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The Lure of *The Animal*: The Theoretical Question of the Nonhuman Animal

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Abstract

Educational critical theory has exposed many oppressive features of contemporary society. However, the literature remains fixed on the human experience, despite the fact that the representations of nonhuman animals provide a rich context in which to explore ideology, power, and what Michel Foucault called regimes of truth. In this paper, the author attempts to theorize animal studies within educational theory, an interdisciplinary approach in rethinking the ways that the notion of "animal" has been constructed by human societies in the West. The author provides a brief summary of the animal studies scholarship that has implications for educational theory and research, such as the specter of colonialism, "animal" as a regime of truth and speciesism. The author demonstrates the discursive construction of nonhumans is riddled with assumptions based upon Enlightenment notions of empirical science and rationality that expose human representational practices and has implications for how Other humans are represented. He ends by examining Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal, a theoretical location from which we can begin to challenge the human/nonhuman binary.



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- Kramer: *I know what this is about Father. I didn't do anything. I just spoke to her innocently for just a few minutes. It's just that, that I have this power.*
- Father-priest: *Yes. Kavorka.*
- Kramer: *Kavorka?*
- Father-priest: *It is a Latvian word that means the lure of the animal.*
- Kramer: *I don't understand.*
- Father-priest: *Women are drawn to you. They would give anything to be possessed by you.*
- Kramer: *Help me father. Help me!*¹

Introduction

The animal. What does this word evoke inside of you? Does it seem to represent the unfathomable, the unspeakable or an impassable linguistic chasm when embodying our lenses as humans? What does it mean to be *human* and does this category that educational theorists seem to solidify so readily, indeed actually exist? These questions inform this piece and have shaped my own work in rethinking the nonhuman animal and importance of representational practices in how we come to understand the world around us. As a man of color who has seen privilege in the halls of his academic work, to the memories of family stories naming stifling oppressive social practices at the hands of White racism and supremacy, *the animal* sits firmly within this embodied reality in much deeper ways than at first glance. The reader may be shaking their head or shifting in their chairs uncomfortably. The animal you say? Western scientific discourses reify and legitimate a certain vision of the nonhuman *along with* shaping how the *Other* has been historically constructed in the West. The recent literature surrounding eco-pedagogy, social justice and critical animal studies (Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Best, 2009; Bowers, 2001; Kahn, 2008, 2010; Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2005; Nibert, 2002; Riley-Taylor, 2002), the role of masculinity in the exploitation of nonhuman animals (Luke, 2007) and the cultural politics of nature (Shukin, 2009), begs us to begin to make inroads in examining how the question of “the animal” is tied to the larger project of Foundations and critical educational theory.

Popular culture is rife with various representations that provide opportunities to explore meaning and ideology. In particular, the idea of “animal” is one that is salient, as the representation of nonhuman animals emerge in a wide variety of places, such as television, film, advertising, scholarly publications and literature. For educational theorists and scholars, examining the representations of nonhuman animals provides opportunities to explore ideology, discourse, and the ways in which the construction of nonhumans mirrors the representation of the *Other Human* in contemporary (people of color, disability or sexuality for example) and historical contexts (such as what occurred

¹ David, L., Seinfeld, J., Kirschbaum, B. & Cheronos, T. (1993). *The Conversion*. L. Charles. et al, Seinfeld. New York: National Broadcasting Company.

in European colonial projects worldwide). In a much more direct and private way, these ideologies of domination structured how people of color with which I share a cultural, political and social affinity, have been constructed as deficient, wild, barbaric and savage (West, 2003). However, these ideologies did not just emerge out of thin air, but were co-constructed by Western Europeans during their colonial experiences, *as well as*, their interactions with nonhumans. This in turn helped shape the colonial project and how race and more importantly, *difference*, was socially constructed. In short, I argue that this historical development helps to demonstrate the interrelatedness of systemic oppression, one of the underlying features of this piece (Nibert, 2002). As Brian Luke (2007) reminds us, “references to human superiority and to species solidarity distance us from the rest of nature” (p. 51).

As Donna Haraway (1991) has argued in some of her seminal work, “we polish the images of animals to see ourselves” (p. 20). Linked to an agenda of social justice that has emerged in the educational literature over the past decade, the treatment of nonhuman animals needs to be addressed by critical theorists in education who seek to change structures of oppression that affect *all of life* on this planet. As educators, the nonhuman animal should concern us in some of these fundamental ways.

- The discursive and material conditions in which nonhumans are imagined in schools legitimate practices for how the *Other human* is understood.
- School lunch programs are intimately tied to global corporate meat economies that support oppressive and barbaric systems of domination over nonhumans.
- The existence of nonhuman animals in schools is both material and representational and both serve a variety of functions in reproducing power relationships and ideologies of domination. Also tied to this are the new forms of representations that emerge from these encounters.
- The concept of “animality” is also tied with racist/sexist ideologies and deficit discourses surrounding disability concerning human populations: both which have been shown to be significant realities in educational settings (Spring 2010). Thus examining the nonhuman animal allows for a richer and much deeper engagement with how oppressions are interconnected.
- Science classrooms are directly tied to the global nonhuman animal trade if they participate in the social practice of dissection as these nonhumans are harvested and sacrificed in the name of “science” and profit.
- Because zoos profess an educational mission, this helps legitimate the current Prison-Industrial Complex that exists which systematically incarcerates the poor and people of color and has decimated these communities historically (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008).

These few examples demonstrate that we need to account for oppressive conditions that exist outside of the socially constructed human experience and theorizing what this

means for educational research and practice, and more broadly, cultural studies.

The excerpt from *Seinfeld* that opened this article is not meant to take away from the seriousness of the ecological crisis we face today or the hellish conditions nonhumans are forced to endure, but is an example of how representations of nonhumans emerge through indirect cultural forms. Through this example, “animal” is linked to unfettered sexual desire and follows the traditional views of nonhuman animals as wild, barbaric, brutish, and savage, despite the fact that we know little outside of Western empirical science. Clearly, “animality” is something to be *cured*, something that must be banished from *human* behavior. This binary lends itself to the idea that to be wild is something apart from *us*, with our supposedly unique traits of rationality, language, and logic (Brown, 2007). However, human as a category has not always been fixed, and has experienced its own ruptures and discontinuities in examples like feral children and wild humans (Nash, 2003). As the category of human is often reproduced and reified in educational scholarship unquestioningly (Pederson, 2009), this provides a unique opportunity to deconstruct the categories that human encompasses and how these were used to exclude those humans and nonhumans that are outside of these supposed fixed biological and cultural categories.

