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## **The Rhizomes Of Academic Practice: Culturally And Linguistically Diverse Students Negotiating Learning And Belonging**

**Radha Iyer**

To teach and learn in present times means being aware of the performative culture that pervades higher education. This performative, audit culture of the academia demands adaptable, autonomous, and self-managing learners (see Ball, 2003). However, we can move beyond such self-managerial discourses if we recognize that, although we “belong to these apparatuses,” what matters is both how we position ourselves and “what we are in the process of becoming” (Deleuze, 1992b, p. 164).

This chapter applies Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizomatic processes of becoming to demonstrate how teaching and learning in diverse contexts are assemblages of practice, affect, and desire that produce agency endowed with multiplicity and heterogeneity. Drawing on a methodology of self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014), I conducted a Deleuzian analysis of data gathered over two years with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Masters in Education students in a unit I taught at a local Australian university. I adopted S-STEP as it allowed me, as the researcher, to engage in a constant reflexive process to examine the pedagogic subjectivities that my students and I were experiencing. Instead of an objective stance examining the learning of students, this study examines my practice and context to analyze the lived experiences of myself as an academic as well as the real-world experiences of my students from a rhizomatic perspective.

In the predominantly Eurocentric settings of western academia, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), as well as pedagogically diverse, students are at the receiving end of the highly academic oriented literacy and pay a high price both financially and subjectively just to get through their course. In the educational field, the unexpected is always on the horizon for these students as new causalities arise due to the unfamiliar and new ways of learning that they are expected to adopt. The students experience a struggle between institutional demands and individual knowledge as they attempt to excel academically. Within this context, my emergent self as the researcher/teacher demanded a decentering, a move away from the normative conception of the institutional voice, to instead become part of the diverse assemblage of my class and my students. Significantly, the study examines how the academic threshold became a site of fluid, rhizomatic transformations to identity and subjectivity, for me as the researcher, and

for my students. The next section examines the process of rhizomatic becoming that was necessary for both my students and me so that we could understand our desires, needs, and goals of teaching and learning.

### **Being and Becoming**

Teaching and learning events with CALD students do not occur linearly but are interconnections of diversity and difference constituted by heterogeneity, fluidity and, importantly, malleability. To interpret diversity and difference as positive, I found I had to shed the deficit binary perception of the academic as an institutional representative and her students as the receivers of information. Further, with my diversity as a significant factor in my teaching, I had to perceive my subject positioning as rhizomatic, one that is nomadic, “intermezzo” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 380)—that is, without roots in the normative. It also implied that I had to attend to interconnections or assemblages. An assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) consists of multiplicities, of often discrete singularities arranged together, or as Nail (2017, p. 23) notes, “a set of relations between self-subsisting fragments.” I found that in constituting my subjectivity as an assemblage, I needed to deterritorialize and destabilize the given institutional academic identity as was the case for my students whose discrete and diverse learning experiences led to an openness, to re-formation, to destabilization from a fixed, rigid approach to learning. Such assemblages also contribute to heterogeneous forms of becoming, which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as a fluid and constant state of being where there are processes of interactions and ongoing changes to self.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), becoming is “involuntary,” where to involve is to form a block that runs its own line “between” the terms in play and beneath assignable relations; becoming is “a verb that has a consistency of its own” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 239) that assists in moving from molar lines or molar identities that determine institutional operations to molecular lines and lines of flight. Molar lines are constituted of rigid segmentarities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Examples of molar lines in this study include official mandates, as well as binary perceptions about teaching and learning, or about the good and not-so-good student. These are lines that organize to control, to administer organizational procedures, and are designed to restrict desire into manageable usages and practices (see also Windsor, 2015). Subsequently, my molar identity as an academic was maintained through institutional structures and was defined through the processes of governance. As the academic, I

knew I held a dominant position, neatly positioning students through institutional norms and practices. However, as an academic from a non-western, non-white background, my diversity placed me on the threshold of becoming that Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 293) observe is “an in-between.” The “in-between” occurred through the slippages from the dominant positioning ascribed to a western, white academic in a western institution. These slippages led to the conditions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization like that of the wasp and the orchid (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). My situation was like the wasp which, when it interacts with the orchid, has with no clear delineation of being one or the other, or of territory (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293). As Deleuze and Guattari observe, through this interaction, the wasp takes on the characteristics of the orchid, and a becoming-orchid occurs. Similarly, for me, it was an ongoing transformative unfolding of becoming-other from the given institutional identity to one of becoming nomadic that became significant.

