



## Affirmative Critique as Minor Qualitative Critical Inquiry

A Storying of a Becoming Critical Engagement  
With What Happens

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**Abstract** This article considers what to do with a political questioning of how to perform qualitative research when engaging with stuck bodily happenings. It does so inspired by philosophical-theoretical-methodological flows in the field of qualitative research where working against colonial ways of knowing and justice-oriented knowledge creation is of importance. The article's storying evolves from a reality- and philosophy-driven curiosity of race in relation to professionalism in early childhood education in a Nordic landscape. As a way of thinking through how to perform critical qualitative inquiry when positioned in a monist materialist thinking and within a philosophy of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987), it explores Braidotti's (2011, 2013) "affirmative critique" as a way of working creatively with resistance.

*Keywords: affirmative critique, critical qualitative inquiry, philosophy of desire, new materialism*

Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 17)

Retrospectively and forward-looking, this article considers *what to do* with a political questioning of how to perform critical qualitative research when engaging with ephemeral real bodily experiences that "forces us to think" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 176). It attempts to do so in a philosophical-theoretical-methodological manner that both works against colonial ways of knowing in research and toward justice-oriented knowledge creation. Considering such questions and forces together actually became the doctoral study that this article emerges from (Andersen, 2015). Worded in a more substantial manner, the study has performed a reality- and philosophy-driven

curiosity of race in relation to professionalism in early childhood education in a Nordic landscape, and it has done so through a “tracing” and “mapping” or a “cartography” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of a white female early childhood pedagogue’s (“me”) race-becomings with a real social landscape. In doing so, the doctoral study was deeply inspired by the emerging interests in bringing the material to the forefront of theory, politics, and activism in feminist work and beyond (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Colebrook, 2008; Papadopoulou, 2010) and by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983, 1987) philosophy of desire, and I suggest that it gradually has articulated a *minor critical qualitative inquiry* with a taste for creation. Hence, it could be said to contribute to the debate on working the limits of critical inquiry (Braidotti, 2013; MacLure, 2015).

Deleuze may not concur with the standard image of a political philosopher. Still, his work together with Guattari is understood as offering an approach to think philosophically around the political (Patton, 2000). What, however, may the consequences be for critical qualitative research if working from and with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of desire combined with new materialist thinking? What might it look like when engaged with race and professionalism in a particular time and space and how might this be political? To think through how Deleuze and Guattari’s work can contribute to political thinking and knowledge production is not entirely new. Writing of the importance of productive educational research, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas, Martin and Kamberelis (2013) argue that research exploring Deleuzoguattarian “mapping” is critical and hence has “political teeth” (p. 673). Further, Massumi (1992) suggests that Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “becoming-other” is utterly political and pragmatic (pp. 100–103), which coincides with the idea of mapping as political counteractualizations. In line with Patton (2000), Martin and Kamberelis, and Massumi, the research presented here suggests that Deleuze and Guattari’s contribution to political thinking concerns a philosophy that instigates new and creative counteractualizations of *the present*. In the study presented, *a present* experimented with as a way of performing creative counteractualizations is understood as assemblages habitually performing stuck happenings (with “me”), or formulated differently, imprisoned race-becomings.

## **A Storying**

Despite a strong interest in social justice and possibilities offered by critical cultural theories when starting to weave a research curious of stuck bodily experiences and these aspects bearing on thinking of how to perform critical qualitative inquiry, *the*

*real* intensified as hard to grasp within this epistemology (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2013; Jones & Jenkins, 2008). Encounters with new materialist thinking and new radical theories of race and whiteness (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012; Hames-García, 2008; Kaufmann, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Rai, 2012; Saldanha, 2006) offered a way out of this impossibility of going beyond the split between language and reality. It was through this work and eventually an extensive reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) that a concern of how to practice critique and resistance when opposing transcendental and humanist traditions in cultural theory was materialized.