My aim is to summarize some of the main contentions of animal studies that directly relate to educational theory and practice. This will serve as an important, albeit brief, introduction to this radically new way of thinking about nonhuman animals *and* our own representational practices. I will focus specifically on some of the main themes that have emerged from this field that are most applicable to educational theory and research, such as the specter of colonialism, “animal” as a regime of truth and speciesism. Although nonhumans may seem to sit outside of the concerns of educational theorists and researchers, the way we construct nonhumans in contemporary society can help us gain a better understanding of how these practices link to our own cultural representations, discourses, and what Michel Foucault (1980) called “regimes of truth”. Rigorously questioning dominant representations also allows us to break down barriers between humans and nonhumans, the *becoming*-aspect of radical critique. I will end the article with discussing the work by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986, 1987) on *becoming-animal*. In this way, I want to demonstrate ways in which humans can rigorously question the human/nonhuman binary that will lead us to examine our own cultural representations and discursive frameworks. It appears that Kramer’s *kavorka* has also captivated me, in fact, *lured me*, into the realm of the nonhuman animal.

Animal Studies: Towards a New Understanding of Nonhumans

Animal studies contain a wide and rich variety of perspectives that have emerged in literary studies, popular culture, scientific studies, and historical accounts (Armstrong, 2008; Bekoff, 2007; Burt, 2002; Fudge, Gilbert & Wiseman, 2002). I also recognize that a “critical” animal studies has also emerged.² I approach the concept of “animal studies”

² Steven Best and other scholars in the Institute of Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) rigorously tie scholarship to larger goals of social, political, and economic analysis that seeks to *critique* and *transform* structures of domination for human and nonhuman animals. Although many scholars that I refer to in this paper do not call their project “critical”, they rigorously question frameworks, representations and ideologies rooted in domination. See ICAS, What is critical animal studies? Retrieved from

in a relational stance to critical animal studies and my own commitments to animal liberation that moves beyond a “rights” rhetoric steeped in liberal politics. In this article however, I focus mainly upon the discursive construction of nonhuman animals that, in fundamental ways, mirrors human discursive constructions about what is “real”, “valid”, or “normal” (Ambrosio, 2008; Foucault, 1980). For example, Lynne Fendler and Irfan Muzaffar (2008) traced the concept of the Bell Curve and how it was used in constructing normalcy and its ties to sorting practices found in schools today. By doing this they demonstrated effectively the historical, epistemological and social roots that the idea of “normal” has in our schooling practices. Similarly, claims to objective truth have filled the history and the understanding of nonhuman animals that have been constructed by Western forms of empirical science, rationality, and scholarship when they stand apart from most of our ontological and epistemological experiences (Baker, 2001). For example, as Philip Armstrong (2008) has argued, “animals...have significances, intentions, and effects quite beyond the designs of human beings” (p. 2). In the literature review that follows, I will focus on those areas that are most applicable to building a more encompassing critical theory in education.

The Specter of Colonialism and Nonhuman Animals

For Europeans during the time of colonialism, the natural world was something of a curiosity to be feared, gazed upon, collected, dissected, caged and eventually commodified (Cronon, 2003; Serpell, 1996). Vernon Kising (1996) wrote that the “new Americans” and their attitude towards nature, brought from Europe, was, “a mixture of fear of the unknown wilderness, a practical need to survive, and a need to cultivate the wilderness [and] this attitude also included a continuing natural curiosity about native and exotic animals carried over from colonial times” (p. 112). Within this particular paradigm, exerting cultural hegemony over global colonial projects helped to lend further support to hegemonic social constructions (capitalism and racism for example) and reified specific social practices (like slavery or colonialism) that benefited Western European institutions, ideologies, markets and epistemologies (McLaren, 2005). Nibert (2002) reminds us that, “the ideological entanglements between exploitation of humans and other animals are fueled by, and intertwined with, economic based oppression—particularly under corporate capitalism” (p. xiii). Spiegel (1988) also notes that, “to a large extent, the heightened institutionalization of oppression of blacks (in the form of legalized slavery), and animals (in factory farming and vivisection), can be attributed to the profit motive” (p. 77). However, this is not to be reductionist in understanding that capitalism or the profit motive was the sole reason. This is to acknowledge the multi-faceted ways in which oppressive practices developed. Although a Eurocentric model would structure colonial governance, these practices were also solidified back in Western Europe. Audrey Smedley (2007) reminds us that,

Men of substance and civility were men who owned property, and thus were also men who had power, or at least could wield some influence in the governance of society. But a man without property was essentially a social

nonentity, unable to undertake civic responsibilities or exercise civil rights.
(p. 53)

In this way, the colonized would be constructed as the quintessential *Other*, the *outsider* without property, without a discrete existence in the eyes of European colonizers. When Europeans undertook their colonial project, they brought with them not only physical culture, but also these types of ideologies, discourses, values, and epistemologies that were projected onto the savage and barbaric *Other* (Bhabha, 1994; Castle, 2001; Said, 1978). As Jean-Paul Sartre (2006) polemically wrote, “Europe, stuffed with riches, granted *de jure* humanity to all its inhabitants” (p. 169). Thus, the notion that nonhumans are different from us helped to inferiorize human *Others* as being similar to animals and preceded the use of language like “savage” and “barbaric” for historically oppressed humans. “Nothing is more consistent, among us, than racist humanism since Europeans have only been able to make themselves human beings by creating slaves and monsters” (Sartre, 2006, p.169).

Turning to the literary imagination to further contextualize Sartre’s critique, we can examine how colonial locales evoked racist and White supremacist understanding of the colonial *Other*. Joseph Conrad (2007) in “Heart of Darkness” is very clear in how the colonial body existed, but at the same time, demonstrating the interrelated nature of how the *Other* and nonhuman were co-constructed together. “And between whiles I had to look after the savage...He was an improved specimen [and]...to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. He had filed teeth, too” (p. 180). Conrad (2007) also evokes another image of the colonial *Other* rooted in a deficit discourse of difference.

