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## Inquiring Through and With Deleuze: Disrupting Theory and Qualitative Methods in Family Studies

*Qualitative inquiry can provide opportunities to utilize and work with theory in new and interesting ways. In this article we suggest that the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze can change, re-create, and infiltrate normative notions of family and innovate inquiry and scholarship. We begin by discussing research, theory, and methodology in family studies and the sameness and simulation present in the field. Then we move to briefly situate Deleuze within a historical and theoretical context, and we discuss immanence and difference as ideas that can disrupt and create potential. Specifically, we discuss Deleuze's concepts difference, rhizome, and becoming. Using these and other ideas, we offer some suggestions concerning how these concepts might be applied in qualitative family inquiry.*

Our purpose in writing this article is to encourage family scholars to see the productive, innovative, and creative aspects of the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze. Rather than saying that Deleuze fills a gap or provides something we lack, we would say that Deleuze offers proliferation, potential, opportunities for expansion, and—above all—creativity in

scholarly thinking. Thus, we present our article as a productive addition, not a representation of Deleuze. Additionally, we hope to provoke and initiate responses that will prod readers toward their own interactions with Deleuze and the reuse of his texts and ideas. In particular, Deleuze critiqued the image of rational thought as too dogmatic, describing it as tree branches and roots, which are clean, demarcated, and delineated. Instead, he invited us to “[take] leave of the trees . . . inventing connections that jump from tree to tree and uproot them: a whole smoothing of space, which in turn reacts back upon striated space” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 506). This smooth, unexpected, diversified, and interconnected intellectual space breaks down barriers, structures, and power, thereby allowing for new possibilities. Thus, our purpose in this article is not to build a new set of fixed methodological practices or connections but to think outside normative discourses and create multiplying differentiating concepts. We encourage readers who are excited about these ideas to apply Deleuze in a variety of different ways and to *experiment* with and through Deleuze rather than trying to simulate and reproduce representations of his ideas.

This article is organized using the concept of the plateau, put forward in one of Gilles Deleuze's collaborations with Felix Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). Deleuze suggested that a plateau does not signify but connects “planes of intensity.” Intensity is an idea used by Deleuze to describe a process of the coming together of virtual (unconscious)

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parts to express something actual (conscious). A plateau, then, is an area that becomes intense but exits before fully forming—a sexual encounter without a climax, for instance (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). In this way, Deleuze *palpates* concepts—feels them out—rather than identifying or defining them (May, 2005). We understand that our insistence on palpating intensities and dancing on plateaus with Deleuze might leave some readers unsatisfied, but we suggest that readers embrace this idea rather than dismiss it.

We present two plateaus here: (a) sameness and simulation in qualitative family research and (b) immanence and difference in Deleuze. In both cases we describe these as separate plateaus with which readers may be able to connect. In referring to sameness and simulation, we reflect on research practices that confirm, validate, represent, and sometimes simplify complex social phenomenon to fit within neatly packaged research designs. While helpful as a set of teachable, understandable, and containable set of procedures and practices, particular research designs and methodologies are valid only within certain epistemological and theoretical perspectives. We refer to these practices as conceptual sameness (i.e., circulation of the same or similar concepts and ideas) and methodological simulation (i.e., repeating other scholars' methodologies without critical reflection), arguing that, similar to other disciplines, they are also prevalent within research in family studies. The second plateau attempts to intensify the work of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze by suggesting that family scholars can apply his concepts of immanence and difference to experiment with inquiry, theories, methodological processes, and methods. The conceptual and methodological productions in this plane are surprising, frightening, creative, exciting, confusing, and unusual, and they contain a wealth of untapped conceptual and methodological potentials.

#### SAMENESS AND SIMULATION IN FAMILY STUDIES

The ideas of sameness and simulation reflect a process of creating identities, or representations, and replicating those identities to demonstrate validity. In currently accepted research practices, both qualitative and quantitative methods create identities for concepts through averages, factor analyses, thematic coding, and other highly

standardized forms of analysis. These research methods focus on ideas of mutual exclusivity, identification, sorting, classifying, and dividing, on the basis of differences from a given identity. To provide instances of this movement toward sameness and simulation in family studies, we discuss the push for the label “family science” as a means of unifying and standardizing the field.

Recent discussions in family studies suggest that family scholars are interested in examining the dominance of a narrow range of ontological and epistemological assumptions within the field. For example, recent discussions within the National Council on Family Relations and its associated journals (e.g., Lareau, 2012; LaRossa, 2012a, 2012b; LaRossa, Goldberg, Roy, Sharp, & Zvonkovic, 2014; Matthews, 2012; Roy, 2012; Zvonkovic, Sharp, & Radina, 2012) have been spawned by the reality that, although qualitative research has become more popular, the number of qualitative articles being published has not increased (LaRossa et al., 2014). Although there are many explanations for the lack of qualitative articles being published, we argue that the field is dominated by a narrow range of postpositive and realist interpretive epistemologies. In other words, our reliance on method has more to do with obtaining standards set by currently accepted (i.e., publishable) theories, methods, and epistemologies than it does with expansion, creativity, and experimentation. The recent (and previous) move to use the label “family science” rather than “family studies,” “human and family development,” and so on, signifies to us an explicit move toward the acceptance of a narrow range of qualitative methods, methodologies, theories, and epistemologies.

#### *“Family Science” as a Marker for Sameness in Methodological Approaches*

Attempts to standardize departments under the name “family science” may be efforts to add credibility to the field; however, the use of the label “science” suggests a reification of postpositivism as *the* approach with which to study families and designates epistemological paradigms outside of this “core” as outside the field (Hamon & Smith, 2014, p. 317).<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>We refer to postpositivism as a signifier for contemporary forms of positivism relying on scientific method, realism, objectivism, and generalizability.

name “family science” has been suggested because it “better reflects the rigorous methods employed in discovering and applying new knowledge” (Hamon & Smith, 2014, p. 319). The idea that some methods are rigorous (i.e., scientific) while others are not suggests a break between the rigorous (e.g., scientific, postpositive, properly performed quantitative, mixed-methods, and objectivist and systematic thematic analysis) and the nonrigorous (anything else). Naming the field represents an explicit means of controlling knowledge production, but there are also implicit rules that delineate the field, which occur in any field (Bourdieu, 1984). Indeed, technologies such as peer review, graduate education, grants, conferences, fame, and political milieus support certain epistemologies, ontologies, research, theory, and methodologies while often eschewing others (Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, Gemignani, Brodeur, & Kmiec, 2007). This is not to say that these technologies are unhelpful or unnecessary, but they are likely to contain elements that shape and even coerce the process of knowledge production and creation of regimes of truth (Foucault, 1975/1995). Thinking in this way, there might not be a direct *bias* against qualitative research in family studies; rather, there are systemic and hidden constraints within the field. We often hear that as a field we value or desire epistemological diversity, but allowing epistemological differences to guide methods, sample selection, representation, presentations, argumentative structures, and writing preferences outside of the standards created by realism and scientificism is quite different. Within this milieu researchers are left to determine how they will proceed. Deleuze caught our eye because he theorized ways in between constraint or territorialized space, as he calls it.

