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article

Telling 'moral tales'? Family narratives of responsible privilege and environmental concern in India and the UK

Janet Boddy,[1] j.m.boddy@sussex.ac.uk
University of Sussex, UK
Ann Phoenix, a.phoenix@ucl.ac.uk
Catherine Walker, cate.walker.11@alumni.ucl.ac.uk
Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education, UK
Uma Vennam, umavennam@gmail.com
Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), India
Helen Austerberry, h.austerberry@ioe.ac.uk
UCL Institute of Education, London, UK
Madhavi Latha, Independent Consultant

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Contemporary discussions of climate change response frequently emphasise individual moral responsibility, but little is known about how environmental messages are taken up or resisted in everyday practices. This article examines how families negotiate the moral narratives and identity positions associated with environmental responsibility. It focuses on families living in relatively affluent circumstances in England and South East India to consider the ways in which the families construct their understandings of environment and take up identities as morally responsible. Our analysis focuses on a subsample of case studies involved in the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Family Lives and the Environment study, within the NOVELLA node, using a multimethod qualitative approach with families of children aged between 12 and 14. This article focuses on interviews with 10 of the 24 families in the sample, all of whom (in both India and the UK) discussed environmental concerns within moral narratives of the responsibilities of relative privilege. Findings highlight the potential of cross-world research to help theorise the complex economic and cultural specificity of a particular morally charged framing of environmental concern, addressing the (dis)connections between 'moral tales' of responsible privilege and individual and collective accounts of family practices.

key words family practices • environment • narratives • cross-national • India • UK
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Introduction

This article examines family understandings and practices that are crucial to theorisations of environmental concern, aiming to address criticisms of over-simplification in climate change policy (Shove, 2010) and the reduction of the study of environmentalism or consumption to 'matters of moral adjudication or political stance' (Miller, 2012: viii–ix). Our research seeks a more complex understanding through analysis of the moral narratives of families living in relatively affluent circumstances in England and South East India (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana), in which environmental concern and environmental practices are framed in terms of responsible privilege. In working with families from the 'majority' and 'minority' worlds, the study contributes to the development of nuanced cross-world analyses. Research material from India and the UK is analysed side by side, attending to commonalities as well as differences across contexts, rather than treating the UK as the norm against which Indian accounts are compared. This 'cross-world' approach is crucial to challenging the 'false universalism' that treats minority world perspectives as all the same and necessarily different from majority world perspectives (Punch, 2015).

The study engages with the 'social drama' of climate change, where narratives of environmental concern often rely on the moral character of those making claims and define performative actions as worthy or unworthy (Smith and Howe, 2015). This moral framing can also be seen in academic writing about environmental concern, in its reference to 'virtue ethics'. For example, Hulme (2014: 308–9) argued that to talk about climate change, we must start by asking what it means to be human and what is the 'good life'. Bell (2014: 142) conceptualises environmental identity in similar ways:

> Every person has an environmental identity (whether it is concerned, apathetic, or antagonistic) that is a necessary part of her full identity. A foundational aspect … is what one sees as the good life.

Bell's formulation individualises environmental identity. Yet, identities are now commonly recognised to be relational, constructed through affiliations with, as well as differentiation from, others (see, for example, Hall, 1991; Joffé, 1999). They intersect with (and are constructed through) practices that are also relational and dynamic, negotiated within wider social structures and everyday family lives (Morgan, 2013). Bell defines environmental identity as 'an individual's understanding of her self related dialectically with her understanding of environmental aspects of human and non-human others' (Bell, 2014: 142). But who are the human 'others' in this moral conception of environmental identity, and how are they understood? The vilification of the 'other' becomes particularly acute during times of crisis (Joffé, 1999), and this can be seen in the characterisation of 'uncivil others' in narratives of environmental concern (Smith and Howe, 2015), exemplified by Bell's (2014) typology of environmental identity. Simple moral characterisations neglect the complex and relational subjectivities associated with response to climate change, but they also obscure structural inequalities.

The dominant moral narratives of environmentalism that emanate from high-consuming neoliberal cultures in the Global North (Guha, 2006; Smith and Howe, 2015) frame environmental awareness through a 'Northern-centric spatial imaginary' of the affluent ethical consumer practising care-at-a-distance (Gregson

