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## **Deterritorializing collective biography**

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This paper proposes a new move in the methodological practice of collective biography, by provoking a shift beyond any remnant attachment to the speaking/writing subject towards her dispersal and displacement via textual interventions that stress multivocality. These include the use of photographs, drama, and various genres of writing. Using a story selected from a collective biography workshop on sexuality and schooling, we document how we work across and among texts, thereby widening and shifting interpretive and subjective spaces of inquiry. We also consider how Deleuze and Guattari's notions of territorialization/deterritorialization and the nomadic subject might be useful in theorizing such methodological moves in collective biography and our own investments in them.

**Keywords:** collective biography; Deleuze and Guattari; girls; sexuality; schooling

### **Introduction**

I spent the entire session thinking that none of my stories had been chosen, without recognizing, even when I was acting in it, that this was “my life” that was being represented and reinterpreted ... Afterwards the familiarity of this scene, which was actually not at all like the story I had told ... (but at the same time was utterly, strangely, true to the memory), provoked another memory ...

When she failed to recognize that the tableau I had created came from her story, I felt a moment of utter failure, defeat. But then I realized that in rupturing her story I had remade it into my own, but not my own; it was now something that belonged to all of us. I had to break the “habit of thought” through which I understood success, failure, and the process of the work itself. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, cited in Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen 2008, 42)

In this paper, we “deterritorialize” collective biography through the introduction of textual in(ter)ventions that invoke multiple genres of text and move us to new interpretive spaces. Collective biography has a long history in feminist research, emerging initially from the work of Haug et al. (1987) and developing in various iterations over time. In 1991, Lather identified it as a productive emergent methodology for disrupting subject–object relations and for bringing the body into research, enabling groups of researchers to collectively analyze how their modes of

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thinking and being in the world had been “colonized by dominant patterns of thought” (1991, 95). The poststructural turn to discourse and its constitutive effects have further influenced the methodological practices of collective biography, particularly in education through the work of Davies and colleagues (e.g. Davies 1994; Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012). Other researchers have taken memory work into different fields and in different directions (e.g. Crawford et al. 1992; Hyle et al. 2008; Stephenson and Papadopolous 2006). However, despite occasional attempts to articulate “rules” for collective work with memories, it is notable that Haug stressed from the beginning that there is: “no single, ‘true’ method that is alone appropriate to this kind of work ... the very heterogeneity of everyday life demands similarly heterogeneous methods if it is to be understood” (Haug et al. 1987, 70–1). The in(ter)ventions that we suggest in this paper are not opposed to a singular normative mode of collective biography that is “correct” but, rather, they are experiments in pushing further methodologically and textually with the particular intent of “deterritorializing,” in a Deleuzian sense, the texts of memory and research process. In this paper, we highlight one particular story that emerged during a collective biography workshop on sexuality and schooling in order to demonstrate how our use of textual in(ter)ventions served to open the memories we had initially written individually. Our textual in(ter)ventions took the form of Image Theatre, photography, and various forms of “writing back” to the original story, which we refer to as “the Sherry story.”

Throughout this paper, we employ conceptual tools offered by Deleuze and Guattari as we attempt to think through what we were doing as we pushed at the edges of collective biography. Recourse to a precise philosophical vocabulary from the work of Deleuze and Guattari is central to our project but it risks alienating some of our readers. We ask that you stay with us, keeping in mind St Pierre’s warning, that calls for jargon-free “clarity” in educational research can operate, “to keep the unfamiliar at a distance and illegitimate” (2000, 478). Rather than obfuscate, our intention is to use philosophical concepts as resources or tools we can put to work to think differently about what we are doing, and what we might do, in our research.

We ask “What can a body do?” (Ringrose 2011), and, working with multiple iterations of a single story in this paper we also ask “what can data do?” Our focus is thus on methodological disruption, on “thinking with Deleuze” (Mazzei and McCoy 2010) in developing our research methodology via Deleuze and Guattari’s emphases on the schizophrenic “I” or nomadic subject. Rather than focusing on the experiential quality of the stories we generated in the workshop, we use Deleuze to generate “previously unthought questions, practices and knowledges” in our empirical work together (Mazzei and McCoy 2010, 505).