We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly, Yes, it was ugly enough... (p. 179)

These passages struck me not only because of how Conrad’s epic story encapsulates the colonial perspectives of Europeans, but also the interrelated nature of how discursive constructions come into being. Like animals, the colonial *Other* is a monster not only for his/her barbaric practices, but also because they lack culture and civility as defined by bourgeois Europeans. The second excerpt also points to the *Other* and their historical links to animality. How was animal so easily replaced with human and why did Europeans choose to represent the indigenous peoples they met as animals?

In speaking about the colonized *Other*, Stephen Morton (2007) writes, “European humanism was founded on a system of exclusion that defined Jews and the colonized as non-human Others” (p. 165). Human animals created hierarchies within their own species modeled after how the “natural world” was constructed during the Enlightenment. As J.M. Coetzee (1999) eloquently wrote, “we have set up a continuum that stretches from the Martian at one end to the bat to the dog to the ape...to the human being” (p. 31). The domination of nature was so well in place by the time of first contact that these discursive frameworks were easily applicable. It made sense to see disposable populations as *animal*

(that unmistakable and unforgivable *Other*) as the practices of domination could be easily transferred. The interrelated nature of various forms of oppression (such as speciesism, racism, sexism, etc.) does not exist on their own but are mutually constitutive (Nibert, 2002).

If we look to Bhabha's (1994) work on the postcolonial *Other*, we can also see this link between the *Other* and the nonhuman.

The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. (p.118)

Think about if we replace, for sake of argument, the racial connotation of "black" with "animal" and how these meanings can be relatively transposed. This is by no means to downplay the plight of the human *Other*, but is instead a fruitful way to explore the mutually constitutive nature of interlocking forms of oppression and the mental models of domination already in place for Europeans to draw upon. Although some scholars have argued against the notion that the colonized were simply passive participants in the process of European colonization (Thornton, 1998), Bhabha (1994) still fruitfully argues that the colonized are denied, "the capacities of self-government, independence, Western modes of civility [and] lends authority to the official version and mission of colonial power" (p. 118). The animal was created in the same discursive space as that human *Other* that territorialized the minds of colonizing Europeans, who were, in some ways, incapable of possessing the uniquely Eurocentric nature of rationality, logic, culture, beauty, and knowledge (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987). Armstrong (2002) also follows the connection that "animal" is linked to the construction of the postcolonial subject.

[The] ideas of an absolute difference between the human and the animal (and the superiority of the former over the latter) owe a great deal to the colonial legacies of European modernity and...that the indigenous cultural knowledges that imperialism has attempted to efface continue to pose radical challenges to the dominance of Western value systems. (¶ 2)

Western European epistemologies, spurred by rapid colonialism, greatly shaped modernity, the concept of "self," and the treatment of nonhuman animals *along with* the colonized *Other*.

Because the colonial machine (Trotter, 1990) was built on both academic sources and the popular imagination (literary texts and travel brochures for example), this lends further support that nonhumans were also (re)produced along these same ideological conditions, with varying texts lending themselves to these discursive constructions (Said, 1978). Western literary and academic knowledge demonstrated how, "seemingly impartial, objective academic disciplines had in fact colluded with, and indeed been instrumental in, the production of actual forms of colonial subjugation and administration" (Young, 1995, pp. 159-160). In fact, Erica Fudge (2002) argues that that the identity of human *depends* on the idea of the nonhuman.

Human is a category only meaningful in difference; that the innate qualities that are often claimed to define the human—thought, speech, the right to

possess private property...qualities of human-ness—are actually conceivable through animals; that is, they rely on animals for their meaning. (p. 10)

The way human beings come to understand the natural world is in a symbiotic relationship with nonhumans. The human/nonhuman binary has been exposed as a way to fundamentally shape the divisions between human and nonhumans that has had devastating effects on the lives of nonhuman animals in research laboratories and factory farms (Derrida, 2008). Animal studies have also allowed us to examine, much more closely, the representational practices in human societies that can help us better understand our own regimes of representation.

Regimes of Truth: Representations of "Animal"

Regimes of representation are “the whole repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which ‘difference’ is represented at any one historical moment” and describes the ways in which we understand both human and nonhuman animals (Hall, 2002, p. 232). Michel Foucault (1997) was able to demonstrate that what is considered “knowledge” in a society is heavily dependent on power relationships, and is about power just as much as about discovery and knowledge. In this way, institutions are linked with outside economic, political, educational, and other dominant discursive constructions (Foucault, 1997).

For example, when psychiatry emerged, it not only included a “psychological” component, but also a wide array of practices and beliefs about confinement, internment, labor, morality, spirituality, mental illness, and disease. Knowledge includes both “inside” practices unique to the discipline, but also includes “outside” practices such as institutional, personal, and community practices, along with social mores, discourses, knowledge systems, legal systems, common opinions and social and historical events (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005). This helps contextualize how “Truth” claims made by Western constructions of science and the inherent power/knowledge relationships in these discourses has influenced a wide array of knowledge systems, such as our understanding of nonhuman animals.³ Although Foucault (1994) focused mainly within the realm of humans, he recognized the shifting nature of how we came to see and understand the natural world, and nonhuman animals, that shifted from different historical periods.

To the Renaissance, the strangeness of animals was a spectacle: it was featured in fairs, in tournaments, in fictitious or real combats, in reconstitutions of legends in which they bestiary displayed its ageless fables. The natural history room and the garden, as created in the Classical period, replace the circular procession of the ‘show’ with the arrangement of things in a ‘table’. What came surreptitiously into being between the age of the theatre and that of the catalogue was not the desire for knowledge, but a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse. (p. 131)

³ For a critique on Western science and its links to nonhuman animals, see Foucault M. (1994). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. New York: Vintage Books; Sloan, P. (1995). *The Gaze of Natural History*, In C. Fox, R. Porter, & R. Wokler (Eds.), *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains* (pp. 112-151). Berkeley: University of California Press; and Thomas, K. (1983) *Man and the natural world: Changing attitudes in England, 1500-1800*. New York: Penguin Books.

