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Sustaining an Environmental Ethic: Outdoor and Environmental Education Graduates' Negotiation of School Spaces

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In this article, I draw on interviews with graduates from an Outdoor and Environmental Education course to explore the ways in which their environmental ethics changed since leaving university. I do this in relation to the graduates' personal and professional experiences, particularly in the context of teaching Outdoor Education and Physical Education in secondary schools. By offering two alternative readings of graduates' experiences, this research contributes to existing education literature about the 'wash-out effect' of teacher education courses once beginning teachers become immersed in schools. In the first reading I find evidence of regulatory and normalising strategies of society and school communities and a 'plateauing' of graduates' engagement with environmental practices. In a second reading, framed by Foucault's theory of power and ethics, I discern acts of 'tactical' resistance. This reading foregrounds strategies graduates use to negotiate the constraining spaces of schools.

■ **Keywords:** Outdoor Education, Environmental Education, Teacher Education, Foucault, Poststructuralism, Environmental Ethics

As a lecturer in Outdoor and Environmental Education (OEE), I have observed (and researched through a longitudinal study) students' enhanced engagement with environmental issues and the development of an environmental ethic during their four-year OEE course (Preston, in press). In this article, I explore graduates' accounts of changes to their environmental ethics once they leave the culture of the course/university and move into a teaching career.

This article draws on interviews from a case study of graduates from the OEE course to examine the ways in which practices of environmental ethics change over time and in relation to postcourse experiences. In particular, I pay attention to the phenomenon known as the 'wash-out effect' and its significance for OEE graduates. In teacher education literature (see, for example, Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) there have been extensive accounts of a so-called 'wash-out effect', that is, the school experience 'washing-out' or diminishing the effects of teacher education programs. While these claims have more recently been disputed and/or complicated, they still remain as 'folklore' in teacher education (Levin, 2001) and I could easily imagine the difficulties of graduates from the OEE course remaining environmentally committed within a school environment.

The following analysis involves two readings, that is, two different interpretations of the same data. In the first reading, I find evidence of the constraining effects of social norms, conservative school cultures and dominant environmental discourses. However, even though I was anticipating this apparent 'wash-out effect' postuniversity, I was not convinced that such a view completely accounted for the experiences the graduates described. An ensuing alternative reading focuses on power as 'games of strategy' (Foucault, 1996a, p. 447). This frame is elaborated through Michel de Certeau's (1988) notion of tactical resistance and Wendy Brown's (2005) interrogation of some of the assumptions around silence and speech. These analytical lenses, expanded below, provide

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me with the resources to look beyond regulatory and normalising technologies of the self to consider how creativity and transgression manifest in graduates' accounts of their school experience. This counter reading is the consequence of a deliberate reflexive engagement with the theoretical concepts of Michel Foucault's final work and, in the next section, I provide a brief outline of the main concepts, namely 'practices of the self' and ethics, which guide the overall analysis.

Theoretical Perspectives

In this article, I investigate possibilities of environmentally ethical subjectivities based on resistance and self-formation. Following the work of Foucault, I endeavour to distinguish between [environmental] practices of the self that seem to be based on prescribed moral codes and those that reflect a more personal and self-conscious engagement [with environmental issues], what Foucault calls, 'an aesthetics of existence' (1996b). I describe the distinction between these practices of the self in relation to environmentalism in more detail below.

Foucault's notion of an ethics based on 'an aesthetics of existence' draws on those arts of the self that can be traced to ancient Greece. In looking to early Greece, Foucault draws a deliberate contrast to Christian morality. This is because Foucault seeks to make a distinction between (Christian) morality as a set of imposed rules and codes of behaviour, and morality (or ethics) as the

> real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: … the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or prescription. (1992, p. 25)

For Foucault, the emphasis is on self-formation as an ethical subject where the 'individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practices, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal' (Foucault, 1992, p. 28). Through this practice of 'self-overcoming' one's self, Foucault suggests that one can transform one's life into an 'aesthetics of existence'. This means that to be ethical it is not enough to conform to a rule or value, one must engage in continuous and creative processes of self-stylisation through self-reflection, self-monitoring and self-knowledge. Foucault sees these practices of the self as an exercise of a personal liberty and, returning to ancient Greece, states: '[In] Antiquity the will to be a moral subject, the search for an ethics of existence, was principally an effort to affirm one's liberty and to give to one's own life a certain form' (Foucault, 1996b, p. 451).

When questioned about whether the Greek concern with the self was just an early version of modern self-absorption, Foucault replies that the ancient culture of the self is 'diametrically opposed' to the modern 'Californian cult of the self' (1991, p. 362). He suggests that the present culture of the self encourages one 'to discover one's true self … to decipher its truth' (1991, p. 362). Against this, Foucault appeals to a practice of creativity: 'From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art' (Foucault, 1991, p. 362). Tamboukou (2003) contends that 'aesthetics of existence' is not a synonym for beauty, nor is it related to an ethics of a good and happy life. Rather, it provides the conditions for individuals to imagine themselves differently; to give different form to their lives — 'the aestheticization of the self should be conceived as a configuration of the different forms we can give to our existence' (2003, p. 177).

