AFFECTIVE REVERBERATIONS: 
THE METHODOLOGICAL EXCESSES 
OF A RESEARCH ASSEMBLAGE

Adrian D. Martin

ABSTRACT

This chapter decenters the methodological unfolding of a qualitative research study on mainstream teachers of English learners, shifting from a sociocultural emphasis on individuality and agency towards affect as a productive post-structural concept. The researcher, participants, and findings are positioned as mutually constituted elements in an enmeshed entanglement of discursive processes, material contexts, animate bodies, and social norms and practices. The work employs concepts introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987): the rhizome, assemblage, and affect. The chapter discusses how the activity that constituted the research study was informed and influenced by affect that reverberated beyond the scope of the immediately observable. The multiple positionalities, past history, and values of the researcher and participant contributed to the methodological decision-making during data collection and analysis in conscious and unconscious ways. Affective distributions permeated throughout the study, contributing to the functioning of activity among and between the elements of the study. Ultimately, elements of the study contributed in ways that extended beyond the normative constructions of research, researcher, and participant. Elements affected and were affected, contributing to methodological excess, insights beyond the scope of normative systemic inquiry. This chapter demonstrates the productiveness of rhizomatic concepts to decenter the elements of a research study and affect as a productive construct to understand systematic inquiry. This move intentionally disrupts traditional conceptions of research and researcher objectivity, explicitly attending to the...
affective interplay among elements of the research assemblage and how this interplay functions as a primary means of scholarly engagement.

Keywords: Affect; rhizomatics; Deleuze; posthuman; post-qualitative; English learners

Among contemporary theorists, philosophers, and social scientists, the construct of \( I \) has emerged as a narrow, thorny, and limiting notion. Drawing from the work of the post-structuralists in the latter half of the twentieth century (e.g., Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Barthes, Deleuze and Guattari), intellectuals have leveled multiple critiques against prevalent constructs of \( I \) and the dominant connotations it assumes. Whether in written texts or oral speech, the third vowel of the alphabet references a presumed speaker. \( I \) is understood as a knowing subject, self-aware, and capable of truthfully relating thought and experience (Ellingson, 2009; Peters & Burbules, 2004; St Pierre, 2004). Thus, the \( I \) conveyed through language is a human \( I \), and as such, is bound by commonsense understandings and discursive configurations regarding what being a human means (Kristeva, 1984; Weedon, 1987). From the perspective of humanism, this suggests a stable, rational, coherent subject who can engage with the world autonomously and with agency (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013; St Pierre, 2011).

Yet, as a material or ontological reality, the postmodern world renders fallacious the \( I \) of humanism. Despite two world wars, nuclear proliferation, and the systematic exploitation and destruction of the natural environment, the human (\( I \)) continues to participate in (and perpetuate) oppressive systems of governance and rule detrimental not only to the human species, but to global ecology itself. Given this immanent reality, the humanist construct of \( I \) fails to encompass the contradictions, differences, irrationalities, and incoherencies maintained and enacted by the self (Braidotti, 2013; Cherryholmes, 1988). Ultimately, this highlights the \( I \) as a floating signifier that changes across space and time (Derrida, 1997; St Pierre, 2000). As this lens suggests, \( I \) is not anchored to the signified humanistic construction of self (Palmer, 1997; Powell, 2007).

