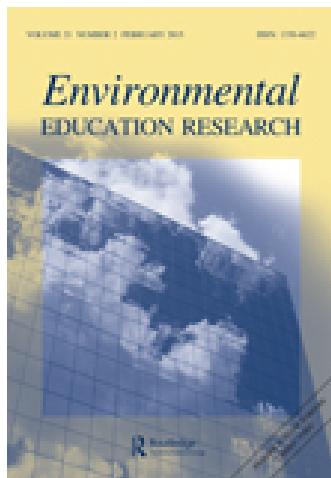


This article was downloaded by: [Monash University Library]

On: 22 January 2015, At: 18:31

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Environmental Education Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceer20>

Critical place as a fluid margin in post-critical environmental education

Yoshifumi Nakagawa^a & Phillip G. Payne^a

^a Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Published online: 08 Jan 2014.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Yoshifumi Nakagawa & Phillip G. Payne (2015) Critical place as a fluid margin in post-critical environmental education, *Environmental Education Research*, 21:2, 149-172, DOI: [10.1080/13504622.2013.862612](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.862612)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.862612>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Critical place as a fluid margin in post-critical environmental education

Yoshifumi Nakagawa* and Phillip G. Payne

Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

(Received 3 December 2012; accepted 28 October 2013)

Positive claims about place pedagogy in education are problematized through this small-scale interpretive study of internationally mobile students' experiences of outdoor environmental education. Of specific interest in this empirical study of learners' pedagogically constructed experiences of place are the fluid subjectivities, cultural dispositions, environmental consciences, and ecological assumptions they already bring 'globally' to the 'place' of the educational intervention, and the hybrid 'splices' we conclude they then temporarily embody – at least, during and after the experience. The study empirically advances an ongoing need for post-critical inquiry in environmental research by incorporating a range of theoretical and conceptual resources that work the boundaries, 'margins', and tensions that lie somewhere 'in-between' the spatially projected place/local and planet/global discourses.

Keywords: place pedagogy and embodied experience; post-critical inquiry; fluidity; hybridity; splice

Post-critical questioning and framing

How and what can we know about subjectivities constructed by and through place pedagogies when, embedded within those pedagogies there exist different, if not competing or contradictory, conceptual framings, environmental designs, contextual issues, normative dilemmas, situated practices, and embodied positionings and, probably, outcomes (Payne 2005a)? How might the reconstituted subjectivities of the researched 'in place' or emplaced be interpreted while the researcher reflexively examines how s/he arrives at the above research question and deliberates about how best to frame post-critical inquiry (Hart 2005; Payne 2005a, 2005c)?

In this theoretically oriented small-scale interpretive empirical study, we aim to identify and reveal some of the 'margins' found in globally mobile and 'fluid'¹ (Bauman 2000) international study abroad students' experiences of the Australian beach and coast in a tertiary outdoor environmental education unit, 'Experiencing the Australian Environment' (EAL), at Monash University (Melbourne, Australia), which emphasized place pedagogy (Payne and Watchow 2009; Nakagawa and Payne 2011). The term 'fluid margin' is important in this study because it problematizes the notion of 'place' assumed in place pedagogy. From our point of view, place pedagogy favors 'place' as a nexus of two ideologies that are accompanied with dichotomous counterparts: ontological localism (contrasted with globalism) and

*Corresponding author. Email: yoshifumi.nakagawa@monash.edu

epistemological objectivism (contrasted with subjectivism). Despite the small-scale nature of this study, we propose that experience in fluid margins consists of body–time–space occurrences and relations that are found somewhere ‘in between’ the local and the global, and the subjective and the objective (e.g. Payne 2003a). Bauman’s fluidity, which emphasizes dynamic temporality, makes it easier for us to imagine such ‘hybrid’² body–time–space as an appropriate condition of our experience. Ontologically, the dynamism of fluidity liquefies the ‘solid’ geographical distinction between the local and the global into complex flux; epistemologically, the temporality of fluidity enables us to bring our (global) subjective histories into objective (local) geographical settings. Again, fluid margins comprise a complex mixture of the local, the global, the subjective, and the objective. And in fluid margins, we cannot reduce the meaning of our experience by solely referring to the local and the objective.

The fluid margin we reveal provides a material context where/when fluid subjectivity is reconstructed or reconstituted as a result of bodily interactive negotiations with ‘other’ objectified (Berger and Luckmann 1967) realities, which we usually call ‘place’³. In this fluid margin, both subjective self and objective place form a hybrid semantic entity. Re-separating the meaning of subjectivities and objectivities (or local and global) into the Cartesian binary oppositions becomes conceptually difficult, or pedagogically pointless. Thus, place pedagogy not paying enough attention to individual subjectivities becomes problematic.

To those who see this post-critical approach to inquiry as leading to a further ‘abstraction’ of the temporal–spatial, we would contend that in our current complex global world, fluid margins *already exist* prior to the naming of ‘places’, and we are *already included* in them (Massey 2005). Even without mentioning the timeliness of ‘complexity’ or ‘globalization,’ as Latour (1993) suggested, the separation of subject and object in modernity itself was a historical project based on an illusion. From that point of view, the dualism between subject and object does not really exist, and in that sense, margins resulting from the spatially projected binary (i.e. global and local) are also most likely fictional. Logically speaking, there will be no margin where there is no dualism. Methodologically, however, we call this possibly indefinable time–space as a fluid margin, and we begin our hermeneutics of experience from this unnamed center, which is to be extended to both ends of the two continuums (i.e. local/global and subjective/objective). By doing so, our fundamental aim is to move the margin, or to be more precise to *remove* it, by suggesting that our fluid margins are not topologically ‘marginal’ at all but the very condition for our being.

Although we may not yet be at that ultimate stage of deconstruction (thus we pragmatically, with reservation, continue calling the time–space of our experience as fluid ‘margin’), based on our ontologically and epistemologically fluid presupposition about body–time–space relationality, this study, now supported with empirical insight, traces how such fluid materialization of hybrid experience occurred for four study abroad students in Australian outdoor environmental education. With that knowledge, this theoretically oriented, but empirically qualified, study provides a point of view and material departure for future ethnographically and phenomenologically disposed studies to reconsider post-critically the role of ‘place’ in outdoor environmental education (Payne 2013).

Rephrasing the above methodological statement more directly in the context of environmental education research, those fluid margins we seek to reveal conceptually and empirically are found somewhere in the personal, social, cultural,

and ecological relations that connect locally embodied memories (Kaufman et al. 2001) in and of ‘nature’ and those future globally imagined relations of humans and their environments and cultures and their ‘natures.’ Our task here includes the need to describe conceptually those empirically found margins that previously existed within certain textual boundaries that limit the discourse of environmental education and its research. Empirically, the problem we pursue is providing conceptual interpretations, contextualized explanations, and embodied/situated understandings of how learners and their researchers make sense of the intersections of the local and global in the pedagogical experiences of ‘places.’ Our warrant is to examine how various spatialized layers of local and global projections are connected in learners’ experience and, in so doing, create previously unacknowledged margins and tensions in the curriculum and pedagogical construction of learners’ subjectivities and intersubjectivities in outdoor environmental education. The research problem in this particular context of place pedagogy is, therefore, the need to make more intelligible how ‘internationalized’ study abroad students constructed knowledge of ‘Australianized’ (coastal/beach) places that were pedagogically offered up as allegedly existing a priori in nature.

This challenging task of conceptually ‘grounding the global’ and empirically ‘consolidating the fluid’ of learners’ subjectivities in and about ‘place’ is located somewhere in between two imaginary spatial projections well-known to environmental education researchers. Heise’s (2008) boundary work interprets these conceptual projections as competing senses of planet and place. In general terms, the notion of sense of planet is informed by critical theory of globalization. It emphasizes the possibility of imagining global interconnectivity in various forms with advanced technologies. For example, Heise pointed out global climate change provides us with a locus for our extra-territorial imagination that ‘requires the articulation of connections between events at vastly different scales’ (205). However, it is important to note that no matter how much globally ‘interconnected’ our lifeworld is, our mobility as social capital⁴ (Urry 2007) is unequally distributed in the capitalist political economy of globalization. Put simply, our capacity to actively access the global interconnectivity is conditioned by the various material settings, one is positioned in physically and socially. This raises a question about the relationship between critical theorizing and praxis according to context.

The latter notion of place, now popularized in the discourse of environmental education and derivatives like outdoor environmental education, is often accompanied with descriptors like ‘experience,’ ‘sense of,’ ‘attachment,’ and ‘belonging’ (e.g. In Australia: Birrell 2001; Brookes 2002; Preston and Griffiths 2004; Stewart 2004; Wattchow 2005), drawing from the phenomenologically humanistic tradition (e.g. Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Heidegger 2001). Those educators normatively assert their ideal of organic solidarity (Durkheim 1984) in *gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 2001) against the economic and cultural homogenization negatively associated with the processes and consequences of globalization (Bowers 2008).

