

ENSEMBLES OF LIFE: THE FOLDING OF OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS IN FAMILY
HISTORY GENEALOGY

by

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(Under the Direction of Elizabeth A. St. Pierre)

ABSTRACT

In this post-qualitative dissertation using Deleuzoguattarian theories, I examine the ensembles of life created by 11 Nebraskan women, all family history genealogists, in the study of their ancestors. The dissertation is guided by three research questions: (1) How does the assemblage enable an ensemble of life? (2) What is the work of assemblage in an object-interview study? (3) What is the work of the ensemble of life in this study?

During data collection, objects (e.g., documents, photographs, and other artifacts) and ancestors' lives formed an assemblage that enabled the ensemble of life, a concept I invented to meet the needs of my study. The ensemble of life is an ensemble of a person's trajectories—or lines—that are formed by the objects-subjects-events (i.e., the objects, people, and actions) in her life, the sensations associated with those objects-subjects-events, and the virtual potential of those objects-subjects-events. Those lines are

also animated by the fold and a life, and they are open and connectable to other ensembles of life.

The study itself was an assemblage that contained a territory and a collective assemblage of enunciation. The territory consisted of the site of the study, the study's timeline, the participants, and a stuttering methodology, and the collective assemblage of enunciation was formed by the object-interview and data. The methodology that guided this post-qualitative dissertation was a stuttering methodology that is a folding and unstable methodology within/outside of poststructural theories and qualitative methodology. A stuttering methodology guided the object-interviews, conversations in which subjects (participants, ancestors, and I) are entangled with objects, which was also the primary method of data collection. Data are conceptualized as a supple and moving ontology that keeps meaning in play.

The work of the ensemble of life is never-ending. The ensemble of life happened in my data, it happened in my writing, it is happening now, and will continue to happen. In this way, I continue to make, remake, and unmake the ensemble of life with data from the study.

INDEX WORDS: Family History Genealogy, Objects, Deleuze, Post-Qualitative Inquiry

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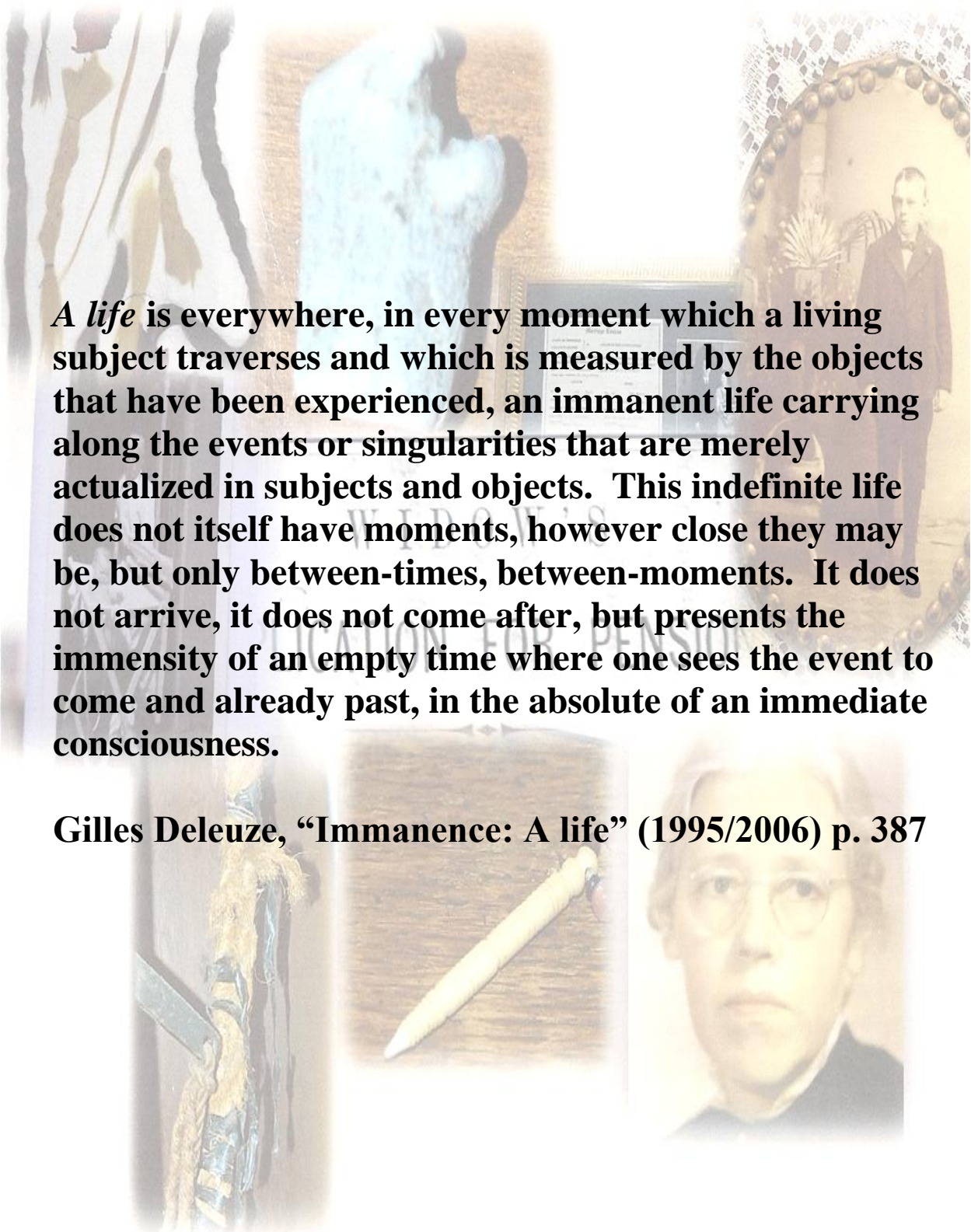
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A *life* is everywhere, in every moment which a living subject traverses and which is measured by the objects that have been experienced, an immanent life carrying along the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. This indefinite life does not itself have moments, however close they may be, but only between-times, between-moments. It does not arrive, it does not come after, but presents the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event to come and already past, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness.

Gilles Deleuze, “Immanence: A life” (1995/2006) p. 387

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CHAPTER 1

MIDDLE OF A LIFE...

Learning about Life

“I want Life.” One of the family history genealogists whom I interviewed in my study about the work of objects (e.g., photographs, documents, and other artifacts) in family history genealogy told me that her grandmother recorded in her journal this simple sentence spoken by both her father and her husband as they lay dying. As she read from the journal, she showed me photographs of her grandmother, her father, and her husband (Figure 1.1).

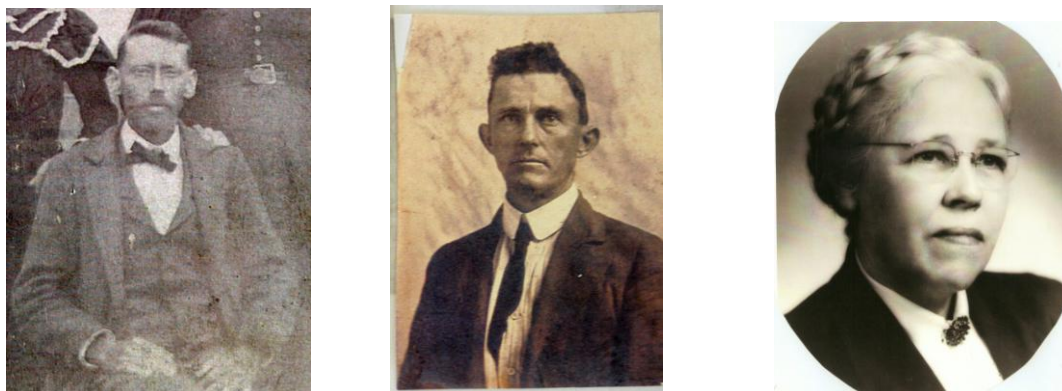


Figure 1.1 I Want Life.¹

Life reverberated not only from the sentence but also from the people in the photographs, long dead. In this way, the living/nonliving binary failed. But that failure could not have been possible without the failure of the subject/object binary evidenced by the entanglement of objects and lives.

The objects—the photographs and the journal—could not be separated from the participant’s ancestors. As the study progressed, I learned that all participants in the

study reported here closely linked their ancestors with various objects they showed me during interviews such that all were entangled much like Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) concept, *assemblage*, which they described as “packs in masses and masses in packs” (p. 34). Bogue (2003a) explained that assemblages are “collections of heterogeneous actions and entities that somehow function together” (p. 98). Assemblages loomed large in my study and assumed a profound significance.

In this object-interview study, I interviewed 11 Nebraskan women, all family history genealogists, to investigate the *ensembles of life* they created in the study of their ancestors, assemblages of entangled objects and life. The research questions that guided the study are the following:

1. How does assemblage enable an ensemble of life?
2. What is the work of assemblage in an object-interview study?
3. What is the work of the ensemble of life in this study?

Background of the Study

Personal Background.

My interest in objects and lives began in my childhood home in Nebraska. To better understand those objects and ancestors that occupied each room, I studied my family's genealogy books—e.g., books containing photographs of people and objects, family trees, and narratives—written by family members. I also asked my family to tell me stories about those ensembles of life. Later on, I commenced my own studies about my ancestors and their objects that captured my interest. The more I learned about them, the more I intimated that they watched over me as I lived my life. Now, my home in

Georgia reverberates with assemblages of my family whose attentive eyes watch me as I become further entangled in other people's objects and lives.

My dissertation study thus continues a life-long qualitative research project about objects and ancestors that assemble ensembles of life in family history genealogy. Using the internet, I sought out family history genealogists living in Nebraska to be participants in my study. I first studied the web pages of the Nebraska State Historical Society, the Nebraska State Genealogical Society, and NeGenWeb to learn more about the state's family history genealogical resources including libraries, historical societies, and family history genealogical associations. The NeGenWeb website is a part of USGenWeb, a website whose goal is to provide free family history genealogical information for those interested in that kind of research. Each county in each state of the U.S. has a cadre of volunteers who offer to help family history genealogists locate county-specific information. I made a list of those libraries, historical societies, NeGenWeb volunteers, and family history genealogical associations within driving distance of my designated research base, my hometown in Nebraska. I then drafted individualized letters and/or emails that I sent to the libraries, historical societies, and volunteers with the NeGenWeb county sites. In general, these emails and letters included a careful description of how I had found their names and information, my purpose for sending the email/letter, my connection to Nebraska, questions about interest in participation and suggestions for my study, and my contact information. From this work, 11 women who have researched or are researching their family history, are residents of Nebraska, and are active members in a family history genealogical community (i.e., as volunteers, members of clubs,

genealogical societies, and/or historical societies) expressed interest in participating in the study.

Theoretical Background.

For most of my life, I was embroiled in humanist descriptions of subjects, objects, and life that suffocated me. At some point in time, I had had enough, stopped believing in those descriptions, and longed for others. Deleuze (1972/1995), in an interview with Guattari, noted the following about people like me who have had enough and need something else:

We're writing for unconsciousnesses that have had enough. We're looking for allies. We need allies. And we think those allies are already out there, that they've gone ahead without us, that there are lots of people who've had enough and are thinking, feeling and working in similar directions: it's not a question of fashion but of a deeper "spirit of the age" informing converging projects in a wide range of fields. (p. 22)

It was not until I read poststructural theories—most notably Deleuze's singular and collective work with Guattari—that I found concepts such as *assemblage*, *the fold*, *events*, and *a life* with which to think my life. It was a non-messianic awakening in which I became caught up in the spirit of those concepts that "do not add up to a system of belief...but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying" (Massumi, 1987, p. xv). The potential of Deleuzoguattarian concepts gave me a crowbar with which to think differently about my life and work.

Deleuze and Guattari's concepts influence how I approach qualitative research. In my introductory qualitative research courses, I was bored with conventional qualitative

research's descriptions of subjects and objects as stable entities. I found the methods of interviewing and participant observation dry, contrived, and tiresome. Simply put, conventional qualitative research's descriptions did not match my lived experiences—experiences about “what's coming into being, what's new, what's taking shape” (Deleuze, 1986/1995, p. 106) as subjects and objects defied stability, and interactions with other people destabilized the verb “to be.” With Deleuzoguattarian concepts I began the work that dominated my doctoral career—re-describing subjects and objects as *becoming*, as “a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, ‘appearing,’ ‘being,’ ‘equaling,’ or ‘producing’” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 239). I also problematized the ontological premises of conventional interviews and observations, methods that assume a stable ontology. I re-described the ontology of those methods as following a “fabric [of which] is the conjunction, ‘and...and...and...’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’” (p. 25). Through analysis, I began to see how a fabric woven by *ands* and populated with objects and subjects as verbs could free qualitative research from its humanist foundations. That work influenced the design of my dissertation study in which I used the Deleuzian (1988/1993, 1991) concept of *the fold* to help me re-describe the work between binary terms (e.g., subject/object and living/nonliving) as relational and in movement and the ontology of the study as rhythmic folds. The fold permeated my study as folding, refolding, and unfolding binary terms formed innumerable pleats in the study.

Not surprisingly, Deleuzoguattarian concepts such as *assemblage*, *events*, and *a life* helped me to think about the folds of my study. I followed Deleuze and Guattari's (1975/1986) advice: “This functioning of the assemblage can be explained only if one

takes it apart to examine both the elements that make it up and the nature of its linkages” (p. 53), and I began to explore the assemblages and other concepts that materialized in my study. The following quote helped me think about how assemblages and other concepts functioned in my study: “An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 22-23).

Social Flows.

The *Random House Dictionary* (2nd ed.) defined genealogy as, “a record or account of the ancestry and descent of a person, family, group etc.” In order to produce the most basic genealogical record of a family—a family tree or pedigree chart—the family history genealogist collects birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce certificates, and death certificates for all involved family members. Those documents are linked to governments’ desire to manage their populations with statistical information about the family. Foucault (1978/2000) explained such a management practice as *biopower*: “Statistics show also that the domain of population involves a range of intrinsic, aggregate effects, phenomena that are irreducible to those of the family, such as epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, ascending spirals of labor and wealth” (p. 216). Monitoring the family via statistical information became an instrument of government, and one way of monitoring the family was to document the family with birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, land deeds, and so on. However, documents are not the only objects of family history genealogy that demonstrate larger structures at work. The availability of photographs is linked to a time when photography became a mainstream method of representing people and things (e.g., homes and buildings).

Artifacts also demonstrate larger structures at work (e.g., trunks used for moving belongings, and furniture styles). In effect, all the objects associated with family history genealogy mark a larger history on the bodies of family members. Genealogy “is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault, 1971/1977, p. 148).² Those bodies—marked by larger historical, social, and cultural milieus—are also connected to other people.

No one ancestor stands alone as each ancestor “go[es] through so many bodies in each other” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 36). One ancestor is always already linked to the actions of other ancestors (e.g., parents, siblings, aunts, and uncles) and other people (e.g., neighbors and church members), and those actions mark the body of the ancestor. As a result, a discussion of one person necessitates the discussion of the people who are connected to that person. In this way, genealogy studies the intersecting social flows, or lines, in which people—people marked by historical, cultural, social milieus and actions of other people—lived and worked.

Semiotic Flows.

A grammar of proper names, indefinite pronouns, and verbs materialized during object-interviews, entangled conversations in which the study’s participants shared and discussed objects associated with their ancestors’ lives. As participants showed me objects and told me stories about the ancestors associated with those objects, they frequently referred to an object using a proper name (e.g., my Grandmother Ann and my Uncle Bob) or indefinite pronouns. It was not a photograph *of* Uncle Bob; the photograph *was (is)* Uncle Bob. Or, when they presented an object to me, they used

personal pronouns in sentences such as, “Here *she is*.” They also referred to ancestors and objects with demonstrative pronouns (e.g., “This is Grandmother Ann.” and “This is Uncle Bob.”). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) wrote the following about indefinite pronouns:

The indefinite article and the indefinite pronoun are no more indeterminate than the infinitive. Or, rather they are lacking a determination insofar as they are applied to a form that is itself indeterminate or to a determinable subject. On the other hand, they lack nothing when they introduce...events. (p. 264)

As participants applied indeterminate pronouns (personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns) to the objects, the objects and ancestors became indeterminate. Indeterminacy, however, is not a deficiency. Instead, it opens potentials and possibilities for the ancestor’s life and the objects associated with it.

Those pronouns and nouns also introduced verbs, which Deleuze (1969/1990) noted are *events*. Deleuze’s (1988/1993) description of the event is helpful in understanding the events of an ancestor’s life. He wrote:

Events in their turn are types of relations; they are relations to existence and to time. Included in the notion as subject is forever marked by a verb, or a relation marked by a preposition: I am writing, I am going to Germany, I cross the Rubicon... (and, if things had the gift of speech, they would say, as might, gold: “I will resist melting and nitric acid”). (p. 52)

After introducing the ancestors to me, participants told me verb-rich stories about an ancestor’s life. The verbs expressed what a person did in her life (e.g., She married and she died), and the objects (e.g., a wedding certificate and a will) portrayed the verbs. The

family history genealogists used multiple verb tenses, sometimes in the same sentence, to describe an ancestor's actions. In this way, the multiple tenses gestured toward a coexistence of time—a nonlinear sense of time in which the past, present, and future coalesce together. As such, the ancestors continue to complete the actions of their lives in a coexistence of time. Furthermore, the objects that portray the event are materialized events that continue to hold an event and all the experiences surrounding it. The semiotic flows of proper names, indefinite pronouns, and verbs (events) in the interview transcripts bring about a sensation of life, a life that cannot be stopped by the presumed material closure of death.

Material Flows.

To better understand how the assemblages functioned, in particular the material flows of the assemblages, I analyzed data using a small section of Deleuze's (1988/1993) book, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* in which he analyzes Leibniz's *Théodicée*. He wrote:

It is an architectural dream: an immense pyramid that has a summit but no base, and that is built from an infinity of apartments of which each one makes up a world. It has a summit because there is a world that is the best of all worlds, and it lacks a base because the others are lost in the fog, and finally there remains no final one that can be called the worst. (p. 61)

The pyramid provided a consistency with which to think the material flows of an assemblage. Each object is an apartment that is marked by larger historical, cultural, and social milieus. Those objects also connect to other people who add interconnecting pyramids to an ancestor's pyramid. The pronouns and nouns used to describe those

objects form indeterminate, folding, unfolding, and refolding borders between apartments, or objects. And the verbs express events that grow in dimensions as they function in a coexistence of time. Deleuze (1988a/1995) wrote, “Folds vary, and all folding proceeds by differentiation. No two things are folded the same way, no two rocks, and there’s no general rule saying the same thing will always fold the same way” (p. 156). The assemblage, or pyramid, is in constant motion and is defined by elastic folds in which subjects and objects grow in dimensions.

The foggy base and the summit of the pyramid, or assemblage, can be thought of as an ancestor’s birth and death dates, seemingly stable entities that mark the material beginning and end of a person’s life. Deleuze (1988/1993), however, complicates such certainty about beginnings and endings of life. He wrote:

[Souls] bear only an “official act” that marks the hour of their future elevation as on to a birth certificate. This birth certificate or act is a flame lit within the dark monad. And inversely, when we die, we fold infinitely upon ourselves. (p. 73-74)

A person’s birth and birth certificate, or any other document certifying birth (e.g., baptismal record and family record in a Bible) ignite an eternal flame that flickers beyond a person’s death. And in death a person continues to fold, continues to live through the objects and events experienced in her or his life even though the material body is no longer.

The eternal flame of birth and the endless folds of death that form the “foggy base” and “summit” of the pyramid, or assemblage, can best be understood with Deleuze’s (1995/2006) conception of *a life*. He wrote:

A life is everywhere, in every moment which a living subject traverses and which is measured by the objects that have been experienced, an immanent life carrying along the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. (p. 387)

A life is a productive current that ebbs and flows, and those tidal movements manifest themselves in subjects and objects. The objects with which family history genealogists do their work are entangled with a life; thus, the subject/object binary fails. In addition, life animates the folds of birth and death. In this way, the living/nonliving binary does not hold. A life forever animates the material flows of an assemblage, an ancestor's objects and life.

In summary, the assemblage is constituted by the material flows that are animated by a life; the semiotic flows that form indefinite subjects, objects, and events; and the social flows mark a person's body. That assemblage enables an *ensemble of life* in which objects and a life form an ensemble of an ancestor that refuses the presumed material closure of death.

A Dissertation

My dissertation explores the assemblage that enabled an ensemble of life, the work of the assemblage in my object-interview study, and the work of the ensemble of life in my study. To do this work, each chapter explores a research question. In chapter two, I explain the assemblage and the constitutive components of the assemblage—the fold, objects-subjects-events, and a life. I then discuss how that assemblage enables an ensemble of life, my first research question. In chapter three, I explore the work of assemblage in my object-interview study, my second research question. I work with five

ensembles of life in chapter four, which together answer my third research question, the work of the ensemble of life in my study. Lastly, in chapter five, I summarize and provide entanglements-folds-implications for each of my research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

**THE FOLD, OBJECTS-SUBJECTS-EVENTS, A LIFE, ASSEMBLAGE, AND
THE ENSEMBLE OF LIFE**

As I mentioned in chapter one, assemblages of objects and a life loomed large in my study. In that chapter, I introduced an assemblage, a heterogeneous group of social, material, and semiotic flows to set up my study. The connections between objects and larger cultural, social, and historical milieus as well as with other people constituted the social flows. The grammar participants used to describe objects produced semiotic flows. Material flows examined how subjects and objects are characterized by the unity of social and semiotic flows. In this chapter, I further explore that assemblage by examining the concepts—*the fold*, *objects-subjects-events*, and *a life*—that constitute it. That assemblage also created an ontological rhythm to my study. First, I explain the significance of the concept in Deleuze’s singular and collective work with Guattari. Then, I describe and provide examples of each aforementioned concept. Finally, I discuss how the assemblage of those concepts enabled an *ensemble of life*, an ensemble of the trajectories of objects-subjects-events in a person’s life, which addresses my first research question, how does assemblage enable an ensemble of life.

Concept Makers: Deleuze and Guattari

Many new readers of Deleuze’s singular and collective work with Guattari first notice their invented concepts including—*rhizomes*, *assemblages*, *events*, and *folds*. For example, when I read “Introduction: A Rhizome”—the first plateau in *A Thousand*

Plateaus (1980/1987)—for a doctoral-level class, some of my classmates were taken aback by the terms and asked “Why couldn’t they just use words that we know?” That question gestures toward aspects of concept invention that Deleuze and Guattari elaborate throughout their singular and collective work. In this section, I examine and provide examples of some of those aspects: the plane of transcendence, the plane of immanence, conceptual personae, and concepts and empiricism. I also explain how I use those aspects in my concept, the ensemble of life.

The plane of transcendence, a plane that houses *a priori* concepts, proliferates in traditional Western philosophical thought. More specifically, ideas and lived experiences fit into preexisting concepts on the plane of transcendence. Returning to my classmates’ question, they wanted a plane of transcendence—“an identification of an ideal or transcendent sort” (Rajchman, 2000, p. 42). In other words, they wanted preexisting concepts that would help them clearly identify and make meaning of lived experience. In effect, they wanted Deleuze and Guattari to operate on a plane of transcendence, a desire that would never be fulfilled.

The existing literature on family history genealogists provides an example of the plane of transcendence at work. The literature focuses on family history genealogists’ identities (e.g., Hackstaff 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Nash, 2002; Tutton, 2004; Tyler, 2005), their research practices (e.g., Bishop, 2008; Duff & Johnson, 2003; Lambert, 1996; Veale 2004), the work of memory in family history genealogy (e.g., Harevan, 1978; Lambert, 1996, 2002, 2003; Parham, 2008), and the relation of family history genealogy to the field of history (e.g., Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Stearns, 1983). In that literature, scholars study family history genealogy and plug it into transcendental concepts

including variations of identity, narratives of research practice, theoretical work on memory, and connections between genealogy and history. Provocative fragments about objects (e.g., documents, photographs, and other artifacts) that researchers left unexplored are evident in that work. Those objects, it seems, did not fit into the plane of transcendence the researchers used in their studies. In this way, objects are there, but they float outside of that plane. My study explores those floating objects and works with them on a plane of immanence.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) invented concepts on a plane of immanence, which holds two interwoven aspects—image of thought and conceptual personae. They described the image of thought and plane of immanence as follows:

The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image gives back itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought. It is not a method, since every method is concerned with concepts and presupposes such an image. (p. 37)

In other words, the plane of immanence is an image of thought that does not follow pre-existing paths of transcendental concepts. The plane of immanence is a space in which heterogeneous lines of thought occur together. In this way, there is no blueprint of thought with/in the plane of immanence. My study takes the objects of family history genealogy and places them on a plane of immanence so that I can think without method.

