

Displaced in Nature: The Cultural Production of (Non-)Place in Place-Based Forest Conservation Pedagogy

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This study examines spatial practices in a forest conservation education program that incorporates place as a tool to teach environmental and forestry issues to schoolchildren and connect them with nature. By analyzing educational forests, “talking-tree trails,” classes taught to children, and how visitors move throughout the sites, this paper argues that people and practices within the forests employ a rhetoric of spatial and temporal transience that can enable a displaced experience. Human-nature dualistic tendencies that foster environmental alienation are produced culturally and spatially and are experienced in ways that can promote disconnectedness. Instead of re-placing students with nature, as place-based environmental education promotes, forestry and pedagogical systems can practice nature as non-placed.

Keywords: Place; Human-nature Dualism; Place-based Education; Forests; Non-place

In the present age of green awareness and concern, a variety of educational programs in the United States are teaching environmental subjects to children. Stemming from research and a perception among many adults that children are disconnected from environmental issues and the natural world (Hoffereth & Sandberg, 2001; Louv, 2005; Malone, 2007), some educators are using place-based pedagogical tools to send children outside to learn and reconnect. The move to teach environmental issues while evoking in children a sense of place, or, a human subjective and emotional attachment to one's surroundings, is an increasingly popular endeavor.

One specific venture is place-based forest conservation pedagogy, where educators bring K-12 students into local forests on fieldtrips. In one such program—the North Carolina Educational State Forest (NCESF) system—in addition to their forest

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management duties, rangers teach students about ecosystems, environmental topics, and forestry practices. The NCESF embraces place-based environmental education's broad goal of teaching environmental topics to schoolchildren in a nature setting and outside the confines of a traditional classroom. To this end, programs such as the NCESF aim to educate by placing "more kids in the woods" (Kimbell, Schuhmann, & Brown, 2009, p. 373).

Programs such as the NCESF are perceived to be positive instruments that bring youth and the natural world together, and in certain ways they do. However, the sites I examined are produced and experienced in ways that can foster disconnect-ness by widening the human-nature split, and not reconnecting humans with nature through a sense of place, as commonly thought.¹ I argue that people culturally construct forests in ways that can employ a rhetoric of spatial transience and promote a displaced experience—a kind of "non-place." Nature-culture dualistic tendencies that generate environmental alienation are not just discursively (Marafiotte & Plec, 2006), scientifically (Haraway, 1989), and historically (Shepard, 1982) created but similarly are produced spatially. That is, how the forest service, educators, and curricula arrange, situate, and transport visitors through the forests can promote a disciplinary and ephemeral experience that reinforces human-nature separation. Humans can interrupt dominant framings and negotiate meaning systems (Atkins-Sayre, 2010; Cox, 2010; Pezzullo, 2001; Schutten, 2008), but place-based forest conservation pedagogical practices also can complicate and hinder a connection.

My goal here is to critically examine place-based features and practices in the NCESF. Analyzing a number of combined elements—US forestry ideology and rhetoric, the forests, trails, lessons taught to children, and how people move about the sites—allows an exploration of how these elements intersect, how they are enacted materially and physically, and the possible consequences of such intersections (Blair, 1999). I begin by examining human-nature dualism, place, and the intersection of environment and place. After detailing forestry ideology and the NCESF, I explore how place-based and temporal formations can rhetorically situate the forests and influence how visitors experience them. I suggest that a sense of place can be difficult to achieve in the forests, and I argue that even natural sites may be produced and practiced as non-places. I end with possibilities for reconceptualizing time spent in the forests in ways that can enhance a sense of place.

Human-nature Dualism and Place

This study is part of a conversation that investigates human-nature dualistic tendencies (Cox, 2010; Marafiotte & Plec, 2006; Milstein, 2009; Schutten, 2008) and how they are "placed" (Cantrill & Masluk, 1996; Cantrill & Senecah, 2001; Carbaugh, 1999; Spurlock, 2009; Zagacki & Gallagher, 2009). Because forest conservation pedagogy proffers place as a tool, I incorporate interdisciplinary place-based research (Cresswell, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Tuan, 1977) along with research that positions place as disciplinary (Foucault, 1977) and even non-placed (Augé, 1995).

Human-nature dualism research investigates how, as many Western, modernist, and post-capitalist ecocultural discourses and practices illustrate, over time, humans have prided themselves from nature and placed themselves in an elevated position, a concept that mediates how nature is understood and treated (Cronon, 1996a; Plumwood, 1997; Rogers, 1998; Williams, 1980). Many humans believe that they are separate from, superior to, and in control of nature, thus permitting them to exert power over the natural world and normalize misuse. Humans produce this nature-human separation through systems such as language (Marafiotte & Plec, 2006), science (Haraway, 1989), and governance (Bauman, 2007). The nature-culture binary is one useful theory that helps to explain how humans continue to perpetuate environmental degradation and destroy their own habitats despite overwhelming evidence that they are doing so.