If our placing is within fluid margins, we must deal with both sense of planet and sense of place at the same time. Thus, studying the spatialized tension between the two boundary ‘riders’ created discursively by planet and place formulations and projections required our deliberate sampling of international study abroad students in place pedagogy. They are a metaphor of globally mobile fluid beings par excellence. They were positioned in a particular pre-determined way by the official curriculum of an undergraduate outdoor environmental education unit at an

Australian university whose ‘knowledge interest’ focused practically on importing, constructing, and enacting the uniqueness of ‘Australian’ place pedagogy (hence the unit name EAL). Further studies of ‘local’ students are needed, noting many of those non-international students we teach and research are also highly mobile. Thus, although the findings in this study are contextually limited to the study abroad students’ experience in Australian ‘places,’ they may also shed an insight into the experience of ‘local’ students in environmental education in general.

In summary, we develop interpretations and offer explanations of how those globally identified and experienced study abroad students found themselves locally embodied during a pedagogical intervention aimed experientially and academically at promoting aspects of the place discourse (Nakagawa and Payne 2011; for a more comprehensive context of the curriculum, see Nakagawa 2012). Again, our intention here is not to identify ‘place’ or ‘planet’ separately, but rather to interpret the complex totality of the experience in, or perhaps more precisely *as*, a fluid margin that is pedagogically, thus materially, constructed.

Significantly, despite its small case nature, while noting the ambitious nature of the research problem and purpose, we anticipate this ‘post-critical inquiry’ (Hart 2005) provides additional conceptual and relevant empirical insights that will inform future studies into the numerous spatial and temporal tensions perplexing not only research work and its framing and questioning in environmental education, but also advance the range of theoretical and intellectual resources brought to bear on such empirical work. Our very limited ‘conclusion’ invokes deeper consideration on the marginal politics and ethics of a hybrid notion of ‘splace’ (Payne’s hybrid neologism combining space, time and place in enigmatic relation to human bodies) as a fluid reconceptualization of ‘place.’

Post-critical inquiry should problematize conceptualizations and contextualizations of place discourse. It should also challenge how such conceptualizations and contextualizations are represented and legitimated in research. Place type and driven conceptions, curriculum constructions, and associated practices of pedagogy have infiltrated the discourse of environmental education over the past 10 years. From a post-critical perspective, we believe the theoretical onset of notions like fluidity within the globalizing and abstracting conditions of late, post, or supermodernity might render conceptualizations of place as little more than uncritical applications of otherwise important philosophical ideas and ideals. If so, noting the theoretical and intellectual resources we draw upon throughout this study, a post-critical reframing of the spatial projections of place is needed, with qualifications provided through empirical study.

Our small-scale interpretive study of place pedagogy and its experience serves as a heuristic investigation with a critical perspective. Our interest lies in numerous unresolved spatial tensions that critically warrant material attention in the increasingly globalized and abstracted discourse of environmental education (Payne 2003b; Reid 2009; Reid and Payne 2012). These tensions will shape the grounds of participatory learning that subjectively fall somewhere in-between the polarized privileging of sense of planet, or sense of place. To this end, and to engage debate in environmental education research, the framing of this study extends into more detailed accounts of its conceptualization of the margin(s). Although this may appear to be ‘conflating’ various theories of place, it is nonetheless crucial to interpret the ‘messy’ (Law 2004) complex realities of students’ experience in response to the

pedagogical discourse and practice, without imposing a particular ‘clear cut’ perspective on those students.

Conceptualizing critical place as a fluid margin in environmental education

Two textual boundaries, or ‘markers’ of the pedagogical discourse of time–space serve to conceptually orient the study: a critically future-oriented ecopedagogy and planetary crisis in environmental education (Kahn 2010); and traditionally conservative place-based approach in outdoor recreation (Wattchow and Brown 2011). The ultimate purpose of the two contrasting pedagogical constructions and their respective global and local contexts converge respectively on some form of ‘pedagogical good’: in Kahn’s case, it is creating the necessary social and political conditions for our globalizing world from a realist point of view; in Wattchow and Brown’s case, it is facilitating an enhanced sense of personal and environmental well-being from a humanistic point of view. In different ways, they seek to promote forms of living and dwelling for us to (re)inhabit our environment. However, the conceptual framings they address differ markedly from each other, revealing a vast spatio-temporal margin that further masks various ontological tensions within that projected discursive/textual time–space (Payne 2003a, 2005a, 2005b; Reid and Payne 2011). And, not as a footnote, post-critical inquiry in environmental education research takes seriously the challenges presented in responding aesthetically, ethically, and politically to the triad of ontology–epistemology–methodology (Payne 2005c, 2013).

Critical pedagogy aims to diminish various margins, from the planetary end of the planet-place continuum, with an understanding that a globally ‘moving’ environmental issues, such as climate change, need to be treated collectively. Generalization and abstraction in both interpretation and explanation within critical pedagogy may seem problematic. However, they also tend to occur in place pedagogy from the other end of continuum. More phenomenological groundings and circumstances, events and episodes in which postmodern type agents potentially ‘experience’ place in the world, individually and collectively, must now accommodate the fact that numerous everyday interactions, relations, communications, and socio-ecological formations of exchange are globally mediated. In place pedagogy, however, those aspects of global mediation in our experience are ideologically hidden to be invisible in its interpretation and representation. A real example might help – the use of mobile phones and satellite technologies in the so-called and uncritically valorized wilderness experience, sometimes valorized in outdoor environmental education ‘journeying’ or ‘expeditioning’ in nature that makes (rhetorical) claims on place pedagogy, sensibilities, and attachments. Demystification of the invisible, abstract, or ‘other’ embodied in the spatio-temporal margins as a result of planet-place tensions are now required, if environmentally ethical relations with places, scapes, and ‘natures’ are to be reclaimed (Payne 2003b). Failing this invites various theoretical abstractions in and of certain discourses that typically invoke unsustainable universalizing assumptions and tendencies. The same goes for critical pedagogy.

The relentless processes of abstraction of alleged ‘places’ and ‘planet’ make it difficult for us to reimagine, reconceptualize, and rematerialize the othernesses and hiddenness of the ‘everyday’ in (environmental) education curriculum and pedagogical interventions. In order to achieve those goals, place-based pedagogy experienced existentially and embodied phenomenologically at the local level must accommodate the equally perplexing question of fluid temporality as an intrinsic dimension of

spatiality (Bauman 2000; Payne 2003a, 2013). Without due consideration of time, locally placed pedagogy tends to emphasize in ahistorical and even atheoretical ways the particular qualities and characteristics of a site or location. These immediately lived qualities are reified, or ‘solidified,’ and renamed as ‘place.’ Nonetheless, learners’ fluid subjectivities in reference to their histories that they bring into ‘place’ with themselves inescapably shape their experience. Meanwhile, much of place pedagogy insists that the emplaced learners are universally expected to sense and appreciate their bodily direct experience of certain assumed qualities and characteristics of place already a priori conceptualized and pedagogically constructed. We find this problematic.

An argument for either sense of planet or sense of place risks becoming overly ideological, and we avoid that path as best as possible. Rather, this study spatially *magnifies* the epistemological borderline between the two types of spatial sense to be a *margin* of considerable onto-epistemic significance that carries with it a range of methodological questions. Conceptually, this margin constitutes the possibility of reflexivity needed to address the flux of materiality and information.

In the field of (environmental) education, Gruenewald’s (2003) ‘The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place,’ which aimed to synthesize critical planet and humanistic place deserves our full attention as an effort to overcome the dualism of spatial imaginaries. The pedagogical time–space that Gruenewald conceptualized as ‘critical place’ is bound by its specific local histories and geographies, as well as its openness to ‘world history’ as a result of the modern economic and sociocultural global intercourse (Marx and Engels 1998). Gruenewald wrote:

... decolonization as an act of resistance must not be limited to rejecting and transforming dominant ideas; it also depends on recovering and renewing traditional, non-commodified cultural patterns such as mentoring and intergenerational relationships. In other words, reinhabitation and decolonization depend on each other. (Gruenewald 2003, 9)

In this quote, Gruenewald explicitly connects his ontology of critical place to his spatio-temporal politics, by introducing the notions of decolonization and reinhabitation. Decolonization is the process to emancipate human subjectivities from socio culturally objectified constraints of place, which function as obstacles for individuals to achieve our ‘full’ potentials as human beings. However, decolonization alone does not provide us with the political solution. Gruenewald also maintained the importance of ‘reinhabitation’ to invite the spatio-temporally accumulated traditions as an essential stakeholder within his political negotiation. Although Gruenewald’s politics well reflects the planet-place tensions that characterize an important aspect of our current being, we feel that his dialectic politics of ‘critical place’ needs to go further to meet the agenda of post-critical inquiry to actively acknowledge hybridity. That is because the synthesis of ‘decolonization’ and ‘reinhabitation’ may lead to an unproductive compromise, rather than truly providing a solution, causing further almost-never-ending political antagonism in our human history (and the adverb ‘almost’ is only granted if we are ready to believe in Hegelian manifestation of Spirit at the end). In other words, in Gruenewald’s critical place, the dualism is maintained as the driving force of the spatio-temporal dialectic.

