

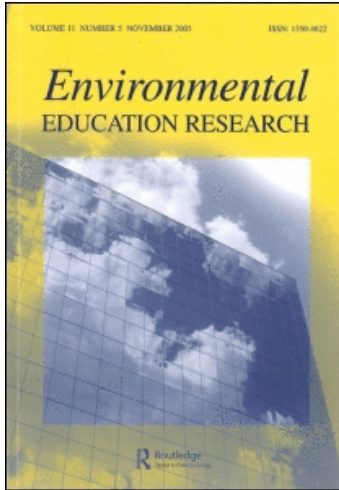
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### Moral spaces, the struggle for an intergenerational environmental ethics and the social ecology of families: an 'other' form of environmental education

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## Moral spaces, the struggle for an intergenerational environmental ethics and the social ecology of families: an ‘other’ form of environmental education

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‘Green families’ in Australia were studied so as to shed light on how a more durable, everyday environmental ethic and ecopolitic might slowly be enacted in the intimacy of the home ‘place’ over an extended period of time in rapidly changing socio-cultural-ecological conditions. Of particular interest to this study of the green household, or *postmodern oikos*, was how its proximal ‘moral spaces’ have been nurtured intergenerationally by family members from within the broader global climate of what Zygmunt Bauman refers to as the ‘moral lag’ of postmodernity. Three layers of interpretive findings about the social ecology and family dynamics of this *oikos* are presented in an effort to provide detailed understandings about families’ *eco being, dwelling and becoming*. Implications for education for the environment can be gleaned from the ‘best’ ecopedagogical practices found in the home that are ‘other’ than those occurring in the formal education sector. This study adds to the theorizations of ‘social ecology’, ‘experiential education’, ‘ecopedagogy’ and, more generally, the notion of an everyday ‘ecocentrism’, while providing some clues for how environmental education in schools might mirror pedagogical aspects of the *postmodern oikos*.

**Keywords:** intergenerational ethics; families; ecopedagogy; ecocentrism; education

### Introduction

In *Does ethics have a chance in a world of consumers?* Zygmunt Bauman (2008) challenged postmodernity’s estranged knowledge classes to confront societies’ intractable problems. These ‘crises’ have resulted in conditions of escalating public fear and insecurity that reconstitute significant global–ecological risks and socio-economic consequences, including those associated with the rarely discussed rise of intensified emotional costs – personally, socially and economically (Elliot and Lemert 2006). These intractable crises are named ecological, financial, moral, health, war, political or, even, education. But they seem to have a common source in the excesses of modernity and their extension into a fluid postmodernity. Each crisis belatedly seems to compete for priority attention – policy and funding – in today’s fast or last-moment ‘on call’ or ‘on demand’ risk averse society.

Bauman also encourages us, as the knowledge producers for future generations, to heed the threat of the ‘moral lag’ of modernity. Modernity’s acceleration within/

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toward postmodernity has further emptied out those moral spaces that previously were understood as an opportunity to ‘take responsibility’ for each other and, perhaps, for the environment and the aforementioned crises.

At the very same time, concerns are being expressed in environmental education research about the value and usefulness of the field’s efforts. Questions are being asked about the ‘framing’ of research – that is, how the research problems we identify and tasks we undertake are being carefully and critically conceptualized, contextualized, represented and legitimated as forms of knowledge production that might, or should, serve the public and its problems (Reid 2009). The craft of framing invites a far greater reflexivity about the commensurability, or lack of, between the still somewhat unclear aims, means and ends-in-view of environmental education research (see Hart 2005; Reid and Scott 2006; Scott 2009). New research imaginaries are also called for, not only in environmental education and its research (McKenzie et al. 2009) but as a considered response to the globalization of education research (Kenway and Fahey 2009).

How then can we postmodern knowledge workers, educators and researchers think ecologically and culturally, globally and locally, and act ethically and politically about these crises, knowing that, in Australia at least, our efforts must dissuade the next generations from the powerlessness those young people increasingly feel about the prospects for the environment (Bentley, Fien, and Neil 2004) while encouraging the hope they urgently need (Fleer 2002)? Is taking intergenerational responsibility possible, as is pursued empirically here in imagining a different type of problem and its framing for environmental education research? Or, more worrying, will we wait for ‘global’ conferences in Copenhagen, or national governments like those in Australia who have declared that climate change presents a ‘great moral challenge’, to then ‘democratically’ legislate our ‘right’ environmental behaviours which already in Australia is constructed by the major (conservative) Opposition party as ‘fear’ of a ‘great new tax’?

While researchers in environmental education aren’t necessarily politicians or lobbyists or business leaders, what ‘places’ or spaces other than schooling might environmental education include in its imaginaries and how might we take responsibility for seeing otherwise? Does Bauman’s still anthropocentric determination to retrieve the moral of the everyday signal any hope of an ecocentric ethic of primary human relations? Or is the global spread, extension and consequences of, for example, climate change far too removed and abstracted from the mundane, everyday lifeworlds of the families to whom we bequeath the already eco-pessimistic next generations with the imperative to develop solutions and take moral responsibility for these crises?

Of potentially more immediate relevance to identifying possible solutions and, therefore, localized sites for inquiry such as that focussed on here is Bauman’s (1997) essay, ‘Morality begins at home’. Bauman highlighted the importance of the morally-proximal space of the face-to-face encounters of the ‘party of two’. That is, the ‘raw’ encounter between two human beings. This pre-ontological space, he asserted, following Levinas, is the incubator for the ‘green house’ possibility of an ethics; in this instance a space engulfed in a rampant world of consumers. This moral space, as found everyday in the home place between parent and child, or siblings, or partners, may be of still invisible intercorporeal or intersubjective and intergenerational value to environmental education and its research. And, in now raising the question of intergenerational value, consideration must be given to the flow of time (and space as place) and their changing and messy ontological politics (Grosz 2004; James 2006;

Law 2004). In this instance, values ‘traditionally’ prized by an older generation, notwithstanding their gender or other differences, living in the proximities of the home with their children, the next generation, may or may not (due to the role of habit and convention, Payne 2002) have reflexively engaged in the processes of de and retraditionalization as a consequence of the prevailing and changing social, cultural and ecological orderings (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Heelas, Lash, and Morris 1996) of that household, neighbourhood and beyond. But needed to reveal it is an approach to the framing of inquiry, conceptualization of research and asking of research questions whose empirical responses aim to (re)present interpretively rich layered insights about the intergenerational nature of such moral spaces and the social ecology of the family.

As postmodernity’s knowledge workers, what do we have to say about this globalized–individually intensified crisis predicament as it is ‘played out’ socially, culturally and ecologically within the household (or school, if you like, as another version of moral space and intergenerational development)? And, by implication, where does environmental education and its research stand in relation to Bauman’s exhortation for the knowledge classes to reclaim those hollowed out moral spaces created by unjust crisis after crisis?