With Deleuze and Guattari (1987), *what is* is a self-organizing open system or an assemblage that is more or less stable and simultaneously in constant motion. Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) answer to how to work with resistance within such a logic reads: "to create is to resist" (p. 110). To think of creation or newness as a way to resist the present, as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, resembles much work of new materialist scholars across various disciplines (Bennett, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Lim, 2010). Yet, to particularly focus on the relation between critique and creation, as Braidotti (2011, 2013) does when articulating an affirmative critique, is not always the case when writing of the politics of new materialism. As a response to this, this article is a storying of a "pedagogical process of learning *from* and *with*" race as it has happened by tracing its condition of creation so that those conditions can be transformed, and also make it possible to actively take part in co-creation of other race-becomings and "subsequent material-semiotic differing realities" (Lenz Taguchi, 2016, p. 214). It is further a storying of a continuing process of articulating what transformative critique might be when working from a logic where desire has no target or object, and how this relates to matter as a "political exit" (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 77).

In its early stages, the doctoral study was inspired by feminist autoethnographic work (Holman Jones, 2005; Spry, 2011; Visweswaran, 1994) and Spivak's (1996, p. 26) notion of "storying" as a situated and localized performance of history aiming to trigger movements toward a past and a future. Naming this text a *storying* is to underline that herstories are "mostly about power" and hence never free of aspects of power (Smith, 1999, p. 34). Interestingly Deleuze (1988b, p. 60) suggests, as a way to be wakeful of power in our work, to be attentive to a dimension that is reducible to knowledge, "the micro," which he defines as "mobile and non-localizable connections" (p. 62). And this dimension, here named *stuck happenings* or *imprisoned race-becomings*, was an important force in the doctoral study this article is based on.

It is hard to story without using the habitual "I." That is, however, what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) challenge us to do when presenting an ontology where the

subject is “forever decentered, defined by the states through which it passes” (p. 20), and where all we can know are assemblages (1987). This challenge will be worked on more extensively later in the article. For now, however, a reader will hopefully accept the term “*I*-*assemblage*” as an attempt to decenter the researcher subject in the storying and, like others before, to work the limits of the narrative “*I*” without being paralyzed (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008; Kaufmann, 2011a).

## Stuck Happenings

When entering the space of doing a PhD, “*I*-*assemblage*” was neophyte of thinking with feminist and critical cultural theories such as postcolonial and feminist post-structural theories. Although these quite recently have shook “*my*” possibilities for knowing and living, it was the methodologies that these theories were productive of (and not) that spurred “*my*” subsequent messy reading-writing-breathing process of creating a study. A rather ravenous appetite for literature on decolonizing, feminist, and critical epistemologies (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Rhedding-Jones, 1995; Smith, 1999; Visweswaran, 1994) combined with a continuing exploring of feminist poststructural scholarship (Collins, 2000; Lather, 2007; Pillow, 2003; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000) and an interest in the performance of ethical professionalism in early childhood in a Nordic “multicultural society” was productive of the articulation of questions that became productive forces in what “*I*-*assemblage*” now think of as a becoming critical engagement with what happens. Two of the questions, or “lines,” to use a Deleuzeo-guattarian (1987) vocabulary, that especially fueled the study were: How might one do transformative qualitative research in a field swarming with potential pitfalls? How might one perform critical qualitative research without contributing to reconstituting and even tightening the social conditions one sets out to challenge?

A quite different but no less productive force in the same process was series of persistent hard-to-word bodily stuck happenings in “*my*” everyday life. These seemed to visit suddenly and repeatedly and felt imprisoning in relation to a long-standing and continuing personal-professional interest in working against discrimination, marginalization, and colonization in early childhood. These stuck happenings occurred as “*I*-*assemblage*” unintentionally performed something dangerously in proximity with what could be recognized as racial discrimination (both phenotypes and discourses of “the Other” seemed to be at work in these happenings). It was not audible and visible discrimination, but perhaps more like a mute refrain that was registered through the body of a light-skinned ethnic Norwegian female, a former

preschool teacher who is now a preschool teacher educator, a woman who does not wear or display religious symbols, and a mother of light-skinned ethnic Norwegian children (“me”) when traversing an everyday landscape in Norway.