Foucault consistently demonstrated the discursive nature of knowledge and its links to how we come to understand and know the world around us.

These discourses often operate both within and outside of established institutional settings, encompassing the social norms, mores, and common beliefs held by members of a society (Foucault, 1980, 1997). For example, when a nonhuman animal is represented as savage in a fictional account (a film such as *Jaws* or literary work like *Moby Dick*) combined with a nature documentary highlighting a recent “wild animal” attack (such as what appears on The Discovery Channel), this supports other forms of formalized knowledge systems, such as from biology classes (maybe from an assignment on dissection) or Western empirical research (Zoological studies). As this example demonstrates, these include a variety of discourses in different contexts and builds what we consider “knowledge” (Foucault, 1972; Hall, 2002). Foucault’s work encompassed a wide variety of settings and practices and he examined, “discourse, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy...[and these are]...supported by types of knowledge” (Foucault, 1980). Knowledge and power are thus inextricably linked to forms of social practice and social regulation and the discursive development of what is true, appropriate, and real.

For Foucault (1980), these discourses produced *regimes of truth*. “Truth isn’t outside power...each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true” (p.131). Whole arrays of social practices are encompassed within regimes of truth and formulate what counts as knowledge. Stuart Hall (2002) argued that,

What we think we ‘know’ in a particular period about, say crime, has a bearing on how we regulate, control, and punish criminals. Knowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to work, through certain technologies and strategies of application, in specific situations, historical contexts and institutional regimes. (p. 49)

We have to recognize that knowledge is tied to power relationships and that to understand what knowledge is, along with our representational practices, we must immerse ourselves in a wide variety of discourses that help contextualize and validate what is known or not known.

To study punishment, you must study how the combination of discourse and power-power/knowledge-has produced a certain conception of crime and the criminal, has had certain real effects both for the criminal and for the punisher, and how these have been set into practice in certain historically specific prison regimes. (Hall, 2002: p.49)

This has a direct link to how nonhuman animals have been constructed in Western society by a variety of different discursive formations and not only legitimates our treatment of nonhuman animals today, but also help us understand how meaning is constructed (Hall, 2002). When the nonhuman is examined in its broader cultural context then, a wide array of discourses must be examined to better contextualize how these discourses interact each other and inform/are informed by these constructions. Thus, the regime of truth surrounding nonhuman animals exists in three fundamental ways: scientific, cultural representations and experiential contact.

Enlightenment Notions of Empirical Science

Philo and Wilbert (2000) claim that, “the natural sciences have for some time been regarded as the legitimate and primary form of knowledge in many societies, Western and non-Western...between humans and animals, and within the animal ‘kingdom’ itself” (p. 8). Lending to this was the Enlightenment scholar’s obsession with classifying and labeling the natural world, or, “the attempts of science and philosophy to devise secure hierarchies and taxonomies in which to place [animals]” (Baker, 2000, p. 9). These scientific discourses helped to further lend justification to how Western Europeans would come to interact with the locales and the nonhumans and humans that called these places home. In 18th and 19th century literature for example, there was a general enmity and fear associated with the wilderness and conquest was a viable and worthy endeavor in which to tame the natural world for a Christian and Western social order (Nash, 2003; Smith, 2008).

The wilderness is the antithesis of civilization; it is barren, terrible; even *sinister*, not just the home of the savage but his *natural* [italics added] home. The wilderness and the savage were as one; they were obstacles to be overcome in the march of progress and civilization. (Smith, 2008, p. 20)

However, not only was the wilderness seen as the antithesis of civilization, but nature has been linked with femininity and mirrors how men have dominated women. As Huey-li Li (2007) argued,

Women’s closeness to nature is neither biologically determined, nor is the perception of an affinity between women and nature an inherent feature of the human psyche. Instead, both the association of woman and nature and the human domination of nature result from a social construction. (p. 355)

Not only did these social constructions rest upon falsely constructed binaries (nature/civilization; civilized/savage) but also shaped how the inhabitants that encompassed those “wild” areas were discursively constructed: both for humans and nonhumans. Nonhumans would be a fundamental feature in overcoming the natural world and would be domesticated, captured, or terminated (Serpell, 1996). Thus a whole litany of “scientific” practices emerged to study and “know” animals, their behaviors, habitats, and anatomical structures.

For instance, Sloan (1995) pointed to what he called the development of the “gaze of natural history” that was, “one of the most fundamental developments in the human science of the Enlightenment...[and]...a new relation of the human species as a whole to time and space, to geography and history” (p.113). This vision that contained the supposed knowledge to decipher and classify the entire spectrum of animal and planet life allowed Western Europeans to fashion an entirely new way to conceptualize the natural world. In this way, animals and plants became objects in the growing and expanding Western European colonial empires. However, because human animals constructed these scientific and cultural notions, it also put them in a position to hold a privileged space within this new understanding. Sloan points out, rather importantly, that, “the early modern classifiers, the Renaissance Encyclopedists, had traditionally excluded human beings from their systematic arrangement of animals” (Sloan, 1995, p. 118). Humans fell outside of the “animal kingdom” and remained securely atop the hierarchy.

In most of the scientific discourses surrounding the nonhuman animal, they are most often represented as a series of automated and biological responses and routines (Wolfe, 2003). In popular culture, they are often represented in very similar or overly simplistic ways, such as the doting pet. As Steve Baker (2001) argues,

Much of our understanding of human identity and our thinking about the living animal reflects—and may even be the rather direct result of—the diverse uses to which the concept of the animal is put in popular culture...[and]...any understanding of the animal, and of what the animal means to us, will be informed by and inseparable from our knowledge of its cultural representation. Culture shapes our reading of animals just as much as animals shape our reading of culture. (p. 4)

Baker (2001) is pushing us to recognize that the idea of animal is intimately tied with how we view and construct our own identities through the cultural representations we encounter everyday. This is not to say that Western science has not served an important purpose in understanding the natural world and has been invaluable in certain ways. However, these are often favored over indigenous ways of knowing the world, as the idea of “animal” is quite different in indigenous cultures and plays a vital and important role in the construction of reality, meaning and the life of the Earth itself (Cajete, 2008; George, 1999; Rains, 1999). Tied to these scientific discourses are the cultural representations of nonhuman animals that exist today.

