were wary of engaging in more extreme activism. Jack pointed out that privileged groups like Pākehā university students would generally be treated well even if arrested. The marginalised, who already had more to lose from the impacts of climate change, were also at greater risk of arrest and poor treatment by the justice system. But also identified were the more subtle threats that operate to restrict young activists' participation in protests and maintain the unchallenged dominance of the prevailing power structure. Jack and Lucas both understood that involvement in protests potentially excluded activists from certain jobs or careers and that prevented some from participating. Mathieson (2004) conceptualises this form of social control as 'silent silencing' whereby opposition to the dominant capitalist economic forces is suppressed and people readily conform for fear of losing their fragile position in the social strata.

-Rewards

Collective action was seen by all participants as a positive force. It could achieve more than *"...just changing your lightbulbs and that sort of stuff"* (Eva). Eva got involved in a fossil fuels divestment campaign when she became aware through a public lecture of *"... where culpability [for climate change] lay and of the potential of collective rather than individual personal action."* The campaign succeeded in getting a large institution to divest from fossil fuels and she discovered that a well-managed organisation and campaign could be very successful at undermining the social licence for the likes of fossil fuels. The successful 2013

Doubling the Quota refugee campaign is a clear example of the value of a specific activist campaign target rather than a generalised expression of outrage or opposition, which may raise awareness but does not have a single clearly defined goal (Stephens, 2018).

Mātauranga Māori

The rangatahi referenced the importance of mātauranga Māori in preparing for climate change, that there is much we can learn from Māori knowledge of the natural world, and their values and attitude to the whenua. However, as Emma cautioned, mātauranga Māori solutions and initiatives should be Māori-led and to enable Māori leadership we must first address Māori disadvantage.

Young tauiwi, Sam, advocated passionately for Aotearoa to prioritise every aspect of Māoritanga to address this crisis, especially manaakitanga to build community, connection and address migration and refugees and mātauranga Māori to build deeper understanding and knowledge of how to heal the environment and thrive.

For 200 years the dominant Pākehā culture has demanded that Māori do things the Pākehā way. Loss of their lands and resources and diminishing of Māori culture has been reflected in persistently poor statistics for Māori in poverty, health and imprisonment (Rashbrooke, 2021). Alongside the recently accelerating renaissance of Māori culture there have been growing calls from Māori leaders for leadership and governance ‘by Māori for Māori’ (Moko Mead, 2016). As recognition grows of the destructive forces of Western capitalist culture and the ancient wisdom of indigenous cultures like Māori and their relationships with the natural world, there is an argument for “by Māori... for all” (Kelly-Costello, et al., 2020). The participants’ understandings of the critical importance of mātauranga Māori in addressing climate change also speaks to the developing perspective of Southern Green Criminology (Goyes, 2019a), which attributes the social and material divide between the Global North and Global South, both metaphorically and geographically, to be responsible for the patterns of environmental destruction across colonised nations.

What matters most to young climate change resisters

The humanity and altruism in the responses of these young people to questions about their priorities for climate justice, and for governments' and societies' response to the crisis, was particularly affecting. This was apparent in the key research finding of their lack of anger with and blame directed at older generations. While they wanted to preserve nature and its wonders for theirs and their children's futures, overwhelmingly they focused on equity and justice issues – and not for themselves but for everyone else, especially the disadvantaged. They recognised that they were in positions of privilege and were likely to be able to meet the challenges of the future better than many others. Their concern was for young people and others who struggle to survive and do not have room in their lives for climate change issues. They wanted to ensure that the escalating inequalities and obscenities of extreme wealth and extreme disadvantage of this consumer age were not repeated, or worse still magnified, in the climate changed world to come. They wanted to see a just transition to a restructured society that leaves no one behind. The participants believed that both education and the media were critical elements in addressing inequity and preparing young people for the challenges of climate change, but that with few exceptions, they were failing. They believed the education system needed to better address climate change in the curriculum and that the media need to more effectively inform the public about the existential crisis we face. The climate change challenge cannot be addressed without building public awareness of the link between inequity, the fossil-fuelled power structure and the climate crisis. Recent research that found secondary schools were largely failing to meet climate change education needs of students (Bolstad, 2020) supports the participants' views.

Hope

"... without [hope] we fall into apathy and do nothing" (Jane Goodall, 2018).