Ironically, the belief that standardization and increased scientificity allows for the discovery of “new knowledge” (Hamon & Smith, 2014, p. 319) has arguably resulted in the replication of the same rather than anything new. For example, we often must defend the commonsense outcomes of sophisticated studies to students or lay persons who shrug and reply, “Didn’t we already know that?” Although we typically attribute this to confirmation bias, we maintain that the replication of results is, to some extent, due to the attempted replication of method

and the acceptance of few epistemologies, methodologies, and theories.

#### *The Anselm Strauss Award*

To further illustrate methodological sameness in qualitative family research, we analyzed the papers that have received the Anselm Strauss Award, given for excellence and innovation in family qualitative research and overseen by the Qualitative Family Research Network, affiliated with the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). This award is given annually and was first given in the year 2000. Current practice for the nomination and selection of the award winner by a volunteer committee of experts in qualitative methods. In all, 16 articles have won the award over 15 years (2 articles were awarded in 2000). We might suspect that this group, then, contains some of the most “innovative” or “highest quality” qualitative research in family studies over this period. Assuming this is the case, we present a truncated analysis of these articles and their circumstances. The most common journal represented was *Qualitative Health Research*, with four winners, both the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* and *Journal of Marriage and Family* had three, and *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Family Process*, and *Family Relations* each had one (see Table 1).

In addition to our analysis of the sameness inherent in qualitative methods, our analysis is also guided by Crotty (1998) and Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppy, Smith, and Hayes (2009), who have suggested that epistemological assumptions play a significant role in theoretical, methodological, and method choices. They suggest that researchers must use these assumptions at various decision junctures to determine which theories, methodologies, and the like they will use. Thus, our analysis attempted to explore ontology, epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods. Sample size is included due to the interest surrounding sample size as a criterion for publishing (LaRossa et al., 2014; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015) and because of its relationship to epistemological and theoretical assumptions.

For the purposes of this analysis we did not assume that labels refer to actual concepts or ideas but instead that they produce ideas in those with whom they connect (Deleuze, 1968/1994).

Table 1. Analysis of Anselm Strauss Award Winners

Year	Authors	Journal	Topic	Epistemology	Theoretical Paradigm	Methodology	Method	Sample Size
2014	Nyman, Reinikainen & Stocks	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>	Couple finances	None described	Interpretive	Conceptual paper	Cross-national qualitative research	NA
2013	Weaver-Hightower	<i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i>	Fatherhood Pregnancy Fertility	None described; subjective	Interpretive	Autoethnography	Interviews; artifacts, photo elicitation, memoirs, participant observation, the writing itself	1
2012	Davis, Ward, & Storm	<i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>	Military families	Unclear	Critical	Action Research (Mendenhall & Doherty, 2005)	Interviews; grounded theory coding	17; 11 individual interviews, 1 group interview
2011	Garcia & McDowel	<i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>	Social capital; low-income families	None described	Critical	Conceptual paper	Social capital mapping for therapy purposes	NA
2010	Funk & Stajduhar	<i>Qualitative Health Research</i>	Caregiving	None described	Discuss positivist, interpretivist/constructivist, and critical orientations to interviews	Conceptual paper	Interviews as coping and deficit in understanding caregiving	NA
2009	Oswald & Masciadrelli	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>	LGBT families; rituals	None described	Interpretive	None described	Interviews; couple interviews, including diagramming and listing; home tours in some cases; GT coding	49 people; 37 interviews; artifacts and diagrams

Table 1. continued

Year	Authors	Journal	Topic	Epistemology	Theoretical Paradigm	Methodology	Method	Sample Size
2008	Read & Wuest	<i>Qualitative Health Research</i>	Caregiving; death	Discuss both social construction and objective	none described	Grounded Theory	Interviews	unclear 12-20
2007	Matta & Knudson-Martin	<i>Family Process</i>	Fatherhood; couple processes	Do not assume an external truth, social construction	none described	None described	Couple interviews; GT coding	40 couples
2006	Beitin & Allen	<i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>	Arab-American families; 9-11	Social construction	Interpretive	Phenomenology	Interviews	18 couples
2005	Edwards	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>	Rural families; identity	Subjective	Interpretive	Grounded Theory	Interviews	10
2004	Wuest, Fod-Gilboe, Merritt-Gray, & Berman	<i>Qualitative Health Research</i>	Abuse; single-mothers; health	Social construction	Critical feminist	Grounded Theory	Interviews	36 mothers and 11 children
2003	Fergus, Gray, Fitch, Labrecque, & Phillips	<i>Qualitative Health Research</i>	Prostate cancer; caregiving	Subjective	Interpretive	None described	Interviews; grounded theory coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)	102 interviews; 34 couples
2002	Daly	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>	Family time	None described	Critical	None described	Interviews; semistructured; observations; GT coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)	61 interviews; 17 couples and 11 single parents
2001	Oswald	<i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>	LGBT families; rituals	Social construction	Critical feminist	Comstock's critical research methodology	Focus group interviews; Coding (Strauss & Corbin)	45

Table 1. Continued

Year	Authors	Journal	Topic	Epistemology	Theoretical Paradigm	Methodology	Method	Sample Size
2000	Mannis	<i>Family Relations</i>	Single-mothers	Mention postmodern (relativism), but indicators suggest social construction	Interpretive	Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin)	Interviews; constant comparison	10
2000	Banister	<i>Qualitative Inquiry</i>	Women's midlife; reflexivity	Subjective	Interpretive	Ethnography, reflexive	Individual and group interviews; journaling; member checking; developmental research sequence method (data analysis); theoretical sampling	23 interviews; 11 participants

Thus, our epistemological leaning became to describe what ideas these words and phrases produced in us, meaning with the experiences and knowledge with which we have come in contact—an ultimately subjective epistemology. This analysis was prompted by a method of exploration and mapping (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) in which we mapped articles on the basis of the criteria previously defined as useful to others. We did not follow a set of systematic procedures to identify and map authors' critical methodological decision junctures, but instead we connected various theoretical and methodological ideas. Additionally, the path through the articles was messy, starting chronologically from earliest to latest with detours back and forth, paying particular attention to the journal in which it was published, the epistemological signifiers, methods instantiation (i.e., justification or explanation for the use of a method or methodology), and sample size.