As Grosz (2005, p. 4) notes, “becoming is the operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system that emerges or actualizes only in duration.” This demanded molecular lines, which Deleuze and Guattari state are the individualized processes of thinking and ways of enacting that interrupt and disrupt the normative processes of being. Therefore, my effort consisted of taking the lines of flight that could go beyond particular institutional ways of being an academic; the pedagogical attempt was to assist my students to engage in molecular becoming. In this process, my study became an examination of how I comprehended the status quo and disrupted it so that change could occur. I realized that to be a productive academic, I needed to think through BwO (Body without Organs) which, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is “not an empty body stripped of organs, but a body upon which that which serves as organs ... is distributed ... in the form of molecular multiplicities” (p. 30). Thinking through BwO meant comprehending the rigid organizational codes, rules, and procedures while, at the same time, considering alternative ways of being and doing (see also Reynolds, 1998).

The structured and restrictive “centred system” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 17) that subjected “the unconscious to arborescent structures” was not suited to the learning that the CALD students wanted, and I had to explore the lines of flight that were evident in their engagement with the program. Notably, it became clear that if these students were to be valuable members of the higher education context, a productive learning community where there was an

acknowledgement of their diversity was required. Having a productive learning community implied perceiving difference as rhizomatic and comprehending their learning processes through a rhizomatic lens. The rhizomatic analysis, as noted by scholars (Grellier, 2013; Honan, 2007; St. Pierre, 1997), is highly relevant to education research, with Gregoriou (2004) suggesting that it provides a “minor pedagogies in education.” (p. 245)

### **Rhizomatic Becoming**

The rhizome denotes a tubular plant that not only grows and expands in any number of directions, but also can bring about new shoots. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) observe, the rhizome is interconnected and radically invested in difference and diversity. Further, as Colman (2010) argues, the rhizome is constituted of networked processes that are neither tracings nor a map as a fixed entity. Academic diversity as a rhizome is full of positive and negative potentialities, and depends on individual comprehension of educational practice either as a political, institutional slogan or as a portrayal of difference as positive. Significantly, for myself as a researcher, comprehending diversity as rhizomatic led me to position myself in a nomadic manner within academia and the resulting rhizomatic plane of immanence that occurred through the lived research led to deterritorialization of norms. Further, for the CALD student a rhizomatic process of engaging in learning assisted in an ongoing process of multiple interconnections, where they could continually negotiate their learning modes.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) outline six characteristics of the rhizome, which help to understand the diversity and difference in learning exemplified by CALD Masters students. These include connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, assigning rupture, cartography, and decalcomania. Through the principles of connection and heterogeneity, difference is comprehended as a rhizome, as it enables the connection of diverse ideas and skills. In this study, these principles provided a theoretical lens to understand how various participants formed a learning community that assisted in producing new knowledges, new understandings, and belonging. The learning situation, like the rhizome, was “perpetually in construction or collapsing ... breaking off and starting again” (Gregoriou, 2004, p. 244), thereby allowing for deterritorialization, or the lines of flight. Ruptures and new lines of flight could only be possible when the multitude of influences led to new knowledges, which subsequently led to new educational outcomes that were also lived experiences. Engaging in such ruptures denotes the principle of multiplicity, which has “neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes,

and dimensions that cannot increase in number without changing in nature” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8). Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 9) state that every rhizome “contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified territorialized ... as well as the line of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees.” The question that confronted my students and myself was whether, through a rhizomatic process, the university system could be diffused, ruptured, to allow for new growth.

