Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology

Disequilibrium, Disorder, Discord at a Video Game Design Camp: Welling the Chaos in Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

Whereas the colloquial notion of chaos as disorder, chance, and anarchy is laden with negative connotations in educational contexts—that is, chaos inhibits rather than promotes—the author attempts to rehabilitate chaos by drawing on a process philosophical view that emphasizes chaos's generative potential. To develop this line of inquiry, the author offers a genealogical account of chaos across the work of Erin Manning before discussing its implications for qualitative inquiry in education. The text then picks up speed through an anarchival experiment with the Giga-Games Camp (pseudonym), a video game design camp for adolescents. Through this work, the author suggests that worlds cohere and are expressed through chaos, not in spite of it, and that qualitative researchers might therefore seek the virtue in chaos, especially in such chaotic times as our own.

Keywords: Manning, chaos, qualitative inquiry, video games, design, literacy

Introduction

The Giga-Gamers are thirty minutes into a 10-hour looping audio stream of George Michael's "Careless Whisper"—just the famous saxophone part—when Ozzy Osbourne joins in with "Crazy Train," then Journey with "Final Countdown," making me wonder if something is indeed about to "go off the rails." Rolling chairs spin haphazardly, as do human bodies, and laughter erupts across the Giga-Games Camp, a video game design camp for adolescents, where playful intensities ripple

with the molecular movements of young people as they fuse relational bonds through video game play-and-creation. It is, as I later describe, an *agencement of chaos*. Not just in terms of disorder and spontaneity—though there is indeed a surplus of both—but also in the way chaotic potential forgathers at the threshold of youthful vitality to become processual play-and-creation. This raucous yet nourishing commotion of youthful vitality is what Erin Manning (2016b), following Guattari (1995), calls a *chaosmosis*, a precarious interfacing between the inside and the outside, the fast and the slow, the virtual and the actual, where games and game worlds chaosmically cohere out of a seething, generative, and immanent brew.

Figure 1

Time-lapse Image of Campers Playing with a Rolling Chair

But, "how to well the chaos?" Manning asks (2020, p. 270)—a provocation I take up here to explore how chaos can create movement in educational qualitative inquiry. The concept of chaos resonates deeply throughout Manning's oeuvre, and as this paper aims to demonstrate, Manning's processual philosophical understanding of chaos as generation, creativity, and potential can move qualitative inquiry as a chaozmatic practice, where research-creation coheres and is expressed by virtue of chaos, not in spite of it.

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train

Let's go[1]

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[1] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

In addition to examining the methodological implications of Manning's chaos, this project also speaks to educational inquiry more broadly through its connection to the field of literacies studies, where a generative strain of scholarship has examined the affective, material, and intuitional qualities of literacy teaching and learning in both formal and informal educational contexts (Boldt, 2021; Ehret et al., 2016; Ehret et al., 2019; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Tanner et al., 2021). Manning's influence can be felt in this work. Thinking with Manning's concept of *immediation* (2020), for example, Ehret et al. (2019) described their work with an after-school video game club as an experiment in *speculative design*, which encouraged an approach to inquiry and pedagogy that "emerges in time and that helps to improve the quality of moments as they happen over time" (p. 1613). Importantly, this process-philosophical line of literacies studies has engaged in various forms of methodological experimentation, including Leander and Boldt's (2021) use of *strategic sketching*; Ehret et al.'s (2016) attention to affectively *felt focal moments*; and Tanner et al.'s (2021) work with improvisational theater. Such process philosophically oriented inquiry in literacies studies has unsettled conventional backwards designed approaches to pedagogy and methodology, opening up new plateaus for educators and researchers to traverse across disciplines, contexts, and ages.

For this project, I mobilize Manning's conception of chaos through an anarchival (Manning, 2020) exploration of the Giga-Games Camp, illustrating how her ideas have helped me reconceptualize young people's digital design practices in an informal literacy learning space. Whereas scholarship on young people designing video games has tended to value it for its ability to teach career-ready computer programming skills (Kafai & Burke, 2015), here I am interested in how Manning's thinking with chaos helps decenter such economic rationalities in favor of intensifying movement, collectivity, and play. To develop this line of inquiry, I begin with a genealogical discussion of chaos in the work of Erin Manning and then consider its implications for qualitative inquiry. From there the text picks up speed through an anarchival account of the Giga-Games Camp, as I attempt to well its chaos and thereby open up space for playful chaos in educational inquiry.

We're leavin' together, But still, it's farewell[2]

Chaos, Quasi-Chaos, and Chaosmosis in the Work of Erin Manning

Few things have inspired humanity's imaginative speculation more than confrontation with the cosmological infinite. In Hesiod's *Theogony* (730-700 BCE/2017), Chaos sits alongside Gaia, the earth, and Eros, the power of generation, in an originary triumvirate. For Hesiod, chaos was a void, a gap, hence its etymological connection to the word "chasm." His observation that "first of all Chaos came into being" (p. 36) functions as a literate enactment of a cosmological origin that only becomes intelligible in its relation to Gaia and Eros (Bussanich, 1983). For the Roman poet Ovid (8 CE/1993), chaos was "an undigested mass // of crude, confused, and scumbled elements, // a heap of seeds that clashed, of things mismatched" (p. 3). In the Ovidian view, chaos is not an empty void, but rather a disorganized assemblage of elements that must be given shape by a

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[2] Tempest, J. (1986).

deity. In both cases, chaos functions as the a-rational attempt to explain the inexplicable—the seemingly random generation of something out of nothing. Whereas Hesiod emphasized the generativity of chaos in relational terms, Ovid emphasized disorder and divine agency.