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and Ferdous, 2015: 253). Environmental concern is distanced, while the Global South is simultaneously constructed as *the* critical environmental threat, because of overpopulation, increasing industrialisation and urbanisation (Räthzel and Uzzell, 2009). In contrast to this concern, the 'affluence hypothesis' suggests that environmental awareness corresponds to economic development, such that the environmental impacts of economic growth start to decline once a certain level of development has been reached (Duroy, 2008). This is a narrative that 'remains squarely within the realm of "business-as-usual" economics', contrasting with consistent evidence that higher levels of affluence correlate with higher emissions (Knight and Schor, 2014: 3729). But narratives of 'green growth' are especially troubling when they coincide with a middle-class framing of environmental problems as 'caused by overpopulated slums and not rising middle class consumption' (see, for example, Ghertner, 2012: 1175). Environmental justice depends on recognition of inequalities within, as well as between, nation states (Bulkely et al, 2014). Inequalities, albeit very different in scale, disproportionately affect children and families within both India and the UK (see, for example, Agarwal, 1998; Ridge, 2013; UNDP, 2014; Eurostat, 2015). In both countries, moral narratives derived from an 'élite consensus' (Swyngedouw, 2013: 6) can be seen as de-politicising by individualising moral responsibility and problematising the poor, while apparently 'ethical' consumption practices can reinforce class divisions and other structural differences (Barendregt and Jaffe, 2014).

In individualising environmental responsibilities, moral narratives neglect the collectivity of family practices, at the same time as families are morally positioned in academic, political and policy debates (see, for example, Morgan 2013). The telling of 'moral tales' can be understood as a family practice, providing ethical accounts that are in part shaped by public discourses of the morally responsible family, but that are based in everyday practices, including gendered practices of care and upbringing, and rooted in complex and interdependent networks and sets of relationships. Agarwal's (1998) recognition that feminist environmentalism should be rooted in the materiality of everyday family lives thus resonates with the fact that environmentalism brings together moral narratives based on élite consensus, 'ethical consumption' and family practices.

Materiality is central to theories of practice, and to theorising practices in relation to consumption, but practices are also embedded in social worlds, and meaning is a core element of any practice (see, for example, Shove et al, 2012). Narrative analysis, with its focus on meaning-making, provides a valuable method of analysing the meanings of practices and their social, spatial and temporal nature (see, for example, Squire, 2013). In particular, 'analysis of the small story enables attention on how people build their narratives and the performative work done by the narratives' (Phoenix, 2013: 73), providing insights into how personal and 'canonical narratives' of socially and culturally accepted norms fit together (Bruner, 1991). Narrative analysis of family practices can illuminate the ways in which 'moral tales' of environmentalism and climate change are framed within small stories of everyday family lives. The analysis presented in this article examines how environmental concern features (and is used) within individual and collective family narratives of responsible privilege among (relatively) affluent families in India (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana) and England. It then considers how these moral, environmental narratives construct difference from the 'other', examining the extent to which narratives of environmental concern entail recognition of lives different from those lived by (relatively) affluent families.

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Methodology

This article is focused on a subsample of family case studies from the Family Lives and the Environment study, part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) National Centre for Research Methods NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches) node (www.novella.ac.uk). The project as a whole aimed to learn from the *diversity* of family lives in relation to the environment. After conducting secondary analysis of eight family case studies drawn from the qualitative subsample of the Young Lives study in Andhra Pradesh/Telangana (www.younglives.org.uk), we interviewed 24 families with very different economic, social, cultural and demographic profiles in India (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana) and the UK (southern England) (see Table 1). We recruited a volunteer sample through school Years 7 and 8 (children aged 11–14), selecting schools in urban and rural locations and on the basis of school characteristics (including state/government and fee-paying schools in both countries). In each country, the sample included urban and rural families with varying levels of relative affluence, while bearing in mind that relative affluence, and relative poverty in particular, are very different in the two countries.

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Table 1: Sample[a]

India	State capital (Hyderabad)	Rural area
Government school	**Mamatha** (girl, 11) Mother, father, two siblings	**Dharani** (girl, 12) Mother, father, sibling
	Anand (boy, 14) Mother, father, two siblings	**Chandhrasekhar** (boy, 12) Mother, father, sibling
Private school	**Gomathi** (girl, 12) Mother, father, one sibling, cousin	**Chitra** (girl, 12) Mother, father, sibling
	Rahul (boy, 12) Mother, father, one sibling	**Hemant** (boy, 12) Mother, father, sibling, two grandparents
International school	***Amrutha** (girl, 12) Mother, father, one sibling	***Reethika** (girl, 12) Mother, father, sibling
	***Aamir** (12) Mother, father, two siblings, grandmother	***Nageshwar** (boy, 12) Father, step-mother, sibling, two grandparents
UK	**Country capital (London)**	**Rural area**
State school	**Phoebe** (girl, 12) Mother, father, two siblings	**Amy** (girl, 11) Mother, one sibling
	Nathan (boy, 12) Mother, step-father, three siblings	**Callum** (boy, 11) Mother, one sibling
	Antonia (girl, 12) Father, mother, two siblings	***Helena** (girl, 12) Father
Private school	**Kofi** (boy, 11) Mother, two siblings	***Jack** (boy, 12) Mother, father, one sibling
	***Marnie** (girl, 12) Mother, father, two siblings	***Rosie** (girl, 12) Mother, father, one sibling
	***Humphrey** (boy, 12) Mother, father, one sibling	***Oliver** (boy, 11) Mother, step-father, two siblings

Note: [a] All names are pseudonyms; * cases discussed in the article.

