A/r/tography as an Ethics of Embodiment: Visual Journals in Preservice Education

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A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology that inquires into educational phenomenon through artistic and aesthetic means. A/r/tographical research engages in pedagogical inquiry where the distinctions between researcher and researched become complicated, responsive, and undone. A/r/tography, the authors argue, develops the relationship between embodiment and ethics as a being-with. In this manner, ethics does not refer to the rationalist acquisition of knowledge or moral codes that advocate particular bodily behaviors but instead suggests that participating in a network of relations lends itself to gestures of non-violence. This article extends previous writings on a/r/tographical inquiry through a particular examination of the use of visual journals in a preservice teacher education course. Through the intertextuality of image and word, visual journals enable teachers and students to make meaning and inquire creatively into educational issues in a space that respects self and other.

**Keywords:** a/r/tography; ethics; embodiment; arts education; visual journals; teacher education
A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology that inquires into educational phenomenon through artistic and aesthetic means (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). Yet a/r/tography is more than a mode of scholarly inquiry or a method of representing research through artistic means, it is an embodied query into the interstitial spaces between art making, researching, and teaching. A/r/tographical research engages in pedagogical inquiry where the distinctions between researcher and researched become complicated, responsive, and undone (Kind, 2006).

Although the field of arts-based educational research has exploded in recent years, scant attention has been paid to the question of embodiment and the possibilities of arts-based educational research as an ethical approach to research and teaching in and through the arts (Slattery, 2003; Springgay, 2004a). A/r/tography, we argue, develops the relationship between embodiment and ethics as a being-with (Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Nancy, 2000). In this manner, ethics does not refer to the rationalist acquisition of knowledge or moral codes that advocate particular bodily behaviors but instead suggests that participating in a network of relations lends itself to gestures of nonviolence (Todd, 2003).

This article extends previous writings on a/r/tographical inquiry\(^1\) through a particular examination of the use of visual journals in a preservice teacher education course. Through the intertextuality of image and word, visual journals enable teachers and students to make meaning and inquire creatively into educational issues in a space that respects self and other.

In the first section of the article, we situate ourselves within the diverse scholarly field of ethics and educational research, guided by the following questions: Who is
research for? How might we think of research methodologies through an ethics of embodiment? How is a research methodology responsible to and respectful of self and other? From there, we isolate key features of a/r/tographical research and then explore the use of visual journals in a preservice teacher education course.

**An Ethics of Embodiment**

In understanding the term *ethics*, we draw on feminist cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2000), who argues that ethics is distinct from morality, where morality is a set of codes and behaviors. “Ethics,” she offers, “is instead a question of how one encounters others as other (than being) and, in this specific sense, how one can live with what cannot be measured by the regulative force of morality” (p. 138). When education takes up the project of ethics as morality, it is interested in particular principles that govern bodies such as regulations, laws, or guidelines (Todd, 2003). In this instance, ethics or morals is designed to assist students in learning how to live and act. It is made into concrete practices, duties, and systems of oppression. Ethics becomes a particular acquisition of knowledge that is rationalist in its features.

In contrast, educational philosopher Sharon Todd (2003) suggests that an ethics understood through social interaction and where knowledge is not seen as an absolute gives importance to the complexities of the ethical encounter. This, Todd and Ahmed both claim, insists on transitioning from understanding ethics as epistemological (what do I need to know about the other) and rather problematizes ethics as relationality. Embedded in feminist or social ethics relationality rests on a complex view of everyday experience “in terms of human relations and social structures” (Christians, 2003, p. 223).
Likewise feminist/social ethics critiques and disrupts the conventions of impartiality in research and teaching, disavowing norms, rules, and ideals external to lived experience (Heller, 1990). A feminist/social approach to ethics asks questions about power—that is, about domination and subordination—instead of questions about good and evil. Such an approach to ethics is centered on action aimed at subverting rather than reinforcing hegemonic relationships (Jagger, 1992).

