"MAD I'M MAD!" – PARENTAL-INQUIRY AS WAYFARING

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Abstract

This paper explores a common tension for parents and teachers working with young children – the tantrum. Building on practitioner-inquiry methodologies, I engaged in a living inquiry into my practices as a parent, with the initial goal of reducing or preferably eliminating my son's angry outbursts. Frustrated with approaches informed by theories often applied within early learning contexts to address tantrums, including behavioural, attachment and self-regulation, I turned to new materiality theories, which provide a novel approach in understanding the socio-material constitution of subjectivities, emotions, and relationships. Within this assemblage, tantrums were reconfigured as a doing of emotions, occurring in the spaces in/between bodies, rather than an individual act of defiance. Through this inquiry, I shifted from a position of trying to intervene from the outside to eliminate, control or manage my son's tantrums to a place of 'intra-acting from within' and journeying with. My parental inquiry became a site to continuously work and rework everyday life and participate in the creative practice of world making. Although the tantrums, which we came to know as Mad I'm mad, continued, the connection among and between my son and I shifted, often in positive and enduring ways. I came to understand parental inquiry as a practice of 'wayfaring,' where the focus is on the journey rather than the destination. These stories may 'trace a path' for other parents and educators as they participate within their own affective and embodied entanglements, creating new possibilities for teaching and learning relationships.

Keywords: parental inquiry, new materiality, tantrum, anger, relational ontology

"Mad I'm mad!" – Parental-Inquiry as Wayfaring

Practitioner inquiry - the disciplined and intentional study of one's own teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras, 2011), is an approach to professional learning that positions teachers as creators of localized knowledge, rather than consumers of knowledge produced by researchers. It empowers teachers and students as agents of change within their communities (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 2007), thereby disrupting notions of teachers as mere technicians implementing 'expert' knowledge. Like teachers, parents are also often on the receiving end of expert advice, standardized routines, and pre-packed programs to resolve issues and improve their work with children. Although much scholarship focuses on mothers' first-hand accounts of their experiences as parents (see Britton, 2013; Hibbitts, 2009; Pushor, 2012), practitioner-inquiry has not (to my knowledge) been applied to parenting in a formalized way, despite the obvious parallels.

Through practitioner-inquiry, I have grown into an identity of a confident, experienced educator who can embrace the complexities of the classroom and work in meaningful ways to resolve tensions through action-oriented inquiry. My image of myself as a parent was a dark shadow compared to my sense of self as teacher. Although I identified as a caring and attentive mother, I frequently found myself at a loss. My responses as a parent often felt habitual, ineffective, haphazard and reactive. While educators are expected to engage in continuous professional development (BC Ministry of Education, 2018), parenting is often thought to come naturally, particularly for women.

As a result of the incongruence I was experiencing, I decided to rework the boundaries between my professional role as an educator and my responsibilities as the primary teacher of my children, and apply similar inquiry-based methods within my practice as a parent that had substantially transformed my work as an educator. Like Marshall (1999), I aimed to "liv[e] life as inquiry" (p. 155), explore everyday experiences that held energy, and embrace research as a holistic practice. I envisioned that this undertaking would be particularly generative as disrupting boundaries, such as those between public and private, formal education and informal learning, and teacher and parent, can generate openings, create inference, and produce creative practices and new ideas (see Smythe, Hill, MacDonald, Dagenais, Sinclair, & Toohey, 2017).

This paper describes my efforts to embark on a parental inquiry with the initial goal of reducing or preferably eliminating what would be commonly described as 'temper tantrums' in my son, who (at the time) was between the ages of four to six. While this inquiry was carried out within the context of parenting, it may also resonate with teachers as they, like parents, are commonly tasked with supporting children in managing, controlling, and changing their behaviour. These renderings outline our processes and the relations within which we are embedded rather than a recipe for others to follow. As Ingold (2011) contends, "to tell, in short, is not to represent the world but to trace a path through it that others can follow (p. 161-162). Our stories may 'trace a path' for other parents, educators and children as they enter into their own intense embodied entanglements.