The principles of cartography and decalcomania explain how learning as rhizomatic becomes a map and not a tracing. Rhizomes are about growing, and, in this study, I perceived the students as growing from novice learners to active participants and skilled students who could engage in problem-solving at every instance of their candidature in the postgraduate program. The academic learning environment is a complex site that, like the tree, has structures that invite tracing, and its “overcoding structure or supporting axis [here, the academic program], is something that comes readymade” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). My mission was to develop an openness where student and researcher ideas could counter the tree-like, stagnant normative class and thereby map out new approaches that went beyond normative stance.

Associated with the rhizome is the notion of desire. Instead of a negative energy denoting lack, desire is an active force within a person that can be utilized positively and is machinic in that it encapsulates the ongoing need for production and consumption (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). In my case, the desire was to produce the best learning environment for the students, where the stimuli—such as the challenges of academic literacy faced by students—could be addressed and the abstract or fantasy could be upheld (that they would be high achievers successful in learning). Desire is situated within the social and, as Smith (2007) argues, our investment in the social system is due to our sense of lack, which results in desire being constituted of the constraints of the system (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). However, for Deleuze and Guattari (1983), lack is only “a countereffect” of desire, and desire is a positive aspect of humans as social beings (p. 27; see also Gao, 2013; Smith, 2007). In this study, students experienced a sense of lack when they felt they had underachieved. I also experienced lack when I saw the results of my teaching. Nevertheless, drawing on Jackson (2009, p. 169), the “voicing subject is also a desiring subject”; that implied how I, through reflexive thinking, could

shift from my desire for the normative, academic standpoint or to assist my students to rupture the silence they often desired in the face of the institutional demands.

### **Method**

This study adopts S-STEP methodology (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014) because it allows examination of the context and self-practice. As these authors observe, speaking about experiences that result from thoughtful engagement with issues provides deep understandings based on multiple truths and multiple ways of comprehending experience.

I followed Hamilton and Pinnegar's (2014) steps to ensure a systematic process of reflection. The *provocation*, which is the first step in this study, was the paradox of teaching the CALD students in an environment they were unfamiliar with and where institutional procedures catered to the normative. The provocation gave rise to the research question: how might difference and diversity be positive for CALD students and the academic teaching them? The question pushed the boundaries of the *ontological stance* and assisted in re-questioning my ontological position regarding my practice. Next, my *exploration* led to investigating my prior knowledge of teaching CALD students, examining my previous ideas about teaching and resources in the light of research literature. *Refinement* took place when my background and experience guided me to select what was worthy of being examined. I received ethical clearance and, being mindful of ethical action as requiring trustworthiness and transparency, I present the data as reported by students, along with the reflections that I maintained. In presenting the data, an essential aspect of S-STEP methodology was to invite the students to enter a shared understanding of my experiences. Using the frameworks of inquiry and analysis as provided by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2015; see also Hamilton, 2004) the study sets out questions, the context, the research literature, methods, and forms of analysis that highlight my practice.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

As noted previously, this study occurred at a local Australian university, and I chose my Masters of Education unit as the site for study. My students in these classes were all linguistically and culturally diverse, had previous degrees and work-experiences from their countries, and often identified as global citizens due to having traveled and worked extensively. Some, however, were very young and had finished their undergraduate degree a couple of months before enrolling for Masters. The two extremes of experience and exposure in students led to this research as well as the methodology that was adopted.

The study began in July 2015 and is on-going and undertook pre and post survey and focus group interviews with international and domestic CALD students who agreed to participate in the study. The following table depicts the participants' background and educational qualifications .