Academic and lay discussions on *place* are dispersed and multifaceted; scholars, practitioners, and educators use *place* (and its counterpart *space*) in a variety of interdisciplinary, multiple, complex, and sometimes contradictory ways.² Here, I incorporate *place* as it is commonly evoked in interdisciplinary literature—physical, cultural, and even imaginary sites that are differentiated and emotionally meaningful to people (Casey, 2009; Cresswell, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005). *Space* is conceptualized largely as an undefined, abstract, and unbounded phenomenon, but not necessarily unmediated (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010; Cresswell, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991). The terms *space* and *place* often are conflated and used interchangeably, and, as Tuan (1977) contends, both are interdependent and require each other for definition. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) clarify this point: “Place as structured, bordered, or built locale depends in part for its character upon how it deploys space” (p. 23). Ultimately, Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) highlight the effects of place-based practices when they argue that, whether or not *space* and *place* are equivalent, oppositional, or contested, it is more important to understand how they are used “to emphasize a difference in how physical situatedness is experienced” (p. 23).

Lefebvre (1991) contends that *place* is produced, and educational forests can similarly be understood as such. Additionally, *place* and *space* typically are delineated from time (Casey, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Tuan, 1977), such as Massey’s assertion that humans prioritize time over space. To Massey, scholars need to vastly retheorize space in part by critically examining the ramifications of the subordination of space to time. Moreover, while this project examines how ideologies, systems, and parties symbolically and materially construct and communicate place to people, important to note is the extended psychological process by which humans conceptualize and connect with place.

Communication researchers have begun to explore the intersection between environment and place (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001; Carbaugh, 1999; Spurlock, 2009; Zagacki & Gallagher, 2009). For example, the notion of a “sense of self-in-place” underscores how physical context, local setting, and socio-cultural meaning systems frame understandings of nature (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001). Zagacki and Gallagher (2009) examine material rhetoric in a museum park and argue that human-created exhibits can enable rhetorical enactments that allow humans to attend to

human-nature interactions. Spurlock (2009) similarly contends that place-based and embodied practices can allow people to challenge traditional ways of understanding environmental issues. In effect, place-based examinations are integral in theorizing environmental issues, where place is not merely a physical context in which communication about environmental issues occur but rather mediates, determines, and produces those very issues (Carbaugh, 1996).

The role of discipline and control in place-based practices is central to this study, where places can be treated as domains of discipline (Foucault, 1977). Foucault traces a new form of punishment—"discipline"—through Europe and America, arguing that punitive systems moved from torturing the body to disciplining and containing the soul. This process called for new types of obscured and decentralized governance and surveillance. Through disciplinary practices of containing the human body in spaces such as prisons, schools, and factories, Foucault (1977) maintained that spatializing techniques advance discipline, which "proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (p. 141). Foucault outlined four spatializing techniques—enclosing; partitioning; creating useful, functional spaces that serve a purpose; and ranking individual bodies within a network of social relations. Disciplinary spatializing methods manage and contain not only the human body but entities in nature as well.

Another useful theory is the notion of "non-place." Augé (1995) articulates non-places as fleeting, disconnected, and historically void sites that are products of supermodernity, such as modern airports, superhighways, and hotel rooms. Non-places are designed precisely to dislocate bodies and efficiently move them to, through, and toward an end; they are intended to be in-between places, void of intimacy and that lead to human restlessness. For example, a superhighway is designed spatially through homogeneity and temporariness to move people to it and through it, displacing bodies from local cultures and place. Car occupants may certainly feel they are in a place in a car or on a road, but superhighways typically are not spaces where people prefer to spend their time; they are not the destination but are in between endpoints. Most relevant, Augé (1995) maintains that non-places are *designed* to be temporary, transient, and downplay a sense of place. Augé's theory is useful because it enables a critic to radically reconfigure and retheorize space, place, and time (Cresswell, 2004).

In sum, scholars investigate human-nature dualism as discursive, scientific, political, and, more increasingly, placed. I further this research by investigating place as a cultural device that can shape how humans anthropocentrically conceptualize and produce the natural world and place, even in ways that are non-placed. In what follows, I analyze how the human-nature breach functions spatially and how placed-based practices determine and mediate human-nature relations in one forest context.

Forest Conservation Ideology and Pedagogy

Forest conservation beliefs underpin place-based practices in this study. A conventional history largely positions federal and state forestry in the United States within a

social and governmental paradigm of wise use, conservation, and efficiency (Bergoffen, 1976; Culhane, 1981; Hays, 1959). The early US conservation movement significantly shaped public understandings of nature and molded contemporary cultural and political structures (Hays, 1959). Within an emerging conservation and wise use perspective, to help the nation govern and use forests efficiently, Congress enacted legislation to manage forests, and the US Forest Service was established (Bergoffen, 1976; Steen, 1976).