In this article, I apply Foucault's conception of ethics to environmental ethics, that is, I locate the practice of ethics (as theorised by Foucault) within the context of environmentalism. Thus, a Foucauldian environmental ethics is not founded on formalised moral codes or obedience to universal environmental rules of conduct; rather, it is a self-fashioning of an environmentally ethical existence. In the context of OEE this refers to the critical and reflexive work on, and by, oneself; a self-stylisation that involves a reevaluation of (personally and socially) familiar conventions and habits in relation to environmental concerns.

The conception of environmental ethics as a work of art that promotes new modes of subjectivity has a number of challenges for environmentalism. Contrary to the tendency of many contemporary environmental organisations to recommend codes of environmental conduct, the responsibility of an environmentalism based on Foucauldian ethics is to craft individual responses to specific environmental circumstances. There can be no universal agreement on what constitutes a 'good' environmental subject any more than there can be agreement about a painting as a piece of art; there are no formal criteria on which to base validity. Therefore, such an ethic does not provide a set of principles or pathways to solving environmental problems but, rather, is a means of understanding and responding to what is going on in a particular context.

In this study, I endeavour to distinguish between environmental practices of the self that seem to be based on prescribed moral codes and those that reflect a more critical evaluation, a personal and self-consciously political engagement with environmental issues. Differentiating these practices of the self is inherently precarious in that it requires an understanding of the motivations for action — the 'mode of subjection' (Foucault, 1991, p. 353) — and because the practices are themselves unstable and provisional. By way of illustration, recycling, motivated primarily by the provision of local council bins and a keenness to do the 'right thing' as a 'good' citizen (that is, following a convention), could be described as a practice of the self that is largely based on moral codes. Normalised environmental practices are implemented

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with perhaps little consideration to challenging the assumptions behind production and consumption and their relationship to ecological concerns. Whereas recycling practised as part of a self-stylised, lifestyle focus that is ever-questioning of, and active about, the connection between humans and environmental concerns could be described as an example of a Foucauldian environmental ethic. Such an ethic enables a more reflexive and critical engagement with environmental discourse and an ongoing transformation, an attempt to break out of particular subjectivity/ies. The distinctions are fragile, but the differences are significant.

In my interviews, I attempted to distinguish the 'mode of subjection', that is, 'the way in which people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations' (Foucault, 1991, p. 353) by talking to participants about their environmental actions and motivations. My initial analysis of interviews with the graduate cohort suggested few instances of an environmentally ethical existence based on self-evaluation and self-stylisation. However, a more concentrated attention to the strategic and creative potential of relations of power, as suggested in Foucault's later work, provided an auto-critique of my original interpretations of the graduate teachers' narratives. In Foucault's later writing, there is a greater emphasis on the possibilities of resistance in his conception of power, for example, 'there is no point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it' (1996c, p. 386). Foucault uses the expression 'relations of power' to move away from the notion of power associated with 'a political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master and the slave' (Foucault, 1996a, p. 441) and to move towards a conception of power as diffuse, ever-present in human relations; 'mobile, reversible and unstable' (Foucault, 1996a). Thus, there is always the possibility of resistance 'because if there were no possibility of resistance … there would be no power relations at all' (Foucault, 1996a). Foucault's theory incorporates an individual's capacity to alter relations of power and recognises the potential of using these acts of resistance to destabilise normalising processes.

Drawing on Foucault's theory of power and ethics, I elaborate on how participants resist normalised ways of being and also consider their capacity to stylise an art of existence within the space of Outdoor Education teaching that enabled some cultivation of an environmental ethic. The value of such a technique of analysis is that it is able to highlight the significance of context to the practice of ethics while it also draws readers' attention to the situated possibilities of participants.

This rereading was also inspired by Wendy Brown's (2005) essay entitled 'Freedom's Silences' and Michel de Certeau's (1988) book, *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Brown's paper, originally prepared as a presentation on censorship, interrogates the assumption that speech equates with freedom where 'breaking silence' is presumed to be a tool of emancipation. Breaking silence, Brown suggests may carry 'its own techniques of subjugation … it may feed the powers it meant to starve' (p. 84). In the course of this enquiry, Brown rethinks the powers and potential of silence 'as not simply an aesthetic but a political value, a means of preserving certain practices and dimensions of existence from regulatory power' (p. 85). It is this view of silence as a 'tactic' that helps me question my initial interpretation of participants' voice and visibility in relation to their environmental ethics. The term 'tactic' here is borrowed from de Certeau (1988) who describes the relational tactics available to the ordinary person in 'practices of everyday life' to reclaim autonomy within a pervasive network of socioeconomic constraints. De Certeau is critical of Foucault's emphasis on disciplinary technology and the broader social processes (discourse) that determine subject positions and he concentrates his attention on actions, procedures and practices (microtechnologies) that people use every day to destabilise, subvert and/or resist the dominant code. This theory of everyday practice complements Foucault's later work on ethics and Foucault's more focused attention to the creative potential of relations of power and the possibilities of individual agency.