Thought and conceptual personae merge together to create concepts on the plane of immanence. Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) explained conceptual personae as follows:

Conceptual personae are the philosopher's "heteronyms," and the philosopher's name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. (p. 64)

A person borrows concepts from conceptual personae and uses those concepts to do something different. For example, Deleuze's work is always becoming Nietzsche, Bacon, Spinoza, and others, because Deleuze borrows concepts from those conceptual personae. Those authors' ideas are always "in" Deleuze's singular and collective work with Guattari, but Deleuze and Guattari do not simply repeat their work, they differentiate it, make it strange. Deleuze (1977/2002) explained:

Think of the author you are writing about. Think of him so hard that he can no longer be an object, and equally so that you cannot identify with him. Avoid the double shame of the scholar and the familiar. Give back to an author a little of the joy, the energy, the life of love and politics that he knew how to give and invent. (p. 119)

In other words, a philosopher thinks so hard about a conceptual persona that the line between philosopher A and person B no longer exists—A becomes B and B becomes A. The constant exchange of ideas and concepts on the plane of immanence is always a process of A giving back to B and vice versa. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari's *affect* is linked to Spinoza, Deleuze's *fold* is linked to Leibniz, the *event* is linked to the Stoics, and so on. Deleuze and Guattari expand those concepts and open them to new and different possibilities.

For example, Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) concept of *plateaus* is linked to several conceptual personae. The term plateau is borrowed from Bateson's anthropological work with Balinese culture. Deleuze and Guattari summarized Bateson's plateau as a "continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (p. 22). They later defined the plateau as "any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome" (p. 22). Roffe (2005) explained that Deleuze's concept of multiplicity draws from Riemann's mathematics work and Bergson's philosophical works. The term rhizome comes from biology. Deleuze and Guattari invent the concept of the plateau on a plane of immanence by putting the concepts of Bateson, Bergson, Riemann, and the field of biology together to make their concept. In summary, the plane of immanence holds an image of thought without method and conceptual personae, and those two interweaving aspects are used to create concepts.

Deleuze and Guattari are the conceptual personae in my concept, the ensemble of life. Their concepts (e.g., *assemblage*, *the fold*, *events*, and *a life*) are tightly interwoven in my concept, so much so that my concept is not possible without their concepts. As I develop my concept, I think without blueprint on the plane of immanence and constantly relay with Deleuze and Guattari and their concepts.

Empiricism, or the study of lived experience, is also linked to the invention of concepts. Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote, "Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experience. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard" (p. xx). In other words, empiricism does

not simply describe lived experience or seek out its essence. Instead, it engages in the creation of concepts. As mentioned above, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) borrowed the term plateau from Bateson who invented the concept to help him in his anthropological work in Bali. Bateson's concept does not exist apart from events and lived experiences nor is the concept *a priori*. In other words, the concept of the plateau did not exist before his fieldwork nor can the concept operate apart from it. Instead, the concept emerged along with his empirical work and, no doubt, other theories. Deleuze and Guattari reinvented the term plateau and made it more connective. Stogall (2005) explained:

For Deleuze and Guattari, concepts ought to be means by which we move beyond what we experience so that we can think of new possibilities. Rather than bringing things together under a concept, he is interested in relating variables according to new concepts so as to create productive connections. (p. 50)

In other words, lived experience is studied in order to open up new and different possible experiences. Concepts, which are derived from other philosophers and scholars, as well as lived experience, name that possibility and seek to create more connections with the concept.

In summary, a concept is never *a priori*. A person invents a concept on the plane of immanence that provides a space for thought without method, is populated by conceptual personae, and is connected to lived experiences and events. In this way, the concept is always available for continual reinvention as thought meanders through conceptual personae and lived experiences on the plane of immanence. A concept can always create new possibilities. Returning to my classmates' question that began this

section, Deleuze and Guattari use figurations such as rhizome, plateau, assemblage, and the fold to open up life to new and different possibilities.

The concept I invented, the ensemble of life, occupies the plane of immanence that is populated by the lived experiences of my empirical study about assemblages of objects and lives and conceptual personae, most notably Deleuze and Guattari. On that plane of immanence, I think without method as I constantly interact with lived experiences and conceptual personae. In this way, the concept is always being invented because it is always available for reinvention made possible by the interactions between lived experience and conceptual personae. The concept aims to open up possibilities for family history genealogy and those who practice it.

The Fold

Deleuze's (1988/1993, 1991) concept of the fold is useful in elucidating the confusion between subjects and objects in my study. In this study, objects refer to documents (e.g., government documents, scientific papers, personal journals, and personal letters), photographs, and a variety of other artifacts (e.g., buildings, gravestones, steering trunks, sewing needles, articles of clothing, and tools). Subjects are both the deceased ancestors associated with those objects and living people, especially the participants in the study. I explain here how Deleuze's concept of the fold helps me work with the folding, unfolding, and refolding of subjects and objects.

Deleuze (1988/1993, 1991) used the figuration of a Baroque house in which the first floor is comprised of matter and the second floor of souls to describe the folds between matter (objects) and souls (subjects). In between those floors there is "a correspondence, even a communication between the two levels. ... A fold between the

two folds?” (Deleuze, 1991, p. 229). It is useful to think of the floors between the two levels as porous, which enables correspondence between the two levels. That correspondence can be thought of as a fold, a continual transfer between the two entities. In other words, the two floors, or matter and souls—themselves folds, fold together. Before I explain the folds between subjects and objects, I first discuss objects and subjects separately.

Matter constitutes all objects. Deleuze (1991) described matter as follows:

Ceaselessly dividing, the parts of matter form little swirls within a swirl, and in them there are other, smaller ones, and still more in the concave intervals of the swirls which touch one another. Matter thus offers a texture that is infinitely porous, that is spongy or cavernous without empty parts, since there is always a cavern in the cavern: each body, however small it may be, contains a world insofar as it is perforated by uneven passageways, and the world, surrounded and penetrated by an increasingly subtle fluid. (p. 230)

Quantum physics is useful in understanding Deleuze’s description. Quantum physics explains that matter, for example, a Civil War era bullet one of my participants shared with me during her interview (Figure 2.1), is always in motion.



Figure 2.1 A Bullet

The atoms and quanta that comprise it are in constant movement, and that movement can be understood as the swirls within swirls that Deleuze described above. The atoms and the quanta comprise the world of the bullet that is defined by the movement from within the bullet as well as movement from outside of the bullet. For example, when I took the photograph of the bullet in June 2010, the camera's flash interacted with the atoms and quanta of the bullet. Likewise, when I held the bullet in my hands, the oils from my hand interacted with the porous bullet. In addition, the world of the bullet is affected by the larger historical and social events such as the Civil War. The bullet, a minié ball, was first used in the Crimean War and adapted by the U.S. Government before the Civil War. The bullet is porous—the outside always interacts, or folds, with the inside—the atoms and quanta.

Objects, then, are defined by the constant swirls of matter that constitute them as well as outside forces that procedurally define the object. Halewood (2005) explained, objects are “to be defined in terms of [their] processes” (p. 63). For example, the bullet is

not just a bullet because it looks like one. The bullet is defined by the swirls of matter that constitute it as well as interactions with outside entities or subjects. The bullet can be defined by the following processes: it was made, it was shot, it was lodged in the head of the participant's great-grandfather, it was removed, it was saved by the great-grandfather, it became a treasured object in the family, and so on. The potential definitions of the bullet are endless, because the bullet can still undergo other processes as long as its material lasts. In the next section, "Objects-Subjects-Events," I use the event and the virtual and actual to work with those processes.

The bullet interacts, or folds, with many subjects (e.g., the great-grandfather, the surgeon who removed it, the family, and me). Like bullets, subjects, or people, are also comprised of matter. Atoms and quanta comprise the tissues, organs, blood, and so on of the physical body. In this way, subjects are also defined as processes; however, those processes are not limited to the physical body. Halewood (2005) explained:

Each subject or fold is a social, physical, and historical rendering: social in that it incorporates elements of the public into a singular entity; physical, in that it is an actual rendering of elements of the universe; historical, in that its formation arises from the prior and particular arrangement of previous folds, and problems within which it is situated. (p. 74-75)

For example, the great-grandfather is defined by social, physical, and historical forces. He is defined within the social times in which he lived (1835-1909). The subject positions of man, father, farmer, immigrant, and Union soldier produced him within those social milieus. In a historical sense, he immigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1847, the height of the Potato Famine, during which many Irish people immigrated to the

United States. He enlisted in the Iowa Infantry of the Union Army and was shot in the head at the Battle of Tupelo, July 14-15, 1864. That shot left an indentation in his head, his physicality, and the swirling matter that made that indentation folds with him. Hence, he is defined by social, physical, and historical forces.

The great-grandfather is also defined with the bullet as he folds, unfolds, and refolds with it. Deleuze (1991) wrote, “The infinite fold separates, or passes between matter and the soul” (p. 242). In other words, the bullet and the great-grandfather fold together. Deleuze went on to explain, “But in differentiating itself [the infinite fold], it swarms over both sides: the fold differentiates itself into folds” (p. 243). The swarming folds render the great-grandfather and the bullet indistinguishable. Halewood (2005) explained, “There is hence no distinction between the material and the social, between subjects and objects; all existence is a complex combination of the two” (p. 75). That is, existence is shaped by the folds between subjects and objects. The folds, not the subject and object, are *a priori*. In other words, the fold, itself a fold, is universal without its being singular. The fold, without beginning or ending, produces both subjects and objects. Thus, it is more productive to think of *objects-subjects*, the hyphen denoting the infinite folding of the two, which can, in fact, never be separate.

The folds between objects-subjects—themselves folds and processes—provide the ontological rhythm, or bass, of this study. Halewood (2005) wrote, “Matter, meaning, subjectivity, and sense happen all at once. They are neither social nor material, nor are they ultimately reducible to either one or the other; the two sides are needed together” (p. 73). In this way, the ontology of this study is nonessentialist because objects and subjects are in flux together. That flux can be thought of as a rhythm, or continuous bass, which

Deleuze (1988/1993) used to describe the fold. He wrote, “The continuous bass does not impose a harmonic law upon the lines of polyphony without having the melody retrieve a new freedom and unity, or a flux” (p. 135). The continuous bass produces a new polyphonic melody, a melody that cannot be repeated. In other words, the fold provides a continuous movement, or bass, from which each fold will be different from the next. Ontologically, this means that being is procedural and always folding. In the next section, I discuss the virtual and actual, which are linked to the event, as a way to further explain the ontology of this study.

Objects-Subjects-Events

In this study, objects helped to materialize an ancestor’s life events. An event is linked to both a subject and object. It is a happening in an ancestor’s life (e.g., to marry, to move, and to die) that exists in a coexistence of time, a perpetual oscillation of past, present, and future. Or, in Deleuzian and Deleuzoguattarian terms an event is *actualized*, or happened, in an ancestor’s life and is linked to the *virtual*, the coexistence of time. In this section, I describe objects-subjects, events, the actual and virtual, and how those concepts contribute to the ontology of this study.

Objects help to materialize, or embody, life events in family history genealogy. Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) suggested that monuments (e.g., memorials, statues, and other pieces of art that commemorate an event such as a war, battle, heroic figure) are events, and I believe their idea can be extended to the objects of family history genealogy. They wrote: “The monument does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe” (p. 177). Correspondingly, the objects of family history genealogy both conserve and

commemorate an event in an ancestor's life in that the objects express events (e.g., a land deed denoting a purchase of land and a photograph commemorating a wedding). In other words, the objects of family history genealogy are small-scale monuments that embody an ancestor's life events.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) defined the event as follows:

The event is not the state of affairs. It is actualized in a state of affairs, in a body, in a lived [experience], but it has a shadowy secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. (p. 156)

The Civil War era bullet (see Figure 2.1) mentioned earlier was actualized in several states of affairs, which Fraser (2006) explained are “taking place in a physical time characterized by succession” (p. 130). First, the bullet was made in a factory. Then, the bullet was loaded into a gun. After that, the bullet was shot from a gun during the Battle of Tupelo and lodged in the head of a participant's great-grandfather. It was later removed and saved by family members. The bullet can be actualized in numerous times and spaces. Fraser explained the event as follows:

It is not bound to a particular space and time, but may be whenever and wherever it is actualized anew. It is because an event can be actualized in multiple ways that it retains an openness to reinventions (or re-eventualizations). (p. 130)

As I mentioned earlier, the bullet is defined by its processes, now understood as actualizations. The bullet is open to new actualizations because it is not bound to a

singular state of affairs. As long as the material bullet lasts in some form or another, it can be actualized in different times and places and in a variety of ways.

Deleuze's (1996/2002) conception of the virtual and actual is useful in understanding the different times in which objects actualize.¹ Deleuze conceived of time as a coexistence of past, present, and future; that is, the past, present, and future are not discrete entities. Deleuze used the terms virtual and actual to denote a coexistence of time. He wrote, "there is a coalescence and division, or rather oscillation, a perpetual exchange between the actual object and its virtual image: the virtual image never stops becoming actual" (p. 150). As an object is actualized in the passing present, it calls up the past, and it gestures toward an indeterminate future.

The actual is an object's "movement across thresholds" (Massumi, 1992, p. 37). In other words, an object is actualized across time and space. Each time an object is perceived, experienced, studied, or thought about it is actualized in a different state of affairs, in a body, in a lived experience, and so on. For example, every time a family member works with the bullet it is actualized again.

Massumi (1992) explained the virtual as "the future-past of the present: a thing's destiny and condition of existence" (p. 37). For example, the bullet continues to exist in a variety of times and spaces. The bullet existed in a factory, it existed on a battlefield, it existed in someone's head, it existed in a family history genealogy project, and now it exists in my dissertation. In addition, the motion also gives the bullet an unforeseen destiny. In other words, the virtual keeps existence open for the bullet by opening potentials and connections for the bullet. The virtual never stops actualizing.

The actual and virtual coexist and function together. Deleuze (1996/2002) wrote, “Every actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images” (p. 148). In this way, every actualization of the bullet is perpetually embraced by the virtual, or potentials. Massumi (1992) used fractals to understand the unending movement between the actual and virtual. He wrote:

A fractal process can be stopped and diagrammed at any point in its dividing.

Every stop will yield a different diagram, each of the same fractal. Since the process is infinite, the number of potential diagrams is also infinite. Even as

itself, even between its two limits, the fractal is multiple and boundless. (p. 37)

Each coming together or dividing of the actual and the virtual can be diagrammed. The term diagram can be thought of in numerous ways (e.g., talking about an event, writing about it, drawing it, acting it out, and thinking about it). I have already mentioned the various diagrams of the bullet—it was made, it was shot, it lodged in someone’s head, it is a cherished object in a family, and so on. The bullet is also open to new and different diagrams as the virtual and actual perpetually oscillate together. Those potentials affect understandings about the subject, or person, associated with the event.

With each actualization of the bullet (e.g., the great-grandfather-bullet, the surgeon-bullet, and family members-bullet), a new sentence is created: He was shot, a surgeon removed the bullet, he kept the bullet, his great-great grandchildren played with it, I studied the bullet, and so on. Each predicate in those sentences expresses a relationship between time, space, and objects-subjects. Deleuze (1969/1990) wrote:

All objects = x [the virtual] are “persons” and are defined by predicates. But these predicates are no longer the analytic predicates of individuals determined

within a world which carry out the *description* of these individuals. On the contrary, they are predicates which *define* persons synthetically, and open different worlds and individualities to them as so many variables or possibilities. (p. 115)

As the event is actualized in different times and spaces, it defines the person again. An object-subject is defined by actualizations and the virtual. Those definitions are not singular and cannot be exhausted. Deleuze (1995) wrote, “But possibility remains, because you never realize all of the possible, you even bring it into being as you realize some of it” (p. 3). Each time that bullet is actualized, it conveys the possible, the virtual. The virtual cannot be exhausted—potentiality always remains.

The *object-subject-event* defines a person by opening them to new and different potentials. I use the term object-subject-event to denote the interconnections between the three concepts. The term gestures toward the inseparability of the three terms that exist in a spatial arrangement as object *and* subject *and* event. In that spatial arrangement, objects and events continuously define a person as those events are actualized through a coexistence of time.

The object-subject-event is also important to the ontology of my study. May (1996) wrote:

For Deleuze ontology is a normative endeavor. The point in doing ontology is not to arrive at an understanding of the way the world is structured, but to be able to take up a certain viewpoint toward the world in order to engage in certain ways of living. (p. 294)

Instead of predetermining being, ontology in this study enables multiple ways of being to form as objects-subjects-events actualize. The doing of ontology is about following, or as Massumi (1992) suggested diagramming, the actual and virtual as they appear in the real, or in lived experiences. Hence, the study is never completed because the virtual, which can never be exhausted, is always actualizing. The lives I studied, and the lives my participants studied in their genealogical work, continue to live.

A Life

The object-subject-event is animated by *a life*.² Deleuze (1995/2006) developed this concept in the last essay he published before his suicide in 1995, “Immanence: A Life”. *A life* is a reserve of possibilities that animates all subjects and objects. In this section, I describe *a life* in relation to objects-subjects-events.

A life should not be confused with an individual’s life. For example, the bullet-great-grandfather-the event of being shot is not *a life*. Instead, the object-subject-event was actualized in his life. Earlier, I explained that the actual is connected to the virtual, a realm of possibilities. The virtual is similar to Deleuze’s (1995/2006) conception of *a life*. He wrote, “A life contains only virtualities” (p. 388). In other words, *a life* is “a resource or reserve of other possibilities, our connections” (Rajchman, 2000, p. 84) that can be actualized in different times and spaces. For example, the great-grandfather’s life, even though his physical body is long dead, is always open to something else, something different. That is, *a life* opens up a person’s life to new and different connections.

The productive force of *a life* emerges from all events, including a person’s birth and death. To be born and to die are events. They are actualized in a time and space. Because the event is linked to the virtual, a person’s birth and death can be actualized in

different times and spaces. *A life* preexists us and follows us. Deleuze (1995/2006) explained, “It [a life] does not arrive, it does not come after” (p. 387). In other words, *a life* surrounds every event including birth and death.

A life is pervasive and inescapable. It arouses all objects-subjects-events with possibility. Deleuze (1995/2006) wrote:

A life is everywhere, in every moment which a living subject traverses and which is measured by the objects that have been experienced, an immanent life carrying along the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. (p. 387)

A life, then, is an atmosphere that penetrates the objects of family history genealogy. Each object, a materialized event, is an actualization of *a life*, or the virtual. Colebrook (2005) explained *a life* as a “virtual power to create potentials through contingent and productive encounters” (p. 11). As *a life* surrounds objects-subjects-events, it opens up potentials and possibilities in a person’s life.

Assemblage

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the constitutive concepts of the assemblage in my study are the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*. In this section, I explain the assemblage and how it functioned in my study.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) wrote, “We call an *assemblage* every constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally; and assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention” (p. 406). In other words, an assemblage is an invented collection of selected concepts that provide a consistency with

which to think about a phenomenon. In my study, the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* helped me to think about my data, and those concepts formed an assemblage. The term assemblage is translated from the French term *agencement*, and the French term is useful in understanding how I used the assemblage in my study. Phillips (2006) defined *agencement* as follows:

Agencement implies specific connections with other concepts. It is, in fact, the *arrangement* of these *connections* that gives concepts their sense. For Deleuze and Guattari, a philosophical concept never operates in isolation but comes to its sense in connection with other senses in specific yet creative and unpredictable ways. (p. 108)

The philosophical concepts of the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* do not operate apart from each other. Those concepts form connections as they inform each other. The assemblage, or *agencement*, is a collection of philosophical concepts and data that ceaselessly connect to each other in surprising ways.

Venn (2006) wrote, “Assemblage can be seen as a relay concept... it focuses on process and on the dynamic character of the inter-relationships between the heterogeneous elements of the phenomena” (p. 107). The concept, entanglement, in quantum physics is useful in understanding the inter-relationships or connections between elements. Gilder (2008) explained entanglement as an interaction in which two entities “lose their separate existence. No matter how far they move apart, if one is tweaked, measured, observed, the other seems to instantly respond, even if the whole world now lies between them. And no one knows how” (p. 3). In other words, as two or more entities interact, they become entangled such that they cannot be thought apart from each

other. Likewise, once two or more concepts interact they cannot be thought or used separately—they are always informing each other. While I have discussed concepts (the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*) separately here, they cannot be thought apart from each other in the assemblage. Those concepts entangle and move together as folds endlessly fold as objects-subjects-events keep actualizing, and *a life* animates those objects-subjects-events.

Those concepts move together in “a logic of the *and*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25) that disrupts the verb “to be.” That is, they move together as an entanglement, an assemblage of concepts, and that entanglement cannot be thought as foundational and essentialist being. I liken that movement to a rhythm—a sonorous bass—that pervades my study. For example, that rhythm is like the window-rattling sound produced by a passing car with its volume and bass set at the highest levels. It is the feeling of your skin shaking and your ears aching. An ontological rhythm, sometimes produced years ago by long-dead objects-subjects-events, penetrates the present with the virtual. Massumi (1992) wrote, “The concepts of virtuality and actualization allow us to think in the present and past-future tenses at the same time, to conceive of the same and different together” (p. 42). In other words, the concepts of the virtual and actual produce a sonorous rhythm with which to think the problems that face us today, and, in this study, to think the objects-subjects-events that constitute family history genealogy. May (1996) wrote, “Deleuze’s ontological approach—or better approaches—are built upon the not-so-controversial idea that how we conceive of the world is relevant to how we live in it” (p. 295). Ontology, then, is about living. It is not about testing life with preconceived notions or transcendental categories. It is about listening to that rhythm and following

that bass. Ontology is about living and working with how such living came into being—what processes, actualizations, and rhythms enabled that life?

Colebrook (2005) explained the assemblage as follows:

Any assemblage such as a philosophical vocabulary (or an artistic style, or a set of scientific functions) faces in two directions. It both gives some order and consistency to a life which bears a much greater complexity and dynamism, but it also enables—from that order—the creation of further and more elaborate orders.

(p. 3)

The assemblage formed by the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* provided a consistency with which to think about my data—the objects and lives of the participants’ ancestors—and it provided an ontological rhythm to my study. While the assemblage provided a consistency with which to think about my study, I needed something else to help me think. In my study, participants shared hundreds of objects and lives with me. As such, the assemblage became so massive that it became unmanageable. I needed a concept that would help me to work with those objects and lives and, thus, I invented a concept that was enabled by the assemblage of objects and lives, the ensemble of life.

Ensemble of Life

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) suggested that, “every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or present connections” (p. 19).

The assemblage formed by the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* enable the ensemble of life—trajectories formed by the objects-subjects-events experienced in an ancestor’s life and animated by the fold and *a life*. The fold, the virtual, *a life*, and objects-subjects-events are inseparable in the ensemble of life. Those components define

the “*consistency* of the concept, its endoconsistency are distinct, heterogeneous, and yet not separable” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 19). In other words, the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* form a system for the concept. In this section, I explain the ensemble of life.

The fold and *a life* provide a rhythmic ontology for the ensemble of life. The fold can be considered the heartbeat, or the beatings of thousands upon thousands of folds. As I mentioned above, those folds procedurally define objects-subjects. *A life* can be thought of as the blood that pulses through the ensemble with the constant pumping of virtual potential to objects-subjects-events that opens those objects-subjects-events to new relations, or connections. Those heartbeats and blood set the ensemble of life into continual motion.

The ensemble of life consists of trajectories of objects-subjects-events, and each trajectory is similar to what Deleuze (1988/1993) wrote about the world. He wrote, “It now opens on a trajectory or a spiral in expansion that moves further and further away from a center” (p. 137). Each trajectory has a center, or an object-subject-event, such as the bullet in Figure 2.1. From that moving center, a trajectory of a person’s life is defined by the circulation of objects-subjects-events, the spatial and inseparable arrangement of objects and subjects and events that can be continuously actualized. In this way, each trajectory has a flickering center that is animated by the fold and *a life*.

A trajectory is formed when a person responds to the affect of the object-subject-event and places them in some kind of order that operates in a coexistence of time. For example, I selected the bullet, amongst other objects, to work with the great-grandfather’s life, because its sensations affected me more than the other objects. Deleuze and Guattari

(1991/1994) explained that a work of art preserves “*a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*” (p. 164). I believe that objects also preserve sensations. Bogue (2003b) described a sensation as “a conservation or retention of vibrations, a contraction of vibrations that takes place in a contemplative soul, not through an action” (p. 181). In this way, sensations are vibrations that cross time and space and cause a person to think, to write, to act. When I asked participants about special attachments to objects, they frequently said, “I don’t know. I just like it.” In this way, sensations sometimes cannot be captured by language. I think of sensations as a feeling in the pit of my stomach, a visceral reaction to the vibrations crossing time and space, that force me to get to work with a particular object.

The bloc of sensation contains percepts and affects that are inseparable. Deleuze (1988b/1995) wrote, “Percepts aren’t perceptions, they’re packets of sensations and relations that live independently of whoever experiences them” (p. 137). The bullet contains percepts that live on long after the death of the great-grandfather. The percepts may be the sound of the gun shooting the bullet, the sound of it lodging in the great-grandfather’s head, the pain of removing the bullet, and so on that are carried in the bullet. Massumi (1980) explained affect as follows: “It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (p. xvi). In other words, affect is a movement from one body to another, in this instance from the bullet to my body. As I held it in my hand, the bullet seemed to overtake me and force me to think, or reckon, with it. In this way, the ensemble of life connects the living with the nonliving via sensations—percepts and affects.

Riding the force of that sensation, a person works with that object and forms a trajectory, or history, of a person. That object-subject-event becomes the entry point to a trajectory. A person may respond differently to those sensations in different times and spaces and create a different version of a particular trajectory. Or, a person may respond to another object's sensations and create another trajectory.