The political negotiation between planet and place is well debated and theorized in ‘other’ disciplines of the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Given various

limitations, for indicative purposes, we draw briefly on a selection of intriguing theoretical informants who would advance the post-critical aspirations for hybridity in this inquiry. Among many theorists, we feel Doreen Massey and Arjun Appadurai are particularly important in relation to the ‘critical place’ conceptualized by Gruenewald.

In cultural geography, Massey’s (1994) ‘A global sense of place’ contained in *Space, Place and Gender*, has been particularly influential, incorporating a post-structural feminist approach into more post-critical accounts of time–space. Massey challenged (or aimed to ‘decolonize,’ in Gruenewald’s term) the hegemonic meaning of place often patriarchally constructed, by pointing out that such place has been in fact composed of multiple social groups (e.g. women). This instantly problematizes Gruenewald’s notion of ‘reinhabitation’ for its ability to represent the meaning of place only partially (and often from a privileged point of view). Being more specific, Massey would ask, what will be ‘recovered’ by ‘reinhabitation’? This question adeptly introduces the complex nature of power for the politics of representation of time–space, thus preparing for more fluid post-critical inquiry. The thesis and antithesis in the dialectic for critical place themselves need to be mobilized. Although Massey indicated her partial sympathy towards historico-geographically accumulated meanings as traditions, she preferred her politics to be ‘progressive’ by appropriately reflecting the fragmentation of fluid postmodern society. In our fluid world, what is the role of ‘outsiders’ in the decolonizing re-construction of the meaning of time–space? Indeed, philosophers like Bauman (1993, 1997) and Braidotti (2006), amongst others, are grappling seriously with the ‘everyday’ question of an elusive ethics of and in postmodernity through their use of metaphorical empiricism and figurations of ‘tourists,’ ‘vagabonds,’ and ‘nomads,’ amongst other categories. Our sample of fluid, highly mobile study abroad/international students in this study fits the ‘tourists’ figuration of identity aspiration.

Massey’s argument represented above is closely associated with the troublesome nature of the constitution of postmodern ‘place.’ In cultural anthropology, Appadurai (1996), in his *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*, pointed out three globally interconnected socio-ontological dimensions of our current time–space, which challenge the traditional sense of place. They are: increasing self-conscious efforts of the nation-state to redefine/reinforce its borders, physically or symbolically; the growing number of collective social movements and translocalities, such as migrants and asylum seekers; and the advancement in electronic mediation and the consequential possibility of virtual neighborhoods (188–199). According to Appadurai, the production of place is becoming more reflexive in relation to planet. Thus, place cannot be considered to be autonomously self-sufficient, both materially and semantically. Furthermore, recognizing this reality of global interconnectivity, Appadurai (1999) suggested less relevance in traditional geography (what he calls ‘trait geography’) that studies the static and solid nature of a time–space (i.e. ‘place’) in the globalizing world. A time–space is dynamic and fluid in its principle, although there are counteractive and conservative local forces that attempt to stabilize the dynamic (Harvey 1996, 292). To deal with this spatio-temporal principle of fluidity, Appadurai recommended a radical shift within the discipline, emphasizing a ‘process geography’ that actively acknowledges the enigmatic and abstracted natures of body-spatio-temporal dynamics technologically mediated in human–environment and culture–nature relations (see also Payne 2003a, 2003b for a similar argument in environmental education research).

Although we have loosely gathered Gruenewald, Massey and Appadurai under the notion of ‘critical place,’ it is also possible, and perhaps more precise, to suggest the discontinuity between them. For Massey, and Appadurai, critical place is fundamentally *becoming*, and as soon as we are emplaced, our subjectivities are interactively *becoming too* (Braidotti 2006). Both critical place and subjectivity are fluid. On the other hand, for Gruenewald, his critical place is the dialectic synthesis of (our) fluid *becoming* and (place’s) solid *being*, and his critical place is a dialectical synthesis of those two socio-physical forces. In the end, what form does the synthesis take – solid or fluid?

Bowers (2008) rejected Gruenewald’s dialectic synthesis of the two socio-physicisms as an ‘oxymoron.’ That is partially understandable, because we feel Gruenewald did not provide a sufficient philosophical nor empirical justification for his otherwise ambitious synthesis. However, it is also true that, although it may appear to be an ‘oxymoron’ to some, the juxtaposition of being and becoming at the same time does suggest theoretical radicalness that is required for post-critical inquiry. If critical place is both becoming and being, which elements are becoming and which are being? Who can or should identify the line in between? For whom is it ‘to live well’ (Gruenewald 2003, 9)? Or, is it better to conceptualize critical place with a particular topology (and ontology) that differs from either sense of place or sense of planet, in order to avoid regressive power politics? The dialectic synthesis of being and becoming indicated by Gruenewald opens up a series of serious political questions. How can we appreciate its theoretical radicalness without being trapped in impossible politics? In conclusion, we will suggest that we can, by deconstructing the dialectic. Instead, we need to accept the ‘oxymoron’ as it is as hybrid.

As Hart (2005) proposed:

All we are doing, as reflexive researchers, is to write in ways that reveal the limits of our knowledge, our political orientations and other dimensions of self, in ways that reveal the discourses that shape our work and open possibilities for thinking about our work as we get on with it (399).

Re-framing methodology

The above political questions are important and we feel they should be answered, even partially, for considering ‘(re)moving’ some of the margins in environmental education. In this paper, however, we will not pursue a gravely speculative direction. Instead, in the next section, we pragmatically position ourselves within a ‘critical place’ pedagogically constructed in environmental education. By doing so, we phenomenologically and empirically interpret the globally mobile study abroad students’ experience of Australianness in a tertiary outdoor environmental education unit, ‘Experiencing the Australian Landscape’ (EAL), at Monash University (Melbourne, Australia), which was closely associated with place-based pedagogy (Payne and Wattoo 2009; Nakagawa and Payne 2011).

The post-critical approach to critical pedagogy of place outlined in the preceding section on ‘conceptualization’ seeks to extend current understandings of environmental education research discourse. Hart’s (2005) conclusion about the place of research in environmental education is appropriate given the numerous contexts of this research including the sample of study abroad students, and also the ‘outsider/insider’ cultural background of the lead author (Nakagawa is originally from Japan)

who, before researching this problem, was a ‘mobile’ international study abroad student in EAL, a number of years ago, hence his desire to make sense of what we study here.

Study abroad students’ experience of the meaning of Australianness in this paper is reported based on the data collected from a small-scale ethnographic case study (Nakagawa 2012) of four study abroad students at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. The opportunistic, self-selecting, or volunteering participants consisted of: one Israeli female, Abby; one American female, Brigitte; and two American males, Chris and Don (all pseudonyms). They were in their early to mid-twenties at the time of the data collection in 2009 when they were studying at Monash University for a period of one semester (approximately four months from March to June). The participants were enrolled in an undergraduate outdoor environmental education unit called ‘Experiencing the Australian Landscape’ (EAL), which emphasized place pedagogy. The unit included two three-to-four-day ‘experiential learning’ fieldtrips to the nearby Victorian coastal locations. The first ‘experience’ of a ‘place’ was held at Point Leo in April (Autumn, becoming cool), and the second was at Wilsons Promontory in May (approaching Winter). The qualitative data corpus consists of three main sources: the lead author’s (Nakagawa) participant observation in weekly indoor lectures and the two outdoor fieldtrips; three sixty-minute semi-structured individual interviews throughout the semester with each participant; and the participants’ unit journals (which was part of unit requirements) as protocol writings.

