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Re-Negotiating Cultural Discourses

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This article documents the efforts of three women who undertook environmental action in their respective schools in the late 1990s. Two young women pushed through a number of barriers, including peer and family pressure, to create a recycling program. A principal defended her teachers to give students space for environmental learning within school grounds. One of the barriers they encountered was a persistent cultural discourse, through which those who embodied an ethics of care were positioned pejoratively as 'greenies'. In response, the women positioned themselves as 'not greenies', in order to legitimise their environmental work. Ten years later, Neus Evans and I revisited this phenomenon (see Whitehouse & Evans, 2010). Dedicated educators, who saw their task as educating young people for their future, were again careful to constitute themselves as 'not greenies', while they innovated sensitive and sensible action in far northern schools. I remain interested in how cultural discourses both enable and act as barriers to sustainability practice, and in how environmental educators find themselves negotiating certain discourses in order to act.

Reference

Whitehouse, H., & Evans, N. (2010). 'I am not a greenie, but': Navigating a cultural discourse. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, *26*, 19–31.

Biography

Associate Professor Hilary Whitehouse is an environmental educator and science educator with a strong commitment to research. She has had a long career in education, working in Australia and overseas. She lives in Cairns because she loves rainforests and reefs. Dr Whitehouse's hobby is tropical gardening, and she works with schools to facilitate learning discussions on sustainability and climate change, as well as volunteering her expertise on frogscaping. Email: hilary.whitehouse@jcu.edu.au

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