Context

I have often observed strong emotions surrounding my son Alex[1]. They run through his body with an extreme intensity, and often are contagious, spreading through our household and pulling other bodies into this vortex. At times, his body exudes joy, a smile consumes his entire face, and he shakes with laughter. At other times, he radiates anger. Red and orange (like his hair) are his signature colours and he identifies with fire elements in games. "Hothead" (the name of one of his favourite video game characters) became our family's name for him when he was about to 'blow'.

Figure 1. Images of Alex

These characterizations are only some of the many stories I could tell about Alex. He is also known for his incredible strength, his athleticism, his helpfulness, his inclination to set novel and

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[1] Alex's real name is used here with his permission, as well as the permission of his father. He has reviewed this manuscript several times and approved of the stories and images shared.

challenging goals for himself, and his ability to preserve to complete difficult tasks (see Figure 1).

My living inquiry (Marshall, 1999) into my parenting focused on my son, Alex, and what would commonly be classified as 'temper tantrums.' Alex is certainly not the only one in our family to express anger and to tantrum (adults included). However, around age four, I began to notice that he was enacting tantrums with an intensity and longevity that I had not experienced with my other two children at any age (see Figure 2). Initially my goal was to inquire into these tantrums with the hopes of reducing their frequency and intensity, or preferably eliminating them altogether.

"Tantrum"
Brow furrows,
Eyes narrow,
Lips curl down,
Shoulders slump,
Arms flap,
Feet stomp
Legs kick,
Hands push way,
Words are replaced by grunts.

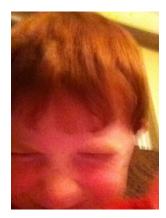*Figure 2.* Documenting Anger

Thinking and Doing

Building on practitioner-inquiry methodologies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras, 2011), I engaged in what Ingold (2013) would call "try[ing] out things and see[ing] what happens" (p. 7), or what practitioner-inquirers would refer to as iterative cycles action and reflection. Following the lead of physicist Karen Barad (2007) who encourages us to consider diffraction as a guiding metaphor of research rather than reflection, I began to question what it might look like to invite diffraction into my practice as an educator (see Hill, 2017) and as a parent. Reflection involves the production of static representations of a reality that is assumed to be pre-existing and stable (Barad, 2007). In contrast, diffraction invites interference, illuminates differences, and reconfigures boundaries to produce something new (Barad, 2007). Here distinct bodies are not assumed to be pre-existing but continuously assembling and re-assembling to produce particular becomings, practices and identities that unfold in unexpected ways (Hill, 2017). Whereas reflection is commonly construed as a cognitive endeavor (Schön, 1983, 1987), new materiality theories disrupt binaries between reason and emotion, and attend to the affective and the aesthetic in research (Mehrabi, 2018). Consistent with new materiality theory, I tried to move beyond rational models of reflection and representation, and engage in embodied diffractive inquiry practices.

Influenced by Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) notion of 'thinking with theory,' in which various texts including theory, data, ideas, methods, selves and the like are 'plugged into' one

another, I began working and reworking my practice as a parent, and documenting what happened. The process of 'plugging in' produces different assemblages as various human and more-than-human entities that temporarily congeal to produce particular effects. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) contend, "plugging in to produce something new is a constant, continuous process of making and unmaking. An assemblage isn't a thing – it is the process of making and unmaking the thing" (p. 1). This process destabilizes the subject, creates openings, and draws attention to the processes in which assemblages materialize. As I attempted to reconfigure my parenting and to invite change within our household, I incorporated various theoretical frameworks into my practice. I was not just thinking with theory – I was *doing* with theory. The congealing of specific theories, practices, methodologies, and documentation produced particular effects, including new subjectivities, identities and relations. My inquiry was characterized by evolving 'stories' (Ingold, 2011) produced through various theory~practice assemblages. Movement produced new assemblages and new stories, some generative and some leading to dead ends, which constituted my son and me in different ways. Certain stories became significant to us at different points in our journey. These texts were plugged into other assemblages and continue to unfold with each telling and each doing.