Such a critique of the \( I \) of humanism has contributed to the theorization of non-normative ontologies and subjectivities as nuanced, material, and multiple constructions of self (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Strom, 2015). Despite these emerging theorizations, qualitative inquiry in general has historically maintained the humanistic notion of self, even though qualitative research initially was considered a response to the crisis of representation in the positivistic underpinnings of quantitative research presupposing a stable, rational, and knowing subject (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In quantitative inquiry, both researcher and researched are constructed as the \( I \) of humanism, quantifiable, fixed, and capable of analytic dissection (St Pierre, 2011). For many works of qualitative inquiry, emergent interpretations of self as mutable, performative constructions are glaringly absent from theoretical frameworks employed to study human phenomena and from the researcher’s understanding of self as a co-participant in the research process.
The purpose of this chapter is to decenter the methodological unfolding of a qualitative research study I conducted on mainstream teachers of English learners (ELs) (Martin, 2016), employing an emergent construct of self that shifts from a sociocultural emphasis on individuality and agency toward affects as a productive, post-structural concept (Coleman, 2012). Like much qualitative research, self-study, autoethnography, narrative inquiry and other forms of intimate scholarship have historically positioned the researcher as agentic, and emergent themes or findings as central analytic foci (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). In contrast, the research discussed in this chapter positions researcher, participants, and findings as mutually constituted elements in an enmeshed entanglement of discursive processes, material contexts, animate bodies, social norms, and practices. This move away from dominant conceptualizations of qualitative research deconstructs the positivistic, objective reporting of a temporally organized sequence of events, research findings, and researcher and participants as active, mutually discrete actors (the humanistic conception of I) who enact their parts in the methodological undertaking as free, individuated selves (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013). By drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic framework (1987), this chapter positions these identified (and unidentified) elements of a research study as a research assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2014; Strom & Martin, 2017a), functioning via mutually affective processes that reverberate as synchronic and diachronic phenomena (Strom & Martin, 2013). Rather than focusing on what elements of the research assemblage are, attention is given to how discourse, materiality, context, and positionality enabled affective productions, shaping the research assemblage itself. In the following section, I describe the theoretical framework that informed this work. I then discuss the methodologies and analysis employed to construct the provided understandings. I conclude with a discussion on the methodological, theoretical, and practical significance of this work for qualitative researchers.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

The non-normative ontologies and cartographic representations of experience and phenomena discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus (1987) are productive theoretical constructs to decenter I from humanistic denotations. Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic framework constructs experience and self as enmeshed in a continuous, non-linear, morphic process of evo/devolutions intimately connected with materiality and discourse, entangled in spatial and temporal locations (Alvermann, 2000; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). Rhizomatics disrupts humanism’s conception of the self as autonomous and discrete; instead, the construct of a recognizable self is not a defined identity, but an always emergent and connected subjectivity positioned in accord to what one does, not what one is (Semetsky, 2006; Strom & Martin, 2017a). Accordingly, rhizomatics provides a multitude of thought constructs researchers can strategically employ to “attend to the ways in which social realities are made through methods, and might be made in other ways” (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 11).
This study employed the Deleuzian-Guattarian concepts of the rhizome, assemblage, and affect to work with the data and recognize the connections among the elements that informed the functioning of the research study (Strom & Martin, 2017a). Decentering myself from the normative construction of researcher provided an opportunity to shed light on the interrelatedness, heterogeneity, and the mutual co-construction of elements in the study that contributed towards the functioning of something (Strom, 2015). As such, emphasis is placed on how elements work in composition (the assemblage), their connectedness (the rhizome), and the ongoing emergence of subjectivities within and among the processes of analytic inquiry. Rhizomatics suggests that such inter/intra-action extends through processes of affective productions; affecting and being affected by others stimulates activity (Strom & Martin, 2017a), in contrast to dominant, sociocultural emphases on agency and autonomy (Fox & Alldred, 2014). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), affect permeates immanently, within the realm of the material universe rather than as a transcendental, metaphysical “truth.” Putting rhizomatics to work forefronts affect as an integral element in the unfolding of this qualitative inquiry. In the following, I describe the employed rhizomatic concepts.

**Rhizomes**

The rhizome is a conceptual configuration proposed by Deleuze and Guattari that contrasts normative, reductive, and reproductive forms of thought (Strom & Martin, 2013). Literally, a plant tubular such as ginger or crabgrass, rhizomes unfurl as a-centered, non-hierarchical networks composed of multiple connections with multiple (and supple) points of entry and departure. The rhizome thus has neither a starting nor ending point (Martin & Strom, 2017). The nexus is always in the middle, ensconced by other, multiple rhizomatic connections. Conceiving of activity (such as research) as rhizomatic enables a recognition of connections among diverse elements at multiple junctures across diverse plateaus (e.g., material, psychological, cultural, discursive) (Colebrook, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). While traditional models of phenomena articulate closed frameworks for discourse, observable behavior, or spatial relationships among individuals or communities (Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), a rhizomatic lens positions these as expansive, traversing multiple spheres of immanence.