Method

The focus of the case study in this article is on four teachers, Elise, David, Sarah and Scott[1] who were drawn from a cohort of graduates of a Graduate Certificate/Diploma of OEE program undertaken concurrently with a Bachelor of Education (Physical Education) at a regional university in Victoria, Australia. While there is a strong outdoor activity component (including bushwalking, canoeing, rock climbing and cross-country skiing), the course also integrates environmental understandings, issues and ethics in both the practical and theoretical experiences. This is in line with the strong environmental focus of the senior secondary school Outdoor and Environmental Studies curriculum in Victoria.

At the time of interview, each participant was teaching in a school; Scott and Sarah had been away from the university setting for four years and Elise and David for two years. Participants were interviewed once and the semi-structured and open-ended interviews took approximately 60 minutes. The interviews had three particular foci: graduates' changing conceptions of the environment and environmental ethics, social and cultural influences on the formation of an environmentally ethical subjectivity and the perceived ability of participants to practice an environmentally ethical existence in their personal and professional lives.

The process of interpreting transcripts involved repeated readings of the interviews, an immersion in the narratives and moving back and forth between and across interviews. I

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did not use computer software to 'unearth' themes or patterns but themes emerged in interaction with the narratives over time and in interaction with my own immersion in research and theoretical literature. It was not my intention to expose the meaning behind the narratives but rather to observe what stories were told; looking not only for recurring themes but also differences, disruptions, gaps and silences. Foucault's conception of subjectivity and ethics was applied as a lens to read interviews but I viewed this not as a linear process, that is, not something employed at the end of readings or 'over the top' of transcripts, but as an ongoing recursive work.

Findings and Discussion

> I definitely changed environmentally — just developed more of an environmental conscience and probably thought about things that I'd never thought about before. (Elise, 2005)

Without exception, these graduates strongly assert that the course significantly influenced their environmental ethic. They all agree that they are now more concerned about environmental issues such as waste reduction, water scarcity and climate change. However, Sarah, Scott, Elise and David suggest a waning (or a levelling out) of engagement in environmental issues and practices after they left university. Scott, for example, said:

> Yes it [environmental ethic] has — it changed significantly over the course. I'd probably say that at the start I would be — I wouldn't have had any environmental ethics about me [laughs] and I wouldn't have even been aware of what they were and now I feel that, yeah, they have changed to a stage where I'm comfortable with them. Leaving the course, they probably haven't really developed and in many ways they've plateaued out and I stick to those same guidelines and those same things that drive me — that had driven me on the course. I stay with those same types of things now and I'm not really proactive in changing and I don't know why that is — a lot to do with lifestyle. Throughout the course we had that exposure — we got the opportunity to question our environmental ethics and we were associating with people that had a very strong environmental ethic. Now I'm not exposed to those type of people — I'm not exposed to that lifestyle therefore I'm not proactive in making changes — lifestyle's a major issue to do with that. You know, the environment that I'm in is not suited to those types of changes being able to be made. (2005)

Similarly, Elise contends, 'I am not as environmentally conscious as what I was when I was at uni' and explains, 'As I drifted away from study, I probably haven't thought about it as much' (2005). She states that the people she mixes with socially and professionally have a somewhat negligible environmental ethic and, as a result, she explains,

> I'm probably not challenged to further improve my ethic. I probably have a good level of ethic — probably a better level than most people I know but I'm not challenged to keep improving on my ethic now like I was when I was at uni. Cause when we were at uni every lesson we were challenged on our ethic and so I was probably forever changing whereas now I'm never challenged. People look at me and think, 'she is [ethical]' because in society — yeah, that's the way people are. Whereas within the Outdoor Ed group we weren't the most environmental ethic[al], you know, we didn't have the strongest ethic around so we were more likely to push ourselves. Whereas I'm probably the pusher but not being pushed now. (2005)

David believes he developed a strong environmental ethic through childhood and this was extended further through the course. Since leaving university, he laments, 'I feel like my [environmental] ethic is being overrun, I guess, by just this city life that I live now' (2005). He attributes this to 'not thinking about it as much and more just concentrating on doing, doing, doing and earning money and that sort of thing' (2005).

