Australian Journal of Environmental Education

Call for Papers

Special Issue

Post-Qualitative Inquiry: Theory and Practice in Environmental Education

A call for papers for a special issue of the Australian Journal of Environmental Education

Guest Editors: Professor Paul Hart (University of Regina) and Dr Peta White (Deakin University)

Within a growing body of research, for more than a decade, post-qualitative scholars have continued to expand, refine and problematize the theory base within educational research. As the theory base becomes richer philosophically, the range of perspectives across research ethics, new empiricisms, new materialisms and posthumanisms directly implicates environmental education (EE) research theory and praxis (Stickney & Skilbeck, 2020). Calls for action within this work signal significant challenges for EE research. This special issue is intended to give voice to a range of post-qualitative studies that foreshadow the evolution of theory and practice in EE research.

An increasing array of social and educational research journals publish post-qualitative inquiries whose research processes are no longer interpretive/representational protocols for what counts as "inquiry." As the frame changes, so must the referents. Theory, not methodology, serves as grounding for scholars such as St. Pierre (2015, 2019), Lather (2012, 2019), Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2013), Lenz Taguchi and St. Pierre (2017), MacLure (2015), Taylor and Hughes (2018), Nordstrom (2018), and Mazzei (2020, 2021). These scholars work directly from theories (e.g, Barad, 2007, 2014; Braidotti, 2019a, 2019b; Braidotti & Fuller, 2019; Clough, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010) and often, directly, with philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari whose "thinking with theory" seems to have inspired Jackson and Mazzei (2017) as a new analytic for post-qualitative inquiry.

Inspired by a natural concern for the political ecology of things in the Anthropocene, EE research is increasingly opening, and perhaps even repositioning, to address connections among the ecologies of posthuman participants embedded within material flows of the planet. A recent special issue of *Environmental Education Research* illustrates a series of engagements with the meeting of politics, ethics and new materialisms with EE (e.g., Clarke & Mcphie, 2020). Increasingly, it seems, EE inquiries are strategically repositioning beyond the limits of qualitative research "methodologies." These post-qualitative explorations are shaped by "thinking with theory," and not by methodologies, in working concepts and problems together.

These conceptual shifts are informed by a new ethics (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; de la Bellacasa, 2017; Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2009; Semetsky, 2012; Stables, 2020) that connects humanist conditions within forms of realist theory, but particularly with the ethics of posthumanisms, new materialisms and new empiricisms. Recent special issues of educational research journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry* and the *International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education* have created openings for EE research journals to support the theoretical depth of these concerns related to Anthropocene ethics. Several new research handbooks such as *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics* support posthumanist and feminist (ecological) ethics (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018) and, increasingly, speculative ethics (Reinertsen, 2019).

Within openings created by a milieu of "research after humanism" educational researchers such as Lather (2019), St. Pierre (2019) and many other feminist scholars have expanded the theory bases and inspired newer journals such as *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology* which has opened spaces for new theory/concept-driven inquiry. These transgressive spaces appear as groundings for changes in theory/praxis. This special issue of the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* is intended to engage "new theory-into-practice." For example, in learning how to give up "human" as separate (and superior) for "nonhuman" and to focus on learning many ways of engaging post-qualitative inquiry, EE researchers have begun to directly engage philosophical frameworks and to generate concepts to compliment and extend existing concepts such as rhizome, haecceity, and assemblage that support re-orientation toward critical and generative work within environmental educational settings. These developments provide critical spaces as background for exchanges of ideas and experiences.

A few points from our perspectives on the emergence and consolidation of post-qualitative inquiry may be useful in thinking about specific areas of focus:

- EE research has been largely grounded within humanist onto-epistemologies and theories (e.g., interpretive representation) as regulating what can count as knowledge
- "Post-qualitative" is emerging as generative criticism, a politics refusing humanist methodologies and re-evaluating qualitative inquiry concepts
- Post-qualitative enables engagement with new philosophical concepts (enabling ontological difference) and theories of affect, new materialisms and posthumanisms
- Post-qualitative re-evaluates (often eschews) theory-into-practices of "data" collection/interpretative where parameters are established in advance
- Post-qualitative suggests de-centering researcher privilege, prescribed data collection methods and interpretation in search of unified theories/conclusions
- Post-qualitative implicates conceptualising activities within framings as new empiricist, new materialist, posthuman engagements within the real lived experiences in school classrooms, field experiences or entanglements, viewed through many, varied conceptual diffractive lenses (e.g., assemblage thinking, rhizomatics, haecceities, intra-actions, bodies without organs, agential realism, and more) to think with and posit/speculate
- Post-qualitative often entails "performative" engagements within all kinds of settings and movements (i.e., walking/talking), different ways of viewing, thinking and living within flattened, ontological imaginings
- Gathering "live/lived" contributions across lived experiences using various media forms/forums
- Speculative realist and generative intra-actions.

This special issue of the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* is intended to engage readers with a rich array of perspectives and experiences from those active researchers who are themselves learning as they work to understand, question and to engage in post-qualitative theory into praxis. We are looking for authors working within practice-based experiences that manifest as post-qualitative forms of realist inquiry. While the theory-praxis balance may vary, each paper should contribute its distinct views on post-qualitative theory as well as issues with its process. The collection is intended to reflect each author's commitment to experimentation and speculative thought about the challenges of constructing and engaging in projects. We are interested in explorations of applications of theory in many ways including creation, generation and presentation of knowing, affective and sensory experiences; working to explore relations of different experiential and material

connections within and across species; ecological "data" within and without multispecies assemblages as well as potentialities that disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions. For example, if a particular focus concerns dominance and colonisation, the entry may raise concerns of the biopolitics of situations from classroom and fieldwork experiences. These may also raise issues of places/ecosystems and/or ethical consequences of post-qualitative in relation to Anthropocentrism, or to ecological sustainability.

Our hope for this issue is for contributions that critically self-challenge traditional notions of "data" as interpretive and critically engage in performative affective, material, artistic, feminist, posthumanisms experiences where participants (including young people) can experience notions of acquiring some form(s) of agency, questioning attitudes, political sense of events, or experiences and empathy for others. The challenge is to engage theory within actual experiences and articulate learnings as meanings and as questions or issues. The challenge is also to articulate concerns or meanings of certain experiences as performances. Findings may communicate meanings of experiences or embodiments that resist conclusions as in experiential and/or collaborative writings of shared participant experiences, intra-actions, multi-species interchanges or with things.

Beyond the references for authors cited within this Call for Papers, we also provide suggested readings (at no extra cost!) in order to create the mood for your potential participation, perhaps engendering aspects of haecceities within your experiences.

Special Issues dates

- Open call - April 2021
- Proposals due – June 2021
- Manuscripts due – January 2022
- Manuscripts reviewed and finalised by July 2022

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