The lead author aimed to represent the participants’ experience holistically by mixing those different modes (movement, speaking, and writing) of their interpretation and representation. Quantitatively, however, the largest portion of the data corpus was generated through the semi-structured interviews, hence disclosing a limitation of this research. In the interviews, in order to reflect the research participants’ lived experience more phenomenologically and meaningfully, the ‘interview guide approach’ (Patton 2002, 349) was employed. In this approach, fixed questions are not used. Instead, general topics to ‘guide’ interviewees’ narrations are prepared. In the first interviews, the main topics were research participants’ motivations and expectations for EAL and their prior knowledge of Australian nature. In the second interviews, the participants described their experiences in Point Leo regarding four existential aspects of human experience (space, time, body, and relationship – van Manen 1990) and how they applied (or did not apply) their learning in EAL. In the final interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences in EAL and how those had contributed to their images of Australian nature, in relation to their own positionalities and cultural backgrounds (e.g. being Israeli or American).

For Max van Manen, every description is a result of an interpretation. Hence, his methodology is hermeneutic phenomenology. This ‘description equals interpretation’ applies not only to the participants’ generation of the meaning of their experiences (e.g. their discourse in the interviews) but also equally to the researcher’s creative authority in this study. In other words, when I describe something as an act of representation, my description/representation is already filtered through my interpretation. Therefore, what we do here is our re-interpretation of the participants’ interpretations, or what Anthony Giddens (1984) called double hermeneutic. At the practical level of this interpretative representation, we followed what van Manen (1990) calls ‘the selective or highlighting approach.’ He wrote:

In the selective reading approach, we listen to or read a text several times and ask, *What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?* These statements we then circle, underline, or highlight. [original emphasis] (93)

One significant limitation of employing such an approach is the inevitable, sometimes unavoidable, emphasis of the researcher's subjectivity in his/her interpretation and representation. In order to avoid the positivist/objectivist criticism for being overly subjective, van Manen pursued the possibility of transcendently phenomenological intersubjectivity, which provides a certain unitary character, or essence, within a phenomenon studied. As a post-critical inquiry that ethically recognizes embodied semantic differences at the subjective level (Braidotti 2006), however, this transcendental approach is not adequate for our more material, intercorporeal, and 'immanent' purposes of our post-critical research. Nonetheless, what we hope to represent immanently should 'textually' represent what our participants might wish us to represent, if partially, to the best of our ability. How can we solve this methodological dilemma? Retrospectively, we find that the lead author participating in EAL as a student-researcher empathetically (Payne 2005a) while emplacing himself in the lifeworld of the participants is intercorporeally helpful to sensorily understand what their (or should we say 'our'?) experience meant in a particular time-space (Pink 2009). Methodologically, this 'ethnographic' sharing of experience also shortened the emotional distance between the lead author and the participants in a positive way, facilitating meaningful exchange of information and ideas in the interviews.

In summary, the post-critical approach used here for the framing of this small-scale interpretive research is historical/temporal, geographical/spatial, empirically local and bodied, immanently corporeal, while being pragmatic, global, and abstract. In digging for interpretations of the local-global (em)placings of pedagogy, our interest lies in their underlying ontological-epistemological margins and tensions. We anticipate our post-critical re-framing of inquiry gestures to the 'new materialisms' turn currently resurfacing in theory (for example, James 2006; Coole and Frost 2010) and the normative nomadism of the possibility of a postmodern ethics (Bauman 1993; Braidotti 2006). We interpretively, but inevitably critically, use the qualitative data-set collected from a small-scale ethnographic case study of four tertiary study abroad students. Due to the students' status and subjectivities, the pedagogical combining of the mobile/planetary/global and embodied/place/local is well suited to our purpose of interpreting the learners' meaning-making experiences in a post-critical fluid margin. The effects discussed here are limited thematically to their constructions of the meanings of Australianness, in particular as it was assertively 'placed' in the pedagogical experiences of beach and coast. In all, with the results of this primary interpretation with a modified hermeneutic phenomenological thematic analysis (van Manen 1990), we inevitably wander into the geopolitical and ethical margins in the discourses of environmental and outdoor educations by highlighting various problematics existing in the fluid continuum between planet and place.

Study abroad students' emplaced experience of the meaning of Australianness

For empirical insight and conceptual qualification and reflexivity, three sets of EAL participants' anecdotes will be introduced. Each set, or even each anecdote within

the set, may appear as fragmented, spatially and temporally (and perhaps corporeally and relationally as well). However, at the end of this section, these three sets will be re-interpreted to represent a narrative of the meaning of Australianness and its 'places' experienced by the four study abroad students in EAL. In particular, the hybrid character of study abroad students' initial experience is analytically suggested in the first set, whereas in the second and third, the thematic focus shifts to the students' embodied interpretation of their direct experience that negated the hybridity for semantic solidity. It is this narrative as a whole that will be used as the basis for our discussion of '(re)moving' margins in environmental education in conclusion. It is important to re-emphasize that, due to limited space in this paper, what is represented here is one possible narrative, among many, which we find particularly useful to problematise the role of place pedagogy for study abroad students. Thus, in that sense, the anecdotes in this section are methodologically even more interpretatively 'selective.' Lastly, the quotes represented here are all from the interviews conducted by the lead author. The context of those anecdotes will be explained based on Nakagawa's emphatically emplaced participant observation, outlined above. In order to emphasize the role of emphatic intersubjectivity/intercorporeality achieved in his shared experience with the participants, in this section, the first person pronouns 'I' or 'we' are employed to emphasize the researchers' interpretation of the participants' experience.

The hybrid tensions between the antipodal solidity and cosmopolitan fluidity

I didn't see any kangaroos like other groups did ... They put in their Facebook a lot of pictures of kangaroos and I was like 'oh my God, I can't believe you saw so many kangaroos when I didn't even see one!' (Abby, post-Point Leo interview)

I'm always trying to go out and meet new people and never trying to stay with the same group. That's just the attitude I have especially when I'm down here [in Australia], because you don't have that much time and you don't wanna get too settled. (Don, post-Point Leo interview)

I had this thought as I was walking ... I will probably never be here [in Wilsons Promontory] again, and you look out the ocean on top of the mountain and you think to yourself 'ok, we stop for five minutes on top of this mountain and I want to take this all in right now because I'm not probably gonna be here again,' you know, we were moving on in five minutes, we were going to a different place. (Chris, post-Wilsons Promontory interview)

At Point Leo, Abby was very disappointed when she heard that her friends had encountered a mob of kangaroos while they had been bushwalking at Point Leo. We were walking, slowly in the rainy weather towards a beach, some with umbrella and others in a raincoat. Native grassland surrounded us. The trail was so narrow that we walked in a single line, avoiding the slippery edges. The instructor had told us that we might see some wild kangaroos, which are usually crepuscular or nocturnal, due to the gloomy weather. Our anticipation increased. I was walking with Abby's group on that day, in front of the single line with Chris, and in fact I saw more than some kangaroos. The students around me got excited, including Chris, taking photographs with a flash. This scared the kangaroos off, and by the time Abby reached

the point, they were all gone. It was on Facebook, in an electronic space, where Abby shared this experience with her peers.

For those research participants who originated from the Northern Hemisphere, Australia initially appeared as the antipodes, separated from home by a great spatio-temporal distance. In fact, most of them chose Australia as their destination of study abroad because of the distance, which would provide them with ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experience. The iconic kangaroo was one of the signs that were adopted by the study abroad students to signify the particularity of Australian time–space. In this instance, their shared sense of Australianness was produced through their bodily movement and reproduced through electronic mediation. This Australianness itself was hybrid in two senses. First, two types of technology were employed for its construction: slow/embodied walking movement and fast/electronic circulation of information. Second, this Australianness was the locus where the participants’ historical subjectivities and the objectivities of the physical environment interacted. As Abby’s comment indicates, the study abroad students enjoyed the kangaroos as a hybrid symbol of Australianness to solidly objectify their pre-conception of Australianness.

However, for the study abroad students who were living their fluid cosmopolitan realities (or, sense of planet), the value of Australianness (or, sense of larger place), if hybrid, was ambivalent: sometimes it was desirable, as in the above instance, but other times not. Don pointed out what Australian time–space meant to him as a mobile being, by referring to his preferred mode of human relationships in Australia. Australian time–space, for Don, was not for ‘getting settled,’ because he was well aware that the four months would pass very quickly and then he would have to return ‘home.’ As a result, Don preferred a fluid mode of body-to-body human interaction in Australia, avoiding mingling in a limited circle of friends (while keeping close contact with his friends and family members back home online!). In other words, Australia for Don, in this instance, was a time–space when/where he moved through fluidly, rather than solidly settled down. This time–space was somewhat similar to what Augé (2008) called ‘non-place.’ Augé wrote:

... non-places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified – with the aid of a few conversions between area, volume and distance – by totaling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called ‘means of transport’ (aircraft, trains, and road vehicles), the airport and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself. (64)

As Augé (2008, 76) added, ‘non-place’ includes two distinct aspects: the fluid time–space when/where one transits; and his/her internalized fluid attitude towards such time–space. He warned that these two aspects should not be confused. The time–space incorporates a complex network of relations between the others and the self, whereas one’s fluid attitude is often identified as highly individualized or even indifferently solipsistic. However, at the meta-level, can this ambiguity itself be seen as an aspect of fluid hybridity? Don’s case indicates that this hybridity is possible: relationally, Australia appeared to Don as a transitional non-place that required the Other (i.e. ‘new people’ and ‘the same group’) in which he nonetheless wished to enjoy his individualistic freedom of non-belonging. To be more direct, his fluid ‘autonomy’ did depend on the existence of the Other. Our intention here is to demonstrate that the process of solidity and fluidity are governed by the hybrid

principle at a more fundamental level, thus problematizing the dialectic of becoming and being suggested by Gruenewald.