As knowledge and understanding of the climate crisis becomes more mainstream there is increasing evidence of young people despairing about the future for themselves and the planet (Hickman, 2020). The young participants in this study are well-informed and most have suffered from eco-anxiety to varying degrees, yet they still have hope for their future. The difference here may be the activism itself. The participants cited taking action – from working in nature to participating in protests – as a defence against hopelessness and a source of strength gained from a community of like-minded others all working together against the odds. Contrary views about the efficacy of hope argue that it is an unrealistic attitude in the face of climate change and serves the economic interests of the powerful elite (Stockdale & Milona, 2020), but there is support in psychological theory for its effectiveness. Snyder (2002) cites three conditions for hope to thrive: goals, pathways and agency. The findings of this research, which align with those of another New Zealand study that identified collective processes as generating hope (Nairn, 2019), indicate that involvement in activist organisations helps to counter despair through a sense of community and a feeling of agency.

Summary of findings

Recognising rangatahi as victims of climate change this research sought to determine what climate justice they seek, from older generations in particular. Media coverage of young climate activists invariably frames them as angry and hostile to the ‘boomer’ generation in particular, blaming their elders for jeopardising young people’s futures by not acting to address climate change. These findings reject that framing. These rangatahi do indeed want climate justice, but identify the offender as the powerful fossil-fuelled global infrastructure they credit with responsibility for the climate crisis, not older generations. They understand that the climate crisis, while an existential threat on its own, is just one of the symptoms of the consumption and growth imperative of the global thermo-industrial power structure, and that escalating global inequity is another.

This research tells us that these rangatahi recognise that climate justice will not be found in the existing seats of power. The ‘structure’ does not want to change. Their responses

suggest that they already have some of the answers; that the chance of a better, safer future might be found in reconnecting with nature and community than in clinging on to a failed social model. They already know that time in nature and finding a community alleviates anxiety and they understand the value of turning to the indigenous knowledge of mātauranga Māori and reconnecting with the whenua to enable people to thrive and the land to heal. The young want to be heard but perhaps they need to trust themselves and turn away from the existing power structures and start to build their own.

Contribution to the literature

Answering a call for urgent research on responses to climate change (Goyes, 2019b; Kramer, 2016; Lynch, 2019; Millie, 2018; White, 2018) this study adds to the growing body of green criminology research. There has been little attention given to analysing youth resistance and how young people are challenging contemporary social, economic, and political systems (O'Brien, Selboe, & Hayward, 2018). Green criminology allows us to identify the young as a specific class of victim from the perspective of intergenerational climate justice (Vegh Weis & White, 2020; White, 2015; White & Heckenberg, 2014). This study addresses a gap in the research through an examination of intergenerational justice for rangatahi in Aotearoa resisting climate change. It investigated the ways in which rangatahi are resisting climate change and finds a wide range of activism from street protesting to environmental conservation to political engagement. It seeks to understand what intergenerational climate justice would look like for these rangatahi. This research finds that these young people seek collaboration with all generations in pursuing a range of social justice outcomes the foundation for which is a restructuring of the fossil fuel-based economy that has delivered huge and growing social inequities. The study participants believe those inequities pose the greatest risk in the face of the climate crisis.

Limitations of the research

This research, involving a small group of participants (n=11), explored and critically analysed the issue of intergenerational climate justice for rangatahi in Aotearoa. With the youngest

participant being 16 years and the oldest being 30 years there is a big difference in life experience across the cohort. Thus the findings may have differed had the study included participants that were closer in age. For example the younger participants tended to have more anger than those who were older, however, right across the age range the focus was on solutions and working collaboratively with all generations. Although the participants described themselves as 'resisting' climate change, not all were currently participating in organised climate activism. All but one had previously participated in organised protests and some were highly engaged in protest organisations but several had moved on from street protesting to other, quieter forms of activism including conservation work, writing or research in climate change or environmental issues and political participation. The findings may have differed if the research was conducted with a loud protest group such as Extinction Rebellion.

Literature on young people's climate change activism focuses mostly on higher profile public demonstrations and protests and the most notably active (and loud) protesters. Much of it is media coverage and there is little academic literature from New Zealand, therefore direct comparisons between the activities of the participants and those of young activists noted in the literature review have limitations. While the latter are engaged in more public displays of anger and frustration, the participants in this study generally saw limited value in anger-fuelled protest and demands.

Many of the sources for this thesis are news reports and commentaries along with the academic material because this is such a fast-moving current field. A year on from starting the research it was necessary to replace some of the earlier data with more recent findings. By the time this paper is completed some of it will already be out of date. However this rapidly evolving data illustrates the growing urgency of the climate crisis and the need to support young people aware of the dangerous climate territory we are entering.

Recommendations for further research

Further research is needed to confirm whether these findings hold across a larger group of participants and a broader range of socio-economic groups. It would be interesting to compare these findings with a study of rangatahi not engaged in any form of climate resistance and their views on a just future. It would also be informative to compare the findings of this thesis with a study of older generations and how they perceive intergenerational climate justice for young people. Building on this study, cross-disciplinary research could investigate the policy settings that would deliver the climate justice young people are looking for. A valuable contribution would be an investigation into how mātauranga Māori can inform and facilitate a more equitable and just climate future for rangatahi and all New Zealanders.

