

**Living within Precarious Times:  
Posthumanist Possibilities for Early Childhood Environmental Education**

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Within the fields of childhood studies and environmental education, a growing body of research drawing upon more-than-human or posthumanist theories has inspired early childhood educators to rethink and unlearn anthropocentric ways of engaging with nature and the environment (Malone, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Rautio, 2013; Taylor, 2011; Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Taylor et al. 2012). While the current epoch of the Anthropocene has fuelled discussions to foster sustainability education in precarious times, posthumanist scholars argue it is limited in its overall capacity to grapple with the complexity of human and non-human relations (e.g. see Malone, 2015). Centring human beings as autonomous individuals, this epoch problematically assumes that: (a) we have entered a time period where all subjects have been granted “equal access to western humanity” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 9), (b) human beings alone have actively caused the earth’s ‘devastation,’ and (c) children, as environmental saviours, can somehow recover the planet from such precarity (Malone, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Taylor et al., 2012; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). As a response to these anthropocentric, child-centred views of environmental learning, posthumanist perspectives challenge the notion that humans beings can dominate, ‘use’ and, subsequently, save nature/the environment which is, in turn, positioned as a passive backdrop devoid of any agency (Änggård, 2016; Malone, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017). These perspectives further highlight how the social world we live in is comprised of an assemblage of human and non-human actors (e.g. things, animals, plants, affects, discourses, institutions) that are constituted through unfolding relations across bodies (writ large) within environments that are always vibrant and ever-changing (Bennett, 2010; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Lenz-Taguchi, 2011). As such, posthumanist theories emphasize “our ecological interdependence [in order to] approach human and geo-physical worlds as a hybrid network of relations” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 81).

However, as many early childhood scholars have argued, exploring our relationships with more-than-human worlds is not exactly a new concept (e.g. Kuby & Rowsell, 2017; Malone, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017). Deep ecologists as well as indigenous philosophers have long examined humankind and nature as relational fields of possibility, rather than distinct entities (Absolon, 2010). That said, the more recent attention to posthumanist perspectives has helped bring these alternative ways of relating to the ‘natural world’ into sharper relief by urging us to consider the “ethical, political, and pedagogical implications of addressing the colonial histories and material geographies” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015, p. 2) that shape children’s more-than-human encounters.

**Call for Papers to a Special Issue of the *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education***

As hopeful global citizens, we would like to explore the generative ways in which young children understand their dynamic relationships with nature/natural environments and how children affectively embody and *learn with* more-than-human others, particularly when those explorations trouble and unsettle anthropocentric or ‘normative’ ways of being, knowing, and doing. We envision serving as co-editors of a special issue contributing to ethical, political, and critical conversations that open up the possibility that these times are precarious due, not only to current environmental vulnerabilities, but also the ways that such vulnerabilities are inextricably entangled within modernist discourses privileging ‘whiteness,’ humanism, speciesism, patriarchy, and colonialism (among other things), thereby

calling much needed attention to the ‘unevenness’ of our global geohistories (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017).

### Proposed Parameters

In addition to the open call for manuscripts for the special issue, we would also like to invite proposals of abstracts for our review prior to full manuscript submissions. All manuscripts will be subject to double-blind peer review processes. We welcome both academic articles as well as non-traditional pieces that play/write with posthumanist theories. In line with IJECEE’s mission, we are interested in pieces that emphasize implications or recommendations for advocacy, practice, research, and/or policy within early childhood (birth-8 years) environmental education.

Possible areas of focus within posthumanisms and early childhood environmental education include but are not limited to:

- affect theories (e.g. inspired by Deleuze; Deleuze & Guattari; Brennan)
- climate change within the epoch of the Anthropocene
- common world pedagogies
- critical disability studies
- ecological identities
- environmental ethics
- feminist new materialisms
- gender, race, indigenous, post-colonial, and/or decolonizing perspectives
- immigration and/or transnational subjectivities
- material technologies
- multispecies relations
- pedagogies of fear (e.g. of nature, of self)
- power abuse and its effect on children
- representations of animals and/or humans in media

In addition to complying with the requirements mentioned in *Author’s Information*, the following timeline and parameters will apply to the special issue:

<u>Tentative Due Dates</u>	<u>Tasks</u>
August 1, 2018	Proposed title, abstract (500 words), and author bios (100 words each) due. Please send as pdf to: <a href="mailto:bdernikos@fau.edu">bdernikos@fau.edu</a> and <a href="mailto:ybhagwan@fau.edu">ybhagwan@fau.edu</a>  The editors will review the abstracts and invite selected authors to submit a full manuscript by the proposed deadline.
September 1, 2018	Decision notification from editors.
January 15, 2019	Full manuscripts due to editors (approximately 6,500 words, excluding references). Please send as pdf to <a href="mailto:bdernikos@fau.edu">bdernikos@fau.edu</a> and <a href="mailto:ybhagwan@fau.edu">ybhagwan@fau.edu</a>
April 1, 2019	Feedback to authors from editors and peer reviewers.

July 1, 2019

Revisions due to editors.

October, 2019

Publication of special issue.

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