

# Do Nurses Understand Embodiment? Exploring a Critical Connection for Improving Human and Environmental Health in the Anthropocene

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# Land Acknowledgement

The land on which I am a settler at home where I live and work (“Seattle”) is the ancestral territory of the Dkh’Dwu’Absh (Duwamish) people. The Duwamish remain unjustly unrecognized by the U.S. federal government, as do many other tribes in Washington state and throughout the U.S.

I also wish to express my deep gratitude to the Mvskoke (Muscogee) peoples, on whose land we are holding our conference in “Atlanta.”

It is my intention to do this work in solidarity with all First Nations peoples among us, in our states, and beyond, alongside them and at their leadership.



To support the Duwamish go to [www.realrentduwamish.org/](http://www.realrentduwamish.org/)

# Presenter Bio

- Assistant Professor at Seattle University, College of Nursing
- Teaching experience: 16 years experience with undergraduate and graduate nursing and allied health students
- Specialty areas: population health, global health and development
- Education: Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Public Health (focus in Global Health Policy), PhD in Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (focus in Comparative and International Development Education)
- Social Location: White Latina, cis/hetero, disabled ambulatory wheelchair user
- Scholarship focus: health equity



Photo credit: Maria Victoria Cachipiendo



# Learning Outcomes

1. Define embodiment

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2. Explain why understanding and acting upon embodiment is important to public health nursing practice

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3. List one example of public health nursing intervention or educational approach which incorporates embodiment

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The background features a light gray base with large, organic, overlapping shapes in muted olive green and dusty rose. In the top left, there are stylized, layered patterns of thin, needle-like shapes in light and dark gray, resembling foliage or a pine branch. A thin, white, wavy line curves across the bottom right, passing over the rose and gray shapes.

# The Inspiration



# Photovoice Research about *sumak kawsay/buen vivir* in Ecuador



○ Epistemology of the South

○ Definitional and translational issues

- “Life of fullness” (Villalba, 2013, pp. 1429-1431)
- “Based on the communion of humans and nature and on the spatial-temporal-harmonious totality of existence (Walsh, 2010, p. 18)

○ Common characteristics (Giovannini, 2015):

- Concepts of solidarity and reciprocity
- Lauds indigenous identity and culture
- Emphasizes well-being of humans, non-human beings, and environment

# Research Question #1: What is sumak kawsay and how is it integral to community development?

2 of 2



“Isabel” – Tupigachi – Aug 2017

**Clasificación de Nuestro Producto – Es para sacar una buena semilla para la siembra del próximo año y para nuestro alimento**

[Classification of Our Product – It is to remove the good seed for planting next year and for our food]



“Isabel” – Tupigachi – Aug 2017

**Seguir Conservando Nuestros Vertientes – Dar las conservaciones del agua [y] sembrar árboles nativos. También los antepasados utilizaban la malta [para coger agua].**

[Continuing Conservation of Our Watersheds – To give water conservations and to plant native trees. Also our ancestors used the *malta* [vessel pictured] [to collect water].]



# The Problem

Increasing environmental degradation accompanies ongoing ill and worsening human health

Both disproportionately affect most marginalized

PHNs uniquely situated in communities to understand and improve upon human—environment interactions


Foundational concept of *embodiment* could be useful

Organizing frameworks emerging to address ‘climate justice’ or ‘Planetary Health,’ but don’t incorporate embodiment



Image Description: A stand of tall trees, viewed from below, looking up at the leafy canopy / Image Source: Casey Horner, via Unsplash free use



The background features a light gray base with large, organic, overlapping shapes in muted olive green and dusty rose. A stylized fern frond is visible in the upper left corner. A thin white line curves across the bottom right.