This orientation serves as a methodological affordance in qualitative research to describe the interconnectedness of a myriad of variables situated in the “blind spots” of traditional forms of analysis. Contemplating the research enterprise as rhizomatic can highlight how formal elements within the study (such as the participants, collected data, and other contextual elements) are intertwined with seemingly disparate elements or elements that extend beyond the scope of the immediately discernable (e.g., past history, dominant social norms or discourses, politics, anticipated futurities) and those seemingly absent. Educational researchers who methodologically employ and think with the rhizome can attend to how they themselves inform and are part and parcel of the confluence...
of elements that inform a research study. The rhizomatic amalgamation of these elements function as an assemblage, which I turn to next.

**Assemblage**

Deleuze and Guattari describe rhizomatic connections that function as an enabling or productive capability as an assemblage. Assemblages are non-linear renderings that articulate the connectedness of elements and how these function to do something (Strom, 2015). Less about what something is, assemblages foster insight on how phenomena emerge and the webs of composition that enable such capabilities. Individual elements in an assemblage are themselves composed of multiple assemblages. Thus, elements (themselves multiple assemblages) work or function collectively. As with the rhizome, the assemblage is unencumbered by the confines of space and time; elements beyond the scope of the immediately discernable or observable can contribute towards the functioning of something that is readily manifest.

From a rhizomatic perspective, the multiple aspects and elements that inform a formal study or inquiry are a research assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2014). Within research assemblages, the emphasis is on how multiple elements interact to enable the production of systemic inquiry rather than what each element is. Traditional perspectives on research construct the production of results or findings via a striated process of data collection and analysis that follows a narrow, linear course of investigation (Merriam, 2009). In contrast, the research assemblage attends to the multiple variables that contribute towards the functioning of the research process. Further, conceiving of the process as an assemblage decenters the normatively constructed prime actors. The researcher and participants (each psychological, physiological, sociocultural, and emotional assemblages) are elements among elements in the processes of systematic investigation. The rhizomatic lens de-emphasizes the historical narrative and discourse on agency and autonomy that individuals possess, and instead attends to how, as sentient beings, individuals are enveloped in fields of affect.

**Affect**

Affect refers to the non-conscious automaticity of feeling (interpreted as emotion) and sensory override that is translinguistic, beyond the domain of the rational, the immediately foreseen, and the logically understood (Braidotti, 2005/2006; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Martin & Strom, 2017). It suggests a change of state or capacity (Massumi, 1987) and can emerge at multiple locations, such as psychological, emotional, mental, physical, or social (Fox & Alldred, 2014). Given that there is no discrete subject (St Pierre, 2004), affective productions surface in composition with other elements of an assemblage, collectively feeling in contrast to agentic actions on the part of one individual or thing upon another. This epistemological shift contributes to the methodological decentering of both researcher and participants, holding each as elements that connect within the research assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2014).
Adopting such a perspective enables a complex, nuanced, and multifaceted consideration for the emergence of phenomena that extends beyond cause-and-effect models or linear casualty (Ellingson, 2009). Instead, the transparency of the openly partial, positioned, and positioning accounts of activity within a research assemblage that is afforded via a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens attends to the interplay among and between researcher, participant, context, data, and the host of other elements that coalesce to offer what traditional qualitative inquiry maintains as “research findings” (Merriam, 2009). As such, “findings” are an emergent construction of the rhizomatic network under investigation, operating and functioning as a collectivity of affects, or affective productions.

Working through the research data with these rhizomatic concepts and constructing the multiplicity of elements that informed this study as a research assemblage demonstrated that the scope of activity that both I and the participant enacted was neither limited to the material context or discursive elements of engagement. The unconscious, ongoing, and spontaneously emerging series of affective productions amongst the elements of the research assemblage were integral to the production of the originally conceived findings. Indeed, rhizomatic concepts enabled me to decenter myself and attend to the affective interplay between myself and the elements of the research assemblage. In the next section, I discuss the processes of decentering my initial investigation and how analysis shed light on affect as a methodological excess.

**METHODOLOGY**

This inquiry is consistent with methodological approaches wherein the researcher employs philosophy to inform the flow of research activity (Korol-Ljungberg, 2016; Strom & Martin, 2013; Strom & Martin, 2017b). As such, my exploration of the unfolding of the research process with the previously discussed rhizomatic concepts was an open, experiential process wherein diverse elements (normatively held as mutually exclusive) were constructed as enmeshed in a mangled web of activity. I engaged with the process of data-walking (Eakle, 2007), recursively examining the data sources, the findings and themes generated from the initial analysis (Martin, 2016) as well as the present experiential meaning-making of self in concert with the data (Strom & Martin, 2013). Although the processes of analysis described in the forthcoming section occurred through a chronological sequence, the analytic process failed to align with any of the dominant approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). The construction of emergent themes materialized through repeated flows of analysis, layering generated meaning upon generated meaning, attending to thematic points of fusion and rupture in the data, and the eventual judgement as to which were held as most salient.