Typically called the first Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot (1947/1987) studied French, German, Indian, and Swiss forestry principles and became an influential player in US forestry. Pinchot's ideas represented a shift away from other ways of conceptualizing nature. Within the emerging paradigms of science and technology, the US Forest Service began to use forests according to accounting and economic principles by focusing on a forest's *profitable production* (Bergoffen, 1976; Hays, 1959; Pinchot, 1947/1987). Scientific and maximum-production based forest management principles have their origins in 18th-century Prussia and Saxony, where traditional rotational farming changed to scientific forestry. This shift called for the use of intensive forest measurement and management techniques to produce the largest possible volume of wood. Oravec (1984) shows how, in the context of the Hetch Hetchy debate, early US conservationists promoted a political philosophy of progressivism to appropriate a utilitarian concept of the "public interest," and forest conservation rhetoric continues to change with time. Forestry now focuses more on watershed protection and multiple-use; however, within a conventional mindset and run by the Department of Agriculture, trees continue to be conceptualized largely as crops—as much needed natural resources to be grown, governed, and harvested by and for people for present and future use (Bergoffen, 1976).

Forestry ideologies and practices can also be contextualized within cultural and political systems of power, with a number of implications for how the public relates to nature and treats forests (Hays, 1959; Hirt, 1994; Kosek, 2006). Hirt argues that the predominant goal of the forest service has been to produce timber. In this way, trees are understood as commodities that are tied to capital accumulation and nation building (Prudham, 2005; Robbins, 1994), where the forest service and conservation ideology can exert power over nature while mediating social relations (Kosek, 2006). Relatedly, forestry's notion of profitable production can further position "public lands as government-regulated spaces of production" (Kosek, 2006, p. 81). In effect, while the NCFESF conceptualizes forests as natural assets that should be managed wisely and resourcefully, important to note are the possible critical implications of this ideology.

Place-Based Forest Conservation Pedagogy

A plethora of public and private K-12 environmental pedagogical approaches abound, each with unique goals, practices, players, and contextual features and with desirable and undesirable outcomes (Gigliotti, 1990). Park preservationism, forest conservationism, ecojustice initiatives, radical ecopedagogy, and non-formal

educators proffer distinct approaches to teaching youth about nature. Perspectives can also differ within one program, where administrators, educators, parents, and students have multiple, and sometimes conflicting ideas of what nature is and how students should learn. Research suggests that environmental education is increasingly complex and diverse, with multiple players, objectives, practices, and tensions (Hart & Nolan, 1999; Taylor & Caldarelli, 2004).

In the NCESF, forest conservation pedagogy simultaneously promotes conservationism, forest management, and place-based education. Broadly speaking, place-based learning incorporates theories and practices that aim to connect students with their surroundings (Gruenewald, 2008). Attempting to escape the non-participatory, limiting, and homogenizing textbook and classroom focus of contemporary education, place-based educators strive to “place” students in local contexts to reconnect.

The NCESF comprises six public forests across the state. Managed by North Carolina’s Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the North Carolina Forest Service, the NCESF offers services and features, including self-guided trails, exhibits, and rest areas. Each forest contains unique “talking-tree trails”—paths with posts where visitors press a button and hear a recording over a loud speaker. The recordings talk about a tree’s physical characteristics, history, relationship to the ecosystem, and how nature and humans use it. Forest demonstration trails display forest management practices such as land measurement, prescribed burning, thinning, and clear cutting.

In addition to their maintenance duties, rangers teach on-site structured classes to thousands of local K-12 students who are bussed into the forests by camp counselors, youth group leaders, parents, and others. Typically 45 to 60 minutes in length, the sessions cover topics such as soil, water, animal and plant life, and forestry management tools. Specific classes include “Forest Life Activity,” “How Paper Comes from Trees,” “Tree Rings,” and “Predator and Prey,” to name a few. Rangers mostly use the American Forest Foundation’s place-based Project Learning Tree (PLT) curriculum, which encourages educators to reunite students with nature. The curriculum promotes hands-on lessons on forestry, ecology, and outdoor exploration and provides opportunities to see, feel, smell, and experience nature. PLT encourages walking in and experiencing forests; observing, collecting, and examining non-human entities in nature; and learning about interconnectedness.

People, parties, and curricula within the NCESF express a number of goals. The forest service manages the sites and educates the public and schoolchildren on forest ecology and management. In interviews, many forestry personnel identified a personal desire for students to appreciate and learn about nature, have outdoor experiences, and understand forest principles. While rangers are concerned with maintaining employment in a troubled economy, many of the foresters I interviewed care deeply about what they do and want students to appreciate, experience, and enjoy nature, as they do. PLT curriculum similarly aims to help students address environmental issues, think critically and creatively, and “become responsible, productive, and participatory members of society” (Project Learning Tree, 2004, § 2). Like the rangers, teachers

come to the sites to introduce children to nature settings, teach science curriculum, encourage an appreciation of environmental issues, and even have a respite from the classroom. Furthermore, educators' goals and fieldtrips such as these are always governed by temporal, economic, educational, and legal restraints, such as educators' and rangers' concerns for student safety, legal exposure, and liability. In sum, as a public education program that promotes conservation while using place-based practices, the NCESF has an important role in informing children about human-nature relationships.