Following Bauman’s generalized use of the ‘incubator’ and ‘greenhouse’ metaphors about the home, other sources in social theory are helpful in explaining how environmental education and its research might proceed at the more embodied and contextual levels of everyday practice with which this study is most concerned. Various theorists such as Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1984) are well known for their insights into structuration theory and habitus, each in their own way dealing with questions of agency and structure. In regard to the everyday, also helpful is de Certeau’s (1984) theorization of strategies and tactics, noting the potentiality for resistance in his ‘tactics of consumption’, while Ginsborg’s (2005) more popularized interpretation of the politics of everyday choices is highly relevant to Bauman’s concerns about the possibility of an ethics amongst consumers. But also in social theory, given the focus on ecopolitics in the home space, Archer’s (2000) account of the ‘primacy of practice’ and its ‘pivotal order’ provides keener embodied, intersubjective and contextual insights that underpin the critical realist position adopted here in making sense of the intergenerational nature of environmental ethics as it occurs in the home and can be reimaged in education. Amongst numerous questions posed about the role of social theory, Archer is keen to rescue the possibility of agency from those intellectual and cultural forces associated with the ‘postmodernist mood’ and anthropocentricity of ‘linguistic terrorism’ that seek to ‘dissolve’ what it is to be human. And one practical primacy of embodied and intersubjective practices in which agency is most likely to be found lies morally and politically in the manner of a family’s ecologically oriented *being, dwelling and becoming* in the (green) home, or what I will refer to as a *postmodern oikos* (Payne 2009). Here, in the sheer intimacy of this *oikos*, Bauman’s notion of ‘moral proximity’ is, *as a pivotal practice*, most likely to be found *circumstantially* and *contextually* in the routinized everyday face-to-face encounters, be they tactically compliant or resistant (de Certeau 1984), of various family members. This intersubjective and intercorporeal but enculturated domestic space is, potentially, an everyday ‘critical site’ for multiple interpretations (Law 2004) of the way practical ethics (Singer and Mason 2006) are conceived, lived, constructed and tactically ‘become’ forms of ecopolitics that over time, or intergenerationally, are reconstituted and de or retraditionalized. And, can be interpreted and described in

different ways as framing part of the way the findings of this study add ‘value’ (Hart 2005) to environmental education research. The home and its everyday allows us to see a little more clearly how Bauman’s oft repeated challenge for us ‘to choose to take responsibility’, or not, is revealed most and is, therefore, visible or available to the knowledge worker and producer.

If so, this *postmodern oikos* potentially acts as an intergenerationally active site of and for an ‘other’ environmental education. It might be an incubator of *becoming green* and, therefore, an informative precursor to the quest for an everyday version of domestic, social and global sustainability. If not, the home/household and family dynamic reconstitutes those risks and crises, as do each of its moral ‘players’.

Either way, and subject to empirical qualification and theoretical development, there might well be some very good lessons learned about the promotion of versions of ecomorality, or ecoliteracy, or ecopolitics (or all) from within the *postmodern oikos* that are relevant to environmental education. Indeed, there have been very few studies of intergenerational ethics and the ways in which families and homes politically construct environmental ethics (Thompson 1997; Kahn 1999). Other studies have focused on how the genesis of (pro) environmental attitudes and behaviours occurs in environmental education in schooling and how those learners ‘bring home’ certain messages and actions (Ballantine, Fien, and Packer 2001). In other words, despite the wealth of literature on child socialization or development and family studies, with forays into their ‘ecology’ (Brofenbrenner 1979), albeit anthropocentric, there is much still to know about how families as the genesis and traditional source of values choose to take responsibility, or not, in their households, for living in a more environmentally benign, activist and ecologically sustainable manner. Indeed, while the significant life experience literature in environmental education research (see Tanner 1980) has partially addressed these concerns, and is instructive, has value and is useful in more than one (in)significant sense (Payne 1999b), it does remain limited given the objects, manner and depth pursued in this interpretive study of the *postmodern oikos*.

The study discussed here, therefore, aims to shed different moral, ethical, political, cultural, economic, geographical and, therefore, ecological light on how family members in the ‘globalized privacy’ of the household conceptualize and enact an ethico-political stance in the everyday of the home place, over time. Of particular importance to the crafting and framing of this study, following Bauman and Archer, was a felt need through a ‘method assemblage’ applied to the notion of an ‘ontological politics’ (Law 2004) to, for the purposes here, develop multiple but overlapping interpretations of the dynamic moral space and agency over time-space and tradition in the household. For research development, including possible comparative studies, one implication of providing different interpretations of the moral spaces of the *postmodern oikos* is to ask: ‘What lessons can be learned that might inform education, curriculum development and pedagogical inquiry and development?’ For example, in the *oikos*, what do those young ‘young green’ family members (or non- or anti-green, as the case might be) ‘unofficially’ take to school and negotiate with the official school curriculum and the teachers’ formal pedagogies (see also Payne 1997; Walker 1997; Barratt Hacking, Scott, and Barratt 2007)?

The findings reported below are the result of a methodologically constrained study of 13 ‘green families’ living in inner city and regional parts of Australia. Arguably, this relatively low sampling of research participants, about 40 parents and children in all (see below), can only modestly shed light on potential ‘best eco-

practices' in the home's social ecology that, in turn, may inform pedagogical, curriculum, methodological and policy development (some of the major implications have already been discussed: Payne 2005, 2006).

The term 'best' family or household green practices is also approached cautiously but positively, mindful of the western bias in the globalized sociology of the family (Edgar 2004), the wide variety of ways in which families now exist and function (Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Berger 2002), how parents parent (Alwin 2004) and the 'wrongness' of the postmodern condition some believe is being inflicted on children (Stanley, Richardson, and Prior 2005). The use of 'best' is political also, noting the critical observations by, for example, Singer and Mason (2006) and Grille (2005), about the numerous practical strategies available to families and the way they maintain a subversive function in democratic societies, which Herring (2003) defends in seeking to restore the place of the home (like Bauman) within considerations of large-scale questions about ethics and justice.

### Rationale

The *educational* problem and 'intergenerational greenhouse effect' grappled with in this research relates to numerous unresolved questions or 'harder to reach' theorizations (Reid and Scott 2006) in environmental education and its research about the moral sources, social power, contextual influences, reach of globalization and their collective ethical consequences for being or becoming green, as each of these notions are part of the representation of the findings summarized below. How do people become environmentally educated and active in a globalizing and abstracting of the everyday condition? What enables and constrains an ecocentric ethics in a (northern and, increasingly southern) world of (rampant) consumers? Or, in this study, how are green family members educated ecologically and reconstitute this agentially in the everyday primacy of practices of the home, following Archer (2000)?

The individual and collective environmental interests, relations, identifications, associations, commitments and actions of family members as they circumstantially, contextually and culturally lived in that home place (Payne 2009) have been of particular relevance in this study to Archer's notion of 'practice as pivotal'. Studies of this mundane, everyday and, therefore, complex and messy type might also help us reflexively understand and clarify the presuppositions we make about ourselves and the subjects of our inquiries, or the researcher and the researched (Hart 2005). In this instance, we might concede the home is probably the most significant experiential site of an embodied, inhabited and 'place-based' environmental education (or not) – well before and beyond the classroom, the playground and the school, or other so-called 'places' or spaces, as valuable as they might be to an environmental ethics and ecopolitical education.