When participants introduced an object to me during the interviews, the object was usually not a birth certificate or death certificate, objects that suggests linearity. For example, the participant, who shared with me the bullet (see Figure 2.1), used that bullet to share her thoughts about her great-grandfather's life rather than present a linear (i.e., from birth to death) description of his life. Likewise, when I shared the bullet in this chapter, I began the trajectory of his life with the bullet and described other life events from 1864, the year that he was shot. A different object creates a different trajectory, or history. For example, I could have used a photograph of that great-grandfather (Figure 2.2) in this chapter.

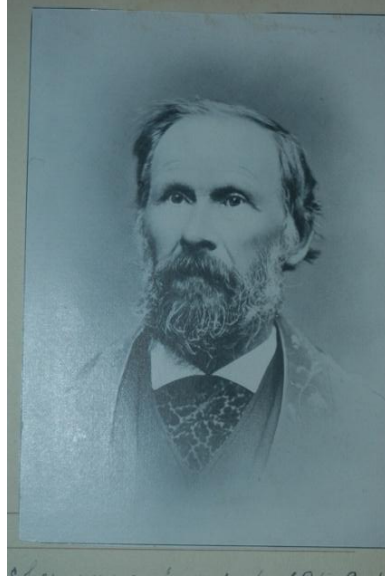


Figure 2.2 A Great-Grandfather

The photograph was taken later in his life when he farmed in Iowa in the late 1800's and 1900's. In this way, the trajectory of the photograph would have a different beginning, the late 1800's and 1900's, and thus present a different ordering of his life events. Each trajectory presents a different chronology of a person's life that operates in a coexistence of time because all the objects-subjects-events are linked to the virtual. Simply put, each object-subject-event sets into motion a trajectory that has its own temporal structure that operates in a coexistence of time. In this way, the ensemble of life is an ensemble of the trajectories formed with objects-subjects-events.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote, "The concept is an incorporeal, even though it is incarnated or effectuated in bodies" (p. 21). Each concept—the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*—is inseparably actualized in the ensemble of life. However, there are points of accumulation of one concept or another in each trajectory that constitutes the ensemble of life. Deleuze and Guattari wrote, "Each concept will therefore be considered as the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its

own components” (p. 19). For example, I discussed the bullet with all of the components (i.e., the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*) to demonstrate the inseparability of the components. I could have used the bullet to discuss the object-subject-event by itself even though the fold and *a life* are always at work in the bullet. The photograph of the great-grandfather who folds with the bullet in Figure 2.2 may produce a different accumulation of the concepts in a different trajectory. For example, I might use the fold to describe the folds of object and subject, because the participant described the photograph with a personal pronoun. Each object-subject-event produces its own accumulation of concepts. As a result, each trajectory is a heterogeneous condensation of the constitutive concepts of the ensemble of life.

The Deleuzoguattarian concept of the map is useful in working with the ensemble of life. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) explained that the map “is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits” (p. 21). As I mentioned earlier, each entryway can be thought of as an object-subject-event that then creates a trajectory. Like the map, the ensemble of life is a group of trajectories that is always open and connectable to other histories of the same person and to other people. As I discussed above, the bullet is just one history of many possible histories for the great-grandfather. Family history genealogists use those combined histories to think about an ancestor. In addition, a history connects to other people: the person who shot the bullet, the surgeon who removed it, the family members, and me, just to name a few. That history may also have unanticipated connections. As I conducted the interviews, I began to see connections between the families (e.g., families living in the same area,

similar jobs, and similar objects). One person's ensemble of life is always open and connectable to other ensembles.

Earlier, I explained that Massumi (1992) proposed diagramming as a useful way to think about the actual and the virtual. The diagram is also useful in working with the ensemble of life. Any diagram is possible; however, in this study, I take diagram to mean writing. In particular, I draw on Deleuze's (1986/1988) definition of writing, "to write is to draw a map" (p. 44). Any piece of writing about a person's trajectory is one of many possible trajectories of that person's life.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote that a concept "constitutes a philosophical language within language—not just a vocabulary but a syntax that attains the sublime or a great beauty" (p. 8). In chapter one, I described the language with which participants described objects. For example, participants used personal pronouns, proper names, and demonstrative pronouns to introduce verb-rich stories about objects. The language of the ensemble of life draws on Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) logic of the *and*, and provides a way, a language, with which to think the subjects *and* objects, living *and* nonliving, human *and* nonhuman, and so on. With this concept, objects fold into subjects and vice versa and make it possible to refer to an object as she, he, they, and proper names. The verbs express events that can continue to actualize long after a person's death. The demonstrative pronouns used to describe objects-subjects-events open a space for those object-subjects-events to continue to actualize in different spaces and times. The ensemble of life, by drawing on the philosophical language(s) of Deleuze and Guattari, provides a language with which to think the demonstrative pronouns, personal pronouns, proper names, and verbs that proliferated in my study.

A person's life, then, is an ever-growing ensemble of trajectories of objects-subjects-events. Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) concept of *haecceity* is useful in working with such a conception of subjects. They wrote, "It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child, that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life" (p. 262). In other words, haecceity is a subject who becomes verbs, the events of her life. Those events are always linked to larger historical, social, and cultural milieus. The ancestor is always inseparable from the events of her life that are always connected to other milieus. The trajectories formed by the circulating objects-subjects-events form lines that assemble into an ensemble. In this way, one ancestor has innumerable lines that constitute her subjectivity. The ancestor "is always in the middle" (p. 263) of those trajectories and circulating objects-subjects-events.

In summary, the ensemble of life is enabled by the assemblage explained in the section "Assemblage." The inseparable concepts of the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life* constitute the concept. The fold and *a life* provide a rhythmic bass for the ensemble and the objects-subjects-events form trajectories of a person's life. A person creates the trajectory when she responds to a sensation, or percept and affect, with/in a particular object. Because a person may respond to different objects in different times and places, there can be a variety of trajectories in one ensemble of life. Each object-subject-event creates a different chronology of a person's life. Those trajectories are heterogeneous in that they combine the concepts which constitute the ensemble in different ways and contain various objects-subjects-events. Each trajectory is also open and connectable to other trajectories within the ensemble and outside of it. The language of the concept is a

language of *ands* between binary terms such that objects become subjects, nonliving become living, just to name a few. A person is defined by her ensemble of life—a heterogeneous ensemble of trajectories that destabilizes the language of binary oppositions.

Summary

In this chapter, I responded to the research question “How does assemblage enable an ensemble of life?” In the first sections of the chapter, I explained how the constitutive concepts, the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*, of the assemblage are at work in my study. I examined a bullet (see Figure 2.1) in order to demonstrate how those concepts functioned in the assemblage. The assemblage enabled the ensemble of life, a concept I invented to better work with the hundreds of lives I learned about during my study. The ensemble of life consists of the constitutive concepts of the assemblage. Living people (e.g., the participants and me) respond to those concepts via sensations (i.e., affects and precepts) that are carried with the object-subject-event. Riding those sensations, living people create a trajectory that has its own temporal structure and accumulation of concepts. Those trajectories are then diagrammed (e.g., written, spoken, and drawn). The ensemble of life is a provisional grouping of heterogeneous trajectories that have different temporal structures and accumulations of concepts (i.e., the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*) that are diagrammed by the living. In this way, the ensemble of life is always available to new and different connections.

CHAPTER 3

THE ASSEMBLAGE I CALL MY STUDY

In chapter one, I wrote that my dissertation study was a continuation of a life-long qualitative research project about assemblages of objects and lives. The time I spent planning the study, collecting data, and writing about the study became an intense way of living my project—my life. I realized that the study itself was an assemblage—which speaks to my second research question: What is the work of assemblage in an object-interview study? Deleuze (1980/2006) wrote, “In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs” (p. 177). In this chapter, I explore two dimensions of an assemblage. First, I study the *territory* of the study—a spatial arrangement of mobile entities—that was created by the study’s design and its implementation, the site of the study, the participants, the study’s timeline, and its methodology. Next, I examine *the collective assemblage of enunciation*—or language system—that was produced by the object-interview, the primary method of data collection and data. I then combine the territory and collective assemblage of enunciation to discuss the assemblage I call my study. In addition, I discuss data analysis as it occurred in this study.¹

A Territory

Every assemblage creates a territory. Wise (2005) explained:

Territories are more than just spaces: they have a stake, a claim, they express (my house, their ranch, his bench, her friends). . . . Territories are not fixed for all time, but are always being made and unmade, reterritorializing and deterritorializing. (p. 78-79).

A study occupies a space and makes a claim. The territory of this study shifts with multiple connections between its terms, which I described in the previous section. In the following sections, I describe the moving territory of my study. In addition, I describe my methodology a *stuttering methodology*, a name that emerged from the territory, which I will describe in detail.

Site of Study.

Upon learning that I collected data for my dissertation research in my home state of Nebraska, many people asked “Why Nebraska? Couldn’t you have collected data in Georgia?” Because family history genealogists live in Georgia, as well as nearly every other state in the United States, I could have stayed in Georgia and collected data. The question remained: Why Nebraska? But that is the question I cannot answer with clarity because there is another question embedded within it: why return *home*? To those people asking the questions, home, it seemed, was an idea that was singular and bounded by time. They assumed that I had a home outside of Nebraska—my current home in Georgia. However, I consider many places to be home—including Iowa, Minnesota, and Chile—where I spent considerable time living. Massey (1994) wrote, “Each of these home-places is itself an equally complex product of the ever-shifting geography of social

relations present and past” (p 172). In this section, I will describe the ever-shifting geography of social relations that constitute the site(s) of my study, my birth state of Nebraska.

I chose Nebraska because I wanted to honor my ancestors who emigrated there in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. According to family lore, my ancestors wanted the future generations of their family to have more than a dugout and a homestead, which were the places in which they began their lives in Nebraska, and a hard life of farming. It seemed fitting that I, the first female in my family working toward a doctorate, should return to Nebraska to honor their desires. Participants with ties to the three Nebraskan counties in which my ancestors lived were selected to participate in my study. While I collected data from January-August 2010, I visited my ancestors’ old homesteads just so that I could feel the ground—their ground—underneath my feet and see the hills they looked out upon. The smell, the air, the wind, the sun, and the ground—rich with rhizomatic roots—joined with a sense of my personal history, helped me to think differently about my life and work. Rølvaag (1927/1991), in his novel *Giants in the Earth*, wrote the following that helps me think about Nebraska and my ancestors who lived there:

And it was as if nothing affected people in those days. They threw themselves blindly into the Impossible, and accomplished the Unbelievable. If anyone succumbed in the struggle—and that happened often—another would come and take his place. Youth was in the race; the unknown, the untried, the unheard-of, was in the air; people caught it, were intoxicated by it, threw themselves away,

and laughed at the cost. Of course it was possible—everything was possible out here. (p. 485-486)

Nebraska still intoxicates me with the history of my ancestors, their struggles, and their blind faith that they might just succeed on the prairie where everything seems possible. Now, when I doubt my abilities or question my study, those intoxicating places resuscitate me and give me courage.

I did not realize, however, when I began my study, that participants' families and the places where they lived would also intrigue me. For example, as I drove from Nebraska to Georgia in March 2011, I paused when I passed Fort Donelson near Dover, Tennessee. One of my participant's ancestors fought in the Civil War battle that occurred there, and I felt a sense of place, of home, as I passed by it. I made the following maps using Microsoft Word's clip art and drawing tools to help me think about place and the lines of my homes, the participants' homes, and their ancestors' homes (Figure 3.1 and 3.2).



Figure 3.1 Emigration Patterns

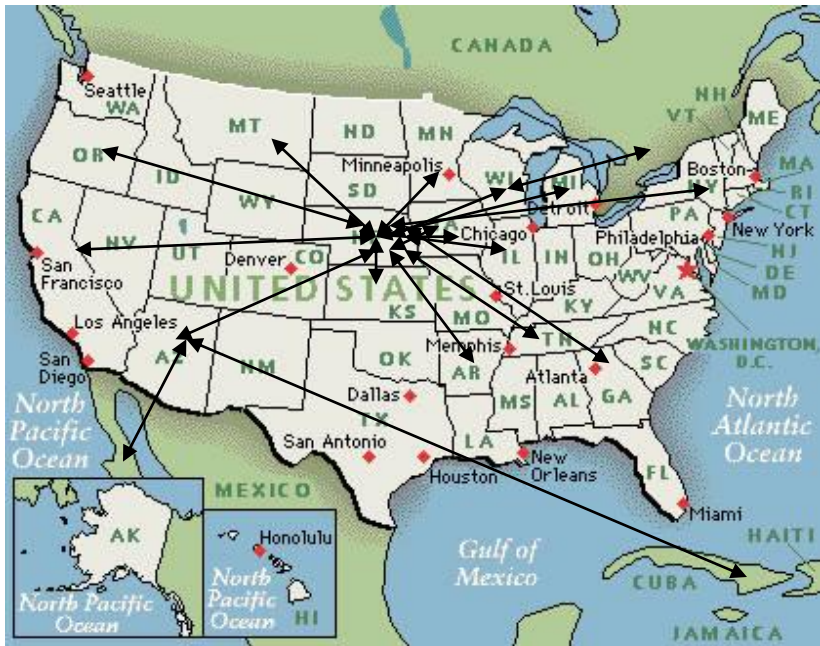


Figure 3.2 Movements within North America

Figure 3.1 shows the participants and my families' emigration patterns to the United States, and Figure 3.2 shows their movement within North America upon the families'

arrivals. Those maps helped me to understand Massey's (1994) idea that place is an ever-shifting complex of social relations past, present, and future.

While social relations constituted place in my study, the state of Nebraska was, of course, significant. During data collection, I saw the state move from winter, to spring, and to summer. During winter months, I drove to interviews in fogs so dense that I could not see oncoming traffic until it passed me. As I drove on clearer winter days, I marveled at how blizzard winds created delicate snow sculptures in the fields. I was awe-struck by two-story high drifts that created tunnel-like roads through which I drove. I watched bald eagles fly across the highway. The dormancy of roots in the winter awakened in the spring and summer. On spring and summer days, the sides of highways were colored by wildflowers and prairie grasses. The winter, spring, and summer winds swept me up with their movement. I and my study were inseparable from the state and its weather as my face felt the cold snaps of arctic air, the bounty of spring, and the heat of summer. Everything was alive and changing, and I was reminded of impermanence—the sensation that my understandings of the study could only be fleeting, moving and shifting with time and space.

I will soon return to Nebraska to live and work. In April 2011, I accepted a position at Wayne State College (WSC) in Wayne, Nebraska. My grandmother, Naomie, graduated in 1932 from WSC when it was the Nebraska State Teacher's College (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 My Grandmother's Diploma

My father, her son, also graduated from WSC with a degree in Elementary Education.² Now, I, the third generation of my family associated with WSC, will be an assistant professor at an institution that is embedded in my family's history. The college and my family's history add to the shifting social relations that constitute place. Of course, Nebraska is also the site of this research project. I wonder if I will forever be entangled in the field, in fieldwork.

I never left, nor will I ever leave, "the field," which qualitative inquiry describes as a bounded and singular place. Massey (2005) wrote, "Highlighting the spatiality of our pasts and the geography of our histories—the dispersion of our very selves—entails a more outward-looking understanding in which all these things are necessarily constituted in and through contacts, relations, interconnections, with others" (p. 129). The contacts and relations I made while in Nebraska remain with me. When I sent participants an email about my new job in academia, they were delighted to know that I will be so close to them. Some even shared their family connections to WSC. The frequent emails that participants send to me may very well lead to visits and, thus, more data. Wherever I

may go in the future, there is likely to be some connection to participants' family histories. I am entangled in my ancestors' places, the participants' ancestors' places, and the social relations I made with participants while collecting data.

Participants.

As I noted in chapter one, I contacted several genealogical associations and libraries in Nebraska for potential participants in February 2009. I also used snowball sampling, a method in which interested participants recommend other people who they think would be good participants. From that work I identified 11 Nebraskan women who met the sample selection criteria. They all (1) have researched or are currently involved in family history genealogy, (2) are residents of Nebraska, and (3) are active participants in a family history genealogical community (i.e., volunteers, members of clubs, genealogical societies, and/or historical societies). No male genealogists met the sample selection criteria. From February 2009 to January 2010 (the month I began I interviewing participants), I kept in close contact via email with interested participants.

In conventional qualitative inquiry, researchers usually provide a substantive discussion of the identity of each participant. For example, who is she? What is her age? What is her occupation? What does she look like? What is her pseudonym? That work is done so that readers can *know and understand* the participants. Deleuze and Guattari's (1991/1994) comments on characters in bad novels are instructive. They wrote:

What matters is not, as in bad novels, the opinions held by characters in accordance with their social type and characteristics but rather the relations of counterpoint into which they enter and the compounds of sensations that these

characters either themselves experience or make felt in their becomings and visions. (p. 188)

When participants are discussed or their words cited, I will not provide a list of categories that a participant “fits,” nor will I use pseudonyms. Instead, I am interested in how these women exist in relationships and are produced by those relationships that are always in flux. I am, and will always be, working to know and understand these women. To write detailed descriptions of each of the women would be to reduce, stabilize, and put them on a platter so that they can be handed over to a reader made ravenous by humanism.

One relationship stands out in my memory—the participants’ (all hobbyist genealogists) hands and the objects they shared with me (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4 Hands

Their hands eagerly showed me the objects that they valued in their lives. For example, several participants told me that no one in their family appreciates the objects as they do. In this way, their hands became the loving caretakers of objects. It also seemed that their hands became a connective link in a coexistence of time. As they touched those objects and told me verb-rich stories about the ancestors associated with those objects, I could see a coexistence of time at work as the past, the passing present, and an indeterminate

future entangled. Moreover, those hands worried about the indeterminate future of those objects. Many participants expressed concerns about what would happen to the objects—objects they had spent significant parts of their lives collecting and caring for—after their deaths. Whose hands would take care of their collections? As I study the photographs of the objects with their hands, I am reminded of how their hands help me to think about a coexistence of time and my responsibility to those objects—a responsibility to revere those objects as much as they do.

Timeline.

Table 3.1 Timeline of Study

Phase	Dates	Actions
I	February 2009	Located participants
II	February 2009-October 2009	Wrote dissertation proposal
	November 2009- December 2009	Defended dissertation proposal and received IRB approval for the study
III	January 2010-August 2010	Conducted data collection and analysis
IV	January 2010- present	Performed analysis and wrote the dissertation

While the above table may appear to be linear and clean, it tidies up the actual work of the study. As I mentioned above, I located participants before I began writing the proposal, and the ensuing communication with them helped me to think about the proposal (Phase II). While I was in Nebraska during Phase III, the state experienced one

of its worst recorded winters with four blizzards that left snow on the ground for over 90 days. As a result, I was unable to complete outdoor follow-up interviews (e.g., trips to cemeteries and outdoor museums). When I returned to Nebraska in late May and early June 2010, significant flooding interrupted my plans. I returned in August 2010 to complete one last follow-up interview, an outdoor interview in 95 degree heat. During Phase III, I began analyzing data and writing about the study (Phase IV). Throughout all the phases, participants and I kept in close contact via email messages in which they shared new developments in their family history genealogy projects (Phase III). No timeline could disentangle the actual work of the study.

A Stuttering Methodology.

Deleuze (1998a/1995) suggested that “everything unfolds” (p. 161) in the middle and that “things and thought advance or grow out from the middle, and that’s where you have to get to work” (p. 161). The stuttering methodology of this study gets to work in the middle of folds and objects-subjects-events. Methodology is the study’s grid of intelligibility that makes certain ideas about people and things possible and impossible. My stuttering methodology takes ideas from conventional qualitative research (Collier, 1957; Collier & Collier, 1986; De Leon & Cohen, 2005; Kvale, 1996; McCracken, 1988) and poststructural theories (e.g., those of Derrida and Deleuze’s singular and collective work with Guattari) to make folding objects and subjects and objects-subjects-events possible in a research setting. In this study, stuttering is not a speech impediment; instead it is a poetics that emerges from a mixing of two disparate elements (i.e., conventional qualitative research and poststructural theories). My methodology speaks to Lather’s (2010) post-qualitative moment, a qualitative research that is becoming because it draws

from qualitative research and poststructural theories. In this section, I describe my stuttering methodology.

In chapter two, I mentioned that the fold is universal and provides an ontological rhythmic bass for my study. Deleuze (1988/1993) wrote, “every fold originates from a fold” (p. 10). The fold is not a universal, because every fold is itself a fold that constitutes subjects and objects. As a result, neither subjects nor objects are stable entities; they are always folding, unfolding, and refolding together. Given that, the way I conceptualize this “qualitative” study marks a shift from conventional qualitative research in which objects and subjects are stable entities that are treated in a binary fashion and a stable ontology.

Conventional qualitative research is subject-centered in that it primarily uses face-to-face methods such as interviews and participant observation to draw information *from people* in order to produce knowledge *about people* and try to understand the meaning they make of their lived experiences. If objects such as documents, photographs, and other artifacts are included in a conventional qualitative research project, they are generally viewed as secondary, ancillary data sources *about people*. In my study, however, objects as well as subjects (participants) were primary data sources as evidenced by the hundreds of objects shared with me during interviews. Because objects are as important as subjects in the production of knowledge in this study, the subject/object binary does not hold. While I discuss objects and subjects separately here, they are entangled, or objects-subjects-events, as I described in chapter two.

When objects are described in conventional qualitative inquiry, they are conceptualized as stable entities that yield information about human life. For example,

Collier and Collier (1986) referred to the photographs of photo elicitation—a qualitative data collection method in which participants share and discuss salient photographs about the research topic with a researcher—as “concrete and explicit reference points” (p. 105) in an interview. While the objects in this study may be concrete in the sense that they are material, I do not theoretically conceptualize them as concrete entities. Instead, I see objects as “blurred, tangled paralyzing, aporetic, perhaps undecidable” (Derrida, 1993/1994, p. 188) entities that refuse permanence because of the swirling atoms and quanta that comprise objects, as I explained in chapter two. Objects, then, do not provide any constancy to an interview as De Leon and Cohen (2008) suggested with their idea of the object probe—a practice of using participant-selected objects as probing devices in semi-structured interviews in order to keep participants focused on a topic. Because objects form “many trajectories that material items can take through shifting meanings” (Hodder, 1998, p. 120) by way of the swirling atoms and quanta, any information about them will also have shifting meanings that defy order and focus. For example, I took photographs of objects shared with me at the end of each initial and follow-up interview. Many times, a different version of a story was told about the object as I took photographs of it. Or, the object prompted a different and unrelated story that would undoubtedly lead to more objects. In this way, objects made the focus of the interview myopic as the objects took us, the participants and me, along many trajectories.

As participants shared objects with me, they told me verb-rich stories about the ancestor associated with the object. As I discussed in chapter two, objects help to materialize an action, or event, in an ancestor’s life (e.g., a land purchase and a marriage). Because the object materializes an action, the object is defined by processes, or

actualizations, which occur in various times and places. For example, a purchase of land occurred in a specific time and place, and that event can be actualized again whenever anyone interacts with that land deed. The virtual, a reserve of potential, is linked to those events and actualizations. In this way, the event is always open to potential connections. The verb-rich, or event-rich, stories that participants told me are always available to something new and different as evidenced by the different versions of stories they told me when I took photographs of the objects.

Those events, then, are connected to ancestors, deceased persons. The event of death (to die) in an ancestor's life, "makes them rise, descend, and rise again" (Deleuze 1988/1993, p. 74). As a result, the ancestors are in movement, "infinitely folding upon [them]selves" (p. 74). The deceased ancestors' do not lose their "capacities to affect and be affected" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 261). Parr (2008) described affect as something that "exceeds existence in a fully coherent body or place" (p. 157-158). In other words, the deceased people, in their infinite folding, exceed their own lives and affect present-day people. Participants frequently became visibly emotional (e.g., tears, laughter, and silence) when discussing an object. For example, one woman shared with me several objects and told me that she just cries upon seeing them. She could not clearly express to me the rationale(s) of her emotional reactions to the objects. Most of the participants did not know how to explain their connections to some objects without crying, laughing, or not talking. The objects and their affects strained humanist language—language stuttered as a poetic of affect took over the interviews. The objects in this study, then, do not yield the "precise and at times encyclopedic" (Collier, 1957, p. 856) data about subjects (people) that Collier claimed they might. The constant

movement of the fold and affect cannot and do not yield precise and encyclopedic data. Instead, data are constituted by innumerable pleats or folds that stutter in humanist language.

The event is also linked to the participants' thoughts and actions about the object-subject-event. Like the deceased ancestors, the living participants constantly fold, unfold, and refold with the object-subject-event, amongst a host of other forces in their lives. The fold is constantly folding and cannot be known in its entirety. Thus, complete knowledge about a participant and their thoughts is impossible. Derrida (1989) wrote, "You will never know, nor will you, all the stories I kept telling myself as I looked at these images" (p. 20). A researcher will never know or be able know *all* the stories about the objects and ancestors that participants tell themselves about the objects and ancestors. For example, a participant told me that I would never know all the stories she sees in the objects that fill her house. The objects, then, cannot be used as probing or prompting strategies as McCracken (1988) suggested in his idea of auto-driving (using researcher-selected objects to drive the direction of face-to-face interviews). No probing question, no matter how carefully worded, will guarantee entrance into participants' thoughts that fold with each reading of the object. Moreover, the fold cannot be directed or told what to do in an interview. The stuttering stories shared during an interview, then, are also shifting and plural and will "always exceed and transgress attempts to capture and categorize" (Scheurich, 1997, p. 73).

