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Math Is in the Title (Un)Learning the Subject in Qualitative and Post Qualitative Inquiry

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Math Is in the Title

(Un)Learning the Subject in Qualitative and Post Qualitative Inquiry

Kayla D. Myers, Susan O. Cannon, and Sarah Bridges-Rhoads

Abstract An ongoing experiment in (un)learning the humanist subject in qualitative and post qualitative inquiry, this writing-reading-thinking explores the tensions that two doctoral students and an assistant professor grapple with through an undirected/directed reading course and beyond. The paper takes up and troubles conventional academic writing practices that aim to present knowledge as finished and neatly packaged for consumption, pushing against the stable academic subject. We intend for the reader to experiment and play in the manuscript and to think with multiple fragments together. We hold a persistent wondering about how to teach and learn to think differently—how to “untrain” researchers as St. Pierre (2016b) says.

Keywords: *post qualitative research, subjectivity, writing, poststructural, posthuman*

This paper continues an ongoing experiment in (un)learning the humanist subject, an experiment that involves continuously learning to follow Foucault’s (1983) advice to “refuse what we are” (p. 785), while also learning to slot ourselves neatly into disciplines (like math), fields (like education), subject positions (like qualitative researcher), and hierarchies (like student/professor). We presented a version of this paper at the 2017 International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, mostly because we needed a deadline to get us writing. Kayla and Susan needed publications, and Sarah needed to show her university that she was writing with doctoral students. We also, however, thought we might have something to say, although we did not know what when we began writing.¹ The sorts of tensions we’d been grappling with felt familiar—as though they’d been spoken as often in the halls of the Illini Union as in our planned reading meetings back home where we took up an excited and perhaps desperate search for ways of thinking, doing, being different. We’d felt resonance, for

example, with calls for special issues exploring “the ways in which we live (and learn) in a more-than-human world” (Christ, Kuby, & Ulmer, 2017), in questions of the possibility and desirability to give up altogether qualitative methods that may only be thinkable with a humanist subject (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017; Vagle, 2017), and in this persistent wondering about how to teach and learn to think differently—how to “untrain,” as St. Pierre (2016b) says. That familiarity, in part, led us to write this article.

What we share below is some of the intricate, messy, sometimes too much and exactly enough workings/thinkings/writings that we’ve been generating in the midst of our (un)learning. Most of the writing was excerpted from a Google Doc entitled “Learning and Unlearning the Subject” that we used during, after, and before our reading meetings. We foraged the document separately and together for words that seemed to jump out at us, for reasons we did not try to determine or explain. Those fragments of writing/reading became our playground, (re)revised and resorted, originally for an ICQI audience, and designed for reverberation and resonance between Sarah and Susan’s voices, with timer and pencils to cross out words that clanged, or to keep them if we felt the clanging was productive somehow. We recrafted again, later, for readers, paying even less attention to which of us originally wrote what, when, and where as we experimented with writing ourselves and each other in first person. We used the text, in other words, to continue (un)learning the subject, catalyzing questions about authorship, mentorship, citation, teaching, learning, and so on. Our hope is that this writing serves as an invitation for you to join us in learning to “listen from the middle of the many conversations” (Manning, 2015, p. 203)² where Manning (2016a) says, drawing on Bergson (2007) as well as Harney and Moten (2013), the work is not to solve “already recognizable, available” problems (p. 10). The work, instead, is to continuously invent “open problems that bring us together in the mode of active inquiry” (p. 10), problems, in this sense, that might help us continuously question how, when, and why to (un)learn the humanist, stable subject in our lives and inquiries and also to persistently create ways to resist the need to *know* how we ought to think the subject and ourselves as subjects once and for all.

We have organized our writing as bullet points below because we wanted to provide structure for the reader while resisting “the implication of ordinality” (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 64). This writing was indeed “out of time” and the thinking-in-writing was “always out of sync with itself” (Manning, 2016a, p. ix). In other words, we did not write or read *in order*, and we do not expect that you will think this paper in an *orderly* fashion. We hope you won’t. Additionally, bullet points are intended to aid the reader in “understand[ing] the organization of

key points” (APA, 2010, p. 63), a useful claim given that our key point, if there is one, is to draw attention to the incompleteness of (un)learning the subject and unlearning any sedimented habits of thought, for that matter. The bulleted list, then, when taken as a whole list or even in smaller groups, becomes a way of continuously (re)creating problems that are always in the middle. As you listen (and read) from the middle, you may find Manning’s (2015) words of advice useful: “Don’t look too hard for the through-thread. Don’t worry too much about drawing a line. Make learning a weave . . . start in the middle” (p. 202).