### Framing, approach and methods

The interpretive, mixed method dense and multi-layered research approach (Fielding 2008), design, methodology and procedures are detailed elsewhere (Payne 2005, 2006) and are summarized in Table 1. Beyond that outlined above, the philosophical framing of the notion of *postmodern oikos* is also elaborated elsewhere where the works of Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman and John Sanders, amongst others, are



Table 1. The research frame.

13 'Green' families	
Seven inner city Melbourne 8- to 16-years-old	Six regional Bendigo 8- to 16-years-old
Parent = 1–1.5-hour 'conversational' interview, 25-item household inventory, 134-item survey of environmental action/inaction 'wisdoms'	
Child = 30–45-minute conversational interview, 92-item survey of environmental action/inaction 'wisdoms'	
'Grounded theory': inductive, interpretive, content analysis of 'data' → emerging conceptual clusters → returned to 'subjects' for verification and negotiation/elaboration → findings	
Researcher = male, 55-years-old, married, father of one 22-year-old daughter, mixed residence in inner city Melbourne and rural Mandurang (Bendigo), doctoral degree, academic, member of Greens with extensive 'political' experience in a range of local environmental, social and educational issues	

used to conceptualize a series of propositions about the a priori status, or socio-ontological underpinnings and its 'politics' (Law 2004) of the family household and its social, moral and ecological dimensions (see Payne 2009).

The findings presented here about the moral spaces and intergenerational processes of the *postmodern oikos* are extracted from one component of a much larger study of the 'environmental action and inaction' of families in their households – 13 'green families' comprising a total of 40 adults and children living in Australia. Seven families lived in Melbourne, the capital city of the State of Victoria with a population of nearly four million where at the 2004 federal election the Greens party vote was 18.5% (an increase of 2.7% from the 2001 election) in the inner-city area from which these families were selected. In this article, I report only on the families living in Melbourne so as to not unduly generalize about city and rural differences in social ecologies. Six other families lived in Bendigo, a major regional centre with a population of approximately 100,000. The Greens vote was 6.5%, an increase of 0.9% from 2001. Parents in both study sites were members of the Greens party or voted/committed to Green. The majority were about 50 years of age. A family included at least one parent and one child. Children were aged between 8- and 16-years-old.

Three generations of the family/home and its primacies of pivotal practices and emergence of personal and social identity (Archer 2000) were studied directly and indirectly in this pseudo-longitudinal account of the processes of intergenerationality. The study has included working with the views and experiences of current green parents, their individualized 'memory-work' (Kaufman et al. 2001) recall of their own parents and parenting, and the voice (Hart and Nolan 1999) and the experiences (Rickinson 2001) of what I will refer to as their 'pale green' children.

The interpretation and construction by the researcher of the layered narratives of intergenerational responsibility in each green family drew on interview, survey and household audit data, and iterative writing processes (where possible) about parents' backgrounds and memories in childhood of environmental influences, events and experiences; accounts of individual and collective environmental actions and inactions and relevant relationships with other family members according to the evolving nature of family functioning; availability of household resources; and past, current and planned connections with community resources that sustained a

preferred mode of green living/parenting or was determined by the demands of post-modern western life.

The seven inner city and six regional Green families 'self selected' for inclusion in the study. The Melbourne cohort reported on here was identified through arrangements made by the researcher with the inner city Green 'network' in Melbourne. All arrangements complied with privacy legislation and University Ethics Committee requirements. Unfortunately, it was not possible to include household ethnographies in the mixed method approach to analytical and interpretive density. The families were studied in the latter half of 2004. Parents were either registered members of the Greens party or voted/committed to the Greens.

Five of the Melbourne families studied included a mother and father; the two others were a single mother household. Individual 'in-depth' interviews were conducted 'conversationally' with the parents who were mainly aged between 45 and 55; children were interviewed separately, the majority of whom were aged 10–12.

The findings reported below represent 'layers' of intergenerational *dwelling, being and becoming* (green). They are based on a content analysis of individual recordings and transcripts, using interpretative and inductive means to cluster concepts in emerging categories (i.e., conceptual indicators as part of a grounded theory logic). Draft descriptive findings were returned individually to each parent to iteratively: (i) check the accuracy of data represented within each of the emerging conceptual clusters; and (ii) provide an additional opportunity to qualify and/or elaborate on various ideas, either in written form or via another discussion with the researcher. Once a mutually satisfactory representation of each participant was achieved, family narratives were constructed from the individual narratives in 'triangular'/ecological ways that best responded to the need for different interpretive layers about a family's dynamic, parenting, intergenerational functioning and household ethic and politic on matters pertaining to green family *being, doing, inhabiting, dwelling and becoming*. Comparisons of individuals by cohort (e.g., mothers) were made to generalize across the sample of parents or children (see Table 1).

## Findings

In response to the representational concerns and the quest for value in post-critical forms/times/spaces of inquiry (Hart 2005), the findings are offered mainly in conceptual terms as they have been derived from the interpretation of data outlined above. Anecdotal insight and evidence has been published elsewhere in other forms of representation, including the construction of household narratives (Payne 2005, 2006).

The 'value' and potential 'usefulness' of these layers of representation are interconnected and threefold. First, the layers add richness to the plausibility of insight into the intergenerational processes of household pedagogies and their praxis. Second, to provide different entry points and conceptual vantages for other researchers who might elect to pursue related, localized and comparative studies. Here, following John Law's (2004) *After method*, I note the messy nature of fully accounting for the everyday enactment in the home of different forms of ecopedagogy, over time–space and tradition, related to the 'ontological politics' (144) of environmental ethics and ecopolitics when they are one component only of a vast array of family functions, customs and norms, arrangements, roles and responsibilities that, in turn, are a microcosm of a variety of historical, social, political, cultural, global and ecological factors



and forces. Third, and consequently, the formidable challenge of developing a socio-ecological theory that relates agency, social structure, culture and nature as it might inform educational discourses, is a worthwhile project for environmental education researchers. Socio-ecological theory potentially extends the current preoccupation with socio-cultural theory in education discourses, as well as family studies (Bronfenbrenner 1979), where ecocentric and ecological assumptions, interests and presuppositions are marginalized. If so, socio-ecological theory underpins a more appropriate and overarching frame about the interactional and relational nature of humans and their environment, over time, space and place.

### **Findings 1. Intergenerational *dwelling*, socio-ecological and cultural–historical dynamics of Green families**

The first representational layer is overtly conceptual. It aims to describe how the practices of dwelling can be incorporated into an interpretation of the intergenerational ‘passing down’ over three generations in the home ‘place’ of a household and family ethic as it occurred in and across changing circumstances and contexts. The way in which the term dwelling is used aims to evoke a deeper sense of understanding about how the conditions and conventions or ‘traditions’ of everyday living in the home shaped not only its pivotal practices of an ethics or ecopolitic but also its negotiation and transfer to the next generation. It is important, for the purposes here, to not read the notion of dwelling as something temporally and spatially static because it basically is a fluid notion when ‘read’ intergenerationally over time and space as an ethics of (home) place and family dynamic.