During my first interview in January 2010, I learned that I am a fold who folds with the objects, ancestors, participants, and other entities. When I stopped for lunch at a café across from the public library, where the interview would take place, I took my

interview guide out to do some last minute studying. However, the café, a converted Quonset, a steel or tin hut usually used for equipment storage, and its customers had different plans for me. Four ranchers sat next to me and I overheard them talk about the cold weather and snow. One rancher related how the county asked him to help remove snow from the countless graveled roads in the area. He described how an upturned piece of frozen cow manure shredded one of his tractor tires, a costly shredding resulting in a \$500 new tire. Another group of men came in to meet friends for lunch. One particularly loud man asked, “Where is that big Bohemian?” (In this area it is commonplace to refer to Czechs as Bohemians) as they waited for a presumably big Bohemian to join them for lunch at the café. As I finished my grilled cheese sandwich and tater tots, an older woman walked by my table and winked at me—perhaps a Bohemian welcome. Life was happening all around me—a shredded tractor tire, friends meeting for lunch, and a friendly wink. I put my interview guide in my bag. I realized that no interview guide could anticipate the conversations I would have with participants. While I did put my guide on the table in the library, where the participant I had to come to interview that day worked as a librarian, I did not use it. Our conversation was a circumnavigating and flowing conversation about the objects she brought to the interview. The pre-written questions in the interview guide would have hindered that lovely circuitous conversation.

During that first interview, I learned that my job in my study would be to free up a space for folding objects and subjects. I asked participants to tell me about an object and followed the flows, or lines produced by the folding objects and subjects, from there. My chief task was to enable flows by trying not to ask interpretive questions (e.g., what do you mean?) or phenomenological questions (e.g., what was that like?). Such questions

assume that the participants have language with which to make meaning of the objects. My questions sought to further explore connections among objects, ancestors, and participants (e.g., This object is also related to so and so, yes? and What connections do you sense to the ancestor-objects?). In effect, my job was to provide a space for a stuttering poetic to occur. I exist in relation to the participants, objects, and ancestors—not apart from them. I, too, am in the middle.

My study presents an ontological shift in conventional qualitative inquiry, which conceptualizes ontology, or being, as stable and linked to a subject. Subjects are observed in participant observation and subjects speak during interviews. As I mentioned in chapter two and in this section, the fold is universal, and creates an object-subject that is procedurally defined by material and social forces. Clearly, the object-subject is not the same as the humanist subject in conventional qualitative inquiry. The fold destabilizes a stable conception of being with the innumerable pleats of both objects and subjects. May (1996) described Deleuze's ontology as a "test of our conceptions [that] lie in what kinds of lives it allows, rather than testing our lives by measure to which they match our conceptions" (p. 295). There is no way to measure or even clearly describe an ontology of the fold using the language of humanism. Being, in this sense, is not something that can easily be observed nor can it be easily discussed in an interview. For example, I noticed how participants stuttered, or did not know how to explain an object. They began stories several times as they attempted to work within humanist language. Eventually, the story would be told, but it would be fraught with "uhms" and pauses as they searched for words. In addition, they frequently used two-to-three words while attempting to describe an object. Again, language stuttered and I realized that they did

not have a language with which to talk about the objects and ancestors. Humanist language clearly delineates subjects and objects as well as living and nonliving. It seemed that their experiences, their lives, with their objects strained humanist language. The pleats formed by the folds of subjects and objects defy humanism's categorization and sure meaning.

A language of folds and objects-subjects-events emerged from the study. Deleuze (1993/1994) wrote the following about a stuttering language:

It is no longer the formal or superficial syntax that presides over the equilibrium of language, but a syntax in the process of becoming, a veritable creation of a syntax that gives birth to a foreign language and a grammar of disequilibrium. (p. 27)

In other words, the language that emerged from the study produced a stuttering methodology—a language within and outside of qualitative research and Deleuzian concepts. Deleuzian concepts are so different from the humanist concepts of conventional qualitative research that the study could no longer be humanist. Moving back and forth between Deleuze and conventional humanist qualitative methodology produced disequilibrium, a stuttering poetic that might not be described as “methodology” at all. That disequilibrium created a particular syntax, or methodology, that is an entanglement of qualitative research, Deleuzian theories of the fold and events, and data.

A Collective Assemblage of Enunciation

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the assemblage I call my study consisted of a territory and a collective assemblage of enunciation. In the previous

sections, I described the moving territory of my study that consisted of the site of the study, the participants, the study's timeline, and a stuttering methodology. In the next sections, I describe the collective assemblage of enunciation, which Wise (2005) described as follows: "Assemblage elements include discourses, words, 'meanings' and noncorporeal relations that link signifiers with effects" (p. 80). The object-interview, the transcripts, and the fibrous and connective data produced a collective assemblage of enunciation. In that space, a grammar of verbs and demonstrative pronouns materialized and multiple and unanticipated connections proliferated. In the following sections, I describe the object-interview, transcription, and data.

The Object-Interview.

The object-interview, defined simply as a conversation in which subjects (participants, ancestors, and I) and objects are entangled, is a product of the methodology outlined above. I developed the object-interview as a space in which folds between objects, subjects, living, and nonliving could endlessly flow together. The purpose, then, of the object-interview is to follow those flows. Patton (2002) described the purpose of conventional qualitative interviewing as follows:

The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories. (p. 341)

The object-interview challenges several of Patton's claims. First, I do not believe that a researcher can *enter into* another person's perspective. If I am a fold and participants are

folds, we fold together. In this way, we are always folding with each other's perspectives. Deleuze (1988/1993) wrote the following about perspective, "I am forever unfolding between two folds, and if to perceive means to unfold, then, I am forever perceiving within folds" (p. 93). Perspectives are folds that move within folds, and perspectives cannot be explicit. In addition, Patton's claims rest on humanist ontological foundations in which being is stable. However, the fold, which serves as the ontology for this study, produces a continuous rhythmic bass that is not stable. While I did collect stories, they are folding, unfolding, and refolding actualizations of objects-subjects-events that are always animated by the virtual and *a life*. In this way, each interview produced its own flows, or lines, of objects-subjects-events and rhythmic folds. In this section, I explore the flows and rhythms produced by the object-interviews.

From January to August 2010, I entered into the countless folds of objects-subjects-events of the 11 participants' family history genealogical research projects using the object-interview. The interview guide (see Appendix A) included open-ended questions to provide a space for the folding, unfolding, and refolding of subjects and objects. Participants were asked to share and discuss several objects (e.g. documents, photographs, and other artifacts) about some of their ancestors that had captured their interest. I emailed them the interview guide before the interviews and asked them to choose objects to bring to our interview that they could share and discuss. I wanted to know how the objects affected the participants and how those objects brought their ancestors to life.

Conversations were, of course, quite different from each other as each interview produced its own middle space. As a result, I did not consult the interview guide during

interviews, because the guide seemed to tame that middle space with preconceived questions. In addition, the guide seemed to place the interviews on a plane of transcendence, which I discussed in chapter two as a plane that determines being with *a priori* concepts. There was simply no way to anticipate what might happen during the interviews. In this way, the interviews lodged themselves on a plane of immanence in which a set of questions could not determine being or thought. When I discussed a participant's interview with her some time later, she noted how our interview was very different from the more traditional, structured interviews she had experienced in the past. I learned later that she and other genealogists I interviewed (they belonged to the same genealogy club) informally discussed how interviewing in my study was different from what they were used to and how much they enjoyed the unique flows of their individual interviews.

I completed 11 initial interviews, one with each participant from January-March 2010. Nine follow-up interviews were completed from March 2010 to August 2010. Two participants asked to meet with me again to share with me different objects. I asked the other seven women to meet with me to learn more about certain aspects of their genealogical work, to complete outdoor interviews, or to learn more about particular ancestors that helped me to think about my work. Interviews occurred in the participants' homes, places of employment, and outdoor locations (e.g., a log cabin, a park, and a cemetery). Initial and follow-up interviews lasted between two and four hours each, and in those many hours we talked about hundreds of objects and ancestors. I also took digital photographs of the objects they brought with them to the interviews.

Kvale (1996) suggested certain kinds of interview questions, including follow-up questions (i.e., questions based on provocative statements made by interviewees), probing questions (i.e., tell me more about that), specifying questions (i.e., questions aroused by an object and/or constructions about the object), and silence (i.e., think time for participants). I used all those types of questions in our conversations, but another kind of question emerged during the object-interviews. I asked *connective questions* in which I sought to make connections between objects-subjects-events. For example, I asked questions about possible links between family members.

Before the first interview, I spent a considerable amount of time thinking about the interviews. I examined my research journal in which I had recorded moments when my family discussed our family history in order to think about what might happen during the object-interviews I was about to begin. In particular, I gave considerable thought to the following experience that demonstrated what Somner (1994) called the “impossibility of sharing” (p. 542). When I arrived in December 2009 at my parent’s house in Nebraska, which served as home base during my research, my mother asked me to help her locate the manifest (the list of passengers on a ship) for the ship—the Howard—that her great-great grandparents and their family had sailed on from Hamburg, Germany to the United States in 1858. While she already knew that the great-great grandparents died of cholera on the ship and were buried at sea, she wanted to see the manifest. I located the ship’s manifest on the internet and printed it (Figure 3.5).

6	Christoph	17				
7	Mason	17	female	wife		
8	Muller	18	male	son		
9	Frederick	16				
100	Ludwig	13				
1	Christoph	11				
2	Mason	9	female	daughter		
3	Bridgman	7				

Figure 3.5 A Manifest

When she found the names of her great-great grandparents, their four sons, and two daughters whom my mother did not know about before seeing the document, she quietly said “There they are.” Tears came to her eyes as she thought aloud, “They [the parents] knew they were going to die... and to leave the children in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Their daughter also died of cholera on the ship. They knew that they were leaving four young sons and a daughter to fend for themselves in a new country.”

I asked her a question. “How would you have felt if you were them [the parents]?” My mother looked at me and did not respond. I knew her look and that silence from adolescent adventures and mistakes—I had gone too far. As she glanced at me, I realized the violence of my question. The question I posed assumed that I could enter into her thoughts, her perspectives, about this object-subject-event, and assumed that I could “understand” her, know what she “meant.” Moreover, the question assumed my mother could enter the thoughts of her great-great-grandparents. Upon realizing this, I wrote a note in my research journal reminding myself to *not* insist upon meaning during upcoming interviews. I divined that I might encounter more instances of sensations and objects that might strain language to its limits. I anticipated pulsating silences that I did not want to terrorize with questions about meaning.

For example, during one interview, a participant shared the following photograph (Figure 3.6) of her great aunt and the following memory with me:



Figure 3.6 A Great Aunt

My great aunt has a daughter-in-law, that every time she sees me, she just says, “Oh, it’s something to see her alive again and young.” Of course, I’m not young anymore, but I do look more like her now. ... But when I went to her funeral, it was really hard to see myself in that casket...

When I transcribed the interview, I inserted a comment, “!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!,” in the transcript as a meager notation of the monstrously pregnant moment I remembered during the interview and that I heard again as I listened to the digital audio file. While some researchers might have pressed the participant with a probe like “Tell me what it was like to see yourself, or your image, in a casket.” Or, “What does that make you think about?” “What did you feel when that happened?” I did not ask those interpretive and phenomenological questions that insinuate that something was missing when, in fact,

nothing was missing—everything was becoming. I could only let the lines of becoming reverberate in space.

In my thinking, the photographs of the participant's great aunt made at least four connections. First, the participant discussed her great aunt's daughter-in-law and how the daughter-in-law saw the genetic fragments of her mother-in-law in the participant's face. Then, a connection was made between the participant's more mature face and her great aunt's face in the photograph. A third connection was made when the participant called up her great aunt's funeral and seeing the great aunt's and her own, face(s) in the casket. Finally, I saw a connection of genetic repetition between the participant and the photograph of her great aunt.

These connections occurred in several contexts. The first occurred in a somewhat murky space-time of whenever the great aunt's daughter-in-law saw the participant. The second returns to the context of the interview on January 15, 2010 at the participant's antique store and post office in a small Nebraska town. The third refers to the great aunt's funeral, a specific time and space. The fourth refers to the connection I made and continue to make between the participant's face and her great aunt's photograph. As a result, the photograph and connections occupy a heterogeneous space of past, present, and future containing multiple great aunts. I do not know which of the great aunt's physical features the daughter-in-law sees in the participant (e.g., a facial expression, a slight turn of the head, a smile, a certain age, and so on). Nor do I know the age of the great aunt the participant saw in the casket (e.g., a younger woman and a woman about the same age as the participant). Numerous connections were produced by the photograph of the great aunt in the undated photograph.

On that day in January, multiple connections, or lines of becoming, were made between multiple people in multiple space-times. Multiple great aunts, multiple space-times, multiple daughters-in-law, participants, and researchers exist in a stuttering study. The intensity of becoming was so strong that I could only make exclamatory marks to ward off interpretation.

The photograph of the participant's great aunt and the participant's words also connected to my own family history. My namesake and grandmother, Naomie Vivian Swanson Nordstrom, died in 1966 from brain cancer 11 years before I was born in 1977 (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 My Grandmother

I was named for her because of her absence in my family and the presence of my red hair, her red hair, a physical trait originating in the Swanson family. At the time of my birth, my parents did not know that I would also grow into her face, a resemblance that numerous family members still comment on to this day. When the participant shared her

great aunt with me, I thought of what it would have been like to see Naomie in her coffin, to see the genetic fragments shared by two women with the same name. I also thought of the times when I see myself—certain turns of the head, a smile, and a look—in photographs of her. Thus, the monstrously pregnant moment in the interview, when the participant described seeing her great aunt in her coffin, extended well beyond the confines of the interview into my own life.

I made other connections during the interviews with connective questions that sought to make connections with/in the interview. Participants shared entire family lineages with me and used words such as “tie” and “connect” to denote lines between objects-subjects-events. I asked questions about who was related to whom, about connections between objects-subjects-events, and so on. Learning about the objects, or what some may call “reading” the objects-subjects-events, then, was about making connections. Grosz (1994) wrote:

It is ... no longer appropriate to ask what a text means, what it says, what is the structure of its interiority, how to interpret it or decipher it. Instead, one must ask what it does, how it connects with other things (including its reader, its author, its literary and nonliterary context). (p. 199).

While Grosz discussed literary texts, I read objects-subjects-events for similar information that sometimes connected disparate objects-subjects-events. Many of my questions sought to make lines or connections or to clarify connections between objects-subjects-events. Connective questions such as “Now, so and so is related to you how, again?” Or, “This object also has to do with this person, yes?” littered the transcripts. In addition to the people associated with the objects, I also asked questions about places as

the people associated with objects moved from place to place. In my mind, I also made connections between participants' families that later materialized in the transcripts.

There were also times when I struggled to make a connection. For example, a participant shared several Navajo baskets that her great-great uncle gave to his family members (Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8 Navajo Baskets

She told me that he was a Rough Rider, a member of the 1st United States Cavalry, with Theodore Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War in 1898. After the war, he moved to Arizona, taught school, and sent baskets made by the Navajo there to family members. He then went to explore Baja, Mexico and died there. It was rumored in various newspapers, including the *New York Times*, that he was cannibalized by the Seri Indians in Baja, known at the time for cannibalistic activities. While some believed he died of dehydration and starvation, rumors of cannibalism persisted. When she asked me, “What questions do you have?” I did not know how to respond. I did not know how to ask

questions about cannibalism. While I made numerous connections with other objects, I could not make a connection with the baskets.

During the object-interviews, I began to see networks of objects that formed an ancestor's life. As I mentioned above, participants used words like "tie" and "connect" to talk about objects. Many times they used those verbs to describe objects for one ancestor. For example, one participant shared with me numerous newspaper articles and picture postcards associated with an ancestor, and I saw how the group of objects worked together to create an ensemble of life, an ensemble of objects that construct an ancestor's life. I explain the emergence of the ensemble of life during the interviews in more detail in chapter four.

In summary, the object-interview is a middle space produced by the flow of objects-subjects-events that is animated by the fold. Each interview occupies its own middle space in which stories and perceptions fold together. Two kinds of questions were used in the object-interviews—Kvale's (1996) follow-up questions and connective questions. Because of the ontology of the fold, I did not ask interpretive and phenomenological questions. The flow of the interview also enabled unanticipated connections between my family's history and those of the participants. Many of the ideas reported in this dissertation would not be possible without the object-interview. Most important I began to see the ensemble of life, take shape in the interviews.

Transcription.

Transcription proved to be an important analytical tool in the study, because I was able to see a collective assemblage of enunciation appear on my computer screen. I completed verbatim transcripts of each initial and follow-up interview. In each transcript,

I noted the participants' use of grammar, including shifts of verb tense and the use of demonstrative pronouns, which created a collection of signs unique to my study.

When I re-read the transcripts, I found frequent changes in tense, for example, past and present tense in the same sentence, that I did not notice during the interviews. For example, one participant said the following: (verbs are italicized and initials represent the names of ancestors):

They [the parents] *did have* a daughter in 1894 about the same time that G. *was attending* the university and her name *was* S... And so then S. *lives* with them and *goes* to school...D. *is* born in Chicago and R. *is* born in Arkansas, when, uhm, G. *was doing, had* a practice in Arkansas.

The past tense verbs bookend the quote, and the present tense verbs occupy the middle space. In this instance, as with so many others, I inserted the comment “The time is out of joint” to note when the past and present operated together. The verbs helped me to understand the relationship between objects, events, and time. Deleuze (1969/1990) wrote:

Just as the present measures the temporal realization of the event—that is, its incarnation in the depth of acting bodies and its incorporation in a state of affairs—the event in turn, in its impassibility and impenetrability, has no present.

It rather retreats and advances in two directions at once, being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened? (p. 63)

As the participant described the events of ancestors' births and deaths, she seamlessly used past and present tenses of verbs. The retreats and advances of the verbs, which are events, helped me to work with the coexistence of time in events—a time in which past,

present, and future are indiscernible. As participants moved between tenses in the transcripts, their transcripts became seas of events in which a linear time was irrelevant. “The passing of the present, and the preservation of the past” (Deleuze, 1996/2002, p. 151) occurred simultaneously.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of transcription was trying to understand the participants’ use of demonstrative pronouns when introducing me to ancestors and objects. For example, they said, “This woman” and pointed to a photograph, and later they shared the woman’s name. I soon learned that I had to make brief descriptive notes of each object and take photographs of the objects as well to keep track of which object went with which ancestor. Both notes and photographs were invaluable during transcription, when I began to insert the photographs into the transcripts. In other words, “this woman” was accompanied by the object associated with her. In describing the extension and vibration of events as well as the coexistence of time of events, Deleuze (1988/1993) wrote, “It is something rather than nothing, but also this rather than that: no longer the indefinite article, but the demonstrative pronoun” (p. 77). The demonstrative pronouns, then, marked how an object reverberates across time and space. The demonstrative pronouns became markers of intensity, of becoming, as the person and object became all possible versions of that person and object.

Watching the demonstrative pronouns and verbs populate the interview transcripts and reverberate in the collective assemblage of enunciation helped me to develop the ideas I explore in this dissertation. The demonstrative pronouns marked each object-subject with intensity such that each object-subject-event is constantly folding and becoming. The verbs transformed the objects into events that occur in a coexistence of

time. In effect, transcription helped me to work with the language in my study and that language would later develop into the language of the ensemble of life, which I described in chapter two. The grammar-filled data from the interview transcripts and objects made other connections, which I explore in the next section.

Data.

While the primary method of data collection was object-interviews, there was a multiplicity of connective and fibrous data that materialized during the study. I was hesitant to sort data into a binary opposition of conventional (i.e., data from interviews and observations) and unconventional (e.g., data not from interviews or observations, such as my family's history, novels, and media stories, to name just a few). My hesitancy stemmed from ontological concerns about how qualitative inquiry seeks to stabilize and reduce being with categories of data, as if there is conventional being and unconventional being. As I mentioned above, the fold is universal in this study, and being is always folding together. And, of course, my uncertainty is brought about by what happened during my study.

Interview transcripts contained references to larger historical events, novels and books, as well as popular media. I understood the larger historical events as I talked with participants but that understanding was lost when I later transcribed the interviews. For example, participants mentioned a battle that an ancestor fought in or used a specific name of an immigration wave. However, when I transcribed the interviews, I had to search the internet for information about those references and decided to insert a live link in the transcript for future reference. Several participants have published books or are currently writing about their genealogical work, and they referenced that work in their

individual interviews to which I included references in the transcripts. In addition, participants recommended literature (e.g., Aldrich, 1925, 1935; Cather, 1896/2010, 1913/1989) and books about genealogy (e.g., Smolenyak, 2009; Szucs and Luebking, 2006), and I also included those recommendations as references in the transcripts. While I collected data, two television programs aired: the PBS Series, *Faces of America* (Gates, Grant, Kunhardt, and McGee, 2010), a program that presented the genealogies of 12 well-known American citizens, and the NBC series, *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Kudrow, 2010), a program that traced the ancestry of seven well-known Americans. Other media such as magazine and newspaper articles, internet websites, books, and so on were produced with the programs. Participants shared their interpretations of the programs and media as well as connections and disconnections to their genealogical work in interviews and correspondence. I also connected theories to the interviews by inserting comments into transcripts that refer to those theories I read while transcribing and rereading the interviews. As I mentioned earlier, I wrote “the time is out of joint” in transcripts to denote a Deleuzian coexistence of time. The interview transcripts, then, were not mere copies of our conversations but were interspersed with other conversations.

As I mentioned earlier, weather became data because it significantly affected my study. St. Pierre’s (1997) dream data were also important in my study. I revisited Nebraska in my dreams especially when I was back in Georgia. I awoke to apparitions visiting me—my grandmother Naomie touching my left arm and participants’ ancestors looking in at me from the hallway of my apartment. The dreams “refuse[d] closure; they ke[pt] interpretation in play” (p. 183) as the dead visited me nightly, alive in my dreams.

St. Pierre's (1997) response data functioned as data in my study. She explained response data thus: "Members and peers do provide us with data that are often critical and that may even prompt us to significantly reconstruct our interpretation as we proceed" (p. 184). I presented a paper on my study in February 2010 to a local genealogy group in Nebraska of which several participants are members (see Appendix B). A participant had contacted me three days prior to the meeting and asked me to make a 30-minute presentation about my study to date. At that point in time, I was in the middle of data collection, and it was my first opportunity to write about my thoughts and present them publicly. The writing I did during those three days, along with the notes I took during the meeting, are response data. I sent the paper via email to participants who were not in attendance at the meeting and asked for their written feedback, which all of them provided. I also attended two other meetings of the same genealogy group during which participants asked me to discuss emerging interpretations.

I also received response data from audience members at conferences. Since October 2009, I have presented portions of the dissertation at various national and international conferences. The questions, comments, and connections made by the audience members have helped me to refine ideas presented in this dissertation.

My family members also displayed a growing interest about genealogical research as evidenced by the stories about ancestors they told me and the objects they shared with me. When I was home in Nebraska, my parents and I spent numerous evenings looking at family history objects around my home and sharing stories about our ancestors. Other relatives took the opportunity to share even more stories and objects with me. I also worked on my own genealogy project about one of my family's lines. Participants asked

me about that work—what was I doing? What new finds did I locate? Could they help me with my family history work? No doubt, conversations with my family members about my ancestors and the objects associated with their lives as well as my genealogical work became data in the study.

I also used a research journal to help me think about the study. In the journal, I wrote field notes, notes about the weather, the books I read, and, of course, my emerging thoughts about the study. I also included newspaper and internet articles about genealogy in the journal. The journal became a place for me to explore my thoughts where “I made accidental and fortuitous connections I could not foresee or control” (St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970). My writing, in many ways, led me to thoughts that are presented in this dissertation. In this way, the contents of my research journal are data.

As connections were forged with a variety of data (e.g., weather data, sensual, dream, and response data, transcripts with references to outside conversations, family data, and writing data), it became difficult to sort all these data into categories. Data became a supple and moving ontology of folds that kept meaning in play by not differentiating being into categories but by resonating with connections and life. Foucault (1970/1977), in his explanation of Deleuze’s ontology, wrote:

The most tenacious subjection of difference is undoubtedly that maintained by categories. By showing the number of different ways in which being can express itself, by specifying its forms of attribution, by imposing in a certain way the distribution of existing things, categories create a condition where being maintains its undifferentiated repose at the highest level. (p. 186)

Fixing and categorizing data fixes and categorizes being, but data will always escape categorization. The fold, which serves as the ontological rhythmic bass of this study cannot be thought in categories, so I use the umbrella term, data, to refer to the connections that proliferated in my stuttering study.

The Assemblage I Call my Study

The collective assemblage of enunciation (i.e., object-interviews and data) and the territory (i.e., site of study, participants, timeline, and stuttering methodology) produced an assemblage that I call my study. In this section, I explain how the assemblage helped me to think about the study.

The assemblage has no clear beginning or ending. I have already mentioned that my study is a continuation of a life-long qualitative research project about assemblages of objects and lives. As I noted in chapter two, the assemblage is always in motion. In this way, the study becomes a verb that refuses stasis. As the components (e.g., site of study, participants, and object-interview) continue to circulate, unanticipated connections, disconnections, and reconnections will materialize. My study, then, is a living entity that encounters forces that produce connections. Colebrook (2005) wrote, “Just as life can only be lived by risking connections with other powers or potentials, so thinking can only occur if there is an encounter with relations, potentials and powers not our own” (p. 4). Within/out the assemblage forces will entangle with the assemblage and those forces will undoubtedly force me to rethink my study.