Table. 1. Participant Information (2015-2017)

Name,	Prior qualification/work experience	Country	Name	Prior qualification/work experience	Country
Veta	Graduate/ teacher, Early years	Vietnam	Rasika	Graduate Engineer	India
Hui	Graduate /Engineer	Malaysia	Bina	Graduate/ Teacher Primary	Malaysia
Chiu	Graduate/ Teacher Primary	Hong Kong	Greta	Graduate/ Teacher Secondary	India
Semi	Graduate/Banker	Singapore	Rema	Postgraduate Science/ College lecturer	India
Hridi	Early Childhood teacher	Indonesia	Ahem	Graduate/ Teacher Secondary	Saudi Arabia
Nusur	Graduate/Teacher	Saudi Arabia	Jess	Graduate/ Teacher Primary	India

In all, there were 34 participants, and the selective data reported here draws on the pre and post surveys as well as the focus group or individual interview responses. The online anonymous surveys invited Likert scale responses as well as comments. The focus groups were conducted with six students in each group and those not available for focus groups were individually interviewed. Along with my reflections, interview responses were selected based on the themes that emerged from the coding and categorizing of the data based on the theory. All student responses have been provided a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality.

I also engaged in dialogue, another component of S-STEP, through the constant and ongoing interactions and conversations with students and a self-reflexive critique of practice. To disrupt good sense, which Deleuze states is "ascribed to one direction only" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 75), and go beyond diversity and difference as deficit, I had to investigate data non-linearly and perceive data as open-ended (Massumi, 2002), as comprising of infinite becomings and lines of flight. I examined the data through a theoretical lens because, as Mazzei (2013, p.107) observes, it "opens up rather than forecloses meanings," permits stuttering and rhizomatic interconnections. In fact, the process of becoming the researcher, of becoming data to study it from within, became crucial.



## **The Process of Being and Becoming**

The data overall illustrated that most students expected the arborescent academic structure and could not imagine they could be different and be appreciated for it. Data illustrated that the process of becoming was neither natural nor a seamless process, but was fraught with dilemmas and challenges. The institution is a molar machine dictating homogenous ways of academic operations, such as formal academic writing skills, a theoretical knowledge base, high-level abstract thinking for the student and an interactive, constructivist class for the academic who, however, insists on academic rigor. Homogenous grouping seemed to be expected by the students, for example, Bina's sharing that "the best thing was meeting someone from my background", or Rema's response that there is a "significant divide between domestic and international students" were typical responses within the molar academic parameters.

Even where CALD students wanted their diversity and difference to be noticed, often it was not. For instance, as Semi mentioned, although they each had different ways to construct knowledge, "we are expected to be quiet." Students desired greater rhizomatic principles in the way the institution operated—for example, preferring to see sample assignments and have their drafts read (which is frowned upon at the Masters level), or to be helped to use Blackboard (while the institution expected it to be a resource to be used independently). However, they were restricted by the over-coded institutional apparatus.

There were significant moments where the students felt helpless as the institutional demands desired silence and in it reaffirmed the power of academic modes that were foreign to them. Their issue, as Hridi observed, was that "there are so many facets to academic learning that are suddenly confronted" or as Rasika stated, it was a "totally different experience, totally different style of studying". For instance, there was the expectation that they would fully understand the online content without additional support, they would be satisfied learning in their group consisting only of CALD students, or they would enjoy engaging in the chat session when online. While some had the desire and expectation to share ideas and have fun in their studies, they were largely quiet, because, as Hridi mentioned, it was a silence expected by the normative demands. Further, Rema noted, "most of the time it is difficult to get from the boundaries to the centre of the discussion. Here there is a bigger divide between domestic and international students," due to the mismatch between domestic priorities and international expectations in learning. Because of this mismatch Chiu mentioned – "I understand the topic and discussion but

I am quiet because they did not notice me” and Veta agreed– the CALD students were perceived as having a deficit, as their previous educational experiences were perceived as lacking desired skills.