Generally, in these families and their ‘evolution’ toward the current *postmodern oikos* there was *intergenerational* continuity in the characteristics of (pro) environmental ‘conservers’, ‘frugality’, ‘resourceful’ and low materialistic and anti-consumer practices. The three generations are referred to as: (1) scarcity/traditional (grand)parents; (2) post-scarcity/current green parents; and (3) postmaterial/pale green children.

#### ***Scarcity/traditional grandparents***

The grandparents of the pale green children lived through the Depression and World War II era scarcity conditions before they had children – the current Green parents. Many Green parents recalled of their childhood how family discipline and various household practices in the 1950s were products of their parents’ economic restraint/s – these being strongly linked to low or minimal consumer and lifestyle opportunities and limited access to scarce resources, even if new convenience products like televisions and ‘labor saving’ devices were becoming available. Frugality persisted in most traditional households of the 1950s and 60s, probably as a legacy of the dominant ‘global’ logic and cultural practice of the pre-World War II era and encapsulated in the idea of ‘saving for a rainy day’.

The current green parents had no recall of ‘conservation’ practices, or what we might now call environmental ethics or pro-environmental behaviours. The family and household tradition was re-traditionalized according to a different logic of practice. Frugality, as a consistent thematic finding, could not be traced directly to any environmental logic, crisis or concern for the environment that their traditional parents experienced in the 1920s–1940s. Then, all frugal and resourceful practices were driven by (economic) ‘survival’ conditions, gender role divisions and, often, working

class identity processes and expectations that reflected the families' acceptance of a largely given and stoic way of local life where the independent ability to 'do without' or be individualistically resourceful in the home were recalled as commonplace. Green parents did have memories of their parents' political affiliations, particularly the father's, but some Green mothers now appreciated or understood the invisible politics of their mother's politic. Mainly working class families, the traditional/scarcity (grand)parents politics ranged across communist activism, benign or neutral, conservative and, in one instance, highly educated and somewhat aristocratic.

Effectively, this survivalist and minimalist mode of disciplined, frugal and resourceful family life in the 1950s and 1960s (in which the current Green parents grew up) was a direct consequence of the prevailing condition of a post-World War II scarcity condition. Its legacy can partially be traced to the earlier depression period of the 1920s and 1930s. However, it would be difficult to make any claims that an environmental consciousness or ecomorality existed in the 1950s home. On display to these post-World War II 'baby boomers', now the Green parents, was an ethic and politic of austerity and living and dwelling resourcefully within economic constraints, socially determined limits and, therefore, highly disciplined family and parenting dispositions, behaviours and future expectations.

### *Post-scarcity Green parents (n = 24, 45- to 53-years-old)*

Parents' environmental ethics and ecopolitic were evolutionary, at times episodic and reflected a mix of 'significant' (Tanner 1980; Palmer 1998) and insignificant (Payne 1999b) experiences. The individual narratives of mothers and fathers demonstrated strong anti-Draft and Vietnam war, social justice and feminist influences in the 1970s following the post-teenage 'break' from home. Personal interests in politics were often 'found' socially in university studies and student politics and through intermittent exposure to other peoples and cultures due to interstate and overseas travel during or after university studies. For many in the early part of their careers, the 1980s marked a (re)turn to 'extended' or community living arrangements. This type of inner-city dwelling offered regular contact with different, influential persons via activist type affiliations and, sometimes, professional and personal relationships. Environmentalism, often activist, in the late 1970s and 1980s, was incorporated into already established forms of social, feminist and anti-war activism in domestic, local and national spheres.

This post-scarcity cohort of parents were significantly influenced in their teens and young adult life in the late 1960s/early 1970s by the new opportunities created by the advent of free university education in Australia and its philosophical or principled uptake of social activism causes – social justice, feminism, anti-war, anti-uranium. Subsequently, these 'on the fringe' but increasingly important socio-ecological causes and campaigns like environmental, no dams, anti-development, alternative lifestyles (including educational revisioning in schools, new musics) and wilderness/national park politics became a focal point in the identity formations of members of this cohort. Despite resistances to their scarcity/traditional parents when growing up, particularly from the current mothers, these green parents' environmental practices (but not parenting) often marked a return to their own scarcity parents' traditional 'way of life' and increasingly fond recollections of their values.

Most of these parents, throughout the 1980s to the present, still practiced frugality in the home. This level of frugality was, however, relative to the much wider availability of cultural resources, social opportunities and desire for consumption and

entertainment in the far more affluent economic and social climate of the 1980s, 1990s and present. For example, one family purchased an electronic bread-maker rather than buy packaged bread from the local shop because of the hundreds of plastic bags they calculated would be wasted in a year. Relatively high levels of frugality prevailed because many parents felt that resourcefulness and/or 'doing without' were worthy ideals and should be privileged in their *oikos*. The bread-maker purchase 'put off' the buying of a digital camera, even if easily afforded by those parents.

The green parents' household ecopractices were, therefore, suggestive of a 'retraditionalized' extension of social justice and equity commitments. But, often pragmatically, they felt they were forced into accepting the consumer way of 1990s life their children were entering. Most of the Green parents felt they had little choice but to be somewhat pragmatic about what their offspring were confronting. Nonetheless, levels of dissonance, frustration and dismay in many Green parents were evident. Some parents felt an acute sense of worry or anxiety about how their own (eco)political commitments at home were positioning their children, particularly at school. Invariably, however, these parents aimed to equip their children with sufficiently developed insights into a range of ethical and political considerations via what is best described as liberal parenting practices, unlike the disciplined parenting they had received. Their current parenting aim, often, was developing self-confidence in their children. Communication, lots of, in the family was prized and privileged as part of the regular approach to interaction.

Despite these worries and tribulations, most parents were comfortable with how their children were negotiating various challenges at school; some parents had been actively involved in schooling matters but were somewhat reluctant to be seen as pushy for fear of their children being seen as different. Mothers, in particular, developed solidarity and a level of security for their children with other 'green' or activist mothers and families in, often, neighbourhood circles. This was far more accessible for the inner-city sample that had attracted a critical mass of green voters and different lifestyles in the community over a considerable period of time.

Very few green parents pedagogically attached great importance to the level of their children's environmental knowledge or frequent contact with nature. Rather, parents consistently linked environmental issues or problems and solutions to their home-based and family-driven education via discussion (and by example) of the preferred ways in which the family conducted its way of life. Eating organically, sometimes homegrown, buying secondhand clothes and limiting or rejecting many household technologies such as computers, and use of public transport or bicycles were relatively common practices and parenting topics. None of the inner-city sample studied expressed any desire to live in the bush but did enjoy occasional family holidays to national parks or the beach.

It is reasonable to conclude that these Green parents demonstrated a strong sense of agency in creating household dwelling conditions, conventions, rules and resources that were consistent with inducting or exposing their offspring into some version of environmental ethics and ecopolitics. A number of parents linked their differences to the need to be somewhat parochial in the way the family conducted its (eco)politics and ethics, conceding also that the environmental education they had developed in the home was their own business; indeed that anything their children's school might do was a bonus but which couldn't be relied upon. This re-traditionalized *oikos*, unlike the scarcity conditions of the homes the green parents experienced in their own childhood, occurred in and against various competing social pressures and dominant

cultural forces that the parents well understood and stood opposed to, for the most part. There was, following Herring (2003), a strongly felt subversive role for these families to play.