Cultural Representations

Another fundamental way that nonhuman animals are understood in contemporary society is through cultural representations that exist in various forms, such as what occurs in literature, popular culture, and film. For example, returning to Baker’s earlier quote I employed, culture is in a symbiotic relationship with the representation of nonhuman animals as we are influenced by dominant representations we view in the media, to those we help reproduce in our own lives and work (Baker, 2001). In film, the nonhuman animal is vividly represented and follows the traditional representation as the savage beast (*King Kong*, 1933/2005), the ruthless hunter (*Jaws*, 1975), the human friend and companion (*Turner and Hooch*, 1989) or the comic relief (*Every Which Way But Loose*, 1978). In each of these films, there are dominant models of nonhuman animals that are at work. As in the case of *Jaws* (1975), we are taught to fear the savage beast and his instincts to kill once *it* has a taste for blood, boldly (re)producing their “savage” nature. In the 1978 Clint Eastwood film *Every Which Way But Loose*, the orangutan (“Clyde”) drinks beer, punches men, and smiles for the camera. In this way, the nonhuman animal exists for our pleasure and gaze.⁴ In both of these instances, the nonhuman exists solely for human use; whether it is for pleasure or fear. This also helps demonstrate that power

⁴ See, Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Practice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) for theorization on the role of the gaze in medical practice. There are striking similarities in the power/knowledge relationship invested in the medical doctor’s gaze and the gaze cast upon nonhuman animals by humans. See also, Berger J. (1991), *About looking*. New York: Vintage International; Ittner J. (2005), Who’s looking? The animal gaze in the fiction of Brigitte Kronauer and Clarice Lispector. In Pollock, M.S. & Rainwater, C. (Eds.), *Figuring Animals: Essays on Animal Images in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Popular Culture*, (pp. 99-118). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

and knowledge is reproduced through, “many, localized circuits, tactics, mechanisms and effects through which power circulates...the ‘meticulous rituals’ or the ‘microphysics’ of power” (Hall, 2002, p. 50). These representations on film, of course, influence a wide range of practices and behaviors (as in other discursive formations about nonhuman animals) towards policy, consumer behavior, scientific discourses and literary representations.

The wildlife genre, as another example, is a unique way in which we are exposed to nonhumans and is ripe for deconstruction within the context of educational theory and research. As Cynthia Chris (2006) argues, “the wildlife genre is...a prism through which we can examine investments in dominant ideologies of humanity and animality, nature and culture, sex, and race” (p. xiv). On channels such as Discovery, National Geographic, and Animal Planet, we are bombarded with documentaries and programs that describe and detail the behavior patterns of nonhumans based upon Western forms of empirical science and measurement and “the new primary loci for representations of nature and animals in widely dispersed cultural corners” (Chris, 2006, pp. xiv-xv). As Pierson (2009) argues, “the Discovery Channel’s nature programming engages its viewers and creates and identifiable cable identity because the discourses are already a recognizable part of a viewer’s social and imaginative world” (p. 235).

Steve Irwin (*The Crocodile Hunter*) for example, worked vigorously for the defense of nonhuman animals and documented this through his television program. However, steeped in a more “biological” and “behavioral” model of nonhuman animals, he often reproduced scientific discourses at the expense of a more holistic and open way of understanding nonhuman animals. In another instance, the immensely popular television program *Planet Earth* (2006), although beautifully executed with absolutely stunning cinematography, also approaches nature and nonhumans from a Western framework, not incorporating any critique or debate about the multiple meanings of animals and of nature itself. It becomes a 21st century form of documentation that mirrors Western European forms of science and rationality (Chris, 2006). The nonhuman animals presented on that program are reduced to automatons, or “biological” routines that only exist through their behavior, as it is meticulously narrated. These two examples, again, form a discursive formation in which to understand nonhuman animals, and when combined with outside knowledge, safely secure their dominant representations in our collective imagination (Pierson, 2009).

Experiential Experience

Adding to this regime of truth is the experiential experiences that humans have with nonhuman animals.⁵ For example, zoos were created as a space in which humans could meet and gaze upon nonhumans in awe, separated by a language chasm that cannot be rectified. The zoo as a space is imbued with all manners of power relationships, as is most space within contemporary society (Morgan, 2000). In his treatment of the modern zoo, John Berger (1980) examined the zoo and roles it played.

Public zoos came into existence at the beginning of the period that was to see

⁵ Although I will focus in this article on the development of zoos, experiential experiences with nonhuman animals occurs in a wide variety of contexts. See Haraway, *When species meet*, Arluke and Sanders, *Regarding animals* and Serpell, “People in Disguise.”

the disappearance of animals from daily life. The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters...Yet, like every other 19th century public institution, the zoo, however supportive of the ideology of imperialism, had to claim an independent and civic function. The claim was that it was another kind of museum, whose purpose was to further knowledge and public enlightenment. (p. 21)

The zoo represented colonial expansion and scientific discovery while also showcasing the exotic spoils from global imperial conquests. Zoos support an ideology of imperialism as put on public display for the citizen at home and satisfied what Harriet Ritvo called the “public appetite for the exotica” (Ritvo, 1996, p. 44).

Built upon the notion that zoos provided scientists and the public “learning opportunities”, they offer a unique discursive construction of Western Enlightenment science, such as rationality, objectivity, empiricism, and naturalistic measurement (Berger, 1980). The educational mission of zoos make this space problematic and further legitimizes a society based on mass incarceration. Because of its highly educative mission, it becomes further naturalized as a place in which to bear witness to *the animal*. Philo and Wilbert push us even further and argue, “the zoo as a space (or set of spaces) specifically put aside for wild animals no longer ‘in the wild’, thereby leading many people to ‘naturalize’ the zoo in the sense of accepting it unproblematically as an appropriate location for many animals” (Philo & Wilbert, 2000, 13). Although zoos also existed in other cultural locations (China, for example), the United States and its development have been rooted in the Western European tradition and it is best to examine the role that the zoo played within this particular context. Thus, the experiential aspect of the zoo is an actual zone of contact (Pratt, 1997), although heavily mediated and controlled, between human and nonhuman animals. As we are increasingly separated from the natural world, the zoo becomes a haven for those “natural” experiences that capitalist society does not offer.