I also view the work of the assemblage as ethical work. Deleuze (1986b/1995) explained ethics as “a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved” (p. 100). In my research journal, I frequently

wrote about the flows of the object-interviews and I how wanted to let the study buzz with heterogeneous elements, with life. I did not want to bring the study to a “violent inquisition of interpretation” (St. Pierre, 2007, p. 2). I began to understand that the study as assemblage was ethical work. Deleuze (1986a/1995) wrote the following that helped me work with the assemblage, “Never interpret; experience, experiment” (p. 87). The assemblage reminded me not to latch onto transcendental categories in the hope that they might help me make sense of the study. It pushed me to experiment with the existences within the assemblage in order to see what they might do and become. In this way, the assemblage became ethical work because it allowed the living and nonliving to continue to live by ceaselessly making new connections.

Analysis

Clearly, practices of coding data and doing thematic analysis that occur after data collection and often constitute data analysis in conventional qualitative research were not adequate in this study. In other words, I could not code the fibrous and connective data nor could I code the folds of objects-subjects-events. Moreover, coding and thematic analysis gesture toward a plane of transcendence in which lived experience is plugged into a plane of *a priori* concepts. As I mentioned in chapter two, I created ensembles of life on a plane of immanence, which has no method of thought. In this way, analysis occurred throughout the study as I thought through “a cacophony of ideas swirling” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 622) about data and conceptual personae. In this study, data analysis was thinking and the material products of that thinking. In this section, I explain how I conceptualize thinking and how thinking helped me with my research questions: How

does assemblage enable an ensemble of life? What is the work of assemblage in an object-interview study? What is the work of the ensemble of life in this study?

To Think.

In this study, thinking constituted data analysis though I am never sure what constitutes thinking. As I mentioned above and in chapter two, there is no blueprint for thought on the plane of immanence, there is only movement of thought. In this section, I explain how I learned to recognize mobile and molecular thought through affect, which I explain later.

Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote the following about thought:

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. (p. 139)

As I folded with/in this study, I encountered many forces some of which included:

Words from theorists, participants, conference audiences, friends and lovers, ghosts who haunt [my] studies, characters in film and fiction and dreams—with [my] body and all the other bodies and the earth and all the things and objects in [my] life. (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 622)

Each encounter presents me with a different entanglement of those forces, and those encounters happen so quickly that I do not know what I think, when I think it, or how a thought happened. For example, I took a break from writing in the hope that mundane chores such as grocery shopping, signing forms, and recycling might help me to think. I

was not aware that I was thinking about writing, but as I walked to my office to sign a travel form, the way to organize a section of this dissertation came to me as the Georgia sun shone upon my face and a warm wind tousled my hair. Deleuze (1986/2002) wrote, “Thought is molecular. We are slow beings constituted by molecular speeds” (p. 283). Thought is so quick, or molecular, and we are so slow to realize the thoughts that zoom through our bodies. Thought happens and we are left with the aftermath—or the affective sensations (e.g., a ray of sunshine, a person, a place, and idea)—that are left in thought’s wake. That afternoon, I realized how very slow I am and how quick thought is. The thought felt like a rush of wind that swept my body up and left me breathless as I furiously dug in my purse for paper and pen to write down the molecular thought that I knew would be soon gone. The sun on my face and the wind in my hair were the affective sensations of the thought and the old receipt on which I wrote the thought is the remnant of molecular thought (Figure 3.9).

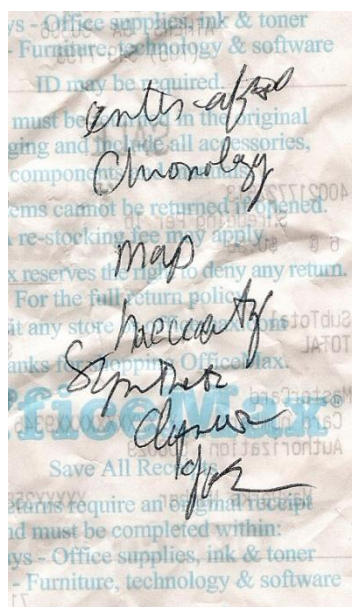


Figure 3.9 Remnant of Molecular Thought

My study is filled with such pieces of paper that attempt to manhandle molecular thoughts that strike me with affective force. Thus, thinking in this stuttering study is a molecular and affective entanglement of forces that course through my body and materialize on receipts, envelopes, pieces of scratch paper, digital audio recorders, and so on. In the next sections, I use three remnants of molecular and affective thoughts to describe the analytical work I did in response to each of my research questions.

How Does Assemblage Enable an Ensemble of Life?

I noticed a sense of vitality during interviews. Despite the length of the interviews, I left them feeling breathless and full of life. After the interviews, I felt as if I had lived a thousand lives, and perhaps I had. That sensation gestured toward an assemblage, and for some time, I could not name it or its constitutive concepts. I just *knew* it was there. I read and wrote about that assemblage for many months, and I came to realize that the assemblage was an entanglement of folds, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*. In this section, I describe how I came to know that assemblage through reading and writing.

Deleuze and Parnet (1977/2002) wrote, “The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages which have invented him” (p. 51-52). While in Nebraska in early March 2009, I studied the quotations from Deleuze in my dictionary on refworks.com to help me think about the assemblage I sensed in my study. When I returned to Georgia in late March 2010, I reread Deleuze’s: “Immanence: A Life” (1995/2006), *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988/1993), *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994), *Foucault* (1986/1988), and some of his collective work with Guattari: *Kafka: Toward a Minor History* (1975/1986), and *What is Philosophy?* (1991/1994). I thought that the

assemblages in those texts might help me to understand the assemblage that was already at work in my study. As I read and reread those texts along with the interview transcripts, I wrote notes, and I found myself coming back to the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*.

I spent about seven months trying different combinations of the concepts. Despite all that writing, I did not know how those concepts worked together in an assemblage. Deleuze (1980/2006) wrote the following about assemblages and his words are useful in thinking about how I worked with the assemblage:

Assemblages exist, but they indeed have component parts that serve as criteria and allow the various assemblages to be qualified. Just as in painting, assemblages are a bunch of lines. But there are all kinds of lines. Some lines are segments, or segmented; some lines get caught in a rut, or disappear into “black holes”; some are destructive, sketching death; and some lines are vital and creative. These creative and vital lines open up an assemblage, rather than close it down. (p. 178)

During those seven months, I wrote lines that turned into segments, rutted, or disappeared. The lines that segmented or rutted were usually lines in which the lure of the plane of transcendence influenced me to write lines that attempted to plug my study into the concepts. I soon realized that I would have to make the “creative and vital line” (p. 178) I sought on the plane of immanence. I had to let the concepts go and think without method in order to work with them.

When I released the concepts, I was able to describe the assemblage I wrote about in chapter two. In that chapter, I described how the fold was a universal rhythmic bass

that animated objects and subjects such that they folded together. To demonstrate the folds between objects and subjects, I used the term “objects-subjects.” Then, I connected objects-subjects to events. I argued that the object-subject commemorates an event in an ancestor’s life. The event operates in a coexistence of time. As a result, the event can be actualized again and again because of the virtual—a force of potential. To denote the spatial relationship between objects, subjects, events, I used the term “objects-subjects-events.” Last, I described how *a life*, a virtual force, animates all objects-subjects-events in an ancestor’s life. The “creative and vital line” (p. 178) of *a life*, objects-subjects-events, and the fold worked together in an assemblage.

The conceptual assemblage I described above became too big and unwieldy with the hundreds of objects and lives that constituted my study. I became overwhelmed by the assemblage as I attempted to work with it and the data. As a result, I developed the concept *ensemble of life*, which was enabled by the conceptual assemblage. The ensemble of life merged after five months of writing and reading. The fold, objects-subjects-events, and a life are the constitutive and inseparable components of the concept. The ensemble of life consists of lines, or trajectories, comprised of objects-subjects-events that are animated by the fold and *a life*.

I wrote chapters two and four together to help me theorize the ensemble of life. Using the interview transcripts, I began to write ensembles of life, which I would later theorize in chapter two. I learned about the concept from writing with it, seeing where it would take me and where it would not take me. Many times, I wrote something in chapter two that would have to be radically altered because of something I wrote in chapter four. In this way, the concept was a product of the relays between theory and

practice. I used reading, writing, and the relays between theory and data to develop my concept. No doubt, as I continue to work with this concept it will change.

The work of the assemblage and any concept it enables is never completed—it is always pumping with vitality and creativity. As a result, my thinking, or analysis, is never completed with/in the study. What I think of now as a productive line may very well cease to work. However, another vital line might emerge. One never knows where the assemblage might go and what it might do.

What is the Work of Assemblage in an Object-Interview Study?

On January 29, 2011 while driving to an interview, I thought out loud and transcribed the following into my research journal:

This project can't be this rage for meaning...It can't be...I don't know what it is then...because all of qualitative research, all of this interpretive business, is just this rage for meaning, gotta get that meaning, gotta get that meaning. Well, I'm lucky if I can get a hold of it, just for a moment. I can't make this mean...I can't, I just, I just don't know what I'm doing anymore.

In less than a month of data collection it seemed that all I had learned about qualitative research dissipated across the snow-covered fields of Nebraska. In this section, I explain how an assemblage helped me to think about my study that no longer seemed “qualitative.”

In my research journal, I struggled with whether I was doing conventional “qualitative research.” I explained in the “Object-Interview” and “Methodology” sections above how this particular kind of interview and methodology both works and does not work with conventional qualitative inquiry's interviewing literature and

methodological literature. I asked myself the following questions. If I gave up meaning, was I doing conventional qualitative research? Can qualitative research survive without meaning? I then questioned why I was trying to “fit” my study into qualitative research even though that category constricted my study. Deleuze (1968/1994) suggested that “every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes” (p. 50). Conventional qualitative inquiry presupposes that meaning exists and can be found and can be transported from person to person via language. However, I was not working with that presupposition. I realized that I was doing something different and had to attend to that doing.

In the “A Stuttering Methodology” and “Object-Interview” sections, I wrote about following the flows of folding objects and subjects in the study. Following the flows of the interviews felt right—it felt like an assemblage. Moreover, during interviews the site of the study, the participants, data, and so on all mixed together. In my unstructured “qualitative” study, the assemblage provided a moving and shifting structure in which I could work without suppressing the folds of objects-subjects-events and *a life* I sensed. The assemblage spoke to the folds, the flows, and the life I knew and experienced in my study and that I wrote about in my research journal.

In this chapter, I described an assemblage that consisted of the site of study, the participants, its methodology, the object-interviews, and the data. All these components are entangled such that participants cannot be thought apart from the site of the study and so on. In this way, my study—an assemblage—marks a significant shift from conventional qualitative inquiry. Conventional qualitative inquiry categorizes each of the aforementioned components. Every part of a study has a category. Data are not

entangled with the site of study; data collection is not entangled with analysis, and so on. As I mentioned in the above section, “Timeline,” data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, whereas in conventional qualitative inquiry data collection and analysis are discrete processes. Moreover, weather data entangled with the site of the study. The entanglements are endless. In such entanglements, the heterogeneous elements of my study are constantly arranging themselves.

That assemblage helped me to think about my study without using the meaning-making machine of conventional qualitative inquiry. As I worked with the data, I found the assemblage to be freeing. Every morning, new connections emerged from the data and my writing that would surprise me. For example, in an earlier draft of this dissertation I included a piece of data about a participant who was interested in learning more about her great-grandfather’s life prior to his marriage to her great-grandmother in order to discuss the significance of verbs in my data. She was able to locate various objects about his life after his marriage, but his life prior to the marriage remains clouded in mystery. She remarked, “We don’t know where he was, what he was doing... After that [the marriage], we can follow him real well.” As I was writing I immediately thought of the map of the United States I made (see Figure 3.2). I imagined objects-subjects-events populating the map as the participant followed his life across the United States. I was able to combine the site of study, theory, and data to help me think about what I was writing. I could not isolate the piece of data into one category or meaning. That data extended well beyond the categories of “verbs” and “data.” The buzzing assemblage helped me to think about meaning in my study. Meaning might appear, but only fleetingly.

What is the Work of the Ensemble of Life in this Study?

In chapter two, I described the ensemble of life, an ensemble of trajectories formed by objects-subjects-events experienced by an ancestor, the sensations associated with those objects-subjects-events, and the virtual potential of those object-subjects-events. The trajectories are animated by the fold and *a life*. The ensemble of life has a language filled with the *ands* between subjects and objects, living and nonliving, and so on. In this section, I explain how I developed this concept.

A remnant of molecular thought manifested in my research journal as I wrote about how participants discussed an ancestor using multiple objects. After I transcribed the interviews, I studied the transcripts of words and objects. As the words mixed with objects, I began to see trajectories of ancestors' lives form. To better understand those trajectories, I drew pictures of lines with objects, much like the interconnecting apartments, or objects, in the pyramids described in chapter one. That drawing helped me to understand that the objects-subjects-events formed lines. At first, I only drew one line. However, after I studied the transcripts and my research notes, I noted that there were other lines at work in the grouping. Many times those lines were of my own creation as I was affected by the objects-subjects-events. I then developed the idea that the group of objects was more like an ensemble—a provisional grouping of lines—that create a person's life.

I use the term *ensemble* in three ways. First, the term punctuates, or ensembles, the assemblage formed by the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*. In other words, the ensemble provisionally groups, or punctuates, that assemblage so that I can work with the assemblage on a smaller scale. Second, because each object-subject-event is

connected to the virtual, each object-subject-event is an ensemble of the virtual—all the possibilities that reverberate from that object. Third, I refer to the musical connotation of the term. For example, an orchestra is an ensemble of various instruments that produce music. In family history genealogy, the objects work together to produce an ancestor's life. No one object can stand alone. Other objects are needed to make sense of a life. And, as a new object is added to the collection, it effects a change not only in what is known about an ancestor's life but also a change in the virtual. The term *life* refers to the person's life and *a life*, a virtual potential.

Once I was able to name the groups of objects I noticed during the interviews, I began to write with the concept. As I mentioned in the section "How Does the Assemblage Enable an Ensemble of Life," I had to write ensembles of lives in order to hone the concept. Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote:

How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Only in this manner are we resolved to write. (p. xxi)

Every day I wrote about the ensemble of life, I worked at the frontiers of my knowledge. As I wrote, I realized that I did not know the concept as well as I thought. As a result, I had to go back to interview transcripts, slide shows of photographs, theories, and my writing. For example, I developed the language portion of the ensemble of life while rereading transcripts. As noted throughout this chapter, the participants sometimes struggled with humanist language and used a grammar of verbs and demonstrative

pronouns to describe the objects. I added the language of the *and*, which I described in chapter two, to provide a way to think about the participants' stuttering and grammar. Moreover, I hoped that the language would provide the participants a way to think about their experiences and lives. In addition, readers of this dissertation and conversations with colleagues provided helpful comments and posed thoughtful questions that helped me to think about the ensemble of life. For example, a good friend, who also was a reader of my dissertation, spent countless hours with me as I talked through the ensemble of life. She carefully listened and asked thoughtful questions that would always invigorate my next writing session. The combination of these activities helped me to work with the concept.

The ensemble of life, as it is presented in this dissertation, may appear to be stable. However, it is far from stable. Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote, "I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentred centre, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them" (p. xxi). I anticipate that I will continue to make and remake the ensemble of life as I continue to work with it. The ensemble of life is never at rest, it is always moving and shifting.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained that my study is an assemblage consisting of a territory and a collective assemblage of enunciation. The shifting territory of the study was formed by the site of the study, the participants, the timeline, and the stuttering methodology. The stuttering methodology is a language of both qualitative research and Deleuzian theories that was formed by the relays between theory and practice, or the doing of the study. The collective assemblage of enunciation was formed by the verb-

rich and demonstrative pronoun-rich object-interviews and the data. The object-interview is an entangled conversation in which participants share and discuss objects in a conversational style. I conceptualized data as a fibrous and connective entity that included both conventional and unconventional data sources. Last, I described how I did the work of analysis, or thinking, in my study. In that section, I explained thought as molecular and affective and described how those molecular and affective thoughts helped to me to work, read, and write with/in my research questions. I and my study are forever entangled in this assemblage.

CHAPTER 4

ENSEMBLES OF LIFE AT WORK

In this chapter, I address my third research question, the work of the ensemble of life in my study by presenting five ensembles of life. The ensemble of life is an ensemble of a person's trajectories—or lines—that are formed by the objects-subjects-events in her life, the sensations associated with those objects-subjects-events, and the virtual potential of those objects-subjects-events. Those lines are also animated by the fold and *a life*, and they are open and connectable to other ensembles of life. In each section of this chapter, I explore one of several lines in five ensembles of life and in each line I focus on one of the following constitutive concepts—the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*—which I explained in chapter two. While I examine each constitutive concept separately, the concepts are entangled in the ensemble of life. In “A Mother Line,” the first ensemble of life, I explore the sensations associated with object-subject-events that serve as entry points into that ensemble of life. Next, I examine the relays between the actual and virtual of objects-subjects-events in the second ensemble of life, “A Great Uncle Line.” In the third and fourth ensembles of life—“A Partner Line” and “A Grandmother Line”—I explore the animating forces of the fold and *a life*, respectively. I then connect all those lines to my grandmother, Naomie Nordstrom, whom I briefly discussed in chapter three, in order to explore the unanticipated connections between ensembles of life. Lastly, I discuss how these tangled lines helped me think about the work of the ensemble of life in this study.

A Mother Line

The participant, a retired professor, drove from her home in a larger city in Nebraska to our two interviews in her childhood home (also in Nebraska), a former funeral parlor in which she kept most of the objects associated with her family. During the initial interview in February 2010, the participant told me about a set of Haviland china that her mother took from her parent's foreclosed home in Iowa in the late 1920's. When the participant and I met for a follow-up interview in June 2010, she served tea using that china (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Haviland China

As I drank tea from the china and thought about its story, the affect of the china washed over me and became my entry point into the participant's mother's ensemble of life. In this section, I explain how objects-subjects-events carry sensations and how those sensations serve as entry points into ensembles of life.

When the participant told me about the china during the initial interview, she told me that her mother did not want any information in the family records about her Haviland china for fear of embarrassing her family. According to the participant, her mother, who died in 1995, was embarrassed that the china also told the story of her family's financial

issues during the 1920's. The participant, however, disagreed with her mother as I explain below.

The participant told me that during the 1920's her parents, newly married, lived in Nebraska while her grandfather, grandmother, and uncle lived on a Western Iowa farm (Figure 4.2) that had several mortgages on it.



Figure 4.2 A Foreclosed Home

To repay the outstanding loans, the participant's grandfather became a migrant worker during the winter in addition to his farming duties that occupied the remainder of the year. In addition, her grandmother moved to a small town in Nebraska to work as a cook in a restaurant. Her uncle abandoned the family entirely, though the participant's mother sent any extra money to her parents. Despite the family's efforts to repay the loans, the bank foreclosed on them and put the farm and the contents of their house on the auction block. Before the foreclosure auction, the grandmother called her daughter, the participant's mother, and asked her to go to the house and retrieve some items, including the Haviland china, that were in the locked-up house. The participant's mother slipped

into the house and retrieved those items. After the auction, their farm, home, and the remainder of their personal belongings were gone, sold to the highest bidder.

As I mentioned above, the participant's mother did not want any information about the loss of the farm and the Haviland china in the family's history. The participant disagreed and said, "That's one of the useful things about genealogy, I think, is that you learn how people manage and what they do in times of crisis." In chapter two, I explained how Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) theorized the monument as a commemoration of an event. The objects of family history genealogy also commemorate events. In this instance, the Haviland china commemorated a foreclosed farm and home. Deleuze and Guattari wrote:

A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggle. (p. 176-177)

While we drank tea during the follow-up interview in June, the participant said the following about losing a home and all its contents: "I thought how dreadful that must have been ... really hard." The event of reclaiming the china crossed space and time and entered into my consciousness that "trace[d] directions, double movements and migrations" (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 220) of the china. I kept thinking about the story of the china the participant told me during the initial interview in February. It seemed that the china absorbed, or embodied, the event of a foreclosed home and the family's troubles.

For some reason, the sensations associated with the event of the china affected me more than other events in the participant's mother's life, and, thus, became my entry point into her ensemble of life. I could also have been affected by the mother's button collection that represented well over 60 years of collecting and organizing that the participant shared with me during the first interview (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 Buttons

I might have been affected by other objects associated with the mother's life in another time and space. Each object-subject-event creates a different line that contributes to the ensemble of life. As I mentioned in chapter two, each line creates a different chronology of events that operates in a coexistence of time. For example, the line formed by the china begins in the 1920's, and the button collection creates a line that spans the 60 years of its existence. The ensemble of life, then, is constituted by numerous lines formed by objects-subjects-events that resonate with sensations.

A Great Uncle Line

On a sun-drenched day in January 2010, I drove into a small town with a population of 68 people to interview a woman in her post office/natural food

store/antiques store on Main Street. I parked my car in one of the parking spots in the middle of Main Street. As I exited the car, I was taken aback by a face looking out of a window at me. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the face was a painting on a building. I chuckled and asked myself—what was I getting myself into today? I also noticed a park covered by three feet of snow and five-foot drifts next to the participant's store and other buildings along Main Street. Elaborate paintings of people and businesses on the buildings (e.g., one building was painted as a dentist's office and another building was painted as a general store) emerged from the drifts and indiscernible objects poked out of the snow. I later learned the participant and her partner had spent about twenty years working on the park on Main Street, purchasing the land and buildings, painting the buildings, gardening, carving innumerable objects, and so on. While the participant shared hundreds of objects with me during the interview, I became spellbound by the connections she made between her park and her great uncle. In this trajectory, I examine the relays between her great uncle and the present-day paintings and carvings that populate the park.

As we sat in her store lit by January afternoon sun, she told me, “This is my great uncle,” as she showed me an advertisement for the book he wrote in 1917, *Direct-Method Physical Development* (Figure 4.4).

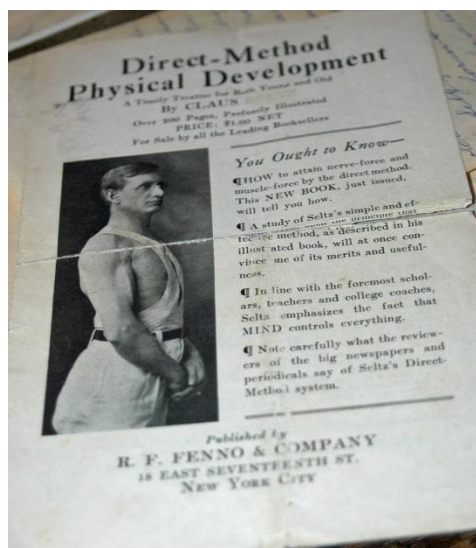


Figure 4.4 An Advertisement¹

The book was a treatise about abdominal health and contained information about bathing, clothing, eating, and drinking. I had heard of books extolling various healthy habits written during this time, but I had never seen such an advertisement. The participant told me, “I think I inherited my great uncle’s strangeness.” My curiosity was piqued.

After this introduction, she told me more about her great uncle who had immigrated to Nebraska in 1887 from Germany and served as a German translator for the United States during World War I. After that, he moved to Washington State to work as an assistant cashier for the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company. While in Washington, he purchased part of an island in the Columbia River, which he developed as a tourist attraction named the Forest Glade Zoo (Figure 4.5).

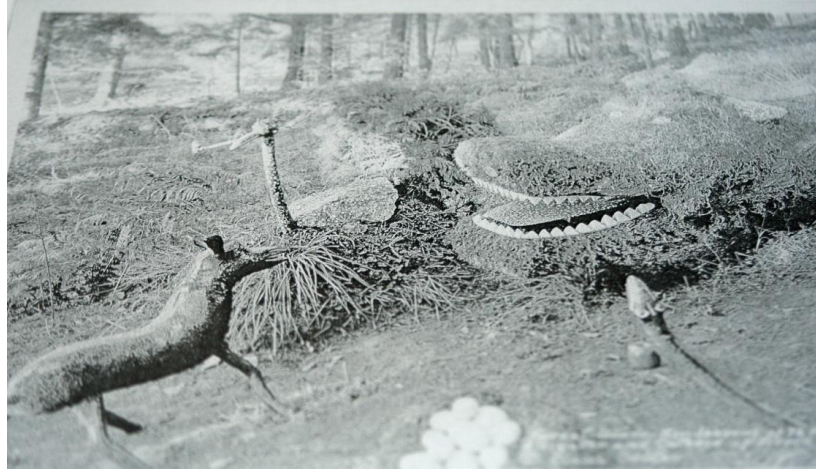


Figure 4.5 A Zoo

As the participant showed me the promotional photographs (e.g., Figure 4.5) he made for the zoo, I learned that the zoo did not have animals, except for those that already inhabited the island. He used materials from the natural surroundings such as logs and moss to make life-sized statues of men, alligators, bears, and other creatures. I became curious to learn about the possible connections between his zoo and the paintings and snow-covered carvings I saw when I parked my car on Main Street. I asked her about those connections, and she replied, “Oh yes, I think I have my great uncle’s blood in me.”