# Defining Terms & Outlining Examples

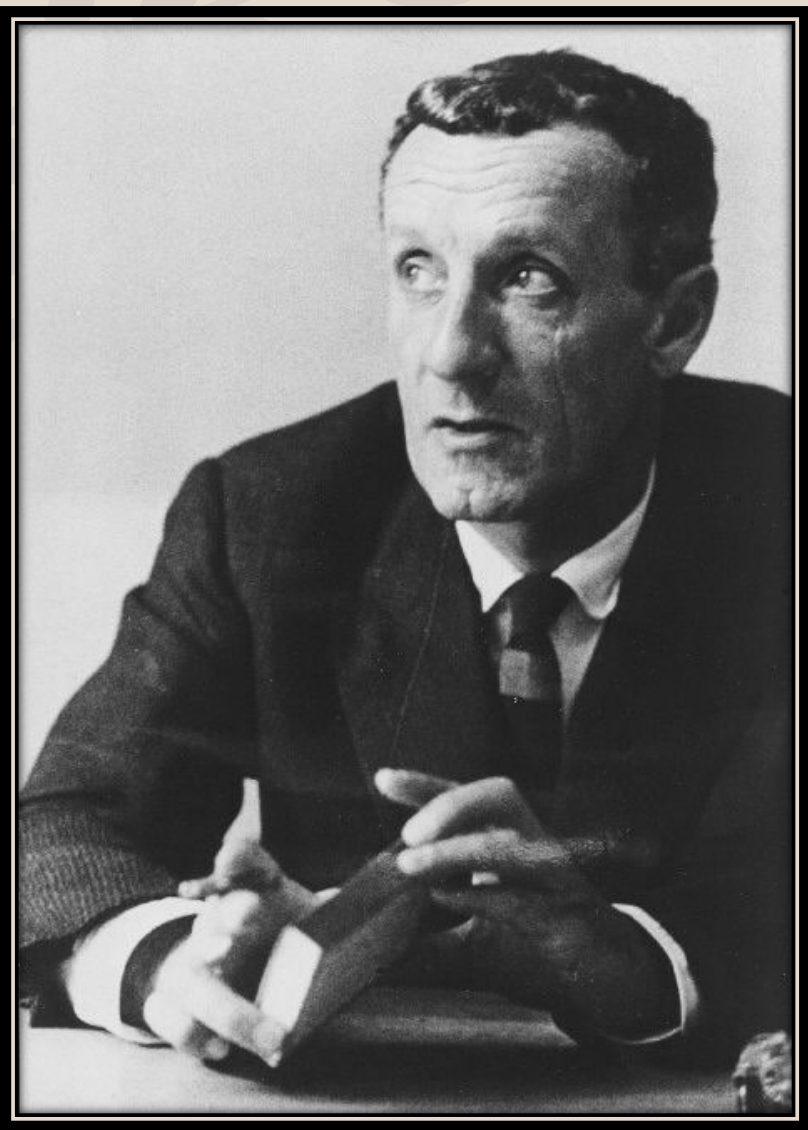


Photo Description: A middle-aged white man, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in a suit and tie is seated looking off to his right

Photo Source: Wikipedia

# Phenomenology & Embodiment

Phenomenology is the study of subjective lived experience

Embodiment is “the way humans, through bodies, understand their world” (p. 3)

Intersensory and sensory—motor gestalt

“...bodies, minds, and the world are inseparable and mutually dependent” (p. 5)

Source: Harrison, Kinsella, & DeLuca. (2018)

# Intersubjectivity and Intercorporeality

## Intersubjectivity

- Human subjectivity (our limited understanding of the world based on our worldview) is always co-subjectivity
- Interchange of (conscious and unconscious) thoughts and feelings
- We are embedded into the world along with others in a shared context

## Intercorporeality

- The embodied subject's interaction with other embodied subjects
- Requires attunement to the other through lived body experiences
- Many examples in healthcare
- Merleau-Ponty extended this to “interanimality,” with implications for our topic today

Sources: Cooper-White. (2014); Durt, C., Fuchs, T., & Tewes, C. (2017).



# Basic Embodiment Examples



Image Description: Two people dancing, executing a turn, in front of a painted wall

Image Source: Jusdevoyage via Unsplash free use

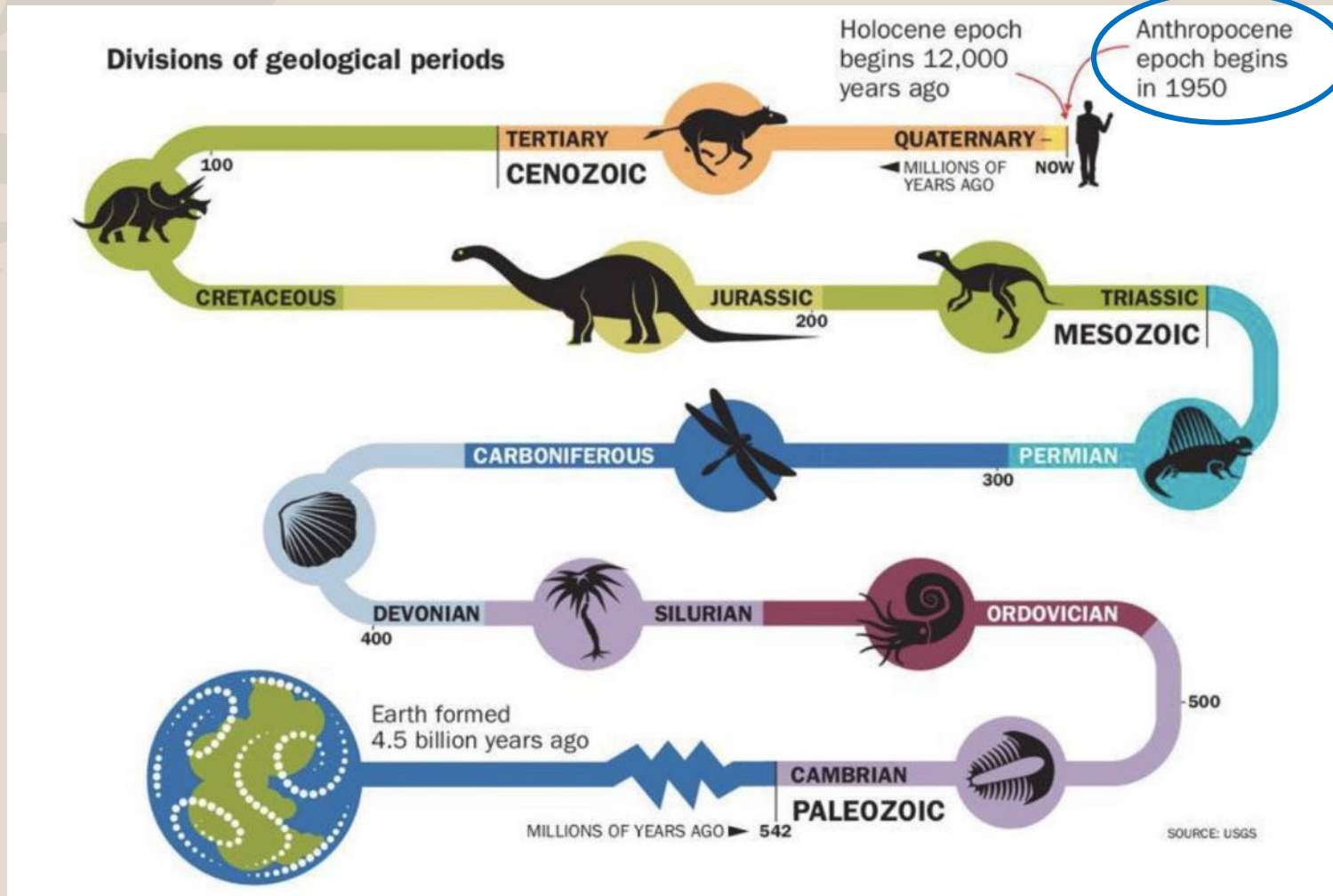


Image Description: A soccer game in action with two women's teams, one wearing white jerseys and the other wearing red jerseys

Image Source: Jeffrey F. Lin via Unsplash free use

Fuchs. (2017)

# What is the Anthropocene?



- o Proposed new epoch in geological time scale
- o Impact of human activities
- o Recent rupturing of Earth Systems functioning

Image Description: A curving timeline with different colors and animal images representing the various geological periods / Image Source: US Geological Service

Source: Hamilton. 2019.

The background features a light gray base with large, overlapping organic shapes in muted olive green and dusty rose. In the top left, there are stylized, layered illustrations of foliage or branches in shades of gray and rose. A thin, white, wavy line curves across the bottom right portion of the image.

# Literature on Embodiment in Nursing



# Search Strategy

Database	Search Terms	Initial Results	Relevant Results	Repeats	Articles Gathered
PubMed	philosophy, nursing AND embodiment	29	17	--	17
	education, nursing AND embodiment	41	19	2	17
	nursing AND embodiment	80	40	15	25
CINAHL	philosophy of nursing AND embodiment	11	8	4	4
	nursing education AND embodiment	21	10	5	5
	nursing AND embodiment	63	32	16	16
					<b>84</b>

Notes: all searches limited to previous 10 years and English language; conference presentations were excluded; articles were excluded if the use of the words 'embody' or 'embodiment' was simply a verb or noun choice and not indicative of the concepts under investigation

# Frequency List of Source Journals (n = 47)

Rank	Journal	Number of Articles
1	Journal of Advanced Nursing	7
1	Nurse Education Today	7
3	Nursing Philosophy	6
4	Holistic Nursing Practice	4
4	Journal of Holistic Nursing	4
4	Nursing Inquiry	4
7	Journal of Nursing Scholarship	3

Total articles from 16 sources listed here = 53 ( / 84 = 63%)

Rank	Journal	Number of Articles
8	International Journal for Human Caring	2
8	International Journal of Mental Health Nursing	2
8	Journal of Clinical Nursing	2
8	Midwifery	2
8	Nurse Education Practice	2
8	Qualitative Health Research	2
8	Sexual and Reproductive Health	2
8	Social Science & Medicine	2
8	Women and Birth	2

# Initial Thematic Groupings (1 of 3)

Theme	Sub-Theme(s)	Frequency
Philosophy	---	15
Education* (total: 14)	[*will outline detailed themes in later slide]	14
Research/Inquiry (total: 28)	Phenomenology	13
	General	6
	Ethnography/Autoethnography	5
	Narrative Inquiry	3
	Grounded Theory	1
Reproductive Health (total: 15)	General	12
	Breastfeeding	3
Diversity/Marginalized Communities	---	10



# Initial Thematic Groupings (2 of 3)

Theme	Sub-Theme(s)	Frequency
Education, Art*	[*will outline detailed themes in later slide]	8
Disability/Chronic Illness	---	8
Ethics (total: 8)	General	6
	Humanism	2
Technology	---	6
Mental Health	---	5
Leadership or Communication	---	4

# Initial Thematic Groupings (3 of 3)

Theme	Sub-Theme(s)	Frequency
Complementary Care (Total: 4)	Massage	1
	Dance	1
	Creativity/Humor	1
	Yoga	1
Holistic Care	---	3
Intercultural	---	3
Trauma	---	3
Spirituality	---	3
Indigenous	---	3
Elderly	---	3
Embodiment Itself (review or conceptual)	---	3

Importantly:  
The concept of **place/environment** only appeared **once** in all 84 articles related to embodiment in nursing in the last 10 years in this search

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# Nursing's Approach to the Body and the Environment



# A Typical Nursing Curricular Approach

## The Body

- Fragmentation into systems
- Body as site of dysfunction
- Pathologizing and othering bodies which do not conform, get better (ableism)
- Focus on body (e.g., biology, genetics, individual behavior) to exclusion of context, determinants

## The Environment

- Covered superficially and hastily as related to specific diseases (e.g., asthma)
- Covered as a determinant within community/population health
- Rarely discussed in actionable terms
- Climate and health increasing in content, not yet sufficient

# What does the *ANA Scope and Standards of Practice* say about environmental health and embodiment?

## ○ Standard 17. Environmental Health:

- “The registered nurse practices in an environmentally safe and healthy manner” (p. 6)

## ○ Art and Science of Nursing:

- “Nursing promotes the health of communities by using advocacy for social and environmental justice, community engagement, and access to high-quality and equitable health care to maximize population health outcomes and minimize health disparities” (p. 7)

## ○ Human Caring:

- “Related to intersubjective human responses to health-illness-healing conditions; a knowledge of health-illness, environmental-personal relations, and the nurse caring process...” (p. 11)



Image Description: A small child wearing pink gloves and hat, shown behind a tree, with their arms encircling the tree  
Image Source: MS Stock Images

# What do the *AACN's BSN Essentials* say about environmental health and embodiment?

- Uses “environment[al]” to refer to context
- Includes environment as determinant of health and component of diversity, inclusion, and [in]equities
- Within specific competencies:
  - 2.2 Communicate effectively with individuals
  - 3.6 Advance preparedness to protect population health during disasters and public health emergencies



Image Description: A group of graduates in caps and gowns, shown from behind with trees in the background

Image Source: MS Stock Images

# What does the *ANHE* say about embodiment?

- ANHE is nursing's leader in environmental health

- Extensive guidance and publications in education, research, practice, policy, climate and health, and food and agriculture

- No embodiment mentions





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# Implications of these Gaps & Possible Future Approaches

# More Details on “Nursing Education” and “Embodiment”

Theme	Sub-Theme(s)	Frequency
Education (total: 14)	General	7
	Simulation	4
	Mentoring	1
	Abroad	1
	Interprofessional	1
Education, Art (total: 8)	General	2
	Dance	2
	Drama	3
	Computer Games	1

# Educational Recommendations

- Introduce and define embodiment for undergraduate nurses at start of program
- Reinforce embodiment through educational practices (e.g., simulation, arts-based methods, community immersions); explicitly discuss body as knowledge source
- Enhance environmental health content and include explicit linkages between human health, environmental health, and health of non-human animals
- Enhance education about climate change and health; provide experiences in which students can engage with communities who are already taking actions
- Enhance nursing philosophy education for graduate nurses
- Encourage incorporation of bodily knowledge, embodiment, and intersubjectivity/intercorporeality into Planetary Health, One Health, and similar initiatives



Image Description: A child's hands encircling a small Earth globe

Image Source: MS Stock Images

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Thank you.  
Questions and feedback  
welcome!

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