We visited each family three times over a period of approximately two weeks.[2] Visit 1 involved a family group interview, incorporating a cognitive mapping exercise to explore meanings of environment in families' lives. Families were given disposable cameras (one each for the main caregiver and the focal young person, and a third camera for the rest of the family) and took photos over seven days to show what was important in their everyday lives and environments. Visit 2 involved individual interviews with the caregiver and young person, and a walking or driving interview in their local area involving the caregiver, young person and anyone else in the family who wanted to come. Visit 3 involved photo elicitation interviews. The main caregiver and young person were interviewed individually, and each selected five of their pictures to discuss with the rest of the family, while other family members separately chose three photos from the third camera. Afterwards, the family group were interviewed together, discussing the photos selected and choosing three that they agreed best conveyed what was important in their everyday lives. Interviews were transcribed[3] and, where necessary, translated into English. We analysed themes and narratives within family cases, before looking thematically across cases, and then at narratives within themes (Riessman, 2008). The analysis presented here is focused on 10 of the 24 families in the sample, selected because they discussed environmental concerns within moral narratives of the responsibilities of relative privilege: four families of children attending private/international fee-paying schools in each country, and two further rural UK families of children attending state schools. The article analyses discussions of environmental concern, how environmental practices were constructed as fitting into family life, and whether or not these issues were routinely discussed within households. Examples from India and the UK are analysed alongside each other since the aim of the study was not to do a cross-country comparison, but to use the cases to illuminate each other.

The research was conducted subject to ethics approval from an Institute of Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC Approval FCL 420), but certain specific ethics considerations are worth highlighting in relation to the analysis presented here. Narratives are always relational, and in framing the study's focus on 'family lives and the environment' we inevitably invoked informants' expectations about *our* moral positioning as researchers. The research interview is a very particular form of conversation, and especially given our focus, it can be seen as a site of managed 'family display' (Finch, 2007), with narratives co-constructed for (and by) the interviewer in the context of that interview (Riessman, 2008; Phoenix, 2013). As middle-class researchers from the Global North and South conducting research for which we have justified the use of carbon-intensive practices (such as long distance air travel), we are in no position to claim a moral high ground, and we emphasised this in our explanations of the research and throughout fieldwork interactions. But families may have felt such expectations nevertheless, and been motivated to align their accounts with morally framed 'canonical' narratives of environmental concern. Some did not; instead they eschewed engagement with such narratives or explained their scepticism about environmental practices. Narrative analysis attends to contradictions and commonalities, within and between families' and family members' accounts, and thus it is possible to examine the work that is done by family narratives, and to produce them, as well as the implications of morally framed conceptualisations of environmentalism for the families.

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Narratives of responsible privilege

For the affluent parents interviewed in both countries, moral tales of responsible privilege were often framed in relation to values for upbringing. In rural England, Oliver's mother (Vicky) was concerned that her children should understand the privilege of being a 'convenience family', with the financial resources to pay others to do "things that we don't like to do":

> 'People might say that's spoiled. It, but that's more of an issue for the children actually I guess. [Janet: Mmm] […] So (...) you know there is that sort of (...) consideration about, you know, this, this is all they know. [Janet: Mmm] So one has to be a bit careful of that I suppose.'

In her individual interview, Vicky described herself as sceptical about environmental responsibility, commenting that "It's not a politically correct thing to say, but just that's the truth." She softened that potentially 'troubled subject position' (Wetherell, 1998) by emphasising her concern to ensure that her children learn to value things, while living a "disposable way of life"; she later related this to wider problems of wasteful technology, such as built-in obsolescence:

> 'Um (...) I think the first time [environment] was ever mentioned was last time you were here. I think it's the first time it was ever discussed in this family. [Janet: Yeah] I mean (...) semi-related stuff, like the whole (...) you know um (...) disposable way of life has been discussed. But much more from a point of view of me trying to (.) get them to learn to appreciate things, to value things.'

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UK survey data suggests that the majority of adults express concern about climate change (see, for example, Randall, 2011), but other research suggests that, as in Vicky's family, intergenerational exchanges about the environment are limited in some homes because the environment is not seen as a suitable topic for discussion, in some cases because children's knowledge disrupts the role of the parent as 'expert' (see, for example, Uzzell, 1999; Duvall and Zint, 2007).