Manning's thinking with chaos can itself be traced back to mythological origins. In *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (2007), she offers a compelling reading of the biblical Garden of Eden narrative, one that points toward the ethico-aesthetic force her work will later intensify. "The touching of the apple," she writes, "is a violent entry into the political, if we conceive of the political as the moment of decision that engages us toward the world and therefore toward each other" (p. 49). In touching and tasting the apple, Eve rejects the infinite for the finite, making a political gesture toward immanence. To be fallen is to understand the indissoluble relation between human and human, human and non-human. As Manning writes, "A certain violence is omnipresent in the realization of the potential rupture between the endless vista of conformity heaven represents and the chaos of the world" (p. 5). Heaven, which is transcendent, compels identity, conformity, sameness, whereas the world, which is immanent, compels us towards difference, towards chaos.

Crucially, however, "Chaos is not the opposite of order," Manning notes in *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (2009). Following William James (1996), she argues, "What we experience—the event of force taking form—is always prehended from a certain quasi chaos: the indeterminacy of the not-yet-actual" (p. 90). In other words, Manning positions chaos not (only) as empirically disordered states of affairs, but rather as the virtual excess that *pre-immanates*—that is, a verb, a doing, not an inert substance—all actualized states of affairs. Quasi chaos is not the virtual, but rather is a transitional mode of virtuality, one that functions as a condition of potentiality for the systems by which chaotic virtuality is slowed, given consistency, actualized. The intensity of virtual chaos is perceived affectively at the quasi-chaotic threshold of experience, where cognitive and linguistic subtraction stabilizes virtuality according to particular regimes of truth and power. "Positivist science," Manning observes, "seeks to overlay potential with order, imposing measure from the outside. Radical empiricism works from the quasi chaos of the not-yet, beginning in the rhythmic middle of a becoming event" (p. 90). A radically empirical, chaozmatic qualitative inquiry, then, is one that reckons with the quasi-chaotic threshold of the middle—the middle of the method, the middle of the field, the middle of the muddle.

Crazy, but that's how it goes…[3]

The middle is a chaozmatic terrain where the chaotic and the stable intermingle. To explore such terrain demands, Manning (2016b) suggests, "an immersion in a kind of chaosmosis, the mix of chaos and complexity, of dissolution, where what is to come must be engendered" (p. 166). Manning's sense of chaosmosis here is liquid—immersion, mixture, dissolution—a conceptual

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[3] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

aqua vita for putting thought in motion. Thought is engendered through movement, through enthusiasm, through a bodying of the event. "This is an enthusiasm," Manning writes, "a chaosmosis, not with life already engendered, but in the very act of engendering" (p. 177). Such movement is exuberant, "but exuberant in its chaosmosis, in the force of its expression across the precarious chasm of petrification and spark" (p. 182). Manning's "precarious chasm" points towards the etymological and mythological origins of chaos—a gap, like a chasm—where petrification (i.e., potential energy) and spark (i.e., kinetic energy) converge to create what is to come.

To illustrate what Manning's thinking with chaos offers, consider the following lines from the opening passage of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE/1993), in which the speaker describes the first of many metamorphoses:

> *Before the sea and lands began to be,*
>
> *before the sky had mantled every thing,*
>
> *then all of nature's face was featureless—*
>
> *what men call chaos: undigested mass*
>
> *of crude, confused, and scumbled elements,*
>
> *a heap of seeds that clashed, of things mismatched.*
>
> *…*
>
> *For though the sea and land were there,*
>
> *the land could not be walked upon, the sea*
>
> *could not be swum, the air was without splendor:*
>
> *no thing maintained its shape; all were at war;*
>
> *in one same body cold and hot would battle;*
>
> *the damp contended with the dry, things hard*
>
> *with soft, and weighty things with weightless parts. (p. 3)*

In Ovid's description, chaos is the swirling mass of "crude, confused, and scumbled elements" that preceded the actualization of the sea and land. However, "the sea and land were there"—in other words, they were quasi chaotically immanent—but were nevertheless embroiled in a seething battle to become. As the speaker then recounts, it was "a god—and nature, now become benign—" who "ended this strife" by "separating" things, by "defining" things, by "assigning" things (p. 3). In other words, the deity actualized chaotic virtuality as particular states of affairs, implying that chaos has been subdued according to the regime of power the god embodies.

What Manning's thinking helps us understand, however, is that chaos remains immanent to experience and creation through *chaosmosis*. Despite the Ovidian god's separating, defining, and assigning things, chaos persists virtually, and it sparks at the quasi-chaotic threshold of actualization. This is the case throughout the *Metamorphoses*, such as when Neptune later lets loose his flood: "Between the sea and land one cannot draw distinctions: // all is sea, but with no shore" (p. 14). A moment of fracture, when immanent chaos disrupted the structured world to engender new, if ephemeral, relations through liquid immersion, mixture, and dissolution — through chaosmosis. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, there persists a precarious chasm between states of chaos and states of affairs, a precarity reflected in the term *chaosmosis* itself, which blends chaos and cosmos, the virtual and the actual, the indeterminable and the determinable, and which thereby emphasizes generation as a perpetually emergent process. There is perhaps something for process-philosophical qualitative inquiry to learn here: methodological attempts to separate, define, and assign meaning according to particular onto-epistemological and ideological frames cannot, despite their ostensibly stabilizing methods, control the virtual chaos there to be welled through chaozmatic thinking at the quasi-chaotic threshold of inquiry in motion.