In this work, we consider the body not as a discrete individual entity, but rather as a mobile-affective site of writing and remembering. As the space we write from and the space we “feel in,” the body is mobile in both time and space. As such, the stories we write in collective biography erupt into the present, bringing forth a host of affective memories with them, for both the writer and readers/listeners/rewriters. The stories we work with in collective biography are ideal in that we invest in them as part of our highly individuated patterns of selfhood. Ideal does not have to mean perfect; it means perfectly fitting into the carefully constructed story “I” have created of my “I”-ness. In extending the work of collective biography through textual interventions such as Image Theatre, photography, and various forms of writing back, our stories are opened up, or deterritorialized, to include pieces which

depart from their idealized forms, including their intrinsic belonging to us, and our ability to recognize them and ourselves within them. That sense of affective-mobility is highlighted by encouraging the story, and the emotions it evokes as it is told and retold, to move between tellers without being reterritorialized, or locked down, without trying to find its original truth, meaning, or owner.

Though we applied textual in(ter)ventions to a number of stories, we focus here on one which emerged after the group discussed an article by Renolds and Ringrose (2008) and their mapping of the ways that girls disrupt and reinscribe normative femininity in what they called, “the brutal contexts of heterosexualized regulation” (2008, 315). In response to a prompt derived from the article, “Remember a time when an ‘alternative figuration’ of girlhood became imaginable/doable,”<sup>1</sup> each of us wrote a memory story. One memory that emerged out of this was the Sherry story, a vignette that captured the group’s imagination in its attention to sensory detail as well as its ability to throw into sharp relief the norms governing proper or respectable girlhood. The narrator, a pre-adolescent girl, “hears” of something shocking, and potentially shameful, happening on the playground. She rushes over to discover one of the girls, Sherry, hanging upside down on the monkey bars. Sherry’s legs are wide open, revealing that under her dress, through her tights, Sherry’s genitals can be seen by a crowd of girls watching her “with guilty pleasure.” This story and our “writing back” to it, offered a venue for thinking through questions of contagion among bodies/selves in girlhood and how we might use collective biography to interrupt the “I”-ness of a story so that what emerges is something akin to what Deleuze and Guattari call “interbeing” (1987, 25). We read this disruption as a significant move for collective biography, opening its practices to multiple new lines of flight.

In what follows, we first contextualize our work within collective biography as a research method, particularly recent writing on collective biography that is informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Davies and Gannon 2009, 2011, 2012). We then discuss our interventions, in Deleuzoguattarian terms, as deterritorializing methodology. Next, we illustrate more specifically how “writing back,” Image Theatre and photographs worked to disperse authorial claims – to deterritorialize and therefore enable us to reimagine possibilities, not only intellectually, but in more embodied ways. We conclude with our thoughts about the multiplicities this process engenders and their implications for future work in collective biography.