Since “my” first job as a teacher in a day care center in Norway, “I”-assemblage had sensed how institutional practices and (“my” own) personal-professional performances sometimes seemed to privilege some practices and/or humans and discriminate against others. As someone who over the past years, in writing and in pedagogical practices, has systematically tried to put to work feminist poststructuralist, postcolonial, and other critical cultural theories as a way of working against such discrimination and marginalization in early childhood, “I”-assemblage became curious about how to explain and critically approach these *unintentional* stuck and troublesome happenings. These happenings seemed to insist on their existence with me despite “my” recent and subversive knowledge of theories that approach and challenge socially unjust practices in early childhood education as discursively constructed and possible to trace and deconstruct. How did these happenings come into being and could they be productive of real transformation?

The stuck bodily registered experiences seemed to escape the recent (at the time) theories for thinking that had become available to me, such as social constructionist theories focusing on colonization, racialization, and whiteness (Berg, 2008; Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Frankenberg, 1993; St Louis, 2005) that offered critical approaches to working against whiteness as well as discriminating and marginalizing pedagogical practices. They also escaped theories offering perspectives on the political aspects of viewing my own subject position as a racialized white subject situated in Europe open to reworking (Griffin & Braidotti, 2002; Warren, 2001). These social constructionist theories *did*, however, open up to quite different approaches than the sociocultural approaches to inclusion and the less analytical “resource-oriented approach” that have dominated Norwegian early childhood education the last two decades (Otterstad & Andersen, 2012). None of the latter offer tools to approach race (Andersen, 2015), which seemed to be the most comprehensive concept to delve into when approaching the stuck happenings. Still, what social constructionist perspectives seemed to be unproductive of was helping to explain the process of the bodily stuck race-happenings coming into being. Importantly, the stuck happenings seemed too persistent to be left alone and too uncomfortable to not matter when interested in working against discrimination, marginalization, and colonization in a so-called “multicultural society.” But, what were the conditions of these race-happenings, and could these be used as political moments?

There is not much room to discuss the use of the problematic concept of *race* here. Nevertheless, it seems important to point to Hames-García (2008), who observes that race is a powerful concept that has transformed many times over the last 500 years. Instead of dismissing it as some do, Hames-García suggests we “ask what the possibilities are for its further reinvention and how those possibilities might promote progressive social change” (p. 315). Also, Braidotti (2006), who writes from a European location, argues that *advanced capitalism*, which is the term she uses for our schizophrenic times, looks like a system that ironically promotes “racism without races” and “multiculturalism without ending racism” (p. 58). Abandoning the concept of race as many Nordic countries have done (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011), and the even more broad silencing of race in early childhood (Andersen, 2015; Mac Naughton & Davis, 2009), have not saved us from racial discrimination across various power axes. Hence, race despite its slipperiness does matter.

## Archiving Happenings

Without really knowing how to proceed what, borrowing from Lather (2007), could be named a “performance of practices of not-knowing” (p. 7), “I”-assemblage began to write down (or document in other ways) bodily stuck happenings, thoughts, and various everyday experiences that were believed to be of relevance for the theme of the study that slowly seemed to crystalize itself: race and early childhood professionalism. “I”-assemblage wrote stories that “had a voice, but no public listener” (Perreault, 1995, p. 33) *and* documented wildly the cultural context in which they happened. This feminist political intuitive gathering together became some kind of beginning (and not) of a Deleuzoguattarian cartography. Inspired by B. Davies and C. Davies (2007), the gathering of happenings and the cultural context where they happened was named a *data-archive* (although a quite messy one). The archive became quite extensive and complex in terms of heterogeneity before the gathering ended. As a way of showing and not just telling of the archive, three documentations are displayed. What follows is first one example of a fictionized version of a stuck happening, and then two examples of things gathered in the landscape traversed in everyday life during the time (in a Chronos logic) of the study.