Inquiry conceived as chaosmosis, or chaozmatic inquiry, is not a hyper-rationalized process, but is rather charged with affect, moving with feeling. A "thinking-feeling," Manning (2008) calls it, "at the threshold of thought and creation" (p. 8), which interfaces with chaotic virtuality to extract "becoming-concepts" (p. 8). Thinking-feeling is akin to the work of philosophy as described by Deleuze+Guattari (1991/1994), for whom concept creation was the attempt to bring consistency, *not* stability, to chaos through variation—not variable, as in the case of science, or variety, as in the case of art—in the form of new concepts that are able to retain something of the chaos by "giving the virtual a consistency specific to it" (p. 118). In this way philosophical concepts touch chaotic virtuality through processes of sense and difference. That feeling of surplus, of being not not-quite-there, that I (and perhaps you) experience with philosophical concepts, is the threshold of quasi-chaotic virtuality, where thought is renewed and imagination is unmoored.

And maybe we'll come back to Earth, who can tell?[4]

Thinking with Chaos in Qualitative Inquiry

I now return to Manning's (2020) provocation: "How to well the chaos?" (p. 270). *To well* is both to dig and to boil, to search and to gush; and to well the chaos, as I conceive of it, is to tap its nourishing flows for qualitative inquiry. To well the chaos, one must dwell with it, following Manning's impulse to "think-with the adventure of discord at the heart of live-living" (p. 101). I say *with* chaos and not *in* it because, as Manning+Massumi (2014) explain, chaos as virtuality cannot be experienced directly, only as the Jamesian quasi chaos, the "field of divergences and convergences, comings-together and goings apart, concatenation and separation, already tending

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[4] Tempest, J. (1986).

to sort itself out in the determination of a thisness" (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 115). When confronted with the quasi-chaotic milieu of the social world—that is, the discordant convergences, comings-together and goings apart—conventional qualitative methodologies sometimes work to distill the complexity of sociality down to a covert simplicity, a *thisness* that renders the world determinate, stable. For St. Pierre (2017), such *conventional humanist qualitative methodology* (e.g., ethnography) is weighed down by the sedimentations of positivism, which position the individual human agent—the "I" of the researcher—as an instrument by which to measure, categorize, and render the social world legible, a world that is indeed always already producing the "I" of the researcher.

In contrast, Manning's thinking with chaos can move qualitative inquiry toward research-creation, or "the transversal activation of the relational fields of thinking and doing" (2016a, p. 138), which offers an approach to educational inquiry that destabilizes the "I" of the researcher, producing accounts of a different (dis)order than conventional humanist qualitive methodology. I do not mean to suggest research-creation eliminates the researcher's "I," but rather that it moves the inquirer towards a time when it is, as Deleuze+Guattari (1980/1987) observed, "no longer of any importance whether one says I" (p. 3). Such is the spirit of Manning's work with Brian Massumi at the SenseLab, "a laboratory for thought in motion" (SenseLab-3e, n.d.), which provides a useful illustration of what a chaozmatic inquiry might look like. Indeed, the work Manning and Massumi describe in *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (2014) is positively shot through with a conceptual orientation toward chaos. At the SenseLab, Manning and Massumi understand "creative chaos" as an "enabling constraint" (p. 113)—that is, a positive limitation, like the no hands rule in soccer, a limitation which encourages creativity—and they seek to create disequilibrial initial conditions whereby unique relations can emerge spontaneously through improvisational dynamics. In their SenseLab project, "Generating the Impossible," Manning and Massumi have invited SenseLab participants to *Prepare for Creative Chaos*, *Compose an Emergent Attunement*, *Give Forth*, and *Creatively Return to Chaos* (pp. 132-133) in an effort to push participatory art beyond its limit as an act of political becoming something akin to Eve's tasting of the apple.

Conceived chaozmatically, transversal research-creation engages with inquiry as a quasi-chaotic event where disequilibrium and discord generate ephemeral and epiphenomenal relations. It attempts to "loosen matter captured on the strata and return it to chaos, to the formless matter of the plane of immanence and infinite possibility" (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 696). Understood as research-creation, a chaozmatic inquiry exceeds the bounds of conventional qualitative inquiry and requires something outside method, which is itself, as Manning (2016b) argues, "an apparatus of capture" (p. 32), "a safeguard against the ineffable"—that is, a safeguard against the world, immanence, and chaos. "What we need," Manning (2016b) observes, "are not methods for curating life-lived, but techniques for life-living" (p. 136), a distinction that resonates strongly with the minor strain of qualitative inquiry influenced by thinkers and philosophers associated with various "posts" (e.g., posthumanism), a strain reflected in this special issue. Unlike method, which disciplines thought according to specific regimes of truth, power, and value, technique unleashes

thought through processual invention, through a speculatively pragmatic sensitivity to the chaozmatic now.

A chaozmatic inquiry encourages thinking-feeling through and across concepts and qualia such that onto-epistemological boundaries become fluid and unstable, urging disequilibrial modes of inquiry whereby new concepts, new futures, and new worlds might cohere. The imperative here is to *seek the disequilibrial* at all stages of inquiry—to, like Eve, eschew equilibrium as a political act—and to thereby engender new relations within and across the event of inquiry (e.g., the field, the researcher, the matter, the participants, etc.). "The challenge is immense," Manning (2013) cautions, as such inquiry "cannot depend on the mantra 'anything goes' as this will produce (in the best of all cases) chaos or (in the worst case scenario) nothing" (p. 126). The risk is real, and I feel it even now as I speak to the virtues of chaos in a (mostly) conventional academic manuscript.