### **Collective biography**

Collective biography (Davies and Gannon 2006) is a research method where, through a technology of speaking, writing, and listening to memory stories on a selected topic, a group of researchers works together to identify and begin to unpack the discursive threads and familiar cultural storylines through which subjects are constituted and made recognizable to themselves and to others. It was inspired by, and developed from, the collective memory work methodology of feminist sociologist Frigga Haug and her colleagues in Germany (Haug et al. 1987). With the methodological naming of our work as “collective biography” (e.g. Davies 1994; Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012), we signal a shift to the collective interpretation of memory within an explicitly poststructural framework with its attendant emphasis on deconstructing normative notions of power and knowledge, on the processes of subjectification, and on the constitutive effects of discourse.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the word “biography,” this method differs significantly from life-history and other research methods that focus on singular psychological individuals. Indeed the method “jettisons” the notion of the, “unitary, rational subject who can be understood in terms of his/her linear development” (Stephenson and Papadopolous 2006, 61–2). The focus shifts from individuals (telling their stories) to processes of subjectification within which subjects come into being, as collective biography draws attention to historically and culturally specific grids of intelligibility such as gender and sexuality. Collective biography, as we have noted, is inspired by Haug et al.’s (1987) memory-work, but endeavors to move this work into an overtly poststructural paradigm. While Haug (2008) stresses that memory-work emerges from everyday language and experience and theory is emergent in the final phases of analysis, collective biography (Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012) foregrounds theoretical and conceptual problems and elaborates these through memories of everyday experience. Close attention to specific sensory, affective, and embodied detail is crucial to this type of writing. The processes of collective biography produce embodied accounts of being; each subject’s moments of singular sensation and memory are opened up so that they begin to resonate with the memories and embodied accounts of becoming of other members of the research group. In this approach, memories are not merely assemblages of familiar stories, narrated by and about essential and individualized selves; they become data for collective inquiry into processes of subjectification. The observations, questions, and comments that are provoked by each memory-story are crucial to the process of opening these texts to alternative readings and subsequent rewritings.

Collective biography is increasingly understood through the theoretical lens provided by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Davies and Gannon 2009, 2011, 2012; Wyatt et al. 2011). Lived experience is of interest, “insofar as it is a manifestation of emergent being, where subjects come to exist, unfold, as virtual points of intersection [or intensities] among concepts, precepts and affects” (Wyatt et al. 2011, 3). Collective biography works with the “virtual body” and with memories of “virtual events” in that each time particular memories are evoked and elaborated in telling and writing in the collective research setting, “they are re-made in their virtual intensities” (Wyatt et al. 2011, 7–8). Close attention to affect, to the body and to language in the telling and the writing of a particular memory aims to capture the “haecceity” or “just-thisness” of the moment so that it resonates in its intensity with the lived experience of members of the collective and not just the individual storyteller (Halsey 2007, 145–6). Memory stories are spoken, written, read aloud, listened to, discussed, and often rewritten by the original author in order to allow other listeners/readers to come as close as possible to the immediacy, intensity and intimacy of that embodied moment, to feel it within the folds of their own bodies. The stories work towards a sense of open borders, of porosity between subjects – of the subjects within the stories and also of the subjects who come together to form the research group. Collective biography produces movements of thought and movements of affect between subjects. Through the workshop process, these become closely linked to the process of writing/listening; each writer/listener begins to become, “someone other than themselves, a subject whose co-implication in the lives of others has become visible” (Davies and Gannon 2011, 119). Thus decentring or destabilizing the “I,” the narrative subject able to represent memories from a coherent or knowledgeable position, is part of the work of collective biography.

Our particular process of collective biography entailed a week-long workshop in Halifax, Canada on the topic of gender, sexuality, and schooling. Our transdisciplinary “girl studies” group consisted of seven women from five different universities working across various fields of study, including women and gender studies, cultural studies, musicology, social work, sociology, and education.<sup>3</sup> We were particularly interested in how feminist scholars had put the theoretical apparatus derived from Deleuze and Guattari to work as they analyzed empirical data from their research with girls. As we generated stories from our own lived experiences of girlhood throughout the workshop, we also considered the efficacy of Deleuzoguattarian theoretical approaches to understanding these stories and our own research process.

Each morning we began with a writing prompt derived from theoretical readings on schooling and sexuality that we had gathered prior to the workshop, or that we added throughout our week together (these included Best 2000; Coleman 2008a, 2008b; Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen 2008; Jackson 2005, 2010; Renolds and Ringrose 2008; Ringrose 2011). We wrote memory stories and shared them with the group, and sometimes rewrote and reread them, usually in order to open the story further to others through, for example, the incorporation of details that were not part of the original telling and/or to clarify points of confusion. In a Deleuzoguattarian reading of this approach, if we consider the storyteller – the subject in whose experience a memory originates – to be the “center” of a memory story, then the methodological movements of collective biography are already somewhat like the, “nomadic waves or flows of deterritorialization [that] go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new center to the new periphery, falling back to the old center, and launching forth to the new” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 53). As the unity of the subject begins to dissipate, the work of collective biography begins to have some affinity with the description that Deleuze and Guattari give of schizoanalysis: it can proceed:

only with great patience, great care, by successively undoing the representative territorialities and reterritorializations through which a subject passes in his individual history. For there are several layers, several planes of resistance that come from within or are imposed from without. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 318)

It is because of the tendency towards undoing that emerged so urgently within the context of this workshop that we began to think of our work as engaging in a process of “deterritorializing” collective biography.