I am on the local train on my way home from work. My eyes are glancing around in the carriage. It is packed with people. Smells and sounds in the constricted area are absorbed by my body. I feel the closeness of the person next to me. Our arms are touching with thick winter coats on. My eyes stop at

a woman dressed in a long skirt, a loose jacket, and a headscarf. We are opposing each other, facing each other's faces. I behold her. This woman who wears the scarf on her head like my grandmother used to doubled, forming a triangle, tied under her chin. The colors of her clothes are in various tones of gray. Her light-skinned face bears marks of age. She is older than me, but not old. Instinctively my eyes look for her fellow travelers. It is as if, almost at once, my eyes are talking to my brain and my brain is talking to my eyes. I start to think of this microscopic experience again, this looking for her fellow travelers. I feel a sudden stuckness. It is as if I am categorizing this woman in ways that lean dangerously toward some kind of racial discrimination—thinking of her as part of an “other” (too other?) group than that which I would place myself. What my brain just did is not who I am, I say to myself. Not who I want to be.

The next documentation is from an advertisement for woolen garments for children. Looking for children's clothes in a local store one day, the cover of an advertisement lying on the counter did something to me. On the cover, there was a photo of a toddler with dark skin wearing a light blue woolen garment with darker blue stars on it. The toddler was also wearing a hat, sunglasses, large jewelry around the neck, and sneakers. His (or her?) hand was holding a microphone, the feet were firmly planted on a stage, and it looked as if (s)he was in the midst of performing a song. Further, there were spotlights on the stage, and one could see hands in the air from an audience in front of the stage. This photo, with the text “WOOL makes you HOT . . . - but not too HOT!” in large letters across the cover, was co-productive of a stuck bodily race-happening with me, and I archived it to remind me of that incidence or what Deleuze (1988b) might call the micro.

The last example from the archive is a not so much a textualized stuck happening but more a documentation of children's articulation of race in the social field “I”-assemblage traversed. As race often seems to be left out of conversations concerning childhood and inclusion in a “multicultural society” and also as mentioned earlier in the Nordic context, this seemed like an important micromoment to document.

“What color did your faces have when you lived in America?” she asks me. She knows that we have lived in USA some time ago. “We had the same color as now,” I reply. Reading her knowledge of how people have different skin colors, and how that sometimes can say something about where you live in the world, I add that there were people with all different skin colors where we lived. Later

the same day she positions her body next to me while we are in the kitchen asking: "Were those others where you lived in America afraid of you?" The girl is five and a half years old and living in a place where her parents felt as "big news" when they moved here from Bosnia a couple of years ago. She also sang "Father Jacob" in Bosnian to me during her family's stay in our home.

As implicitly articulated, during the process "I"-assemblage started to think of the stuck happenings and the traversed social landscape as productive of "my" racial subjectivity. There was no intentional subject in control of the stuck happenings, nor a stable subjectivity existing before the happenings. Rather, the subject seemed to come into being through and with the happenings. Hence the archive could not only be understood as a documentation of what happens if "on the look-out" (Deleuze, Parnet, & Boutang, 2011) for something interesting but also as a form of documentation of the self in its becoming (Perreault, 1995; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). This I suggest is both a working with and a working beyond a feminist vein where the personal is political (Holman Jones, 2005) and in line with what Braidotti (2006) refers to as becoming nomadic as a researcher-subject where "the self" is opened up to the outside.

