



Rantala, T. (2019). *Exploring data production in motion: Fluidity and feminist poststructuralism*. Myers Education Press.

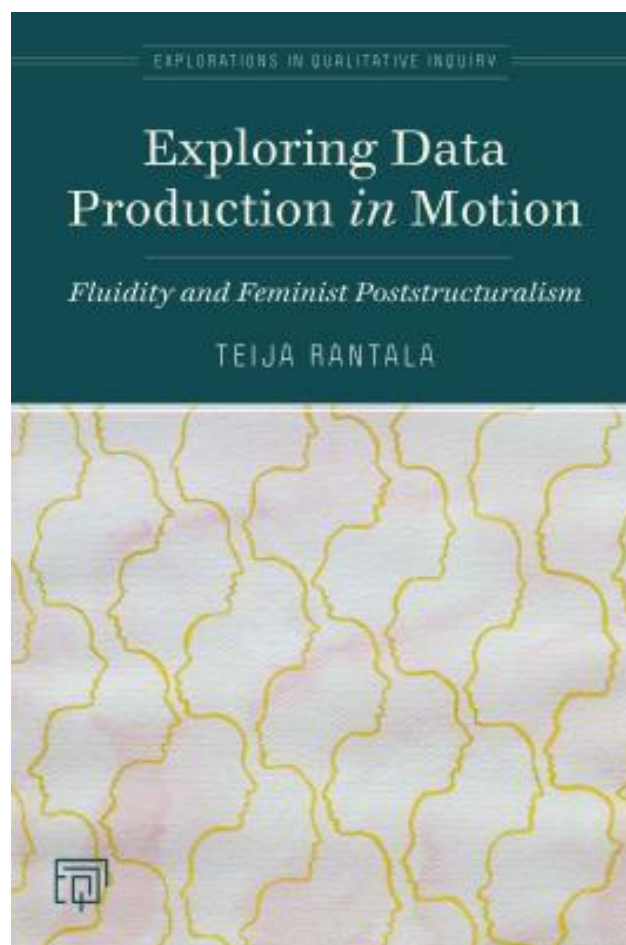
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Teija Rantala's book combines innovative and fluid methodological experimentation and critical social inquiry. It is the culmination of her doctoral thesis, which explored the multiplicity of aspirations voiced by a group of Conservative Laestadian women via autobiographical writing, collective biography and memory work. Building on poststructuralist heritages of feminist theorists such as Cixous (1993), Irigaray (1993) and Braidotti (2002, 2003) as well as Barad's (2003, 2007) postmethodology connecting mainly to the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987), she crafts a materialisation of the women's experiences that moves beyond some of the dominant narratives that surround conservative religious movements.

Throughout the book the author is sensitive to the emergent and situational nature of her research and is aware of the challenges of employing conventional qualitative research and analysis that can fix certain modes of thinking and being. To counter the potential to ossify and fix data collection and analysis, she argues that fluidity and movement in research practices



can produce a more open and emergent approach to both data and the resultant analysis. She employs a schizoanalytical approach (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) as she considers how women's subjectivity is constantly changing, and this takes her analysis and thinking in new directions.

Rantala works with a vital methodology that is fluid and in motion. Her argument for taking this situated approach to both methodology and analysis is based on an understanding of the differences between the possible and potential ways of conceptualising women's subjectivities. She takes a critical perspective as she seeks to unpick and untangle some of the "systems of inequality, domination, and oppression" (Rantala, 2019, p. 4) present in qualitative inquiry and wider society. She acknowledges the important work done by critical social research methodologies to highlight systems of oppression, but highlights that traditional methodologies and practices do not always succeed in revealing and challenging normative and dominant discourses and power constructions.

The thesis in this book is that there is a need to consider more immanent and flexible approaches to deal with "the constantly changing social world" (Rantala, 2019, p. 5). In this way Rantala theorises knowledge-production-in-the-making, which is situated and relational and not limited by linear conceptions of time (See Deleuze, 1994; Manning, 2007, 2013; Massumi, 2002). This way of thinking and doing research opens up different possibilities to explore socio-political inequalities found in everyday life and how these can generate new conceptions of the subject and subjectivity. Here subjectivity is relational, material, and multiple, and it cannot be fixed and stable, as it is in constant movement. What this means for Rantala's feminist poststructuralist approach is that this attention to fluidity and situatedness allows her to "trace actual voices, the aim is at following the events, intensities and affects of the inquiry" (Rantala, 2019, p. 19). She

generates data with the women participating in her study using a combination of memory work and collective biography, drawing on works of Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (2006, 2012). This collaborative mode of data production is a conscious and ethical move to allow momentary and unexpected writing events to become materialised (Massumi, 2002; Rantala, 2017). She explores the practice of writing itself more in detail with feminist philosophers such as Cixous (1993), Irigaray (1993) and Kristeva (1980).