Although ethics has been examined from multiple perspectives in relation to qualitative research methodologies (see Christians, 2002), our focus on feminist/social ethics shifts inquiry from “getting to know the other” to an inquiry that creates bodied encounters that are themselves ethical in nature. As Todd (2003) offers, research would not be focused on acquiring knowledge about ethics, or about the Other, but would instead have to consider its practices themselves as relation to otherness and thus as always already potentially ethical—that is, participating in a network of relations that lend themselves to moments of nonviolence. (p.9)

Importantly then, ethics involves a rethinking of embodiment as being-with.

The philosophies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968) locate the body as the expressive space by which we experience the world. In his theories of intersubjectivity, each body/subject participates with other body/subjects, comingling and interpenetrating each other. Bodies bring other bodies into being without losing their own specificity, and each materializes itself without being contained. Rather than an understanding of self and other as oppositional, intersubjectivity becomes imbricated and reciprocal. One is always already both self and other at the same time. Such a conjecture is similar to Nancy’s (2000) theories of “being-singular-plural.” For Nancy, to be a body is to be “with” other
bodies, to touch, to encounter, and to be exposed. In other words, each individual body is brought into being through encounters with other bodies. It is the relationality between bodies that creates a particular understanding of shared existence. Relationality depends on singularity. A singular body, argues Nancy, “is not individuality; it is, each time, the punctuality of a “with” that establishes a certain origin of meaning and connects it to an infinity of other possible origins” (p. 85).

Peter Hallward (2001) substantiates this definition with the following: “The singular proceeds internally and is constituted in its own creation. The singular, in each case, is constituent of itself, expressive of itself, immediate to itself” (p. 3). Criteria are not external but are determined through their own actions. Nikki Sullivan (2003) provides us with a further explanation: “Each ‘one’ is singular (which isn’t the same as saying each ‘one’ is individual) while simultaneously being in-relation” (p. 55). Singularity, as a theoretical construct, demands that self and other no longer hold opposing positions. Bodies/selves cannot exist without other bodies/selves, nor are the two reducible to one another. In other words, my uniqueness is only expressed and exposed in my being-with. This being-with is not defined through the common (I am not “with” because I have the same characteristics, i.e., all women or all students) but a with that opens self to the vulnerability of the other, a with that is always affected and touched by the other. This openness propels us into relations with others; it entangles us, implicating self and other simultaneously creating a network of relations.

Clifford Christians (2003) reiterates this when he writes:

This irreducible phenomenon—the relational reality, the in-between, the reciprocal bond, the interpersonal—cannot be decomposed into simpler elements
without destroying it. Given the primacy of relationships, unless we use our freedom to help others flourish, we deny our own well-being. (pp. 225-226)

Being-with constitutes the fabric of everyday life and the ethical encounter. Through bodied encounters, body/subjects create lived experiences together and nurture one another’s ethical relationality. In other words, all bodies/subjects involved in the research inquiry are active participants whose meaning making exists in the moment of encounter.

A research methodology that insists that research participants are static objects to be studied also assumes that particular descriptions of the Other can be concretely defined. An ethics of embodiment counters this with the following: “Particularity then does not belong to an other, but names the meetings and encounters which produce or flesh out other, and hence differentiate others from other others” (Ahmed, 2002, p. 561). In other words, an ethics of embodiment is concerned with the processes of encounters, the meaning that is made with, in, and through the body, not discernable facts about a body.

Feminist philosopher Moira Gatens (1996) argues that reason, politics and ethics are always embodied; that is, the ethics or the reason which any particular collective body produces will bear the marks of that body’s genesis, its (adequate or inadequate) understanding of itself, and will express the power or capacity of that body’s endeavour to sustain its own integrity. (p. 100) In other words, ethics is not dictated by a rational and universal mind but rather embraces notions of bodied particularity.

In turn, any understanding of ethics always assumes a complex body. Therefore, an ethics of embodiment is complex and dynamic, open to challenge and revision. An
ethics of embodiment “opens the possibility of engagement with others as genuine others, rather than as inferior, or otherwise subordinated, versions of the same” (Gatens, 1996, p. 105). Ethics, argues Gatens (1996), is not just different forms of knowing but different forms of being, and it is this complicated and responsive understanding of lived experience that is at the heart of a/r/tographical research.