<p align="center">*Can he see or is he blind?*[5]</p>

As an approach to investigating the social world, a chaozmatic inquiry understands the practice of research-creation as a process of attunement and transindividuation which is always already reckoning with and proceeding by bouts of disorder, unpredictability, and turbulence. When thinking-feeling at the quasi-chaotic threshold of experience, attunement activates the transindividuality of inquiry as event, where transindividuality is, as Manning (2020) explains, "not the sum of the parts. It is the excess that moves across all comings-into-experience" (p. 309). To chaozmatically inquire in education is to reckon with the quasi-chaotic excess of the event through attunement to the thresholding processes of the virtual becoming actual. Chaozmatic thinking can nurture the excitement, enthusiasm, and adventure of inquiry across its domains, even when enacting a conventional research practice like manuscript writing, where I, for example, enter into composition with my surroundings, sit with the indeterminable, linger in the chaosmosis, as I try to generatively well the virtual chaos of thought as it spills out into the actual words people read.

After all, as is the case with research-creation, fundamental to speculatively pragmatic chaozmatic inquiry-creation is the understanding "that making is a thinking in its own right, and conceptualization a practice in its own right" (Manning, 2016b, p. 134). Making, thinking, practicing, conceptualizing—these creative processes are all immanent to one another and to the social world to, for, and with which they speak. When thinking becomes making (and vice-versa) and conceptualizing becomes practice (and vice-versa), thought is immanently in motion. However, because it is a gesture towards the quasi-chaotic excess that pre-immanates inquiry, there is no recipe to follow in order to enact chaozmatic research-creation. Indeed, to the extent that step-methods become intelligible within the discourses and practices of methodology, to abandon methodology may likewise be to abandon method. This, of course, does not mean one cannot *do* anything, but rather that whatever one does is not bound up in any prior

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[5] Iommi, A.F., Osbourne, O., Butler, T.M.J., Ward, W.T. (1971).

methodological superstructure (St. Pierre, 2021). What is needed are bespoke techniques, not methods. And the reason can be found in the two words' respective origins: method derives from the Greek word *hodos* for pathway, while technique derives from the Greek word *tekhnikos* for art or skill. Whereas method travels the well-worn path of methodological capture, chaozmatic technique artfully and skillfully invents and innovates concepts on the edge of chaos in pursuit of difference, a challenge I take on in the subsequent section.

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train[6]

Welling the Chaos of the Giga-Games Camp Anarchive

As an inquiry practice, anarchiving reckons with the paradox at the heart of much qualitative inquiry, one that has prompted me to ask, following Manning (2020), "How to reconcile the freshness, as Whitehead might say, of processes underway with the weight of experience captured?" (p. 3). In other words, how can I enliven the quasi chaos of the Giga-Games Camp (Figure 2) when all I am left with are the event's preserved material traces? No method (e.g., coding), and certainly not a prescriptive one, can resolve this tension, since prescriptive methods can suppress chaos in an effort to portray stability as a hidden substrate shaping the moving world. As Manning (2016b) observes, "If something cannot be categorized, it cannot be made to account for itself and is cast aside as irrelevant" (p. 32). The chaotic surplus of inquiry is indeed that which cannot be categorized—though perhaps it can be anarchived, understanding of course that chaos will always elude the anarchive, too.

Anarchiving has encouraged me to reactivate the quasi chaos of the Giga-Games event and thereby reach toward its chaotic virtuality to see what might be engendered when thought is put in chaozmatic motion. This is possible, as Manning (2009) explains, because "events always in some sense remain invested with this quasi chaos, for they have been prehended from the indeterminacy of the forces that compose them" (p. 90). To anarchive is to reckon with the tension at the heart of inquiry—the "weight of experience captured" (Manning, 2020, p. 3)—and it is to think chaozmatically across the precarious cha(o)sm of lively emergence and dormant data. Anarchiving at once confronts this tension while inspiring experimental variations in response to it, something it achieves through its "capacity to sidle form without fully giving in to its contours, or becoming seduced by the false promise of reproducibility" (p. 92). For this inquiry, my anarchival work sidles form across the quasi-chaotic material traces curated at the Giga-Games Camp, including my own written reflections, photographs, videos, and camper-created video games— along with the music, the movement, and the memories. Such traces, however, do not of themselves constitute the anarchive, but rather they adumbrate the indeterminable surplus of the

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[6] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

Giga-Games Camp event.