The participant told me that she did not know anything about the zoo and the photographs of it when she began to purchase the land and build her park on Main Street that commemorates the town’s history. When a cousin gave her the photographs, she formed a connection between her park and her great uncle’s zoo, a connection she understood as her great uncle’s blood running through her body. She frequently said throughout the first interview, “Oh, we could go and see that, but it’s covered in snow.” As a result, she gave me a brochure describing the park, and we discussed it. The park, occupying nine of the 15 lots on Main Street, includes a restored one-room school house, where many of her family members attended school; a garage including restored artifacts

from a local 1916 barbershop; a restored office area that was once part of a nearby town's train depot; facades of buildings (e.g., a dental office and an automobile mechanic shop); a "Privy Path" of five donated outhouses; and the town's historical society—which she founded—that includes genealogical records for all families who lived and/or are living in the town, typed copies of handwritten diaries of prominent citizens, and other information.

After numerous weather problems (e.g., excessive snow, snow melt, and flooding), I was finally able to see the park in August 2010 during a follow-up interview. While the restorations of the school house, barbershop, and office are incredible, I most enjoyed the whimsical surprises in the park. Like the participant's great uncle's zoo, the park was filled with man-made humans and animals. For example, her partner, an acclaimed wood carver, had made numerous carvings of birds, animals, and people (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Carvings

The participant herself painted prominent community members (e.g., mayors, bankers, and business owners) and her family members on the facades and buildings (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.7 A Banker

She also planted native plants including varieties of prairie grasses and wildflowers throughout the garden (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 A Park

An unseen and inexplicable sensation gripped me, as the participant and I walked in the park that early evening. My mind returned to one of the promotional photographs the participants showed me during the January 2010 interview, a photograph of her great uncle standing with one of his statues in the zoo he created nearly 90 years ago (Figure 4.9).



Figure 4.9 A Great Uncle Revisits a Park/Zoo

I kept expecting to see him in this park, thinking he might poke his head out of the prairie grass and join our walk. The connections between her great uncle's zoo and the participant's park were undeniable. I stumbled through humanist language and said to her, "I think he is here, I just feel it. I can't explain it." She replied, "I feel like he is revisited through me."

The verb "to revisit" is of interest here. While some may consider the participant's use of the verb "revisit" to be a production of her heart and mind, it is, in fact, the indiscernibility between the actual and virtual that Deleuze (1985/1989) discussed as follows:

The indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, or of the present and the past, of the actual and the virtual, is definitely not produced in the head or the mind, it is the objective characteristic of certain images which are by nature double. (p. 69)

That is, the objective characteristic of the park is *both* the great uncle's zoo and her park. As I mentioned in chapter two, the actual and virtual are used to denote a coexistence of time in which the past, present, and future are entangled together. The park is always entangled with the zoo. In this way, the park and zoo render the distinctions between times and places indistinct, and the verb "revisit" marks the lack of clarity between the park and the zoo.

Each creation is both part of the park and part of the great uncle's zoo. Deleuze (1985/1989) wrote:

The actual image and the virtual image coexist and crystallize; they enter into a circuit which brings us constantly back from one to the other; they form one and the same "scene" where the characters belong to the real and yet play a role. (p. 83-84)

In other words, all the carvings in the park are real, and they also call up the moss-covered creations in the great uncle's zoo. Each carving, painting, and plant in the park is an actualization of the great uncle's zoo. In this way, the park's creatures are past, present, and the future to come. The park, then, is best understood as a tight circuit between the actual and virtual, such that the great uncle is always visiting the park.

The objects-subjects-events that constitute the ensemble of life are entangled with the actual and virtual so that the actual and the virtual are indiscernible with/in the

objects-subjects-events. Such indiscernibility is not something a person feels or thinks—it is there with/in the objects. It can, however, be sensed, as evidenced by the participant's statements about her great uncle's blood that runs through her body, his strangeness that she inherited, and his revisits in her life. But I, too, experienced that indiscernibility as I formed connections between the park and the zoo. The objects-subjects-events that constitute the ensemble of life are a tight circuit of relays between the actual and virtual.

A Partner Line

In the preceding line, I mentioned the participant's partner who helped build the park on Main Street. She frequently mentioned him during the initial interview in January 2010 and the follow-up interview in August, but did not discuss him at length. During both interviews, I learned that the participant would tell me what she wanted to tell me. When I asked for more information about some objects and ancestors that I sensed she had a special connection with, she curtly told me, "I told you all I'm going to tell you about it." I sensed that the participant felt a special connection with her partner by the way she talked about him. For example, she called him "her partner" for some time before she shared his name with me, and her voice changed when she talked about him. It is for these reasons that I did not ask her for more details about her partner. However, she did tell me about him in her own way, which was by the objects he carved and restored in the park and the participant's cat, who watched the interviews. In January 2010, she told me about his carvings that occupied the park (see Figures 4.6 and 4.8) and his restoration work with the school house and her family's log cabin (Figure 4.10).

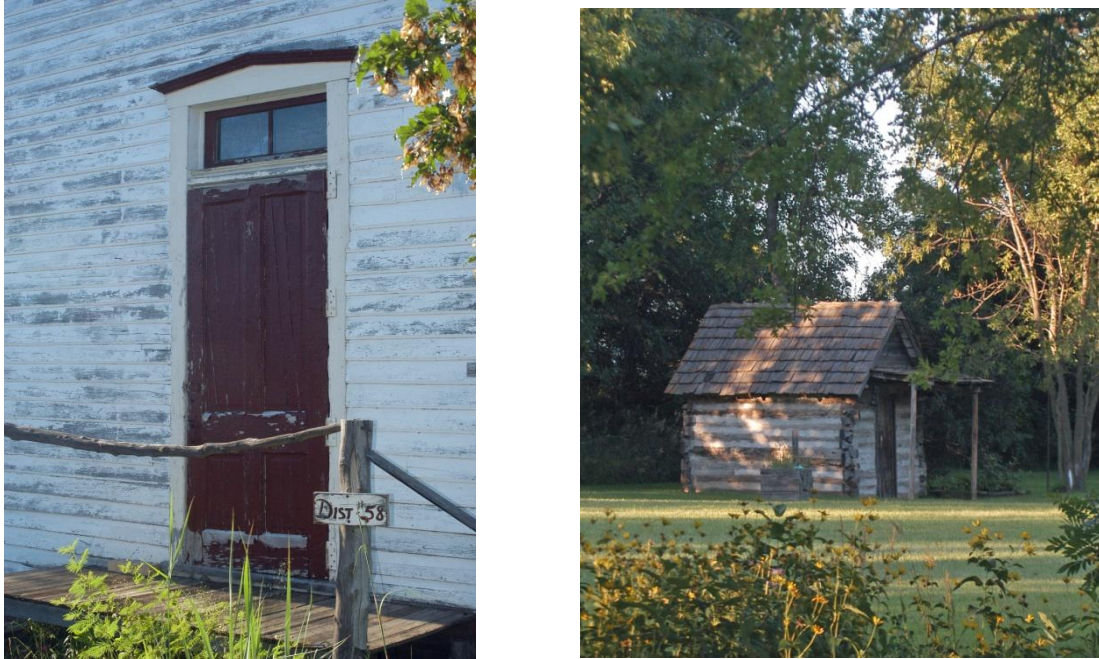


Figure 4.10 Some Restorations

In August 2010, I was able to see his work, the work through which I came to know him.

In January, I also learned about her cat who had an unanticipated connection to his life.

In this trajectory, I explain how I came to know him through the folds between human, nonhuman, object, and subject.

When the participant and I finished our initial interview, I asked her about her cat, a polydactyl Maine Coon, who patiently watched our entire four hour interview (Figure 4.11).



Figure 4.11 A Cat

She told me that her partner had hated cats, especially this cat, and that when her partner was dying, the cat ran away. While visiting him at the hospital, she told him about the runaway cat. He whispered, “She will return.” On the day he passed away she went to his carving shed, and found the missing cat staring at her. Before his death, the cat was not very friendly to people. However, after his death, the cat became friendlier. The participant believed that her partner lived on through the cat, because the cat took on characteristics (e.g., warmth toward others and friendliness) she associated with her late partner. For the participant, her partner lived on through her cat.

As I drove back home from the interview, I kept thinking about the cat and how she (the cat) problematized the human/nonhuman binary. Derrida (2006/2008) wrote:

Thinking about what is meant by living, speaking, dying, being, and world as in being- in-the-world or being-within-the-world, or being-with, being-before, being-behind, being-after, being and following, being followed or being following, there where *I am*, in one way or another, but unimpeachably, *near* what they call the animal. It is too late to deny it, it will have been there before

me who is (following) after it. *After* and *near* what they call the animal and *with* it—whether we want it or not. (p.11)

In other words, animals provoke us to think differently about humans and nonhumans and living and nonliving. After listening to the story about the cat, I thought about how the cat watched the entire interview and occasionally interrupted it for petting sessions. I thought that the participant's partner had been there watching the entire interview. As I petted the cat, it drew me into the folds of living, nonliving, human, and nonhuman. Being, in this interview, was being—folding—amongst all those folds. I began to understand the cat as a force that overtook me with folding, unfolding, and refolding binary terms.

During a follow-up interview with the participant in August 2010, I learned a bit more about her partner and sensed the rhythmic bass of the fold. As we walked through the park in the early evening, she told me about late night paintings and carvings when she and her partner were creating the park. She would get up in the middle of the night and paint a surprise for him, just to see if he would notice. He would do the same, only he would carve a small piece of wood. The next morning always presented a challenge—one of them would have to find the new painting or carving in the nine lots on Main Street while the other looked on in anticipation. Everywhere I looked I saw his carvings peeking out of the prairie grass (see Figure 4.8), and I played with interactive carvings, for example, a carving of a woodpecker that pecked the tree bark when you pulled a hidden string (Figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12 A Woodpecker

I also saw his restoration work with the school and log cabin (see Figure 4.10). The rhythm of the fold was undeniable as the park became a space of folds between objects and subjects. In the record-heat of the early evening, those folds formed a rhythm for my gait as I came to know more about her partner through his carvings and the restorations that populated the garden. As I walked through the park, I folded into his folds.

As I saw the partner's carvings, petted the cat, and listened to the participant tell me what she would about him, a "condition of the possibility of melding, perception, being, sensation, and subjectivity" (Conley, 2005, p. 180) appeared that is associated with the fold. I came to know the partner by the carvings that echoed his friendliness and laughter across the park and by the cat who rubbed her (his) scent on my legs. The carvings and cat melded with the partner so much that I sensed, perceived, those indiscernible folds. Ontology for me was a rhapsody of folds that swept me away with/in

its rhythmic melody. The ensemble of life overflowed with melodic folds of being between objects, subjects, humans, and nonhumans. In this way, we are always coming to know a person with/in a rhapsody of folds.

A Grandmother Line I

For thirty minutes of a nearly four hour interview in February 2010, another participant's voice, normally breathless from the words that excitedly poured from her mouth, slowed as she read the words of a transcription of her grandmother's journal and talked about the photographs connected to the journal. As the participant, a volunteer English as a Second Language and citizenship instructor at area meat-packing plants and libraries, read from the journal, her eyes filled with tears. The walls between the home, in which the interview took place, and the foggy day outside collapsed as a fog-filled intensity filled the room. This woman (the participant's grandmother) who wrote the journal, whom the participant loves dearly, seemed to give her pause. In this ensemble, I examine that intensity and pause, *a life*.

The journal, *Glimpses of My Biography*, was written in 1941 and contains five sections, each with a provocative ending (Figure 4.13).

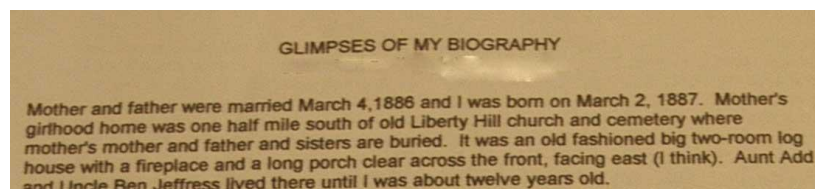


Figure 4.13 A Journal

In the first section the participant's grandmother described childhood events in rural Arkansas. For example, she described her family (Figure 4.14),



Figure 4.14 A Family Note: Grandmother is on the left.

her childhood home built by her father (Figure 4.15),

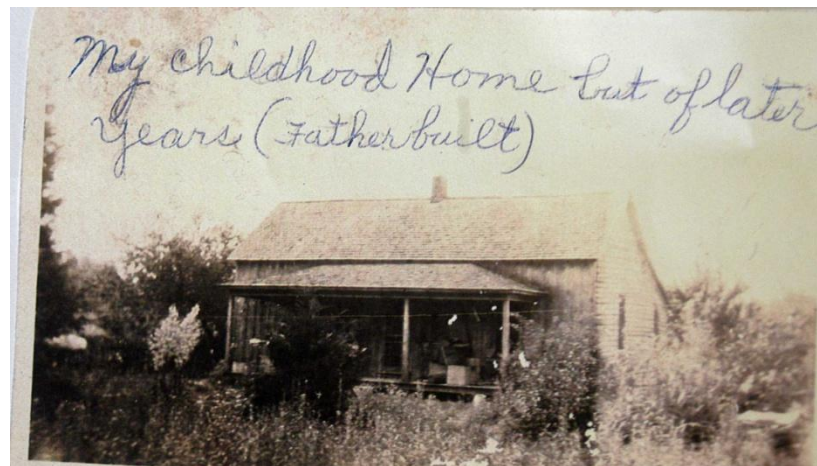


Figure 4.15 A Childhood Home

her school, childhood games, the church she attended, and her love of daydreaming. The first section ends with “Left here until March 2, 1941” (she does not provide a beginning date for the journal). The second section described her young adult life. For example, she described her first job teaching (Figure 4.16),



Figure 4.16 To Teach School *Note:* Grandmother is in last row, far left.

her courtship and marriage to her husband (Figure 4.17),

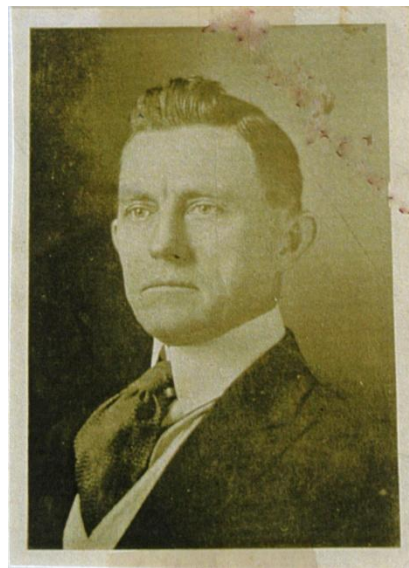


Figure 4.17 A Husband

and her father's death in 1905. The grandmother wrote the following about her father's death from appendicitis:

I loved my father dearly and I was grief stricken beyond words. I shall never forget his last words to me when near the close. I wanted so to do something for him and he seemed so restless and I asked what he wanted and he said, "I want

Life.” These words were forcibly recalled when my husband too said those very same words.

As I explained in chapter one, the sentence, “I want Life”, captured my attention and helped me to think about my study. The sentence became a sensation that was actualized in the journal as each page resounded with a desire for life. She concluded the second section of her journal with the sentence, “If I live and have time, I may write more.”

The third section, which described the adult lives of her three children, her adult friends, her husband’s physical and mental decline that she attributed to poor business dealings, her frequent moves across the country, and her husband’s death of an unnamed illness ended with:

Now I’m tired. These have been a few of the highlights in our life and if God lets [me] live I’ll write more but since I must face an operation soon, I’ll close for now praying I may again write in this book. March 8, 1941

She did not mention which operation she faced. On April 20, 1941, after a month’s absence from writing in the journal, she did share some information about the operation in her journal.

On March 13, 1941, the grandmother underwent a hysterectomy. Benrubi (1988), in his history of the hysterectomy, suggested that the modern hysterectomy was advanced in the 1940’s with the use of “fluid therapy, blood banking, intravenous therapy, and most importantly antibiotics” (p. 538). She does not describe in detail the surgery (e.g., full, partial, vaginal, and abdominal), the surgeon, or the medical treatments (e.g., antibiotics, blood banking, and anesthesia) available to her in 1941 in Arkansas. However, given that she ended the fourth section of the journal with “If I may live...”

one can imagine that she worried about the operation and the potential effects it might have on her life. After little more than a month's convalescence, she ended the journal with "It's a glorious spring and so good to be alive."

The grandmother's desire for life prior to her hysterectomy, as well as her father's and husband's pleas for life before their deaths provide a way of thinking about Deleuze's (1995/2006) conception of *a life* (Figure 4.18).



Figure 4.18 I Want Life.

Their medical issues can be thought of as wounds, which Deleuze described as "incarnated or... actualized in a state of things and lived experience. A wound itself, however, is a pure virtual on the plane of immanence that leads us to a life" (p. 389). The actual wounds (i.e., appendicitis, an unnamed illness, and a hysterectomy) in three people's lives, coupled with their desire for life points to *a life*, a virtual force of potential.

Each statement was made "at that point of its [life's] fading in a moment between life and death, a life lived in excess of a subject, beyond consciousness" (Grosz, 2007, p. 297). With those statements, the grandmother, her father, and her husband appealed to that excess for more days "share[d] with the weather, the ocean, gravitational forces, even the chemical transformations out of which they are formed and to which they return" (p.

297). In other words, they desired more life—the sun shining on their faces, gravity pulling their feet to the ever-turning earth, time spent with their family and friends, and so on. Deleuze’s concept of *a life*, like the virtual, is a force of potential and possibility that animates the statements and the objects associated with their lives. In this way, the grandmother’s, her father’s, and her husband’s desire for life is always being fulfilled.

Grosz (2007) explained, “And it is this shared life, aligning life with non-living forces, that provides the condition under which life creates, makes, invents, that is, adds to the non-living a new force of virtuality, new singularities” (p. 297). In family history genealogy, that life can emerge from objects. The nonliving people associated with the objects continue to live because of the “irreducible persistence of life” (Deleuze, 1985/1989, p. 74) that pumps the nonliving with virtuality. In this way, the journal and the photographs provide the life that the grandmother, her father, and her husband so desired. That desire, that life, gives the living—the participant—pause as the immensity of *a life* presents itself to the living and nonliving.

When I listen to the audio-recording of the thirty intensity-filled minutes during which the participant read from the journal, the immensity of *a life* is palpable. However, I cannot adequately describe that immensity with humanist language. If I must describe it, the air became heavy, as if the fog outside entered into the home. In this way, *a life* was an atmosphere that emerged from the journal and photographs. As the participant read from the journal, it seemed that we—the participant, her grandmother, her great-grandfather, her grandfather, and me—sat at the participant’s kitchen table folding together in the foggy intensity.

A life is a persistent and productive force in the ensemble of life. The force of *a life* is what makes the living and nonliving endlessly fold together and is also part of the rhapsodic ontology I discussed in “A Partner Line,” because it sweeps the living away into the folds of living and nonliving. In this way, a nonliving person continues to live on in folds in the ensemble of life such that a desire for life is always being fulfilled.

A Grandmother Line II

In chapter three, I discussed how the genetic repetitions I share with my grandmother connected to a participant’s story about seeing her own face in her great aunt’s coffin. That connection, however, was not the only one I made. A person’s life, even after her death, continues to make unanticipated linkages and ruptures. In this section, I explore how trajectories in my grandmother Naomie’s ensemble of life connect to the lines already described in this chapter in order to demonstrate how the ensemble of life is always open to connections with other ensembles. To make those connections, I examine a set of dishes, photographic slides of my grandmother, pets, and the last known photograph of her before she died in 1966.

China Connections.

While I was collecting data, my aunt and uncle called my parents’ house to tell us that a distant cousin downsized her home and sent our family some dishes that she purchased at the auction following my grandmother’s death. My aunt and uncle had yet to open the box, because they wanted my parents to be there for the occasion. All five of us sat in their living room eagerly anticipated the opening of the box. My aunt pushed the packing paper aside to reveal the dishes—a set of red glasses and a tea set (Figure 4.19).



Figure 4.19 A Glass and a Teacup

My uncle remembered drinking Kool-aid from the red glasses, but my father did not remember anything at all about the glasses or tea set. We decided that my aunt and uncle would keep the red glasses and my parents would take the tea set.

After the decision was made, my aunt and uncle discussed other objects they had, for example, a set of chipped goblets they had that came from my grandmother's house. My aunt said, "They're not worth much. None of this is worth much." I desperately wanted to ask, "How do you value a life?" Instead, I remained silent.

In "A Mother Line" I discussed the Haviland china (see Figure 4.1) that a participant's mother reclaimed from a foreclosed home. The participant never mentioned the monetary value of the china other than referring to the name of the china, Haviland. Instead, she discussed the dread of losing a home, a sensation that she associated with that china. Another participant, who owned an antique shop, gestured around her store and said, "All of this is worth some money, but it isn't valuable, because none of these objects have stories." The objects affect the living with sensations. Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote the following about artwork:

The young man will smile on the canvas for as long as the canvas lasts. Blood throbs under the skin of this woman's face, the wind shakes a branch, a group of men prepare to leave. In a novel or a film, the young man will stop smiling, but he will start to smile again when we turn to this page or that moment. (p. 163)

Their comments on artwork can be extended to the objects of family history genealogy. Returning to my grandmother's dishes, those dishes throb with sensation. Each time they are studied, used for dinner or a tea, my grandmother folds into the living. Those sensations associated with the dishes and any other objects of family history genealogy have little relation to their monetary value. The sensations—the smiles in photographs, the trees bustling in the wind of a photograph, the hands holding a teacup, and the weight of a hand signing a document—make those objects priceless.

Revisiting Slides.

After I arrived in Nebraska for data collection in December 2009, my cousin mentioned my grandfather Nordstrom's slide shows at a family gathering at my aunt and uncle's house. We all groaned and remembered when Grandpa, Naomie's husband, would set up the projector, find a box or two of slides, and call us to the living room. I remembered those times as tedious interruptions of my childhood play time as my grandfather showed slides of farms, cattle, and golf courses. Still, there we sat, looking at slides as my grandfather told us about each one. When my grandfather died in 1992, the boxes of slides were split between my father and uncle. While in Nebraska, I told my father I would like to see them again.

One afternoon my father set up the slide projector in the basement and told me to come downstairs. As he went through boxes of slides, some of which I had never seen

before that featured my grandmother, he told me about each slide as it slipped in and out of the projector and his memory. When he showed me the slide of my grandmother sitting in a field of wildflowers in Colorado during a family vacation he said, “Now do you see where you get your reddish hair?” (Figure 4. 20)



Figure 4.20 My Grandmother I

I had never seen a color picture of my grandmother, who so many relatives said I look like. I saw my hair (her hair) on the screen. With each passing slide of her, I saw myself—certain gestures, facial expressions, and poses. For example, her concentration while using her new sewing machine seemed to match the way I hunch over when I concentrate on an activity (Figure 4.21).



Figure 4.21 My Grandmother II

The way her face dropped down when she spoke to my grandfather is the same way I hold my face when I write. (Figure 4.22)

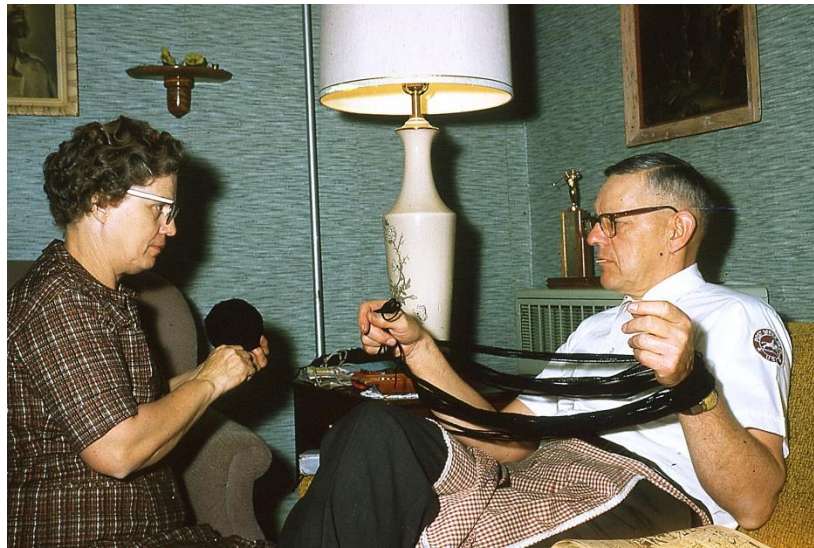


Figure 4.22 My Grandmother and Grandfather

Her excited smile and body that seemed ready to leap for celebration at a family Christmas gathering was something I know my face and body to do when I am excited (Figure 4.23).



Figure 4.23 My Grandmother III

Every slide of her was a reminder of me.

In “A Great Uncle Line,” I discussed the participant’s use of the verb “revisit” and how that verb helped me to think of the virtual that always “revisits” us. Throughout my life, my grandmother’s virtual revisited me through my physical appearance. In fact, when I was born, my grandfather Nordstrom said I was a Swanson, her maiden name. However, I did not realize how much I looked like her until I saw my hair (her hair), my face (her face), my body (her body) on the slides, and I intimated that my grandmother survives through me. Deleuze (1985/1989) wrote:

The virtual survival of the dead can be actualized, but is this not at the price of our existence, which becomes virtual in turn? Is it the dead who belong to us, or we who belong to the dead? (p. 74)

When I saw those slides, I did not know whether my grandmother belonged to me or I to her. Who did my (her) face, body, and hair belong to? I became curious about my life—

whose life is (was) it anyway? I began to think about my life differently, as a virtual survival of my grandmother that exists in a coexistence of time. Deleuze wrote, “Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual” (p. 82-83). My life and her life are perpetually oscillating together in a coexistence of time. In this way, our lives are defined by that oscillation between living and nonliving, as our lives are lived together.