### **Deterritorializing methodology**

The deterritorializing strategies – textual in(ter)ventions – that we describe in this paper arose firstly because several of us have previously worked with innovative forms of writing and other art forms in research in general and in collective biography in particular, and secondly because we worked with a Boalian drama practitioner on our final afternoon together. After we had gathered a number of written pieces over the course of several days, we began to disrupt one another’s texts through dramatic performance and rewriting memories from different perspectives and/or in different genres.

Reworking one another’s texts rather than our own was a significant departure from the usual collective biography process where the original author tends to rewrite earlier drafts of her story (Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012; Haug 2008; Haug et al. 1987).<sup>4</sup> This strategy unhinged the writer from her text and allowed us to



recast what subject, text, and body/embodiment might mean in this work. The persistence of the originating subject as the one who “knows,” and who remains most authorized to speak and write the truth of memory has, at times, provided an awkward undertow in collective biography work. Where it is taken up within a poststructural paradigm, with a commitment to problematizing the individualized humanist subject and interrogating the constitutive effects of discourse across subjects, collective biography attempts to move beyond the purely biographical humanist subject (Davies 1994; Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012). However, as St Pierre suggests, “humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak... everywhere, overwhelming in its totality” (2000, 478). Our strategies of deterritorializing the texts precluded this slippage into an individualized, psychological, linear, or chronological subject. Though the quotes from the workshop at the beginning of this paper refer to “my life” and “her story,” the experience of misrecognition – of loosening the self from the story – had a powerful effect. As we have discussed, in a Deleuzoguattarian sense, collective biography undoes subjectivity and disrupts temporality. Subjects are detached from a sense of ownership over their own memories, that is, from a sense that “this happened to Me.” The authorial “I” of the story/memory becomes a “We,” enabling a shared sense of being/becoming that resonates with what Deleuze and Guattari would describe as a nomadic subjectivity: an exteriorizing of feeling so that it is no longer locked in a closed system (i.e. a subject who has feelings) but a powerful affect, with multiple intensities within the pack that, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, can serve to: “sweep me away so that the Self (Moi) is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are desubjectified, perhaps even to the point of death” (1987, 356).

Below, we present the textual in(ter)ventions we applied to the Sherry story. We consider these as providing evidence of ways the individual “I”s of the research group members were interrupted, thus opening space for affective movement across, among, beyond our own stories – a de/reterritorializing rhythm integrally connected to nomadic subjectivity. As noted above, this particular story was written in response to a prompt derived from an article by Renold and Ringrose (2008):

She had heard the rumours before she saw for herself. It was true. Sherry was doing roll-overs and the splits upside down on the monkey bars. Her tunic skirt flipping over to reveal that underneath her leotards she is not wearing any underwear. The girl hangs onto the pole watching and waiting with the other girls, pointing and laughing, flushing with guilty pleasure when Sherry does the splits and everyone can see her vagina.