The psychological tension of the hybrid Australian time–space experienced as both the ‘solidly’ relational antipodes (represented through Abby’s experience) and fluid non-place (represented through Don’s experience) is evocatively expressed in Chris’ recollection of Wilsons Promontory. There, we bushwalked through the beautiful National Park for four days with fully equipped heavy backpacks, changing our campsite every night. This was my first overnight bushwalking experience, and not knowing what to bring, my backpack weighed almost half of my weight (some of the weight was from canned food, which I thought would be convenient). Observing other students, it seemed most of us were more or less inexperienced (I saw others eating canned food too). The routes of our daily walks must have been carefully determined taking our modest outdoor capacities into account – the experience for me was positive, neither too challenging nor too easy. In this pedagogically mediated material setting, various modes of mobility, both physical and imaginary, coexisted: our daily slow and short walking, technologically embodied by our heavy backpacks, and the educators’ understanding of our limited capacities; yet a relatively mobile way of experiencing the time–space by nightly changing our camping grounds. We pulled ourselves to get to one location with strenuous efforts on display, but the following morning, we packed up our tents early and left quickly for another camping ‘space’ along the way. I remember that the moment I was packing my tent with my partner was particularly sad, although the day’s beautiful walk was waiting ahead.

Chris understood this dramatic tension of mobilities and evocatively translated it into his being-in-Australia-wished-to-be-solid-as-a-fluid-study-abroad-student. As his quote shows, Chris’s method to cope with the tension is existentially touching. The time–space on the move was divided up into minimal units, and each moment was transiently lived with subjectively rich meaning. However, that moment only lasted for a while, and he was destined to move on to a new location to do the same thing again. By repeating this process, the collection of those time–space fragments accumulates, but there is no visible path to trace them backwards. ‘Real’ Australia should exist somewhere and sometime, because the study abroad students did experience it bodily. However, at the same time, they knew that it was also something they could only recollect in their imagination. This presents the final phase of the hybridity of Australianness they experienced – materiality of there/past and imagination of here/present. Australianness appeared, thus, as body-time–space hybrid relations.

This section, from a post-critical perspective, pointed out various possible hybrid characters of Australianness the study abroad students experienced during/after the EAL fieldtrips. In the following, we explain how the students interpreted this hybrid Australianness pedagogically materialized in EAL, and this will prepare for our final argument for the fluid margins in environmental education.

Snorkeling at Point Leo and deconstructing Australianness

I’m not dealing well with the weather, the cold weather, I mean. I was really cold and I started coughing. I even cough till this day since we went snorkeling. (Abby, post-Point Leo interview)

I guess that was the point, you know. There are all different water environments and not all going to be like you have seen in ... they are not all gonna look like Cairns and the Gold Coast. I mean, this is Point Leo, this is what this water environment looks like and it doesn't look like those. So it was negative at that time but I guess now I'm reflecting on it and it's not a bad thing. (Brigitte, post-Point Leo interview)

[Point Leo] influenced my idea of Australia because you get to see another part of it, something I hadn't seen before, but the idea of the country as a whole being influenced by this trip, I would say no ... it's more sort of filling in a map, like I have been there and yeah I have been there and know what it looks like. (Don, post-Point Leo interview)

From the first interviews, it was identified that there were two predominant 'solid' themes in the research participants' conceptualization of Australian nature prior to EAL: they were the Outback (of which the kangaroo is a part) and warm tropical beach. These images positively constructed the meaning of Australianness as the antipodes. In this section, we describe how warm tropical beach as Australianness was bodily deconstructed by the research participants during the Point Leo fieldtrip.

Prior to EAL, the study abroad students imagined that the typical Australian warm beach is to be found somewhere in Queensland, as it is often promoted in tourist advertisements with an internationally established icons such as the Great Barrier Reef. In that typical beach, the water is warm and clear, and colorful fish are abundant. It is a good place to enjoy snorkeling and diving. When the study abroad students knew that snorkeling was going to be one of the organized outdoor activities at Point Leo, they were all excited, expecting that their experience would be something similar to what they had seen in their guidebooks. However, Point Leo is located in the southern coast of Australia, and the fieldtrip took place in April. April, in Melbourne, is autumn. In addition to the cool temperature, the weather was cloudy and rainy throughout the fieldtrip, which nullified the visually pleasing views under water. Partly because I knew the weather condition from the weather news, partly because I was catching a cold, and partly because I wanted to observe bushwalking more extensively, I did not participate in snorkeling. But it was not hard for me to imagine that snorkeling would be physically challenging for some of the participants.

Not surprisingly, then, their response to this snorkeling activity was generally 'negative' as Abby's comment indicates. It also failed in the pedagogical sense, because EAL intended to facilitate students' positive emotional attachment with the natural environment through embodiment. After all, if it is 'just' seaweed in the dark and cold salty water that one can experience out of snorkeling, it is unlikely to invoke emotional appreciation of the physical environment. However, according to Brigitte, this experience could be considered to be 'positive' intellectually. Responding to my question asking about the possible benefit in her snorkeling experience at Point Leo, Brigitte answered it had provided her with a new meaning of 'Australianness.' Not all the Australian beaches will feel like a warm tropical beach as typically represented in the guidebooks. While most international tourists are entrapped within the consumer-oriented mainstream tourism discourse, Brigitte corporeally deconstructed this ready-made commodified meaning of Australianness. This gave her a positive feeling of distinction as a connoisseur.

The corporeal deconstruction of 'Australian beach' did not end in itself. The study abroad students applied the logic further, to the very notion of 'Australianness.' If

‘Australianness’ of ‘Australian beach’ is artificially constructed (either pedagogically or by the tourism industry) and thus can be deconstructed, what does the ‘Australianness’ of Australian time–space mean in the first place, other than to signify its geopolitical limit of the nation–state? To this question, Don insightfully suggested that Australianness to him became meaningless. Australia became a quantitative non-place (Augé 2008), instead of a qualitative place that signifies a certain set of a priori characters. Experiencing Australia, then, for Don, became similar to ‘filling in a map.’ In the interview, Don used the number and names of locations visited to measure his knowing of Australian time–space. The logic of knowing becomes ‘been there done that’ instead of identifying its qualitative identity. At this point, the study abroad students’ Australian time–space was extremely fluid leading to relativism, and their subjectivities also seemed to have disappeared. What happened next?

The coastal country, ‘phenomenological’ reduction, dialectic ending

The desert is the large part of the country ... people live around the outside so no one really experiences that unless you go out there. I just don’t have time to do that, so it’s kind of one thing that I’m probably gonna regret ... It’s all about experiencing, you know. (Chris, post-Wilsons Promontory interview)

I heard from people that it’s quite disappointing because it’s just driving for a few days in the desert and you don’t see anything and all you get to do is just to walk. (Abby, post-Wilsons Promontory interview)

The trips [in EAL] have changed my perception of Australia and I feel like they [Australian tourism] need to represent themselves differently ... because it [the Outback] is just very stereotypical ... and it is not like that at all. I can see ... why the center of Australia is important to them, but people don’t even live there really. So you know, this is how it should be represented, I think, more Wilsons Prom and Point Leo and places like that, because I feel those places people are more up to visit, versus the center. (Brigitte, post-Wilsons Promontory interview)

Although the qualitative solidity of Australianness may have sunk into the dark and cold water at Point Leo, it paradoxically remained important for the study abroad students to signify positively the time–space of their being-study-abroad-students. As Frederic Nietzsche claimed, our power of affirming ‘yes’ is great, which would save us from being trapped in nihilistic relativism. In this instance, the study abroad students re-constructed their meaning of Australianness by saying ‘yes’ to their embodied experience, which was pedagogically emphasized in EAL. However, the way they addressed ‘yes’ was problematic, indicating the limitation in traditional place pedagogy’s combination of sense of place and embodied experience that overemphasizes the objectivity of the immediate physical environment.