None of the 16 articles explicitly described its ontological assumptions, and few explicitly described their epistemological assumptions. Instead, they used phrases or words, which we found indicative of certain assumptions. For example, uncovering or discovering a theme indicated a rationalist epistemology, discussing meaning or meaning making suggested interpretivist theoretical leanings, use of the word *essence* suggests a phenomenological perspective, and so on. However, we were unable to know whether these phrases held meaning for the author or only to us as researchers; thus, we became embroiled in our own ontological and epistemological concerns guided by our reading of Deleuze and others.

It was difficult to discover any ontological or epistemological leanings from explicit discussion and, in some cases, the reasoning for the use of theories, methodologies, and methods was unsubstantiated. Most of the articles were, to us, epistemologically unaware. There were phrases that indicated epistemological leanings, for example, "postmodern" (Mannis, 1999), "researcher betwixt and between" (Banister, 1999), "co-construction," but even in these cases the connections between ontological or epistemological assumptions and theoretical, methodological, and methods decisions were unclear.

Being explicit about onto-epistemological differences breaks us out of an atheoretical, postpositivist mindset (in which our epistemological assumptions are taken for granted

and thus not needing explicit articulation) and allows scholars to distinguish between how different assumptions create different knowledges. Methodological instantiation (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009) suggests that researchers provide instances, justifications, or evidence for the use of theories, methodology, and methods (see Banister, 1999, for an example). Among Strauss Award winners, instantiating methods was rare or somewhat confusing. This rarity could be because of the authors' emphasis on theory (e.g., family systems, family stress, life course) and underemphasis on epistemologies and theoretical perspectives (e.g., empiricism, rationalism, positivism, postpositivism, interpretivism), confusion about the connection between these two, or the idea that citing a well-known text on a given method (e.g., "we followed Charmaz . . .") is sufficient compared to a more in-depth instantiation of methodological decisions. Of the articles reviewed, deciding on an interpretivist theoretical plane and discussing nuances within it, such as critical feminist, interactionist, social constructionist perspectives seemed fairly comfortable for scholars, however, connections between theories and methodologies were not always clear. For example, Beitin and Allen (2005) described using social construction, systems theory, and phenomenology, but this statement of theory was not connected to their method; it was unclear how social construction or systems theory informed their decision to use phenomenological analysis. A lack of instantiation was especially prevalent in studies that cited grounded theory but used it only as an analysis tool. We think this incongruence and lack of instantiation presents challenges for researchers, who are often called upon to defend their epistemological and methodological decisions against the dominant epistemologies, theories, and methods in the academy.

Maybe the most surprising element of our exploration and the greatest evidence of the epistemological and methodological sameness in the field was realizing the extent to which grounded theory has become a dominant methodological approach and analytical dogma in family studies. Considering that the award is given for excellent or innovative qualitative work, sameness associated with grounded theory coding and in-depth interviews have become the standard for qualitative researchers in family studies. As discussed previously, grounded theory was used primarily as a coding strategy rather than a rigorous

methodological strategy that involves constant comparison between analysis and collection guided by theoretical sampling, and ultimately theory-building elements derived from the theoretical perspectives that grounded theory methods draw from. It follows that a potential lack of awareness about the different types of grounded theory and their theoretical perspectives resulted in citations meandering within articles from Glaser and Strauss (1967) to Strauss and Corbin (1997), and Charmaz (2014)—but not to Clarke (2005)—all of which have similar strategies but vastly different theoretical and epistemological assumptions (LaRossa, 2005). As a result, we were left to speculate as to why researchers might discuss and cite grounded theory when using thematic coding, especially since references to thematic analysis might be more appropriate. In addition, we wondered why grounded theory, which has the potential for innovative analytical and theoretical work, is often methodologically stripped down and overly simplified. In part, researchers might refer to grounded theory because of familiarity with the coding strategy and possibly without awareness or knowledge of the role of constant comparison, theory building, memoing, and theoretical sampling in grounded theory studies. It is also possible that the ubiquitous referencing of grounded theory indicates the dominance that grounded theory has gained in family studies (as well as in other fields) and the trust and value that researchers and reviewers place in it as a label, similar to the ways we use the label "science" (Veblen, 1906). In other words, scholars submitting to journals are aware that most reviewers know of grounded theory and trust it as a reliable and well-known method of analysis, even when stripped of its methodological complexity and nuances. Within recent years there has been more of an emphasis on the award going to innovative research, and this emphasis is clear. In the past five years more awards were given to conceptual methodological articles on interviews and cross-national qualitative projects, as well as to a very compelling autoethnography. Furthermore, it was encouraging to see differentiation in methodology and several new ideas that could promote methodological diversity.

Qualitative research in family studies no longer needs to wear the clothes of the postpositive paradigm: stable method, methodologies based on sameness and simulation, replication, triangulation for distant and objective truth.

Many qualitative researchers in family studies have created a strong foundation for current researchers to expand, innovate, and critique taken-for-granted notions and practices in qualitative family research (Sharp, Zvonkovic, Humble, & Radina, 2014). The need to problematize methodological and epistemological dogmas and fixed assumptions is ongoing.

We propose that because of the epistemological and methodological diversity among qualitative scholars, researchers ought to be cognizant of various perspectives and how methods and methodologies fit into these philosophical ideas (Crotty, 1998). By articulating congruence between theories and methods, qualitative scholars can create space for themselves while questioning the monolith of “scientific” discourse—not science itself—but “science” as a label (Veblen, 1906) or as taken-for-granted and limited practice. Having said this, we suggest that methodologies and the technologies that reproduce them (e.g., peer review, graduate education) reproduce existing or confirmatory forms of old knowledge rather than allowing for the construction of creative or innovative knowing. Researchers interested in navigating the dominant forms might think of creative ways to move in between and around the systemic and hidden constraint of the academic system.

#### DIFFERENCE AND IMMANENCE IN THE WORK OF DELEUZE

We learn nothing from those who say: “Do as I do.” Our only teachers are those who tell us to “do with me,” and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce. (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 23)

From the beginning of this section, we wish to say that we are presenting our *map* of Deleuze and not a *tracing*. The distinction is that we are not attempting to say what Deleuze’s key concepts are or which ones are the most important to understand, nor are we explaining what it *is* that Deleuze means to say. Instead, we have explored Deleuze’s work—and the work of others who have explored Deleuze—and created this map. Deleuze offers productive additions, potentials, opportunities for expansion, and—above all—creativity. Thus, we present our map as a proliferation or burgeoning of

Deleuze rather than a clear picture or definitional representation.