In the city of Hyderabad, Amrutha's family lived in a gated community where her father, Vijay, said his wife and children spend "90% of their lives". Both Amrutha's parents repeatedly expressed concern that their children's lives were (too) separate from the 'real India', a depiction that the children sometimes contested:

Vijay:	'So we kind of, uh, live in this dilemma of whether are really doing the right thing by providing all the comforts to them and shielding them from reality. Well I'm kind of thinking that maybe once they grow a bit older then we're gonna show them what life is so that [they really ='
Amrutha:	'= I'm okay! ='
Vijay:	'= Appreciate this] life and also [understand the realities ='
Amrutha:	'= <u>Dad</u> I'm <u>okay</u> ='
Vijay:	'= you know?]'

Accounts of responsible privilege often encompassed narratives of some sort of environmental responsibility. Amrutha's parents highlighted the recycling facilities in their gated community, and Amrutha's mother's 'carpooling' when she shopped with friends was narrated by her father as an environmental practice:

Aruna:	'I – I mean, all my friends. We all carpool and then we go [to a farmers' market].'
Natasha:	'[Oooh, right ='
Madhavi:	'= OK]' Vijay: 'So when it comes to the environment [related ='
Aruna:	'=Yeah! [laughs] ='
Vijay:	'= carpooling is] something which is catching up today.'

Aruna later moderated this interpretation by highlighting the social aspects of carpooling with friends, but this small story shows a framing that both she and Vijay repeated, of environmental practice as characteristic of India's developing modernity ('catching up today'). Environmental practices were repeatedly shown by this family to be relational, fitting in with social and family life as in the carpooling example, and to be a site of family display (Finch, 2007). Of course this is a display for the interviewer, within our study. But the carpooling example also indicates how responsibility and knowledge are filtered through privilege – sharing cars is a choice, not a necessity. In this way Vijay and Aruna put boundaries around family membership, demonstrating their position as part of an 'élite consensus' (Swyngedouw, 2013), ahead of others who are 'catching up'. These understandings were also framed biographically and transnationally, contrasted with the family's previous experiences of living in the US.

In a different way, transnational understanding also informed the understanding of responsible privilege expressed by Mary, whose son Jack attended a state school in an English village. She contrasted her family's life with her experiences of living and working in the Global South, commenting that:

> 'You know, you're already – just the fact we live here, we're already in a massively privileged, tiny minority. And the fact we live here and we live comfortably and we have jobs […] you know the children are (...) they have everything they need. They don't get everything they want, but they very much have everything they need. […] That's not environment, sorry. But that, but it does feed into it, because then it feeds into sort of (...) trying not to take more than what is your sort of share.'

In Mary's account, the intersection between responsible privilege and environmental practices is inextricably linked to family life and to relations that are comparative. Throughout her account, her recognition that the family have more economic resources than most of the world is politicised and rooted in experience, and lies at the heart of her philosophy of "not taking more than ... your share."

The way in which Mary's account is situated in an affluent Global North country becomes clear when it is juxtaposed with a narrative from Parvathi, whose daughter (Reethika) attended an international school in Andhra Pradesh. Like other parents in our sample, she and her husband spoke of making their children aware of their privilege, that "people are suffering" because of water shortages. But Parvathi also

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situated her narrative in biographically rooted understandings, with a detailed listing of the complex labour involved in securing drinking water in the village where she grew up. This story showed her personal experience and environmental knowledge, making clear that her current comfortable situation (and secure water supply) doesn't diminish a personal understanding of rural poverty.

In inner London, Humphrey's family also positioned environmental responsibility as part of responsible privilege. In their first interview, Humphrey's mother Julia set out a strongly environmentally engaged family identity and "the issue of trying to live a sustainable life on the ground." Like Parvathi, Julia offered a detailed listing of practices – in this case relating to energy use – demonstrating the knowledge underpinning her responsible position. Her narrative built on the story of doing a big 'eco-fit' of their house, emphasising their ecological concern, and the feeling of responsibility engendered by the privilege of having "spent all this money" on the house:

> 'So you think, well, we [laughs] we spent all this money and (...) used all of these (...) calories, if you like. You know (...) in the grand scheme of things in order to create this house, we should do our best (...) not to then just relax into normal usage.'

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For several of the more affluent families in our sample, narratives of responsible privilege also revealed the moral discomfort engendered by forms of (high carbon) consumption that were rendered possible through (relative) affluence. Within the English context, this often focused on car use, and cars often featured in family photos (see Photograph 1). Rosie's mother, Sally, told the story of their 'forced' decision to buy a 'ridiculous' 4x4 vehicle after being snowed in in their rural village:

> 'I mean we're not into having four wheel drive necessarily, but someone said to me without one you won't be able to get to school... […] So we've been sort of (.) forced into one of these ridiculous 4x4s, which (.) everyone at the school seems to have [laughs]. Which is a shame; we're in this little village and we shouldn't really need to run around in big cars. But, but it does mean that we can, I can do a lot of the drives without worrying about being stuck. So that's a bit of an impact (...) environmentally.'