The qualitative semantic void of Australianness caused by the corporeal deconstruction needed to be filled with meaning again, in order to re-construct Australian time–space. Quantitatively collecting diverse time–spaces within Australia and filling its map was one strategy of theirs. However, the majority of the research participants (except Don) felt that this was not enough. In order to recover the qualitative identity of Australianness, if counteractively, they utilized their bodily direct experience, referring to the ‘phenomenologically’ oriented pedagogical emphasis of EAL. As Chris explained, although he indicated his partial ethical

awareness of the possible Other (i.e. the desert), his embodied meaning of Australianness was reduced to his direct experience of Australian coast/beach – as he said, ‘it’s all about experiencing.’

This is an interesting phenomenon. Prior to EAL, the participants’ imagination of Australian nature was balanced on the parity between the arid Outback and warm tropical beach. These archetypal landscapes were both equally representative in their imagined Australian natural time–space. Among the participants, Abby was particularly looking forward to visiting Uluru and its surrounding area when she first arrived in Melbourne, in order to experience rich Indigenous histories and geographies. Even for her, the significance of the Outback in the form of hearsay, personally or culturally, decreased, contraposed against *her* bodily direct experience in coast/beach. After the final exams in June, Abby was instead planning to travel in Queensland along the coast for a relaxing vacation.

It was in Brigitte’s idea that their embodied interpretation was understood to relate to its representation in a wider social context: although it was their meaning of Australianness that was re-constructed with their bodily direct experience, some universality should also be able to be claimed ‘transcendentally and phenomenologically’ (another main feature of place pedagogy in EAL heavily influenced by Husserlian tradition and humanist geography) based on their personally embodied truth. The dialectic re-construction of their Australianness took the following procedure. In the beginning, there were the Outback and warm tropical beach as the key element of Australian nature (thesis). Then, the Australianness of warm tropical beach was bodily deconstructed and this deconstruction further problematized the notion of Australianness (antithesis). In the end, Australianness was phenomenologically re-constructed as a coastal country referring to their embodied experience (synthesis).

As a means of both interpretation and representation by the powerful (Brotton 2012), their dialectic of Australianness took a form of cartography. In this, they exercised their power as mobile beings. In Chris’s mental map of Australia, the significance of Australianness was distributed along the coastal line, resulting in less significance for the center. Topologically, therefore, for the study abroad students, Australia became similar to the shape of a doughnut: real around the edge, empty (or ‘very stereotypical’ – Brigitte) in the middle where ‘you don’t see anything and all you get to do is just to walk’ (Abby).

In this, the power of ‘yes’ problematically pushed the unexperienced Other from the embodied center of ego to the periphery and the beyond. This symbolic exclusion is unethical, and this was how the modernist trope of the Same and the Other functioned as the vanguard of colonialism (Said 2003). If that is the case, is it better off to live safely and peacefully yet uncomfortably in postmodern nihilism/relativism? Or, are there any other better options that environmental education can offer? One brief observation at the end of this section: where are the various forms of hybrid Australianness that we initially observed gone?

Hybrid politics and ethics in the fluid margins

In summary, our reflexive critique of place pedagogy (and critical pedagogy) has addressed theoretically and empirically how ontological aspects of fluidity can further the aspirations of post-critical inquiry. Thematically, our argument so far forms a narrative composed of three conceptual steps: (1) Gruenewald’s critical

place is a dialectic synthesis of *being* of place and *becoming* of inhabitants, and this is a significant effort to overcome the dualism of sense of place and sense of planet; (2) however, we indicated, with a set of empirical findings, that how dialectic synthesis takes place can sometimes be problematic, if not often, considering the fluid nature of subjectivities with more global mobility as social capital; (3) therefore, instead of pedagogically encouraging the dialectic as an exercise of mobile power as a privilege to ‘solidify’ time–space from its particular perspective, we recommend the contradiction of the co-existence of being and becoming as it is, that is, as a hybrid. We have called this hybrid as ‘fluid margin’, because phenomenologically, we are still living in the dualism of sense of place of sense of planet. Thus, the hybridity we are suggesting leads into the broader questions of a normative type that connect to the ethics and politics of curriculum theory.

In the final part of this paper, we will focus primarily on a nomadic-like wandering into the now exposed margins of in environmental education inquiry. For this, we have employed the above interpretative narrative of study abroad students in EAL as providing an empirical springboard (James 2006) into questions about the ‘place’ of normativity in environmental education research. One particular problem we highlighted is that the post-critical hybrid experience of fluid time–space can be transformed into modernist/humanist dialectic knowledge via a place pedagogy that overemphasizes the solid and transcendental aspects of embodiment and relationality with others. In this pedagogical conversion, we found that a very messy hybrid of experience was smoothed into dialectic knowledge of ‘place,’ which is ethically problematic in the context of globalizing world. We felt the need to keep our hybridity alive to avoid the problem. The always elusive Other should not be treated solely as ‘antithesis’ for dialectic synthesis, which usually takes place from the perspective of ‘thesis,’ but the catalysis to confuse, disorient, and deterritorialize us so that we can be better prepared to live ethically in a hybrid world (Braidotti 2006).

In order to simplify our arguments, we identify one central problem regarding ‘(re)moving’ (some of) the margins in environmental education research – that is, the underlying and assumed interest in more fluid critical place, or post-critically as we have glimpsed empirically above, the rise of what we refer to as ‘splace’ (i.e. space + place as bodied enigmatically in, through, over and against ‘time’ lived in particular situations and geo–cultural–historical contexts). Even ‘non-place’ needs to be included in our consideration, in order to critically evaluate various approaches to and understandings of ‘place pedagogy’ and its derivatives such as immersion, sensibility, and even attachment, and particularly how these knowledge interests are played out in outdoor environmental education. Here, we encourage further research, so that debates about ‘place’ in environmental education and related curriculum fields incorporate some of the conceptual apparatus and theoretical turns we include in this post-critical engagement with some of underlying assumptions, interests and practices in, albeit, a small-scale but empirically informed study of mobile study abroad students in Australian beach and coast.

Gruenewald’s critical place, as we viewed it, is a dialectic synthesis of a bodied-spatio-temporal mixture of essential *being* of place and phenomenal *becoming* of us. Based on this study, we feel that ‘place’ needs to be understood that it is *becoming as well as being*. This seems increasingly true in fluid and hybrid globalizing conditions, and thus place might better be rephrased as splace, in which ‘experience’ subjectively lived through pedagogical enactments is described simultaneously referring to both characters of ‘place’ and ‘space’ of time–space.

But, we ask, based on what we have revealed here, is this contradiction of ‘splace’ unnecessary, or even confusing?

Post-critically oriented postmodernism can be an opening invitation for inquiry. A poststructural critical feminist Kaplan (1996) diagnosed postmodernity as a contradicting time–space that is characterized as both continuity and discontinuity with modernity. Similarly, James’ (2006) ‘social’ ontology reveals a series of overlapping ontologies and epistemologies bequeathed over time–space as ‘layerings’ in our current being, and overlayerings as future becomings through different socio-cultural-historical formations – neatly summarized as tribalism, nationalism, and now globalism. What they indicated is that postmodernity includes both modern and postmodern within itself. Thus, the ‘contradictions’ we identify empirically and outline conceptually and theoretically are, we argue, inherent within the ebbs and flows of postmodernity.

Applying this to postmodern spatiality, how then can we talk about ‘place’? Our argument is that we cannot, because every modernist thought or practice that aims to establish a general category (including place) is necessarily contextualized in postmodernity. This is not to say that those general categories are not important any longer, but they need to be reflexively approached with the particularity of context that is now generated in relation to the global – hence our emphasis on ‘splace.’ Similarly, the non-problematized general category of ‘woman’ is problematic for Kaplan, because the reality of being a woman is philosophically masked with the universal idea of ‘woman.’ Instead, Kaplan argued that ‘[o]ne becomes a woman *through* race and class’ [original emphasis] (182), that is, within a *particular* materialistic (including geographic, historic, socio-cultural, economic, etc.) relations. Place (solid, universal), too, thus requires critically reflexive appraisal, as should be the pedagogical priorities and practices that align and position learners within that solidity.

We anticipate this post-critical study of place pedagogy within the confines of outdoor environmental education sheds deeper insights into the problem of how locations of knowledge and the locating of learners’ experiences and associated subjectivities reveal keener insights into the problematic and acritical, ahistorical and, increasingly we feel, atemporal, disembodied, and decontextualized reproduction of somewhat naïve place pedagogies. Modernist generalization, or theory, alone should not continue to be seen as the primary and only valid way to produce social knowledge any longer. Generalization should be complimented with insights into postmodernist context and complexity of being, becoming, and associated pedagogies. We see that the post-critical sits comfortably within the nexus of general and contextual, theoretical and empirical, material and ideal, objective and subjective, and nature and culture (Latour 1993). ‘Splace,’ as a post-critically inspired concept, therefore, not only troubles those assumptions but, we feel, ‘opens up’ for inspection and further inquiry numerous margins that lie in-between the reified binaries of place and space, the historical and the atemporal, or the local and the global, or the personal and the planetary.