(Un)Learning the Subject³

- We’ve each felt it—the inadequacy of phrases such as “This is just who I am” or “You aren’t acting like yourself” as they crop up in conversations with our friends, colleagues, children. Such convenient and habitual phrases do little to allow for movement, for crumbling, for difference, for iterations that mark a subject who is always already becoming other than itself. Will we ever shake this need to rethink and retheorize the subject, to decenter any notion of a stable, coherent subject from our inquiries and relations?
- Barad (2012b) says that “theorizing [is] a form of experimenting, is about being in touch. What keeps theories alive and lively,” she says, “is being responsible and responsive to the world’s patternings and murmurings. Doing theory requires being open to the world’s aliveness, allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonder. . . . Theories are living and breathing reconfigurings of the world” (p. 207).
- Susan was theorizing the subject with water the other day. I don’t remember what she said because I was immediately transformed to a place on the beach where water was smacking against my legs and her words kind of flowed into the ocean in my mind where I was thinking with her. Kayla was thinking the subject with the *between* of definitions of *tremor* she Googled—tremor as a symptom of some ailment or maybe an underground worm that terrorizes Kevin Bacon in a 1990s movie. I was trying to think *between*, too, and could only think of a paper I wrote in my first class in my doctoral program, an attempt to somehow think *between* photographs I took on a yearlong stay in Mexico and fragments of writing from the journals I wrote during the same time. When I got back to the United States, I had to write that paper to help me think *between*. All the identities I was asked to conjure up in response to questions *about* Mexico, Mexicans, and my Mexican heritage crumbled in the spaces between those pictures and words. I never

published the paper. It never felt “right.” Somehow the theoretical work seemed off. Seemed separate. Seemed forced. I am always searching for how to think *between*. Our shared Google document has 26 mentions of “between.” I’m thinking between them all.

- I don’t know where else to put this, but Barad is trying to get us to consider objectivity differently, and this “unlearning” feels the same. I’m resisting Barad, though. Not sure why.
- Cut from WebMD (n.d.): “If you notice a tremor, observe it carefully and note what seems to make it better or worse before calling your doctor. There are some differences between essential tremor and tremor caused by Parkinson’s disease. If a cause is discovered, the disease will be treated rather than the tremor.”
- All these *fragments* of (un)learning of the subject. These fragments are not part of a whole of our (un)learning but somehow seem to resonate with Foucault’s claim that his theoretical work was always in connection with the “cracks, tremors, and dysfunctions” he was dealing with—in part, a “fragment of [his] autobiography” (Foucault, 2003,⁴ p. 171).
- I keep thinking about this text that we will create together *about* our (un)learning. I imagine processes of play. Processes of invention. Processes in which we write and write and write. Then, we are given a word count, and we each invent a text from the writing that meets the word count. But then the text doesn’t have to stay in those sentences, because then we get to wordsmith it and play with it and each other’s again and again. And then we get to reread the texts we each mention and rethink/rewrite everything. Until it is nowhere close to what happened and nobody has any idea of whose words are whose. Is there a subject of writing that can be known/learned? Unlearned? Reproducible?
- The word *reproducible* is the smallest saucepan on my gas stove right now. When it sits empty on the grate top it wobbles back and forth, the teeth of the grate too wide for the small lightweight pan, but wide enough to stop it from toppling over (if you’re careful). Put something in the pan—fill up the word *reproducible* with meaning, a definition, citational authority—and it becomes steady. Right now, my thinking on Barad’s (2007) apparatus is what’s filling that pan and keeping it from falling over. It’s helping me steady the term *reproducible*.
- I love Foucault. I hate that Foucault feels irrelevant in the Baradian times that claim a Foucault who isn’t addressing materiality.
- I felt as though I understood subjectivity, whatever that means, but then, when I was writing, I didn’t understand anything anymore.
- Thinking with moments

Thinking with bodies

I haven't read enough

Nobody's ever read enough Foucault

Writing and sorting writing and sorting writing and sorting

Lineage

Foucault feels very important right now

YES this person is smart and important and read and relevant, and if you're not reading him or familiar with him, then you should be