Initially, I began with approaches commonly applied within parenting and early learning contexts to address behavioural issues, including approaches inspired by attachment, behavioural, and self-regulation theory. According to attachment theory, strong physical and emotional connections between caregiver and child mediate trauma, stress and frustration experienced by the child and are thought to reduce tantrums (Sears & Sears, 2001). Further, awareness of cues and triggers can prevent tantrums before they occur. "Attached parents can read their child so well that they naturally create conditions that prevent temper tantrums" (AskDrSears.com, 2018). For behavioural theories, tantrums are viewed as learned behaviours that produce desired outcomes for the child. Through awareness of antecedents and consequences associated with tantrums, the child's bodily responses can be controlled through changing the environment to reinforce desired behaviours and extinguish unwanted behaviours (Booth Church, 2011). According to self-regulation theory, the child must learn to master environmental stressors and control the body (Shanker, 2013). The goal is to maintain an optimal mental state (calmly focused and alert) through awareness of self, as well as stressors, and the motivation and capacity to deal with stressors efficiently and effectively. According to Shanker (2013) the capacity to self-regulate increases developmentally and children learn to self-regulate through internalizing their experiences of being regulated by others.

The goal of creating various theory~practice~data entanglements is not to render representations of Reality or to interpret events, but rather to explore how specific assemblages works and what they produce (Lens Tagguchi, 2012). In experimenting with attachment, behavioural, and self-regulation theory, I came to understand that these theories construe the child and caregiver as independent individuals with the agency to impact other bodies, producing particular separate and distinct identities for parents (and children). Within the attachment framework, the successful parent is one who encourages the development of *inner peace* within

her child through close bodily contact and strong connections, and preemptively avoids angry outbursts through aware and attentive parenting. Thorough the lens of behavioural theory, the successful parent is construed as one who can effectively control the environment to produce the desired results. According to self-regulation theory, the successful parent is one who supports her child in developing emotional intelligence and regulatory behaviours, monitors and regulates her own neurosensory systems, and intervenes from the outside to support her children in achieving homeostasis through scaffolding and co-regulation. Incorporating strategies inspired by these three theories within my practice as a parent, such as shaping (behavioral), extending unconditional positive regard (attachment), and engaging in deep breathing (self-regulation), tended to produce assemblages that were fragile, unstable, and short-lived, and continued to constitute Alex as an out-of-control child and myself as an ineffective parent. Our frustration grew and so did the tantrums.

In order to create openings and novel solutions to a reoccurring tension in my practice as a parent, I turned to new materiality theories, which *provide a unique approach in understanding the constitution of subjects, emotions and relationships from a social~material perceptive. Grounded within post-human perspectives and* based on a relational ontology, new materialists view individuals as fluid and co-constituted in the moment of coming together with other bodies, both human and more-than-human (Smythe, Hill, MacDonald, Dagenais, Sinclair, & Toohey, 2017). Unlike psychological theories in which mothers and sons are assumed to be pre-existing, bounded, stable, and agential subjects, through the new materiality lens, they are viewed as open systems that are continuously reconfigured through material entanglements (Culter & MacKenzie, 2011). Barad (2007) refers to this process as *intra-action*, differentiating it from more common notions of *inter-action,* in which preexisting individuals are empowered to act upon one another. Within a relational ontology, agency is not bestowed on 'individuals' as such but rather involves an iterative reconfiguring of material-discursive phenomena. As Barad contends, "agency is about possibilities for worldly re-configurings. So agency is not something possessed by humans, or non-humans for that matter. It is an enactment. And it enlists, if you will, "non-humans" as well as "humans" (Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012). Causation is not viewed as a linear event, but rather seen as emerging through intra-actions between and among entities in which boundaries are created or collapsed (Barad, 2007). Here the successful parent "intra-acts from within" (Barad, 2007), participating in the creation and disruption of various bodily configurations, producing identities and relations that are enabling and harmonious.

Telling Stories

What follows is a rendering of various stories that held energy for Alex and me during our journey. Within this telling our stories are organized according to three themes dominant within new materialist theories, including the affective, the material, and the bounded. Like all tellings, this account does not reflect Reality, but rather continues to contribute to the continuous unfolding of the assemblages and the reconfiguration of our world.