Yet, many of us may still ‘need’ identity, or a sense of autonomous self, that is nonetheless constructed with one or more general categories. Also, many of us may still be trapped within the positivistic mode of production of knowledge where it is considered that knowledge is not knowledge if it cannot be generalisable and broadly applicable to a range of contexts and situations, or behaviors (Krathwohl and Smith 2005). In that sense, we are perhaps still ‘modernists’ in mind and at

heart, or wish to be. Our placed mind has not caught up with our fluid body in the world of increased and enhanced mobility thus causing various ethical problems at the global level (Bauman 1993; Singer 2004). Can we change? Does ethics have a chance in postmodernity (Bauman 2008) and in/on education (Bauman 2012)? If we can change, we are in the middle of transition here and now. Thus, the postmodernist view, following Kaplan and James, that allows us and prepares us for our ‘contradictions’ seems the most pragmatically ethical within certain historically bodied, social, cultural, and ecological circumstances. Putting this back in the context of critical place, or splace as we invite, environmental education research recommends we should not see planet and place in the mode of ‘either/or’ at this historical stage. Instead, ideally, planet and place together compose a contradicting fluid and hybrid time–space where the ‘contradiction’ is so ordinary that it ceases to be contradiction. This is the principle of splace – a melding of in-betweens according to the flux of context and circumstance and bodied dispositions.

With this emerging ethico-political framework, what can we learn empirically from the meaning of Australianness experienced by the four study abroad students in EAL, particularly for environmental education research in the increasingly fluid world of non-places? Put differently, how does research like the above provide simple and more straightforward insights into the pedagogical question of how can we better prepare our students to deal with the messy hybrid realities we discern in this study without encouraging them either to make undue generalizations where contradictions are forcefully removed or made invisible or to accept relativism that does not produce any positive values?

First of all, hybridity is a form of material existence and relations, and includes *both* lifeworld and textualism (Payne 2005a). The study abroad students’ conception of Australian nature prior to EAL personified subjectively as the warm and dry beach and the Outback marks a certain positionality they ‘carried’ in the globalizing world. Perhaps such positionality is indeed heavily influenced by tourist consumerism and the internationalization of education within a neo-liberal trajectory of the postmodern university. The consumerist discourse is socially and environmentally problematic, and thus should be critiqued, as some in environmental education have been arguing since the field’s inception in the 1970s. This criticism also should be reflexively directed to one’s subjectivity, as researcher and researched, as Hart (2005) argued powerfully for when noting the transition of inquiry to the post-post and post-critical. However, either consumerism or positioned subjectivity is not to be simply negated as ‘false consciousness.’ Post-critical fluid and hybrid environmental education (research) recognizes these imaginaries as part of our lifeworld, and its goal is to help equip our students with skills to transform their subjectivities from within. Though not from outside, because in the non-dialectic hybrid, as we have outlined substantively and methodologically, there is no antithesis. As Braidotti (2006) repeatedly insisted in her nomadic ethics: ‘we are all in this together.’ EAL’s somewhat utopian and complacent negation of our ‘false’ subjectivities with a pre-emptive type of phenomenological reconstruction (of place), in that sense, is both naïve and instrumental, because it not only uncritically endorses and rehearses a set of assumptions and interests about place and associated pedagogies but also discards the crucial role of imagination in our fluidly globalizing world (Kenway and Fahey 2009) that are avoided, misrepresented or disregarded. Granted that the current world is troublesome and messy in many aspects, but through post-critical inquiry, we need to empower our students to sharpen their imagination so as to deal with the

problems we seek to address. Encouraging them to take refuge in a somewhat mythically constructed ‘place’ and escape inside the shell of their bodies, as we have seen in this study of student subjectivities in outdoor environmental education, appears to miss the point. For this purpose, inclusion of post-critically oriented social/cultural theory in the curriculum is necessary. As is empirically-driven and insightful research about the value and usefulness of a post-critical framing and approach in environmental education (e.g. Payne [forthcoming](#)).

Second, providing fluid students with the trope of modernist localism based on their own direct experience poses significant problems, not only pedagogically but also socially and ethically. Those problems are closely associated with new, often invisible, fluid forms of oppressive power. Socially, as Hall (1991) pointed out, a blind belief in localism is a risky proposition, considering that the numerous forces of advanced global capitalism now incorporates and commodifies local diversity and its numerous identity and cultural capitals so as to make profit out of it. Ethically, a phenomenologically oriented constructivist pedagogical sense of place and reliance upon total (‘inter’)subjectification of place experiences as learning masks the historical forces and neocolonialistic power that mobility as social capital intrinsically possesses. This study, as an alternative metaphorical starting point for post-critical research and pedagogy, has demonstrated how the uncritical pedagogical endorsement of place can turn on itself in highly unpredictable ways that potentially undermine its ethical warrant and claims. Following Hinkson, James, and Veracini’s (2012) accounts of the settler-colonial present, we cannot avoid posing the question of to what extent ‘place pedagogy’ in outdoor environmental education and, even, environmental education and education for sustainable development is part of a colonizing logic and practice. In the absence of conceptual nuance and critical reflexivity offered up or invited by invoking the margins of time–space, a colonizing discourse such as ‘Australia is a coastal country,’ or the ‘outback’ is quite problematic (Plumwood 2000), although it may make sense to certain subjectivities and identities (Read 2000). This type of argument for pluralization of identity often ignores the disparity of mobility as social capital to definitively represent time–space. After all, although it is valid for mobile learners, be they international or ‘local,’ to have a personal impression of Australian time–space as a result of visiting Australia for a period of one semester, that cannot and should not drive out the spatio-temporal identities that have existed much longer in both the (human) bodies visiting that space, temporarily, or collectives inhabiting a ‘place’ over a longer period of time–space and changing contexts. How to come to terms with these diverse interpretations and representations of various in-between splaces and post-critical pedagogies is, indeed an important if not confronting, aesthetic, ethical, and political question which, based on the heuristic provided here, needs to be addressed elsewhere in a much wider range of pedagogical circumstances, contexts, and conditions.

EAL’s pedagogical practice encouraged the limited sample of students to reterritorialize Australian time–space by corporeally ‘decolonizing’ it, in a similar manner in which critical pedagogy might operate until it confronts elements of post-critical theory. As Heise (2008) adeptly observed, identity politics in postmodernist, poststructuralist, and postcolonialist manners appears to deterritorialize identity at the first glance, by adopting concepts such as nomadism, and in this particular case corporeal deconstruction (Payne and Wattoo 2009). However, it is often the case that those once deterritorialized identities tend to re-establish ‘quasi essentialist

categories' (Heise 2008, 5), because the positionality from which such deconstruction often takes place (i.e. this is often white male middle class) is seldom called into question. This reterritorialization is not necessarily always bad, as ultimately critical pedagogy genuinely aims for a 'good' hegemony to transform social injustice (Giroux 1988). However, it is again naïve to assume that reterritorialization or temporary 'reinhabitation' always turns out to be good, as this case study demonstrates its problematic consequence. We note places can be 'bad' in contrast to the assumed 'good' sometimes carried by/through their uncritical rehearsal and application.

What seems more striking here is that the borderline between place-based education and critical pedagogy is blurring even more now, to the degree that, perhaps, in postmodern *reality*, there only exists a contradicting fluid margin that might better be entertained, conceptualized, and studied empirically and materially through hybrid notions like *splace*. And it is this margin that is asymmetrically (Latour 1993) claimed by both spatialized modernist pedagogies (i.e. critical pedagogy and place pedagogy) to be part of either planet or place (or temporally, future or past). This brings consideration back to our ethical framework for the margins in environmental education. Rather than claiming the territorial authority over the margins from outside by asserting either sense of planet or place, or globalism or localism, we feel it is more ethical to understand that the ontology of postmodern time-space is a layered series of historical socio-ecological formations and arrangements, following James (2006), and to mobilize this margin from inside towards both ends of the planet-place continuum. It is beyond the scope of this limited study to suggest how that can be practically achieved in the context of environmental education. However, for the postmodern aesthetics, ethics, and politics of environmental education and its research, that post-critical question needs to be well considered.