The author is concerned with the idea of co-producing data with participants, and analysing data beyond comparison and judgement, with the focus on momentary ethics of desire and subjectivity formation. Therefore, in the beginning of the book the author sets up the context of the Laestadian movement and the focus for women to become mothers, noting that "maternal identity [is] the only officially recognized identity for adult Laestadian women" (Rantala, 2019, p. 36). The tensions between this accepted identity position and the development of contemporary feminist views on transformational politics for women in the Laestadian movement become clear in the collaborative writing and memory work. These methods offer an opportunity for the women to consider not only a maternal identity, but multiple possible positions as they negotiate their own maternalism and sexuality set within the needs of the movement to sustain its long-term future.

The data produced from the research included autobiographical writings, recordings of memory work encounters, and collaborative writing and prose, which were analysed to map and chart the women's perceptions of their desires and aspirations. As the author started to analyse the narratives, she looked for mappings and lines of expression (Braidotti, 2002) that revealed the affective nature of the women's aspirations. The ethical focus of the inquiry was to shift power from the researcher and distribute this with the participants. The

commitment to co-researching with the women and the women's willingness to engage with the collaboration allowed the women to shift the focus from their victimisation and normative expectations of the movement to a more collective and multiple view of their subjectivities. This was highlighted in the data extracts that revealed the multiplicity of the women's subject positions. These were not fixed but fluid, ever changing, and relational based on the women's individual and collective experiences.

Rantala draws on the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of schizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) as she analyses her data. This concept allows her to map the immanent nature of the forces and flows that are apparent in the women's narratives and how these are connected with their aspirations. This mapping led her to draw out three main arrangements of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987): religion and faith, collectivity, and womanhood. To help the reader to consider how these arrangements were produced, the author incorporates the mapping and images from the data production that reveal the connections. The mapping and images provide the reader with examples of the schizoanalysis process and help make connections between theory and data. From these three broader arrangements of desire it becomes possible to explore and trace the lines of movement present in the data and make linkages to those arrangements of desire to unfold "the women's lines and their movement, intensities, and affects to examine the intersections of Laestadian women's faith, collectivity and desired subjectivities" (Rantala, 2019, p. 86). The data revealed the dominant (molar lines) structure of the religious movement with its expectations for fertility and motherhood but also the women's responses (molecular lines) via which they negotiated their own path through the dominant religious expectations. The author argues that in revealing these molecular lines the women could orientate themselves away from some of the patriarchal

assumptions, and map out their agentic subjectivity as a response to molar strictures of the Laestadian movement.

In the interlude of the book, the author, with Professor Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, explores the purpose and function of fluid qualitative research practices. This interluding conversation concerns the generative and potential nature of working fluidly with research practices (See Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). The primary potential of being open to fluidity and motion in research practices is the chance to move away from foreclosing positions and possibilities that might reproduce dominant structures of knowledge production. Remaining open to multiple possibilities via processual and open-ended methods allow for critical feminist social inquiry to build new and creative responses to these dominant social positions and offer alternative ways of responding to entrenched power structures.

The overarching value of this book is the author's presentation of the ways in which the movement and fluidity of the data, 'the life in the lines', is articulated through feminist poststructuralist analysis. The data highlight the molar and molecular movements and changes in the women's subjectivity. These changes show how women who are part of religious conservative movements can live and think beyond dominant and patriarchal assumptions of their roles. The women's writings and expressions are treated with sensitivity, and it is clear that the author was committed to an ethical and collaborative retelling of the women's experiences and aspirations. The blend of images, narratives, and theory provide a twofold contribution: the first is to highlight new and innovative methodologies with which to enact qualitative inquiry. The second is the elucidation of the women's multiple molecular subjectivities, which provide an alternative counterpoint to some of the dominant religious and societal narratives that surround contemporary women. This book is aimed for both established scholars, as well as master's and

doctoral students. The book is a valuable resource for those interested in both feminist poststructuralist methodology and postqualitative inquiry and analysis. It skilfully

opens up the possibilities of feminist fluid and open-ended inquiry to readers who may not be familiar with the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari and poststructuralist methodology.

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About the Reviewer

Dr. Nikki Fairchild is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education and Care. Her PhD thesis, research interests, and publications enact posthumanist theorising, including the work of Deleuze and Guattari and new material feminisms, to extend existing theorisations of classroom practices, professionalism, and more-than-human distributed gendered subjectivities in Early Childhood. She is also interested in interdisciplinary ways to enact methodology and method via post-qualitative research (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8640-2710>).



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