In what follows, I analyze forest conservation ideologies, pedagogical tools, and place-based practices in the NCESF program. Drawing from research on environment and place as well as Foucault's notion of spatializing techniques and Augé's theory of non-place, I explore how forestry and educational practices are situated spatially within cultural systems of power. I investigate how people produce place in ways that influence how humans understand nature and a sense of place. In this case, forestry, teachers, and curricula rhetorically position and physically transport students through the forests in notably disciplinary and displaced ways that can create a sense of place-less meaning, where forests are positioned as consumable entities.

Placing Practices in an Educational Forest System

This study is part of a larger project both on and off six NCESF sites. As a participant-observer, I used field notes and photography to document forest layout, spatial features, trails, animal and plant life, and I researched contextual and historical issues. I participated with rangers in management practices, assisting in lesson preparation, set up, and administrative duties. From nine talking trials across six forest sites, I analyzed messages from sixty-one talking recording posts, totaling 303 recordings. I documented the trails' and the sites' spatial elements and how humans moved throughout them. Additionally, I observed rangers teach lessons to students in one site.

Combining interpretive and critical research to understand and critique, along with incorporating ethnographic techniques (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), I used grounded theory (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994), generative rhetorical criticism (Foss, 2009), and critical theorizing.³ From this research, educators, curriculum, and forestry spatially produce and rhetorically situate human-nature interactions and forests in three ways: a) as contained, disciplinary, and physical sites to go to and locate oneself and trees in; b) as sites through which visitors move; and c) through a temporocentric flow.

Going to and "Placing" Oneself and Trees in Nature

In the forests, talking recordings, lessons, and curricula, nature is conceptualized as a physical site where humans go to "place" themselves. First, educators and students frequently depicted nature as a physical destination and spoke of the forests as an end point in a journey. By way of sign postings, maps, spatial features, and trails, the visitor is told they have come into a distinct physical site to which they have traveled,

go deeper within, and then leave. When students arrived and were guided on trails, they frequently said things such as, “Where the heck are we going?” “Where is the talking-tree trail?” and “We’re going to the forest.” One talking-tree recording illustrates the notion of the visitor arriving in a distinct physical locale: “Welcome to Holmes Educational State Forest, a unique outdoor experience, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, with its rugged terrain, numerous rock outcroppings, and scenic vistas.” The forests are depicted as material sites that are “unique” from elsewhere.

Within the process of going to and into a physical site, there are areas where visitors do not go or are discouraged from going. In this way, as Jacobson (2005) illustrates, the materiality and perception of an area’s boundaries, borders, and territorial elements determine and channel movement through the sites. Most forests are hundreds of acres in size, yet most of the sites are inaccessible to visitors. People are discouraged from and typically do not walk unsupervised into areas without trails or into unmarked sections. Similarly, in lessons, educators instructed students to stay on the trails. Remote and unregulated areas are not widely visited during lessons and often are marked off limits. Maps, trails, and signs that say “follow this symbol,” “enter here,” “do not enter,” and “stay on the trail” discourage visitors from venturing off trail. Moreover, to get to less managed trails and areas, one must first typically walk through interpretive sections, framing how the forest is experienced.

In addition to going to and into a physical nature site, one goal of place-based education is to locate where one is, and the forests predominantly are depicted as places of one’s own. Jacobson (2005) argues that establishing one’s own sense of place in the United States largely stems from early European colonial groups’ conceptualizations of place. Attempting to escape an out-of-place feeling, groups such as the Puritans came to develop a moral association with the land they “found” by crossing an ocean to be reborn, notably by harnessing nature. A similar notion of finding one’s own place—and the potential for ownership and moral association—was evident when one teacher said to students upon exiting the bus, “This place is ours for the day,” and as rangers frequently told students, “This is your forest.” In one class I attended for environmental educators, the instructor noted that a main goal of place-based education is to identify where one *is* in the world and to know that area’s issues, locating humans within their own local geographic terrain.

The forests are arranged spatially to encourage people to locate where they are within a physical area. In particular, standing and outlook areas offer visitors a spot where they can view the forest, creating a distinct physical area to position oneself. In one area with a standing wooden podium, visitors place their feet on designated foot markers on the podium and look into the forest at two poles to conceptualize an acre of land (see Figure 1). The body is positioned within one’s own compartmentalized area, standing in a state of ocularcentric attention, with feet in place and eyes looking into the woods. The podium is designed to allow visitors to delineate an acre of land and observe forest management practices, further positioning the body within human-created measurements of managed nature. The spatial practice of separating the human from nature becomes apparent here; the body is placed within yet distinctly separate from the forest. As a variation of Zagacki and Gallagher’s (2009)



Figure 1. A standing podium in an outlook area.

inside/outside trope that is representative of some environmental discourses, visitors are “in” nature, yet also detached from it, again, illustrating the placement of the human in a binary position.