Sally went on to detail the utility of her car in coping with the journey to school, before ending with a coda, justifying their choice of school (and so the need for the car):

> 'But you know the, the, the, the school I think is, is wonderful for the children. One of the reasons we chose it was because it looks out. […] And for argument's sake where Rosie's classroom is, the view she has is just stunning. And I mean, that's got to give you a sense of wellbeing when you work – you know, you work in an environment like that.'

In ending the narrative this way, Sally highlights a different meaning of environment. Her discursive turn 'But you know…' explains that the 4x4 is in fact necessary for the children's wellbeing and their access to a 'stunning' environment.

Photograph 1: "Like half our life is in the car" (Marnie)

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Sally's negotiation of environmental attractiveness, her children's schooling and environmentalism demonstrates a common feature in the family narratives – that environmental responsibility was linked with family responsibilities and the resulting local family practices. This is further illuminated by Aamir's and Amrutha's family narratives.

In Hyderabad, where temperatures often rise to 45°C in summer, air conditioning (AC) was highlighted as a necessary consumption practice by Aamir and Amrutha's families. Aamir's mother Zoya explained that air-conditioning was 'not a luxury', but was purchased as a necessity for her father's health. Both mothers said that air-conditioning was necessary so their children could sleep in the summer, but Zoya drew a generational contrast, speaking of trying to reduce air-conditioning use, to "develop this habit in [the children], like how to avoid wastage":

> 'In my childhood I did not know what AC is [Natasha: Mmm]. Only when I go to some big hi-fi place I used to feel that when I was very small […] like I have come to a very big place, where see it has AC, air-conditioning, AC. But now it is very common, for my children it is very common thing, like how we switch on the light, how we switch on the fan. AC is like the same for them.'

Zoya's positioning of herself as the expert within this narrative is consistent with other research that highlights generational hierarchies in families (see, for example, Uzzell, 1999; Robson et al, 2007). But air-conditioning and water use were not only taken-for-granted as necessary practices for *children*, as we can see from Zoya's account of her own routine during the heat of summer:

> 'When I come back home it is terribly hot, I take bath, eat my lunch and then switch on AC and take a nap for some time.'

In Zoya and Sally's accounts, the high-carbon practices of AC and driving are justified as practices of care, necessary to meet their and their families' needs within specific environmental contexts. Environment, identity and consumption intersect, as the display of environmentally engaged identity positions is balanced against the characterisation of the responsible mother whose consumption practices ensure family wellbeing.

Imagining the 'other'

Categorising the self always requires an 'other', but this is not static (Hall, 1991); rather, it slips discursively between vivid and vague formulations as we account for ourselves (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In our analysis, families' constructions of engaged environmental identities within their narratives of responsible privilege highlighted varied, shifting and sometimes contradictory characterisations of the 'other'. Perhaps unsurprisingly in a study of family narratives, children were key characters in adults' narratives of responsible privilege, often characterised as less responsible or less expert than the adult narrator, as in Zoya's narrative (above). In these narratives the child is not (or not only) an imaginary character; s/he is also quotidian 'other', a central character in the narrator's everyday (and imagined future) life.

In contrast, families' talk also showed how more distant and abstract 'others' were characterised within moral narratives of environmental concern. All the more affluent Indian families lived in relative proximity to poor communities that were affected by climatic events and constrained environmental resources. But for affluent families in both countries, lived experience of adverse climatic events was generally distant from quotidian life. Nageshwar's grandmother, Sakuntala, highlighted her understanding of environmental issues such as resource depletion, but noted that such problems affected others, not her family. Aamir's mother, Zoya, also gave a distancing account, commenting that she would help people affected by climatic events if she could, but that "reaching them personally is not possible". Parvathi, Reethika's mother, also offered a sympathetic framing, not of an abstract other, but of the tenant farmers on her family's land. As before, she invoked a biographically shared identity – "we were all born in agriculture families, did farming in the past, and father-in-law does even now" – but she noted that the crop loss caused by this climatic change had little direct impact on her family:

> 'Loss means, nothing much, but not having satisfaction. That is, we have leased our agriculture lands for lease to the tenant farmers. There is no proper yield for them. Even if they have experienced loss we too have our requirements, isn't it! You are aware of tenancy, they give tenancy amount, and we are taking from them even in loss period. And that too feels unsatisfactory. If there is good harvest, it's good, we feel that, and there is good harvest, which gives a different feel and satisfaction.'