Attending to Affect: The Story of Mad I'm Mad:

When my attempts to control Alex's tantrums or teach him to better regulate his emotions failed, we began to work in more exploratory and collaborative ways. I asked him what he calls it when he gets so upset. He responded quickly and in a whisper, "*Mad I'm mad*" (see Figure 3). Once he named it, a new world was born and this phrase became a powerful force in shaping the emergent assemblages within which we were entangled. The 'tantrum' was reconfigured as 'doing of emotions' (Micciche, 2007) rather than an individual act of defiance, a lack of regulation, a reflection of an insecure attachment, or an example of ineffective parenting. Unlike psychological perspectives that locate emotions within individuals and establish a false binary between people expressing and receiving anger, new materialist perspectives understand emotions as dynamic and relational, and co-emerging between bodies (Ahmed, 2014; Davies, 2014; Micciche, 2007). As Micciche (2007) contends, emotions are performative and are "enacted and embodied in the social world...produced between people and between people and things (p. 2-3). Further, feelings do things and constitute various realities (Ahmed, 2014).

Figure 3. Replica of image Alex selected at age 6 to accompany the Story of *Mad I'm mad* (by Alex Hill, age 8)

With the materialization of *Mad I'm mad*, along with my new theoretical lens, we began attending more closely to emotions. We wrote poetry about *Mad I'm mad*, found images on the internet that resonated with our experiences, and read various story books[2] about anger. Kyo

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[2] Books included 'How does a dinosaur say I'm mad' by Jane Yolen, 'Alexander and the No Good Very Bad Day' by Judith Viorst, 'When Sophie gets Angry – Really Really Angry' by Molly Bang, and 'Virginia Wolf' by Kyo Maclear and Isabelle Arsenault.

Maclear and Isabelle Arsenault's book 'Virginia Wolf,' with its vivid images and expressive language, resonated with us both. The book, based loosely on the relationship between Virginia Woolf and her sister, artist Vanessa Bell, describes Vanessa's efforts to rescue her sister from her *wolfish* mood. As is evident in the following poem (see Figure 4), *feeling Wolfish,* became part of our assemblages.

> **Mad I'm mad**
> *A rhinoceros crashes into my stomach*
> *A T Rex is roaring in my ear*
> *I see Red*
> *There is a wolf inside*
> *It feels like I am the F Word*
>
> *Figure 4.* Anger poem (by Alex Hill, age 6)

Through our talking reading and writing about anger, which produced equally forceful positive emotions and feelings of connection, Alex and I were reconfigured, and there were new possibilities for action, relationships, and subjectivities. I would like to report that *Mad I'm Mad* dissipated, but that was not the case. Anger continued to flow through our house, grabbing a hold of my son and I, stopping us on our tracks. I asked Alex what I could do to help him during *Mad I'm mad*. He said that hugging helped, which surprised me because during these times with the stomping, flapping, kicking and pulling, hugging Alex would be akin to hugging a porcupine. He said that it did not help to try to explain things to him or forcibly relocate his body (common advice for parents managing tantrums).

> *C: How can I help you with Mad I'm mad? Does hugging you help?*
> *A: Yes.*
> *C: Explaining why I said what I said?*
> *A: No.*
> *C: Taking you to a quiet room?*
> *A: No.*
> *C: So just hugging. Do you know that sometimes when I hug you when you are 'Mad I'm Mad' you kick me or push me?*
> *A: No (sheepishly)*
> *C: Why do you think you do that?*
> *A: Because I don't know what you are doing.*
> *C: So keeping you in the same place, hugging you and telling you what I am doing is helpful. Is that right?*
> *A: Yes.*

Through this work, I came to understand that *Mad I'm mad* required accepting the aesthetic and allowing emotions to wash over us. It could not be understood or controlled through the reason or logic. Rather than trying to contain or constrain Alex or these powerful emotions, I tried my best not to become ensnared within this powerful assemblage that could swallow you whole, and

move creatively within the forces and flows. At times the introduction of something new within the assemblage created an interference that altered the entanglement. Just as Hermione's bluebell flames spell released the Devil's Snare, a joke or the introduction of another body could sometimes lift *Mad I'm mad*. At other times, it was like we were on a one-way track and no matter what we did, nothing could derail it. At these times, I began to understand *Mad I'm mad* as a place for dwelling *with* my son. Sometimes wolfishness needs to run its course.

Mine, it's MINE! Attending to the Material

Within new materialist perspectives, individuals are decentered and continually constituted within a complex set of embodied relations with the human and the more-than-human. I began attending to the material and observed that enactments of *Mad I'm mad* typically co-occurred in situations in which access to people, places or things were restricted. I observed that many things belonging to children in the family home including toys, books, clothes, and even toothbrushes often had joint or fluid ownership. This was not as common for adults who often held distinct possession over particular items. For some entities, ownership was inherent within the thing itself. The patriarchal chair in our standard dining room set is a good example. Although it does not belong to anyone in particular in our family, it invites the bums of some and repels others. The following excerpt exemplifies how Alex's trajectory within the family household involved a complex entanglement with things and people over a short period of time.

> *All three kids are sitting on chairs around the kitchen table working on a project with their nanny, involving leaves, glue, and paper. Alex gets up to get paintbrushes and paint from the art cupboard. Tink gets up too. Alex returns to sit in the chair where Tink had been sitting. Tink protests. Alex starts to frown, squint, slump, and grump. The nanny points to another spot at the table and says this is where your leaves are. Alex sits down in this chair and the tantrum is averted.*

> *Later Kai moves over to the side of the table where Alex and Tink are working. There are two paintbrushes on the table. Kai picks up one. It is the one Alex was using. Alex starts to frown, squint, slump, and grump. I say there are LOTS of paint brushes and get a whole container of them for the boys to use. Tantrum averted.*

> *Alex gets a house he has built out of magnetic blocks to show me. He puts it down on a table but before I can look at it, his sister grabs it and pulls it apart. Alex grumps, his shoulders drop, he stomps his foot and kicks. He pushes his sister and she begins to cry.*

More than a frustration, as these events likely would be understood within psychological perspectives, the continuous thwarting of Alex's entanglements restricts who he is becoming and his participation in the unfolding of the world. As subjectivities are constituted among bodies both human and more-than-human, growth and renewal are contingent upon movement along the entangled lines of becoming between 'self' and 'other' (Ingold, 2011). If access to other entities is limited, the potential for becoming and movement is also constrained.

Agency here does not reside within the individual, but rather between bodies. As Bennett

(2010) contends, things have power - they are actants that invite, entice, direct, repel, confer and organize. For example, the medicine ball absconded from an adult space with its shiny light green exterior, unexpected weight, excitingly malleable exterior, and unusual inability to bounce mesmerizes children and draw them into an intense struggle for its possession. It is a ball-baby to one and a Martian egg to another, each entangled within an intra-active process of becoming in relation to the ball. Things hold traces of what has happened and what is yet to occur. As Barad contends, past~present~future are entangled and bodies carry sedimenting effects (Dolphijn, & Van der Tuin, 2012). Barad (2014) refers to this as *spacetimematterings*. She says, "there is no moving beyond, no leaving the 'old' behind. There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then. There is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new" (p. 168). Within these complex entanglements in which diverse constitutive intra-actions co-occur in and through time involving the same object, emotions run high.

Besides "zooming out," as Nelia Evans (2018) would say, to view the complex intra-actions among people and things, I also "zoomed in," coming to understand Alex as a compilation of agentic entangled materials including cells and micro-organisms. As Bennett (2010) notes, "Each human is a heterogeneous compound of wonderfully vibrant, dangerously vibrant, matter (p. 12-13). At times *Mad I'm mad* co-occurred with a presumed drop in blood sugar, so much so that Alex materialized as *Hangry Alex*. Alex is no more (or less) responsible for his hanger than a stadium is responsible for a group rioting of concertgoers. Rather, various entities, including the hormone ghrelin signalling hunger to the brain, and low levels of glucose, amino acids and fatty acids in the blood stream congeal to produce particular effects.

By attending to the material, I began to see *Mad I'm mad* as distributed across entanglements involving numerous bodies rather than owned or controlled by individuals. The tantrum could no longer be ascribed or accounted for in its entirely to an individual, either Alex or myself, but rather was seen as an effect of the congealing of variety of bodies within micro, meso and macro assemblages that came together in powerful ways.