Sarah also suggests that the course was significant in developing her environmental ethic and concurs with the views above in terms of being unable to mobilise her environmental ethic in new and different ways:

> Probably how I was acting at the end of the course is probably pretty similar to the way I act now. I probably haven't developed a great deal from then … I guess everything I … have done since then is sort of automatic. I probably haven't picked up new behaviours since I finished the course. (2005)

These descriptions of a waning or 'plateauing' of engagement in environmental practices are consistent with the 'wash-out effect' that has been cited in teacher education literature, that is, the school experience diminishing the views formed at university (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Interviews with Elise, David, Sarah and Scott suggest that throughout the OEE course they were engaged in processes of self-reflection and their mode of being (in relation to the environment) was continually being challenged, modified and transformed. During the course, there seemed to be a profound change in terms of students' capacity to engage in discourse about the environment, but transformation in a practical sense was generally restricted to normalised environmental practices, for example, recycling and water-saving actions. Postuniversity, interest in environmental issues is sustained (to varying degrees) but a capacity to continue to transform their ethics and everyday environmental practices in new and different ways seems to diminish. It appears that, while the course challenged these participants to reflect on and transform their environmental ethics, it did not provide them with the skills to develop or sustain an ethics based on self-stylisation. Elsewhere, I discuss my complicity as a teacher and environmental exemplar in setting a moral framework that shapes students' environmental subjectivity in very particular ways and restricts the possibilities of new, self-stylised forms of subjectivity (Preston, 2011). Here, I concentrate on the

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normalising and disciplinary technologies that graduates encounter in their postuniversity experiences.

In the following section, I expand on some of the constraints that participants, Elise, Sarah, Scott and David express and that seem to explain an apparent reduced capacity for a sustained self-transformation. This is followed by a second reading in which I attempt to look beyond repressive and disciplinary technologies to produce a counterimage of participants that foregrounds their negotiation of environmental subjectivities. Here, I gesture towards a view of participants as 'becoming' environmentally ethical. The term 'becoming' refers to the argument that environmental subjectivity, as with other forms of subjectivity, is not fixed and final, but instead in-process, dynamic and unresolved.

Negotiating Environmental Ethics: Constraints and Tensions

In the interviews there are frequent admissions of succumbing to the normalising and homogenising tendencies of modern society. The participants often acknowledge the difficulties of living an environmentally sustainable lifestyle and frequently admit a contradiction between their environmental ideals and actual everyday practices. Following is a description of some of the most commonly articulated constraints.

The participants state that an obstruction to living an environmentally sustainable life is attachment to the materialism and consumerism that is endorsed by contemporary society. When I ask about barriers, Elise explains: 'Oh, just life I think — just everyday life and society — the fact that you want things … Consumerism … we want stuff — it's just what you do' (2005). Scott also talks about the normalising effects of society: 'I know there's things that I should be doing … but I don't do just because of the way my lifestyle's set up' (2005). He talks about driving a car to work and feeling he is unable to make changes even though he knows the effects on the environment: 'You know the environment that I'm in is not suited to those types of changes being able to be made' (Scott, 2005).

Each graduate mentions low financial status as a limitation to being able to 'walk her/his environmental talk'. A common frustration is living in rental properties and the resultant perceived lack of freedom to make changes to their everyday home-life, for example, water-saving devices, vegetable gardens, solar technology and so forth.

Another obstacle to sustaining a lifestyle that the participants perceived as environmentally ethical is the lack of like-minded people in their lives. Most participants acknowledge a noticeable difference between themselves and their friends in terms of environmental ethics. For instance, Elise, who has gone back to teach near her home town and back to 'the friends that I've had all my life', admits 'My friends aren't very environmentally ethic[al]' (2005).

The constraint of not having exposure to people with compatible or more developed environmental ethics is not restricted to social life but also extends to professional life as Elise explains:

> [L]ike a lot of my friends and the people I — even the people at work — think that, you know, my ideas are silly or, you know what I mean, a lot of people don't have an environmental ethic so when I talk about like not throwing an apple out the window they go, 'Don't be so stupid it's just an apple'. (2005)

Similar experiences are recounted by David:

> I associate with some people who would have — their environmental ethic wouldn't exist I don't think, and even people that I work with — people in my faculty that I teach with and even who I teach Outdoor Ed with — they have a very different environmental ethic to me but yet I still associate with them and work with them in fact. (2005)

This lack of role model or supportive influence is also apparent in participants' responses to a question asking them to identify people with environmental ethics towards which they aspire. Mostly participants name people (lecturers and other students) with whom they did the OEE course. No-one acknowledges a role model from popular culture and only one person had found a 'new' role model, that is, someone from their present circumstances, to provide them with direct and tangible examples of other ways of being 'environmental'. Thus, the lack of people ('confidants, friends, guides, and professors' (Foucault, 1990, p. 51)) with whom they could 'seek out friends of like mind and form more or less structured communities, recognise the more and less wise, seek council, and establish customs and obligations that encourage the care of self' (Scott, 1996, p. 135) seems significant in the capacity for a continued self-transformation. In this summary of Foucault's description of practices involved in the cultivation of an art of existence, Scott (1996) underscores Foucault's point that the practices are not solitary exercises but 'a true social practice' (Foucault, 1990, p. 51) and the importance of this point is highlighted further in participants' descriptions of their school environments.