An evolving thinking of the happenings as productive of "my own" white racial subjectivity and a struggling to explain the process of continually coming into being led me to an emergent but still frugal body of work within race studies (Saldanha, 2013; van der Tuin, 2011). This work attempts to "re-ontologise" race (Hames-García, 2008; Lim, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Nxumalo, 2010; Rai, 2012; Saldanha, 2006), that is to go beyond race as something represented in language and discourse to offer a radically different approach to discrimination. This created an interest in acknowledging matter as a force in racial differing, that is to think of imprisoned race differings or the stuck race-happenings as a morphing sociomaterial thing and as productive of more stuck-race-happenings. It also created an interest in a further documentation of how racial difference was actualized with "me" and around "me" to come up with new visions of sustainable just professional practices. The documentation of stuck race-happenings and the archiving of things (e.g., toys, folders, advertisements, films), texts (e.g., literature, political documents, newspaper articles, web pages), and memories hence continued, and it was all archived in a large cardboard box. What to analytically *do* with all this was at this point still unclear. However, the new materialist perspectives that the mentioned radically different approach to discrimination worked from became increasingly of interest.

## Stuck Happenings Meet New Materialism

As mentioned “I”-assemblage became curious of if and how these unintentional stuck happenings could be productive of change and hence not only interpreted as sad examples of how dominant discourses of race were producing limited white professional subjectivities and restricted performances of ethical pedagogical practices. This curiosity found a language to create movement with through readings of texts within a new materialism. As suggested by Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012), new materialism is an intellectual tradition that does justice to the material-discursive character of all events and has an immense interest in an affirmative approach to reality. The transformative power in this tradition lies in and through, as stated by Rosi Braidotti, a shift to the affirmative where you can take on the misery in the world but also a larger sense of the possible.<sup>1</sup> Implicit in new materialism is a commitment to approach reality as entanglements between discourse and materiality (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Materiality or substance in this intellectual line of thinking is not understood as the fixed essence or property of things, rather “substance in its intra-active becoming – [is] not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency. The term ‘matter’ refers to the materiality/materialization of phenomena, not to an inherent fixed property of independently existing objects” (Barad, 2008, p. 173).

New materialism is a cultural theory that neither privileges matter over meaning nor culture over nature and that has a renewed interest in the philosophy of immanence (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). It is “a natureculture metaphysics of the ontologically prior” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 92) that allows us to approach the world as complex, as metamorphosis, and as immanent to affirm it’s becoming. It also offers tools to give a special attention to matter that has been so neglected by dualist thought (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). Relating this to the stuck happenings understood as productive of racial subjectivity, subjectivity is also materially embedded within this line of thinking. Here, lending a quote from Tiainen (2007), “our subjectivity is always materially embedded, and . . . its emergence occurs through inextricable interconnections with the surrounding reality, thereby making that which is outside us and inside us constantly pass into each other” (p. 148). New materialism then opens for exploring white racial subjectivity as produced through processes that involve more agents than language and discourse,<sup>2</sup> and as emergent.

Approaching race within this metaphysics, Saldanha (2013) writes that race operates “far ‘below’ any mental or linguistic detectability” (p. 7). With this, matter could refer to both phenotypes and bodily sensory experiences such as the stuck happenings, which is something that usually goes under the radar of social constructionist

perspectives. Instead of approaching race as either biological or cultural, Saldanha (2007) suggests thinking of race as “a shifting amalgamation of human bodies and their appearance, genetic material, artifacts, landscapes, music, money, language and state of mind” and that racial difference “emerges when bodies with certain characteristics become viscous through the way they connect to their physical and social environment” (p. 9). Race in a new materialist thinking is no longer a socially constructed phenomenon, neither a biological phenomenon, but rather a sociomaterial phenomenon that emerges in the present (Saldanha, 2006).

Installed in a new materialist vein, “I”-assemblage, through an intuitive gathering together, has documented the emergence of “my” racial subjectivity in its materialization. New materialism offers a vocabulary for and a way of thinking about the stuck happenings that makes them more possible to articulate, affirm, and resist than through a more Hegelian negative critique. In the process of learning of this metaphysics, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of desire became an alluring place to further immerse in an attempt to work from and with the process of materialization and hence also the logic of assemblage.