Notes

1. Zygmunt Bauman used 'fluidity' as a metaphor to signify the ontological dynamism of beings. For Bauman, fluidity is the 'lightness' that brings a perspective of change or flexible becoming into the constitution of beings: '[i]n a sense, solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters' (2). Semantically, liquidity or fluidity signifies indefinability, but meaning is only contextually valid for the time being. While Bauman used the term 'liquid', instead of 'fluid', in his *Liquid Modernity* (2000), he often employed those words interchangeably. We only use the term 'fluid' for readability, because this word can be usefully modified into the adverb in English, as 'fluidly'.
2. According to Bruno Latour (1993, 10–11) 'hybrids' are 'entirely new types of beings' made of mixtures of binary oppositions, such as nature and culture. While producing complex hybrid beings, modern society, on the other hand, also critically re-purifies them into binary oppositions, which is how knowledge is supposed to function in modernity. Latour pointed out that this double process of modern production of hybrids and their re-purification is a contradiction, to the degree that our 'modern' identity is now problematized. Latour's observation supports our argument that we need to deal with hybrids (and their contradictions) in our everyday life, and this includes environmental education.
3. Cresswell (2004, 7) recommended three fundamental aspects of place for a concise definition. Those aspects are: location; locale (i.e. 'the actual shape of place'); and sense of place (i.e. 'the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place'). While sense of place is subjective and emotional in its origin, it also often takes material forms (e.g. establishment of a town museum), thus 'objectified' (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

This instantly indicates that place is in fact hybrid, instead of being an objective entity that autonomously transcends our subjectivities.

4. Urry (2007, 197–198) identified an aspect of mobility as our socially organized capacity to move around, which he called ‘network capital’. Network capital includes eight elements. They are: (1) array of appropriate documents, visas, money, qualification; (2) others (workmates, friends, and family members) at-a-distance; (3) movement capacity; (4) location free information and contact points; (5) communication devices; (6) appropriate, safe and secure meeting places; (7) access; and (8) time and other resources to manage and coordinate the above elements. Following Urry’s conception of mobility as network capital, we use the term ‘mobility’ or ‘mobile’ in this paper to signify the social capacity of the subject. For example, when we describe study abroad students as ‘mobile’, we mean their sociological status as well as their literal ontological fluidity.

Notes on contributors

Yoshifumi Nakagawa is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia. He is currently researching WWOOFing with an interdisciplinary perspective, combining sociology, tourism studies and environmental educational research. He is particularly interested in human–nature relationships experienced in the (eco)tourism settings and how those relationships are indicative of the formation of current human subjectivities.

Phillip G. Payne is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia where he also co-leads the Education, Environment & Sustainability (EES) Faculty Research Group. His current research interests focus on how the triad of somaesthetics, ethics and politics in environmental education inform and reflect the triad of ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns and considerations in framing environmental education research and inquiry.

References

- Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appadurai, A. 1999. “Globalization and the Research Imagination.” *International Social Science Journal* 51 (160): 229–238.
- Augé, M. 2008. *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. Translated by J. Howe, 2nd English ed. London: Verso.
- Bauman, Z. 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2008. *Does Ethics Stand a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2012. *On Education* (Conversations with Riccardo Mazzeo). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Birrell, C. 2001. “A Deepening Relationship with Place.” *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 6 (1): 25–30.
- Bowers, C. A. 2008. “Why a Critical Pedagogy of Place is an Oxymoron.” *Environmental Education Research* 14 (3): 325–335.
- Braidotti, R. 2006. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brookes, A. 2002. “Lost in the Australian Bush: Outdoor Education as Curriculum.” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 34 (4): 405–425.
- Brotton, J. 2012. *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*. London: Allen Lane.
- Coole, D., and S. Frost. 2010. “Introducing the New Materialisms.” In *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by D. Coole and S. Frost, 1–43. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Cresswell, T. 2004. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell.

- Durkheim, E. 1984. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giroux, H. 1988. *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gruenewald, D. A. 2003. "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place." *Educational Researcher* 32 (4): 3–12.
- Hall, S. 1991. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." In *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, edited by A. D. King, 19–40. London: Macmillan.
- Hart, P. 2005. "Transitions in Thought and Practice: Links, Divergences and Contradictions in Post-critical Inquiry." *Environmental Education Research* 11 (4): 391–400.
- Harvey, D. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Heidegger, M. 2001. Building Dwelling Thinking. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Translated by A. Hofstadter, 141–160. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Heise, U. K. 2008. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Globe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hinkson, J., P. James, and L. Veracini, eds. 2012. *Stolen Lands, Broken Cultures: The Settler-colonial Present*. Melbourne: Arena Publications.
- James, P. 2006. *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back in*. London: Sage.
- Kahn, R. 2010. *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy, and Planetary Crisis: The Ecopedagogy Movement*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kaplan, C. 1996. *Question of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kaufman, J., M. Ewing, A. Hyle, D. Montgomery, and P. Self. 2001. "Women and Nature: Using Memory Work to Rethink Our Relationship to the Natural World." *Environmental Education Research* 7 (4): 359–377.
- Kenway, J., and J. Fahey. 2009. *Globalizing the Research Imagination*. London: Routledge.
- Krathwohl, D. R., and N. L. Smith. 2005. *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal: Suggestions for Students in Education and the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by C. Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Law, J. 2004. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London: Routledge.
- van Manen, M. 1990. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Marx, K., and F. Engels. 1998. *The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Massey, D. 1994. *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, D. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage.
- Nakagawa, Y. 2012. "Study Abroad Students' Place Experience in Australian Beach: A Critical Interpretative Study." Master's thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Nakagawa, Y., and P. G. Payne. 2011. "Experiencing Beach in Australia: Study Abroad Students' Perspectives." *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* 27 (1): 94–108.
- Patton, M. Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Payne, P. 2003a. "Postphenomenological Enquiry and Living the Environmental Condition." *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 8: 169–190.
- Payne, P. 2003b. "The Technics of Environmental Education." *Environmental Education Research* 9 (4): 525–542.
- Payne, P. 2005a. "Lifeworld and Textualism: Reassembling the Researcher/Ed and 'others'." *Environmental Education Research* 11 (4): 413–431.
- Payne, P. 2005b. "Critical Experience in Outdoor Education." In *Outdoor and Experiential Learning: Views from the Top*, edited by T. Dickson, T. Gray, and B Hayllar, 184–201. Dunedin: Otago University Press.
- Payne, P. 2005c. "'Ways of doing' Learning, Teaching and Researching." *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 10: 108–124.

- Payne, P. 2013. "(Un)Timely Ecophenomenological Framings of Environmental Education Research." In *International Handbook of Research in Environmental Education*, edited by R. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, and A. Wals, 420–433. London: Routledge.
- Payne, P. Forthcoming. "Slow Ecopedagogy, Democracy Emplaced, and Environmental Education Curriculum Theory." In *Environmental Education Reader*, edited by C. Russell, J. Dillon, and M. Breunig. New York: Peter Lang.
- Payne, P., and B. Wattchow. 2009. "Phenomenological Deconstruction, Slow Pedagogy, and the Corporeal Turn in Wild Environmental/Outdoor Education." *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 14: 15–32.
- Pink, S. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Plumwood, V. 2000. "Belonging, Naming, and Decolonisation." *Ecopolitics: Thought and Action* 1 (1): 90–106.
- Preston, L., and A. Griffiths. 2004. "Pedagogy of Connections: Findings of a Collaborative Action Research Project in Outdoor and Environmental Education." *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 8 (2): 36–45.
- Read, P. 2000. *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reid, A. 2009. "Environmental Education Research: Will the Ends Outstrip the Means?" *Environmental Education Research* 15 (2): 129–153.
- Reid, A., and P. Payne. 2011. "Producing Knowledge and (De)Constructing Identities: A Critical Commentary on Environmental Education and Its Research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 32 (1): 155–165.
- Reid, A., and P. Payne. 2012. "Handbooks of Environmental Education Research: For Further Reading and Writing." In *International Handbook of Research in Environmental Education*, edited by R. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, and A. Wals, 529–541. London: Routledge.
- Relf, E. C. 1976. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.
- Said, E. W. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Singer, P. 2004. *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*. 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Stewart, A. 2004. "Decolonising Encounters with the Murray River: Building Place Responsive Outdoor Education." *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 8 (2): 46–55.
- Tönnies, F. 2001. *Community and Civil Society*. Translated by J. Harris and M. Hollis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tuan, Y.-F. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Urry, J. 2007. *Mobility*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wattchow, B. 2005. "Belonging to Proper Country: Australian Outdoor Education as Experiencing Relationships in Place." In *Outdoor and Experiential Learning: Views from the Top*, edited by T. Dickson, T. Gray, and B. Hayllar, 13–27. Dunedin: Otago University Press.
- Wattchow, B., and M. Brown. 2011. *A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor Education for a Changing World*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing.