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Too Many Monkeys Jumping in Their Heads: Animal Lessons within Young Children's Media

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Abstract

Young children's media regularly features animals as its central characters. Potentially reflecting children's well-documented affinity for/with animals, this media—books, toys, songs, clothing, electronic media, and so on—carries with it many explicit and implicit messages about animals and human-animal relationships. This article focuses on the particularly foundational age of children under four and their parents/caregivers as children's first early childhood environmental educators. Drawing on ecofeminism, ecocriticism, and early childhood environmental education, we explore messages about animals in children's media, critically considering notions of mis- and displacement, anthropomorphism, and subjectivity. Our inquiry challenges parents and environmental educators to reconsider the lessons young children learn about animals from their surrounding media and explore possible alternatives that question and seek to transform social and ecological inequalities.

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