Berger further asserts that, “a zoo is a place where as many species and varieties of animal as possible are collected in order that they can be seen, observed, studied” (Berger, 1980, p. 23). The zoo, as a social space, is invested in scientific Truths and the divisions that demarcate human and nonhuman is invested in mediated power relationships (Morgan, 2000, p. 276). Although many claim the scientific and public missions of zoos, one cannot escape the problematic nature of locking up a living thing within a confined space, supposedly mirroring and simulating a “natural” environment.

However you look at these animals, even if the animal is up against the bars, less than a foot from you, looking outwards in the public direction, *you are looking at something that has been rendered completely marginal*; and all the concentration you can muster will never be enough to centralize it (Berger, 1980, p. 24).

These types of experiential experiences with nonhuman animals further legitimate the larger discursive constructions of nonhuman animals as something to be gazed upon, dissected, abused, neglected, and caged. All of these examples of cultural representation however, build a regime of truth around our understanding of the nonhuman animal. These various discourses that surround the animal are thus linked in a discursive practice

that effectively situates the nonhuman outside of human experience or intellectual domains.

Despite the European obsession to solidify categories that separated human and nonhuman, there were ruptures that emerged. Richard Nash (2003) explored the tensions from those “things” that defied definitions and classifications. He takes us on a journey through the world of the 18th century wild person (the pygmy, the castaway, the feral child) who appeared in journal descriptions, narrative fictions, scientific treatises, and philosophical explorations. Because this *wild human* defied classification, this illuminates the notion that the identity of “human” was never fixed. In this way, “literary and scientific discourses interact with one another as part of the process by which culture constructs a particular notion of what counts as ‘human’” (Nash, 2000, p. 7). Building on Habermas’ Citizen of the Enlightenment (steeped in reason, learned, propertied, and bourgeois), Nash juxtaposes this with the notion of the wild human that defied dominant conventions, categories, and cultural/social locations. However, other historians also argued the idea of the “monster” (as those born with physical deformities were often called during the 17th century) also challenged the categories of “human”. As the historian Zakiya Hanafi (2000) argued,

the monster threatens to destabilize all order, to break down all hierarchies. Monsters stink of the feral and the forest, of that space outside of the law...[and]...function as representations of the other face of humanity, some bestial or demonic alter ego that must be repudiated and effaced in order for the authentically human being to assert its civilized selfhood. (pp. 2-4)

These historical examples force us to dig much deeper in to how *Other* humans have been constructed. However, the last point to emerge out of scholarship within the animal studies genre is speciesism.

Speciesism

Racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism and ageism have all been established as ideological features of contemporary society (McLaren, 2006). However, what is often omitted is *speciesism*, an important function in justifying how we dominate nonhuman animals. As Cary Wolfe (2003) argues,

Current critical practice, for all its innovation and progressive ethical and political agendas, takes for granted and reproduces a rather traditional version of what I will call the discourse of species—a discourse that, in turn, reproduces the institution of speciesism. (p. 2)

As defined by Peter Singer, speciesism “is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (Singer, 2002, p. 6). This discourse of speciesism pervades the representations of nonhuman animals. As racism, sexism, and classism operate independently and collectively, speciesism needs to be included as one of the ways in which oppression is reproduced and should be guiding framework for analysis. (Gaard, 2001; Warren & Erkal, 1997).

Connected to speciesism are anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, or the notion that human animals should rightfully dominate all of life on this planet. Like

anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism also needs to be better contextualized within the educational literature, as children's literature, for example, contains many representations of nonhuman animals (Gomez-Zwiep & Straits, 2006). Because the construction of the *Other* exists within this broader cultural and academic environment, anthropocentric ideologies need to be deconstructed by educational scholars in exploring how they help reify ideologies of domination, along with how it reproduces Eurocentric hegemony over the social and natural world. Nonhuman animals become a lens in which we project our social norms, expectations, understandings, and frameworks onto them (Daston & Mitman, 2005).

Simply defined, anthropomorphism, "is the word used to describe the belief that animals are essentially like humans, and it is usually applied as a term of reproach, both intellectual and moral" (Daston & Mitman, 2005, p. 2). For example, when we look at a dog, we will assign human qualities, maybe portraying his look as "sad" or place nonhuman animals in our own roles as humans, such as in our occupations or familial roles. Anthropomorphism extends the idea that, "animals are imbued with humanlike intentions, motivations and goals" instead of existing our own frameworks and understandings of them (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007, p. 864). Serpell (2005) argues further that the development of anthropomorphism has serious consequences in the ways we interact with nonhumans.

By enabling our ancestors to attribute human thoughts, feelings, motivations, and beliefs to other species, it opened the door to the incorporation of some animals into the human social milieu, first as pets and ultimately as domestic dependents. In fact...without anthropomorphic thinking neither pet keeping nor animal domestication would have even been possible. (p. 124)

Anthropomorphism relies heavily on the human/animal binary and because humans have been able to nurture a relationships based upon domination⁶, this has meant that we were in a unique position to project our qualities and social systems onto nonhumans (Serpell, 2005).

Whether oppressive practices are enacted towards human or nonhumans, these need to be challenged, as they are all features of oppressive social systems.⁷ As Gaard (2001) argues,

Speciesism is a form of oppression that parallels and reinforces other forms of oppression. These multiple systems—racism, classism, sexism, speciesism—are not merely linked, mutually reinforcing systems of oppression: they are different faces of the same system. (p. 20)

⁶ I am hesitant to say that nonhumans have not resisted human orderings and ideologies in fundamental ways. See specifically, Arluke, A. & Clinton S. (1996). *Regarding animals*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, and Haraway, D. (2008). *When species meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

⁷ Although she does not deal with nonhumans specifically, Elaine Riley-Taylor argues from an ecofeminist perspective that situates us within a reciprocal relationship with the environment. This helps demonstrate the interrelated nature of all forms of oppression. See, Riley-Taylor E. (2002), *Ecology, spirituality, and education: Curriculum for relational knowing*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. Also see, Strzalkowski, J. (2007) Perspectives on ecofeminism. *Educational Studies* 41(2), 175-178.