To present some key ideas of Gilles Deleuze, we first situate his writing and discuss strategies for reading his work. Deleuze began writing during the postwar era in France and continued into the social turmoil of the 1960s and beyond. His contemporaries were well-known theorists such as Foucault, Lyotard, Irigaray, Derrida, and de Beauvoir. While he was a prolific writer across various topical areas, we focus on some of his more commonly referenced works, including *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense*, and the two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which includes *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, both of which were coauthored by Félix Guattari, a French psychoanalyst. Deleuze is typically situated with other theorists and philosophers who are considered postmodern or poststructural. These groupings result from their focus on critiquing a common idea. For example, poststructuralists often take issue with the structuralism of Hegel, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss. However, this does not mean they arrive at the same point. Deleuze’s critique is critical, but also productive and creative, and to resist linguistic sameness, he often creates new words or phrases, or reuses common words or phrases in new ways. He said, “It is sometimes necessary to invent a barbaric word to account for a notion with innovative pretensions” (Deleuze, 2013, n.p.). For us, these neologisms often create some challenges or frustrations in reading postmodern or poststructural theories. As a result, we suggest that those interested could allow potentially difficult texts and complex work of philosophers to wash over them and “do their thing” (E. A. St. Pierre, personal communication, May 2011). In other words, we might think of postmodern or poststructural theories not as things to be understood or uncovered, but—as mentioned earlier—as experiences that produce or provoke new thoughts within the reader via their experience with a text or idea even if it does not “make sense.” Rather than looking to define an accurate representation of Deleuze’s concepts, our goal is in the process of working over ideas and concepts themselves.

Thus, we might be more productive in reading Deleuze if we focus on what he produces in us rather than determining what it is he is saying. For example, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote:



There are, you see, two ways of reading a book; you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies. . . . Or there's the other way: you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is "Does it work, and how does it work?" How does it work for you? If it doesn't work, if nothing comes through, you try another book. This second way of reading's intensive: something comes through or it doesn't. There's nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. (pp. 7–9)

Following Deleuze's suggestion, we have attempted to employ this second kind of reading in this article, and we encourage the reader to do the same in reading this or any of Deleuze's work. We walk a fine line between presenting our interactions with Deleuze and sharing what our reading of Deleuze has produced in us. And it may be that our reading of Deleuze does not fall into either of these areas but instead moves in between and around these two ways of reading.

#### *Poststructural and Postmodern Theories*

A brief diversion into postmodern and poststructural theories may be helpful in further situating Deleuze. Postmodern and poststructural theories are multiple and varied. For some scholars, post theories (e.g., postfeminist, postqualitative, postmodern theories) are counteractions, critiques of different figures and their ideas, which represent modernity (e.g., truth, objectivity, transcendence). Others like to use the term *post* to illustrate a departure from sameness, foundationalism, epistemological control and order, and stable structures. Many postmodern and poststructural theories and philosophies are similar in that they resist stable linguistic signifiers and definitions that aim to close down concepts and processes, but others emphasize the differences between the postmodern and poststructural projects. For example, Peters and Burbules (2004) argued that the theoretical object of postmodernism is "modernism," whereas the theoretical object of poststructuralism is "structuralism" and its critique. Moreover, poststructuralism is often associated with linguistic reconceptualizations, whereas postmodernists engage in broader cultural critiques.

It is both productive and counterproductive trying to separate postmodern and poststructural thoughts. Even though both terms are sometimes used simultaneously and in synonymous

ways, any categorical separation between the following theorists is somewhat inaccurate, and possibly undesirable. Lather (1991) explained that postmodernism can mean cultural shifts of the postindustrial era, whereas poststructuralism processes those cultural shifts through theorizing and linguistic critique (i.e., views on language as a differential system). Cultural shifts can include work on genealogy, power, discourse, knowledge, and ethics (Foucault) overproduction, simulations, signs, virtuality, the loss of real (Baudrillard), and grand narratives (Lyotard), to mention a few. However, not only are postmodernists interested in cultural critique; they also share an interest with poststructuralists interested in plural faces of phenomena and the complex forces that shape different social practices. Poststructuralism, when seen as a specific postmodern practice, is often associated with theorizing of Derrida, including his focus on deconstruction, linguistic inconsistencies, intertextuality, and difference; Deleuze's work on the philosophy of difference, desire, events, becoming, and territories; and Levinas's focus on ethics, intuition, and otherness. Despite these different conceptual areas of cultural and linguistic critique produced by Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, Deleuze, and Levinas, all these scholars focus on critiquing the assumptions of stability, structure, and reality that prior works had been built on.

Some of the most exciting aspects of postmodernism and poststructuralism for us relate to the ways in which postmodernism and poststructuralism re-create knowledge as culturally situated, flexible, always changing, becoming, fragmented, and impartial. Knowledge is not linear, predictable, controllable, or stable; instead, it is thought of as a verb, pluralized, or an invitation to relate. Once knowledge is perceived in this way, many taken-for-granted concepts and practices become questionable, as we examine internal contradictions and how concepts and practices deconstruct themselves from within. Postmodernism and poststructuralism enable fluid conceptual boundaries and free play of different epistemological and information systems (Woods, 1999). However, it is not the case that anything goes. The criteria guiding what is acceptable can be cultural and collectively determined, changing, and shifting (see Thayer-Bacon, 2003, for a discussion of qualified relativism). Additionally, postmodern and poststructural scholars are often interested in

developing fragile, corporeal forms of self and the real, and they see individuals as having the freedom to release creative energies outside foundational morality or normative ethics (Peters & Burbules, 2004).

Another exciting line of thought among many of these thinkers (e.g., Derrida, Deleuze) has to do with rethinking, reworking, and reconstructing binaries or dichotomies, especially through and within language. Binaries such as father–mother, child–adult, male–female, and school–work create limiting hierarchies and grand narratives that often display “hidden” preferences and values that are ultimately constructions within particular discourses. To expose structures of nomination embedded in these binaries, postmodernists and poststructuralists often focus their analysis on power, ways language functions and creates realities, and how discourses and institutions are used to create complex power–knowledge networks. Deleuze resists by creating a philosophy of immanence that, instead of identifying and assigning meaning to the objects and their signifiers, utilizes the idea of becoming: becomings of things, forces, and processes through their various intensities (Deleuze, 1969/1990b; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987).