Animal Connections.

During the slide show I described in the previous section, my father also showed me slides of his family pets, notably Rags (Figure 4.24)



Figure 4.24 Rags

and Mesie, my grandmother’s cat (Figure 4.25).



Figure 4.25 Mesie

In “A Partner Line,” I discussed how the participant felt that her partner lived on through her cat (see Figure 4.11). The participant’s story helped me understand how my grandmother continues to live, or fold, with/in Rags and Mesie.

When my father showed me the slide of Rags (see Figure 4.24), I laughed out loud. I asked, “How did the dog stay so still with a football helmet on his head?” He replied, “I don’t know.” As we continued to look at the photograph, he said, “Oh, how Mom loved flowers.” Before this conversation, he had referred to my grandmother with pronouns, by her first name or as my grandmother; he never called her *Mom*. Derrida (2006/2008) wrote, “It happens that there exist, between the word *I* and the word *animal*, all sorts of significant connections” (p.49). Perhaps Rags, the animal, made it possible for my father to think, to say, “Mom” to me.

When my grandmother died in March 1966, my grandfather could not give away her cat, Mesie (see Figure 4.25). When he re-married in November 1966, Mesie came to live with his new wife in their new home. According to family members, Mesie never acclimated to the new home. She was sullen and stand-offish. It was as if Mesie had to

remind everyone of her nonliving owner. Derrida (2006/2008) deconstructed the binary of human/animal and suggested that binary terms work in a multiplicity. He wrote:

Beyond the edge of the *so-called* human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than “The Animal” or “Animal Life” there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say “the living” is already to say too much or not enough), a multiplicity of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death. (p. 31)

Mesie occupied the heterogeneous space of both living and nonliving. She was a four-legged, tail-swishing, and hissing reminder of her past owner. For example, in a photograph of my grandfather with his new in-laws taken in the late 1960’s, he held Mesie, as if the cat—my grandmother—were a part of this new family (Figure 4.26).



Figure 4.26 Mesie II *Note:* My Grandfather, back row first from the left, is holding Mesie.

Similar to the participant's cat (see Figure 4.11), Mesie occupied a space in which it was difficult to know whether my grandmother was in fact dead or a series of folds between living and non-living.

Animals, then, provide us with a way to negotiate living, non-living, subject, object, and other binary terms. Derrida (2006/2008) suggested that perhaps the most tenacious binary division in which we live is that between human and animal, or nonhuman. While seemingly mute, animals respond from the space of swarming binary terms and they force us, humans, to reckon with that heterogeneous space. Derrida described such being as "being-huddled-together" (p. 10). "To huddle" can also be thought of as "to fold," which I described in chapter two. Being is a series of folds that endlessly fold together. Animals can help negotiate that space of folding, or huddling, as they pose in front of flowers, hiss, and rub their scent against the legs of the living. As a cat kneads on your stomach, she reminds you that you, too, are a fold, huddled amongst many folds.

A Last Photograph.

The last known photograph of my grandmother was taken approximately six weeks before her death of brain cancer while she was visiting family members in Arizona (Figure 4.27).



Figure 4.27 A Last Photograph *Note:* My grandmother is on the right.

In “A Grandmother Line I,” I described how the participant’s words slowed with the intensity of her grandmother’s journal. In a similar way, the photograph of my grandmother gives me pause as the space between living and dying opens to *a life*.

I first saw the photograph in February 2010 while my parents were out for the evening. While I was collecting data, my father scanned some of my grandfather’s slides, and I occasionally looked at his computer folder to study the images. When I saw the photograph on the computer screen, I cried an open-mouthed, soundless, tear-filled, and runny-nosed cry. I do not know why I cried as I did. I have known for a very long time that my grandmother died in 1966. I suppose I just did not expect to see her dress partially uplifted by the wind, her rustled hair, or her face showing the signs of cancer. I had never seen a photograph of her like that before. As I wept, I could not stop looking at the photograph, as if that might somehow save me from tears. Every time I see it, I respond in the same way, and like the participant who read the journal in “A Grandmother Line,” this photograph’s intensity is like no other.

The participant's grandmother's journal was written approximately a month before her hysterectomy in 1941, and the photograph of my grandmother was taken about six weeks before her death. In both instances, *a life* is evident as one woman desires life and the other faces her death. Deleuze (1995/2006) wrote the following:

Between his life and his death, there is a moment where *a life* is merely playing with death. The life of the individual has given way to an impersonal and yet singular life, which foregrounds a pure event that has been liberated from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and the objectivity of what comes to pass: a "*homo tantum*" with whom everyone sympathizes and who attains a kind of beatitude; or an [ha]ecceity, which is no longer an individuation, but a singularization, a life of pure immanence, neutral beyond good and evil, since only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things made it good or bad. The life of such individuality is eclipsed by the singular immanent life of a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life... (p. 386-387)²

The journal and photograph give way to *a life*, because those objects are experienced when death is perceived to be close. Those objects are "bits of experience that can't be fit into a nice narrative unity" (Rajchman, 2000, p. 85). That is, the sensations of intensity—the feeling of being in a time warp, a change in voice, eyes filled with tears—do not fit into a cohesive whole. Those sensations of intensity are haecceity, which Rajchman explained as follows:

An hour of a day, a river, a climate, a strange moment during a concert can be like this—not one of a kind, but the individuation of something that belongs to no

kind, but which, though perfectly individuated, yet retains an indefiniteness, as though pointing to something “ineffable.” (p. 85)

In other words, sensations are individuated, they happened in an individual’s life, and they are indefinite and indescribable. That is, haecceity is my tears upon viewing the photograph, the participant’s voice caught by the words of the journal. Language strains under those experiences because humanist language fails to describe that intensity. The virtual, *a life*, is expressed by those moments of speechlessness and struggles of language. The journal and the photograph and the atmosphere of intensity the participant and I experienced provided a glimpse of *a life* when both women—her grandmother and mine—perceived that death was imminently close. The journal and the photograph take the breath away, but also breathe *a life*.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter and in chapter two, the ensemble of life—similar to the Deleuzoguattarian map—is always open and connectable to other ensembles of life. Deleuze (1980/1995) wrote the following about maps: “What’s interesting, even in a person, are the lines that make them up, or they make up, or take, or create” (p. 33). In this section, I demonstrated how my grandmother’s ensemble of life connects to or takes lines from other ensembles. The lines I took (e.g., A Mother Line, A Great Uncle Line, A Partner Line, and A Grandmother Line) from other ensembles modified my grandmother’s ensemble of life by adding new dimensions. Likewise, my grandmother’s lines added dimensions to the other lines. In this way, a person’s life is always open to new and unanticipated connections, and those connections constantly modify a person’s ensemble of life.

To Work

The ensemble of life has always been at work in my study. In chapter three, I described how the ensemble of life emerged during interviews as participants explained an ancestor's life with a group of objects. I also explained in that chapter how I had to put the ensemble of life to work in chapter four in order to define it in chapter two. In this chapter, I presented five ensembles of life. In this section, I describe in more detail how the ensemble of life is at work in this study.

The fold and *a life* provided a bass for the ensemble of life. As I mentioned in “A Partner Line,” I had a strong sensation of the fold as the cat (see Figure 4.11) rubbed its (the participant's partner's) scent on me and as I walked through the park the participant and he had built. While that sensation was among the strongest I intimated during the study, all the interviews pulsed with rhythmic folds and *a life*. The virtual force of *a life* animated those objects as the subjects, the ancestors, associated with those objects folded into the living during the interviews. For example, in “A Grandmother Line I,” I described the intensity of the participant reading from her grandmother's journal in which she, the grandmother, wrote about a desire for life and how that desire is continuously fulfilled by *a life*. *A life* permeated the interviews as we—the participants, me, the ancestors, and the objects—folded together. Thus, the ensemble of life flickers with folds and *a life*.

In all the initial and follow-up interviews that I completed (11 initial interviews and nine follow-up interviews), I was able to better understand how objects-subjects-events are continuously actualized. Participants frequently shared the same objects-subjects-events in both initial and follow-up interviews for a variety of reasons (e.g., the

participant's choice, my need to know more information, and a need to retake photographs). For example, in "A Mother Line," the Haviland china (see Figure 4.1) was actualized in the story about it during the first interview and it was actualized again when the participant used the china to serve tea during the follow-up interview. In addition, I learned about the great uncle in "A Great Uncle Line" in both the initial and follow-up interviews. The repetitions of the actualizations helped me to understand how all the objects-subjects-events in the ensemble of life are charged by virtual potential—the potential to actualize again and again.

During interviews, I also made connections to my ancestors, most notably my grandmother Naomie. While I was in Nebraska, I searched my family's basement for objects associated with my grandmother Naomie's life. I located her diploma from the Nebraska State Teacher's College (see Figure 3.3) amongst other items. My grandmother was always on my mind as I drove to interviews, participated in interviews, and thought about the study. For example, I frequently felt a warmth on my left shoulder as I drove to interviews. That warmth became the way I thought of her, the way she folded into my life, during my study. During the interviews, I made connections to her life, for example the connection I described in chapter three about the participant seeing her face in her great aunt's casket. In addition, the interviews helped me to think about her life. For example, the grandmother's journal in "A Grandmother Line I" (see Figure 4.13) helped me to think about the last photograph of my grandmother in "A Grandmother Line II" (see Figure 4.27).

As I thought and wrote about the study, I frequently thought and wrote about my grandmother's ensemble of life, an ensemble that I continue to create. Her ensemble of

life became a space for me to explore and play with the concept as her hand settled on my left shoulder. I also wrote about the connections between her ensemble of life and those ensembles that I learned about during interviews, which is the focus of “A Grandmother Line II.” Her left hand gently pushes me through the connections in this study.

As I mentioned above, I put to work the ensemble of life with my data in order to define the concept. In each of the ensembles of life in this chapter, I explored a constitutive concept (e.g., the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*), which then allowed me to define each concept in chapter two. For example, in “A Grandmother Line II,” I was able to work with the connections between ensembles of life and, in turn, explain how that connectivity worked in chapter two. In addition, I was able to further explore the actual and virtual with “A Great Uncle Line” and as they apply to my life in “Revisiting Slides” in “A Grandmother Line II.” In this way, the data helped me to rethink the concept and open it to new and different ideas. I suspect that the ensemble of life will continue to change as it interacts with other ensembles of life in my data.

Each line in this chapter is in constant motion and available for reinvention. To demonstrate such movement, I used indefinite articles and verbs for section titles and captions because indefinite articles and verbs gesture toward the possibility of new and unanticipated connections and lines. In addition, I included numerous objects-subjects-events in this chapter to disorient the lines so that they may open to other possible lines. Perhaps an object-subject-event will affect the reader and force her or him to create a different line or to see the line I produced differently. Furthermore, the indefinite articles, verbs, and objects-subjects-events serve to remind me that the lines are unstable and their meanings are fleeting and fragmentary.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote:

It [the concept] does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, only intensive ordinates. It has no energy, only intensities... The concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing—pure Event, a h[a]ecceity, an entity: the event of the Other or of the face (when, in turn, the face is taken as concept). (p. 21)

In other words, the concept does not happen in a singular space and time. The ensemble of life happened in my data, it happened in my writing, it is happening now, and will continue to happen. A concept, then, is always open and malleable to events—an event of working with the concept, an event in an ancestor’s life, an event in my life, to name just a few. The lines in this chapter are creative productions that are never finished because I will undoubtedly encounter events that produce ruptures, segments, and lines of flight that will continue to shape the concept with intensities and affects. In this way, the ensemble of life is an ever-shifting structure populated by events of all kinds and intensities.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored my third research question—what is the work of the ensemble of life in this study?—by presenting five ensembles of life. I demonstrated how objects, which help materialize events, serve as an entry point into the ensembles in “A Mother Line.” Those objects-subjects-events are interwoven with the virtual and actual, which I examined in “A Great Uncle Line.” In “A Partner Line,” I worked with the folds between subjects and objects as well as human and nonhuman. I discussed *a life* as an animating force in “A Grandmother Line.” I then connected those lines to my

own grandmother's ensemble of life. Lastly, I examined the never-ending work of the ensemble of life in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENTANGLING ENSEMBLES OF LIFE

In my object-interview study with 11 Nebraskan women, all family history genealogists, I investigated the ensembles of life they created in the study of their ancestors, assemblages of objects of lives. In this dissertation, I worked toward answering the following questions that guided my study:

1. How does the assemblage enable an ensemble of life?
2. What is the work of assemblage in an object-interview study?
3. What is the work of the ensemble of life in this study?

In this chapter, I examine the term “implications,” provide summaries of the potential answers to my research questions, and explain the possible *entanglements-folds-implications* of those answers.

Entanglements-Folds-Implications

For some time, the term “implications” has made me wary. As it is usually deployed in scholarly work, the term means the “so what,” or how other people and/or fields of study will be affected by a study. In this way, the term assumes that a person can know in advance how various fields might respond to and/or take up the knowledge produced in a study. Clearly, in poststructural work, there is no way to anticipate how entities might be affected by a study. Given my suspicion of the term and my use of Deleuzoguattarian concepts, I decided to do a little research.

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the etymology of the word “implication” is derived from the Latin *implicationem*, which means interweaving or entanglement. *Implicationem* connects to *implicates*, or “to involve, tangle, connect, closely” (Harper, n.d.), and *implicates* is formed by *in-plicare*, or to fold. When I read that etymology, I was surprised to learn that the term “implications” was so closely connected to the terms “entanglement” and “fold” that I used throughout this dissertation. I used the term entanglement, a term borrowed from quantum physics, to demonstrate the connected nature of the Deleuzoguattarian assemblage, an entanglement of words, bodies, practices, places, ideas, and so on. Deleuze’s (1988/1993; 1991) concept of the fold served as the ontology of my study, and I used that concept to describe how objects and subjects are continuously folding together. The origin of the word, implication, helped to me to rethink how I might put to work this term in my study.

The term *implication* is put to work in this last chapter to demonstrate already-known and potential entanglements-folds-implications of my study. I use the term *entanglement-fold-implication* to denote how this study is always already entangled or folded with so many other entities and the possibility of future entanglements and folds. This dissertation is already entangled(ing), folded(ing) with the theorists I cite, the data, the study, and other unknown entities and forces. For example, I have presented parts of this dissertation at various conferences, and audience members have entangled and folded with my work as evidenced by the response data (St. Pierre, 1997) they gave me that helped me hone ideas in my study. No doubt there are other entanglements that already exist without my explicit knowledge, because “the world is entangled in a beautiful and mysterious way” (Gilder, 2008, p. 20). In this way, there is other response data—other

entanglements—that I have yet to encounter. In the following summaries, I examine the summaries of potential answers—themselves entanglements and folds—to my research questions and the possible entanglements-folds-implications of those questions.

Entanglement-Fold-Implication 1: How Does the Assemblage Enable an Ensemble of Life?

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote, “All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges” (p. 16). The ensemble of life cannot be thought apart from the assemblage of objects and lives that materialized in my study. In this section, I summarize that assemblage that enabled the ensemble of life and the entanglements-folds-implications of that work.

In chapter two, I described the fold, the object-subject-event, and *a life* as the constitutive concepts of the assemblage that enabled the ensemble of life. The fold is the ontological rhythmic bass of the study from which objects and subjects—themselves folds—fold together. Those objects-subjects are linked to events that operate in a coexistence of time. In this way, objects-subjects-events can actualize time and time again as they move through space and time. In addition, *a life*, a virtual force, animates all objects-subjects-events. Those concepts continuously move, “arrang[e], organiz[e], fit together” (Wise, 2005, p. 77) in an assemblage. While that conceptual assemblage helped me to think about the study, it did not help me work with the hundreds of individual lives I learned about during the object-interviews, conversations in which subjects (participants, ancestors, and I) and objects are entangled. Therefore, I invented

the ensemble of life to help me work with the individual lives I came to know in my study.

The ensemble of life rides the rhythm of the fold and is animated by *a life*. The ensemble of life is an ensemble of trajectories that are formed by the objects-subjects-events in a person's life. A line is formed when a person responds to a sensation associated with an object-subject-event and creates a nonlinear (i.e., the line does not begin at birth) ordering of other objects-subjects-events. In this way, one object-subject-event produces a particular line while another object-subject-event produces a different line. Those lines, which constitute the ensemble, can be connected to other ensembles of life.

The concept provides a way to explain other experiences that I am learning happen more often than I anticipated. When I discuss the concept with colleagues, they frequently tell me how the concept helps them to think about their ancestors. For example, one colleague told me that her mother revisits her with/in ladybugs. As she wrote thank-you notes after her mother's funeral, she sat next to a plant that had an unknown ladybug nest. After she completed writing the thank-you notes, the nest exploded with newborn ladybugs. Now, whenever she sees a ladybug, she believes her mother visits her and gives her advice. She told me that the concept provides a way to think about the slippage between human and nonhuman as well as living and nonliving that she knows and lives. For some people, the concept gives them a way to think about their ancestors, or objects-subjects-events. In effect, those people become entangled with my concept as they connect the concept to their own lives.

The responses of colleagues to the ensemble of life help me to think about another possible entanglement-fold-implication of the concept. The ensemble of life is built on a constantly shifting plane of immanence, a plane in which there is no method of thought. The concept marks a stark contrast to the previous work in family history genealogy that exists on the plane of transcendence, in which experience is plugged into transcendental categories. The objects-subjects-events of the concept shift the subject-centered focus of the existing literature to an entanglement of objects, subjects, and events. In this way, the concept presents a new and different trajectory in the literature on family history genealogy.

Entanglement-Fold-Implication 2: What is the Work of Assemblage in an Object-Interview Study?

In chapter three, I described my object-interview study as an assemblage, which contains both a territory and a collective assemblage of enunciation. The territory consists of the site of the study, the study's timeline, the participants, and a stuttering methodology, and the collective assemblage of enunciation is formed by the object-interview and data. In this section, I examine the work of three parts of the assemblage: the study's ontology, the study's stuttering methodology, and the object-interview. Then, I describe the entanglements-folds-implications of those ideas.

As I noted in chapter three, early on in the study I had no idea what to make of it. However, after some time, I realized that the study was an assemblage—a moving and heterogeneous mass that continues to respond to the events of my study. Somehow, the components (i.e., the site of the study, the study's timeline, the participants, the object-interview, and data) of the assemblage work together in the assemblage. Deleuze and

Parnet (1977/2002) explained, “The assemblage’s only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis” (p. 69). In other words, the constitutive concepts of the assemblage continue to co-function together as the elements enter into new relationships with each other. For example, participants enter into a relationship with a timeline; places form relationships with interviews and data, and so on. As such, I will continue to work with the assemblage to understand how these concepts continue to work together and what new connections they form together. In this way, my study will never be finished because the assemblage is always in motion.

In addition to ceaseless connections, the assemblage’s motion was produced by the endless folds that created the ontology, or rhythmic bass, of this study. In chapters two and three, I explained that the fold provided a nonessentialist ontology in which both objects and subjects are in flux together. The fold creates a rhythm in which each folding of objects and subjects creates a new polyphonic melody. In this way, the ontological task of this study was to follow the folds and the melodies they create. Ontology, then, was a normative endeavor in which being is always in flux because of the fold. Such ontology marks a difference from conventional humanist qualitative inquiry that uses a stable ontology in which objects and subjects are discrete and stable entities. As such, my study presents an ontological shift in qualitative inquiry.

I used qualitative inquiry and poststructural theories to develop a stuttering methodology that is a folding and unstable methodology within/outside of poststructural theories and qualitative methodology. The methodology of this study used the fold to suggest that objects, subjects, human, nonhuman, living, and nonliving continuously fold together in lived experience. The fold disrupted the presumed stability of those terms as

it is presented in conventional qualitative methodology. In this way, the methodology is in perpetual disequilibrium because of the fold.

I used poststructural theories and qualitative inquiry to design the object-interview, an interview that puts to work poststructural conceptualizations of objects, subjects, living, and nonliving. The object-interview is a conversation in which subjects (participants, ancestors, and I) and objects are entangled. Objects, subjects, nonliving, and living were equally important in the production of knowledge in my study. The purpose of the interviews was to engage a middle space of folding objects and subjects and the folding perspectives of the participants. Connective questions (e.g., This object is connected to this other one, yes?) and Kvale's (1996) follow-up questions (e.g., follow up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, and silence) were used during interviews. In addition, I did not ask interpretive or phenomenological questions during interviews, which also gestures toward the ontology of this study. The object-interview engaged a middle space of folding, unfolding, and refolding objects and subjects.

The assemblage, stuttering methodology, ontology, and object-interview entangle and fold with post-qualitative inquiry. St. Pierre (2011) described post-qualitative inquiry as follows:

Each researcher who puts the “posts” to work will create a different *articulation* ... *remix, mash-up, assemblage, a becoming* of inquiry that is not a priori, inevitable, necessary, stable, or repeatable but is, rather, created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand, which is always already and, and, and.... (p. 620).

Above, I described how my study is an assemblage of the categories (e.g., site of study, timeline, and data) of conventional qualitative inquiry. The assemblage was produced by

what happened, what is happening, and what will undoubtedly continue to happen in my study. As those happenings produce new connections, the assemblage overflows with *ands*. The assemblage I described in chapter three is unique to my study as it wrestles with poststructural theories and conventional qualitative inquiry as evidenced by the ontology, stuttering methodology, and object-interview.

St. Pierre (2011) described the methodology of post-qualitative inquiry as follows, “What happens next is not predictable, and, for that reason, the ‘posts’ do not and cannot offer an alternative methodology” (p. 622). In other words, any methodology, stuttering or otherwise, is not a messianic savior. My stuttering methodology, then, is not “the next new and exciting methodology” because it is completely entangled with the problems of my particular study. If I were to repeat this study, a different methodology—a different grid of intelligibility—would emerge from the assemblage formed by the study. In this way, each post-qualitative study creates its own methodology as it responds to the study’s problems.

The ontology of this study, the Deleuzian fold, gestures toward a post-qualitative project in which the meanings of lived experience are fleeting and fragmentary. May (1996) explained, “[Deleuze] is underlining the idea that philosophy generally, and ontology specifically, is not about getting it right but about getting a take on it that allows one to live in certain ways” (p. 294). In other words, the ontology of the fold is not about getting it right because there is no “it” to be gotten right because the fold is always folding. Nor is there an “it” to be interpreted or made to mean. The fold allows for fluidity and elasticity of lived experience. Lived experience will always be in flux.

The object-interview is a step in rethinking qualitative methods in post-qualitative inquiry. St. Pierre (2011) suggested that “If we no longer believe in a disentangled humanist self, individual, person, we have to rethink qualitative methods (interviewing and observation) grounded in that human being” (p. 620). As I mentioned above, I designed the object-interview using poststructural theories and qualitative inquiry. The design of the interview enabled a middle space in which objects, subjects, living, and nonliving folded together. In such a space, the presumed stability of the humanist “I” was overwhelmed by the fold. In this way, the object-interview speaks to St. Pierre’s (2011) call because the interview does not solely focus on a human being—it is an entanglement of objects, subjects, living, and nonliving.

My study is among those described by St. Pierre (2011). I anticipate that others interested in doing post-qualitative inquiry might look to my study as one such way to do post-qualitative inquiry. However, those scholars should be warned that this dissertation is an example, not a model of post-qualitative work. There is simply no model for post-qualitative work—it is always moving and shifting as each study responds to its unique problems. I cannot anticipate the possible entanglements, or folds, of this study with other post-qualitative work that is now taking shape.

Entanglement-Fold-Implication 3: What is the Work of the Ensemble of Life in this Study?

Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) wrote, “Of course, new concepts must relate to our problems, to our history, and above all, to our becomings” (p. 27). The ensemble of life is related to the problems in my study and helped me to think about those problems in productive ways. As I mentioned above, I invented the concept to help me work with the

hundreds of individual lives I came upon during the study. As I worked with the concept and lives in chapter four, I began to see the concept take shape. No doubt, as I continue to put this concept to work, it will shift and change. In this section, I examine the work of the ensemble of life and the entanglements of such work.

As I mentioned above, the ensemble of life is an ensemble of lines created from objects-subjects-events. For example, in chapter four I created a line of the participant's mother's life using the Haviland china, but I could have used other objects-subjects-events in the mother's life to create other lines. Of course, those lines connect to each other and form an ensemble because the lines share objects-subjects-events. The lines of the ensemble vibrate with the inseparable constitutive concepts—the fold, objects-subjects-events, and *a life*—of the ensemble of life. In this way, the mother's china is an object-subject-event that is animated by the fold and the virtual potential of *a life*. The line created with that china entangles with other lines in the mother's ensemble of life. Moreover, I connected the china to my grandmother's dishes in chapter four. The ensemble of life, then, is an entanglement of lines formed by objects-subjects-events that are animated by the fold and *a life*, and the ensemble is always available to connections with other ensembles of life.