Figure 2

Composite Image of Activities at the Giga-Games Camp
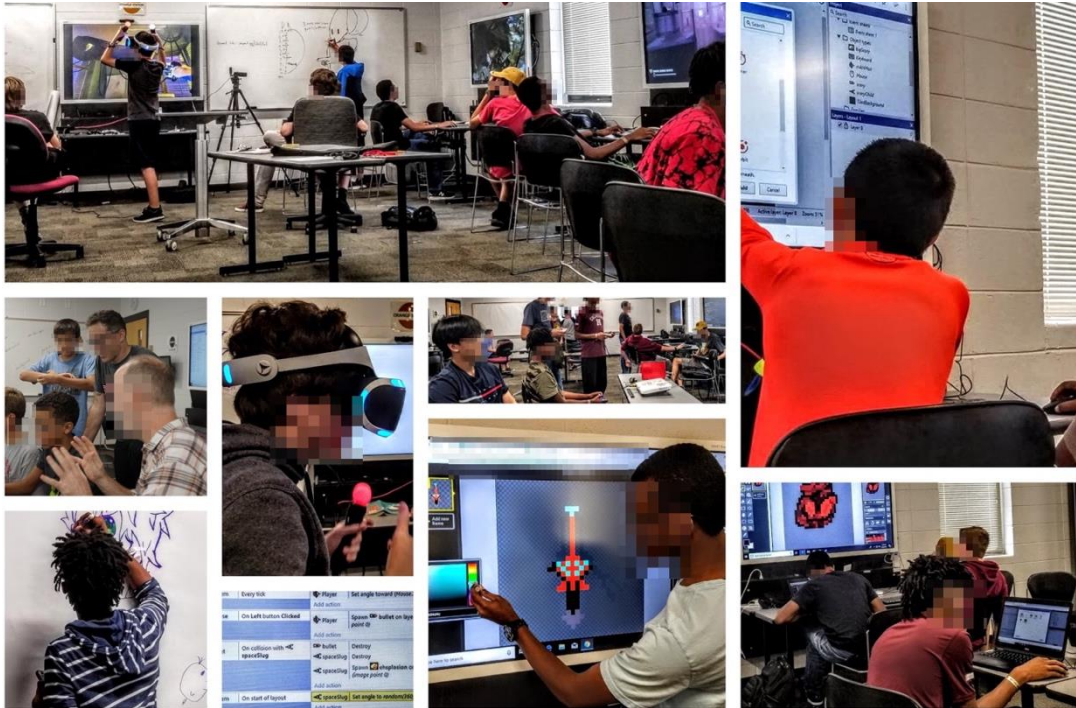
In what follows, I attempt to re-activate the life of the event by putting chaozmatic thought in motion—a motion that will soon become commotion as it picks up speed. Rather than discipline thought through the stabilizing linear processes of categorization and delineation, however, I instead playfully wander through the anarchive. And I mean that quite literally, as I spend considerable time playing and replaying the games Giga-Gamers created. This anarchival play functions as a "feed-forward mechanism" (Manning, 2020, p. 92) by which I can seek the disequilibrial and thereby well the chaos. Yet and still, though, I recognize that "for an experience to be known as such, there has to be a subtraction into actuality" (Manning, 2013, p. 176)—the images, the words, the composition, this manuscript. But reaching towards anarchival commotion demands a formal response, an imperative I draw from Manning (2020), who calls for "new modes of narration, new techniques of writing, new practices of living" that can be "activated from the event's middling" (p. 49). As an effort towards what is for me an aspirational way of living with and through inquiry, I think, feel, and write across the Giga-Games Camp anarchive; Manning's concepts; and the likes of Ovid, Ozzy Osbourne, Black Sabbath, and Europe—Georgie Michael's "Careless Whisper" sometimes playing on the lower frequencies of my memory—and as I do, a somewhat rhapsodic mode of minding middles takes hold of me.

We're leavin' together, But still, it's farewell [7]

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[7] Tempest, J. (1986).

The *Agencement of Chaos*

Manning, like Buchanan (2017), tends to think with the concept of *agencement*, not assemblage, but while Buchanan prefers the term due its "plain language understanding of assemblage as the putting together of things" (p. 462), Manning (2020) insists that "*agencement* is not a form in any sense of the word (neither is it an arrangement). *Agencement* assembles—it is the movement-toward, the orientation that creates the conditions for a process to 'take'" (p. 445). This is an important point, as Manning's sense of *agencement* as a moving towards emphasizes its processual qualities and emergent potentials. *Agencement* as a moving towards need not imply some master subject—that is, an Ovidian-style deity constructing an ordered arrangement—but rather it underscores *agencement* as an always ongoing transindividual process whereby relationality coheres out of chaotic virtuality when pre-personal forces forgather at the quasi-chaotic threshold of experience.

"If instead of beginning with agency we turn to *agencement*," Manning (2016b) proposes, "asking not what the subject did but what the event proposed, another version of the task comes to light" (p. 143). But what does the event propose? And what is the task? The event proposes chaos—through play, movement, and sound. The task—to seek the disequilibrial.

Has he lost his mind?[8]

To nurture a more open, dynamic space where young people can play and design in a process-focused, non-goal directed way, Lars and I eschew the stability and determinacy of school rituals. The camp's processes and norms are therefore structured around a set of *mechanics* instead of rules, drawing on the game design concept of *mechanics*, which essentially refers to the core set of activities by which players interact within a game world. Such mechanics are *enabling constraints* (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 113). Mechanic number one: *This is not school*. Through such mechanics, we introduce "the enabling constraint of quasi chaos," as Manning+Massumi put it, in an effort to "create conditions of interference" (p. 126) that can destabilize the camp, that can set it a bit off kilter, that can produce living and learning of a different (dis)order than school.

We're heading for Venus

And still, we stand tall[9]

Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" echoes against Europe's "Final Countdown," creating a discordant medley of sound matched only by the laughter-chatter bouncing through the music and off the

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[8] Iommi, A.F., Osbourne, O., Butler, T.M.J., Ward, W.T. (1971).
[9] Tempest, J. (1986).

walls. The space vibrates with youthful energy.

Antwon works on "Black Man," his first digital animation, but struggles with PiskelApp, a browser-based tool for creating and animating pixel art. He calls me over to help him think through the effects different pixel resolutions will have on "Black Man."