You I'm you! Attending to Boundaries

Denied access to my body often co-occurred with *Mad I'm mad*. I began to attend more closely to the creation, suspension and reworking of the boundaries between my body and Alex's body. Going beyond co-regulation or attachment that constituted our bodies as distinct entities interacting with one another, new materiality theories view bodies as continuously reconfigured through the process of intra-action. These boundary making practices that Barad calls *agential cuts,* produce distinct entities, but only temporarily. Barad describes this iterative reconfiguration of the world as *cutting-together-apart*, which collapses and produces boundaries and subjectivities. In this regard Alex and I were involved in a continuous process of worlding (Haraway, 2007) in which we were sometimes co-constituted as separate entities acting upon one another in either harmonious or conflictual ways, and at other times constituted as one of the same. Indeed, Alex is of me - he came from my body, but I am also of him. This is not a

metaphor. Cells of children have been found in the organs of their mothers' bodies (Martone, 2012), which troubles assumptions of material boundaries between 'individuals.'

One night, Alex and I had been working to keep *Mad I'm mad* at bay the entire evening. It was like we were on a one-way track and there was nothing we could do to overt this sticky emotion (Ahmed, 2014). Finally, I had had enough. I carried Alex's grumping, flapping, stomping body upstairs away from the other children. I explained that I was taking him upstairs to 'calm down.' Hands hit my chest, legs kicked my legs, and vocal cords screamed "NO!" This continued as we sat in my room. Eventually I threatened, "if you hit me again I will leave." The hand stopped hitting my body and, to my surprise, started hitting *his* body. With this act, the boundaries between us were reconfigured. We became one-in-the-same - hitting was happening to *us*. As Sarah Ahmed (2014) suggests,

> emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. (p. 10)

Previously constituted as separate entities acting upon each other, the differentiation between our bodies dissipated, and we materialized as one entity, entangled within a powerful emotion.

In the early stages of my inquiry, I assumed that Alex needed me to enforce boundaries when we experienced *Mad I'm mad*. Consistent with common parenting advice, I assumed that it was my job as a parent to stop his lashing out by restricting the stomping feet and flapping arms, and quieting the shouting voice. With this *agential cut* (Barad, 2007), my son and I were configured as separate entities and opposing forces. However, my critical friend, Jen Adi, a yoga therapist, warned against "sitting on anger" and suggested that instead I move my body with his body (e.g., hold his hands as the arms flap up and down) and talk to him about what he is experiencing. This practice of meshing bodies and chanting *"Mad we're mad. Mad we're mad,"* often enabled intense emotions to move through our relational field. Interestingly, this practice of moving together as one is consistent with Spinoza's notion of ontological boundaries. For Spinoza *individuality* is based on relations of motion and rest as bodies assemble and move together (Lord, 2010). For example, a person and a wheelchair are ontologically indistinct when their movement is harmonized, as is a group of people in wheelchairs moving synchronously. Similarly, when Alex and I moved together, we worked through *Mad I'm mad* as one body.

Another related practice that reconfigured boundaries involved *magic kisses* (kisses placed behind the ear that could be accessed at a later time when we were apart) (see Figure 5). In trying to create more enduring physical contact between my body and Alex's body, I drew on this practice heavily. This tradition evolved to include him giving me kisses behind my ears, as well as me leaving kisses behind his ears, and soon his sister joined in the ritual. Sometimes for fun we also would add a (pretend) fart or a burp behind each other's ears to carry with us throughout the day. These rituals appeared to produce a relatively stable meshing of my son and myself, a sedimented effect (Barad, 2014) that transcended time and space.

> *When I was putting Alex to bed I talked to him about staying in his bed (he had come to my bed at 2 am the night before because he was "lonely"). I made sure he was warm enough and had a stuffy to snuggle if he felt alone. I talked about giving him kisses behind his ear in case he felt lonely in the night. We began reading stories. A while later he whispered, "the magic kisses worked today." I said, "how do you know?" He said, "I saw your spirit at school." I asked, "what was I doing?" He said, "snuggling me."*

Between my lips and the back of my son's ears I found a fluid and transcendence space, and within this relational field, *Mad I'm mad* was often disrupted and connections strengthened.

Figure 5. Replica of the image Alex selected at age 6 to accompany the Story of *the Magic Kisses* (by Alex Hill, age 8)

Attending to boundaries highlighted the fluidness in which my son and I were co-constituted as distinct individuals or one in the same. Assemblages that produced powerful emotions and held much energy, at times could be disrupted or avoided through the erasure of our ontological distinctness and through the act of moving together.