Poststructural inquiry, within its various practices, is inherently critical of previous and current structured conceptualizations of language, theory, data, method, and practice. Thus, there is an obvious critique of conceptualizations of family structure on the basis of typologies, dichotomies, and stability (i.e., what is average, normal, or acceptable). Many of the labels involved in studying families present such stable, dichotomous thinking, for example: “father,” “stepfather,” “involved father,” “uninvolved father or family,” “step-family,” “extended family”—these labels distinguish “different” families from an ideal image (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Smith, 1993). While recent years have brought much attention to marginalized families (e.g., LGBT families), these “different” families are still required to have qualified labels distinguishing them from other families according to structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality (e.g., poor families, single-parent families, minority families, LGBT families). Poststructural theory generally critiques or rejects these supposed stable structures, be they purposeful or inadvertent.

### *Immanence, Difference, and Repetition*

Starting with ontology and epistemology is not the only way to enter the Deleuzian labyrinth (see Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). Deleuze said that we might “enter at any point” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987); however, we believe that an introduction to these ideas can make other concepts more intense. Ontological assumptions arise from the question: “What is?” To answer this question, Deleuze drew heavily from Spinoza (Deleuze, 1970/1988) and Nietzsche (Deleuze, 1962/2006), as well as from Bergson (Deleuze, 1966/1990a) and Hume (Deleuze, 1953/1991).

The first conceptual building block that we discuss in Deleuze’s ontology and resulting epistemology is *immanence*. Deleuze appropriated the idea of immanence from Spinoza to create a flattened world of experimentation rather than one of exploration and discovery. Spinoza wrote around the same time that Descartes theorized mind–body duality (Deleuze, 1970/1988). The distinction between these ideas focuses on *transcendence*. Many of the major philosophers in the history of philosophy discuss ontology in terms of transcendent orders (e.g., Plato’s forms; an immortal and perfect God; Kant’s noumenal, universal truth). However, Deleuze rejected transcendence in favor of immanence, which suggests that there are no ideal forms or higher orders or substances to be emulated or discovered by lower orders or substances (Deleuze, 1968/1994). For example, whereas Plato described the ideas of model, copy, and simulacra, Deleuze suggested that there is no ideal model or copies of the model: It is all simulacra (Roffe, 2005). This suggests that in an immanent world everything exists on the same plane, as the same substance, but expresses itself differently. Thus, there is no perfectly defined or designed chair or table, but there are “nebulae, statistical wholes whose outlines are blurred” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1983, pp. 68–69). These “statistical wholes” exist only because they are named and defined. As such, creation is the purpose within an immanent ontology, the epistemological assumption being that knowledge is created through experience and experimentation rather than discovery (Deleuze, 1953/1991, 1968/1994). In other words, there are no preexisting laws, theories, or forms of inquiry waiting for us to discover, but we create these ideas through our interactions with the world. Thus, Deleuze becomes a pure

empiricist, a proliferator and creator of concepts rather than an explorer set out to discover what is already there.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1968/1994) devoted an entire volume to the study of difference, which becomes the criterion for *being* in his ontology (Smith & Protevi, 2013; Williams, 2013). Typically we think of *difference* as difference *from* some identified thing, but Deleuze encouraged us to think of difference-in-itself. Concerning identity and difference, he wrote, “That identity not be first, that it exist as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle become; that it revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept, rather than being maintained under the domination of a concept in general already understood as identical” (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 41). Thus, Deleuze’s project frees difference from the dominance of identity by making difference primary and identity secondary, creating a focus on difference itself rather than the supposed unity of an identity centered on commonality or sameness. In this view what a thing *is* constantly fluctuates so that there really is no *being*, but things are *becoming*.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of repetition has to do with time on a plane of immanence, with difference as the criteria for being. Deleuze explored ontological time with Bergson (Deleuze, 1966/1990a) as an alternative to linear and psychological time (May, 2005). In ontological time there is a folding and refolding, or expression, of substance (material). For Deleuze, the present is the difference from an expression of substance; the past is the accumulation of past expressions, not just of the individual (psychological time) but of the collective past (May, 2005); and the future is the potential expression of substance. These are summed up in the concepts of the virtual (unexpressed or unconscious potential differences) and the actual (expressed or conscious) difference (Deleuze, 1968/1994). In this way time is linked not to any objective element—rotation or movement of the earth, or fluctuations in isotopes linked to signifiers such as seconds, minutes, hours, days—but to the

repetition of difference. This is not the repetition of the same (i.e., commonality and identity), but the repeating of that which differs. In other words, time occurs through the repetition of different expressions of substance.

Taken together, these ideas constitute the Deleuzian concepts of immanence, difference, and repetition. To summarize, immanence is the assumption that all substance belongs to itself, repetition suggests that it is the process of folding and refolding of substance that creates difference, and difference is the criteria for being, which is actually becoming. The present is composed of actualized differences with unknowable and infinite virtual potentialities. Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote that “difference is not and cannot be thought in itself, so long as it is subject to the requirements of representation” (p. 262). This idea moves us away from representation, identity, or the unified to a focus on movement and multiplying (McMahon, 2005). The implication for researchers is that representation or interpretations may be no longer the main tasks associated with qualitative inquiry, but that inquiry must shift toward experimentation, extensions, connectivity, and actualization: pure empiricism.

As a result of the epistemological direction taken by Deleuze, his ontology of difference problematizes many sociological and psychological notions of “self” based on structured taxonomies and dichotomies (e.g., gender, race, class, sex). We know that studying identity and self has been a key focus in social and psychological theory and research for the past century. However, Deleuze (1968/1994) suggested that identity assumes a person’s lived experience can be constrained into a set of identifiable characteristics, which reduces experience into a set of commonalities and similarities. Instead of generating identities through essential properties, scholars utilizing Deleuze’s theories might explore events in which multiple and shifting “identities” may be actualized. Deleuze called this “nomad thought,” which “does not repose on identity; it rides difference” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. xii). In other words, the question is not, “What is this?” but “What happened here?” and “What potentialities does it hold?”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>It is important to recognize that this becoming is not toward a transcendent end but a constant moving in between and around identities.

<sup>3</sup>We refer to potentialities rather than possibilities as possibilities suggest an actuality that is limited by reality.