A/r/tography as Relational

A/r/tography is a research methodology that dwells in the in-between (Springgay, 2004b; Springgay & Irwin, in press). It is a research methodology premised on openness, listening, and on being responsive and receptive (Kind, 2006; Todd, 2003). A/r/tography as a research methodology and a space of pedagogical inquiry encourages and fosters ethical relations. Drawing on the complexities of lived experience, a/r/tographical research demands that education become a risk that “breaks through, disrupts, and interrupts convention” (Todd, 2003, p. 50).

A/r/tographers live research. Within a/r/tography are the living practices of art making, researching, and teaching (hence the a-r-t in a/r/t). A/r/tographical researchers may begin from a familiar place, for example a material process (like felting) or an autobiographical narrative, which is then intertwined and in conversation with unfamiliar questions, things hidden, or silenced (Kind, 2006). As an aesthetic inquiry, a/r/tography is an embodied living exchange between image and text and in-between the roles of artist, researcher, teacher (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay et al., 2005). As such, a/r/tography is relational and is located in the uncertain and often difficult spaces of the in-between.
The in-between accounts for: the liminal spaces of art making, researching, and teaching; the multiplicity of identities, such as artist, researcher, and teacher; and the uncertain forms of inquiry and representation, such as image and text. According to Elizabeth Grosz (2001), the in-between is not merely a physical location or object but a process, a movement and displacement of meaning. It is a process of invention rather than interpretation, where concepts are marked by social engagements and encounters. Meaning and understanding are no longer revealed or thought to emanate from a point of origin; rather, they are complex, singular, and relational. As such, a/r/tographical texts are not places of representations where thought is stored “but [are] a process of scattering thought; scrambling terms, concepts, and practice; forging linkages; becoming a form of action” (Grosz, 2001, p. 58).

Sara Pink (2001), in her writings on visual methodologies, suggests that research needs to reduce the distance between researcher and object of study, between research and representation. A/r/tography embraces proximity by understanding art making, researching, and teaching as living practices and as relational encounters that are provocative, hesitant, and complicated. Says Sylvia Kind (2006) of living inquiry, “each element cannot be discussed or understood separately, rather is considered in the midst, engaged, and entangled. It is much more the sum of its parts as transcends, extends, and exceeds the elements” (p. 53). A/r/tography allows for these experiences to matter, to be examined and questioned in multiple ways. Artists, researchers, and teachers do not simply do art, research, or teach; they live through these embodied experiences and make sense of them in purposeful ways. A/r/tography as such performs an ethics rooted in everyday life. Based on experience and relationality, a/r/tography as an ethics of
embodiment is preoccupied “with the moral dimension of everyday life” (Christians, 2002, p. 409).

Entertaining the question “Who is research for?” a/r/tographical inquiry insists on a communitarian model where participants have a say in how the research should be conducted and a hand in actually conducting it (Christians, 2003). As a/r/tographers, we can see our students as participants in our lives as artists, researchers, and teachers, yet by engaging them in a/r/tography, they too become artists, researchers, and teachers, giving them an active role in our queries as well as their own. This reflects Yvonna Lincoln’s (1995) words:

[The] dissolution of the hard boundaries between rigor and ethics in turn signals that the new research is a relational research—a research grounded in the recognition and valuing of connectedness between researcher and researched, and between knowledge elites and the societies and communities in which they live and labor. (p. 287)

With these ideas in mind we introduced visual journals into a preservice art education course, bringing a relational understanding of art making, researching, and teaching and a communitarian model of ethics to the fore.

**Visual Journals and A/r/tography**

Teaching nonart elementary education majors in a course titled “Art in the Elementary Schools” poses its own set of pedagogical challenges. Many of the students have not had a formal art class since middle or even elementary school. Their perceptions about the purpose of art class fluctuate between making paper bag puppets and egg carton
caterpillars to time fillers for classroom teachers to have their planning period to those who truly value the arts. This range of understanding poses difficult challenges for art educators who are trying to introduce art as a form of research inquiry, meaning making, and embodied learning.