We use this as the basis for our discussion of textual in(ter)ventions in/to collective biography as a methodological practice. The use of in(ter)vention – both as a practice and as a term – is intended to evoke the sense of interruption, disruption – even eruption – that happens when we open a text to multiple writers and recast it in multiple forms. We think of “text” here in a broad sense, considering it to include not only print, but also, for example, visual art, drama, dance, and music. As our inter(ven)tions involve art practices such as drama and writing, it is worth noting here that, for Deleuze and Guattari, art is not about representation as such; rather, it is the movement of affect in the form of sensation, as one means through which de/reterritorializing occurs. For them, art is connected to the natural/physical world; it is a rhythm, a becoming-expressive, a time/space where sound

and color (for example) continuously mark and re/mark territories (de/reterritorializing), affect rhythms, shift intensities, transform milieus (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 311–23). Grosz (2008) notes that, within a Deleuzian paradigm, artistic practices have particular potential for deterritorializing habits of thought that separate and individualize us. She suggests that art can surprise, intensify, and provoke movements of affect across and between bodies:

[...] art is the most direct intensification of the resonance, and dissonance, between bodies and the cosmos, between one milieu or rhythm and another. It is that which impacts the body most directly, that which intensifies and affects most viscerally. Through the plane of composition it casts, art is the way the universe most directly intensifies life, enervates organs, mobilizes forces. It is the passage from the house to the universe, from territory to deterritorialization. (Grosz 2008, 23–4)

Our work with art in(ter)ventions interrupted the limits of the discursive and the conceptual by mobilizing sensation, force, and intensity, opening up spaces where we can imagine and feel outside the boundaries of our “selves,” our memories, physical bodies, and also, more literally, the texts we wrote, individually, during the workshop. In doing so, we work across the body, not as an individual body, but, in Deleuzoguattarian terms, as a relational body, one that is affected by and affects other bodies. Against an understanding of bodies as discrete entities with proprietary histories, memories, and sensory perceptions, we intervene in texts as a way to explore bodies as “relational becomings” (Coleman 2008b, 168). Memories become processes that are collective/multiple rather than individual – in space and time – through our imbrication with other bodies, subjects, and texts. Below, we discuss in turn the writing and dramatic/photographic in(ter)ventions we undertook in relation to the Sherry story.

### **Writing in(ter)ventions**

In the final stage of the collective biography workshop, we each wrote back to someone else’s story, with the intention of expanding and/or transforming it – and thereby manifesting new possibilities as to what the text might do. We chose from several options: write from a different character’s point of view, write in a different genre such as poetry or a script, or write into a particular image, feeling, or other moment of the original text. We found that we were at times uncomfortable with moving into another’s text, sometimes tentative and at others more confident and playful, as if working with someone else’s memories liberated us from our everyday, habituated, ways of knowing. Even listening to someone else read our original stories aloud, ruptured the fabric of ownership, the sense of our stories, our memories as personal, individual territories.<sup>5</sup> Our in(ter)ventions thus took place on two levels: at the level of the texts and also in the relations among us as researchers and colleagues, creating new affective flows across stories and among (and beyond) writers and texts. The piece below emerged as an example of this process:

Sherry knows she’s better on the monkey bars than all the other girls. Her legs are strong and she has practiced all through the summer on the old frame down back of the yard at her grandma’s house. Her cousins nickname her “monkey” ‘cos she’s better than most of them by now. She loves the feeling of hanging upside down and feeling the blood rush to her head and looking at the world all topsy-turvy. She loves hanging there feeling sun on her legs and air on her skin. She hates having to wear all these



clothes now she's back at school. They get in the way. She'd take them off if she was a real monkey. She dresses herself for school when she's at her grandma's place and likes the sorts of clothes that feel like they are not even there. In the schoolyard the other girls gather round her. They look funny upside down, giggling and pointing at her. She doesn't really care much what they think. They don't play with her anyway. But she sort of likes that they are watching her. That gives her a funny upside down feeling in her tummy. She pushes her legs higher and higher so they can have an even better look.