Considering what we have presented, we now explore how to use these ideas in family studies. Thinking about families and difference in itself may provide some alternatives and possibilities for families to connect and live outside the fixed and essentializing family categories, including dichotomies of good and bad, straight and gay, nuclear and complex. Thinking of difference in itself allows for families to express themselves via the differences they produce rather than via their commonalities, which reduce them to a few acknowledged parts. Thinking about repetition and families could prompt family scholars to think of how family may be repeated but never repeat the same. Even under similar conditions each family will be done or constructed or viewed or experienced differently. Thinking about difference in itself also disrupts the idea of family itself. If we think of family as a common set of characteristics, then we lose the differences. In other words, family becomes a representation rather than moving experience or event. Thus, as family scholars we may no longer ask what a family is, but what family does and the conditions under which it operates and appears, if only briefly.

### *Rhizomes*

A rhizome is a plant stem, which grows underground sending shoots sideways and upward, sending leaves up toward the sun while nodes and roots grow into and around one another below the earth—such as with ginger, grass, bulbs, or tubers. This image is an alternative to prevalent root–tree figures (i.e., typologies, dichotomies, taxonomies, continuums). A rhizome provides an alternative way to think about the complex multiple entanglements of difference outside of the constrained and reductionist root–tree image. In this way of thinking, no part of the grass can be singled out as unitary, existing on its own. Instead, “these interwoven rhizomes, with their numerous roots, form the firm swards of meadows and prairies” (Curtis, 1907, p. 384). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) identified six principles of the rhizome that illustrate what a rhizome can do. Briefly stated, these principles suggest that any point can be connected to any other; the connections the rhizome

makes can be thought of as a collection of differences that connect and relate; root–tree images of thought represent multiples or collections of connections that move together but are not stuck together; forces act on these lines to constrain or segment them, but there are points at which lines break free and leave there patterned movements; the rhizome mapped “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 12); tracings are not maps, but “the tracing should always be placed back on the map” (p. 13).

The rhizome concept is directly related to Deleuze’s focus on difference. Rhizomes produce and exemplify difference through endless and emerging connections and relationality of multiple differences. The idea is introduced in Deleuze’s collaboration with Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, but much of his previous thinking about difference and multiplicity run throughout this idea of the rhizome. In contrast with the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) present some types of trees and roots that hearken to Deleuze’s earlier thoughts on difference and identity. For example, the root–tree system classifies and labels and fails to represent the complexity of reality because the world is messy and immanent. An example of this may be in regard to sexuality, where we often refer to the dichotomous relationship of gay–straight, or in some cases we might think of a continuum, which includes an indefinite number of representations under the primary root of hetero- or homosexuality. However, these ideas still represent an image of thought focused on root–tree thinking because they detach sexuality from the immanent world in which it was created. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) called root-tree thinking the “most classical and well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought.” (p. 5).

A rhizome makes connections horizontally (think immanence: a flattened, equal, surface without transcendent or higher-order substances) without referring back to representation, and it does so in a messy entanglement of differences. An important element of the rhizome is that it operates through the conjunction *and*, which allows us to say that a family is not good or bad or happy or poor (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987); instead, a family is good and bad and happy and poor, and many other things. In this way, the connection of these things becomes a multiplicity or open-ended substantive entity. In contrast to systems theory,

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Instead, Deleuze suggested that the virtual potentialities of substance are infinite (see May, 2005).

functionalism, or other patterned, structured methods, theories, and technologies, a rhizome appreciates the messiness of complex social phenomena. A rhizome is not perfectly delineated like tree branches but comprises tangled and messy roots, where the ends and beginnings are difficult to define and the middles are the center of the growth. From this perspective, families do not begin or end, they are not hierarchically structured, and they do not include fixed categorizations. Instead, different actualizations and enactments of families come together differently at different times. Thinking of the family rhizomatically calls for thinking of the family as a multiplicity—a singular and multiple entity. A family is not constituted of one or two or three or four things, but a family is so connected that it “carries enough force to shake and uproot” any stable conceptualization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25). In other words, while we typically categorize families or family members as stable beings (e.g., mother, father, brother, sister), instead we can think of the family as an event, and family actions as lines, which deterritorialize one another (remove one another from their territory or typical space), thus creating the rhizome, performing family desires. For example, families are—in many instances—created by persons who act in a “family” via events rather than some kind of stable definition based on gender or genetics. In these ways, a family is rhizomatic, a multiplicity.

Perhaps a helpful way to think of this idea is to contrast it with patterned family formations. For example, a mother, father, brother, or sister can also be thought of as a rhizome, which comprises difference. Much of the time these individuals act passively, in constrained or striated ways (i.e., according to structures such as race, class, gender), but occasionally they are brought out of their territory and deterritorialized by another event or action. In these situations mothers, fathers, grandparents might break out of striated paths and act in different ways. In this way the person expands his or her territory, creating a line of flight. These lines of flight are what Deleuze refers to as *becomings*.

### *Becoming*

Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-

progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, “appearing,” “being,” “equaling,” or “producing.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 239)

Becoming is one of the major culminations of Deleuze’s work on difference and is related to the rhizome concept. Becoming provides one potential response to the idea of a fixed or stable ontology. Becoming takes the place of being in a Deleuzian ontology suggesting that people become rather than are. This perspective on being and identity creates alternative and unknown spaces for differencing and for individualization rather than centering on similarity and sameness.

In his book *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze (1969/1990b) drew from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* to describe “pure becoming.” When Alice becomes larger, she is larger than before, but at the same time she becomes smaller than she is now. In this way fixed identities are questioned. Alice does not grow without shrinking, and she does not shrink without growing: “But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present” (Deleuze, 1969/1990b, p.1). This paradox of moving in both directions, or illustrating both senses at the same time, speaks to becoming.

A starting point may be a stay-at-home father, which suggests a man who is a father who stays at home as opposed to a father who works. Both men have the label “father” because they are men with children, but one stays at home while the other works. This is an example of root–tree thinking. For Deleuze *becomings* are minor (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), which means that they break out of typical ways of doing and run toward the untypical. One way we might think about a father who stays at home with children is as becoming-mother—not to say that there is a dichotomous or binary relationship between mothering and fathering, but that he is moving into the territory typically held by mothers. In this case he is not being a father or being a mother; he is *becoming* rather than being. A stay-at-home father, or any parent for that matter, can never be pinned down into one location; rather there is a constant moving in-between father and mother.