We introduced visual journals into this course as a way for students to engage in living research and to develop an embodied and relational understanding between self and other. For the purposes of this research article, we examined these journals throughout the semester (total of three semesters at this point) and asked students to additionally reflect on the process of keeping visual journals. Included in our analysis here are extracted vignettes from student journal entries and images. Out of respect for the images (photographs of pages of the journals), we have inserted them into the article in much the same way that the narrative vignettes have been included. We do not offer descriptions of what the images “illustrate” but allow the collection of text and image to speak for themselves.

The course meets each week for one semester (16 weeks) for a total of 4hr a week. There are five sections, each comprising approximately 25 students, who are taught by three graduate teaching assistants (TAs)² and guided by a faculty mentor. Although all of the TAs have engaged in the visual journal process, this research study grows out of multiple sections taught by one of the graduate students.

Students are asked to keep visual journals to reflect upon and demonstrate their search for ideas, to document media exploration and artistic decision making and revision, to present research, and to discuss/reflect on implications for classroom practice. The visual journals become a space for the students to explore ideas, beliefs, and opinions
through words and images. Their entries can consist of, but are not limited to, drawings, paintings, collages, photographs, poetry, and quotes. Grauer and Naths (1998) acknowledge that visual journals are similar to sketchbooks but that they differ because of the use of words that “describe and support depictions, become graphic devices and aid reflection on personal themes and metaphors” (p. 14). An example of this visual research can be found in Laura’s entry:

By including text in my art, it forces me to choose what I feel is really important. When there are only one or two words on a page or one quote, it really makes the meaning of those words stand out, not only for me but for others who look at the art. Including minimal texts, as well as deciding what image to create, makes me explore deeply into the issues at hand. It makes me think harder about the issue and work through it even more in my mind.

Journal Entry by Sarah
The visual journal is expected to be a work in progress comprising classroom explorations, research materials, handouts, class notes, reflections, homework assignments, and in class activities and investigations. Once a week, studio time is provided for students to complete in-class art activities, which include an exploration of identities and a visual culture collage. Students are required to complete at least one page per week that investigates separate readings assigned outside of class. Each entry is meant to serve as a progressive exercise that highlights students’ construction of meaning. The visual journals are routinely examined by students, peers, and the instructor to examine student progress, growth, and understanding.

The visual journals are assessed on the fulfillment of the required assignments; experimentation of different materials; demonstration of skill and technique; incorporation of ideas, imagery, and text; and creativity, effort, and criticality. Akin to Grauer and Naths (1998), we have noticed that “students working regularly in Visual Journals seldom need direction once they are conceptually clear on the meaning of personal work” (p. 15). Students thus accept more responsibility for classroom learning through the making of art. Says Marica of her visual journal process:

One of my favorite aspects of the visual journal is the extreme diversity among the entries. All of us read the same text, yet our reflections are all so different. I think that is a great example of our differences as readers, learners, artists, and people. It is very important to keep in mind as future teachers that all of our students will be different in the way they perceive information.
Elizabeth offers a similar understanding:

The visual journal has altered the way I approach class readings. Typically, I read with a highlighter in hand and try to absorb as much information as possible. But for this course, I have found myself reading to find personal connections. Since we are expected to create an artistic response, instead of a typed journal entry, I found that I am constantly discovering relationships between my life and the readings. This form of reading has been very meaningful and easy to retain.

