

Intimate and Family Practices, Generational Justice, Environmental Justice and Global Inequalities

Lynn Jamieson, Wednesday 15th June.

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Climate change globalizes and radicalizes social inequality; it exacerbates inequalities of rich and poor, core and periphery, and at the same time dissolves them in the face of a common threat to humanity (Beck, 2010, 165)

Development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (widely used definition of sustainable development adopted by the Brundtland report, WCED, 1987, 45)

Environmental justice is a phrase used to make the political demand that environmental inequalities are redressed. There are multiple types of inequality that might be labelled environmental: inequalities in exposure to pollution and extremes of climate or the resources to cope with extremes of climate; inequalities in access to natural resources that are the basics of survival, clean drinking water, fresh air, nutritious food, safe shelter and protection from extremes of weather. The phrase 'environmental justice' is particularly used to point to the unfairness of the differential impact of environmental degradation and climate change that means those who suffer the most are those who are least responsible for the cause of the harm and vice versa. It's the minority of rich countries of the world (here after minority world) who have disproportionately created global warming and the resulting climate change but the majority poor who disproportionately suffer –the intensified drought in sub-Saharan Africa, the intensified floods in Bangladesh where poverty already renders people extremely vulnerable, small nation-islands of the Pacific losing their home lands to the sea. In general, poor people have fewer resources with which to adapt and often have been much less implicated in creating the problem. The World Bank publishes international league tables of carbon footprints on a per person basis - the estimated total amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of that country divided by their population. They put the average for 2011-2015 for the USA at 17 metric tons per person compared with 7.1 for the UK but there are 48 of the roughly 200 countries with less than one ton per person. The majority of countries on the list are in Africa but they also include– Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Paraguay, Guatemala, Haiti, Togo, Tonga, the West Bank and Gaza.

In aspect of family, domestic and personal life involving food, water, energy and the consumption of other material resources, we all know that people in the rich minority world are ratcheting up much higher carbon footprint than their equivalent in the majority poor world. For example, a HOUSE OF LORDS European Union Committee 10th Report of Session 2013–14 noted 'Consumers in industrialised countries waste almost as much food as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa. The global carbon footprint of wasted

food has been estimated as more than twice the total greenhouse gas emissions of all road transportation in the United States (US)' Not all food waste is at the level of households but in the UK about half of it is and the UK has the highest rate of food waste in Europe.

Within the national contexts of the minority rich world, it's the more affluent who are the major domestic producers of the harmful carbon emissions and the major consumers of irreplaceable global resources. In the UK, alongside the food waste we have households sometimes relying on foodbanks because they have no money to buy food. I want to briefly illustrate this, simultaneously giving some clues to the significance of the contribution of family households to the UK's total carbon footprint. In the rich world, family-households are a major consumers of energy. Households use 59% of the UK's natural gas consumption. Gas being the dominant fuel used for heating in the UK. Households are also responsible for 30% of electricity consumption (DUKES 2015, 107 and 126). Yet within the UK some households are defined as living in fuel poverty. About 17% of all households, 4.3 million households in 2013 (that is they need to spend in excess of 10 per cent of household income to achieve a satisfactory heating regime (21°C in the living room and 18°C in the other occupied rooms). (Fuel Poverty Report 2013, 76). What is called the domestic sector as opposed to industry or services claims the main share of energy used in transport, 62% of all transport energy demand in 2013 (DECC 2015, chapter 2, p 10). This means that households are also significant consumers of petroleum as the main fuel of transport. A significant proportion of domestic consumption is the household cars. 87% of transport energy consumption is road transport and 55% of road transport consumption is the car (p7). But 25% of households do not have a car. Households without cars are predominantly low income households. Households without cars are now outnumbered by the households with two or more cars. It could be argued that there are many environmental injustices associated with the pattern of car use. The steep social class gradient associated with children's deaths in traffic accidents and the higher likelihood of such an accident in urban areas with lower car ownership. Researchers have interviewed parents who see driving children around as a means of keeping them safe but ironically it also adds to the harmful particulates breathed in by children walking. In a city laid out like Edinburgh, the suburban dwellers whose choice of home has purchased a garden, cleaner air, and safe streets for her or his children adds to the pollution experienced by children in the lower cost housing estates that are passed driving into the city on the arterial roads.

Ways in which people enact being a family or being in close relationships – family practices, practices of intimacy and displaying family - are often also practices of consumption. Families and relationships carry practices and values of consumption; they transmit dispositions to consume or conserve. Practices of gift giving, orientations to transport, food, water, energy use, shopping, spending, saving, recycling are shaped, carried, and sometimes transformed in families and relationships. Obviously this is not to suggest families and relationships are the whole story, they are embedded in, constrained or enabled by wider contexts. Sociologists of families and relationships study many aspects of the intersection of consumption with family and intimate practices but only a minority with awareness of

issues of sustainability or a political interest in thinking about the conditions that would enable families and relationships to be part of the solution. This must change. Such a change does not mean subverting other political agendas, challenging homophobic heteronormativity, or gender inequality or racism or ethnic or religious division – all of these agendas can complement taking a more direct interest in modifying the trajectories of environmental catastrophe that we are currently on.