The foregoing example is helpful, but it should be noted that a fuller analysis would add a critique of the idea of father itself, male itself, mother itself or any human-centered family moniker, since these ideas are similarly connected to root–tree thinking. For example, Deleuzian becoming suggests that becoming does not move in directions but connects with various senses, emotions, and bodies. In becoming, things, questions, words, and senses are reversed; more becomes less and less becomes more. Similar phenomena happen to all dichotomies in this ontology, active and passive, too much and too little, already and not yet—cause-and-effect binaries break down, reverse. For example, the statement “good fathers care for their children” is as good and valid as the statement “good children care for their fathers.” Becoming is a process of creating friction and instabilities in the structured ways of being in the world. In the case of Alice, Deleuze (1969/1990b) wrote, “All these reversals as they appear in infinite identity have one consequence: the contesting of Alice’s personal identity and the loss of her proper name” (p. 3).

Jackson (2013) described Deleuzian becoming as the movement through an event that is in between, a threshold or entryway between past and future. In Deleuzian becoming, presence is always absent in a way, since—in the absence of presence—past and future are jointed and related. Deleuzian projects replace the dominance of presence through language. Becoming is intertwined with language; “everything happens at the boundary between things and propositions” (Jackson, 2013, p. 8). As such, notions of family do not stay the same when they continuously encounter new moments in time, new words, and new forms of existence and experiencing. Each passing or threshold presents new forms of relatedness between the past and future, and thus family is always becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) wrote about the alliance between the wasp and the orchid, which is being synthesized but does not produce a wasp-orchid. Similarly, becoming mother or father is not about imitating the forms of mother or father but “emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity” (p. 275), a kind of “micro-parenthoodness” that produces and creates men and women as a molecular fathers and mothers. Parenthood does not belong to particular age, sex, order, or category, but fatherhoods and

motherhoods “slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes; they produce molecular [families] on the line of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 277). Fatherhood does not become, but becoming itself is a fatherhood. In other words, fatherhood is the production of multiple tiny fatherhoods that are uncontrollable in their becomings and appearances.

#### APPLYING DELEUZE: THINKING WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

We have presented multiple concepts from Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking but have focused ultimately on their ideas about rhizomes and becoming—concepts that rest on fundamental notions of immanence, difference, and repetition. In presenting these ideas we have tried to impart what these concepts may become or do beyond representation. In doing so, we have troubled the ideas of representation, identity, and self. Deleuze (1968/1994) pushed away from stable, transcendent, or a priori concepts, saying, “Concepts are indeed things, but things in their free and wild state. . . . I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon” (p. xxi). Therefore, concept creation becomes an important empirical task: These concepts are not required to uncover universal principles or laws, but instead are employed to produce something. “Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts. . . . On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever” (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. xx). While many researchers are not philosophers per se, they are engaged in a process of empirical examination and concept creation. For example, scholars might construct and use concepts that create rhizomes by overlaying tracings on maps, entangling root–tree systems, and creating lines of flight in thinking about family and inquiry by freeing thought from striation and coercion.

In addition, the work of Deleuze may be particularly helpful in “liberating” families who have been squashed by transcendent ideas of difference and morality. Researchers may also look at the family itself as a rhizome of actions—caring, providing, teaching, protecting, guiding—rather than individuals defined by universal characteristics. Children raised in foster care may be a particularly fruitful area for viewing family as a rhizome, because family is so obviously fluid for these children and parents. However, researchers may also

study those families who most closely “fit” into various family types (e.g., nuclear family, complex family, cohabiting family) and trouble these representations with the experiences of these families. For example, using these families’ experiences to see how they are *becoming* rather than *are* a particular way. Remembering that becomings are breaks from coerced patterns toward the minor researchers might explore how families become complex, become deviant, become neglectful. To do this, we must remove our assumptions about these ideas and open up the possibility that all families are deviant and complex and neglectful. Furthermore, researchers might also think of particular persons as becoming child, becoming brother, or even move outside of family territories such as becoming teacher. More specifically, we might ask questions about family communication or kinship (see Laurie & Stark, 2012), or we may trouble ideas of LGBTQ families, single-parent families, or deadbeat dads. These conceptualizations move families and persons in between striation and create lines of flight in family rhizomes. Deleuze’s scholarship is not only about destabilizing dominant, traditional ideas; ultimately, it is about destabilizing all categorical thinking. Thinking of families in this way may be one means of addressing the issue of contemporary family complexity—not so much to define what family complexity is, but how complexity is relative to the conditions surrounding a particular family rather than on how the family is structured (Goldberg, 2010).

Deleuze’s philosophy holds several possibilities for conceptualizing families (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1983, for their in-depth treatment of family), but we suggest one step further, wondering how Deleuze may create lines of flight in qualitative inquiry. Methods in their own right contain zero effectiveness and power, especially in qualitative research, although there is significant power inherent in discourses surrounding methods. This is not to say that method is unhelpful, but the method in itself is nothing more than a tool. It is true that if our means of inquiry require reproducible results that method serves a purpose, but Deleuze’s conceptualization of repetition suggests that repeating a method produces difference rather than the reliable sameness desired by researchers (i.e., the same outcome regardless of time and place).

Method itself can also be limiting, since it constrains participants into sameness, not difference (e.g., fitting into themes, groups, ranges, quartiles). In contrast, some forms of theory (philosophy) can provide possibilities, new avenues and extensions of thought outside normativity. We echo the sentiments of Jackson and Mazzei (2012): “Qualitative data interpretation and analysis does not happen via mechanistic coding, reducing data to themes, and writing up transparent narratives that do little to critique the complexities of social life; such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multi-layered treatment of data” (p. vii). Instead, we call for researchers to consider using Deleuze’s theories or other theorists to construct and create new approaches to inquiry and ideas in their work that are aligned with the research project’s epistemological assumptions (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009) and that are as unique and varied as those that they study.

#### *Some Methodological Potentials for Inquiry*

Deleuze’s (1968/1994) philosophy surrounds the production of ideas. Ideas do not come out of nowhere, but they function as differentials of thought. In addition, Deleuze’s (1969/1990b) discussion of ideas suggests that ideas come from sensation, or an unperceived realm of sense. Deleuze (1968/1994) proposed that ideas form differential relations to their object through singularity; thus, ideas both extend and promote comprehension. From this perspective, ideas for how to plug in Deleuze into one’s research projects call for multiple, nonlocalizable connections between different elements (of life, sense, experience, virtual). We argue that one cannot think about methods, strategies, or ways that inquiry is being actualized without considering the epistemologies and ontologies that guide any inquiry and exploration of the world in the first place. Therefore, applying Deleuze forms a unique task for each individual who reads this article and Deleuze’s work. In other words, we believe that providing specific ideas for application would transform Deleuze into a “thing” rather than an experience. Nevertheless, we recognize that thinking about how to engage in inquiry with Deleuze is difficult, and we suggest that one possibility for applying Deleuze lies in the question of “how one might live” (May, 2005, p. 1). Rather than asking how we might live, however, this question could be

changed to ask how one might do inquiry and how might one do research that differentiates and relates.