Elise, David, Scott and Sarah are the only qualified Outdoor Education teachers in their schools and so any professional support or alliance is through their other teaching method, Physical Education (PE). Support or encouragement of an environmental ethic (in a Foucauldian or any other sense) appears absent from these beginning teachers' professional lives and, in some cases, there are descriptions of power relations that seek to inhibit it. For example, Elise describes the reaction of her colleagues when she engages in environmental activities around the school: 'The other PE staff, they often laugh at me when I'm doing things around the school and stuff' (2005). And David laments about not being able to change the Year 10 Outdoor Education elective: 'I think it's the staff that I work with at the minute perhaps having that

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different environmental ethic doesn't help and they're senior to me and they set the program up and it's very hard to change it straight off' (2005).

The marginalisation of Outdoor Education in schools is often apparent in participants' comments and in the administrative decisions made by principals. For example, David suggests that the reason for his school not offering Year 11 and 12 Outdoor Education is the school's focus on academic achievement and the perception that Outdoor Education is 'too disruptive' (2005). Elise expresses frustration with the administrative decision to replace her when she went on leave with someone PE-trained: 'But he's PE — he's not Outdoor Ed trained but — he's great — but I went on a camp with him and he was doing things that I was cringing at' (2005). Sarah shows similar irritation with school administrators' lack of recognition of Outdoor Education as a discrete subject:

> When you think of classically PE people and classically Outdoor Edders there's a fairly big difference and that's one thing that annoys me in schools is they see them two as the same subject [laughs]. If you're a PE teacher, you know, you can take the Outdoor Ed class — like I've been at a school where the Year 12 Outdoor Ed teacher was a PE teacher and just the things that, you know, the practices that that class were doing were just totally against the Outdoor Ed sort of way of doing things and that's frustrating. (2005)

Scott also works at a school where PE-trained staff take Outdoor Education subjects. His comments echo Sarah's: 'It still frustrates me in school when people say, 'Oh, PE and Outdoor Ed — same thing'. They are not the same thing. Same with the people who do the courses — they are not the same type of people' (2005). The perception in school communities that Outdoor Education is a subset of Physical Education is a common one and a consequence of historical associations, for example, the location of Outdoor Education in the Health and Physical Education Learning Area and the early formulation of Outdoor Education as activity-based (Lugg, 1999).

While there is acknowledgment that PE and Outdoor Education teachers are 'not the same type of people', none of the participants indicate any feelings of tension between their different subjectivities as PE teachers *and* Outdoor Education teachers. In fact, there is a suggestion that, rather than pursue coherence in their subjectivities, they seek and enjoy the differences. As Scott notes, 'You are a different person but there's no tensions. It's a great balance to have … I enjoy the balance … I have my Outdoor and Environmental Studies where it's a little bit of philosophy … and you've got your PE which is your hard facts' (2005).

Participants speak of competing understandings of themselves as subjects in schools: they must negotiate Outdoor Education and PE contexts, which, in their minds, are clearly separate. For instance, Elise suggests that generally environmental issues are suppressed in PE classes because of curriculum and time limitations, for example, 'like I don't have time in PE … [to talk about environmental issues] — but, yeah, like if it come up in conversation — but, no, because it's probably not relevant' (2005). And Sarah explains that she rarely 'walks her environmental talk' in PE classes 'cause I'm probably not thinking that way when I'm in a PE class' (2005). In the school setting and outside her Outdoor Education class, Sarah is reluctant to identify as an environmentalist. She admits, when I ask her if she can 'walk her talk' with other staff,

> I can but we probably don't have those sorts of discussions often. I'm just trying to think back to when we would have. I guess that's, you know — people probably don't know that I'm into the environment and I love the outdoors. No, I don't think I probably do with other staff. (2005)

These comments suggest that participants associate preservation of teacher 'citizenship' with not appearing too radical (in terms of environmental politics) in the school context. This supports the research by Whitehouse (2001) and Whitehouse and Evans (2010) that suggests sustainability education teachers (in regional Queensland primary schools) reject the 'greenie' label because of its cultural association with being radical and the pejorative attributions that this association carries.