Gaard makes an effective argument about the interrelated nature of the various forms of oppression that exist simultaneously. Many scholars have privileged some forms of oppression over others and have not helped us demonstrate the multiple ways in which oppression is reproduced in a highly amorphous and symbolic late-capitalist society. Although speciesism is in direct relationship to the nonhuman, it further illuminates how the *Other* is constructed and cannot be separated from other forms of oppressive practices. As the late French theorist Jean Baudrillard (1994) argued,

Animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed. A logic parallel to that of racism. An objective animal 'reign' has only existed since Man has existed. It would take too long to redo the genealogy of their respective statuses, but the abyss that separates them today, the one that permits us to send beasts, in our place, to respond to the terrifying universes of space and laboratories, the one that permits the liquidation of species even as they are archived as specimens in the African reserves or in the hell of zoos—since there is no more room for them in our culture than there is for the dead...this abyss that separates them follows domestication, just as true racism follows slavery. (p. 133)

As the passage demonstrates, Baudrillard saw parallels to the treatment of oppressed humans with nonhumans, making the integral link between speciesism and other forms of oppression.

Resisting the Human/Nonhuman Binary: *Becoming-Animal*

Although often constructed as dense, esoteric theoretical work, there have been philosophers and other academics that have tried to rethink the boundaries that separate human and nonhuman. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were critical of how “animal” was located in Western culture and they argued that, “society and the state need animal characteristics to use for classifying people” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 239). However, we need to be careful not to affirm the metaphorical nature of “animal” that treats them as *objects of study* rather than a living thing with their own purposes that sit outside of human understandings and conceptualizations (Berland, 2008). Some scholars have suggested that their claims reflected this standard treatment of nonhumans that situates animal studies as, “as an abstract, esoteric, jargon-laden, insular, non-normative, and apolitical discipline” (ICAS, n.d.).

The question to indeed ask is simple: does Deleuze and Guattari’s *becoming-animal* provide an interesting blueprint for how we can transcend our boundaries and think *differently* about nonhuman animals (Brown, 2007; Lawlor, 2008)? Can these occur through critical creative projects, theoretical investigations, the written form and direct action political projects?⁸ When speaking of those who have chosen to know nonhuman animals in less oppressive ways, Mitman (2005) argues, it is “not just of the elephant’s abilities to transcend individual experience but of [the researchers] abilities...to cross the species divide” (p. 176). In this way, researchers have developed “deep identifications

⁸ For a treatment of direct action politics, see DeLeon, A. (2008). Oh no, not the “A” word! Towards an anarchism for education. *Educational Studies* 44(2), 122-141, or, Day, R. (2004). From hegemony to affinity: The political logic of the new social movements. *Cultural Studies* 18(5), 716-748.

with their chosen subjects” and have attempted to cross and challenge the human/nonhuman binary (Daston & Mitman, 2005, p. 7). This is the *becoming* process that Deleuze and Guattari envision occurs by engaging the nonhuman through writing. Metaphorically, *becoming* is about questioning us as human subjects and attempting to write from a different position. In a sense, trying to see and write the world (at least our understandings of it) in new and critical ways. Brown (2007) argues that this means, “engaging ethically with others who do not share our forms of language and thought” (p. 276). In other words, as Lawlor (2008) boldly proclaims, “we must stop being human” (p. 170) and expand the notion of “auto-affection”, a human’s supposed ability to hear speech as soon as we utter it and reflect upon this phenomenon (Lawlor, 2008: p. 170).

What do I hear if not my ‘self’? I hear the voices of the animals. When I hear myself speak, I also inseparably hear the gnashing of the teeth of an animal in the agony of death. The voice of the animal is in me, and thereby I undergo the ways that animals change or become. We have gone from auto-affection to becoming (Lawlor, 2008: p. 170).

To explore this further, Deleuze and Guattari also argue that nonhumans exist outside of the ideological, mental, and physical spaces we are forced to inhabit during late capitalism.

This becoming side of the nonhuman animal is best represented through the literary form. For example,

to become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all of its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p.13)

For Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka’s work demonstrates how an author can transcend some of the limits imposed by a capitalist system that has territorialized our bodies and minds. These territories emerge in ways such as the Protestant work ethic, consumerism, normative discourses, gender boundaries, sexuality and racism. When they write of a “continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves”, (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p.13), this completely rejects and de-centers the traditional notion that experiences can be reduced to capitalist abstractions (such as paper currency) or that our work should be about personal advancement. *Becoming-animal* is about trying to transcend our own social limitations and boundaries in creating new spaces for resistance and transformations to occur.

Through becoming, we join with the other animal in a zone of proximity that dissolves our identities and the boundaries that we set up between us. This process disturbs and disrupts our usual ontological categories. The resultant zone is a field where novelty and creativity can occur. New ways of relating to one another proliferate here. These creations are the possession of neither entity participating in the becoming; they are created by the shared event of becoming itself. The novel ‘lines of flight’ that are formed in this zone have the power to transform us. We are significantly altered by this exchange with the other animal. In the process, the human being moves out of a position of

dominance. She slips out of the position of centrality that enabled her to establish the binary of human-animal to begin with (Brown, 2007: p. 261-262).

Again, this is why Deleuze and Guattari refer to Kafka's animals that,

never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their forms as well as from their expressions, from the signifier that formalized them. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p.13)

This seems to resonate with how *becoming* transcends the spaces we currently inhabit to levels and zones that push our collective social subconscious.

Turning to Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*, Deleuze and Guattari argue (1987) that this celebrated novel,

in its entirety is one of the greatest masterpieces of becoming; Captain Ahab has an irresistible becoming-whale, but one that bypasses the pack or the school; operating directly through a monstrous alliance with the Unique, the Leviathan, *Moby-Dick*. (p.243)

Becoming-animal then is a way that barriers are broken between human and nonhuman and occurs through artistic representations and the act of writing (Baker, 2000; Lawlor, 2008). "The painter and the musician do not imitate the animal, they *become-animal* at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, at the deepest level of their concord with Nature" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.305). Deleuze and Guattari are arguing that, in writing and representing nonhumans, we are also deterritorializing our sense of self by undergoing a "metamorphosis," "which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself [*sic*]" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.35). In this way, "we become animal so that animal becomes, not human, but something else" (Lawlor, 2008: p. 178).

