



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Angela Cazel Jahn

Will defend her prospectus

Rearing Future Generations: A Conundrum

Abstract

Childrearing is a culturally unique and universally technological effort. In every time, place, and society, people use artifacts and infrastructures to satisfy the innate needs of very young humans, the pragmatic motivations of diverse individual and institutional entities in charge of them, the anticipated needs of future generations, and the maintenance of viable socio-ecological systems that support us all.

This research explores childrearing practices in a rapidly changing world. Surveys, interviews, and workshops will engage stakeholders from three locally connected urban settings - a school, a children's museum, and a child welfare unit - each dedicated to the development of future generations in Phoenix, Arizona. Guided by the question of how, and to what degree, their everyday practices impose aggregate impacts on planetary ecosystems and societal sustainability, participants will be invited to reconceptualize the domain of childrearing as a networked socio-technical system.

Each study begins with a conceptual framework that extends Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of child development into a mental model of adaptive management in the Anthropocene. The first variable in this framework is a particular set of conditions and circumstances. The second is a cast of individual and institutional agents, each with motivations for using technological artifacts and systems to fulfil their roles. Third, these tools are described as components in a bounded systems inventory. Fourth, environmental and social impacts of technological practices are identified. Finally, implications for the future can be extrapolated, with potential benefit to those bringing up new humans in unprecedented conditions.

The rearing of future generations can theoretically nudge societies in more or less sustainable directions, depending on how sustainability is defined. Technologically dominant societies have an amplified role in determining what values and practices are likely to be sustained, or jettisoned. In these contexts, mutual recognition and

collaboration between childrearing and sustainability may yield more effective practices for both domains. This is both the goal and the contribution of this research effort: Childrearing practices warrant a space of their own in the multifaceted domain of sustainability.

Monday, April 23, 2018
10:00 a.m.
Wrigley Hall, Room 481

Faculty, students, and the public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Beth Blue Swadener (Chair)
Dr. Brad Allenby (Member)
Dr. Jose Lobo (Member)