Figure 3
Image of Antwon and Alex Designing
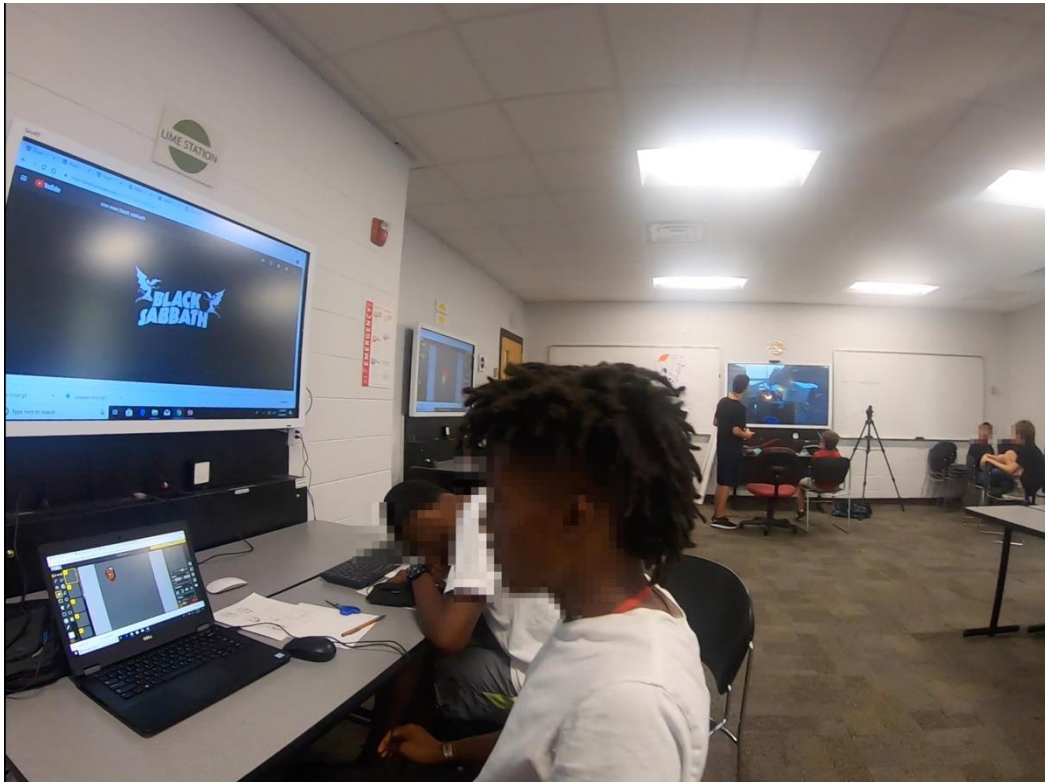
Alex sits beside Antwon, using pencil and paper to create concept art for the game he and Antwon are designing together, while Cameron, working at an adjacent computer station, watches Will and J play *Spiderman* on a PlayStation 4 (Figure 3).

In a conventional learning space, many of the Giga-Gamers would likely be described as "off task" or "distracted" because their behaviors disrupt product-focused pedagogies. I prefer to think differently of the chaos-campers, understanding us all as a "group-subject, the agglomeration of collective forces in the event" (Manning, 2020, p. 117), where creativity and desire transindividually exceed and precede both the individual, product-oriented learner and the individual, disciplining instructor. After all, "desire's production has nothing to do with the creation of a product," as Manning (2020) writes. "This is immanent production, an agencement of tendencies toward an unfolding, in the event, of a politics of affirmation" (p. 300). Desire-driven immanent production needs no product—it is all process, the moving towards the *agencement of chaos*.

With so many light years to go

And things to be found[10]

So rather than attempt to redirect or control the youthful vitality spilling out all over the camp, Lars and I feel towards pedagogies of the moment, remaining attuned to the dynamic interaction between states of play and design as they merge and morph. In doing so, we engage in disequilibrial pedagogy as a political act of affirmation, one that honors youths' "vitality rights" (Boldt, 2020), "the basic rights to be vital, to experience vitality, and to have that vitality welcomed and joined with" (p. 12). In this way, campers' play and design processes function as the immanent production of desire and vitality, where the individual designer is decentered such that bodies, materials, and space exchange energy. When Antwon animates "Black Man" while other Giga-Gamers play in virtual reality, design original games, and post to the camp's Discord[11] server (Figure 4)—as the discordant sounds of heavy metal echo against the breezy saxophone of smooth jazz—design circulates as an affective force that precedes and exceeds the individual. A "desiring-production," Manning (2020) calls it, or "the *agencement* of a process that facilitates a dephasing that affirms difference" (p. 300).

The Giga-Gamers now cohere into little pockets of relationality: playing and designing games together, sharing memes, animations, and games via the camp's Discord[11] server.

> "Mr. Krabs is dummy thick," Tyler posts to the Discord server.

> "WHAT?" Alex replies.

> Tyler then says aloud—and to no one in particular, it seems—"If you want to see a dummy thick Momo, look it up. But don't."