This in(ter)vention generates a new story from the point of view of a girl who seems otherwise to have no voice or say in how she is positioned by the other girls or the narrator (and who is voiceless in the original story). It opens a line of resistance to others' positioning of her. In this fictionalized rewriting, Sherry becomes agentic, despite her subordination by others, in articulating another perspective on her play. She highlights the feeling of blood in her head when she hangs upside down, the sun and air on her legs and arms, how much she loves clothes that, "feel like they are not even there." The textual in(ter)vention also mobilizes affective flows in different directions and enables different potential points of contact for listener/readers with the story as well as potential points of rupture within the story itself. It subverts the passionate attachment to the truth of the memory by imagining other possible/plausible truths and perspectives. Like the group member in the opening of this essay who described her failure to recognize that the tableau in which she was participating came out of one of her own stories, in the process of writing in(ter)ventions, we were thrown into the deterritorialized space of writing through, or even beyond, what had been someone's else's story, as our own stories were written, not "over" but "across" in complex ways, with bits and pieces left in and out, rearranged, translated, turned inside out, and erased, but not completely. In writing back to the memory stories, the writing, like our "selves," entered into a nomadic state, a state of becoming, which is a "constant state of movement and transformation" entailing "novelty [and] the openness and uncertainty that this produces" (Coleman 2008a, 89).

While generating a similar sense of uncertainty as the writing in(ter)ventions around the process of deterritorializing embodied stories, memories, and "selves," the drama workshop took us into a space that was even less familiar and – for many group members – much less comfortable (at least initially) than the writing. By moving (into) our physical bodies, we were pushed into sensuous, and more direct, even vulnerable, relations with one another. The energy generated in this way was vibrant, something less attached to the discursive or the conceptual – and something that exceeded any of our individual "selves."

### **Drama and photographic in(ter)ventions**

In the final afternoon of our workshop, we invited a Boalian theatre practitioner to work with us on a sample of the texts we had written through the week. Facilitator Susan Spence-Campbell led us into drama through a series of exercises that involved physical movement and stillness, voice and silence, individual, partner, and small group work. Significantly, she introduced us to Image Theatre as a means of working with specific phrases and fragments that she had chosen from our writing. For Boal (2006), image, feeling, and imagination became important in the context of his cross-cultural and multilingual work with Theatre of the Oppressed.

Specifically relevant to our work with textual in(ter)ventions is his interest in: “the *multiple mirror of the gaze of others* – a number of people looking at the same image, and offering their feelings, what is evoked for them, what their imaginations throw up around that image” (2006, 175; italics in original). We understand the “multiple mirror of the gaze of others” as fluid, shifting, and multidimensional, a movement across physical bodies, subjects, and bodies of text, something set in motion by affect, by new iterations of bodies-in-relation.

In Image Theatre, one person silently sculpts others into a tableau (frozen picture) inspired by an idea, story, memory, or experience (Boal 2006) – in our case, the excerpts from our stories. Later, the tableau comes to life, is “dynamized” through improvisation – the characters in the tableau talk, move, and interact to explore the multiple potentialities of the moment (Schutzman and Cohen Cruz 2006). In relation to the original story about Sherry, our task in the drama workshop was to move the single line: “flushing with guilty pleasure when Sherry does the splits and everyone can see her vagina” into a tableau where each participant created and held a position according to the director/participant’s vision. Spence-Campbell chose the fragments from the texts such as the one above based on their possibilities for tableaux, not because of a personal investment in the group dynamics, the writing process, or the texts themselves, as she knew only one member of the group and had not participated in the writing process earlier in the week. In doing so, she assisted in the process of removing us from ownership of the original texts and of moving subjects across the bodies (textual, physical, and other) that were present in the space and time available. Further, because each of us chose a phrase that did not come from our own writing as a basis for directing others into a tableau, we worked *through* the story like we did with the writing in(ter)ventions described above – albeit through different artistic media, this time using our bodies and voices rather than the written word. In the Sherry tableau, a new character emerged – that of a teacher who looked over her eyeglasses at Sherry’s exploits on the monkey bars, thus introducing another perspective on Sherry’s transgression that could be juxtaposed with that of the two small groups of girls who gathered in the scene.