**Context and Participants**

The processes of data collection took place in Springbrooke (a pseudonym), a suburb of a major metropolitan city in the Northeastern United States. The
participant, Lucille, was a midcareer kindergarten teacher at a local elementary school. Although the Springbrooke school district was experiencing a rise in the number of students classified as ELs, at the time of the study it did not have a formal English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education program. ELs were housed in mainstream, general education classrooms and taught alongside their English proficient peers. ESL instruction was provided to ELs in a separate classroom context on a weekly basis.

As the teacher of record, Lucille had 20 students in her class, one of whom was an EL. Although she identified as a White monolingual speaker of English, throughout the study Lucille related her value for linguistic diversity, frequently commenting on her own early life experiences in a highly diverse urban community where the sounds of numerous languages being spoken featured prominently in her childhood memories. Lucille expressed great pride in her decision to become an educator. Teaching was a second career, having found her former profession in publishing as unfulfilling and devoid of meaning. Lucille expressed her desire for her students to succeed academically, and noted her efforts to promote a classroom environment that was welcoming to all students, including those for whom English was a second language.

As an element of the research assemblage, I contributed to the analytic endeavor in multiple ways beyond the normative confines of the researcher. I acted as the researcher in the formal study from which this present work is discussed. I was responsible for the methodological design, analysis, and reporting of the findings (Martin, 2016). However, in working with the concept of assemblage, I recognized myself as an element that affects and was/is affected by the research process. Indeed, my positionality, personal, and professional history, the social categories I am ascribed and those I claim, and my values and beliefs inform the construction and interpretation of the meaning-making process. I am a first generation American, the son of Cuban immigrants. I have been involved in the field of education for almost 20 years; I was a classroom teacher for over a decade and served as a language arts supervisor. I am an advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse students, for LGBTQ members of the education community, and for equity and social justice in all aspects of schooling and the educative experience. Rather than denying these elements of who I am in the chimerical pursuit of objectivity, I disclose my subjectivity in the effort to convey the trustworthiness of this work.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this study occurred in two phases. The first was throughout the spring and summer of 2015. I conducted five interviews with Lucille and observed her teaching five times. Throughout this period, I kept a researcher journal, maintained field notes of my observations, and analytic memos on my meaning-making of the data. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The subsequent data analysis phase was during the 2016–2017 academic year when I resumed my researcher journal. Whereas the former researcher journal from the initial collection period documented the sequence of events as they
unfolded, the journal in this secondary period chronicled my reflections and analysis of self as a member of the research assemblage in relation not only to Lucille, but to the other elements of the research assemblage as well. This researcher journal enabled me to make note of connections between the rhizomatic concepts in the unfolding of the study, my experiences pre- and post the initial inquiry, and the additional layers of insight emergent with the passage of time. In this inquiry, the researcher journal was the primary data source with the aforementioned sources serving to inform its contents.

Reading and rereading the discursive/material elements (transcripts, analytic memos, researcher journal) of the study facilitated decentering myself as the researcher and acknowledging myself as part of the research assemblage. I focused on how these sources (and the processes through which they were collected) were understood with Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, keeping record of instances wherein elements of the research assemblage affected and were affected. The rhizomatic framework enabled a nuanced examination of how my engagement with Lucille facilitated enactments of particular subjectivities, and by attending to moments of visceral response or change, the affective productions that surfaced throughout this process. Thus, analysis of the activity in the research assemblage attended to the connections between and among the elements of the assemblage and what these connections enabled.