The power of the norm sets up “degrees of normality,” thereby establishing “membership of a homogenous social body” (Foucault, 1991, p. 184) that distinguishes between who belongs and who gets excluded. The norm promotes the belief that not only suitably shaped docile bodies are required for learning, but also to “the shading of individual differences” (Foucault, 1991, p. 184) that, in this case, marked these students as noticeably different. Normalization processes have only intensified through surveillance such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and an expectation of high-level communication skills for entry into the postgraduate program in Australia. Normalization mechanisms such as these cannot be easily overlooked, especially, as Deleuze (1992a) observes, we live in a “control society”. It was, therefore, mandatory for me to realize that they were being constrained by institutional practices and that I needed to shift from my normative, arborescent position to recognize them within their space. I had to recognize that “educational life-forms” (Cole, 2011, p. 44) are questions about experience concerning education and a Deleuzian solution is “to look for ways out of these contexts” (Cole, 2011, p. 44).

To shift from this molar process of being to becoming demanded a molecular response from me, the teacher, both so that deterritorialization of thought and action could occur and with the knowledge that, although future reterritorialization into the molar would continue to happen, these could be interrupted more easily. The molar academic machine was going to get frayed at the edges although continually reterritorializing to be normative. For example, Students’ attempts to adjust, acknowledged by Semi (“here the gap between teacher and student is lesser-it took me time to adjust”), or Nusur’s view that “the teacher does not encourage,” was a reminder that the molarity of the institution is an “apparatus of capture” (Massumi, 1992, p. 101) as it reproduces the same—in this case, it reproduced the international student as incapable of being a productive group member.

Upon re-reading the data closely, it became evident that while most students confronted the same normalizing processes, some understood they had to be proactive. Ahem, for instance, understood he “had to move from a traditional learning mode to a highly thinking and creative mode”; for Bina when “Pam shared resources, it was really nice”, it became easy to enter the

new academic culture. Veta noted, “when I show my opinion they talk behind me; but I join up a different group, sit at different tables.” Their views indicated that the institutional homogeneity could be interrupted not by assimilation, but through “reciprocal presupposition” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 67), which is, by simultaneous importance, being given to their process of learning. Reciprocal presupposition occurred when academic learning had no hierarchy and students could go beyond tracings to map their territories.

In my reflections, I found that while the overall program had a linear structure, the interactions that were necessary to the operations of the system needed to be non-linear, or “loop-like” (Smetsky, 2006, p. 10), given to extensions, modifications, and rearrangement. For example, I realized my attempts at reiterating the importance of assessment were not that successful, and, it “fell apart due to individual needs” (Reflection, 2015, Semester 2); that “they did not often complete the writing task and found the exercise a strain.” I realized I had to move from this standpoint, deterritorialize and “go beyond institutional expectations” (Reflection, 2016, Semester 1). Such a move required that my thoughts shift fluidly with the needs of the students. I had to engage in experimentation to reaffirm the plane of immanence that, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) claim, is constituted by a “differentiated threshold” (p. 281) through its capacity to produce multiple ways of doing that are not tied to transcendent institutional thought. To achieve the plane of immanence I had to work through spaces that formed through interactive relationships and prevent the system from foreclosing on itself. It was to comprehend the limitations of my institutional judgment, “believing they had not read the set reading” (Reflection, 2015, Semester 2), to recognizing heterogeneity in that “they had different ways of learning” (Reflection, 2016, Semester 2). This was a process of mapping a new complex relationship, of changing my own identity through a subjective process of becoming by thinking through their problems as my concerns. I moved from, “‘Why do I feel a sense of loss when they are attempting to achieve?’ to ‘I should take the next step to get them to consciously comprehend that their voice is important’” (Reflection, 2017, Semester 1). Applying Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) view, it is on the pedagogical plane of immanence/consistency that the BwO can be realized through “assemblages ... plugging into desire” (p. 166), which, here, is the desire to ensure academic success for the CALD student. In believing that “showing a sample of academic writing is frowned upon at the Masters level,” I was experiencing the unique identity of the conformist academic who might over-interpret institutional dictates. However, any ontological

becoming could only progress by perceiving myself as an interactive and dynamic component of the complex scholarly assemblage. In short, it was necessary to move from the arborescent role of the academic to a rhizomatic process of anti-dualistic thinking to engage in “transversal communications between different lines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11). In Deleuzian terms, it was to celebrate the becoming-wasp of the orchid and becoming-orchid of the wasp towards a new threshold that was always in the process of becoming-other.