***Post-traditional pale green children (n = 17, 8- to 16-years-old, majority 11–13)***

Typically, the majority of these young, lower secondary school, children were ‘post-material’. They demonstrated a domestically educated constraint on their own purchasing power as it was coupled with a heightened sense of environmental commitment. The majority of children knowingly rehearsed or unknowingly replicated many of their parents’ environmental practices in the home and, therefore, actively reconstituted their parents and family ecopolitic and environmental ethic. Most children participated in sports, musics, hobbies and had pets, often did not have a television or computer in their room and had limited access to family television, computer/internet or video/DVD player, sometimes as a result of a contract with one or both parents.

Most children were aware of their parents’ social, political and environmental views. Most knew and had basic understandings of national and global environmental problems but had little conventional environmental or ecological knowledge. Interestingly, many children confessed to being proud or admiring of their parents’ differences. This ‘otherness’ sensibility of the pale green children was sometimes openly demonstrated to their peers at school, occasionally as an anguished but sometimes proud reminder to the jaded idealism of some of the parents. At other times, children were clearly pressured by the consumer-techno-entertainment logics and practices of the majority of their peers and families. This pressure invariably created (some) tension for the child and, subsequently, concern or anxiety for one or both parents.

Most children believed they had a ‘voice’, and that it was listened to in the home, in the way the family functioned. Consistent communication, the raising of difficulties encountered by family members, provision of explanations from one or both parents fostered in most children a sense of confidence and family solidarity, even for the slightly older and, perhaps, rebellious teenagers engaged in youthful identity transitions transformed by the decline of authority and structure (Cote 2000).

At times, some children felt the need to remind a parent, or sibling, about rules that had been established for environmental reasons. The weight of this responsibility varied. Some older children occasionally but willfully broke rules to antagonize or oppose a parent. A number of children elected to join a parent at a meeting, or rally or community event in which environmental matters were on the agenda. Many children were ‘leaders’ in academic, sport or musical activities at school.

Undoubtedly, all of the children might be named ‘pale green’ because of the mix, often uneven according to age, of environmental sensibilities, interests, subjectivities and actions. These children’s pale green otherness and difference, like their parents, now face formidable social pressures and cultural forces, that, perhaps, will be difficult to sustain in the future.

**Findings 2. ‘Lived’ everyday ecological becoming**

The second layer more descriptively focuses on the everyday agencies of those *inhabiting the postmodern oikos*. This layer of interpretation of practices is more confined – temporally and spatially to the current practices and nature of the home place. The representational aim is to add richness of insight into the everyday phenomena of

green living and focus on notions of 'being', 'doing' and 'becoming' in ways that extend the above discussion of green intergenerational processes and 'dwelling'. This additional layer focuses on the circumstances and situatedness of family members and serves to round out an empirical basis to the notion of 'social-ecology' signalled in the Introduction. It stresses the more elusive temporal-spatial and intercorporeal and intergenerational moral spaces of the ways agents individually and collectively practice in the everyday. That is, it aims to add to previous work undertaken about the importance of understanding the 'critical ecological ontology' of our collective *for being for the environment* (Payne 1999a).

Current green parents and pale green children demonstrated high to moderate levels of conserver and/or pro-environmental practices (water, energy, travel, waste and self-wisdoms) as audited on a household survey each family member completed.

### ***Green parents' circumstances and 'situatedness'***

All Green parents were Anglo-Saxon (either Australian or British), highly educated (the majority with postgraduate qualifications in a wide range of academic/professional fields) and now work in a variety of professional human/social service settings. Marriages/partnerships were durable and, in most instances, based on a shared or like-mindedness about environmental issues/politics, more so than most other issues. Two of the families studied were 'single mother'. One family was 'blended'.

All green parents were potentially high-income earners but through their household politics, parenting practices and career choices shunned the levels of materiality and consumption they believed other 'baby boomer' households now practiced or aspired to.

Significantly, most parents agreed to earn less income than what could be expected of the high qualifications held. This self-imposed limitation often reflected a vocational decision to work in a human-service type setting that provided some opportunity for the continuation of a life-politic, be it, for example, in a university student union management position or part-time employment as a doctor in a community-based medical clinic. All families appeared to maintain comfortable but conscientiously low consumption lifestyles. Most homes were owned and older, being inner-city, often renovated and somewhat rustic or rambling.

Mothers were more inclined to, or elected to, work part-time in the 1990s due to child raising commitments. Hence, their privatized 'turn' to a domestic form of activism that mixed a traditional gendered role of mother with a de and retraditionalizing feminist commitment to change. Mothers of children now in secondary schooling were keen to publicly return to socially and/or environmentally relevant activities if not already presented through part-time work or domestic opportunities. Most fathers were now following established careers according to traditional gendered expectations and, in most instances, actively contributed to or shared domestic duties, and parenting eco-responsibilities within a retraditionalizing perspective, but often as the conventional disciplinary 'back-up' indoors, sometimes as creative nurturer and minder in the outdoors.

These green parents deliberately delayed having children, often in the mother's mid to late 30s, due to a combination of work and lifestyle commitments and shared desire between partners to be wiser about a parenting philosophy and practices. The need for this wisdom was often attributed to the extended and varied life experiences most parents had individually pursued in the 1970s and 1980s.

The above temporal–spatial–social life-course patterns, again, reflect a process of selective ‘re’traditionalization and ‘de’traditionalization of becoming a green parent. Most current parents grew up geographically in working class conditions and settings where, for the most part, the father worked and mother stayed at home. Most felt they were conventionally raised in a stable, if not a somewhat conservative, household political environment. There were some strong exceptions, noted earlier. Most parents recalled their schooling in the 1950 and 1960s as ‘standard’; some as a source of exploration and discovery. ‘Nature’ and nature experiences and their endorsement were not prominent in these parents’ recall of their childhood years but access to open spaces and freedoms were taken-for-granted, as was outdoor play in local places/venues and relatively natural settings. For some, home-based vegetable and fruit growing, having a pet, and family holidays (in outdoors) were viewed as important and memorable childhood experiences. Most parents now organize occasional family camping trips primarily for social reasons for their children.

In some instances, green parents actively detraditionalized their approach to parenting by deconstructing elements of the way they remembered being raised themselves. One mother remained very cautious about exposing her son to his grandparents because of the sexist manner she alleged of her own upbringing. Another mother, despite her own activist tendencies and aspirations, refused to allow ‘strong’ political debate in the home because of her negative childhood memories about the political volatility of her communist home and family life. Her father had been arrested and imprisoned because of his political activities, some of which occurred as meetings in the home. Another father engaged in a therapeutic process prior to having his first child so as to shed himself of assumptions and attitudes that he felt he had inherited from his father.