Parvathi further emphasised her sense of connection when she said, "we do not have great respect for [the rent] collector, we have lots of respect towards a farmer, used

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to be like that!" Later, she asserted the value of this shared identity, twice repeating a normative statement about Indian culture– the "farmer is the backbone of the nation." But her complex moral position was also evident in her distancing of the rent collector that her family employs and her justification that "we, too, have our requirements."

Three families highlighted activities designed to raise children's awareness of the less fortunate 'other'. Aruna and Vijay took their children to visit local orphanages and emphasised this family practice by marking it on their family map, as Aruna explained:

> 'We make it a point that we go to – we go and visit those places when it's their [the children's] birthday.'

In the UK, both Oliver and Marnie's families told stories of holidays in Africa involving visits to village communities. Saskia, Marnie's mother, explicitly attributed her children's understanding of water use to their village visit, saying, "They're conscious of water as well, because we took them to Africa for an experience […] and we went into a village where they have to get water from a well." But Hudson (Marnie's younger brother) disrupted his mother's moral tale, interrupting eight times to repeat that the experience was "really fun". Towards the end of the narrative, Marnie joined in her mother's moral framing:

Marnie: 'It made me think that my life is like (...) extremely like (...) I'm privileged to have (...) this, this... […] And then when you think about, like somebody will say, oh I want a bigger house and I want (...) a nice car, it's like (...) like you [inaudible] like the people in Africa don't have anything. They don't say to them, I want a nice car, I want a nicer house, because they have to work really, really hard... […]'

Saskia: 'We tried to give these guys respect for the planet, because they are rather lucky I think just to have all the nice, the simple things that come into their life, like water, food, and nice schools. Um so we do like to give them a bit of the wild west every now and then just to... [laughter] … just to ground them.'

At this point, Hudson interjected again, drawing Marnie back to another memory of fun:

Hudson: 'It was really fun when we were sitting down on the floor when (...) even if you was like (...) even if I hadn't eat with my hands before, like with like really got messy... [...] And it was much different to England.'

Marnie: 'Ate everything of the chicken, didn't we; every bit of the chicken including its eggs inside it, its head, [I] was nibbling on the head.'

This narrative corresponds with Wetherell and Potter's (1992) culture-as-therapy discourse. Marnie and Saskia contrast less fortunate others who 'don't have anything' with the normative, 'the nice, the simple' things of the modern minority world, while for Hudson, cultural strangeness is fun to consume and hence not disadvantageous.

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A different framing was offered by Oliver and his brother, who also drew a contrast with their own taken-for-granted affluence, but here, the other's lack of resources is naturalised and hence constructed as not a problem:

Oliver: 'I mean it would be really (...) annoying if we didn't have electricity from now. But if we'd never had electricity it wouldn't make much difference. […]'
Max: 'If we started living with electricity but we didn't have it (...) it would just be (...) bad. But if we started without electricity (...) it would be fine because we wouldn't know (...) like (...) what it would be like to have it. And it would just be fine.'
Vicky: 'We've met children that haven't had electricity, haven't we?'
Oliver: 'Yeah. But...'
Janet: 'When you were in Tanzania?'
Vicky: 'I think so yes. […] They didn't know they didn't have it.'
Oliver: 'If you start with it and then you don't have it, you know what it feels like.'
Janet: 'Yeah.'
Oliver: 'But if you start without it (...) you just won't know and then you'll just (...) be happy.'

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For Hudson, Oliver and Max, their experiences emphasise difference; while thought-provoking, they don't produce feelings of environmental responsibility, solicitude or mutual recognition (although Marnie is eventually steered to this conclusion). The parents' aim of getting the children to recognise their privilege is only partially met, leaving a gap between the taken-for-grantedness of environmental resource use in their affluent families, and the inability to link this psychosocially with people's lives and practices in poverty. There is no real discussion within these narratives of what 'responsibility' means, or of what the children are meant to do as a consequence. Uzzell's (1999: 401) distinction between three planes of environmental education is relevant here: while the children may be positioned by their parents as 'acquiring learning', it is less clear that they are 'developing concern' or 'solution finding'. In India, Amrutha's mother Aruna highlighted recognition of, and concern for, the 'other' which was rooted in a contrast with her 'comfortable' life:

> 'But what about, the people [claps] who are living in the small villages where they get to face all these kind of problems in their everyday basis, what will they do? Nobody is there listen to them, right? […] I am living a comfortable life, I am saying a small nasty smell comes I can complain to people who can take care of it, but what about those people, that was my concern.'

Moments later, she drew a further binary, comparing 'uncivilised' and 'uneducated' village people favourably in contrast to 'civilised', educated city dwellers who use plastic bags:

> 'And you should see now you are going to [rural area], you should visit small, small villages, they are better than civilised people I should say, frankly. Because fine they don't have any accessibility for all this wonderful [reusable

shopping] bags, the brown bags that they give in the market, they don't have accessibility for all those bags, but they use the paper, I really appreciated them so much because I think even civilised people who are well educated don't follow this.'