There is also a suggestion that the different teaching subjectivities affect not only participants' capacity to 'walk their environmental talk' in the presence of colleagues and within curricula areas outside Outdoor Education, but also their personal environmental practices. For example, Elise, on reflection about the different hats she wears in the school, implies that the different ideologies underlying the different subject areas affects the environmental choices she makes: 'But I suppose when you think about it, when I bought gear for PE, I didn't probably think about where it came from. When I bought the gear for Outdoor Ed I did' (2005). This supports the contention that ethics for these graduates are tied to the obligations and values of the Outdoor Education subculture. In this case, wearing an 'Outdoor Ed hat', or positioning oneself as part of the Outdoor Education community, makes possible environmental considerations. These considerations, however, do not emerge (or can be ignored) when one is constructed as a 'Phys Edder'. This also supports findings from the longitudinal study that suggest participants' environmental ethics are compartmentalised, that is, they perform environmental subjectivities in relation to specific cultural settings.

Rereading for Resistance

One reading of the preceding narratives could highlight docile bodies colluding with the normalising strategies of society and school communities. Another reading, however, suggests forms of resistance that are quite tactical (de Certeau, 1988). Tactical, in this sense, implies a refusal

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within a dominant cultural order and de Certeau's (1988) use of the term in relation to indigenous Indians' relationship to Spanish colonisers is worth elaborating:

> Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind, they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were other within the very colonization that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped it without leaving it. (p. xiii. Italics in original)

From this perspective, Sarah's reluctance to speak of her environmentalism with other staff members could be interpreted as a mode of resistance, a tactic for negotiating domination. While she appears 'outwardly assimilated' with other staff members (i.e., not too different), she is 'other within' in terms of holding onto environmental beliefs and sharing these with her Outdoor Education students.

As Brown (2005, p. 85) contends 'refusing to speak' can be 'a means of preserving certain practices and dimensions of existence from regulatory power, from normative violence, as well as from the scorching rays of public exposure'. She elaborates, quoting Foucault, 'silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance' (Foucault, 1990 cited in Brown, 2005, p. 86). Thus, silence functions not only as a 'shelter *for* power' but also a shelter *from* it. Sarah's silence about her environmentalism could be viewed as a strategic way to 'preserve her environmental practices'. As a beginning teacher in a conservative school system, she is aware that her environmentalism may be seen as radical and she may be keen to shield herself from the 'scorching rays of public exposure'. Silence 'broken' by Sarah may bring otherness into being 'as it brings a designated subject respectively into abjection, censure, or regulation' (Brown, 2005, p. 86). The stigma and exclusion that sometimes accompany being seen as an environmentalist may be something that this new teacher is eager to avoid or views as counterproductive to her environmental aims. As noted earlier, the notion of strategy or 'tactics' (de Certeau, 1988) was important to Foucault. Insisting on the productive potential of power, he claims that freedom is found in the ability to reverse or to resist a situation. This may involve creative tactics, attaching innovation to the relations that oppress (Scott, 1996, p. 141). With this in mind, I now review my first reading of the constraining influences on the four graduates in question and look for examples of 'refusals' of the constructed self.

Sustaining an Environmental Ethic

On reflection, it could be argued, that my categorisation of Elise, David, Sarah and Scott's environmental ethics as diminishing follows a linear analysis and fails to capture the complexities and fluidity of subjectivity and ethical formation. The preceding section provides evidence of the 'wash-out effect' I was expecting but, after interviewing the graduate group as a whole, I noted some inconsistencies and contradictions. What I felt, following the interviews, was a sense that these graduates had actually maintained a strong environmental ethic. Even though their life, on the outside, did not appear to be 'an aesthetics of existence' or a creative self-stylisation as a 'work of art' (Foucault, 1991, p. 362) in terms of what participants *could* be doing (and participants admitted this), there were strong indications that environmental ethics were an important part of them. In terms of the situated possibilities, that is, the spaces in which they inhabited and operated, these graduates showed resilience and resourcefulness in sustaining their personal ethic. Following are some examples from participant interviews that support this argument.

When I question Sarah about the maintenance of her environmental ethic, she responds adamantly that the environment is still a high priority for her: 'Oh no … I don't think I have lost sight of it' but admits that 'there's probably times when you don't voice it' (2005). While Scott acknowledges the shallowness of some of his environmental actions, he admits that he has a growing commitment to environmentalism in some form or other and this surprises him:

> So, yes, I do think that as I get older I am — that even just goes for around the house … environmental effects are things that I'm mindful of that I never thought I would have been and I never used to be … it's just instilled in us now and it's a growing appreciation. (2005)

David conveys disappointment in his capacity to live his environmental ethic through his everyday lifestyle but talks about a conscience in relation to natural environments:

> Well, I have a conscience when I'm anywhere in the outdoors and I actually, you know, it's nothing to do with minimal impact strategies like you were talking about before — these rules — you're not supposed to do this but I would just not — I always tread lightly — I wouldn't — I'm careful of standing on a grass or something — things like that and I think that's something that's just inside me that it would hurt me to do that. And it pains me to see a kid cut a corner on a path which is adding to the erosion of the trail and the side of the mountain and I know that's my environmental ethic cause that's my feeling towards it. It's not because someone else is saying that you shouldn't do that or that is actually written in a book somewhere — that's me thinking 'Why do that?'(2005)

Unlike the others, Elise openly identifies herself as a 'greenie' (her words) in the public sphere and there is no question in her mind that she has an environmental ethic although, 'probably my ethic may not be where it — where I'd like it to be eventually but, yeah, I do think I have an ethic when it comes to the environment' (2005).