Parents shared strong views about the importance of formal education and selection of secondary schools for their children, usually State, but alternatives were carefully considered in some instances. For some parents, the transition of their children from primary to secondary school was a momentous decision in that the choices available to the parents and the child raised numerous issues. The ‘fit’ of the child’s personality and ‘difference’ was weighed up by parents with and against the child’s wishes, maintaining of existing friendship groups, proximity of school and the focus or diversity of the curriculum opportunities. Importantly, most parents felt that a ‘green’ education was their responsibility, partially as a consequence of their acknowledgement that most schools neither had the resources or, perhaps, inclination to provide an environmental education that was consistent with the way they thought it should focus on, or the way it might be enacted. The children of two families attended a Steiner school because of its alternative qualities and characteristics, including a perceived holistic/ecological approach. Some mothers, one father, were actively involved in a voluntary capacity in their child’s schooling. The majority of parents were ambitious for their children’s *being* and *becoming*.

### ***Current family ethical being and household political becoming***

The synergy of family functioning and parenting strategies, as interrelated, recursive and reconstitutive forms of agency in structure (Giddens 1984), were (strongly) socially democratic – participatory, communicative and, seemingly, mutually responsive and supportive. Many of the parents methodically planned their shared approach to parenting, presumably as a consequence of the delaying of having children and the



reflexive manner in which some parents re/detraditionalized their own parenting philosophy, as indicated above (Archer 2007).

Parenting strategies were underpinned by seriously considered governing principles in the liberal conduct of the home, such as consistent communication arrangements at set times, or promoting confidence in their offspring with assertiveness training, that were strategically and openly practiced, sometimes instrumentally (persuasively or manipulatively with rewards), but rarely coercively. Some parents identified a potential downside to the open and transparent basis of honest and regular communication in the home. In these instances, family discourse was often openly critical of consumer culture according to parents' ongoing commitments to social-justice and community engagements. Some parents worried about the effects on their children of their ongoing pessimism or tired cynicism. Various other 'eco' principles were positively modelled by both parents, sometimes reciprocated by children and regularly shared or mutually reinforced amongst siblings. The older child often became a leader and sometimes reminded a parent of any lapse in certain green actions or inactions. Boredom of children was not apparent.

The family ecopolitic was (increasingly) domestic and managed, occasionally intensified and monitored, in particular, by the mother, sometimes disciplined by the father, and more likely to occur indoors. The indoor ecopolitic focussed primarily on the issues of food/diet and clothing selection/purchase-related, but included conventional saving, fixing and recycling efforts. Some parents and children were vegetarian. The food politic revolved around the provision of high quality, sometimes organic, sometimes local produce. For some families, buying organic was costly but worthwhile. Daughters/girls appeared to be more involved in the food choices parents (usually mother) made and its preparation. Clothing choices were made mainly by mothers and daughters and were, in many instances, less slavish to fashion and, in some instances, included shopping from secondhand clothing stores and 'pass me downs' from older to younger. The selection of clothing, as distinct from food, was a point of vulnerability to the peer group pressures some of the older children in this study felt. Parents were sometimes placed in a difficult position in how to handle conflict but, as explained before, most families worked their way through these issues through discussion and problem-solving.

Within the uneasy mix of liberal parenting according to governing principles, many parents actively limited (younger) children's access to electronic media (TV, computer, mobile phone, etc.), restricted or discussed and debated children's selection of television/video/DVD content, and regularly avoided or deflected consumer culture imperatives (fast food, fashion shopping, school tuck shop). For example, in one family the purchase of the bread-making machine and delaying of the purchase of a digital camera was a democratic decision. The limiting of the availability of TVs, computers, mobile phones or restricting of their use was mostly a parental decision which, over time, most children adapted to and, in some instances, actively supported. Alternative forms of entertainment were often pursued by the children (reading books, musical instrument tuition, playing in the street/neighbourhood, membership of school or community sport team, managing pets).

### *Children's pale greening*

Only a longitudinal study of the young children participating in this study will reveal what they 'became' as a consequence of their early 'immersion' and 'intervention' in

the *postmodern oikos* created largely through the historical efforts, in place, of the current green parents. Hence, given the current insight and evidence, the use of 'pale green' children to characterize this cohort.

All children participating in the study ranging between 8- and 16-years-old were intelligent, expressive, articulate and, seemingly, mature 'beyond their years'. They confidently participated in the various forms of data collection and, for the most part, were enthusiastic about their own and parents' involvements. The older teenage children were curious about the purposes of the research and some were keen to discuss various topics with their parents. Most children were (self)aware and proud of their own 'green' (and family) differences. Children less than 10-years-old had vague ideas about environmental problems, concerns, practices and solutions.

There was strong uptake by this pale green cohort and, in most instances, little resistance to parents' pro-environmental actions, even though there was occasional mention was made of 'deliberately having a long shower' or 'leaving the lights on' to annoy a parent. Although participation in green actions in the home was habituated, in many instances, there appeared to be a considerable amount of voluntary participation in parents' activist interests and commitments. Some children enjoyed attending marches and rallies and felt 'no pressure' from parents to be there. Many children actively and diligently reconstituted green household practices by being, for example, in charge of recycling, caring for pets and, in one instance, gaining part-time employment after school in an organic food shop.

The majority of children appeared to be (self)aware and proud of their own green (and family) differences. Some older children were more secretive in their praise of their parents' commitments but wouldn't confess this to them. There was strong evidence of children sustaining their individual and household green concerns, interests or commitments despite, particularly for the teenagers, increasing peer and cultural pressures. Children were very aware of and sensitive to the differences between their green values and those of the majority of their peers. But this sense of difference was not restricted to green values and actions only but also across a range of attributes (size) and endeavours (prowess in sport or music, or 'leader' of something at school). A number of the older children confessed that they occasionally felt 'out on a limb' or a 'bit frustrated' that more of their cohort did not share green or environmental values. Most, however, felt they could confidently negotiate, defend and, in some instances, teach such differences to their peers. As indicated earlier, many of the parents were acutely aware of the potential difficulties surrounding their children's self and social perception of being different, particularly at school.

The majority of children and teenagers felt they were able to discuss and/or obtain support from their parents in dealing with these differences. Parents were regularly sounded out for advice on how to cope or adjust to issues arising at school about environmental attitudes and green actions, amongst a range of concerns. Much of this open and supportive communication about environmental and related differences appeared to be predicated on strategically developing the capacity and confidence of these children to deal with such issues in a competent manner in the future.

While some of the older teenagers had part-time jobs (organic food shop), the majority of children enjoyed and appreciated a considerable amount of independence, but within a fairly structured urban household environment. There was limited and irregular contact with local nature (backyard, local parks/creeks and community farms, usually with the father on bike rides or walks) and holiday nature (beaches, bush with the family and often other like-minded families). Although some children

acknowledged a desire for similar friends at school, most of the children's friendship groups were varied according to the different networks of schooling, sport and their parents' friends and families.

Most enjoyed school and were performing well in a range of academic, cultural and sporting endeavours. Like the majority of parents, children felt they were not getting an environmental education at school and that there might only be one or two teachers who had an interest in such matters. Children were acutely aware of the fundamental difference in the green culture of homes and school and were often highly critical of the waste and other 'anti-environmental practices' that they felt teachers and schools condoned, or turned a blind eye to.