Placing oneself in nature in these ways illustrates the role of discipline and control in spatial production, and Foucault’s (1977) four disciplinary spatializing techniques are evident here. The forests are positioned as enclosed and bounded sites, where the body travels to and is contained within. Further individual partitioning within the enclosed locale is essential, where “disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed” (Foucault, 1977, p. 143). Division happens through a personalized moral association; “my forest” creates mental cells of sorts, where division occurs when nature becomes one’s own. Moreover, within disciplinary sites, spatialization creates useful, functional places that economically serve a purpose. As in schools, the forests are set up to best meet the needs of rangers, teachers, and forest management and not necessarily the students and the forests. Additionally, in ranking individual bodies within a network of social relations, students are subdivided further into groups and classes of students, into the student role and educator-student relationship, and within larger normative educational and cultural practices.

Trees similarly are situated and disciplined, pointing to the re-enculturating of nature by positioning trees in distinct cultural geographies. Forests are located within ecologies such as watersheds, swamps, mountains, and coastal plains. However, the talking-tree recordings predominately establish a tree’s position within bordered and contained physical human geographic territories, such as neighborhoods, hometowns, continents, countries, and states. The American beech recording illustrates this anthropocentric placing:

With the exception of a relative of mine in Mexico, I am the only species growing in the New World. I have a purple-leaved relative from Europe that people like to grow in their yards. I can be found in the eastern part of the North American continent from Nova Scotia to Florida.

Recordings tell of trees dwelling in other human locations and regions, such as the New World, the Orient, the south, and out west. In the recordings, blue grass background music, North Carolinian accents, and assertions that trees live in the Tar Heel State and the Old North State establish the forests within North Carolinian cultural geography. Trees are characterized further as having (human) relationships with trees in other sites. The shagbark hickory recording notes that it is:

[P]art of the hickory family . . . one of my cousins lives in Mexico and the other likes to live in the Orient. I am one of the most common hickories throughout the eastern United States . . . with 20 cousins that live in the United States. I, along with the other kinds of hickories, am truly an American tree.

Placing trees in these ways—as material entities that are in, from, and grown in anthropocentric geographic locations and that speak like humans—illustrates how forestry rhetorically positions trees in ways that enhance a culture-nature binary. Having trees behave like people and “talk” to visitors illustrates how the trees become more like humans, a move that slides visitors toward the human realm. Trees sometimes are discussed as a part of nature, but they are positioned primarily within human places, versus as entities of their own making or within unrestrained non-human spaces. The talking trees also align with forestry rhetoric, where visitors are led to believe that, similar to humans, trees understand their place—that they sacrifice themselves for the greater (human) good through their willingness to be cut down. This aligns with one of the rhetorical strategies used to materially instantiate conservation practice and the utilitarian ideology upon which it depends. Human-centered depictions send the message that trees are central to and located within human development, to state and national economies, and to the maintenance of cultural geographies. Rather than positioning humans as co-existing with trees or as part of a forest’s unbounded space, this anthropocentric move to “place” trees rhetorically situates nature in human-constructed sites where trees live and fraternize with each other and with other humans and sentient beings.

Structured Movement through Nature

How people move in and through areas determines how place is perceived (De Certeau, 1984; Dickinson, 1997; Jacobson, 2005; Lefebvre, 2004). Through positionality in and movement through the forests, “bodies build places” (Casey, 2009, p. 117), and material places then are enacted on and are consequential to people (Blair, 1999). Scholars have examined how humans move within designated nature settings. Within eco-tourism contexts (e.g., Milstein, 2008; Pezzullo, 2003), humans move through sites in ways that situate the body and influence meaning. In an examination of toxic tours through a Louisianan area dubbed “cancer alley,” Pezzullo compares moving by bus through the neighborhoods to US civil rights

movement boycotts, where busses symbolized activism. Similarly, de Certeau contends that movement in and through places can be contextualized in narrative forms, where, “Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice” (p. 115). As de Certeau argues, in cities, modes of mass transportation enable spatial trajectories—called *metaphorai* in modern Greece. Forests are depicted frequently as narrative structures that have spatial markers, through which humans move. The movement is quick, controlled, and disciplined, with precise outcomes.

To demonstrate how human mobility and movement spatialize the forests, a description of the fieldtrips is useful. The fieldtrips normally began in the morning when students arrived by bus or car in designated parking lots. When exiting the busses, students typically stayed near the bus in a gravel parking lot or a selected play area until adults instructed otherwise. Rangers and teachers then split students into smaller groups, lined them up, and walked them through the forest to a previously set up outdoor classroom clearing. Putting students in groups, lines, and rows was common during their visits, a traditional disciplinary pedagogical practice that positions the body in an orderly way, facilitates efficient movement, and is convenient for the instructor (Foucault, 1977). As in schools, students typically walked through the forest in lines, and many teachers stressed the importance of lining up and being orderly. In one ranger-led talking-tree trail tour, upon arriving at the first talking tree, the teacher said to the children: “Let’s make a first row. Make a second row. Make a third row. Eyes on [the ranger] and let’s listen.”