## **Stuck Happenings Meet Philosophy of Desire**

Reality in a Deleuzoguattarian philosophy of desire (1983, 1987) is, as mentioned in the introduction, a self-organizing open system that is more or less stable and simultaneously in constant motion; it is an assemblage. Through their philosophy, they “reactivate the transformative force of desire” by unlinking “desire” and “desire for” because every “desire for” is considered a closure (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 76). Desire with Deleuze and Guattari has nothing to do with lack but is instead a productive process of becoming (Massumi, 1992). What is becoming or produced in this process of production is real. And at the same time it is reality. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) write: “If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality” (p. 26). This then is the “ground” for an immanent ontology. Further, in a Deleuzoguattarian reading, life is desire and desire is the expansion of life through creation and transformation. Desire is a production (Colebrook, 2002). The stuck happenings then were not just representations of racial (perhaps) discrimination, they were real emergences of race that also have been productive of reality.

Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of desire is an opening toward a different activism than that of cultural materialism or social constructionism that interrogates “how reality is constructed in the subject itself” (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 73). In their

monist materialist philosophy, there is no division between man and nature (Sellars, 1999). In contrast with an anthropocentric thinking, the subject is no longer in the center (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010) but rather in the periphery. The posthuman subject then is continually becoming in processes where man no longer is in the center and the effects have to do with habits, coincidence, and creativity (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). It is a dissolved self in constant becoming we are dealing with here, a distributed subject (Lorraine, 2005). Hence, the real enemy of (new) materialism is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, dualism (Papadopoulos, 2010). Of new materialism's going beyond dualisms, that is a continuing of Deleuze's monist philosophy, Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012) write that

the transcendental and humanist traditions, despite being manifold, are consistently predicated on dualist structures. New materialists open up the paradoxes inherent in those traditions by creating concepts that traverse the fluxes of matter and mind, body and soul, nature and culture, and opens up active theory formation. (p. 86)

This move to a monist materialism by Deleuze and Guattari, that also is an important force in new materialism, is, according to Papadopoulos (2010), "not a theoretical choice; it is the result of a political diagnosis according to which any desire for change has been vampirised by the institutions of the state" (p. 76). Hence a philosophy of desire is highly political, and as in the quote in the very beginning of this article, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that "underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes" are political (p. 17). This is in concert with desire understood as habitual but always also unpredictable production. Working transformatively with race and whiteness then, needs perhaps something else than a "macro-politics" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that is the standard of tolerance, recognition, and respect.

What Deleuze and Guattari offer with their conceptualization of desire is a loose way of approaching unforeseen happenings in humanity and history (Tuck, 2010). For example, how can it be that our (humans) planned solutions for ending racial discrimination haven't worked as anticipated? Despite various implemented strategies to work against racial discrimination, it is uncontested that racial discrimination as a sociomaterial phenomenon happens across various geopolitical sites. Deleuze and Guattari also offer tools to approach how humans do not act in line with their intentions and how they are constantly failing their hoped-for-self like in the stuck happening on the train in the vignette offered earlier, where "I"-assemblage somehow suddenly produced some kind of unintentional sorting process.

In a philosophy of desire, “intentionality is not attributable to humans” (Mazzei, 2013, pp. 778–779) because the subject is rather a biproduct of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). The documented stuck racial happenings then are in a philosophy of desire not performed by “me” as a conscious intentional subject separated from reality (desire) but are rather “experiential event[s]” (Semetsky, 2005, p. 92). “I” am no longer an intentional self. “I” am a state of continuously becoming through experience or, as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), “the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” (p. 275). “I” am assemblage (Kaufmann, 2011b) with all its lines of stratifications and lines of flights. “I” am morphing matter.