- I feel perpetually behind my students. They jumped right into reading Barad, de Freitas, Braidotti, and countless others they are always bringing to the table (their stacks of articles I've never seen or forgotten I downloaded and slotted as "to read"). So much of my training was reading the French white boys—Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida—and now I am doomed to suss out the differences between anti-humanism and posthumanism and to determine who did a material vs. discursive analyses when and how and where. Maybe my students have done that already. If they need to.
- We need to unlearn the subject, damn it. The Scholar subject, for instance. Foucault (1996) said that Scholar has a very specific meaning: "A man of knowledge, a man who manipulates various forms of knowledge, who reveals some parts of knowledge and disqualifies others, who moves within this kind of knowledge game" (p. 133). Because he can't "dispense with the knowledge game," he tries to "get around the problem, to find something that is not a part of knowledge but deserves to be" (p. 133).
- Sometimes, it feels like unlearning the subject is *not* at all what we need to be doing, what we are doing, or what we can do. Sometimes it feels like the only option is to "do" a conventional humanist qualitative study about something *and then* write about how the subject was deconstructed. Sometimes adhering to the structures of *PhDness*, such as comprehensive exams and prospectus writing, means it is time for Kayla and Susan to at least appear certain in the uncertainty about the subject so they can prove movement along the path to what? Completion? Coherence? Graduation? Brilliance? And I can prove my worth as a mentor of doctoral students. Sometimes it feels like we are too tied to the need to be readable and sensible to our disciplinary field (like doing work about math or early childhood or literacy) to be open to entanglements. And sometimes, like Erin Manning (2016b), our need or desire to think relationally risks being too insensitive to demands that identity—whether it be because of race, class, sexuality, politics . . . and, and, and—be the starting point and central factor in our teaching, our research, our living.

- Lately it feels like I'm almost always feeling some amount of guilt—if I'm reading I feel guilty because I *should be writing*, if I'm writing I feel guilty that I'm not writing OTHER THINGS, if I'm with Susan writing, I feel guilty I'm not working on comps, etc. . . . then I feel guilty when I'm with my baby and not writing or reading at all, but that guilt is far easier to push down. How do I even think guilt, though, outside of humanism? I was just reading Derrida (2007), and he is framing guilt in terms of a confession. A declaration. More than just declaring knowledge. My relationship with the other actually transforms when I echo Derrida in saying, "I'm guilty, and not only am I informing you of this, but I'm declaring that I am guilty of this" (p. 448). My relationship with myself transforms too in that declaration.
- All over the place
 And nowhere in particular
 Taking in bits and
 pieces and calling them ours
 They are not the right
 dressings though for these bodies
 We need to armor ourselves in math ed literature
 stockpile the right citations
 enough qual
 Kayla has the right number of math classes, more than enough
 She is legitimate, she is mathy, she knows CGI.
 I still need to be groomed.
 Groomed to be more mathy.
 I don't like being in those spaces
 I don't like becoming a mathematized body
 Rigid
 Knowing the right answer, searching for one truth.
 One right way.
- I just saw that we are in the Foucault 1 session at ICQI, probably because we quoted Foucault in our abstract. Maybe the universe is trying to tell us something, whatever that means, because Foucault is exactly what we *must* read. Sarah's Foucault shelf in her office *has* been haunting us—mocking her for not frequenting it much lately and both of us for always seeming to find Foucault in our "to read" piles. Foucault will help us make some sense of that meeting we all attended the other day in which exercising power felt material, visible, and almost graspable. Maybe Foucault will be some sort of through line in this paper. How many times do we mention him?

- Manning (2015) says, “The soundscape of learning is full of inklings which reside below the threshold of actual perception. Think of the site for learning as encompassing what it cannot quite articulate, and listen to what that sounds like, even if you can’t quite hear it. It makes a difference” (p. 203). Yet there is fatigue in starting from the middle. I just need some clarity, damn it.
- I have thought this humanist subject with so much of what I have read, and how can I unthink them? How do I not teach that subject? What good is it? But then if you don’t know that there are other ways to think, that the subject of humanism is indeed an invention, then that feels limited. But then, how do I get out of the idea that people need to be lifted from their false consciousness about the subject? Then, I think, “but we must know the subject is an invention.” Then, I think, “I am not sure the subject is an invention at all.” I am not sure the subject isn’t the humanist stable self. Then, the next second, there is instability. At least, I think there is.
- I was sick last night and still this morning, the dimness of fever. This created a break in the routine that had become normalized to me. I canceled my observations between trips to the bathroom at 11 p.m. I stayed in bed and read Richardson (1997) and Edgoose (2001) and Braidotti (2013) and wondered how I had gotten this far off what I would consider just.
- We must direct our reading.
- I’m reading Braidotti (2010) Powers of affirmation: Response to Lisa Baraitser, Patrick Hanafin and Clare Hemmings in *Subjectivity* 3(2) 125–148. This paper spoke to me. I was searching for the Braidotti that Susan was thinking with the other day and found this in my computer. It is this straightforward (not really) talk about the subject and why it matters. Lots made me think about why the need for a retheorization of a subject. . . . She said: “Let me state at the outset that there is nothing wilful or voluntaristic about this – I think rather the very historical condition of advanced global capitalism make [it] imperative to raise these questions” (p. 141). She is asking a number of questions about the subject. One is: “How to expand the understanding of the political subject so as to create the optimal conditions to strive for the production of social horizons of hope, and hence for sustainable future?” (p. 141). Later she says, “It is not a matter of choosing to stick to the old humanistic and anthropocentric ways of thinking, but rather of being historically propelled into a situation in which we need to think differently about who we are in the process of becoming” (p. 141). I guess it is really that last line that is sitting with me.
Being propelled into a situation.
Not a choice of sticking to old ways of thinking.