The term 'intergenerational justice' has been used in a range of ways reflecting the different usages of 'generations'. It has been used in evaluating the fairness of the share of resources received by successive cohorts or the changing balances between parents or grandparents and their children or grandchildren. Commentators on welfare regimes sometimes try to calculate whether the young or the old benefit most from redistribution of tax revenues. For example, in the context of the Australian welfare system, Alan Tapper has consistently argued that there has been a shift over time in welfare policies such that they now favour older people at the expense of the young (Tapper, 2003, 2007, 2013) In the UK in the context of the current government's political project of austerity, commentators have noted a reversal in fortunes of young adults now compared to those of their parents at a similar age and stage, for example in the costs of university education and in opportunities to achieve home ownership as young adults. In the context of climate change, intergenerational justice often refers to the definition of sustainable development adopted by the World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Brundtland *Development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*

The concepts 'environmental justice' and 'intergenerational justice' have only been taken up directly by a small number of speakers at this conference despite its focus on inequality. However, many speakers including our keynotes have focused on family and intimate practices that are relevant to both local and global inequalities including intergenerational justice and environmental justice. The patterns of passing on advantages that David has just been talking about are not confined within national borders but the stuff of transnational families and global elites and articulate with these issues. Within family studies, gender studies and the sociology of intimate life there is considerable interest in shifts in balances of power and the nature of solidarity or connection across gender and generation that might give us clues about circumstances which might enable reconfigurations of issues of justice and inequality.

Transmission of Values and Practices

There is a small but growing body of research explicitly looking at the transmission of pro-environmental values in family households across generations which is important for trying to understand the reproduction of more sustainable practices and degrees of manoeuvre for doing things differently. Sometimes the focus of transmission that is at the core of research is pro-environmental appreciation, appreciating of nature or the attentiveness to biodiversity. Lydia Martens work here represents that field. Sometimes the focus is on action, the take-up of environmental activism or a more specific environmentally friendly practice such as vegetarianism, cycling instead of driving or practices of conservation and

recycling. The Australian work of Philip Payne, the work of the Danish scholars Alice Grønhoj and John Thøgersen and Louise Chawla in the USA or among a new generation of scholars in the UK Sarah Hards and show the capacity of parents and peers to influence children by their own active practices, 'doing as learning', as well as through verbal demonstration of their own interest in and values. In North America Louise Chawla and her co-author talk about parents or significant others as role models and for activism also the importance of observing group action as having some impact. In the UK, Sarah Hards' work draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, notions of 'path dependence' and Howard Becker's notion of 'normalisation'. Family scholars can bring an understanding of inequalities and social change in households and personal relationships to these lines of work. An understanding of the classed and gendered nature, of family households is lacking in some of this line of work and some sophisticated work is represented by people at this conference. There was a session on families and environment showing this work but unfortunately it was not well attended. This line of work includes research designs making use of international comparison – for example, the work that Ann Phoenix is involved in with others looking at the understandings of environmental issues communicated in family households in India and the UK. It also involves research tracking changes in sensitivity to environmental issues and pro-environmental practices across family household transitions such as the work that Janet Boddy, Karen Henwood, Kate Burlingham and others are involved in. But the offerings are not yet many and there is a lot more to do.

Boundaries of Responsibility and Rules of Fairness

However, I'm also suggesting looking for lessons from work on families and relationships that does not directly focus on environmental issues in order to understand the theoretical conditions of drawing boundaries between ourselves and others and the possibilities of reworking rules of fairness. Both concepts 'environmental justice' and 'intergenerational justice' make reference to boundaries of responsibility to others, whether interpersonal responsibility for known others or the more or less connected lives of others yet to come. Family and intimate practices often involve boundary work and this is one relevant area of research to which many of you already contribute. Family life and personal relationships create boundaries that mark the limit of values and practices of responsibility to others, which may delimit who is and is not worthy of treating fairly, of everyday acts of kindness or empathetic consideration. Practices and limits of such boundaries and rules of fairness are of potential relevance to any discussion of environmental and intergenerational justice. The transmission or combating of gender inequalities, the reproduction of social class, religious or ethnic identities or the challenging of prejudice and racism in family households speak of boundary maintenance or reworking rules. The way that aspirations for gender equality are blocked by structuring of paid work and child care and the space that can be levered despite this that Kathleen Gerson talked of, the transmission that Julie Brannen talked of are of direct relevance. I suggest that the step-parent families are another source of evidence about remaking boundaries and redrawing rules of fairness that we might attend to and transnational step families would be of obvious theoretical interest.