### **Rhizomatic Reimaginings/Desiring Difference**

Understanding the academic environment in a relational manner as constituted of micropolitics of difference was not without contention. It implied going beyond dualisms and binaries and perceiving the molar and molecular, homogeneity and difference as constituted on the same plane of consistency. As Blaise (2013, p. 189) notes, a “micropolitics considers the small everyday encounters.” The micropolitics of difference accounts for the molecular level lines of flights, and is composed of a diverse range of flow of ideas, values that are always susceptible to acceding to the molar machine (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 216; see also Krause & Rölli, 2008, p. 243).

Subsequently, studying the micropolitical aspects of learner engagement became necessary to understand how these students took an agentive stance. The students, although aware of and operating to the norms prescribed by the institution, were often consciously and methodically rupturing the fabric of academia. For example, as an area of study within the Masters program, TESOL is situated as a molarized wing of academia. However, for Hui, it implied being respected for having English as a second language as she imagined that TESOL positions itself as a deterritorialized space within academia.

Deterritorialization became an essential focus for another student (Jess) where, faced with the lack of choice and knowing the conditions of learning, she had to “adjust,” or move between past experiences into present moments. Similarly, when a student in the survey mentioned that she liked to “share ideas and extend the point of views as well as having great fun,” it illustrated how she resisted the molar institutional forms that overcome, totalize and attempt to unify. Semi mentioned interaction with the local mainstream students as very important, and stated that when “the local students show an interest in our experiences it helps with learning as the interaction leads us to comprehend institutional expectations.” Further, as demonstrated by Greta, rhizomatic lines of flight could only operate when CALD students fought against the normative

tracings: “Whenever you give critical view to native speakers they will be negative towards you. I told him he could not take an Australian only perspective and that he had to take a global perspective.”

When the CALD students adopted new ways of learning, they were approximating a rhizome, connecting, sharing through diverse modes, disrupting the perception of difference as irreconcilable. Veta realized that “even when the domestic students do not notice me, I show my opinion--then they have to notice me.” In reaching out, they employed the principle of connection in “making others notice,” and the process of becoming for these students was a move from “having samples would help” (Rema) to “we must think for ourselves,” as Greta mentioned. Multiplicity consisted of shifting their perspectives; it was to shift from Nusur’s experience — “knowing people is difficult. I found I had to go and join up – for me it did not work” —to Chiu’s opinion that “when the teacher puts you in groups then you have to provide your views.” Chiu’s response regarding the domestic students—“they were happy to learn by asking if it was the same back in your home country”—indicated a constant deterritorialization of the molar positionality towards a rhizomatic becoming, an assemblage of diversity and difference that could be used productively to interact with others. Such interaction ruptured the normalized being that was expected to be docile due to as institutional demands that positioned their difference as a deficit. As another example, many felt like Jess to begin with: “academic writing is totally new for me – a big challenge; subjects are not familiar to me.” However, they began to realize, “if I keep this attitude that there is language barrier then I will be stuck.” (Greta) The assemblages that formed with the students moving away from a linear conception of learning were a synthesis of heterogeneities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 330). Students realized that only by decentering themselves from a deficit discourse by mapping through cartographical becoming and by desiring to re-position themselves they could succeed.

### **Decentered Researcher Becomings**

Constant reading and re-reading of data against the theoretical framework showed that student interviews and survey responses highlighted their insecurity and struggles to understand their standpoint, or their positioning, as they attempted to become members of the institution. My experience of teaching them brought to the forefront my challenges and often the failures of my practice and my attempts to overcome those failures by making changes to my teaching and instructions. I felt I had not achieved the desired result of the program or the result desired by the

students. In class, the students attempted to engage in the content, and in the hour reserved for them after class, recounted what and how they understood. However, I was doubtful whether they were adopting the system the way they desired. To find out, I decided to conduct focus group or individual interviews after they finished the unit. The interviews were conducted at the end of each semester. Initially, I was disheartened going through the data. However, when I re-read the interview transcripts, I began seeing some students demonstrate a deeper process of reflection and ownership of ideas.