The historical conditions demand it.

- Kayla said I sounded like the “Foucault police” the other day, talking about *my* Foucault feeling different than some others’ Foucaults. I guess it sounded like I was making the case that my Foucault was the one that ought to be enforced or learned. Maybe I was. I hope not. How much reading of Foucault is necessary to be able to “get free of oneself”—not that *that* could ever happen all at once, or so he’d say.
- We agree, I think, with St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016) that there is an “ethical imperative to rethink the nature of being” (p. 100).
- I was just told that my CV looked good—as long as I wasn’t trying to call myself a math person. “Math” was in titles only three times. I’m a qual person. Apparently.
- I just took some writing you did in the document and changed the names to make it about me.
- I cannot stop thinking about the immediacy and urgency of identity.
- I have been produced in his likeness: the researcher, the academic, the author. I have become (temporarily) what I resisted. I find myself making reading trajectories that are impossible to achieve, producing the subject of “good student,” of academic, getting the right word counts, reading the right number of pages, counting, counting, counting. I have let the interstitial spaces that were (are) important to me be sucked away. There is no air to breathe, I am drowning in words, and make no sense of them. I read productively. I write efficiently. The poetry is gone.
- Who directed this directed reading? Some readings Sarah suggested because she wanted to read or reread or because she couldn’t think without them anymore or because she couldn’t resist seeing them as somehow “foundational” or because she hoped they would respond to one of Susan’s or Kayla’s questions or because she thought they would change everything. Some readings Kayla and Susan suggested because they were reading them in other courses or had followed citational trails from articles they loved, or were concerned that they were not keeping up with who people were citing. Other readings erupted in our conversations when someone read a bit aloud that intrigued us. We didn’t all read all of them. Sometimes two pages was enough for three weeks of conversation.
- I am reading elsewhere in parenting blogs and pregnancy/baby-related websites that creep into our conversations about bodies (de Freitas & Sinclair, 2014). I can’t not theorize pregnancy and bodies in my (many) readings.
- Sometimes it feels like our project is Foucault’s project—“find[ing] out how the human subject fits into certain games of truth” (Foucault, 1996, p. 432). Sometimes it feels like Braidotti’s (2013) move “towards elaborating alternative ways of

conceptualizing the human subject” (p. 37). Not sure how different those are sometimes. Sometimes it feels like we were just trying to figure out what counted as posthumanism, poststructuralism, new materialism, and so on.

- Sometimes it feels like all this thinking is actually doing something that matters in the lives of others, shifting the ways that Kayla and Susan can intervene in how mathematics is taught, impacting how nature-based education was conceptualized in schools I’m involved with, affecting how we talk with our children and maybe something else.
- Sometimes when we talk, I feel like we are just talking in quotations. In fragments. Phrases, words that struck us as we read individually or spoke with colleagues or friends. Something like what Maggie MacClure (2013a) wrote of when she described how “data fragments” from a study “would sometimes seem to glow during team meetings” (p. 661). Those quotes toss around on the page and through Skype.
- Barad uses Foucault to think power, she uses Butler, too, in her thinking about bodies. So my thinking last night as I was sitting in class talking about Barad—I find myself thinking Deleuze (well, thinking about the rhizome) as I read Barad. The professor says that St. Pierre did that, too, but there are critiques of that and people claiming that Barad and Deleuze are *too different* to think together. Which makes me wonder about our subjectivity thinking here. . . . Are there subjects that cannot be thought together? What would that mean for our learning and unlearning of the subject? Is that even worth thinking about? What makes Deleuze and Barad too different to think together?
- I feel like I don’t know anything :-)
 Foucault helps us carve a territory . . . a place to start . . . something in the middle . . .
 make stretchy spaces
 that used to be firm and solid
 Weave and waves
 We need to unlearn the subject, damn it.
 We need to unlearn the subject. I can’t give up on this.
 It is the commitment I can’t let up.
 Listen to what that sounds like, even if you can’t quite hear it.
 We are all over the place.
- Letting the theories wash over us, the reading, with no expectation of clear divisions or clear departure from one reading to the other. As though we could just say, “I am now done with my humanist thinking,” and it would be done.