Implications of this research

Trust in institutions

The insights of these rangatahi have implications for policymakers and leadership as they develop strategies to prepare for and respond to the climate crisis. This research demonstrates the lack of faith by these young people in governing institutions to respond adequately to climate change - the greatest challenge of our time. In addition these rangatahi believe the prevailing neo-liberal capitalist system is not capable of delivering equity or justice for them or anyone other than a privileged few. This has implications for the future of our governance, legal and justice systems if the current generation of young people do not afford our institutions legitimacy through their belief in them. Governments need to act to gain the faith of this younger generation of voters if they hope to maintain the legitimacy of democratic institutions for as long as the current social structure and its institutions hold (Servigne et al., 2021).

If governments want support from the growing and future electorate of young people they should heed their priorities in responding to the climate crisis and ensure a particular focus

on addressing structural inequities; a just transition with a focus on jobs; Māori-led mātauranga Māori solutions and responses to environmental and social challenges; and education initiatives to prepare rangatahi and tamariki for climate change. Rangatahi seek structural reform and an active role in the decisions that will have a far greater impact on their lives than those of the current policymakers. The climate challenges are more complex than anything legislators have yet had to deal with. Experiments with citizens' assemblies have shown they can be successful in addressing difficult or divisive issues that politicians are afraid to take on (Amateurs to the rescue, 2020). Introducing rangatahi citizens' assemblies is one way to involve the young in policy making. Their value would depend on their mandate. The voting age could be lowered to acknowledge the growing stake in the future the young have as environmental and climate conditions deteriorate.

Mental health

Most of the young people in this study had suffered from anxiety and/or depression caused by their awareness of the climate crisis and the challenges to come. Our young people have grown up under the neo-liberal capitalist doctrine that emphasises individual responsibility and undermines community and has delivered a staggering rise in inequality in Aotearoa and growth in poor health outcomes including rising mental health problems, particularly in the young (Barnett & Bagshaw, 2020; Rashbrooke, 2021). As the real time effects of the climate crisis increase there is the potential for a growing mental health crisis, especially in the young who have much more of their future to lose. We have seen how health systems around the world have struggled during the pandemic and were unprepared for such a global scale crisis. In the future the health system is likely to have multiple crises to address at once: mental health; more pandemics as human populations place animal populations under increasing stress; tropical diseases spreading with the warming; heat stress and other casualties of extreme weather events (Servigne & Stevens, 2020). The health system in general but mental health services in particular need to prepare for this including education for young people and community programmes that strengthen citizens' resilience.

A new criminology of climate change

This thesis draws attention to the injustice and inequity perpetuated by the predominant global power structures that the young participants in this research accurately targeted as the root cause of climate change and the source of the intergenerational climate injustice they will suffer from. The climate crisis is an existential threat that is the result of great injustice. Yet this injustice is mostly not criminalised; much of what constitutes 'green crime' is not criminalised (White & Heckenberg, 2014). This research argues, as advocated for by green criminologists (Millie, 2018; White 2018) that a new critical criminology of climate change is urgently needed. Leading critical and green criminologists (Brisman & South, 2014; Lynch, 2019; Michalowski, 2016; White, 2018) argue that climate change criminology is the most important area of study for contemporary criminologists. Criminology itself risks perpetuating the interests of the dominant economic forces and the ideology of the political state that cause the ecological harm if it does not focus on the injustices inherent in climate change impacts (Michalowski, 2016; White, 2018). By highlighting the injustices in the global systems that have led to climate change, critical criminologists can illuminate for students and a public audience the stresses on our highly connected environmental, economic and social systems creating vulnerability to collapse.

"...we argue that green criminologists must come to recognize that capitalism and nature cannot both survive over the long run, and in criminological terms, capitalism is therefore a crime against nature."

(Lynch, Stretesky and Long, 2016, p.137)

The future

The young people whose valuable contributions are represented in this research understand that there is no climate justice without social justice. Structural change to facilitate social equity, a fair transition, equity and justice are their priorities in order to achieve climate justice. They have no time for intergenerational squabbles and lay the blame for the climate crisis squarely at the feet of Big Oil and big business and the profit-driven capitalist system that enables the despoiling of the environment and the exploitation of peoples. Some anger but mostly frustration is directed at political leadership: *"The new climate denial is not denying that it's happening, it's saying that it's too hard"* (Jack, 22). They have insight and

draw the same conclusions about the multi-dimensional nature of the crisis as some of the world's leading researchers in this space (Stoddard et al., 2021). It is past time for the views of rangatahi climate resisters to be prioritised in the policy debates and decisions that will determine the future they will have to endure but many of the policy makers will not.