With their materialism, Deleuze and Guattari question “how the very moment of morphing matter comes into being” (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 75), and retrospectively I suggest that this was what wildly and rigorously was documented in the messy archive. In the archive there were tracings of how race was “stratified in me” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 178–179) as a decentered subject but also how it was stratified “at the places where we are” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 178–179), such as an everyday landscape. To produce knowledge with such “morphing matter” (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 75) demands approaches that can be attentive to reality as mobile and to how methodologies are involved in the creation of reality (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). As mentioned already this was done through becoming nomadic, a state where one as a researcher subject involves in a floating sensibility where one becomes more porous to the outside (Braidotti, 2006). “I”-assemblage sensed this as a letting go of rational thinking, and instead becoming more attentive to nonhuman forces inside and outside the human body (Bennett, 2010).

To use another Deleuzoguattarian concept, what was documented was *affective* encounters, which is one way to register how desire “impact[s] on our bodies in ways that are non-conscious” (Hickey-Moody & Malins, 2007, p. 8). Affect is, according to Stewart (2007), “the varying, surging capacities to affect and be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergences” (p. 2). Affects are things that happen, or happenings. They are reality’s actualizations expressed through our (researcher) bodies and which find their ways toward thinking while at the same time creating movements toward a future (Stewart, 2007). In the next part I attempt to, inspired by Braidotti’s “affirmative critique” (2011, 2013), say something about how one might work critically and creatively with immanent happenings (or affective encounters) to actively create just realities.

## Stuck Happenings Meet Affirmative Critique

Braidotti (2011) suggests that the monist materiality that is already sketched out needs an “affirmative critique” as a way of performing political activism. This is her response to the paradox of how to engage in affirmative politics that entail the creation of alternative visions while simultaneously doing critical theory, which implies resistance to the present (Braidotti, 2011). In other words, Braidotti addresses the relation between creation and critique, which is a problem that has confronted most activists and critical theorists. Central to the debate of how to balance the creative potential of critical thought with negative criticism and oppositional consciousness, Braidotti suggests, is the question of how to resist the injustice in the present and at the same time engage them in productive and affirmative ways. MacLure (2015) writes of the same challenge and suggests that affirmative critique must be immanent, transversal, and “oriented towards eventualities that cannot be foreseen” (p. 105) and suggests that is something quite different than judgments. Immanent critique can rather be connected to Deleuze and Guattari’s suggestion to replace interpretation with experimentation, their idea of becoming-other (1987) and also their suggestion that resistance is about creation (1994).

To think of experimentation as political presupposes a monist materialism but also another conceptualization of an event than we are used to in a logic of Chronos. In the logic of Aion, “the time of the pure event or of becoming” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 290) events has no beginning nor end, nevertheless they could be approached as productive of change (Stagoll, 2005), of transformations toward something else. Events with Deleuze are not new occurrences, new entities, or a disruption of some continuous state (Stagoll, 2005; Williams, 2008). An event is somewhat the continuous object of a double question: “What is going to happen? What has just happened?” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 73). That is, Deleuze’s event (1990) is a pulling back and proceeding at once, or a movement toward the future and toward the past at the same time. In other words, an event has both an actual and a virtual dimension. A politics with Deleuze and Guattari might be to trace the actual or what is actualized, like the stuck race-happenings or rather race-events described earlier. But we must not stop there. We should also map such events’ virtual dimensions. This is to affirm what happens to us, the materialization of reality, and to in creative ways experiment to push matter into new habitual becomings. This is a political act as “only continuous variation brings forth . . . virtual continuum of life” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 122). Hence working politically within a monist materialism would

include elements of experimentation or creativity, the performance of “asignifying ruptures” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10), or mappings. This, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is a way of opening up to difference in itself, a phenomenon’s qualitative difference (Leonard & Moulard Leonard, 2012). This is a politics and ethics of life, of joy (Sellars, 2006), an affirmative critique. This is a “minor science,” I suggest, a minor critical qualitative inquiry and a minor politics that, according to Papadopoulos (2010), “pushes matter to the next threshold, connects practical affects and affects of practices” (p. 77). It is counteractualization.