- I'm thinking apparatus as the thing that measures and makes boundaries, and if it measures the same thing over and over, it can reproduce. But apparatuses are a multiplicity, and we are entangled. Boundaries then are not fixed but moving and becoming. Barad's (2007) point, I think, is that there are many apparatuses. But we cannot know the bounds of them. We cannot know the objectivity.
- Do these theories resonate with me because they help me to think my particular problem at hand. They help me think myself out of a place that I don't want to be, yet I can't quite leave cleanly. There are all these tugs and aches and shoulds and oughts. I police myself on these things, I fight my own stable version of me—I can't let go of it. It feels as though I am divorcing myself. Divorcing this me that I could count on to be a certain way to stay that way to be predictable and strong. Definitely strong. Dependable.
- Just reading in Affrica Taylor's book a description of Haraway: "Also defying her own categorization, Haraway insists that her work is neither 'realism', nor 'biological determinism', nor 'social constructionism', but a 'serious . . . effort to get elsewhere'" (A. Taylor, 2013, p. xv).
- Sometimes this work we do of learning and unlearning the subject feels so familiar to what Jessica and I have been thinking/writing lately—informed by Massumi (2015), who says "it is just as possible to start with . . . a material other than language" and generate concepts [to think with, so to speak] "as it is to start with reading philosophical texts and move into its embodied acting-out" (p. 68). This feels like that sometimes. Not finishing something in advance of the page. Continuously questioning what inquiry might look like on the page—when language can't hold the subject. We consistently erase the writing and overwriting that troubles every single grammatical construct that centers and stabilizes the human subject. But I resist asking them to read that writing. It somehow feels like forcing a lineage on them.
- I need to zigzag again, yet I need to find my path, my interest, my research topic, my area of expert-ease.
- Ahmed (2006) said, "When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. Such exclusions—the constitution of a field of unreachable objects—are the indirect consequences of following lines that are before us: we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not 'on line.' The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there" (pp. 14–15).
- They must also cite Foucault's chapter on method in the *History of Sexuality* (1978). Yet, I'm sure neither has read it. Then again, when I returned to reread it

again just the other day, it was as if I had never read it either. Like Derrida (2001), “each time I beg[an] a new text . . . everything falls apart in the face of the unknown or the inaccessible, a crushing feeling of clumsiness, of inexperience, and of powerlessness. Anything I had already written [or read] is instantly annihilated . . . as if thrown overboard” (p. 64).

- We must go back and list what we have read, see what lineage we produced. We must ask questions such as: *What responsibility do we have in the production of this reading list for this manuscript? How might it be taken up? Who are we not reading? What conversations are we not a part of? What circle of the same are we staying within by following citational trails? Whose lineage are we a part of?* Then, we might know what to read next. A new directed reading. A new reading direction. Here’s the list pulled from documents, e-mails, memory, and so on: Ahmed, 2006; Amatucci, 2012; Bansel, B. Davies, Gannon, & Linnell, 2008; Barad, 2007, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Bergson, 2007; Braidotti, 2010, 2013, 2016; Britzman, 1992, 1994, 2000; Caputo, 2012; Caputo & Dickinson, 2012; Christ et al., 2017; Collective, 2017; B. Davies, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2010, 2014; B. Davies & Bansel, 2010; B. Davies & C. Davies, 2007; de Freitas & Sinclair, 2014; Derrida, 1976, 1992, 1997, 1999; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012; Edgoose, 2001; Foucault, 1978, 1983, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003; Harney & Moten, 2013; Honan & Bright, 2016; Hood, 1985; Jackson, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, 2012; Kimmerer, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010, 2016; Koro-Ljungberg & Clark, 2016; Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012; Koro-Ljungberg & Ulmer, 2016; Lather, 2016; MacLure, 2009, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Malone, 2015; Manning, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Manning & Massumi, 2013, 2014; Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017; Massumi, n.d., 2008, 2010, 2015; Mazzei, 2014; McWilliam, 2008; Murrin, 2016; Parry, 2015; Pittard, 2015; Richardson, 1994, 1997, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000, 2011, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; St. Pierre et al., 2016; A. Taylor, 2011; C. A. Taylor, 2016; Ulmer, 2017; Vagle, 2017; van Manen, 2014; Wyatt et al., 2014; Zembylas, 2003.
- I cannot believe myself in the writing of this paper, how undependable I have been . . . how I keep coming into meetings with nothing (on paper in Google Doc) . . . nothing that counts traditionally. Nothing to show. Sarah says this is okay. And it’s okay that I haven’t “done” comps, and that it’s all okay. And I tell myself that all the time too. Yet it doesn’t feel okay. Those waves wash back over me of panic at not being good enough—student, mother, wife, friend, person. I really, really would like to push them away, those concepts. Could I get free of not good enough if I take up poststructuralism? Can I blow up “good mother,” “good