Additional layers and possibilities also emerged through photographs of the tableaux<sup>6</sup> that Spence-Campbell took with her iPhone. She shot from several angles, thus providing multiple perspectives, further fracturing existing narrative coherences. As they could be immediately projected through a computer onto a screen, the photographs were starting points for discussions whereby we offered varying and multiple interpretations about the characters we had just “played,” considering their motivations, feelings, next actions, and so on. In the Sherry tableau, we were struck by the expression on Sherry’s face in the photo: how did she experience this event? As a moment of freedom and joy, oblivious to the onlookers? As defiance? As a means of getting attention? What was the teacher thinking? Would she ask Sherry to get down from the monkey bars? Discipline the group of girls? Was she deriving her own secret pleasure? And what was going on with the two groups of girls, the onlookers, individually and collectively? What affects were created through their “looking”? For instance, while the pictures, at first glance, seem to convey a conventional response in the onlookers, in the form of shock and even ridicule or contempt, was there also a secret delight in Sherry’s disruption of the gendered status quo? Across all the photographs, including the one of “Sherry,” it is possible to read what Deleuze and Guattari would call a “contagion of affect”

(1987, 241), where the individual feeling of bodily satisfaction and freedom experienced by Sherry (Figure 1) spreads to the two groups, creating a nomadic movement of joyful rebellion, even if it is quickly reterritorialized by molar structures, present in the onlookers' possible fear of what will happen to Sherry or the teacher's censoring gaze (Figure 2).

After the tableaux and ensuing discussions about what was happening in the pictures, we found ourselves needing to understand what all the characters might have been thinking; rather than acting or "role play," we felt ourselves becoming the characters we were embodying, that, in fact, they were taking us over, or in Deleuzoguattarian terms, infecting us (Figure 3). We needed to move, act, and speak through the characters, and this contagion moved us to the next phase of Image Theatre, where we dynamized the tableaux, thereby investigating what each might have been thinking or feeling and what she might have said or done prior to, or after, the moment that had been captured in stillness through the tableaux and the photographs. In this way, different forces and intensities were mobilized through what we had collectively imagined into existence, across the bodies of the characters, our own assemblages of "self," and the bodies of text in the form of the written story, the tableaux, and the photographs.

In the process of writing collective biography, we are never just writing. The process begins with the sharing of stories, some of which get written down, some not. In the creation of tableaux, we wondered: could a greater fluidity, a deterritorializing, of the stories told and written down emerge? Could we allow ourselves, consciously or not, to draw from the broader pool of collective narrativization? One memory provoked by looking at the photographs of our tableaux in the writing of this paper is the sense of fun we had in performing them. We were struck by the gusto with which we threw ourselves into the roles, and the ways in which we imagined our bodies physically into particular shapes, forms, and relations with others. This is an example of how expanding collective biography practices might create both "ruptures and reterritorializations as a molecular rhythm" (Renold and



Figure 1. Sherry upside down on the monkey bars.



Figure 2. Cluster of three girls looking at Sherry.



Figure 3. Cluster of two girls and teacher looking at Sherry (on right).

Ringrose 2008, 332). The pleasure in the play, and the memory of the play, is partly the pleasure of exposing the, “molar (normalized) ideals and discourses of gendered and sexualized identity” (Ringrose 2011, 602).

Taking part in the drama workshop provided a potent context for generating a nomadic subjectivity in our work on girls, sexuality, and schooling, as each participant took on, expressed, and articulated the gestures, modes of thought, affects, and emotions that had originated with another's memory. In this space of multiple mo(ve)ments, we experienced our bodies, not as fixed biographical entities located in time and space, but as fluid, time-traveling nomadic becomings, both acting upon, and being acted upon by, stories generated by the group. When we took up and lived other subjects' stories through drama and writing in(ter)ventions, we became part of them and they part of us; in doing so, we multiplied stories and subjectivities, deterritorializing the "I" of each story by blurring, if not erasing, the lines between individual biographical selves.

