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Global Climate Change in Zine Culture

Abstract:

This paper utilizes images and questions to foster critical thinking in regards to climate change science and environmental impacts. There is a special interest in human relationship with the environment and what that means in association with political and economic barriers. Emma Percy's zine, "All Together: a primer for connecting to place + cultivating ecological citizenship", is an example of how climate science education should be approached in all communities. Zines are an affordable form of education and thus, can be distributed across varying classes and social hierarchies in an attempt to unite communities under a general understanding. Education is a crucial step in conservation and environmental impact prevention; the most pressing question in modern day is how to go about this education. Percy uses questions and images to provide a visual and personal experience within climate science education that is generally accepted as one of the best ways to learn.

Emma Percy's interactive zine, "All Together: a primer for connecting to place + cultivating ecological citizenship", employs baseline environmental knowledge and policy to pose questions and provide images to its readers in order to educate its audience on climate change and human-wildlife relationships. Zines generally target an audience that is already invested in its topic; using a zine as a form of education revolutionizes not only the way a younger generation of varying classes, ethnicities, and locations take in and digest the risks of global climate change, but also how zines function as an educational tool. Influenced by ideologies from conservation activists such as Aldo Leopold, Percy develops a theory for using ecological citizenship in order to connect these international crises to the personal reader. This can be linked to how a zine is designed to be a personal connection between reader and creator. This zine asks questions of its readers in order to get them to think about environmental issues and policy, so that the conclusion they come to is their own. My question to you is: what is ecological citizenship?

Ecological citizenship stems from sustainable living; it thrives off of a recognition of responsibility to reduce environmental impact from peoples own personal lives(Johanna Wolf , Katrina Brown & Declan Conway). Ecological citizenship is being incorporated into a movement of environmental living that must stem from economic and political factors in climate change, and be taught as such. Emma Percy addresses this, as well as the socio-political and economic influences in ecological citizenship and climate science, by educating their community of readers in an interactive zine. Ecological citizenship cannot be simplified by cancelling out politics or the economy: this is what climate science education needs to encompass. Emma Percy insists that ecological citizenship, despite its socio-political hardships, is the direction we must

go. They write, “The environmental movement has evolved significantly since the conservation conversation began in the 1800s, and I recently became deeply interested in the concept of “ecological citizenship” as the logical next step in that history”(Percy). Using the word “movement” reminds us that this is a national, if not an international, crises that must be relayed as such. It is a battle that has been fought for centuries, yet we are even deeper in the trenches than we were before. Having ecological citizenship is a membership in this movement, which will be a relevant part of the future of global climate change in politics. In order for this to be accessible, education on this topic must also be accessible to the general public. What comprises a general public? For a zine, this can be anyone who can afford it.

Emma Percy’s zine costs \$5. Zines cost less than a textbook on Earth science, and they are easier to comprehend for someone who might not have extensive knowledge of climate change and environmental impact. This is one of the significant aspects of zine culture. They are, most of the time, quite cheap or free. This makes them containers of education that most social classes can afford. This is especially important in climate change education: one study conducted found that, “20% of teens in ‘their’ study and 46% of teens in the national survey either thought global warming was not happening or did not know if it was happening.”(Stevenson, Kathryn, T. Peterson, M. Bondell, Nils Moore, and Howard Carrier). The most likely explanation for this is that these teens did not have access to proper climate science education, or they have been told that this isn’t something to worry about. This is where education outlets such as zines gain more importance.

Education is not just sit and listen to lecture; education is all forms of listening, seeing, and hearing. Because of this, education can be taught under false pretences, leading to

skepticism. Adults demonstrate how skepticism is a major factor in how older generations understand global climate change and what that means in both a personal and global atmosphere. Their personal ideas influence what they think of climate change on a global scale. Given recent research in climate change education, there is a “declining concern among adults that is driven in part by entrenched worldviews”(Stevenson, Kathryn, T. Peterson, M. Bondell, Nils Moore, and Howard Carrier). “Declining concern” refers to an ignorance of the real and immediate impacts and threats of global climate change. Adults were educated by a world that insisted that climate change is a thing of the future, for when cars can fly. Adults watch the news. Adults hear our President deny these threats. Adults are the more skeptic simply because they have been educated their whole lives in favor of this skepticism. But forget everything I just said for a minute. What if I could make this simple. Aldo Leopold was a man with many visions, and one of them was this idea of a land ethic. He insisted, “the relationships between people and land are intertwined: care for people cannot be separated from care for the land”(The Land Ethic). What if I told you all you had to do was care? Does ecological citizenship seem less daunting now?

That being said, Percy doesn't ignore the significance of political and economic factors in global climate change, and how education must be centered around these factors as well. Percy asks questions such as, “Who protects native species from decline? Or is supposed to protect.” This question alerts the reader of the socio-political boundaries that prevent Aldo Leopold's vision of simply caring from being enough. The “who” in this question is murky, but then Percy causes us to further contemplate what is actually going on with the “who” as well. The educational importance here is that Percy doesn't just spout information that the average person will get bored of after 30 seconds. Percy demonstrates the ideal methods of education, outlined

as “a concern for education of high quality(which is interdisciplinary and holistic, fosters critical thinking and problem solving, and is participatory and locally relevant)K”(Bangay, C. and Blum, N). Their questions push the reader towards critical thinking and problem solving, and the images are geared towards those who learn better from a visual way of teaching.