marriage”? Then I am left floating without direction. What are the handholds and footholds if we are not working toward good, or maybe we are just destabilizing that concept? Is good in the making all the time? To be determined within each time/place/space? How are we good in relation?

- How often would you say we actually met together to talk/read/think/write/experiment? Weekly, maybe biweekly, after we factor in sick children, exhaustion, other deadlines, minds/bodies being elsewhere, and just plain forgetting? I have to calculate hours of “mentoring students” for my annual review. This was a “directed reading” course at some point. I better see what we read. . . .
- Carol Taylor (2016) again. Her sentence structure I like . . . “new material feminism touches me, presses on my skin as sensorium” (p. 201) . . . “seeking a reading which maximizes” (p. 204) . . . “we bend our thoughts, bodies, and emotions to producing another star-rated journal ‘output’” (p. 202).
- I cannot stop thinking about the immediacy and urgency of identity.

Notes

1. We began writing quite often. We wrote, for example, a prediction of the outcomes of our weekly meetings on a “Directed Reading” form we had to submit to the university for the semester we actually sought credit for our grappling. We wrote a half-draft of a paper never submitted for a call for papers for a literary journal that asked for writing on teacher resistance. We wrote two (eventually approved) proposals to our university’s Institutional Review Board, one called “Complicating Teacher Identity” about an undergraduate course Sarah taught often and the other called “Parental Motivation and Nature Schools,” which would produce research Sarah promised to share with a local nature-based elementary school. Kayla wrote two course papers related to the first, which we talked about often, and Sarah wrote countless lesson plans informed by our collective subject talk. We also wrote interview protocols that produced transcribed interviews that made no sense without a humanist subject as well as 201 pages in shared Google Docs, not to mention the thoughts and written words that we kept from each other. We wrote an abstract for this paper, and what we wrote below, which we timed so it would fit neatly within the 15-minute time chunk we had for presenting. The rest of those words were erased or stored elsewhere (sometimes in locked cabinets and password-protected computers) for later experimentation. And then, we added some back to this *final* version that seemed like they would be okay for a paper but would not have been sensible to read aloud.
2. We are trying to take Manning’s (2015) suggestion seriously, “allowing learning to continue, rather than continuously cutting learning off in the name of what we’ve decided, in advance of our coming together, is worthy of being called Knowledge” (p. 202). We haven’t laid out a reading list in advance of our coming together. We follow citational trails rather than trying to cover a canon of texts that may be presumed essential

poststructural and posthuman readings. We don't shy away from reading philosophical texts, though—even the ones that are too hard to read. Instead, we toss them into the group as *gifts*, “like an inexistent but insistent spirit, like a specter that haunts the wheels and pulleys and clanking gears of the economy” (Caputo, 2012, p. 25). These are (im)possible readings that we find ourselves between as we keep reading, sharing, gifting, and reading some more (Derrida, 1997).

3. Others have experimented with writing conventions (e.g., Honan & Bright, 2016), including ourselves (Bridges-Rhoads, 2015; Cannon & Holbrook, in press; Van Cleave & Bridges-Rhoads, in press), searching for ways conventions could be used and reused differently, departing from their original design. That experimentation produces a number of effects: movement through paralysis, disruption of writing-up-research-as-usual, and making visible the ways the subject of humanism permeates academic discourses.
4. Many of the individual interviews and lectures we read occurred prior to the publication date of the collection cited. We encourage readers to go to the collection to get a sense of when the individual selections were written and translated and also to explore how a scholar's texts interact with each other across time.

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