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For these participants, the school context is both a constraining and enabling influence. On the one hand, the conservative school community has a constraining influence on these graduates, typified by normalised environmental actions and a general reluctance to openly identify as environmentalists or 'greenies'. On the other hand, it also provides a productive space — the Outdoor Education space — for other ways of being. In the next section, I argue that the relative autonomy of secondary teaching, Outdoor Education curriculum (with its critical focus) and the development of teacher–student relationships through outdoor experiences provides graduates with opportunities (and curriculum support) to be 'other', to be an environmentalist within this space. Thus, they form their own subculture within the school culture that helps support and sustain their environmental ethic. The aim of the next section is to further complicate my initial reading by contrasting constraining influences (and the supposed waning of environmental ethic in a Foucauldian sense) with more examples of possibilities and resistance evident in graduates' transcripts.

Schools: Creative and Constraining Spaces

The school community, as a whole, appears to the graduates as a space that is unhelpful in 'cultivating' or supporting strong environmental ethics; in many respects, they express a feeling that their energies seem 'trapped' in the regimented school spaces. Nonetheless, there are examples of opportunities being negotiated by graduates for the practice and cultivation of environmental ethics through Outdoor Education. In particular, graduates see possibilities through the content of the Outdoor Education curriculum and the use of the outdoor classroom as a space to exhibit and promote environmental ethics.

Outdoor Education, for all participants, is an important part of the stories they tell about themselves as teachers and they are forthcoming with examples of 'environmental' successes in their Outdoor Education classes. Participants generally see Outdoor Education teaching as more meaningful than PE in terms of addressing social issues (which often included environmental issues). For example, Sarah compares the content of Outdoor Education with PE:

> I don't know if it's because I'm more passionate about it [Outdoor Education] than I am about PE but it seems to have more like moral content or content that is like good for society and everybody can learn from it and I mean there's obviously good things that come from PE too like if I wanted a healthy heart and all that sort of stuff but lots of the learnings that come out of sport and PE classes are sometimes negative as well — bullying and — not everyone's good at sport. (2005)

Participants suggest the Outdoor Education 'classroom' (inside and outside) provides a space for participants to develop relationships with students and thus opportunities to expose and champion their environmental ethics. There are numerous examples of graduates prepared to take on subjectivities that they have difficulty mobilising elsewhere in their professional and everyday lives. Scott, for example, is not an activist and therefore not a 'greenie' in the stereotypical sense but accepts the label in his Outdoor Education class:

> And it's interesting how … they [the students] … call me like the greenie and the tree hugger and things like that when you go out. But I actually think that without imposing on them too much that I do get a message across that they do start to understand. (Scott, 2005)

Subtle subversion is a common tactic among participants as they negotiate the rocky terrain of environmental ethics with their students. The following discussion by Sarah is a good example:

> [I]n teaching I don't push it on kids and after we've done a trip or something's come out and we've had a really good time together, I'll say, 'You know there's lots of things you can do to help the environment. You kids didn't know I was a greenie'. I put it like that. 'You don't have to be, you know, dressed like a hippie and out hugging trees to care about the environment and be green'. (2005)

This last comment by Sarah is significant and calls to attention my tendency to look for 'normalised' ways of being radical. It also exemplifies the tactical (de Certeau, 1988) and political value of 'refusing to speak' (Brown, 2005). Subversion can take many forms and Foucault's call to sculpt one's life in creative and innovative ways points to experimentation and craft in the ways one resists. 'This means that, even in acting creatively, one regularly remains within the bounds of normality' (Schwartz, 1999, p. 118). Schwartz (1999), in an article examining Foucault's late work on ethics, suggests that:

> playing the game badly or refusing to play at all will quickly register as signs of incompetence or deviance. Such subnormal and abnormal behaviour tend to unleash disciplinary forces meant to renormalize… . [W]hat is needed is that one play the games of modernity differently.(p. 119)

Thus, to avoid being classified as deviant by her students, Sarah 'plays the game' but subtly changes the rules. By providing a positive outdoor experience and not being too confrontational, she plays the game but, at the same time, exposes her students to different ways of relating to their surroundings.