### Findings 3. The *postmodern oikos* – an imaginary flourishing

The home is a highly influential site of education as well as for socialization and enculturation. It is, probably, the most powerful shaper of our *being* in terms of how beliefs, values and the worth of knowledge, understanding and emotional development are fostered relationally or not, and reconstituted through action and inaction in the everyday. We know a great deal about families and parenting (Scott, Treas, and Richards 2004). Each has attracted a great deal of academic attention over many decades of study. But not about the household as a geography or spatiality of being. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006) argued that the home is a key idea in numerous traditions of geography and a key site and spatial imaginary in the contemporary world. Bachelard (1958) has written, unusually and poetically, about the intimate experience of places, including the home. Cooper's (2006) text evocatively takes us outside the inside home into the meaningfulness of its gardens. Singer and Mason's (2006) case studies of eating inside the home and household buying from outside it are very revealing about food choices and actions. The SLE literature is partially revealing about the influence of parents, changes to neighbourhoods and children's contact with nature via family holidays. In all, the home is a place warranting critical investigation that seems to have escaped the attention of environmental education research.

Blunt and Dowling (2006, 268) conclude their text with suggestions for further research by noting that homes remain a pressing issue worth exploring from a geographical perspective. They invite research that deals with how nature–culture relations are expressed in contemporary home-making practices and what their implications are for sustainability. They also ask for research about the environmental consequences of home-making practices and how ideals of the home can be refashioned in an environmentally sensitive way. They conclude their wish list for research with two other recommendations. First, they ask for recognition of the multiple scales of home and how such differences can be used to open up debates on sustainability, home and housing. Second, they invite consideration of how global events such as climate change influence home-making practices?

The previous two layers of findings about the *postmodern oikos* go part of the way to addressing Blunt and Dowling's call, reiterating the absence of study of the home in the environmental education research literature. To those ends, this third layer of interpretive finding focuses more generally on the notion of the *postmodern oikos* found and studied here (Payne 2005, 2006, 2009). In particular, the findings reported above delve into questions of *being, doing, belonging, dwelling, inhabiting* and *becoming*. Those ideas are now incorporated into a broader statement about the

*postmodern oikos* revealed here. The section will conclude with an acknowledgement of some of the gaps and directions that future studies might consider.

*Oikos* can be traced to its origins in classical Greece and needs to be understood in relation to the *polis*. That is, the ecology of Greek homes, whose economy included animals, was always cast in the political tension between the private and the public that Hannah Arendt, amongst others, provided crucial insights into in regard to the ‘social’ but gendered nature of that politic (Payne 2009). Pecora (1997) cautioned that the Greek *oikos* was too often characterized as noble in the texts that represented it to us. Nevett (1999) called for a materialist and artifactually driven archaeological account of Greek homes so as to help overcome their textualized idealization. This study, a critical realist one, heeds those concerns within its limitations while addressing Blunt and Dowling’s call but, following Bauman, tries to reveal the moral spaces, struggles and intergenerational consequences for sustainability of the green families.

Their *postmodern oikos* is incredibly complex, as noted earlier, but its ‘pivotal practices’, following Archer (2000) are partially revealed in the first two layers of findings outlined above via the interpretive approach adopted in this study. Even a study of pivotal practices has limitations. For example, household ethnographies were not an option. The notion of family is always in flux – not only on the variations of it now available but who holds power within those pivotal practices and their related circumstances and contexts, and with or against the ‘traditions’ of that family. For example, the rise of ‘pester power’ and the consumer imperative of children has attracted widespread attention and opinion in the public press in Australia and observes that many parents lack confidence and competence to parent effectively within the power ‘shift’.

The interpretations here of household moral spaces and family struggles should, therefore, be understood as snapshots only of a select sample of families bravely living the *postmodern oikos*, possibly against the odds. The same can be said about the need for broader understandings about the (changing) quality of family dynamics, parenting and the internal relations of family members, including the relations between children and their grandparents (or extended family), and how they shaped, and were shaped, by the sharper ‘reductionist’ focus here on environmental matters. Even there, the tactics employed by family members within their broad ‘conservation/sustainability’ household strategy requires more fleshing out (de Certeau 1984) within the (embodied) ‘lived’ and discursive/communicative norms, conventions and power struggles of the family structure and its reconstitutions of agency, both individual and collective, in the time–space of the ‘private’ home ‘place’ (Giddens 1984) that, of course, is increasingly vulnerable to the ‘public’/global penetrations of the thoroughly *postmodern oikos*.

The question of time, enigmatic to say the least (Payne 2003), in relation to the moral and praxical spaces of the home place, remains intriguing and compelling when intergenerational interests enter the research question, as has occurred here. Part of the complexity of the *oikos* can temporally (and culturally) be found in the use of terms like tradition, detradition and retradition as they inextricably occur within the flow of the household over time but in the everyday. Also of interest is how the household ecology of family member’s knowledge, values, actions, or lack of, recirculates ‘slowly’ through time in the household place, noting the accelerating collapse of the public–private ‘separation’ through a wide range of increasingly invasive means. These, and other questions, demand looking into, not least of all because, as has been stated above, we pragmatically need to understand what aspirations, expectations,

assumptions and other socio-ecological ‘baggage’ children do bring to the school and must be negotiated with by the environmental education teacher and researchers.

Notwithstanding the need for further research along the lines suggested above, we have ‘found’ a *postmodern oikos*, or green household, that takes very seriously its moral spaces and struggles for responsibility, or *for-being-for-the-environment* or *ecological becoming* (Payne 1999a). An ‘imaginary’ has been visioned and enacted in a range of pivotal practices despite the trials and tribulations of the *postmodern oikos*.

### Discussion and conclusions

The three layers of findings represented above are a somewhat messy, textualized effort to richly ‘presence’ that ‘dwelling in’ and ‘becoming of’ the moral spaces and incubator effects in the *postmodern oikos* as it has been constructed intergenerationally over time–space in the everyday by family members and their dynamics. The three layers loosely combine in an interpretation of the agencies of three generations of families living in constantly changing circumstances and socio–historical–cultural–ecological contexts and conditions. The above form of ‘re-presenting’ research takes seriously those concerns now being expressed in environmental education research about the adequacy, or not, of inquiry where the notion of framing invites a greater degree of reflexivity about the conceptualization, contextualization, representation and legitimation of particular pieces of research work (see Reid 2009).

More generally, this study is a partial response to Bauman’s (2008) broader challenge to knowledge workers to identify practical answers to the possibility of an ethics in a consumer world. The limitations of that task are openly conceded, noting the difficulties of speaking on behalf of, for example, the current Green parents (the researched) where many were encouraged (as part of a politicized approach to environmental education research) to write about their historical experience of being, becoming and parenting green. Much still needs to be said!