The data suggested that they could build a rhizomatic assemblage that incorporated previous learning modes with new learning modes. Some did not “have a general idea of how to write critically”, yet, “they learnt to make the attempt” (Hui). Greta, who earlier was afraid to speak out, later managed to mix old and new ways of being a student through choosing instances to speak up in class and share her ideas. Rema noted, “it is difficult to get from boundaries to the center of the discussion,” but as Chiu stated, when the “teacher puts you in groups, and then you have to provide your views, it boosts you up,” thereby mapping and deterritorializing.

As my reflections illustrated, when I noticed my assessment of these students as a deficit discourse, I realized I had to move from the molar institutional expectations I had towards a positioning that promoted their diversity and becoming different as positive. I had to go beyond the perception that students could not engage with the content to assisting them to be proactive in learning. I understood that the molecular lines intersecting the molar lines could encourage a change in thinking and learning if I could promote continuous deterritorialization. For such deterritorialization to occur, I had to shift my position constantly, comprehend the pull and push of the molar apparatus of the institution, an affirmation of the root-like, dominant forms of teaching which demanded sameness and the contradictory forces of lines of flight.

Becoming is a rhizome, “an alliance” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 238), which implies that it establishes numerous relationships. In this, I had to celebrate the molecular steps as there was an abiding correlation between each stage of deterritorialization with reterritorialization; however, it was one that was a creative attempt to enact difference, “an alliance”. Routines and traditional ways of achievement led to tracings being reaffirmed, and I comprehended that I was attempting to be the successful academic promoted by the institution when I attempted to get them into the mold of the ideal student. As an academic I experienced a sense of loss when the students failed to achieve, but through a rhizomatic process of shifting my perspectives I

recognized that they were establishing their voice and standpoint, and, in this process, there was a change in their approach to learning.

In this regular site of tensions that occurred both for myself and my students, there was the desire to be different that could unravel a separate self. This process was not without contention, as the forces of desiring production and the desire for the plane of consistency collided. Subsequently, the students, bringing their expectations about the academic program and learning, were positive in their desire to achieve success. Their responses depicted their desires that often became visible as, beneath any “representative agency,” desire “continues to rumble, to throb [and] in return can ... resonate to breaking point” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 296). Desire, in turn, became a site to produce the new, a constant desire on our part to achieve, to dismantle the discourse of deficit.

The methodology of S-STEP assisted in an intimate examination of my practice through the dual lens of the student and the teacher. It exposed how I needed to examine my practice over an extended period, make constant adjustments to my practice over each semester, and importantly, not consider all CALD students as having the same requirements. The study, though small, builds into the more substantial body of work on CALD students by highlighting the need for constant movement between thresholds, between positionality from being in a molar position to a molecular becoming. In this sense, it contributes to the more significant body of work that is occurring in making learning successful for these students. Importantly, this methodological approach assisted me in uncovering the finer aspects of each student’s approach to learning that, together, formed a rhizomatic assemblage. Such an assemblage could be possible through the framework of inquiry. However, as Hamilton and Pinnegar (2014, p. 159) note, when focusing on “relational interaction,” the inquiry “remains inconclusive,” but is indicative of molecular openness instead of molar closures.

Overall, the study illustrated the incompleteness that is recursively present in teaching, and of learning as an ongoing process of becoming. Performativity and its accompanying discourses of accountability and adaptable identities, as noted at the start of the chapter, are an integral aspect of present-day education structure. Therefore, there will always be territorialization and reterritorialization within institutional territories. However, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) noted, it is in the endless possibility for deterritorialization that molecular, nevertheless, significant points of achievement can be possible.

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