An additional means of gaining insight occurred by constructing rhizomatic maps (Alvermann, 2000; Strom, 2015), suspended and momentary renderings of the elements in the research assemblage. In my researcher journal, I mapped not only material and contextual connections, but also affective connections as well. Mapping instances of affective connections highlighted the often unintentional and unconscious sensory productions that reverberated among elements in the research assemblage. Beyond the scope of the initial inquiry, these visceral impulses, productions, and co-productions echoed forth from the moment of their instantiations into the present. Ultimately, as Lather suggests (2007/2017), these unintended and frequently unexamined “excesses” of the research process (i.e., what was produced beyond the normatively identified research findings) both demonstrate the narrow scope through which traditional inquiry examines social phenomena while attending to the multiple (e.g., affective, material, discursive) plateaus through which phenomena occurs. As such, this takes up Braidotti’s (2013) charge to engage in an affirmative politics both through simultaneous critique and creativity, resisting the status quo (i.e., the limited nature of traditional inquiry) while creating alternatives (i.e., attending and reporting on the excesses of the research assemblage).

**EMERGENT UNDERSTANDINGS**

This section sheds light on how affect permeated the processes of systemic inquiry. Lucille and I not only affected one another, but also the research process itself. The connections between her and I, including our histories, interactions, and perspectives, co-constructed the emergent understandings and themes generated by the study. Whereas in the reporting of the initial inquiry
I partook as the researcher, here I decenter this role and position myself as participant among participants. To illustrate this shift, I present the findings as rhizomatic meanderings, analogous to an acentered and non-hierarchical navigation through the research assemblage. I report how affective productions reverberated through the research assemblage across diverse contexts, temporally unencumbered. Undoubtedly, affect was an unavoidable, essential, and integral component of the research assemblage. I commence by discussing Lucille’s affective response and pedagogical adjustments in response to my own affect. I then report how the research context enabled affective productions within myself and how this reverberated into the research process. I conclude with an account of how participation in the study enabled affective connections for Lucille (and myself) between our present subjectivities as education professionals and our previous experiences as students.

**Personal / Pedagogical Affective Distributions**

At the time of the study, Lucille was teaching one EL, Sharon, who had emigrated from Israel with her family and was in the US a few weeks. As the only speaker of Hebrew in the class, Sharon was linguistically isolated. Lucille indicated that she provided much individualized attention to Sharon, frequently monitoring her own rate of speech, modeling instructions with hand gestures, and employing visual images and illustrations as frequently as possible to support comprehension and language acquisition. Yet, Lucille’s prime emphasis was supporting Sharon’s sense of comfort and inclusiveness in the classroom. While she indicated that she did not possess formal training or professional development to teach ELs, Lucille was nonetheless cognizant of the need to attend to Sharon socioemotionally.

I empathized with Lucille. Although my previous teaching experience was predominantly with Spanish-speaking ELs (and as a native speaker of Spanish, I possessed a shared linguistic background with most of my students), there were two EL students of another language background that I taught during my novice years. Like Lucille, I taught these children in an early childhood classroom, and like Sharon, they (a brother and sister) were the only speakers of their heritage language (Chinese) in the class. Like Lucille, I recalled the challenge to determine how to support these students academically and linguistically. While at the time I did not possess formal insight of pedagogical strategies to modify instruction for ELs, I did possess a first-hand understanding of the processes of learning a second language. I connected with these students (as I connected with Sharon) on a personal level, as a former student in the processes of learning academic content and English. But as a teacher, I connected with Lucille, recognizing the challenges (and opportunities) afforded by linguistic diversity in the classroom.

These recollections of past professional (and personal) experiences mangled with affective productions contributed to the meaning-making of my observations of Lucille’s practice and the discourses from her interviews. As a former urban teacher myself, I was familiar with the structural and sociocontextual
aspects of her school setting. I also connected with Lucille’s anecdotes on lesson planning, classroom management, and grappling with an imposed instructional model. Decentering my role of researcher, I was able to connect with the context of Lucille’s professional environment and her role as an early childhood educator and teacher of ELs. Nonetheless, moments of disconnect emerged, wherein I found myself unable to comprehend Lucille’s pedagogical decision-making in lieu of her discourse aimed at enabling Sharon to feel comfortable and welcomed in the class.

Having observed an instructional episode where Lucille randomly called on students by drawing popsicle sticks labeled with the students’ names from a cup, I experienced a sense of anxiety for the students, but especially for Sharon who, if called upon, would be expected to verbally participate in a public setting and in a language in which she was not yet fluent. I recognized that this affective response was potentially triggered by my own early schooling experiences as someone for whom English is a second language and as a former teacher of ELs. These affective productions in the well of my memory reverberated into that present moment. In an interview with Lucille subsequent to this observation, we discussed classroom management techniques and I inquired about the practice of randomly calling on students. The multiplicity that informed my positionalities shed light on how the very asking of this question was undergirded by my own affective production, and despite my defined role as a researcher who was supposed to engage in an objective protocol, the values I maintained as a teacher positioned the pedagogical practice I observed as undesirable and linguistically (as well as socioemotionally) inappropriate for Sharon.