### **Fading Out . . . For Now . . .**

As an ending and as an attempt to expand the idea of experimentation as a political practice, I will once more turn to Braidotti. To perform affirmative critique, she suggests that one “has to start from micro-instances of embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose the self” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 268), which I claim is quite close to what was practiced when archiving the stuck race-happenings that emerged as political knots (e.g., the train story) and also when tracing how race was stratified in the landscape where they emerged (e.g., the advertisement and the dialogue with a girl). This is also in proximity with Deleuze’s idea of finding interest in the micro (Deleuze, 1988b). Further, Braidotti (2011) suggests proceeding positively and creatively with the idea of endurance when performing an affirmative critique. Commenting on this with Deleuze (1988a), endurance involves making “use of our own duration to affirm and immediately to recognize the existence of other durations, above or below us” (p. 33), which I believe overlaps with a performance of opening up to difference in itself or a mapping of the virtual dimensions in events. Massumi (1992) links this to the Deleuzoguattarian concept of becoming-other as was mentioned earlier, a becoming that is a “coming out” of reality’s habitual production (p. 106), a counteractualization.

To practice experimentation with the idea of perhaps speeding up endurance from the microinstances that actualized as imprisoning with “me” in the beginning of a research “I” found inspiration in Bergson’s method of intuition, that is a method of “invention, coincidence, and relationality” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012, p. 814). This is a method that, according to Massumi (1992), can provoke an “unhinging of habit” (p. 103). Intuition is not the same as duration, it is rather the movement that make us emerge from our own duration (Deleuze, 1988a), a movement that loosens up reality’s actualizations (Grosz, 2005). As a method, it can be characterized as intimate

because it cannot be done from a distance (Coleman, 2008). Instead a researcher-subject might creatively become with what is experienced as imprisoning. In this study this was the traced stuck happenings and the landscape where they were produced. Further, intuition is a method that resists the intellect's temptation to "understand the new in terms of language and concepts of the old" (Grosz, 2005, p. 8) and engages with endurance that happens when entering into intimate relation with the object of interest, here the stuck race-happenings. There are no rules or recipes, however, for how this might be practiced, because intuition is an "attuned empiricism" (Grosz, 2005, p. 8) that connects the object to the universe, that is reality understood as a self-organizing ongoing process. In the study storied here, intuition as a way of experimenting resembled some kind of daydreaming state *with* the happenings and the writing down of endurances this produced, a state that became productive of "a qualitative variation, a positive alteration of my own states" (Moulard-Leonard, 2008, p. 92) of becoming-other, and it is what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write of as mapping.

A more expanded storying of this experimentation must be left untold for now. A fading out comment of the political possibilities of the storied process is, however, perhaps necessary. This is nevertheless hard to articulate without falling into some kind of habitual normative language or "desire for" logic. According to Papadopoulos (2010), a "'desire for' is a closure" (p. 76) and working within a logic where known concepts such as tolerance, respect, and recognition are used to think of another future when troubled with discriminationlike happenings might just keep everything in its place. To surrender to a monist materialism in critical qualitative research and to perform an affirmative critique is, I suggest, political through its engagement with habitual actualized material presents in creative ways and through pushing matter to the next threshold (Papadopoulos, 2010) without having a particular goal or outcome. This might produce "adventitious growths and rhizomes" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 17), or more livable lives.

## Notes

1. Braidotti's comments come from an online video, now unavailable, where she spoke of an upcoming summer school session at Utrecht University in 2014 entitled "Critical Theory Beyond Negativity: The Ethics, Politics and Aesthetics of Affirmation."
2. This does not imply that I do not recognize how "the axes of sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences form intersecting patterns of becoming" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 44).

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