

Climate Justice & Gender Justice



First, eco-friendly marketing messages and materials can be designed to affirm men's masculinity and give them the confidence to overcome their fear of being judged as feminine. For example, in one experiment, men who received feedback affirming their masculinity were more interested in purchasing an eco-friendly version of a cleaning product. Second, green organizations can be marketed with more masculine branding. Men in one experiment were more likely to donate to a green non-profit with a masculine logo (black and dark blue colors featuring a howling wolf, with the name "Wilderness Rangers") than one with a traditional logo (green and light tan colors featuring a tree, with the name "Friends of Nature").

Men Resist Green Behavior as Unmanly, Scientific American, 2017.

There is a pervasive blindness to gender within mainstream environmental disciplines. Whereas class and poverty, "race" and ethnicities seem to have been easily integrated, the same cannot be said for gender as a relevant category.

A Stranger Silence Still, MacGregor, 2010.

Patriarchy is harmful to our climate. Deconstructing and transforming masculinities will strengthen solutions for climate change.

Men, Masculinities, and Climate Change, MenEngage, 2016.

BACKGROUND

Beginning almost two decades ago, a small group of researchers and key studies have sought to re-center an analysis of gender in the global dialog on climate change and solutions.

Three outstanding examples include Geraldine Terry's resonantly-titled *No Climate Justice without Gender Justice: An overview of the issues* (2009), Fatma Denton's *Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts, and Adaptation: Why does gender matter?* and Sherilyn MacGregor's, *A Stranger Silence Still: The need for a feminist social research on climate change* (2010).

As Sherilyn MacGregor explains succinctly in *A Stranger Silence Still: The need for a feminist social research on climate change* (2010): "The small amount of research that exists on gender and climate change has been conducted by gender, environment and development (GED) scholars and by feminist researchers working for the UN, government ministries and women's environmental organizations. The bulk of the scholarly work has appeared in two special issues of the journal *Gender and Development* published in 2002 and 2009..." As researcher Margaret Skutsch has noted, few articles on the gender-differentiated implications of climate change have been published since.

Striking, she also notes that neither the Kyoto Protocol nor the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change actually mention the words "gender" or "women"-- as good an indication as any of how genderblind climate discourse is and how far it needs to go.

The basic thrust of the argument advanced by the studies and reports we do have is that because of rigid and gendered divisions of labor, women are uniquely vulnerable to climate change and climate disasters, and are also uniquely positioned to implement "green" solutions.

Factors like race, class, and ethnicity have been readily integrated into climate discourse, yet it continues to be mostly gender blind.

And this blindness permeates every aspect of the movement: its ignoring of women's voices, vulnerabilities, and agency; its domination by male perspectives at every level, international planning and expertise to local leadership on-the-ground that is almost inevitably male; and its inability to interrogate how its own efforts may be adding to or reinforce the structural inequality of women and girls.

For instance, the many studies on climate change correctly note that its impacts are mostly likely to be felt first by those who live in poverty. Less noted is that women are disproportionately among those who impoverished, making up nearly three quarters (70%) of the world's poor. Moreover, such women are not just poor in terms of income, but doubly-impoverished by a lack of economic agency and mobility (particularly if they are dependent upon males, have infant children, or both).

This has led some scholars and advocates to insist that there can be *no climate justice without gender justice*, because attempts to address climate change—whether its impacts or to mitigate its effects—are inseparable from the lives of women. Below is a summary of some top-line findings.

Moreover, it complicates the search for solutions as well. For instance as MenEngage notes in “Men, Masculinities and Climate Change” almost one-and-a-half times as many U.S. women believe climate change affects them personally as men: 69% of women versus just 48% of men. And men are much less likely to agree to the personal lifestyle changes desperately needed to reduce the greenhouse gases primarily produced by wealthy nations.

VULNERABILITY & IMPACT

- Women are primarily responsible for gathering water, wood, and fuel; they thus tend to be uniquely dependent on local natural resources and when these are compromised, they experience that loss first.
- When there are food or water shortages, women are the first to “go without” so that their children can survive.
- As primary caregivers, when warming-related diseases like malaria or dengue spread, women are more likely to be burdened with their effects.
- Climate related disaster disproportionately impact women with dependent children—they are less likely to be able to move out of the path of extreme weather events (floods, droughts, hurricanes, etc.) and tend to die in larger numbers than men (in rich as well as developing countries).
- Men can also have special gendered vulnerabilities, as with the many men and boys from West Africa who have died trying to reach Europe because climate stress has decimated their rural livelihoods.

MOBILIZING AND REDUCING

- Women—who do the bulk of agricultural work in the global south—are often best positioned to understand and implement greener solutions regarding water, fuel, and land conservation; yet often they are not consulted because local leadership is all males. Women are also more likely to be good stewards of natural resources, which men may regard as things to be used or exploited.
- Similarly, the global climate agenda is set by men from wealthy countries at every level (experts, policy-makers, spokespeople, and entrepreneurs); they tend to promote stereotypically “masculine” strategies (big technology, large-scale projects, complex computer modelling) focused on future *mitigation* while ignoring poor women’s need for immediate adaptation strategies.
- Women in developed countries are more likely to be concerned about climate change, work to reduce their carbon footprint, and become involved in environmental activism.
- Men tend to shun eco-friendly behaviors like recycling, reducing carbon output, and eco-activism because caring, cooperation, and virtuous behavior is considered unmanly (a number of campaigns are retooling their presence to give it a more masculine branding).

Climate change has been presented not only as a largely scientific problem (one might say it has been “scientized”), but also as a threat to national and international security (i.e. it has been “securitized”)....A feminist response is to point out that by ‘scientizing’ and ‘securitizing’ it, climate change is constructed as a problem that requires the kinds of solutions that are the traditional domain of men and hegemonic masculinity.

A Stranger Silence Still,
MacGregor, 2010.

To date, gender issues have hardly figured in the international policy discourse...To some extent, this lack of attention to gender issues reflects an understating of social issues generally in the climate-change discourse. Social scientists became involved in the climate-change field fairly recently, while natural scientists have been working on it for decades. The main discourse is still a stereotypically “masculine” one, of new technologies, large-scale economic instruments, and complex computer modelling. Alternative frameworks have been put forward such as sustainable development, climate justice, human rights or ethics, but gender equity has not been central to any of these paradigms either.

No Climate Justice without Gender Justice:
An overview of the issues,
Geraldine Terry, 2009.



WHEN GENDER IS ADDRESSED

TrueChild.org

Adopted from *Gender and Climate Change: From Impacts to Discourses*,
Sherilyn MacGregor, 2010

As noted, climate discourse has largely ignored gender except for a small collection of studies and papers. However, even these tend to share common shortcomings.

First, the most frequent co-location of words in gender climate research is 'women' and 'vulnerable'. Rural Southern women appear only as one-dimensional objects: helpless, voiceless, and unable to manage themselves or their families without agencies funded and staffed by the North. They are the subjects on which decisions and policies are enacted – they are never decision-makers or participants in the process themselves.

Second, these studies tend to focus uncritically on the need to scientifically count, measure, and map the disparate effects on Southern women. This prioritization on measuring, counting, and mapping "impacts," "victims," and "vulnerabilities" totally submerges Southern women's actual voices or lived experiences.

Third, rather than seeing gender as a social and political relationship between people with masculine and feminine roles, studies fall into the familiar trap of Gender=Woman, so there is no mention of men and boys other than as less vulnerable or more culpable.