The notion of discipline is seen again in movement throughout the forests, where the strictly controlled ordering and transit of bodies continues the regimens of indoor, classroom discipline. Foucault (1977) noted how, as disciplinary organizations, elementary schools “function like a learning machine, but also a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding” (p. 147). In lessons, adults—predominately teachers—corrected behaviors to align with a prescribed and efficient movement. For example, on one ranger-led talking-trail tour, two children pressed their ears against the talking post while it was speaking; the teacher pulled them back, saying “step back and listen.” In another example, several children went off a trail to walk through a section of forest. The ranger yelled, in a frustrated tone, “Go *around!* Go *around!* the trees, not through them! Sheesh!”

Spatializing practices that encourage visitors to travel through the forests are contextualized within conservation rhetoric which appropriates forests as part of a larger serviceable entity. Forest entrances and exits, clearly marked trails, container walls, boardwalks, and directional placards direct visitors how to enter, exit, and travel. Physical markers guide visitors through the sites while locating them within contained places, creating, in some cases, the appearance of transport tunnels that facilitate a restricted and efficient flow. While de Certeau pointed to spatial practices in cities, forests can similarly be conceptualized in a narrative form, where a larger spatial flow is apparent. Nature is organized when visitors move from one site to the next, within discourses of conservationism and forest management and facilitated by the stories that rangers and teachers tell. Nature is transformed into a kind of

large-scale technology for mobility, framed as a series of spatial sites—conservation, recreation, walking, eating—that move visitors.

The talking trails particularly encourage movement through them. The trails encourage visitors to start at the beginning and go to the end, and to do so in a distinct way. One talking-tree trail sign that reads “End of Trail, Do Not Enter” reminds the visitor of the proper place to begin and end. Even self-paced students tended to move through the trails. In one ranger-led tour, before the tour began, the ranger asked the teacher, “How do you want to do this?” The teacher replied, “Just let them do it at their own pace.” The students traveled quickly to the first talking post, huddled around it, and pressed the button. A few students stayed to listen to the recording, but most students left and walked hurriedly down the trail (and some appeared to be racing) to the second talking post. Most students walked quickly, focusing on the posts before moving to the next. Several students started running, to which teachers and rangers typically instructed, “Don’t run.”

After traveling through the forest in lines, the rangers led students to clearings in the forests, called “amphitheaters” and “outdoor classrooms” (see Figure 2). The classrooms are set up in structured ways similar to traditional indoor classrooms, containing lined wooden seats and benches, typically with a podium at the front. Rangers stood at the podium and faced the benches, where students sat, facing the instructor.

Teachers then seated the students on the benches. In one lesson, a teacher who especially promoted discipline instructed students to sit so the class can begin. In a firm tone, the teacher commanded:

Walk all the way around. Stay in line, fill up the seats. Stay in line, fill up the seats. We have to sit close together. Sit. You need to go back and get in line with [name of child]. Sit down, fill up the seats. Scoot over.



Figure 2. Outdoor classroom.

The teacher physically moved several children around on the seats, using strict tones, stern facial expressions, and the teacher's hands to place the students in the proper formation. In one instance, a first-grade student turned her back to lean on her neighbor's side and put her feet on the bench. The teacher physically corrected the student, telling her to sit straight with her feet on the ground, facing forward.

As these examples demonstrate, educational and place-based practices allow an efficient and contained movement through the sites. This movement illustrates how foresters and educators rhetorically produce forests and guide experiences in ways that enhance human-nature dualism. Movement through the forests can decrease the tendency to pause and take in one's surroundings in alternative ways, anthropocentrically positioning bodies in a particular kind of movement and situating nature as a physical space through which people transit.

Temporocentric Flow

The notion of time is central to place-based research and spatializing practices. In varying ways, Massey (2005), Casey (2009), and Lefebvre (1991) trace what they identify as the subordination of space to time. Massey works from the premise that humans have prioritized time over space, and Casey traces "temporocentrism" through seventeenth century subordination of place to space and then space to time. By fixating on time, humans tend to overlook place in ways that can promote symptoms of placelessness (Casey, 2009; Massey, 2005). To Casey, "getting back into place" partly means escaping temporocentrism by "implacing" the body in a way that deemphasizes time, accentuates place, yet still incorporates movement.

A temporocentric flow is central to how the forests are experienced, where visitors are encouraged to move to and through the sites in a timely fashion. The lessons were strictly timed, typically starting and finishing within one hour. Lessons usually began with a presentation of information, where students sat, listened, and answered rangers' questions. The lecture typically was followed by an activity or demonstration, in which students participated, often lining up to partake. Rangers frequently used flip charts, poster boards, taxidermied animals, and other visual aids, and these materials broke up the lessons into smaller segments. Scheduled bathroom and lunch breaks further divided time. To facilitate timeliness and flow, on several occasions, teachers blew whistles to indicate the end of a lesson. In one day-long camp, the coordinators blew a loud blow horn that could be heard throughout the forest to indicate that it was time for the next class.