Alex immediately Googles "dummy thick Momo," carefully, loudly, and slowly narrating his process so we all can hear. A gaggle of Giga-Gamers huddle around him—and then spontaneously explode into a frenzy of hyperbolic disgust and discord.
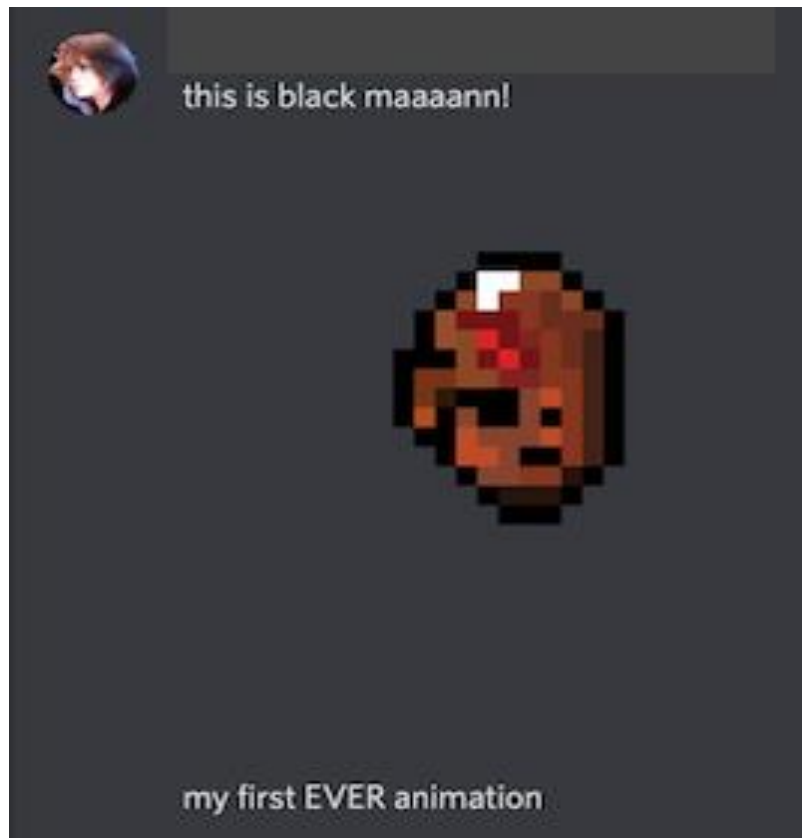
Crazy, but that's how it goes…[12]

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[10] Tempest, J. (1986).

[11] Discord is a voice over internet protocol (VoIP) and social media platform where affinity-based communities engage in multimodal communication.

[12] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

Figure 4

Image of Antwon's Discord post

"Discord," Manning (2020) writes, "is key to how value moves the event. With discord comes breach in form, shape-shifting" (p. 94). Discordantly through the Discord server, the Giga-Gamers *hyper-channel* across the material and digital worlds, producing affective transmissions that dissipatively flow between our shared virtual and physical environments such that the boundaries between them blur into the *agencement of chaos*. Through the quasi chaos of the Discord server, the *hyper-channel* moves an excess that surges over the edges of screens and into bodies, charging them with joy and movement and laughter and creativity. This is how the hyper-channel encourages a "breach in form," a "shape-shifting" (p. 94)—through Discord.

The Giga-Gamers are becoming.

> The Giga-Gamers are becoming memes.

> > The Giga-Gamers are *becomeme*.

Aaron finds a ten-hour stream of the saxophone intro to George Michael's "Careless Whisper," which begins playing loudly enough to hear across the entire space (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Image of 10-hour Stream of "Careless Whisper" Saxophone Loop

"Why," I inquire.

"Because I wanted to hear it," he says, "and I found this on YouTube, so let's see how long we can listen before destroying our minds."

"So you just like this song?" I ask.

"No, I'm just seeing how long it can last until someone comes over and shuts it down. I know it will annoy somebody."

No one seems to notice or care. This despite the fact that Antwon and Alex increase the volume of their music, now inviting us all to climb aboard Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train."

"Well, I'm not going to be the one to shut it down," I assure Tyler.

It is just more discord, after all, more shapeshifting, another formal breach as the *agencement of chaos* now wells with sound.

I'm going off the rails on a crazy train[13]

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[13] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

Mikel and Bethany focus intently on designing "Pathfinder," a game in which the player-character tries to evade an enemy AI as it follows them around each level. Josh and Nate take turns pushing each other on a rolling chair (see Figure 1), their spinning-grinning paralleled by Daniel's, who is jacked into a PlayStation virtual reality apparatus, his movements in the virtual world mediated by a wire tethering him to the real world—another *hyper-channel*.

Figure 6
Images of Josh at the PlayStation VR Station

As Daniel plays with, against, and in the virtual world, he flies, bounces off walls, taunts other players, his physical body responding to his virtual body and vice-versa. His *hyper-channeling* body is, as Manning (2009) describes, a "quasi chaos of the movement's immanent centering," which is "itself a change of equilibrium, an individuating of the becoming-body of the movement" (p. 45). It is a body at the quasi-chaotic threshold of becoming-cyborg. After Daniel comes Josh, who quickly rage-quits the virtual reality game, carelessly tossing the headset to the floor before trudging slowly away (Figure 6). A moment of fracture—discord of a different (dis)order.

Nate recovers the equipment and enters the virtual world beyond-us-yet-tethered-to-us in the *agencement of chaos*. Someone turns out the lights so all screens can be better seen, and Josh lies dejectedly on the floor, staring up at the other campers as they take turns playfully bouncing

between real and virtual worlds.

Now the time is here…[14]

"Affectively," Manning (2009) writes, "feeling works on the body, bringing to the fore the experiential force of the quasi chaos of the not-quite-seen" (p. 95). Affectively attuned to the quasi chaos of this event, I think and feel toward *chaosmosis*—the precarious interfacing between petrification and spark—trying to do so "in a way that prolongs the capacity of one body to act" (Manning, 2016b, p. 173). I walk over to Josh and offer my hand. "Sorry I did that," he says, as I help him up from the floor.