For some graduates, the imperative in schools to perform certain subjectivities and not others does not thwart a preparedness to challenge the boundaries. For example, even though Elise was laughed at by her PE colleagues for identifying as an environmentalist, she suggests that this does not deter her:

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> Oh, I do it anyway [laughs] … I'm known for it at school — picking on people and saying, 'No, don't chuck that in the bin. Put it in the recycle bin' … so it doesn't stop me. (2005)

But strategic 'games' are evident in other ways that Elise attempts to influence staff. As well as role-modelling environmental practice around the school, she invites other staff to observe her teaching practice. For instance, when she experienced an Outdoor Education camp with dubious environmental practices led by a PE-trained teacher she 'got him to come on a trip with me a few weeks later and just see how I did it and he said, 'Yeah, that's how he will run it in the future" (2005).

David's tactic of resistance, consistent with Brown's (2005) 'refusal to speak', is a decision not to do battle. During the interview, David talks about his frustrations with how Outdoor Education is conceived and taught at his school. He suggests that the academic culture of the staff and students is such that his efforts to change the Outdoor Education course would be wasted: 'I don't want to use all my energies up at that school. I feel like I'd be better using that energy somewhere else … with kids who want to do other things' (2005). He goes on to explain that he'd 'like to get into a school that's got an already — a really strong outdoor program … And then really get involved and throw my ideas in — get amongst it' (2005). Rather than viewing David's situation as one of domination and repression, employing Foucault's notion that 'power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free' (1996a, p. 441), uncovers conditions for resistance. It is evident that while the senior staff and the culture of the school have the effect of constraining David's ability to 'walk his outdoor and environmental talk', his decision 'not to waste his energies', has also made possible his freedom. David demonstrates a resistance to 'relations of power' and his future plans suggest that he is making an 'effort to affirm one's liberty and to give one's own life a certain form' (Foucault, 1996b, p. 451). Later in the interview, David reveals that he is taking leave from teaching to travel and on return will consider

> changing work and working with people who are perhaps a bit more like-minded… . Yeah, I feel like … when I'm in the right teaching environment that I'll feel a lot more comfortable walking my talk. At the minute, no … but I feel like there is a teaching environment out there that would be much more suitable for me. (2005)

The above examples provide support for Foucault's claim that: 'Power is not evil. Power is games of strategy' (1996a, p. 447). Participants show a capacity or agency to negotiate and resist the relations of power evident in their individual educational settings. Scott, Sarah, David and Elise articulate strategies that enable them to be 'other within' constraining spaces of schools. Silence, refusal, escape, subtle subversion and role-modelling are viewed as tactics of resistance but are also strategies that do not jeopardise their intelligibility as subjects. As Rose Braidotti might suggest, they are able to 'blur … boundaries without burning bridges' (1994 cited in Tamboukou & Ball, 2002, p. 267). What is evident here is perhaps an inventiveness that Foucault claims is a necessity to ethics.

Conclusion

My first reading of Sarah, Elise, David and Scott's interviews suggested that the capacity of these graduates to transform and mobilise their environmental ethics was constrained by the bounded and homogenising space of school teaching. A second reading, however, indicates a resistance to the restrictions and expectations these people confront within the educational spaces. Elise, Sarah, David and Scott seek out the less bounded spaces that Outdoor Education can occasionally provide. These become creative spaces that afford these graduates with opportunities to practice and promote environmental ethics.

Graduate narratives suggest that, at this stage in their early careers, they are doing what seems achievable with the limited resources and constraining conditions that surround them. Keeping in mind their circumstances, the extent to which graduates manage to sustain enthusiasm and passion for environmental issues in their professional and personal lives surprised me. Eric Darier, a Foucauldian environmental writer, observes that 'the degree of 'greenness' of resistance can be measured only in context, not in the abstract' (1999, p. 232). This is a cautionary reminder about making generalisations, judgments and comparisons without considering the impact of contexts on subjectivity.

My original reading of the interviews reveals the traditional imperative to see change as continuous over time, that is, an unbroken, linear process. A second reading, however, provides opportunity to observe some of the complexities of change. For these graduates, in terms of their environmental ethic, there is not a consistent movement forward or backwards, but nor do participants stay the same. The practices of an environmentally ethical life cannot be described in such simplistic linear ways. Rather than describing graduates' environmental ethic as diminishing or limited, viewing their (environmentally ethical) lives as 'becoming' may be a better way to account for what I observed. Here, I employ the term 'becoming' to encapsulate the ongoing and fluid nature of a beginning teacher's life and the trajectories that it takes. While I do not suggest that one perspective is more 'truthful' than the other, I contend that the second reading is better aligned with the intention of Foucault's final works and assists with developing a more complex and situated analysis of the subject and ethical formation.

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Endnote

1 Six graduates were interviewed for the case study but, for the purposes of this analysis, I focus on the four graduates who were teaching in schools at the time of interview. The experiences of two participants who had taken different pathways since leaving the university provide the basis for another analysis. Elise, David, Sarah and Scott were selected with the aim of achieving a gender balance and also a mix of teachers from regional and city schools. To maintain anonymity pseudonyms have been used.

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