In keeping with Christians (1999) definition of ethical theory as “an effort to articulate moral obligation within the fallible and irresolute voices of everyday life” (p. 76), the a/r/tographical nature of visual journals resonates with what Angharad Valdivia (2002) calls an “ethics of voice.” In challenging universalistic attempts to develop knowledge paradigms, visual journals insist that “multiple and partial perspectives are in continuous negotiations” (Shildrick, as cited in Valdivia, 2002, p. 435) and as such opens a space for multiple subjectivities to be thought alongside each other. Marica echoes this in her journal entry:

I feel that my voice is definitely presented on a more personal and accurate level than in other assignments. Instead of answering questions or writing a paper about a given topic, and then being graded on our effectiveness of reaching a certain answer, these journals allow us to be in control of the material and interpret them in whatever way we want to.
Another student, Amy concurs:

Many of the classes I have taken have been very similar. Go to class, listen to a lecture, take an exam. However, this class proved to be much different. I can actually read the texts and think deeply about how I feel about a certain issue. I am not forced to think the same thing as everyone else in the class, and I can just express myself in whatever way I want to. I feel that I have really learned about particular issues through the visual journals….I have also learned more about myself throughout this process.

Elizabeth offers a different insight into voice in the classroom:

Through the journal, I feel that I have found another component of my “voice.” This is the creative portion that acknowledges that I cannot draw but I am creative. I have found that a major part of my voice can be found in my photographs.

Our intent was to introduce visual journals as a form of a/r/tographical research and as a relational understanding of meaning making. Recognizing that the students’ future roles as teachers cannot be concretely defined, the process of visual journaling enables them to launch their own research journey. As the students engage in class readings, discussions, and visual journal entries, their understanding of art transcends “coloring inside the lines.” They enter their own space of a/r/tography through an exploration of the in-between—as artists, researchers, and teachers—and question not only the material processes by which one can create but also the politics of
representation, authority, and voice (who speaks for whom). A journal entry from Alex demonstrates this:

Each assignment has stretched my mind and forced me to really think about issues going on around the world. As a teacher, we will have to bring up topics such as body image, ecology, diversity, and race in the classroom, and this will not be easy. By putting my own ideas into a journal, I have already explored my personal opinions about such issues, and it will help me to address them with a class.

Her reflections continue:

This class has completely changed my idea about the type of teacher I want to be. The visual journal has taught me that I want to be a teacher that strays from the norm. Many pages in my journal show how we need to look at the world with an open mind and really delve into issues in the world. One of my pieces says, “Move learning away from the idea of a fixed body of knowledge with a fixed way to teach it.”…The journal has showed me that teaching is about taking ordinary things and making them come alive for students.
The students undergo a transformation process as they search and probe from within and in relation with others. Kind (2006) maintains that a/r/tography is a transformative practice and argues that the transformative also requires sensitivity, a deep respect for the web of life and the larger system of which we are apart, an awareness of the sacred, and the acknowledgement that knowledge itself is uncertain. (p. 49)
Within this uncertain and liminal space, a/r/tography becomes a “receptive attitude of learning which often takes place in nonverbal, inarticulate, artistic and expressive ways as not everything needs to be understood rationally or completely” (Kind, 2006, p. 49). One journal entry discusses this understanding of transformation:

I like how we get to share our visual journals with our classmates. It always interests me to see how others in the class perceive certain issues. It gives me many different ideas that I may have never even thought of, and I often ponder these different thoughts throughout the class, really deciding my opinions on the issues.

Another student offers her insights:

As I have gone through the process of reading and reflecting in a visual journal, through artwork, I have learned a great deal about teaching and about myself. The visual journal allows you to step out of the box that has been created for us through schooling and try something new. The information we read about becomes more alive and meaningful when we use our visual journal.

Courses such as “Visual Art in the Elementary Schools” rarely ask students to engage in research/inquiry. Likewise, when research is brought into the preservice classroom, it is in the context of reading/doing research about teaching. A/r/tography, on the other hand, “facilitates inquiry through teaching—that is, engaging in teaching as an ongoing act of inquiry and as an artistic practice” (Kind, 2006, p. 54).
Using the visual journals as a space of critical reflection, students undergo a process of transformation as they explore questions related to their own lived experiences inside and outside of teacher education. Students examine their decisions to become teachers, establish a basis for the qualities that they think are vital for teachers to possess, and explore how they hope to affect the lives of their future students. In addition, students investigate through visual and textual means what it means to “do research” that is creative, embodied, and open to difference. Heather grapples with the difficulty of learning to live through inquiry:

It was interesting to me that some of my reflections came naturally and did not require much thought process, while other reflections were very time consuming. What amazed me more was that the reflections that were the most time producing were the most rewarding. I learned so much about myself through these in-depth reflections and realized that there are some issues that bother me that I didn’t realize I felt so strongly about before.
The use of journals aided in creating a classroom environment that was centered on openness, communication, and creativity and that developed an understanding of self and other that was not oppositional:

With each issue discussed in class, you get to view it through your own eyes. Then by sharing in class, you can see how everyone else feels about the issues. It shows the many different perspectives that people have.

