

2013

Re-Generating Research Partnerships in Early Childhood Education: A Non-Idealized Vision

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Citation of this paper:

Pacini-Ketchabaw V., Nxumalo F. (2013) Re-generating Research Partnerships in Early Childhood Education: A Non-idealized Vision. In: Duncan J., Conner L. (eds) Research Partnerships in Early Childhood Education. Palgrave Macmillan, New York

**Re-Generating Research Partnerships in Early Childhood Education:
A Non-Idealized Vision**

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw & Fikile Nxumalo (2013)

In J. Duncan & L. Conner (Eds), *Research partnerships in early childhood education: Teachers and researchers in collaboration* (pp.11-26). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. [pre-proof version]

Abstract

This chapter provides a challenge to positivist notions of partnership in early childhood education, and instead proposes a re-generative posthumanist perspective, based on relationality of partnerships. Specifically, the chapter addresses the troubles and struggles inherited in research partnerships through a non-idealized vision of research partnerships. It experiments with the notions of regenerating ‘change’ and regenerating ‘relationality’. It also addresses the multi-layered aspects of knowledge-in-the-making; non-innocent relations; difficulties of thinking change in research; and the potentialities of conflict and dissension. However, no certainties and closures about research partnerships are provided.

Non-Idealized Vision of Partnerships

A non-idealized vision of practices grounded on committed attachments needs a multi-layered, non-innocent, approach. . . . Relationality is all there is, but this does not mean a world without conflict nor dissension. (Bellacasa, 2012, p. 204)

We begin this chapter with a disclaimer. Although we have been working in collaboration with early childhood educators for many years now, we do not have definitive answers regarding enablers and barriers for effective relations in research partnerships, for transformations in educators' practices, and for advancement of educators' thinking and actions. Yet, since our research collaborations with educators began in 2006, we have dedicated much thinking about the *troubles* and *struggles* of research partnerships. It is precisely the troubles and struggles that are inherited in research partnerships that we want to address in this chapter. We do so by outlining challenging theoretical pathways. Using Bellacasa's (2012) words as our inspiration, we show how relational work in research partnerships is always multilayered and far from innocent. We also attempt to think-with 'a non-idealized vision' of research partnerships that is based on entanglements. For example, we pay attention to research practices that entangle researchers with everything they encounter in their relations with educators. To engage with this non-idealized vision of research partnerships, we experiment with the notions of regenerating 'change' (bringing Deleuze and Guattari (1987) into the discussion), and regenerating 'relationality'. We write about the multi-layered aspects of knowledge-in-the-making; about non-innocent relations; about difficulties of thinking change in research; and about the potentialities of conflict and dissension. Yet, there are not certainties and closures in our arguments about research partnerships.

We speak of re-generation as a way of displacing "development, fulfillment and containment" (Haraway, 1997, p. 12)—interrupting an all too easy move towards interpreting our work with educators through progressive linear trajectories of change. Re-generation, through its gestures to growth, as consisting of complicated, entangled

and continually emergent past-present-futures, creates movement away from linearity. Re-generation embraces mutuality, mess, multiplicity and contradiction.

Regeneration is not about starting points. It is the always already—it is augmentation and fragmentation and building and deconstruction. Regeneration is non-chronological and is not only disinterested in origin, but is interested in being antagonistic to origin. The moment of replication and appropriation is along a trajectory that is non-linear and messy. What do we know? What can we change? What did we used to do that was good? What has been lost and found and invented and fused? . . . [Regeneration] is not situated along a chronology of time, a narrative of progress, or a framework of history. It is looking for new location. (Handlasrsky, 2010, p. 88)

We draw on regeneration as ‘ways of seeing’ that produce mutual interferences to ordered narratives of our research. Haraway (1992) refers to these ways of seeing as ‘differential artifactualism’ (p. 299); where research is relational, embraces difference and, acts in disruptive ways. An important part of these disruptions has been to resist limiting our work to humanist relationships – to put differential artifactualism to work to inhabit *naturecultures* (Haraway, 2008) through located stories of place. Importantly, re-generation provides an entry with which to engage with the more-than-human relationalities that have inhabited our collaborative work with educators.

We bring forward selected stories from our research practices. These stories allow us to follow a feminist politics (Haraway, 1991) to which we are committed to in our work (for example, see Nxumalo, Pacini-Ketchabaw & Rowan, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012a; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo & Rowan, 2011). These are stories that grapple with

troubles, but have no generalized moral teachings nor are finished stories of grandiose research practices. They do, however, have “consequences for response-ability” (Haraway, 2012, p. 312). The stories, we tell about our research, are not reflected upon, but they are linked to other stories. Stories become entangled without following a linear trajectory. The stories and encounters we write about are troubling to us. As ‘researchers’ we struggle to understand what it entails to be in a research relationship, to respond to the troubles that these encounters bring, to acknowledge our own implication in these encounters, to care for the world we are in--to stay with the trouble itself.

We take seriously recent critiques of qualitative research practices (e.g., Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Law, 2004; MacLure, 2010; Mazzei & McCoy, 2010), and acknowledge research practices as non-innocent, as always embedded in and reproducing social relations of power (McWilliam, 2002). Therefore, we engage in the ‘details’ of research accounts, in the middle of mundane practices of research with educators and avoid generalizations. As Haraway (2012) says:

The details link actual beings to actual response-abilities. Each time a story helps me remember what I thought I knew, or introduces me to new knowledge, a muscle critical for caring about flourishing gets some aerobic exercise. Such exercise enhances collective thinking and movement too. (p. 13)

We also attend to what Phelan (2011) refers to as an impoverishment in research pertaining to teacher education and practices. Phelan notes that what is needed are research approaches that “nurture thought and cultivate- different ways of understanding and imagining”; research approaches that are “non-consequentialist in character”; research approaches that enrich rather than improve; research approaches that “tolerate

interminable questions”; research approaches that “do not try to resolve the difficulties that their explorations may surface” (p. 208). Therefore, we avoid thinking of research partnerships with early childhood educators as external interventions that can be measured, and instead focus on what these partnerships might bring to co-create new visions of relationality.

We begin by describing the context of the *stories* we use throughout the chapter. Then, we address the re-generation of change by interfering in a story of professional development. We propose the re-generation of relations by putting differential artifactualism to work and addressing human – non-human relations. Through these movements in our texts, we draft a vision of non-idealized research partnerships.

Collaborative Researching

The stories we write-with come from a research project involving early childhood educators and ourselves within the context of Western Canada. We have been experimenting with what we call collaborative critically engaged communities to rethink practices in early childhood (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot & Sanchez, submitted). Since 2006 we have been working collaboratively with groups of early childhood educators using what we call pedagogical narrations (Berger, 2010) as a way to reconceptualize pedagogy. At the heart of these collaborations is political work – ‘taking apart’ and contesting some of the pedagogical understandings that underlie our practices in early childhood; as well as figuring out what is next after the contestation. Together we discuss how we might work with postfoundational theories (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., submitted) to shift our perspectives and inspire ethical action in response to everyday pedagogical encounters. We try to engage in research with educators from a position of

ethical responsibility that does not mean transcending problems but engaging and situating ourselves and our own practices in such problems.

Postfoundational perspectives are very important in our work with educators (for a detailed description see Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., submitted). We work with ideas brought forward by postfoundational theories to broaden the lenses through which we view children, educators, learning and teaching. We strive to move beyond dominant perspectives (as exemplified in this chapter) and make visible the political aspects of early childhood education. As we explore through examples of educators' pedagogical narrations, our readings of postfoundational literatures (e.g., posthumanist, postcolonial, antiracist, queer, feminist, and poststructural) lead us to new spaces of critical inquiry that complexify our practices in ways that would not be possible if we rely solely on dominant understandings of early childhood education. Postfoundational perspectives allow us to *contextualize* and *politicize* ideas about early childhood education that tend to be taken for granted.

By creating spaces for collaborative critical work in our research, we challenge each other and engage with a multiplicity of pedagogical possibilities. The process invites us to think differently about early childhood pedagogies, by making space for new connections to be made between theory and practice. We view such research practices as incomplete, ongoing, messy processes filled with struggles, tensions, challenges, frustrations, unknowns, discomfort, and divergence. At the same time, we experience within these spaces, deep connections with each other, as well as 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that cracked open our pre-established modes of thinking and acting in research. This is not to say that we view our research as having a clear end goal

that is easily reached. We do not necessarily resolve the tensions we encounter. But from new lines of thought, new possibilities emerge for rethinking practices and our implicated positions in these practices. Thus, our work with educators is ongoing, tentative, transformative, and experimental.

In the rest of this chapter, we engage with the troubles that partnership stories, outlined at the beginning of each section, bring to research. All of the stories told emerged when Fikile was working with one child care centre two years ago as part of our collaborative research project. As mentioned above, the aim was to bring in change to the educators' practices. The stories come from the same classroom, but took place at different times during the academic year. Although we feature only six stories here, similar stories could be taken from other child care centres we worked with (however, our goal is not to generalize these moments). We selected these stories because they 'spoke to us' and 'troubled us' (Haraway, 2012). Our engagements with the stories are not solutions or explanations, but rather they are our way of grappling with what Bellacasa (2012) describes in the introductory quote: "A non-idealized vision of practices grounded on committed attachments needing a multi-layered, non-innocent approach" (p. 204). We follow the stories as non-innocent tales that implicate us—a diffractive rather than a representational approach (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008). In this understanding, research is a "critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar" (Barad, 2007, p. 90).

Re-Generating Discussions of *Change* in Research with Educators

An educator whispers to Fikile: “We have four completely different philosophies in our team . . . One thing that’s frustrating to me is that we are still so fixed on meeting a daily schedule. Could you talk to the team, maybe if they hear it from you, they will see the problem and change?”

A child is sitting with me (Fikile) quietly creating an intricate arrangement of stones and sticks collected from a walk. An educator calls the child’s name in a loud tone: “Come now, it’s circle time”. The child is led into the nap room for circle time where the other children are already sitting on square mats. The door closes shut as I sit and fidget with the stones at the table. I silently wonder when these practices will change . . .

Initially, we designed our project as action research because we wanted to actively engage educators in discussions and actions that relate to their current circumstances in early childhood (MacNaughton, 2005). An important goal of action research is to effect change through action by generating knowledge that people can then use in their everyday lived situations (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). One way we pursued this goal was by starting our conversations with educators and funders as doing ‘professional development’. Research and professional development blur in our work, as both relate to notions of change. We were interested in practical change, in how we could transform participants’ theories and everyday actions in relation to equity and social justice. We focused on ways to enact an activist approach in our research practices, and we attempted

to shift power relations by foregrounding voices (educators and children) that have been marginalized by particular knowledge/power structures.

So too professional development must be acknowledged to be a flawed project that constructs new power/knowledge relationships ... for better and worse.

Academics and academic managers should bring to professional development the same systematic curiosity and capacity for skepticism that is the hallmark of good science and good scholarship whatever the object of analysis. (McWilliam, 2002, p. 298)

Professional development, with its assumed position towards change, is entangled in our research actions and assumptions. For example, when the educator whispered to Fikile that she could change the other educators' approach to daily schedules and when our research and pedagogical practices collided with circle time routines, we reminded ourselves of how professional development, as a material-discursive 'actant' (Latour, 2004), creates certain worlds and excludes others. We wondered about the kinds of relationships between academic and educator research partnerships we had inherited and inhabited: What assumptions are embedded in these relationships? How do we inhabit or tease out these assumptions? What are the consequences of these inheritances?

Professional development programs for early childhood educators in North America, and other parts of the world, tend to aim at changing educators' knowledge, beliefs, skills, and practices to effect improvements in children's learning outcomes (Biesta, 2007; Phelan, 2011). The emphasis of professional development is on changing the educators and their practices by implementing a specific source of change, such as a research program (for an example see Smith & Gillespie, 2007). There are three

interrelated assumptions embedded in this idea of professional development. These assumptions are: that professional development is an innocent, passive event in educational processes; that the educator who participates in professional development is a stable, unchanging subject; and that change is something exceptional, while stability and order are the norm. In modern thought, representational thinking works through language to deem objects, concepts, and events as real and as having a concrete entity unto themselves. Underlying this view is “an unshakeable assumption that reality is essentially discrete, substantial and enduring” (Chia, 1999, p. 215). As the stories we relate suggest, professional development is filled with “tensions, resonances, transformations, resistances, and complicities” (Haraway, 1988, p. 588), which cannot be explained through a simple process of providing tools for change.

The term professional development is understood to accurately represent “an external world of discrete and identifiable objects, forces and generative mechanisms” (Chia, 1999, p. 215). Guskey (2002) acknowledges that professional development involves different processes at different levels, but he views them as purposeful endeavors that need to be carefully evaluated to determine whether they are achieving their purposes. This normative depiction of the effects of professional development assumes that the learning that takes place in professional development involves responding “to pre-formulated questions and eventually arriving at pre-existing answers” (Bogue, 2004, p. 333)—a passage from non-knowledge to knowledge, from ignorance to enlightenment. Reflected in this model is an individual who can be known, defined, and represented.

There are other images of change that would allow us to reconceptualize professional development and our conceptualizations of research partnerships, and, in turn, challenge us to create other worlds and other ways of caring for each other. By exploring the notion that change is both constant and intra-active (Barad, 2007), we hope that our work with educators can regenerate other worlds. What if we do not presuppose a static, knowable educator? Instead, could we view the educator “as an incomplete project” (Britzman, 2007, p. 3)? This alternative view shifts the focus of professional development from *being* to *becoming*. A focus on being—which is typical of professional development and research with educators in the North American context—concerns itself with the organized state of things—their unity, identity, essence, structure, and discreteness. In contrast, a focus on *becoming* allows for dissonance, plurality, constant change, transience, and disparity (Chia, 1999).

By giving priority to being—and consequently to representation—the transformation that is action research’s primary goal is seen as something exceptional that takes place under specific circumstances with the help of certain people who are referred to as agents of change (Chia, 1999). This view privileges outcomes and end-states and does not acknowledge the dynamic nature of on-going developmental processes. As one example of professional development that takes this view, Fullan (2001), a leading scholar on educational change, writes that real change “represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth” (p. 32). Fullan (2001) contends that people need pressure to change; he identifies “do’s” and “don’ts” that support the view that change is an exceptional process through which

individuals need to be led, and which must be carefully orchestrated (pp.108–109).

Phelan (2011) challenges this model:

This view not only neglects that (teacher) education [and research] is a process of mutual interpretation by participants (academics, teacher mentors. . .), it also sidesteps the question of the very desirability of ends. Even if we can produce a certain type of teacher by means of a particular kind of teacher education programme it does not mean that that ‘teacher’ is desirable. Neither can we take recourse to any set of means to produce what might be considered desirable ends because the means are part and parcel of what is produced. (p. 210)

In contrast to this view, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) borrow from process-oriented philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to argue that change is not an exceptional capacity of individuals, but a pervasive state of life: “Individuals ... are themselves tentative, and precariously balanced but relatively stabilized assemblages of actions and interactions” (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 592).

A *becoming* style of thinking invites us to see the early childhood educator as continuously produced rather than predefined. Semetsky (2004), also drawing on Deleuze’s work, explains that “one’s self is always already in a process of becoming-other” (p. 319). Thus there is no presupposed identity, but always novelty and something new. If we accept that we are in a process of becoming, of constant change, then we must abandon our idea of a static, knowable educator and move to a view of an educator in a state of constant becoming and change.

Change as *becoming* is conceptualized as the ultimate fact for every phenomenon, including individuals (Chia, 1999). Tsoukas and Chia (2002) use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome to think about change:

Change is subtle, agglomerative, often subterranean and heterogeneous. It spreads like a patch of oil. Change takes place by variations, restless expansion, opportunistic conquests, sudden ruptures and offshoots. Rhizomatic change is anti-genealogical in the sense that it resists the linear retracting of a definite locatable originary point of initiation. (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 580)

From a Deleuzian perspective, the world is constantly in flux, thus it is “unrepresentable in any static sense” (Chia, 1995, p. 579). If we focus on becoming rather than being, we need to look at “the micro-organizing processes which enact and re-enact [professional development] into existence” (Chia, 1995, p. 587). This is to say that we need to look closely at the micro-practices involved in developing professionals.

Perhaps then change in professional development and action research programs is constituted and reconstituted in intra-action (with educators, with practices, with children, with pedagogical narrations, and so on); therefore it is “perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other re-workings” where none of these participants are fixed, mutually exclusive or independent (Barad, 2007, p. 203). The educator who participates in a professional development program or in a research program is always changing. The change materializes *through intra-action* through time and space; it is a *doing*, a *becoming* (Barad, 2003). Both the educator and the professional development and research program emerge from their intra-action. The change that takes place is constituted. It is not a static relationality, and it cannot be predicted in advance. These are

“co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners preexist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all” (Haraway, 2003, p. 12).

We feel it is naïve to talk about research partnerships as opportunities that bring about change in educators’ practices. This is what troubles us about the stories presented above. Following Tsoukas and Chia (2002), we suggest that research partnerships can be seen in terms of *possibilities*. If no single (predetermined) trajectory exists that educators take through professional development or in research, we need to work toward opening up to the multiple trajectories of the processes in which educators engage. The task is not to provide ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ to produce educational change, but to relax these instructions and attend to the surprising possibilities that emerge from the constant, undetermined nature of reality. How have the educators and the researchers been constituted in these events? What has emerged through these events?

Re-Generating Discussions of *Relationality* in Research with Educators

Educators have been concerned about children’s prolific use of paper in the centre and have been thinking about how to engage in an inquiry with children on the ethics of caring for paper. One day during Fikile’s visit to the centre, she and the educators discussed possibilities for extending the inquiry beyond the ‘fact-based’ approach educators have been engaging with (trees-pulp-paper making). An educator mentions to Fikile that perhaps a First Nations person could come to the centre to talk about taking care of trees/land.

A white poster board titled “Nature Discovery” hangs on a wall outside the child care centre. Several red maple leaves are glued in rows on the poster. Beside each leaf, a child’s name is neatly printed.

The children are having a “music circle time”. The educator instructs the children to pretend to be trees; children’s bodies bend, tangle, twirl into many ‘tree-branch’ configurations as they dance to the music.

It is a cold crisp morning as Fikile, the children and the educators begin a walk to the forest that is nearby to the child care centre. They encounter a large hole where a tree once stood. It’s a “bear hole,” one child says. They encounter many “bear holes” and “bear prints” that morning as well as ‘other’ possible inhabitants of the forests. Each hole they encounter is named by the children: “rabbit-hole”, “bear-print”, “bear-hole”, “a giant’s prints”.

As we noted above, by attending to the possible worlds enacted through these stories of place, rather than their interpretation and representation, we engage below with a diffractive approach. We are reminded of what Haraway (1992) explains: “Artifactualism is askew of productionism; the rays from my optical device diffract rather than reflect. These diffracting rays compose interference patterns, not reflecting images” (p. 299). We moved away from explaining and representing these stories as ‘problems’ with the educator, that were then smoothly resolved through imparting of ‘knowledge’ or providing solutions. We found that thinking about research as being relational practices

that bring into view particular worlds (Haraway, 1991), generated more possibilities and brought our discussions to complex layers of participants beyond the individuals in the encounter.

In this conception, then, relationality is not about imparting expert knowledge but instead to take seriously what ways of ‘relating’ to social and material worlds are enacted through these stories and through our discussions of these encounters with educators—this is not to say that we have overcome or transformed the troubles that such encounters bring, but that we have attended to the multiple relationalities that they have brought into view, including the complex more-than-human relations that emerge and are already embedded in the work that we did; attending to relationalities, “gaps and awkward encounters” (Choy et al., 2009, p. 382) simultaneously.

As Bellacasa (2012) notes, this is a non-innocent engagement with research practices that is relational, yet these connections are not without frictions and tensions (Tsing, 2005). For instance, when the educator speaks to us of bringing a First Nations individual into the child care centre, when we encounter and are troubled by representations of nature, of children in nature, and of children as naturally closer to nature, all of these encounters enact worlds that are affectively resonant with the colonial past-present histories in which our work is situated; worlds (Taylor, 2013) in which we as researchers are also implicated and embedded. That is to say, the relations we inhabit in this work are not limited to relations between us (educators and researchers), but also to the settler colonial past presents including the “colonial histories and neocolonial rhetorics that continue to infuse ‘commonsense’ categories and identities like ‘nature’”

(Willems-Braun, 1997, p. 3). How do we account for these colonial relations when engaged in research with educators? What is our responsibility? How do we respond?

We attempted and continue to attend to relationalities in our research with educators that go beyond human centric relations. We want to locate our work within the *places* we inhabit as part of being/ becoming human and more-than-human colonial ‘contact zones’ filled with multiplicities, intensive power relations and unresolved belongings (Taylor & Giugni, 2012). While we have not necessarily solved these tensions, they provided disruptions, such as in unsettling and resituating the static, representation and familiarity underlying so-called “natural places” (Taylor, 2013; Taylor & Guigni, 2012) as a site for children’s experiences in early childhood settings within the specific context of what is now British Columbia. As van Doreen and Rose (2012) note, our approach has been relating to places as inherently vibrant and storied, enacting different questions and histories:

[P]laces are understood and embedded in broader histories and systems of meaning. But stories and meanings are not just layered over a pre-existing landscape. Instead, stories emerge from and impact upon the way in which places come to be—the material and the discursive are all mixed up in the making of places, as with worlds more generally. If we accept this notion of place, however, an important question remains before us, namely, who stories these places?

Whose stories come to matter in the emergence of a place? In particular, we are concerned to ask: What might it mean to take storied-places seriously as multispecies achievements? (pp. 2-3)

We see potential in rethinking the concept of relationality in research that attends to relations with place/land and colonial past-presents. Relations with place/land are always already present, as is exemplified in the stories above. Attending to these relations allows us to begin to trouble colonial anthropocentrism that privileges not only humans over other humans, but that are predicated on human mastery over ‘nature’ and other more-than-human worlds (Tsing, 2012). Inhabiting relationality in our research practices is thereby an important move towards unsettling the nature/culture binary and towards research practices that “resituate the human within the environment, and to resituate nonhumans within cultural and ethical domains” (Rose et al., 2012, p. 3).

We also see ethical potentialities in relational research practices as creating interferences and disruptions to the exteriorities claimed by colonizing research practices that “teach that knowers are manipulators who have no reciprocal responsibilities to the things they manipulate” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 88). In our research with educators, by attending to materialized practices and their inter-related histories and discourses, we attempted to create openings towards making visible colonialisms as material-discursive assemblages of histories, place, practices, bodies, things, materials, economies, discourses, affects and memories amongst other constituents and processes. Importantly, regenerating relationality in our research practices was not an attempt to completely map or represent all the constituent parts of these stories, but, rather was an intentional politicized ‘noticing’ of events and encounters (Tsing, 2012). A located and close “noticing the seams” (Tsing, 2012, p. 152) of colonialisms and anthropocentrisms is an important place to begin; where contradictions and troubles abound; “this is no place to search for utopia” (p. 152) but perhaps can be a productive site to seek out new

potentialities, new ethical and affirmative possibilities for ‘living well with others’ (Haraway, 2008), including more than human others (Tsing, 2012).

These stories entangle us in relations with place as a site of asymmetric power relations, as a relational place of conflict and friction; where place is not “as static or bounded but...mobile and in process...open to conditionality and emergence” (Anderson, 2012, p. 571). We continue to grapple with how storying encounters with place in our research practices might make visible how “place is far from a static, stable, or fixed entity no longer reliable, consistent, or necessarily coherent; it is wholly provisional and unstable” (Anderson, 2012, p. 574), a relational ‘gathering’ of things, bodies, and histories that require close attention to its enactments and socio-material multiplicities. In storying troubling encounters with and conceptions of “nature”, we have begun to explore with educators possibilities for attending to situated entanglements with and connections to the “sticky materialities” and histories of place, where humans are not necessarily the only actants and where their relations are not necessarily determined by human encounters (Tsing, 2005). For example, we began to think how to bring ‘big ideas/ethical questions’ alive with young children such as how to engage the political, environmental and sustainability aspects of pedagogical inquiries, how to honour the lands in which the child care centres we work with are located, and how we are entangled with non-human others (e.g., Nxumalo, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012a, 2012b).

Veronica is currently working with a group of educators and children to rethink the pedagogical possibilities of *water*. Their goal is to go beyond the sensory experiences usually offered and, instead, view water through unfamiliar lenses. By concentrating on water for an extended period, many questions are beginning to arise: How do

children/educators relate to water when it's seen as political? What are the risks involved as we think beyond our educational experiences with water? How has water been viewed historically? How will our view of water shift as we engage in thinking with the children? What are our pedagogical responsibilities when the notion of water as a "natural resource" covers up so much of our colonial histories and presents in Canada?

As Tsing (2005) explains, "our encounters are infused with other social histories-with humans in more or less important roles, depending. And there is nothing about social relations, per se, that requires human forms of consciousness or anatomy" (p. xx). We see regenerating relationality in research partnerships through 'more-than-human' relations as creating openings to "speak beyond the boundaries of conquest and domination" (hooks, 1995, p. 297).

On Re-Generating Research Partnerships in Early Childhood

Drawing on Haraway (2004) this chapter has not been a rebirth but regeneration of concepts of change and relationality. This regeneration has involved "maintaining elements of past and present and reconstructing these with emerging and useful elements" (Handlasrsky, 2010, p. 97; Bellacasa, 2012). This chapter has proposed a non-idealized vision of research practices that is based on close attachments to what we do and to how we relate. This non-idealized vision of research practices has also been for us a way of engaging with the colonial anthropocentrism that permeates qualitative research that addresses partnerships with educators.

In this chapter we have only begun to explore ways of thinking about change and relationality in research partnerships. There are no doubts that further work needs to take place to articulate (but not restrict) non-idealized visions of research partnerships.

Aspects such as relations to non-human others, relations to places, entanglements with colonialisms might be worth emphasizing.

Our future endeavours related to this work is to continue to think about the ideas of partnership with early childhood educators. These kinds of dialogues are necessarily unpredictable and, of course, will escape our intentions.

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