There is a classic study suggesting the family ensure that concern for justice does not extend beyond 'nearest and dearest'. It is the political scientist Edward Banfield's 1950s study of a

small town in Southern Italy, which he renames Montegrano. My own reading of Banfield is tempered by his introductory remarks which would now be regarded as both close to racism and as demonstrating a naive chauvinistic ethnocentrism: 'There is some reason to doubt that the non-Western cultures of the world will prove capable of creating and maintaining the high degree of organization without which a modern economy and a democratic political order are impossible' preceded by the even less considered remark 'One could not, for example, create a powerful organization in a place where everyone could satisfy his aspirations by reaching out his hand to the nearest coconut. Nor could one create a powerful organisation in a place where no one would accept their orders or directions' p 8. It is difficult to judge the extent to which Banfield's analysis was influenced by his own politics and political culture but he certainly put together a substantial body of evidence. This included 70 interviews conducted by his Italian speaking wife assisted by a student, thematic apperception tests, census data and local biographies. He coined the term 'amoral familism' to refer to a set of rule of conduct that included focus on the short-run advantage of the nuclear family and never furthering the interests of the group or community unless this is maximising their interest. Banfield argued that amoral familism was the outcome of a complex combination of material, economic and cultural factors. The majority of villagers lived in extreme poverty with no access to redress, being served by education and health systems which perpetuated illiteracy and ill health. He suggested that childrearing practices fitted with and perpetuate this code of conduct, combining indulgence with arbitrary and frequent punishment – a combination that communicates 'there is no underlying principles but only fate' and created emotional dispositions that work against a sense of self-efficacy and faith in making your own biography.

So the structural context shaping life chances, the cultural backdrop of fatalism and the practices of parenting, doing family and doing gender are all implicated in the amoral familism albeit not all of these are fully fleshed out in Banfield's work. Our current understanding of family practices, practices of intimacy and doing gender was not of course informing work at that time.

The possibility of amoral familism remains a potent idea, it represents the possible extreme limit of tight boundary drawing around moral responsibilities to others, and recurs as a reference point in contemporary writing. It's referred to by Kyung-Sup Chang in his writing about South Korea and Yunxiang Yan in his writing about China. In the UK Diane Rey's refers to amoral familism in her study of middle-class parents and their decisions about whether to send their children to private or comprehensive schools. She finds some parents who have a strong commitment to community and social mixing choosing comprehensive schools for their children despite having the means to send them to fee paying private schools. However, she also finds parents succumbing to the wider political culture and discourse of neoliberalism that valorises competition, individualism and the market.

If amoral familism is one extreme of possible ways of conducting family life and of drawing boundaries, is there another extreme of a generous-to-all open inclusiveness? Also is that necessarily where the most fertile territory for environmental justice lies? An idea towards such an extreme sometimes appeared in the writing of Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Gernsheim

(2013). They use the term 'world families' although this concept has a yet more tenuous relationship to an evidence base than amoral familism. At one level it seems to simply be a relabelling of what the wider literature calls transnational families to describe family relationships that span national boundaries and 'mixed relationships' across ethnic, national and religious boundaries. But there is also a claim of potentiality, that world families are a new cultural form that have the potential to be transformative. They are suggesting a dialectic between the intimate practices within world families and the possibilities of undermining the system of nation states. Beck talks of the nation state system, their territorial organisation and efforts at fixing the position and groups of individuals on a world scale as the 'real inequality' The expressions of hope about transformation in Beck's writing about families, parallel are interlinked with his writing about climate change and cosmopolitanism. Beck wrote about the threat of climate change as a moment of opportunity for radical transformation and talked of the 'cosmopolitan imperative' - 'cooperate and share or do not cooperate and die'. There are flashes of optimism that world families will be the carriers of a cosmopolitanization. 'persons with frontier transcending experiences and possibilities of activity are much more likely to develop cosmopolitan attitudes to foreigners. In other words, the experience of global interdependencies and active interaction across borders favours the readiness and capacity to see through others' eyes. The fixation on the nation-state is slackening' (Beck 2010, 170).

I suggest that there is value in the aspirational and inspirational themes of Beck's work – there's something refreshing about a combination of optimism and injunction to take climate change seriously and do something. However, it falls far short of an account that takes us close to understanding the range of conditions that would make the aspirations more likely to become realities. As they acknowledge, many constellations of relationships approximating to world families are not in fact straining to celebrate common humanity or express a boundary-dissolving cosmopolitanisation in their outlook and some are the antithesis of this. The literature on global care-chains, mail order brides, international adoption and surrogacy is rich in examples of families and relationships that exploit rather than subvert the inequalities created by national boundaries. Also the literature on mixed relationships within nation states does not routinely discover people who have managed to inhabit a space of cultural transformation rather than shuttling between worlds or remaining in exile.

The structural and cultural conditions in the UK at the moment seem extremely hostile to 'world families'; the Brexit move is clearly a hardening of national boundary and is seen by much of the rest of the world as unwelcoming. Perhaps there is also some hope in reports of actions in memory and solidarity of the victims of the mass murder of gay people in Orlando?