We're leaving ground[15]

All the while, the Giga-Games Camp moves as an event precariously perched on the edge of chaos, where chaotic qualia—sound, movement, speed—interface with chaotic virtuality such that creativity and imagination actualize spontaneously as digital art, video games, and friendships. As the event unfolds, attunement and movement are modulated through the structural pressures applied by the bodies moving as the *agencement of chaos*. Such pressures can be applied by any body—human or non-human, physical or digital—and can also be applied transindividually, that is through "what is passing between the individuals involved, which is reducible to neither taken separately" (Massumi, 2015, p. 94). And this processual attunement to the event, where different desires move in different directions, flashing between states playful creation and creative play, is the moving towards of the *agencement of chaos*, a farrago of feeling flowing through the collective.

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

But moving towards what?

The ledge, ha-ha, the edge[16]

The *agencement of chaos* speaks to how freedom of movement and action, which can manifest as chaotic disorder in need of authoritarian control, can in fact nourish learning, design, and relationality. Such a transindividual conception of living and learning shows how creative processes exceed the individual while nevertheless sustaining them, even when their projects are left unfinished—that is, left perpetually in the middle. At the Giga-Games Camp, some campers create playable video games, while others devote all their energies to animating pixel art. Some campers work together; others work alone. Some campers prefer not to "work" at all, dabbling with different devices and platforms, pushing against the boundaries of the camp's mechanics, or playing game after game after game. Taken together, these are the Guattarian (1995) "Zen points

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[14] Iommi, A.F., Osbourne, O., Butler, T.M.J., Ward, W.T. (1971).

[15] Tempest, J. (1986).

[16] Daisley, B., Osbourne, O., & Rhoads, R. (1980).

of chaosmosis," which "can only be discovered in nonsense" (p. 118), in the frenzied laughter and molecular movements of youth. Such Zen points, Manning (2016b) suggests, are an "enthusiasm, a chaosmosis, not with life already engendered, but in the very act of engendering" (p. 177).

Will things ever be the same again?[17]

Towards Chaozmatic Qualitative Inquiry in Education

"The concept is never borne of an individual," Manning writes (2020, p. 11). "Whoever is named in the creation of a concept is a carrier. Their role is not to claim it but to see how its carrying into the world alters the place from which thinking moves" (p. 11). Just as Manning carries forth the concepts of James, Whitehead, Deleuze+Guattari, and Guattari, among others, here I have carried forth Manning's conceptual innovations and variations, even experimenting with a few of my own. *Chaos*, *quasi chaos, chaosmos, agencement, agencement of chaos, hyper-channel, anarchive, affect, transindividuality, attunement, becomeme*—a chaos of concepts circulates throughout this anarchival exploration. It is a conceptual chaos of the not-quite-there that allows me (and hopefully you) to reach across the precarious cha(o)sm of experience by thinking-feeling towards generation, towards difference, towards chaotic virtuality in educational inquiry.

Qualitative inquiry, I suggest, needs more chaos, and it needs more chaos more than it needs more method. A chaozmatic qualitative inquiry seeks the disequilibrial, understanding chaos not only as observed disorder, but also as the processes by which the real, the virtual, and the actual flicker in and out of becoming. To reckon with chaos in qualitative inquiry is to move with the chaosmos, an attunement to the freedom and creative potential of quasi chaos that neither descends into a state of deleterious actuality—pure disorder, chance, and anarchy—nor responds with reactionary, authoritarian systems of control and capture. My anarchival study of the Giga-Games Camp showed me the difference chaozmatic thinking can make, especially when one takes seriously Manning's (2016b) provocation to research-create, to "consider that making is a thinking in its own right, and conceptualization a practice in its own right" (p 134). While I continue feeling the "weight of experience captured" (Manning, 2020, p. 3), enlivening the material traces of the Giga-Games Camp—playing campers' games; listening to Black Sabbath, George Michael, and Europe as I write; reading, thinking, and writing with Manning's ideas all the while—has created useful frictions with the stabilizing, deterministic tendencies of inquiry. Further, attempting to sidle form through experimental compositional practices (e.g., song lyrics) has lodged me in the chaosmos as I meandered playfully through the discord of the Giga-Games Camp, trying to move the *agencement of chaos* across temporalties, off the page or screen, and into readers' bodies and minds.

Just as there are no step-methods for research-creation, I cannot provide any step-methods by

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[17] Tempest, J. (1986).

which to rationalize a chaozmatic qualitative inquiry in education. One must become attuned to the edges of quasi chaos, those moments of precarity where systems and relations are destabilized, and then one must linger with them, seek them, maybe even nurture them—and this, I suggest, is the case for all aspects of inquiry (e.g., reading, field work, data curation, writing, etc.). It is an inquiry of immanence and the event; it chases after "the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 156).

Moving towards such an inquiry calls for thinking and feeling one's way towards molecular techniques of a moment—attunement to how movements, sounds, and materials processually cohere as *agencement of chaos* in classrooms, schools, and communities—and Erin Manning's work is a powerful guide. As Manning (2020) notes, "None of this is an individual's work. The writing, the thinking-with, the sociality, is what brings the concept to expression" (p. 11). To seek the chaos of concepts is to generate them, vary them, play with them—not so much like Ovid's deity, but more like the Giga-Gamers and the raucous yet nourishing creative commotion they spark. After all, "A concept is oriented by the path it draws forth," Manning (2020) observes; it is "less ours to claim than ours to follow" (p. 11). A chaozmatic qualitative inquiry follows concepts into the chaosmos, and we can all do it together across time and space, and in conversation with Deleuze+Guattari, with James, with Whitehead, with Manning, and with each other, too. It is through such relations that new worlds cohere and are expressed by and through chaos, not in spite of it, and qualitative researchers might therefore seek the virtue in chaos, particularly in such chaotic times as our own.

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