Becoming-animal pushes us to see and experience ideas we may never have thought of alone. "If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 240). By traversing writing in ways that question our own subjectivities or the imperatives of empirically based research, we fundamentally change ourselves and can be linked to ways in which writing helps foster a self-reflective, critical and vibrant society (Ambrosio, 2008; Holman Jones, 2005). "For Deleuze and Guattari, the criterion for a successful becoming therefore is that something is written down, that by writing the becoming down one 'conserves' the formulas that will allow others to become and to cross thresholds" (Lawlor, 2008: p. 178). Baker further argues that this is an, "un-humaning of the human [and] happens in many areas of human experience" (Baker, 2000, p.102). This is also challenged through various practices that we participate in.

For example, because I have a feline companion, does that mean I am subjected to the territorialized spaces capitalism engenders, or does writing as a process set me free from this psychological bondage? As Shukin (2009) wrote, "becoming-animal is not to be confused with actual animals, and certainly not with those 'Oedipal pets' that represent for Deleuze and Guattari the most contemptible breed of molar, domesticated

animal” (p. 30). There is not an easy answer to the predicament that Deleuze and Guattari place all of us in, but is a paradox or a challenge to our embodiment of radical theories of knowing. We must always be mindful of the false *becomings* of market culture along with the idea that the rhizomatic nature of contemporary capitalism makes the notion of *becoming* even more problematic. To use Shukin’s (2009) words, how do we resist the “sorcery of market culture” (p. 32)? Maybe *becoming-animal* can be seen as a continuum of unlearning capitalist frameworks while at the same time opening new doors of knowledge which fundamentally question our current reality, or embodying “pure intensities” that, “are never permanently attached to molar organisms but are rather virtual attractors of their potential becomings” (Shukin, 2009, p. 30).

By examining these challenging philosophical arguments, it can be argued that agency still rests with us, reinforcing the metaphorical and symbolic nature of the nonhuman, denying them active participation in constructing and mediating their (and our) social worlds.

This emphasis on the malleability of the animal subject (which is neither subject nor form) reinforces the assumption that meaning is produced by and within the human subject [and] our connection with them can only be asserted through a reaffirmation of their difference and distinction from us. (Berland, 2008, p. 449)

Although after studying the texts of Deleuze and Guattari, it appears to me glaringly apparent that they were openly hostile to the simplistic understanding that humans have constructed about nonhumans. They are pushing us to deterritorialize our bodies and minds.

The metamorphosis is a sort of conjunction of two deterritorializations, that which the human impose on the animal by forcing it to flee or to serve the human, but also that which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself [*sic*] (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 35)

Because of this, we can still locate political and theoretical struggle in their notion of *becoming* because a human undergoes fundamental changes when exposed to new ways of thinking about the world through reciprocal relationships with others. In this way *becoming*,

is a zigzag in which I become other so that the other may become something else, but this becoming something else is possible only if a work (*œuvre*) is produced. It seems to me that no one has sufficiently recognized this fact: for Deleuze and Guattari, a becoming is successful only if writing results. Without the tangible result of a creation, becoming fails. (Lawlor, 2008: p. 170)

Becoming-animal can be a location for struggle, pushing us to engage the nonhuman in the radical project of critiquing and envisioning something new. We can locate this within the creative process of writing and thinking that transcends coercion and domination and moves towards a holistically natural world.

Conclusion

Animal studies can offer new interpretations of how nonhuman animals have been constructed by Western discourses of science and rationality and critique the ways in which animals are employed through cultural representations, discourses of science, or through experimentation. It is a radical departure from what we know and understand about nonhuman animals and forces us to rethink their representations in a variety of contexts. Examining the representations of those “mysterious things” that sit outside of our ontological and epistemological experiences gives us a deeper understanding into how human beings come to construct our social world. Often understood in simplistic ways, such as “wild” and “savage”, the nonhuman is *the Other*, carefully placed on display for the gaze of Western Enlightenment science, in both “scientific” contexts, like laboratories and zoos, to cultural representations, such as in film and literature. As I have demonstrated in this article, many scholars see parallels in the way nonhuman animals are represented and constructed to the human *Other* that has legitimated and fueled oppressive social practices.

Whatever the context, narrowly held views about the inferiority of the nonhuman allows exploitive industries to flourish and other misrepresentations about animal testing, vivisections and other practices directed towards nonhumans go virtually ignored. These, of course, feed off of the larger discourses that comprise human understandings of the nonhuman *Other*. For educators, this is quite profound. As critical scholars expose some of the underlying oppressive features of human society, the nonhuman needs to be included in these critical analyses as a new frontier in understanding oppressive social practices and their ecological consequences. However, the discourse of speciesism keeps these practices and representations firmly in the psyche of most of us, allowing the testing and consumption of nonhumans at an alarming pace. Fortunately, Deleuze and Guattari gave us something to ponder and question. They forced us to examine the notion of *becoming* that tries to break boundaries and transcend our own limitations by way of the creative process of writing and other artistic productions. Through *becoming*, we undergo a metamorphosis that forces us to reconsider what it means to indeed be *human*.

Although most scholarship privileges humans over nonhumans, this position reveals its anthropocentric presuppositions that forcibly place human systems, emotions, and other social mores onto the bodies of nonhuman animals. However, popular culture is filled with anthropomorphic depictions of the nonhuman, as fish, dogs, elephants and a litany of other nonhuman animals talk and dance on the big screen for our amusement, forever solidifying human anthropomorphic ideologies. Despite these challenges, there are critical voices questioning our role in oppressing nonhumans. Hopefully, this paper, and other scholarship in the field, will begin to pave the way for new conversations to emerge that examine social problems outside of the human milieu, expressing a more holistic and less hierarchical “critical” theory that encompasses a wide range of traditions and critiques. Educators need to be mindful of a wide variety of theories that can push us in new directions in thinking about how systems of domination are interrelated. By looking at nonhumans, we may discover deeper meanings about who we are and the social practices that engender a relationship based upon domination, instead of one dedicated to rigorous critique, social transformation and less coercive social experiences.

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