The contrasts that Aruna draws in these examples do crucial identity work, positioning her as both civilised and having superior knowledge and practices relative to the others she defines. This élite identity position was maintained in the family group interview, when, in contrast to Aruna's sympathetic framing of the rural poor, she told a joint story with Vijay in which the spatially proximate 'other' of the maids in their gated community was given a less romanticised, more problematising characterisation:

Natasha: 'Umhmm and what do you – you think the reason is for the maid not putting (.) the rubbish [in the chute? ='

Aruna: '= They're in a rush], they just want to fly away. […] Many times I tell them, "throw it in the bin". They look at me as if they don't understand my language? *Hindi mein bolo* (tell them in Hindi) they won't understand, if you talk in English they won't understand, you tell them in Telugu, they won't understand. [They just stare at me like this and just go away ='

Vijay: '= I think it's part of, part of –] Yeah, I think it's just part of the culture. Um if you compare India with, let's say US or UK, we keep our house clean but not our surroundings.'

In England, Humphrey's parents provided another example of a construction of the environmentally ignorant or (un)concerned 'other', problematised in contrast to their own knowledge and concern:

Roger: 'So yes. But I mean you could (...) we're not (...) hair shirt type things….

Helen: 'Yes.'

Roger: '... you know, fanatics or something.'

Helen: 'Yeah.'

Roger: 'We, we think that if (...) if everybody did (...) I suppose took the same responsible position that we were taking, then (.) the whole country's carbon footprint would be you know, we'd meet our targets that we're supposed to be reducing by 2020 fairly easily I would have thought.'

Julia: 'I think it's partly because we read the newspaper.'

Roger: 'Mmm.'

Julia: 'I've (.) been quite (...) startled at (...) intelligent, I thought well informed people (...) who just last year were not aware that fish stocks were running out. Now, if you read the paper…'

Humphrey: 'Even I knew that.'

Julia: 'Well that's partly because we keep telling you. [Joint laughter] I think that indicates people who aren't reading the newspaper. Because it doesn't get covered a lot on television and radio news. […] So it is partly simply that (.) people (.) just don't know.'

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The phrase 'hair shirt' environmentalism was also used by Helena's father, James, who lived in a rural village where Helena attended the local state school.

James:	'And I don't want to (...) I could spend my whole time (...) um (...) in (...) um (...) threadbare woolly pullovers. Never shave. And people would say, oh, James is great ... […] but (...) he's not really with us. He's not in the real world. Whereas (...) you know, because occasionally I put on a suit and tie, because I drive a car […] I like to think they can see that my environmentalism (...) it's not hair shirt environmentalism.'
Janet:	'Mmm.'
James:	'It's, it's, it's just...'
Helena:	'Just German.'
James:	'Yes. [laughter] Herr Shirt! [laughter] Herr Shirt, yeah.'

As with Humphrey's family, James and Helena emphasised the importance of environmental concerns in their lives, detailing everyday practices to reduce energy use. By jokingly rejecting the character of 'Herr Shirt', James defends his 'engaged' environmental identity against possible constructions of it as a disparaging archetype, the 'hair shirt fanatic' that Roger also resists. James explained "I'd like to seem terribly normal, but be doing everything I can...." By establishing their positioning as moderate, both fathers also avoid a charge of moral hypocrisy in relation to their families' consumption practices.

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Conclusion

When research on sustainability or carbon practices focuses on individuals, it ignores the relationality of everyday lives. Our analysis indicates that *families* are at least as meaningful as individuals as units of analysis, indicating that a focus on families can help address over-simplification in theories of environmental concern. The data reveal not only the collective negotiation of practices but also the moral narratives attached to practices and identity positions of environmental responsibility, in the context of relative affluence in the Global North and South. In focusing on families who expressed environmental concerns through narratives of responsible privilege, we do not claim to represent 'affluent' or 'middle-class' perspectives in either country, or to 'compare' across countries. Rather, we aim to think 'across worlds' without losing sight of specific cultural and historical contexts (Jamieson and Milne, 2012), in order to theorise the complexity – and contextual specificity – of a particular morally charged framing of environmental concern.

Smith and Howe (2015: 201) highlight the ways in which environmental strategists have created a new subject position, 'the well-intentioned but morally conflicted middle-class citizen.' The research showed how this morally conflicted subject position was negotiated by relatively affluent families in India and the UK. High carbon practices were framed as morally problematic within an identity position of environmental responsibility, but also as essential for family life, for comfort and convenience and 'the things energy makes possible' (Whilhite, 2005: 2). Moralising constructions of environmentalism could be seen to help people to negotiate this uncomfortable subject position, by characterising 'uncivilised others' as the real cause of

the problem. Moral environmental identities were framed in contrast to diverse others, invoked to draw particular moral lessons or to affirm particular desirable identity positions. These 'others' include children, who are positioned as less responsible than parental narrators; the poor as victims; the poor as embodying moral lessons (especially for children) through their illustration of hardship; and conversely, both poor *and* non-poor others who are framed as problematic by virtue of their ignorance, lack of education and environmentally damaging practices.