Resting place: Teachings, learnings, and researchings

These tellings of *Mad I'm mad* flow through various personal and professional assemblages within which I am entangled, informing my work with my students, as well as with my children. Within schools and homes, we tend to create boundaries around the individual and we ascribe agency to and "treat" this bounded person when conflict occurs[3]. Teachers and parents are often expected to control the behaviour of individuals in their care, and can

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[3] Margaret MacDonald, personal communication. Dec. 1st. 2018.

experience a sense of personal failure when interventions are not successful. The stories that Alex and I share provide a different way of understand and being in relation with others that may resonate with both parents and teachers alike.

Through this living inquiry into parenting, I shifted from a position to trying to intervene from the outside to control or manage my son's tantrums to a place of 'intra-acting from within' (Barad, 2007). When my parenting was plugged in (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) to new material theories, tantrums were reconfigured as a *doing* of emotions (Micciche, 2007), occurring in the spaces in/between bodies, rather than an individual act of defiance. Although *Mad I'm mad* continued, the connection among and between Alex and I continuously shifted, often in positive and enduring ways. Parental-inquiry, like practitioner inquiry, became a site to continuously work and rework everyday life and participate in the "creative and potentially political practice of world-making" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011, p. 104). For both teachers and parents, shifting the gaze from the individual to the assemblage, moving creatively within forces and flows, and attending to the aesthetic, the material, as well as the bounded, can produce new relations and new possibilities for practice.

As with practitioner-inquiry, the goals of parental-inquiry are as much ontological as they are epistemological, in that they aim to shift ways of being as a teacher or parent, as well as contributing to understandings of teaching and parenting. I have come to accept *Mad I'm mad* as a complex 'meshwork effect' (Ingold, 2011), and I am learning how to negotiate a path through a world that is fluid, full of vortexes, and holds every possibility. The story of *Mad I'm mad*, became one of journeying *with* my son, and I have come to understand parenting as 'wayfaring,' (Ingold, 2011), where the focus is on the journey rather than the destination. For both teachers and parents, this ontological shift of journeying *with* children, rather than trying to understand or change them can produce new ways of being and becoming.

As a parent and as an educator I find it encouraging to view my identity, as well as those of my children and my students, as co-constituted, fluid, and emergent, and to recognize that my failures (and successes) as a mother and teacher are produced within relational fields. When we have a bad day or experience conflict, I take comfort in the notion that these assemblages do not define our essence and that we will be differently constituted within other assemblages. I have come to accept that solutions to tensions at home and in the classroom are often temporary, and are never resolved in a permanent way. They are continuously enacted and reenacted, worked and reworked, done and undone. Each incident creates an opportunity for another spiral of inquiry, which produces new assemblages, and enables new possibilities for thinking, doing, and becoming.

When we were reviewing this manuscript, nearly two years after our active inquiry subsided, Alex created a drawing to include with our work (see Figure 6), that continues to contribute to the unfolding of *Mad I'm mad*.

Figure 6. "Anger volcano" by Alex Hill (age 8)

When asked about the drawing Alex said, "*... a volcano is erupting it made a river of lava. There is a rock with a tree on it with two owls (Cher and Alex). Grrr bzbz zzzz bhh sounds of the volcano ... or me getting mad.*" In my reading of this rendering, Alex and I materialize as birds of a feather standing united in a safe place, firmly grounded, while surrounded by an eruption of emotion. The drawing, which moves me greatly, features repetitions of elements included in the images Alex selected from the internet two years ago that resonated with our stories, such as fiery lava in Figure 3 (associated with the story of *Mad I'm mad)* and an image of two birds in Figure 5 (associated with the story of the *Magic kisses)*. Our dialogue with and through this drawing encircles us in love, carrying sediments of our lived journey and the journey that is yet to come. Like *Mad I'm mad*, this doing of emotion produces particular effects and entangles our bodies. As Ahmed (2014), contends, "What moves us … connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others" (p. 11). We hope that the stories that we have shared might move you and be moved by you, as you participate within your own affective and embodied entanglements.

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