The visual journals created spaces of relational inquiry that promoted student reflection on their past educational experiences as well as how their experiences have and will influence their understandings of the world, representation, and the teachers they will become.

Journal Entry by Melissa
As Deborah Britzman (1991) states,

learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or mirroring predetermined images; it is time when one's past, present and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always a process of becoming: a time of formulation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (p. 8)

It was not our intent to present “a single, complete truth” (Morgan, 2000, p.134), but rather to stimulate the students to uncover their own meanings and multiple associations in and through bodied encounters. Grace’s entry demonstrates this multiplicity, but it is also troubling in that it suggests a dominant voice of reason:

I have noticed that I step out of who I am when contemplating how to express visual art. I begin to see things in different perspectives. Throughout my visual journal, my voice often changes in relation to the theme. My voice may no longer be mine but actually portrays a voice of another. It is often hard for me to decipher between my voice and the voice I use.

Grace’s reflection is indicative of the traditions of schooling premised on the belief in authority and distance. It is interesting that Grace’s reflection concludes with this sentence: “Even though I used a voice that was not my own, I have been affected by similar issues and found my own voice creeping into the piece.”
One of the key components of a/r/tographical research is reflective questioning. It is a research methodology intent on “not” finding or searching for answers but on constantly complicating and troubling the art-making, researching, and teaching process through the creation of questions that provoke further inquiries.

To ask is always the repetition of the “why” or “how” for example, as the play between what we know and what we don’t know, between the thought and the unthought, and always between the said and the unsaid…a question is an invitation to the play of multiplicity that operates between the given and the virtual…when we ask why we are opening a space in which there are an indefinite number of possible answers for us to choose…This space and its indefinite creation is precisely what allows and ensures different possibilities to spring forth (Martusewicz, 1997, p. 99-100).
As educators, we understand that “there is the uncertainty of the pedagogical encounter itself, where the meanings students create for themselves cannot be foreseen, where learning to become is not a seamless project of success” (Todd, 2003, p. 37). Visual journaling establishes an opening of inquiry for students to document their reflections, questions, and beliefs.

Visual journaling can be understood as an interface of textual and visual thoughts that facilitates a process of “self-imaging, auto-inquiry, and cultural critique” (Smith & Watson, 2002, p. 7). It is a nontraditional form of qualitative research, a re/search methodology that stimulates an overlapping of the creator as an artist, researcher, and teacher (Lymburner, 2004).

Journal Entry by Jennifer
A/r/tography is a collection of autobiographical works of art that expose intimate moments and continual growth. In this ruptured space of living inquiry, focus is on what is learned during the act of creating and meaning making, not what is learned from the final work of art (Springgay et al., 2005). This learning process can enable students/teachers to become better aware and appreciative of our environment and empower them to make knowledgeable decisions and differences in the world (Carson & Sumara, 1997).

Through the use of visual journals, we encourage students to create a space where they investigate themselves through visual and verbal narrations to better understand their experiences and knowledge in relation to the broader field of education and society in general. They are encouraged to connect to the world beyond the self.

Journal Entry by Connie
The students become artists through their art making, become researchers through researching course content and the production of knowledge, and become teachers through their inquiry and engagement with pedagogy. Visual journaling becomes a project of transformation that opens up the possibility and potential of learning. Students are not told what to think in the course but stimulated to critically examine their own perspectives and beliefs in relation to others.