As a critical realist, socio-ontologically disposed study of the agencies, dilemmas, responsibilities and choices of families, it deliberately highlights a temporal–cultural and intergenerational view of moral, social and ethical space in which environmental education and ecopedagogies now exist in the everyday ‘normality’ of the *postmodern oikos*. The families’ intergenerational ecopraxis is another real example of how the necessity of slow time asserts itself, ontologically and phenomenologically, over and in place as an essential ingredient of any form of politics (Grosz 2004) and their implications for environmental ethics, as well as in education (on slow vs. fast time in ecopedagogies, see Payne and Wattchow 2009). Following Bauman, Ginsborg and Archer, there is clear evidence of the reflexivity and environmental performativity of a small, powerful and progressive or subversive group of people tactically living a green *postmodern oikos*. There is, I believe, profound reason to feel hopeful about how individuals and families negotiate their agencies in everyday ways that are positive and constructive. But, it hasn’t been easy for these green families.

The notions of time in place and ‘proximal intimacy’ in an *oikos* are important in drawing implications for schooling and education. In his account of discontent in postmodernity titled ‘Morality begins at home: The rocky road to justice’, Bauman (1997), following Levinas’s ethics *for* the Other, dwells on the ‘primal moral scene’ (51) – it being *the* moral space requiring retrieval for what Bauman believes is the now well-overdue ‘remoralization of primary human relations’ (65). That scene, as outlined in the Introduction, is the ‘moral party of two’ (46) in which the face-to-face encounter



of I and the Other is and always has been where moral action ‘is born and gains strength’ (70). It was clear from this study how different moral parties of two occurred and recurred in the various intergenerational phases of *oikos* – be it mother and daughter, partner and partner, or sibling to sibling, or child to grandparent. There were numerous moral spaces found in this study worthy of further attention in research and pedagogical development that, together, signal the complexity of for example, moral reasoning, certainty and the prospects for durable environmental ethics and ecopolitics. For Bauman, this ‘large moral space’ is the ‘birth place’ of moral sensitivity (46). And, ironically given this ontologically oriented study of Green families and their intergenerational environmental ethics, Bauman refers to this moral space as a ‘greenhouse’ (47) – a space where each of us is now asked, or reminded if, indeed, we as researchers/researched are estranged from the social contexts of our knowledge work, to usher that moral space into a praxical and discursive/textual mode so as to encourage choice (or not) to take ‘responsibility for the Other’ (70).

This ‘nearby’ but ‘large’ proximal moral space only partially and messily investigated here might (best) be found in the intimacy of the family home place, noting how change has occurred inexorably in the family, its constitution, arrangements and functioning, including parenting and children/youth/young adult transitions. And, after that, potentially in the intimacy of the school class room, noting that the moral party of two is destabilized and extended, but still somewhat available, even if fleeting. Levinas and Bauman have always noted that as soon as the ‘third party’ intervenes in this moral space that the prospects for ethics are diminished and displaced to the demands of the ‘social’ world. This happens in families in homes and in classes in schools. Our pale green sample was challenged by peers, friends, families and related networks yet remained capable of living a range of green principles. For Bauman, the metaphorical home place of face-to-face morality might well be a surrogate small-scale key to the large-scale social problems of ethics and justice.

There can be no doubt that our pale green children, and their global ilk, are entering into what Bauman (2008) has named as the ‘unmanageable’ and maybe ‘unimaginable’. The consequences of climate change are now front page news, sometimes referred to by political leaders as a ‘great moral challenge’ but, as I write, competing with the alleged economic recovery from the financial crisis of capitalism as the persistent priority where restoring consumer confidence in the market economy is targeted as the national interest.

There is a moral and political challenge for the way we approach schooling revealed by this study. The pale green children have grown up in an *oikos* where frugality, resourcefulness, being green and different, were valued. They were less concerned about money and goods, and their parents were more interested in the family’s collective *becoming*, notwithstanding the ubiquitous peer group pressure on the children and the somewhat weary cynicism of the parents who have practiced lifestyle and ‘paradigm change’. One might expect that the moral space they have inhabited in the *oikos* is part of an introduction to, following Bauman’s question (2008), an ethics that does have a chance in a world of consumers. Might schools develop themselves as an ‘other’ ethical version of *oikos*? How might educators use the ‘time’ and place of the school to usher moral and ethical sensitivities and actions like those described above? Can various contradictions between the rhetoric and philosophy of environmental education and the reality of schooling practices (Stevenson 2007) and what learners bring to both be acknowledged, and limited? Baby steps are needed.



The social ecology and critical ecological ontology of the households outlined here should be of interest to official school-based (and community-based) curriculum and pedagogical development in environmental education because the home is a primary shaper of what children, knowingly and unknowingly, take to school or 'live' in the everyday political world of choices. Sometimes educators forget this. Teachers inevitably wrestle in rushed or crowded ways in their curriculum and pedagogical interventions, often on behalf of the State, with their learners' home-based environmental interests, or lack of, and commitments, or lack of. These school-based State-driven interventions are, of course, accelerated abstractions typically contrived by absent/non present curriculum experts and, consistently, focus on knowledge production or information dissemination; hardly the moral space of the home identified by Bauman for the everyday choices of the child in 'taking responsibility'. The estranged, expert, official curriculum, by and large, is not the moral, social, political and ecological lifeworld experienced by those children and, if so, through schooling serves to disembed and decontextualize that not surprisingly disengaged learner from the everyday practices in which his/her environmental interests, problems and issues 'live'. But through green architecture, school gardens, outdoor festivals, camps and so on, governments and school councils can create conditions that partially reflect the *postmodern oikos* revealed in this study of green households.

In regard to 'filling the gaps' sometimes mentioned in environmental education research, the studies outlined above shed some light on the everyday and significant sources of environmental behaviours. Put simply, the everyday lifeworld of home is not often a mirror of the (contrived) lifeworld of the school. For example, the preoccupation in schooling with the 'right' environmental knowledge is a partial starting point only in environmental education to create the appropriate attitudes and values. Parents here were far more interested in an everyday ecopolitical education than they were in a factually driven view of environmental knowledge. Its partialness is problematic in that such knowledge is probably at odds, ontologically and epistemologically, with that of the children's current lifeworlds, even in its consumerist practices, in particular the family's nurturing and/or disciplining of the various moral spaces and primacies of practice (or lack of) for a revitalized ethics of education. Yet again, the framing and findings of this study, will signal concerns in environmental education about the use of the term 'for' the environment. In this case, the 'other' of the *oikos* has been case studied – perhaps as an exemplar of what does happen or can be imagined, notwithstanding the many resistances that can be anticipated in moving the school to something like an *oikos*. That is, the socio-ecological vantage point offered here is suggestive of the potential for a remoralized conversation between unofficial, household and official, State/school versions of environmental education ethics and its praxis.

Bauman's quirky use of terms like the home, birth place, greenhouse, breeding and training ground, have a particular salience to how ethics in the sheer intimacy and moral space of the pivotal practices (Archer 2000) of the home is co-constructed by family members in their everyday face-to-face encounters, over time, in a range of possible directions, including environmental and ecological. Indeed, the study of any (re)moralization of human relations practiced pivotally amongst family members in the direction of environmental ethics might clarify some of the important pedagogical grounds of environmental education (Payne 2005, 2006); a challenge for environmental education research pursued here that might inspire and reinform other research efforts that seek to influence official curricula and pedagogical endeavour.

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