This diverse 'othering' highlights the work of identity construction, and the specific labour involved in maintaining the 'moderate' position of responsible privilege (not 'Herr Shirt'), as well the gains. From this position, families can maintain an engaged environmental identity alongside practices they construct as *necessary* consumption, which might otherwise sit in tension with the identity of responsible parent concerned for family wellbeing. As seen most vividly in Aruna and Vijay's story of problems with maids, the distancing of the 'uncivilised other' need not attend to structural inequalities in knowledge or resource use. Families' accounts echoed dominant canonical narratives – in media and political discourse – of the heroes and villains of climate change. In highlighting the tensions they reveal, we do not seek to disparage families' concern for the responsibilities that come with privilege, nor to suggest hypocrisy in those who frame 'environmentally engaged' identities alongside justification of necessary consumption. Rather, we aim to address the unhelpful over-simplification inherent in moralising discourses of reducing consumption and climate change response.

Understandings were also framed generationally, in parents' concerns to instil a sense of responsible privilege and in the generational distinctions that parents drew between their own childhoods and the comforts and resources their children take for granted. In this characterisation, the child is contrasted with the environmentally responsible parent figure, a characterisation that resonates with a wider literature showing the generational constraints on children's agency (see, for example, Robson et al, 2007), and which raises questions about children's power as environmental actors within families (Uzzell, 1999; Walker, 2016). ABC (attitude, behaviour, choice) approaches to the development of environmentally sustainable practices have often been of limited effectiveness (Shove, 2010), and our research helps show why that might be. Families engaged in 'carbon-intensive practices' may well be knowledgeable and concerned about environmental issues, but these concerns sit alongside understandings of 'necessary consumption', rooted in everyday practices and family imaginaries. The research helps to account for the disjuncture between the meanings assigned to an abstract notion of 'environmental practice' as a social good, and the localised meanings assigned to a specific practice within a specific context (see, for example, Shove et al, 2012).

Many of the moral tales of 'responsible privilege' presented here were consistent with a de-politicised 'Northern-centric imaginary' of the ethical consumer (Gregson and Ferdous, 2015). There are, of course, substantial cultural and contextual differences between the countries, but narratives across contexts shared common features, in parents' concern for (and efforts to address) children's taking for granted of their privileged position (and children's occasional contestation of that framing), and in the justification of 'necessary consumption' within an environmentally engaged identity position. While narratives frequently contrasted families' privileged lives with the virtuous (less fortunate) other, difference was also central to the framing of

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'uncivilised' others, in comparison to the environmentally engaged narrator and in ways that could neglect social and structural inequalities.

In conclusion, we make a cautious argument for optimism. Through attention to family – and hence to the relationality and materiality of everyday practices – it should be possible to build a more complex and contextually situated narrative of environmental concern than the moral tale of the (heroic) individual capitalist consumer. This depends on recognising the cultural and economic specificity of individualising moral narratives of environmentalism that emanate from high consuming neoliberal cultures, and on a more nuanced understanding of the tensions, conflicts and contradictory practices that can act as barriers to reduced carbon emissions in households. The analysis presented here lends weight to Bulkely and colleagues' (2014) arguments for a conceptualisation of environmental justice that encompasses *recognition* of the 'other', because framing justice predominantly in terms of *responsibilities* focuses attention on the middle classes in ways that neglect structural inequalities, and the very limited contribution to greenhouse gas emissions from low-income urban households. To meet the substantial societal challenges posed by climate change in an increasingly globalised world we must 'confront our own otherness' (Andrews, 2014: 10) as well as our relationality and necessary interdependence in an unequally precarious world (Butler, 2004). This depends on the imagination of the other in everyday life, and on narratives of environmentalism that move beyond moral drama to a virtue ethics that makes visible structural inequalities and the complex ways in which economic resources and opportunities shape understandings of 'necessary' consumption practices.

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Notes

[1] Corresponding author.

[2] Interviews in India were conducted in Telugu, Hindi or English, by Madhavi Latha, Catherine Walker and Natasha Shukla. Interviews in England were conducted by Janet Boddy, Helen Austerberry, Catherine Walker and Hanan Hauari.

[3] All names are pseudonyms. Transcription conventions: (.) and (…) indicate shorter and longer pauses; […] indicates text has been edited; [= and =] indicate overlapping talk; and <u>underlining</u> denotes emphasis in tone.

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