We need to talk about collapse

Increasingly mainstream scientists are starting to talk about multi-system collapse of the social, economic and eco-systems that underpin the entire fabric of the planet (Breeze, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; Read, 2021; Servigne & Stevens, 2020; Stoddard, 2021). Despite the awareness the young people in this study had of the causes of the climate crisis and the relationship between climate change, inequality and a global economic system that does not meet the needs of billions, some may not yet acknowledge the scale of the overlapping crises the world faces and the impact of the dismantling of the current structures. Little in the majority of their discourse suggests they envisage the collapse of social structures as indicated by Stoddard et al. above. That has implications for the rest of their generation, many of whom will be less well-informed. While these rangatahi understand the current structure is broken and they seek a changed society they default to current institutional representations of the present structure for solutions; looking for greater political representation and educational and media reform for example. There is less understanding that the current system must come to an end for them to achieve the justice they seek. There is limited awareness of the real potential for social collapse in the medium, or possibly even short-term if a trigger of multi-system collapse is tripped (Breeze, 2021c; Servigne & Stevens, 2020; Stoddard, 2021). Collapse should not be seen as one event that occurs sometime in the future. Collapse is already happening for the many who are losing homes and food supplies to famine, fire and floods. Collapse is happening for the millions of species that continue to suffer and become extinct from the toxic impacts of industrial civilisation (Ahmed, 2014; Bendell & Read, 2021; Servigne & Stevens, 2020). We need to prepare our rangatahi. They have hope but they also need realism. While we cannot bequeath them a future world with the same opportunities there are today, preparing them as best we can for the future is at least a nod to intergenerational justice.

Mō tātou, ā, mō ngā uri ā muri ake nei.

For us and our children after us. (Whakatauki)

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APPENDIX 1

Kupu Māori – Glossary of te reo Māori (Māori language) words

Aotearoa – Indigenous name for New Zealand. Literally: “land of the long white cloud”

Kaitiaki – Guardian, keeper, preserver

Kaitiakitanga – Guardianship, protection, preservation

Kāi Tahu - Alternative form of Ngāi Tahu, one of the Māori tribes

Kaumātua – Adult, elder, person of status within the whānau

Manāakitanga – Extending aroha (love), hospitality, generosity and mutual respect.

Marae – Complex of buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe) or whanau (family)

Mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge

Pākehā – New Zealander of European descent, foreign, exotic, originating from a foreign country

Rangatahi – Youth / young people

Tamariki – Children

Taonga – Treasure, anything prized

Tauīwi – Foreigner, European, non-Māori, especially non-indigenous New Zealanders

Te ao Māori – The Māori world

Te reo – Language

Tikanga – Customs

Tūpuna - Ancestor

Whakapapa - Geneology

Whakatauki – Proverb

Whenua - Land

APPENDIX 2

Support for Climate Activists

If you or someone you know is affected by this story, you can get more information on the Mental Health Foundation's website - or by calling Healthline on 0800 611 116.

Here are some support options:

- **1737, Need to talk?** Free call or text 1737 to talk to a trained counsellor.
- **Kidsline** 0800 54 37 54 for people up to 18 years old. Open 24/7.
- **Lifeline** 0800 543 354 Open 24/7
- **Rural Support Trust** 0800 787 254
- **Samaritans** 0800 726 666 Open 24/7
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO) 24/7
- **Youthline** 0800 376 633, free text 234, email talk@youthline.co.nz, or find online chat and other support options [here](#).
- **Kidsline:** 0800 543 754 - available 24/7
- **Anxiety New Zealand** 0800 ANXIETY (0800 269 4389)
- **In a life-threatening situation call 111**
- **Depression Helpline:** 0800 111 757 - available 24/7
- **What's Up:** Free counselling service for those under 18- 0800 942 8787 - 1pm to 10pm weekdays, 3pm to 10pm weekends

DOS AND DON'TS FOR ACTIVISTS

Published: 03 October 2019 Last Updated: 07 May 2020

Climate Trauma Survival Tips from Lise Van Susteren (psychiatrist)

Taken from 2009 article by climate activist Gillian Caldwell

<https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/support/activists>

<https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/explorations/blogs/477-coping-with-the-climate-crisis>

Coping with the climate crisis 2: climate distress & anxiety

Aug 13, 2020

Ro Randall

- Psychotherapist Rosemary Randall talks about climate anxiety or – as she prefers to call it – climate distress: the feelings of shock, fear, anger, grief, sorrow, guilt and shame which often overwhelm people as they let the truth of the climate crisis into their hearts. These are natural and appropriate reactions to fully understanding a very difficult reality and Rosemary offers pointers to how to cope.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRCPiBYX_dk&feature=youtu.be