Lucille’s response to my inquiry suggested her own affective production; she appeared to have not expected my question on this instructional practice. She indicated that she would never embarrass a student or call on one who was not ready to respond. Her quick response, heightened pitch of voice, and eagerness to change the subject suggested that my own affective response at the formerly observed classroom practice reverberated with her own (at that present moment) in reply to my question. In subsequent classrooms observations, Lucille did not randomly call on any students through the use popsicles sticks or other means.

Affective Contemplations/Convictions

Prior to this study, my former experiences as a K12 student and my professional experiences as a teacher were exclusively in urban schools, and I approached the research from the dual lens of urban student and urban teacher. As a student, I was fortunate in that the schools I attended were well-funded, and I acknowledge the numerous teachers who promoted my learning and academic development. Yet, when I began my teaching career, I became familiar with a variety of school contexts that reflected the characteristics more frequently associated with urban education: a lack of basic materials, outdated instructional texts, rigid pacing guides that dictated the sequence of instruction, physical environments that (at times) were less than optimal as conducive to learning, and periodic lack of appropriate temperature control for the summer heat and
the cold of winter (I recall instances when students and teachers would need to wear winter coats in the classroom). There was no recess, lunch periods were short, and should the lunch monitors be amenable to it, students were permitted to play for a few minutes on a playground that was in actuality a parking deck. My students (predominantly immigrants and children of color) would run on the concrete amidst the cacophony of cars and pedestrians on the streets beyond the school gate. Such observations, experiences, and my work with children and families at or below the poverty level, deeply informed my eventual scholarly focus on issues of educational equity.

My work with Lucille was, thus, my experiential introduction to education in a suburban context. The aim of my research was not centered on similarities and differences between teachers and students in urban and suburban contexts. Yet, analysis of the entries in my researcher journal and my reflections on Lucille’s professional context in a suburban school district highlighted a variety of affective responses to that context that surfaced throughout the process, and how these served to inform my future research.

Filtered through the lens of my background in urban education, I viewed the Springbrooke district as a privileged, even idyllic learning context. Recess took place on the expansive grounds filled with trees and green grass next to the school, devoid of the noise of traffic. The children played enthusiastically in a space unencumbered by fences or gates. The walls of the school were graced with student work in well-lit hallways; the staff was courteous and friendly, and the students learned in classrooms outfitted with the latest technological resources. My observations of Lucille highlighted a pleasure in regular classroom routines and in the teaching and learning process. But as encouraged (or even enthralled) as I was by this context, I experienced a visceral sting, a growing acknowledgement of how I, as a teacher, and my own prior students had not experienced schooling within such an environment, and an awareness that this was inextricably linked with socio-economic status and race. Below the surface level of my awareness and the formal processes of data analysis was an affective production surfacing from my experimental engagement with what teaching and learning are like for those in middle- and upper-class communities.

Decentering myself as a researcher enabled recognition of how my analytic conclusions to better attend to the learning experiences of linguistically diverse children emerged not only from the intellectual endeavor of analyzing the discursive/material data sources (field notes of my observations of Lucille, her interview transcripts, and my researcher journal), but also from my affective response to what I had experienced as I engaged not solely within the research assemblage but also within the assemblage of Lucille’s school environment. I was affected by what I saw and what I experienced as much as I was affected by the inequitable learning conditions in my early career; my conviction to work for equity and social justice in my scholarship was reaffirmed not because of a conscious, deliberate act or consideration, but instead by the affective responses that reverberated from my early career through to the present, and in my contemplation for the future.
Throughout the study, as I interviewed Lucille and inquired about her perspectives on ELs and what it was like to teach these students, she frequently reflected on aspects of her personal life and how the multiple roles or identities she possessed connected to her work as a teacher of ELs. Emergent commonalities between the two of us were undergirded by affective productions. Affect was not simply held as an element of memory; affect reverberated from our past history into the present. For Lucille, awareness of our commonalities and participation in the study reinforced her value for an inclusive and welcoming classroom for all her students. For myself, it surfaced as a lens through which I felt a kinship between our prior educative experiences.