In chapter two, I described the language of the ensemble of life that draws on Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) logic of the *and*, so that subjects and objects, human and nonhuman, living and nonliving are constantly in flux. For example, in chapter four, I noted how a participant introduced to me her grandmother's journal as "This lady." The language of *ands* in the ensemble of life makes it possible for the participant to refer to an object with a demonstrative pronoun and a noun. The language of the concept also

makes it possible to talk about nonhumans as humans. For example, in chapter four, I discussed the participant's polydactyl Maine Coon cat who became a constant reminder of her deceased partner. As I have mentioned throughout this dissertation, participants sometimes used multiple tenses in the same sentence to relate the events of their ancestors' lives. The verbs animated the nonliving with life. In this way, the language of the ensemble makes it possible for objects to become subjects, animals to become human, and the nonliving to become living.

As I explained in chapter four, the ensemble of life must always be plugged into lived experiences and put to work, so I will continue to define the ensemble of life as I continue to work with the data. The constitutive concepts and data may form a particular symbiosis that prompts me to think differently. Or a shard of data may shatter the entire concept. In effect, the ensemble of life may grow infinitely, become ruptured by data or any number of things as I work with the concept.

In the opening paragraph of this section, I cited Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) who suggested that a concept must relate to problems and becomings. The ensemble of life helped me in my problems with the study, and it is also helping others think about their lives. When I discussed the ensemble of life at a recent conference presentation, several audience members told me how the concept helped them to think about their ancestors. For example, someone told me how grateful she was for the concept because it gave her a language with which to understand her grandmother's recent death.

Entanglements-Folds-Implications...

Derrida (2004/2007) wrote the following that helps me think about the entanglements-folds-implications of my study. He wrote:

You invent and create silhouettes, but in the end it no longer belongs to you. Spoken or written, all these gestures leave us and begin to act independently of us. ... At the moment I leave “my” book (to be published)—after all, no one forces me to do it—I become, appearing-disappearing, like the uneducable specter who will have never learned how to live. The trace I leave signifies to me at once my death, either to come or already come upon me, and the hope that this trace survives me. This is not striving for immortality; it’s something structural. I leave a piece of paper behind, I go away, I die: it is impossible to escape this structure, it is the unchanging form of my life. Each time I let something go, each time some trace leaves me, “proceeds” from me, unable to be reappropriated, I live my death in writing. (p. 32-33)

In this dissertation, I invented a concept—the ensemble of life—a concept that never belonged, nor will it ever belong, to me. It is an entanglement of me, participants, their ancestors, Deleuze and Guattari, amongst others who fold, or entangle, with the concept. That entanglement signals that the concept is a living entity that is always at work. Because it is a living concept, it is also dying because of the folds between living and nonliving. It is for the aforementioned reasons that I end this dissertation with an ellipsis, which Chamarette (2007) suggested is linked to the fold. She wrote that the ellipsis provides “a radical frame, because it highlights the site of multiplication and not a specification of meaning” (p. 35). The ellipsis gestures toward folds and entanglements that continuously interact with different entities. As my study folds and entangles with

other entities, its meaning infinitely multiplies. The entanglement ... The fold ... The event ... *A life*... assemblage ... The unanticipated ... The ensemble of life ensembling...

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Notes

Chapter One

1. All photographs have been cropped and enhanced using Adobe Photoshop.
2. Some readers may be troubled with my use of Foucault (1971/1977) and genealogy to analyze family history genealogy. However, the section of the article “Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History” from which I cite pertains to descent-based genealogy. In this section (pp. 145-148), Foucault analyzes Nietzsche’s *Herkunft* that Foucault defined as “stock or *descent*; it is the ardent affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class” (p. 145). Thus, the use of this small section of Foucault’s work is appropriate because it focuses on blood relations that constitute the majority of family history genealogical work.

Chapter Two

1. “The Actual and the Virtual” was first published posthumously in the French version of *Dialogues* in 1996. The edition I used did not include an original publication date for the piece. While the copyright page does indicate that the first version of the book was published in 1977, I will use 1996/2002 throughout the dissertation.
2. I use italic to denote *a life* throughout the dissertation to eliminate confusion between a person’s life and *a life*.

Chapter Three

1. I realize that much of the content of chapter three is dedicated to rich ethnographic detail so that readers can see, know, and be in the study. Such ethnographic detail lends validity to my study. However, the details of my study as I experienced them are fleeting and sometimes difficult to explain within the grips of humanist language. In this note, I provide a brief critique of validity and explain how I use a rhetorical strategy of fleeting details.

Lather (1993) described validity “as a space of constructed visibility of the practices of methodology...an apparatus for observing the staging of the poses of methodology, a site that ‘gives to be seen’ the unthought in our thought” (p. 676). Lather’s construction of validity is based on an Aristotelian metaphysics, a “metaphysics associates sight with knowledge” (Derrida, 1983, p. 4). In other words, Lather’s validity is linked to sight and knowledge as well as being. Validity is about details that help the reader see how knowledge was constructed. That knowledge, of course, was developed in the field. In this way, validity is determined upon how well a writer can describe “being there” in “the field.” Lather’s epistemological focus masks an important and underdeveloped aspect of her article—ontology. As I developed in chapter two, the ontology of this study is a series of never-ending folds. In this way, knowledge and vision are also a series of folds.

Olkowski (1999) wrote, “In Aristotle, entities have different degrees of being, as if there were only so much being for distribution” (p. 479). In other words, being is centered and stable and it can be distributed in hierarchies. As

was noted above, Aristotle's metaphysics is linked to sight and knowledge. Aristotle, then, creates hierarchies of being, sight, and knowledge. Clearly, the Deleuzian fold is not centered nor is it stable. In this way, being cannot be distributed—it is always distributing itself through folds. Sight, knowledge, and being form innumerable pleats that destabilize hierarchies.

Deleuze (1968/1994) critiqued the Aristotelian conception of difference in order to develop his conception of difference as a moving ontology in which difference is transgressively repeated. In this way, Deleuze critiques Aristotle's metaphysics. Olkowski (1999) described Deleuze's critique of Aristotle's metaphysics follows: "For Deleuze, Aristotle's conceptualization does not simply create hierarchies of thought; rather it serves to legitimate certain visual, linguistic, social, and political practices that developed around the demand for intelligibility, rigidity, and hegemony" (p. 481). In other words, validity relies upon sight, knowledge, and being and restores an Aristotelian metaphysics. In this way, being is stable such that an observer can see a phenomenon and develop knowledge from it. Validity then remains in a post-positivist realm in which one-to-one correspondences, knowable and rigid subjects and objects, and a stable ontology proliferate. As I described in chapter two, the fold makes both subjects and objects pliable and connective. In addition, the fold served as the ontology for this study. Validity, then, looks different in this study.

In this chapter and in chapter four, I play with the phrase "setting the stage," a common phrase to describe validity in conventional interpretive inquiry. On such a stage, a researcher writes elaborate, detail-filled rich descriptions about

the field and all that comprises it (e.g., participants, place, and time) so that a reader can fully see, be, and know the study. The stage I set in this dissertation is “a theatre where nothing is fixed, a labyrinth without a thread (Ariadne has hung herself)” (Deleuze 1968/1994, p. 56). I will provide the outlines of the study, the frame of the theatre or labyrinth. However, I will not provide those rich descriptions, those thick threads onto which readers can latch onto and ride their way into an Aristotelian metaphysics. The fold always disrupts the stage and labyrinth.

To do this work, I employ a rhetorical strategy developed from my study that aims to describe the “being there” of my study. Most of the participants began talking about the objects they associated with their ancestors before I could take off my coat and grab my digital audio recorder. In this way, I immediately folded into a stage of folding objects and subjects. Moreover, participants described some objects in detail while others were described with a simple sentence. In effect, the objects-subjects-events that I learned about were always partial, always producing more questions than answers. Details were few and far between as participants stuttered in humanist language. In addition, the pace of interviews was quick as objects formed nonlinear trajectories that spun out of control. Details could not be captured. The term “details” assumes that there is a language to describe the folds of fieldwork, of doing this study. Like so many of the participants, I struggle against humanist language to describe my study. In this way, some details are lackluster because humanist language fails me. This

study was a breathtaking series of folds that caught me up and took, and continue to take, me for a wild ride.

To rhetorically demonstrate such a sensation, I thrust readers into my study such that they may not be able to hang their coat or sit and get comfortable. The stage is not fixed in this study, it never was. I provide more ethnographic details in some sections while others are lack details. Those details are always partial and struggle within humanist language. What remains constant is how I've theorized the study. In this way, the details in chapters three and four repeat and open the study to something else.

Validity in this study is a transgressive repetition of my study. The stage I set in this dissertation is full of moving sets such that a reader cannot see, know, and be the study in an Aristotelian sense. I repeat the study by theorizing it as I attempt to make sense of the pleating folds that constitute my study.

2. I do not provide a figure for my Father's graduation because he is still living. Family history genealogists generally do not include information about living people in order to protect their identity.

Chapter Four

1. Last names and notes of photographs have been erased using the "spot healing tool" in Adobe Photoshop. That tool has a smudging effect on the photographs. As a result, some photographs appear to have smudges.
2. The word "ecceity" is used in the original version. Given its similarity to the term "haecceity" and that the term is sometimes spelled differently in different

translations of Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's work, I use the term "haecceity" in this quote for consistency.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

If you have time, it would be wonderful if you could look over this interview guide before our first interview so you'll be familiar with what I'm interested in. Of course, I am very happy to talk about anything else you think would be useful for my study on the relationship between objects and family history genealogy.

I'd like for our conversation to center on several objects (for example, documents, photographs, and any other artifacts) about some of your ancestors or people you have researched that have captured your interest in a unique way. It may be that you have a special interest in one of your ancestors or that family lore and information learned from the objects does not match up, and so on. I am comfortable with a very broad, open definition of "object," so an object could also be a place, a building, or something else that we could go to and see if it is especially important in your work. But if the object is small enough, like a photograph, it would be great if we could have it there with us during the interview.

For your convenience, I would be happy to meet you where you'd like for the interview—your home, your office, or any other place where we would not be interrupted for an hour or so. I would very much like to audio-tape the interview and to photograph the objects we discuss. Please feel free to jot notes about the following questions on this guide.

- For each object, please tell me
 - about the object (e.g. where did you locate it, how did you locate it, where do you keep it now?)
 - What does this object make you think about and/or feel?
 - If this object could talk, what do you think it would say?
 - about the ancestor (e.g. any stories you know about the ancestor; if the ancestor and/or person lived during your lifetime, any memories you have the ancestor and/or person; the significance/meaning of the ancestor and/or person in your life)
- How does this object (these objects) help you to put together a picture of the ancestor (person)?

Appendix B

Talk Presented at Genealogy Club Meeting, February 22, 2010

Introduction.

The tables have been turned. Instead of me asking about how you put together pictures of your ancestors using objects, I will share with you how I am putting together pictures of you all, your ancestors, your objects, and your work. Instead of you sharing objects that you use in your work, I will share some of the objects that I use to do my work. As I prepared this talk, I asked myself a question that many of you posed to me, is this what you want to know? I am eager to your response to that question after I am finished with this talk.

Many of you shared the in-process parts of your research. Like you, I will share the in-process parts of my research, which, at this point, is still very much in process. I am very much in the middle. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980/1987), two of my favorite twentieth-century French philosophers, wrote, “It’s not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left” (p. 23). It is true, it is difficult to see from the middle and I hope what I am seeing, my emerging interpretations, thus far, will make sense to you. What I hope to do in this talk is to help you see how I am seeing this study from the middle of it. To prepare for this talk, I scoured my notes and transcripts of the interviews for possible points of interest to you that will help to set the stage for the research, its significance to the academic world, and how I am working toward producing knowledge.

I located the following quotes from the transcripts and notes that will guide my talk this evening: I like your title; We laughed out loud, you had no clue; And How are you going to make sense of this?

I Like Your Title.

The title of my dissertation, *You Will Never Know All My Stories: Dramatic Objects Conjuring the Specters of Ancestors in Family History Genealogy*, is intimately yoked to this framed collage of my Grandmother Naomie. (Figure A.1)



Figure A.1. Framed Collage of Grandmother Naomie

Nothing much was ever said about Grandmother Naomie as I was growing up. She died in 1966 from brain cancer and my grandfather soon remarried. Of course, I did not know Grandmother Naomie because I was born in 1977. My grandfather, my father, and my uncle rarely spoke of her. All I knew was that I look very much like her and that she was my namesake. Soon after my Grandfather Norris Nordstrom, her husband, died in 1992, my parents gave me Grandmother Naomie's wedding ring, a modest silver ring with three miniscule diamonds. My parents informed that before my grandfather went to

the rest home, he told my parents that he wanted me to have the ring. I asked family members to tell me stories about her, but such queries generally proved fruitless. All I knew for certain was she died from brain cancer in 1966. The silence about her was deafening, and I had to get to know her from other sources.

I searched the basement of my house and found three pictures of her in our family photo collections: the first, her confirmation photo taken in 1927 when she was 15; the second, her high school graduation photo taken in 1930 when she was 18; and, lastly a copy of a photo taken of her with my father and uncle in 1942, when she was 30 years old that she sent to my Grandfather Norris while he served with the Navy in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. I also found an announcement for her Wednesday, August, 7, 1935 wedding to my grandfather as well as her and my grandfather's wedding certificate. I carefully put her photographs and the wedding documents into this frame to have something tangible about a woman I would never know face-to-face.

I have come to know her through these pictures, documents, and her ring and from what little information I was able to pry from my reluctant father and hesitant uncle. While my grandfather was away during World War II, Naomie took over his position of postmaster in Wausa in addition to caring for two young sons, her aging mother-in-law, my Great-Grandmother Anna, and her mentally-challenged brother Walter. She did all this work without many complaints, I think. I constructed her as a giving, selfless, compassionate, and hardworking woman—a woman I aspired to become. This frame has traveled with me from Nebraska, to Minnesota, to Georgia, and, now, back to Nebraska. To even begin to state the significance of this frame in my life and work would be another talk. Regarding this project, I came to realize that my collection of her

photographs, documents, and objects was the meager beginnings of a family history genealogical project that helped me make sense of her life. I began to think differently about the objects such as documents, photographs, and artifacts of family history genealogical research, that these objects are evidence that something—a marriage as verified by a certificate, the purchase of land verified by a land deed, an artifact owned by a family member, and so on—happened in another time and place and are yoked to an ancestor. In a sense, these objects are dramatic evidence of a person's life. We are not looking at a marriage certificate—we are looking at *their* marriage certificate. We are not looking at a land deed—it was *their* land deed. We are touching an object that *they* once touched.

For every photograph I have seen, every object I have held, and every document I have studied in this dissertation, I realize that those objects overflow with mysteries that I will never know. Perhaps, Bess Streeter Aldrich (1925) in *The Rim of the Prairie* best illustrates the idea that the objects themselves are overflowing with stories that we may never know, stories that we can only imagine. She writes the following about a land deed:

The contract was drawn up. Uncle Jud signed it. Aunt Biny signed it. Warner Field witnessed it. Mr. Rineland, as notary, acknowledged the execution of their voluntary deed. Mr. Denning paid down a thousand dollars cash. The date of possession was given as March fifteenth. Ten thousand dollars cash was to be paid on that date and the balance with a note secured by a first mortgage on the land. All business transactions. All dry data. All in the day's work of the bank. Just a sale of "one hundred and sixty acres with all buildings thereon." But

nothing of the sale of the wood thrush that sang at evening, the phlox that grew on the way to the well, or the light that lay on the rim of the prairie. In the transaction nothing including the transfer of a half century's hopes and fears, or the title to love and service and memories. (p. 216).

I thought this passage to be a beautiful example of what we do not know, what we cannot know, of the questions we might ask to those people that we study if only we could.

What were the thoughts and feelings of those people who sold that land? When looking at a marriage certificate, we may wonder how the two people met, how they fell in love?

When looking at an immigration certificate, we may wonder what prompted them to leave their home country? What was it like to leave their families and all that they knew?

Jacques Derrida (1989), a 20th century French philosopher, opened an essay about a photography exhibit with the following, "You will never know, nor will you, all the stories I kept telling myself as I looked at these images" (p. 20). And, you will never know all the stories I have told myself about these pictures, these documents, just like I will never know all the stories you tell yourselves about the objects associated with your family members or people you have researched. And these stories, it seems are indescribable, they are moments of silence in an interview when the air is thickened by marvel, by questions, by stories that are too numerous, and perhaps, impossible to tell.

We Laughed Out Loud, You Had No Clue.

I roared with laughter when a participant told me that some participants had laughed out loud when they saw that I thought the interviews would last about an hour. I laughed because it was a true statement. I really had no clue. But, there is good reason.

To my knowledge, there are only a few studies about genealogists. These studies focus on memory (e.g., Harevan, 1978; Lambert, 1996, 2002, 2003; Parham, 2008), research practices (e.g., Bishop, 2008; Duff & Johnson, 2003; Lambert, 1996; Veale, 2004), and identity (e.g., Hackstaff, 2009a; Nash, 2002; Tutton, 2004; Tyler, 2005). One of the most common ways for academics to write about their studies is to present something a participant said or did and then theorize, or explain how such a statement supports their argument in a particular paper. I noticed several pieces of evidence in which participants mentioned objects—locks of hair, letters, photographs, family Bibles, and so on—however, the authors did not develop much of anything about these objects. The objects were just mute parts of a statement that the authors used to support another argument. These statements also held other clues, for example, participants would want to show the researcher the object or would talk about how they wanted to know the motivations of the people they studied. My curiosity was piqued. The objects were significant, significant enough for people to mention them in interviews or in responses to survey questions. No one, to my knowledge, had asked genealogists about them. I wanted to plan a study where you all would be able to showcase and talk about the objects of your research and how these objects help you to put together a person's life.

So, I developed an interview method called “object-interviews” that would set a stage for you all to discuss the objects that are so very important to your work, to include the objects in the conversation. As I have mentioned to some of you, I have to insert the photographs of the objects in the transcripts so that the transcripts make sense. The handful of studies used more traditional data collection methods: interviewing, participant observation, and surveys. When planning a study and thinking about the nuts

and bolts of interviews and so on, it is important to study what others have done before you in the hope that it might give you some clue as to how to plan the length of interviews, length of research, and so on. According to the literature—with an even smaller number of studies using interviews—the interviews lasted about an hour or so. Therefore, I planned for hour-long interviews. Boy, was I wrong. I had no idea that if objects were included, that the interviews would last, two, three, and sometimes four hours long. I had no idea that I would take hundreds of photographs and come to cherish those objects that you shared with me. Nor did it occur to me that in order to talk about one person's life you all would need to talk about the people who came before and after them. At times, I felt like I had literally opened Pandora's Box. Sometimes not having a clue can be a very good thing.

How are you going to make sense of all this?

As many of you know, the phrase “find your roots” is fairly common in genealogy. In fact, the word “roots” appears frequently in the transcripts. I stated earlier that the focus of my research was influenced by this frame, my desire to know more about one of my roots, Grandmother Naomie. Since that time, I have tried to learn more about her and other roots of my family that are slowly being unearthed. As a result, I am tangled in roots. I am tangled in my roots and, now, all of my participants' roots. So, it seems appropriate that I use roots, or what I soon will call rhizomes, as a way to think about how I am going to make sense of all this.

The phrase, “tangled roots” appears numerous times in Bess Streeter Aldrich's (1925) *The Rim of the Prairie*. Earlier I read from this book a section about a land deed and Aunt Biny was mentioned as a cosigner of the land sale. If you have yet to read this

book, what I am about to say is a spoiler for the novel, but it is vital that I share it with you tonight. Uncle Jud and Aunt Biny have second thoughts about selling the land and end up not selling the land to the Dennings. Later on in the novel, when Aunt Biny's daughter, Nancy, and her husband offer to move an elderly Aunt Biny to their home, Aunt Biny talks about her reasons for wanting to stay on the land that she and her husband homesteaded Aunt Biny said:

They [the trees] were just little saplings that we brought in a wet gunny-sack. I'm like one of them. I was planted here when they were. My roots extend down in the ground far out to the end of the upper eighty and down to Tinkling Creek. If you'd pull me up, the life would just naturally run out of me and I'd be dried up and limp and useless as a hewn maple. No... I'm grateful to you both. But I'd rather stay here. ... where I can look of to the rim of the prairie ... and see the sun go down. (p. 347).

I would like to focus on the fourth sentence, "My roots extend down in the ground far out to the end of the upper eighty and down to Tinkling Creek." I have read and reread that sentence many times and the image of a woman standing on her land with porous feet always comes to my mind. I imagine her life, her stories, her photographs, all the objects of her house that are described in the book, pouring out of her feet and extending beneath her. In particular, I imagine a woman a participant told me about. This woman's husband fought in the Civil War and, after his death, she attempted to get a pension from the government. Unfortunately, the couple's marriage license was lost in a house fire and she had to go to extensive lengths petitioning for her pension. The petition file contained numerous information about the land she owned, her property, her assets, and medical

information, and so on. I kept thinking about the wealth of information in that petition and how this participant said she was just starting to sort through it all. The participant mentioned that these documents provided her with clues for researching this woman's family. In particular, the woman's brother gave an affidavit that described the couple's wedding. She had a new lead, a new root to follow. What I am trying to get at with this brief story is that even though it may just be one person's roots, those roots are always tangled up with other people's roots. And these roots are always part of the town's history, the county's history, the state's history, and the nation's history. Tangled roots, indeed.

To help me think about roots in a more concrete manner, I located this picture from the National Geographic Magazine website.



Figure A.2: Prairie Grass Rhizome (Richardson, 2008)

The caption states:

Bringing new meaning to the expression "out in the field," photographer Jim Richardson made this image of prairie grass roots northeast of Salina, Kansas. Jerry Glover, of the Land Institute in Salina, managed the digging of a hole eight feet (2.4 meters) wide and six feet (1.8 meters) deep so Richardson could get this

perspective. Says Richardson, "Mostly I wanted to be able to show the phenomenal root structure and the mixture of prairie plants that make a thriving prairie. The roots go down deep, allowing them to weather tough times." This is one in a series of soil profiles Richardson is making around the world.

Thinking this picture and the section from *The Rim of the Prairie* together along with the data from the transcripts has helped me to think about this project in some interesting ways.

As I drive to interviews and even as I drove here this afternoon, I look out to the fields and imagine all the roots that are slowly stirring beneath the snow. I think also of the histories, sometimes difficult histories, I have had the privilege of listening to over the past couple of months. I think about how you all have dug holes into the ground and studied the roots of your families. I think about the hole I have dug to study my family and the larger cross-section I am currently digging with your help that study your roots. And these roots, too, are tangled. I am thinking in particular of an instance when a participant described Ku Klux Klan activity in this county. I remember my throat clutching as I saw the notice in the paper about a KKK meeting. I immediately thought of my great-grandfather who was a member of the Klan and resident of this county during the time period in question. I wondered how he interpreted that notice in the paper. I thought about how the person who this participant was describing interpreted that notice in the paper. I was ashamed, sickened, and uncomfortable by the connection between my family history and the other family's history. Tangled roots, indeed.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), whom I mentioned earlier, suggest that the rhizome, or root structure, as a useful way to think about ideas and concepts. It allows

for me to think about these interviews in a connective fashion. It allows for me to think not only about the past, but also the present and the future. I can think the best and the worst together—the moments of pride in a family and the moments of shame. I can think a variety of personal, familial, local, and national histories together. Ironically, you all planned to discuss maps this evening. Mapping is how I view writing, especially when I am trying to make sense of the tangled roots as I try to make sense of these interviews overflowing with both told and untold stories about ancestors and the objects associated with those ancestors, those stories. I map the roots and how they connect and disconnect, and I follow those lines as I write, always hoping for that “a-ha” moment. As you may have noticed, the maps I produce are rather eclectic, there are parts of novels, poetry, French theory, interviews, and notes, just to name a few. I map, or write, what I cannot anticipate. The only thing that I can anticipate is that I will always be in the middle of this project, tangled up in my roots, your roots, for some time, perhaps until the end of my academic career.

And One More Thing: Coda 1 ...

Bess Streeter Aldrich (1935) opens her book, *Spring Came on Forever*, with the following paragraph:

In the telling of a story the narrator takes a bit from life as definitely and completely as one would cut a paper doll, trimming away all of the flimsy sheet excepting the figure. A section of real life is not so detached and finished, for the causes and consequences of it reach backward and forward and across the world. For that reason no mere story can ever be complete, no family history contain a beginning or an end. (p. 1)

It seems then that genealogy is always in the middle, never complete. You all have shared with me the causes and consequences of the lives of the people you research. You have shared the questions and stories about the documents, photographs, and artifacts that constitute your roots. And as I work to make sense of the tangled roots, I know that I, too, will always be in the middle, in the middle of your ancestors, your objects, your stories.

And Just One More Thing: Coda 2....

I would like to end with some thoughts about the consent forms you have signed. Perhaps you will keep this document in a safe place. Perhaps a grandchild, a great-grandchild, or a great-great grandchild will find this document amongst your papers and might wonder aloud, “Huh, my ancestor participated in a study, and the researcher was from Georgia. What was that researcher doing in Nebraska? What did my grandmother or grandfather tell her? Why did they want to talk to her? Where can I go to locate more information about this part of my grandmother or grandfather’s life?” Family history perpetuates, far into the future, a future not one of us can anticipate. What stories will our future families tell themselves about us, this project, this evening? How will they make sense of the roots that we’ve tangled up a bit?

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