### Conclusion

In engaging in textual in(ter)ventions in collective biography via Image Theatre, photographs, and writing, we deterritorialize what is imagined as inside, as authentic and belonging unilaterally to the individual self who remembers. Instead, we consider the nomadic subject, not as a discrete rational subject but as a "cartographic figuration" (Braidotti 2008, 27) perpetually engaged in self-reflexivity, always in motion and always in relation. This is a "non-unitary" subjectivity that is a "dynamic, time-bound, embodied and embedded subject in process" (Braidotti 2008, 27), where the binaries of self/other, subject/object dissolve, where the taken-for-granted connections between a memory, in its "original" textual form, and an individual subject/body rupture and may even be rendered unintelligible or unrecognizable to its "author." As Goodchild says of deterritorializations:

When forces meet and interact, the relation that they construct affects their own nature and changes them in the process ... one force acts on another by lending it a fragment of its code, offering some of its conventions and habits. It imposes senses and values on the other force. The latter then responds by acting on the former, imposing its own sense and values. Through this exchange of fragments of code, the overall memory or territory belonging to each force is expanded, possibly in a way that overrides former codes and conventions ... each force is transformed in its essence: it is deterritorialized. (1996, 38)

Thus our memories operate like forces that exchange fragments of code and alter each other in the exchange. De-linking individual subjects and bodies from their memories, and having other bodies take up and inhabit these memory spaces, grafts new affects and sensations onto these memories and serves as a powerful reminder of the mobility of subjective experience. It is a nomadological approach to subjectivity that emphasizes a body/subject/assemblage that is, "constantly transforming; is (capable of) constantly being known, understood and experienced differently" (Coleman 2008b, 171). Using this approach to collective biography moves us from writing and re-working individual stories as a means of identifying "grids" of intelligibility, to a more forceful intervention, a jarring of the text/subject/body in a manner that we might, somewhat provocatively, describe as a "becoming violence." That is to say, the wrenching of a story out of a biographical narrative of the self into a collective mo(ve)ment creates both pain and pleasure for the individual subject/narrator, but opens up new stories, new voices, and new perspectives that do not erase as much as co-exist with, and "feed upon," the "original" story.

If, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 93), a schizophrenic is one who refuses the “I,” a nomadological approach to collective memory work entails radically disrupting the ownership of a memory by the subject to whom the memory “belongs.” A Deleuzian re-imagining of collective biography embraces a schizophrenic conception of individual memory as a collectively created assemblage, a kind of contagion that creates multiplicity without absorbing or equaling the original story (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 239–41). These becoming stories do not replace the “first” story; they do not leave this story intact and enter it via another voice (i.e. synthesizing); instead, they use the story to proliferate, to give birth to themselves, while remaining rhizomatically “in alliance” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25) with both the teller and the story to which they are connected. This type of work offers us lines of flight out of the molar memories of “things that stay” (Coleman 2008a); those painfully gendered and heterosexualized memories that were so much a part of the week we spent exploring sexuality and schooling through collective biography. These are first steps; there are many more to take.

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### Notes

1. Prior to the workshop, the facilitators (Susanne and Marnina) developed a series of writing prompts generated from particular workshop readings.
2. See St Pierre (2000) for a thorough elaboration of poststructural theoretical concepts in education.
3. Our group comprised (in alphabetical order): Marion Brown, Dalhousie University; Michele Byers, Saint Mary’s University; Susanne Gannon, University of Western Sydney; Marnina Gonick, Mount Saint Vincent University; Mythili Rajiva, University of Ottawa; Susan Walsh, Mount Saint Vincent University; and Jacqueline Warwick, Dalhousie University.
4. Haug’s original outline of memory work in *Female Sexualization* (1987, 70), however, recommends attending to points of view, interests, and motives of others when participants revise their own memory stories.
5. It is amazing what another’s voice, pacing, intonation, and pronunciation can change in the telling of a story. It is also noteworthy that where the writer had already read his/her story aloud, the new reader often mentioned the desire to try and “copy” the original “voice” as closely as possible.
6. The photographs we include in this paper have been “Photoshopped” in order to further disengage the photographic images of our embodied selves from the (illusion of) stable, coherent selves that we inhabit on a day-to-day basis. In doing so, we shift attention from our identities onto the shapes and forms of bodies in relation to one another, and the sensations, affects and intensities are mobilized.

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