By looking at Percy’s cover image, we can break down climate change education into multiple different factors, including sea level rising and the international scale it must be studied on. The first tier of this image is that it is the image of a mountain. There is ice on it and it’s surrounded by water. There are ice chunks in the water. The second tier is the meaning behind it. One of the aspects of ecological citizenship is that it is not territorial, meaning that it is not limited to specific continents, countries, or towns. (Johanna Wolf , Katrina Brown & Declan Conway). Climate change is global, and one of the aspects of nature that capitalizes on this international sphere of influence are glaciers. This image shows a mountain with a glacier that appears to be starting about midway up. I guarantee that this glacier once met the edge of the water. I can see the path it once followed by looking at the erosion of the rocks below it. The glacier itself is not very dense. I can see the rocks protruding from underneath it, and it has more of a snow composition rather than that of a great ice glacier. Most significantly are the chunks of ice floating in the water. Climate change is often partnered with sea level rising: this causes quite a bit of skepticism. One reason behind this is that if I were to ask you to look at this image and point out where the sea level is rising, there would be no clear point to circle. But this image isn’t supposed to show where the sea level is rising, it is used as evidence of climate change. The erosion path in the rock is evidence that the glacier once existed up to the sea level. Where did that ice go? In the ocean. The chunks of ice are proof that the glacier is continuing to break off.

Percy is giving their readers evidence. In this zine, Percy poses, “When a drop of water falls on the ground, what body of water will it eventually flow into? What body of water will that flow into?” Answering this question as it relates to this image, every drop of water flows into the ocean below it. Oceans are connected, therefore, this body of water will take the drops of glacier and spread them across the globe. The massive melting of glaciers is therefore a main cause of sea level rising. This image is a form of education because it is one thing to hear that *our* glaciers are disappearing, and it is another thing to demonstrate what that looks like.

These are *our* glaciers. They are a part of *our* environmental community. This brings me back to ecological citizenship: a non-territorial idea that embraces every person on every continent (Johanna Wolf, Katrina Brown & Declan Conway). One of the vital ways that every person on every continent can be connected is through education. In this case, specifically education on climate change. When I say climate change, I mean climate change as it relates to every possible discipline. In discussing this global phenomena, there must also be a discussion of the global factor as they relate to a local sphere and personal experience. Percy educates whomever their general audience might be on these global issues and forces them to think on what these issues mean in their lives by asking questions. What does everything I have written so far mean to you?

Memorize this entire paper and you will have the knowledge that it gives. But if you are then asked a question outside the realm of what exactly this paper said, you won't have a coherent answer. That being said, you can't memorize answers to questions you've never heard. Percy takes on a unique teaching style in which they give the reader baseline information and then make them develop their own explanations for why this information might be true. Through

questions, the readers learn. In an interview I conducted with Percy themselves, they told me that they hope “that the reader comes away with a sense of curiosity to learn more about their environment. A lot of the questions in the zine are things that the average person doesn't know the answer to, but probably should, and that was intentional. I want people to use it as a tool to start educating themselves and questioning the way they interact with the rest of the world.” As I said before, with images, Percy is giving their readers proof. With questions, they are giving their readers tools and opportunities to be educated. A lot of the questions relate these large, daunting, environmental issues to the reader on a personal level. So what does this allow the reader to do?

This allows the reader to see that this issue isn't in the future or at a different location; it is now and everywhere you look. By posing locally and personally important questions, Percy tackles skepticism and strongly influences education among their audience. Percy asks of their reader, “Think about the place that is most important to you. What makes it so special?” Zines are sometimes created with personal gifts to the reader. The gift from Percy are these questions. They are a way of developing a personal connection, not necessarily between Percy and the reader, but between the reader and the environment. Questions relating to the personal lives of the reader are locally important, and some of Percy's suggestions, such as, “Identify five animal species that live nearby. Where do they make their homes? Where and when can they most commonly be seen? Are they native to the region or introduced from elsewhere?” urge the reader to participate in the exploration of their ecological citizenship. These factors of education are shown to reduce skepticism of climate science and to spark interest in the educated to help prevent threats of climate change in either personal or larger picture ways(Bangay, C. and Blum,

N). By being a part of the community that is gearing their efforts towards this type of environmental education, Percy is a part of a push towards 21st century teens and young adults to be actively aware of global climate change threats and consequences.

This zine falls under multiple socio-political situations, all pertaining to the environment. Due to this zine's focus on the human-environment relationship, influence, and consequence, I would say that it speaks mostly to the socio-political climate surrounding global climate change and environmental impact. The zine's introduction gives the reader a general consensus on the tragic environmental issues of our time, ending in Percy's philosophy of ecological citizenship. It continues to explore this idea, but what is the most important for me and my understanding of how this zine responds to the climate change crisis, are the questions the zine asks the reader. Questions such as "who protects the air from pollution?" and "how many things do you own that are made of plastic?" are exactly what needs to be going through the minds of my generation(Percy). I can tell you that the air needs to be protected by all of us in small ways instead of by a single person in a big way, or I can force you to come to a conclusion on your own. By coming to that conclusion, the climate change battle is now personal to you. The images provided are evidence of what is physically happening to the world we live on. All of this is why this zine is designed to educate. The significance of this education is how it encourages critical thinking and logical problem solving, as well as its affordable nature. The emphasis on ecological citizenship and global climate change's non-territorial aspects is important because this education mean squat if everyone isn't involved. These issues span across every class, ethnicity, and location, so the education has to span this far as well. Emma Percy and their zine is

an inspiration for what sort of education should be used for global climate change.



Works Cited

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