Coleman and Ringrose (2013) proposed that following Deleuze calls for relationality and bringing theory to methodology. Scholars are to ask questions about conditions, connections, effects, and affects. Research functions as a messy craft and performative assemblage, especially since scholars could consider the simultaneous presences and absences within the flexible boundaries of scholarship and life. From a Deleuzian perspective, methods are not descriptive or generative but are performative through remaking, reacting, and reconstructing. For example, Renold and Mellor (2013) used Deleuze's thinking and theoretical connections in their multisensory microethnography focusing on how children "do gender" in day care. These authors used multimedia technologies, including video diaries, field notes, and drawings, to generate data about the complexities of affect and different modalities of senses. Furthermore, they studied the sonic environment of heterosexual discourses including noise events, silence, and sound with(out) the subject. The authors used noise events to illustrate how sound shifts the researcher's focus and analytical attention, and they were able to locate ruptures and regulations of heterosexual normativity and flows of power that inflate and deflate young female and male bodies.

Nordstrom (2013), in turn, used Deleuze to develop what she called object-interviews. During these object-interviews, Nordstrom made connections between objects (e.g., bullets, Bibles, hair, photos, garden, documents, buildings) and participants' deceased ancestors. This interview space enabled the researchers to create an "ensemble of life," or a continuously changing group of objects associated with an individual's life. Rather than asking what different objects mean or how they were understood, Nordstrom focused on rhizomatic connective questions, such as "How does this object connect to the ancestor?" and "Who was related to whom?" Each object-interview produced multiple connections that were outlined in a map of different object relations.

Cole (2013) used Deleuze's notion of virtual to investigate multiple literacies of Sudanese families in Australia alongside Sudanese families, without othering them or comparing them to normative and overly generalizable

notions of Australian family. Cole (2013) was "searching for the multiple, geoplactic forces that are embedded in the narratives of the Sudanese Australians" (p. 37). Data were generated through filmed observations in adult English classrooms, interviews, and participants' self-created short films. Cole found that literacy for his participants reflected any form of communication in life. Pragmatic, minor, and multiple literacies (e.g., peer and youth literacy; literacy of synthetic time; war literacy; oral, tribal, and physical literacies) extended participants' memory, change, imaginary, affection, and play into the mainstream educational practices, acting as new "narrative real" for these participants.

These examples have important implications for qualitative researchers interested in Deleuze's philosophy. Qualitative inquiry could use Deleuze's concept of difference to more deeply reflect the complexities of life and social worlds, without reducing or representing them as a hierarchy of identities in which one difference is better or more important than another. Deleuze moved away from the notion of the stable identity–subject because it assumes a transcendent or better difference. In other words, a stable identity associates multiple differences into one whole representation rather than recognizing the multiple interconnected differences that exist. In this way some differences are recognized or exalted while others are subjugated. Although it is not problematic to focus on specific differences, it can be problematic to reify these differences. When scholars instead think of differences as creating and affecting a phenomenon, then the holistic identity and whole, containable subject is replaced by discourses, contexts, language, culture, and endless compositions of particles, molecules, and forces.

Following a method with exactness and objectivity can be important, especially when researchers are required to follow inherent rules (e.g., statistics). Sometimes an exact method is followed out of tradition, when in actuality replication or objective application can never be achieved (i.e., thematic coding, grounded theory, content analysis). In some cases methods and methodological technicality or objectivity become a validating factor whereby some methods are considered better than others and some methods receive more attention in journal articles, conferences, and so forth (e.g., grounded



theory over autoethnography, content analysis over rhizoanalysis). This potential reliance on normative and “popular” methodological practices and grand narratives can be validating and comforting—especially for beginning scholars—but when scholars uncritically adopt methods and techniques, it may also limit methodological possibilities and nonnormative extensions of thought. Similarly, in some contexts insistence on using the label “science” and making our work more “scientific” can limit the availability and usability of certain method and discourses. Rather than reducing scholarship to normative methods, inquiry could be conceptualized as an experiential process in which experiences are mapped and connections, events, and senses documented. In this way, past experiences are not represented, but new experiences may be created through emerging events and multidimensional connections.

#### MOVING FORWARD

Typically, we think of authors as experts who have the answers, but answers assume transcendence and conclude thought; questions result in more questions, which is productive. Our principal struggle in writing this article has been the constant mapping of Deleuze’s thought as we have read, thought, and experienced more. Every revision has created something and made new connections, dropped dead ends, and blazed new trails. Our interactions with reviewers encouraged us to think in between to determine how we could package Deleuze into this space. Our writing has been experimental as we have found what we could and could not get away with. Our process has been similar to that of Ulmer and Koro-Ljungberg (2014), who utilized Deleuze to rethink writing in qualitative research. They conceptualized visual writing as a form of cartography, not as a prescriptive navigational formula, but as a fluid, dynamic process for exploration and experimentation in research and writing. For example, they (we) saw writing as events associated with various related and unrelated inquiries, representations, and practices that are likely to set in motion a series of simultaneous methodological processes related to analysis and writing that could work against linguistic fascism and cultural grand narratives.

We hope that this article generates questions for further exploration about the way the world is (ontology), the ways in which

knowledge is produced (epistemology), and theoretical connections being made in the field. Epistemological and methodological diversity can broaden conceptual connections, theoretical horizons, and promote situated research practices in family studies. Readers who want to explore further Deleuze connections could turn, for example, to *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1983). In that volume, Deleuze and Guattari focused on the family directly by rethinking Freud’s construct of the Oedipal Complex, Lacan’s idea of desire, and Marx’s ideas on capitalism. Therapists may find the idea of schizoanalysis contained in this volume particularly interesting, as it creates a subject as multiple—multiple sexes, personalities, productive desires—as opposed to some singular representation (i.e., personality types, sex or gender, sexuality).

We encourage qualitative researchers to find cracks, create lines of flight, to look not for what is there but for what could happen. Rather than being constrained by material, think of what a body could be capable of (Deleuze, 1970/1988). The purpose of this article was not to find out who Deleuze was or what his work represents but to journey and experiment (May, 2005). We cannot tell you what Deleuze can do. That is the task of everyone who takes up Deleuze’s project. Doing research in this way is certainly risky, especially considering the state of qualitative family research, but we believe that by working in the spaces in between that we can enlarge and enrich the family field in ways that have not yet been thought of and can liberate families from the root–tree thinking that so often dominates and represses.

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