Although the visual journal is bound, it is not organized in any particular order. It can be viewed freely from any page acting as the starting point. The visual journal “forms a rhizome with the world” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p.11) and invites personal associations to be established. Just as the visual journal entries contain overlapping interdisciplinary content, there is an increase in awareness of the interconnections art has with across the curriculum. This new space of learning, encourages “new connective tissues [to]... emerge, new visions [to]... develop, and new meanings [to be]... constructed” (Lymburner, 2004, p.76).

Through an interface of visual and textual imaging, the students are engaged in self-exploration, self-reflection, and self-analysis. Each journal entry is a fluid space that generates thoughts to “flow back and forth, and in and out, each influencing, directing, and informing the other” (Wilson, 2004, p. 47). However, this “self” exploration needs to be understood as a “relational” practice where the self is not in opposition to the other. Researching the self requires an ethics of embodiment as being-with. As such, it moves research from “about” the self to a space of inquiry that uses “one’s own life as a site of inquiry” (Chambers, 2004, p. 1).
Research that views the world in discrete and independent parts also maintains a separation of self and other. A/r/tography as an ethics of embodiment takes the approach that we are imbricated and intertwined with the world and with each other. Nancy (2000) describes being as “co-appearance,” that we are with one-another in a singular plural of being. Each individual being “becomes” through proximity and encounters with other individual beings. This relationality, we argue, is the basis for an ethics of embodiment.

Barbara Tedlock (2000) posits that the study of “experience is intersubjective and embodied, not individual and fixed, but social and processual” (p. 470). Dwelling in the in-between, student a/r/tographers complicate and question their lived experiences and find connections and omissions that are significant in understanding them. As Ahmed (2002) argues, it is this needed time of engagement of self as other and with other “others” where ethical negotiations of meaning making and questioning take place. It is through investigations of their singular and collective pasts, which opens up a space of uncertain futures, which cannot be fully anticipated, where students reflect on their pasts and questions for their futures arise. Visual journals as a/r/tography do not force students to see ethics as “right and wrong” but rather requires students/teachers to engage in social interaction as an ethics of “difference.”

Through visual journals and an ethics of embodiment, preservice teachers consider inquiry not as something that tells us “about” a particular subject but as a space where one shares “the exhilaration and the difficulties of opening oneself (and others) onto this limit space, of stepping out to a precipice, and confronting the unthought” (Martusewicz, 1997, p. 100).
In Reflection

The unthought is a difficult concept for elementary student teachers to entertain. The traditions of their education, prior to university and also in preservice programs, are often marked by the weight of grades rather than the search for meaning or understanding. Kelly illustrates this when she writes the following:

As students, we have been trained to worry about grades and not necessarily learning or understanding ideas. It is hard for me to do entries in my journal and not see a rubric in front of me including the specifics I need to include.

A/r/tography as visual journaling emphasizes the unthought, the spaces that are messy, uncomfortable, and complicated. Through the intersection of image and text, students are asked to create meaning from disparate and fragmented sources, to search for hidden experiences that are not apparent on the surface, and it is students who assemble the frameworks of understandings rather than having teachers give them rigid rubrics and set expectations. Thus, the distinctions between researcher and researched become “complicated, responsive, and undone” as students become artists, researchers, and teachers constructing and mediating their own visual-textual understandings. Likewise, visual journaling promotes meaning making that is based on active participation.

Quite often in the arts, participation has been boiled down to the idea of “moving one’s body.” For instance, if students draw or dance, the actions invoked through their limbs is said to elicit embodied participation. Yet, embodiment is not qualified through the body’s physical movement but rather the interconnection between consciousness and materiality (mind and body). Therefore, students’ active participation is more than simply
cutting and pasting images into a spiral notebook but involves the placement of spaces, meanings, and subjectivities together in a rhizomatic sequence, and from this fluid, hesitant, and non-linear arrangement, multiple unfoldings ensue.

What emerges from such considerations is an understanding of embodiment as “being in motion” (Ellsworth, 2005). Embodiment is constituted through the self/body’s movement, force, action, and transformation “in the making” (Ellsworth, 2005). Accordingly, Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) contends that: “embodiment puts us into a moving relation with forces, processes, and connections to others in ways that are unforeseen by consciousness and unconnected to identity” (p. 121). This immediate, living, and unfolding body is enmeshed with an understanding of the cultural location and the specificity of the body (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2007).