As previous examples demonstrate, walking through the forest—from the parking lot, to the classes, to lunch, and back to the bus—happened at an accelerated pace, with an emphasis on timely flow. A disciplined, regimented, and expected structure permeated almost every minute of time spent on the sites, with few unstructured activities or free play. Rangers and teachers often asked students to hold their questions to stay on schedule and guided students briskly to lessons to arrive on time. For example, while walking to a lesson, one camp counselor repeatedly told the children to hurry, instructing "Come on, come, come, come." When children stopped

to comment on something in the forest, the counselor interrupted by telling the students to get back in line and move faster: “Move over. Pick up your feet. Pick. Up. Your. Feet! Thank you. Pick ‘em up!”

Essentially, students experienced scheduled, disciplined, and temporocentric visits, as in traditional classrooms. Visitors are guided toward a temporal experience and encounter forests sequentially, with an efficient rhythm and order. Teachers’ focuses on discipline and time mirror structured educational practices and serve larger functions of keeping children in line with ordered ways of knowing, just as forestry management practices resourcefully order and discipline the bodies of trees. A fixation on time can create obstacles for seeing the intrinsic value and beauty of the forests, essentially reinforcing a tightly contained nature-culture divide.

Nature as Non-Place: Spatializing Human-Nature Dualism

As this study demonstrates, nature is situated as a physically enclosed site where humans go, quickly locate and compartmentalize themselves (and trees) within, and focus on movement and time. One result is the creation of a place, *per se*, but not necessarily a sense of place that connects humans with their surroundings in ways that will significantly alter environmental degradation. Spatializing practices begin to point instead to the possibility of a transient, displaced site that differs from a broader, and not necessarily physical, sense of place where one is with or of nature. In these ways, forests can be understood, exercised, and reconceptualized as a kind of non-place.

Non-places are transitory and acontextual sites that are produced to displace humans and aptly move them toward and through a locale; as in-between sites, they lack meaning and closeness and can lead to human anxiety (Augé, 1995). While place still exists, humans increasingly live in ways that are evanescent and dependent on frantic mobility. Augé (1995) elucidates non-places as notably constructed sites—transportation modes and hubs, mega shopping complexes, and other ultra-constructed locations that are void of organic social life. Forests often are conceptualized as pristine places, where one goes to escape the modern life and human-constructedness that Augé describes. Yet forests, too, can be transient.

Non-placing practices include compartmentalization, discipline, frantic movement, and temporocentrism. For example, humans emphasize time when they travel rapidly to and through spaces in an attempt to reinscribe meaning (Augé, 1995; Casey, 2009); sporadic movement is central to educational practices in the forests. In contrast to temporocentrism and quick movement, Tuan (1977) contends, “If we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (p. 6). In this regard, a paradox to human life is that, in contrast to plant life, humans must move in order to survive (Casey, 2009). Movement is necessary, but Tuan argues that a particular kind of paused movement enables place. Casey notes the implications of the reverse: “Rushing from place to place, we rarely linger long enough in one particular place to savor its unique qualities and its local history. We pay a heavy price for capitalizing on our basic animal mobility” (p. xii). Non-placing practices

therefore position forests as somewhere *to go*, to be *in*, and to move quickly *through*; in contrast, the process of being “implaced” involves being *of*, *from*, and *with* (Casey, 2009). Human movement and orientation occurs in the forests, but, as Casey argues: “Finding our way *in place* by means of orientation . . . is not tantamount to being implaced. However efficient and successful our voyaging may be and however many places we discover, we remain essentially homeless” (p. 121, emphasis in original).

Ultimately, similar to superhighways, I argue that forests, as they are produced through forest conservation pedagogy, are *not meant to* evoke a sense of place. Returning to my earlier discussion, forest conservation ideology conceptualizes nature—through forestry’s central protagonist of the sacrificial tree that is grown and gives itself to humans—as something people should appreciate and learn about, yet ultimately cut down and consume. Forestry rhetoric still largely envisions forests as a markedly managed commercial venture—a crop. In this way, commercialized *productions* of nature are the cultural context in which human-nature relations occur (Bulbeck, 2005), and positioning forests in these non-placed ways makes them more vulnerable to being understood as serviceable, efficient, utilitarian places for human use. Educators bring children to the forests to learn about trees, yet ultimately forests are produced for humans to manage and consume. This notion points to the contradictory concept of a “consumable nature,” or, as one talking-tree recording called it, “the ecology of a managed forest.”