Lucille and I had each attended urban Catholic schools in our youth. While we both shared familiarity with being a student in a context that was deeply religious and faith driven, Lucille expressed that often, discipline techniques in the school were highly inappropriate, indicating that she would never discipline her students as she and her peers were decades earlier. Suggesting that it was perhaps because that was another time (“another era”, in her words), Lucille was critical of the methods and approaches that her teachers (some of whom were clergy) employed throughout her early schooling years. Evidently, these early schooling experiences affected the way she interacted with her students in the present, not in terms of what to do, but instead in relation on what not to do with them. In listening to her words, and in reading and rereading the transcripts of her accounts, I felt what she felt, and my memory was jogged to a teacher from my own educative experience whose disciplining techniques would be described as bullying today. Like Lucille, I too drew from the well of memory (affective and incidental) to know how not to affect my own students.

DISCUSSION

The examples provided in the prior section suggest that changes, instances of emergence, and the reinforcement of perspectives did not surface from an independent exercise of agency. The unfolding of the activity in the research assemblage was prompted by multiple affective productions and responses (Fox & Alldred, 2014). Lucille’s change in instructional practice, although subtle, as an affective reverberation in response to my own affect having observed a practice of cold calling on students, including ELs. My commitment to issues of social justice and equity in education was not the result of an intellectual summation; instead, it surfaced as an affective response to my first-hand experience within Lucille’s school context. Our mutual experiences as former students in religious institutions was a source of affective influence, responding to practices that we deemed inappropriate by engaging in counter-practices in our own teaching.

These points of analysis surfaced as methodological excess (Lather, 2007/2017), something not sought, considered, or examined under the tenets of the original research study, but an element of significance nonetheless. Further, a traditional qualitative model (with the historically constructed division between
researcher and participant) and the humanistic definition of self (I) would have been unable to attend to the emergent understandings discussed in this chapter. As methodological excess, these understandings surfaced from the blind spots of normative qualitative inquiry. By thinking with theory and employment of the rhizomatic concepts, I was able to decenter my researcher self and examine my role as an element connected to other elements in the research assemblage.

This conceptual and methodological shift (from agency to affect) is a significant departure from traditional considerations of agentic capacities among or between the researcher and the research. Employing affect and the other Deleuzo-Guattarian notions as conceptual guides enabled the decentering of self/other towards a recognition of all as an entangled mesh of matter (Barad, 2007). Given the limitations of traditional methodologies to account for the complexity of social phenomena, engagement with such an approach to research and concepts of self and knowledge that break from humanistic assumptions are enabling and productive towards attending to the messiness, the irrationality, and the affective dimensions of experience that surface as visceral, autonomous responses as shaping forces in the processes of meaning making, prior to and in conjunction with conscious cognitive activity (Martin & Strom, 2017; St Pierre, 2011).

Ultimately, this shift is necessary for researchers working with intimate methodologies who desire a fine-grained analysis of the activity in the research assemblage, but also in the effort to demonstrate trustworthiness in the work. Given the automaticity of affect, it is beyond the scope of being “controlled”. Maintaining affective productions and reverberations as methodological excesses in the blind spot of qualitative inquiry perpetuates status quo, reproductive means of understanding oneself and the world itself. For methodologists committed to constructing new bodies of knowledge with which to understand social phenomena and the processes through which such understandings are developed, it is vital to move away from normative constructions of qualitative researcher, research, and participants towards perspectives attentive to the inter/interplay among diverse elements as diachronic and synchronic activity (Strom & Martin, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The methodological approach employed in this chapter demonstrates the affordances of decentering the self by thinking with Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts. It sheds light on how the self (whether researcher or participant) is always enmeshed as a member of the research assemblage. Even when feigning to assume objectivity, affect reverberates as a transconscious shaping force. Ultimately, for methodologists and researchers, attending to the self as affective rather than agentic and as affecting and being affected in the research endeavors holds much promise to provide nuanced and emergent insights. For research methodologists, and especially for researchers employing intimate approaches to inquiry, investigating instances of affective productions and reverberations draws attention to what has historically remained in the blind spots of research. As such, this chapter is a call
for researchers to decenter the elements of the research process and re-examine the trajectory of their systematic inquiries.

REFERENCES