Embodiment is not about identity per se, a topic of earlier performative representations, but about subjectivity. As such, embodiment is not an immutable signifier of identity, but is a signifier of multiplicity existing within a complex web of cultural understandings and significations.

(Garoian & Gaudelius, 2007, p. 9)

Likewise, it is dangerous to suggest that the arts are more suited to embodied forms of learning and research. This continues to perpetuate a cognitive/bodied divide between the arts and other (the “serious” or “hard”) disciplines. Rather, as Ellsworth (2005) argues, “some knowings cannot be conveyed through language” (p. 156) and as such invite us to “acknowledge the existence of forms of knowing that escape the efforts of language to reference a ‘consensual’, ‘literal’, ‘real’ world” (p. 156). This knowing, Ellsworth purports, moves us beyond “explanation” that can be commodified, captured,
and in essence “taught” and toward a way(s) of knowing that is rooted in embodiment as being in motion, relational, and singular. The arts, or a/r/tographical research, we argue, provide potential time-space intervals for the “coming of a knowing” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 158), and as such, a/r/tographical research emphasizes invention rather than interpretation.

Visual journaling as a/r/tography stems from a belief that ethics emanate from bodied interactions and living inquiry. It is our embodiment that gives us the capacity to engage in art making, researching, teaching, and other aspects of our daily life. It is our embodied selves that elicit ethical relationships and provide access to the diverse ways of meaning making. A/r/tography, we argue, through visual journaling is engaged in the practices of everyday life and as such provokes an ethical relationality between self and other. Through image and text, students (as artists, researchers, and teachers) engage in knowledge production that is manifested in their bodies as a web of entangled understandings that arise from visual, tactile, and sensory experiences. This corporeal knowledge between bodies enables active critical reflection that is a necessary part of ethical awareness and self/other understandings. John Smith and Deborah Deemer (2003) contend that educational inquiry

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\text{can, should and must have an ameliorative purpose—}\text{that what we do as inquirers has the purpose of contributing to making people's lives and futures better (again, with full recognition that whatever better might mean in any given context cannot be precisely specified). (p. 448)}
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Importantly, a/r/tography as an ethics of embodiment allows moral education to be liberated from the narrow confines of right and wrong to become a far more
encompassing social ethic premised on difference, responsiveness, and uncertainty. Akin to feminist communitarian models of ethical research, a/r/tography as an ethics of embodiment insists that inquiry is rooted in community and that knowledge arises out of our being-with others. As such, participants, or in our case co-a/r/tographers, have a say in how research is conducted, “including a voice or hand in deciding which problems should be studied, what methods should be used to study them, whether the findings are valid or acceptable, and how the findings are to be used or implemented” (Root, as cited in Christians, 2003, p. 227). The visual and textual journal entries demonstrate not only that visual journaling enables students to respond in multiple ways and to uncover the many layers of experience, so too the entries illustrate the students’ agency in determining what is to be studied, what methods of inquiry are necessary or valid, and the intersections between critical reflection and daily life. For instance, one of the class themes challenges students to think about historic places and/or memorials as living, embodied narratives that have no closure (see Ellsworth, 2005) and as sites of “interminable learning” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 104). One student, Misha, included in her visual entry photographs that she took at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel, layered with personal reflections, emotions, and negotiations of that site.

When inquiry is based on living practices, it becomes ethical. “Reciprocal care and understanding, rooted in [bodied] experience and not in formal consensus, are the basis on which moral discourse is possible” (Christians, 2003, p. 228). The process of visual journaling imbricates daily life with critical reflection and inquiry, infusing art making, researching, and teaching with the body’s expressive capabilities, and
illuminates how the body’s response and responsibility to others are formed in our bodily openness to self and other.

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Notes

2 We would like to thank Mary Wolf, one of the TAs, for her input and assistance with this research study.
3 Pseudonyms have been used.

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