Through social paradigms of wise use and conservation and forestry ideology, then, forests are not intended with a sense of place in mind. Despite the material appearances of the forests, according to profitable production management techniques, humans must produce and manage trees in ways that obscure a sense of place and highlight transience that displaces bodies. The forests are portrayed as bounded sites where students go to and through, rushing from the bus to clearings, sitting for timed periods in structured classes, and hearing messages that highlight cultural geographies and downplay holism. Adults tell students to appreciate and experience nature, but ultimately to stay on the trail and behave. Students learn that trees exist in abundance and for people and that human management speeds up natural processes to quicken consumption. It is hard to believe these kinds of practices are what reconnect youth with nature in ways that minimize the human-nature divide.

Conclusions

The nature-human binary that people produce is spatial, with implications for ecocultural relationships. Humans can be misplaced physically and temporally in natured non-places in ways that contribute to human-nature separation and hinder reconnection. Humans spend a great deal of time traveling quickly in solitude through non-places, as if living within a vast pause (Augé, 1995). The forests are practiced as in-between spaces that constitute the vast pause in between the human-nature divide. In reality, however, trees are not in an environment and

forests are not in human places. Forests and trees are the environment; they do not live in a place, they *are* that place (Maloof, 2005).

One caveat is important to note and points to an important area for future research. Students, visitors, and rangers are not only drones who are pushed in non-reflexive ways. Milstein (2009) elaborates this point: “as dominant ideologies assert and reproduce themselves, so, too, do alternative ideologies resist and challenge dominant ways of thinking and doing” (p. 26). Greg Dickinson (1997) furthers that, through differing kinds of movement, people are on diverse simultaneous trajectories. While resistance was not entirely common, visitors and rangers did interrupt dominant framings to form their own meaning systems and senses of place. In interviews, several rangers explained how they are constrained by rigid forestry, educational, and legal systems, yet many rangers have their own senses of place with the forests. Although I have detailed how these sites largely limit human-nature connections, as Massey (2005) argues, it is important to remember to “[imagine] space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity” (p. 10). Students and rangers are able to exit dominant and disciplinary practices in self-guided ways and place themselves.

Also important are the possibilities for reconceptualizing place-based practices in the forests in ways that can enhance a sense of place. Taking a different approach to place and time can alter how humans experience the forests, a move that can interrupt the human-nature divide. For example, instead of structured, patterned, disciplinary, and timed lessons that teach students to go to nature but not necessarily be with it, some programs implement less constructed educational methods. In this way, perhaps environmental education in general should consider avoiding the appropriation of regimented classroom practices so as to let students have less disciplined experiences. Reconceptualizing place and time could involve: taking longer walks in less-structured areas with more contemplative pauses; decreasing time spent in outdoor classroom clearings, structured lessons, and guided tours; sitting less; and collapsing classes into larger, unbounded blocks. Emplacing practices also include behavioral, cognitive, and emotional modifications such as slowing down, clearing the mind, letting go of time, and incorporating emotion. In contrast to transient and disciplinary movement, Carbaugh (1999) illustrates how “dwelling-in-place” and “listening” techniques are complex ways of being that connect participants intimately with a physical locale. Last, perhaps the forest service would do better to encourage an experience where visitors imagine themselves as trees rather than having the trees behave like humans, a move that can lead to a greater appreciation of the trees as living things worthy of human respect.

Place-based practices profoundly influence human-nature relationships. The forests I examined are situated in non-placed ways that can push visitors to the human side of the divide. The desire to return children to nature and “place” them there can be symptomatic of displacement and not necessarily a return to place. In this regard, place-based forest conservation pedagogy’s stance to return children to nature can illustrate what Cronon (1996b) calls “getting back to the wrong nature.” This forest education program functions spatially in ways that deemphasize a sense of

place and do not resolve environmental problems. Instead of bridging the human-nature divide, environmental educators can produce a unique kind of non-place, where the human instrument of spatial production enables people to accomplish the very task of separating humans from the natural world.

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Notes

- [1] There are multiple ways of being with/of nature that promote a sense of place and deemphasize human centeredness. Throughout this paper, by being "with nature," "of nature," or having a "sense of place," I mean engaging in understandings and practices that minimize anthropocentric conceptualizations of the natural world, increase a sense of co-presence, and help bridge the human-nature divide.
- [2] For a helpful discussion of space and place terminology within the social sciences, see Agnew (1993). Also important to note is that foresters, educators, and curricula use *space* and *place* in a variety of colloquial ways.
- [3] Also called the "constant comparative method," analyses and theory are generated by going back and forth between, or "comparing" data, research questions, and analysis. Generative criticism uses rhetorical analysis to examine research (Foss, 2009). The method incorporates rhetorical tools, such as cluster method, and frequency and intensity of words, images, tones, language, and themes. Procedurally, when combining these methods to collect and analyze research, I first used open, analytical, and focused coding to develop and analyze codes and categories that emerged from the research (Strauss, 1987). In this step, I developed and generated broad schemas and themes and paid attention to how members saw and experienced the events (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Next, I went back and forth between the research and the coding to ascertain whether the schemas reflected what I observed. After generating, clustering, and confirming the schemas, I chose core themes that appeared to be the most frequent, connected, striking, and salient.

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