Abstract
In this paper I engage with the work of contemporary First Nations artist Rebecca Belmore in order to examine a/r/tographical research from the perspective of an ethics of embodiment. While the field of arts based educational research and its constitutive variations 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 teaching, learning, and being-with (Slattery, 2003; Springgay, 2004a). Belmore’s work embodies the qualities and features of a/r/tographical research and teaching, and thus serves as a conceptual and theoretical example.

Introduction: In/of blood

A lone body moves along the shore of an industrial beach near Vancouver, British Columbia. The cold, grey winter day, adds to the bleakness of her surroundings. The solitary figure flails in the water near the shore, struggling with a bucket. She then kneels and holds the vessel beneath the surface of the water, only to rise and walk, again, along the beach. She stops abruptly and throws the contents of the pail outwards, so that it splashes up against a screen. What at first appears distant and separate from the viewer becomes immediate and intimate, conflated by the fact that the water has turned to thick, red blood. The blood oozes and drips along the skin of the film (Marks, 2000) fragmenting and distorting the image. The action is further altered as the viewer watches this performance-based video installation through quite literally, falling water. The scene described above is experienced as a video installation, where the video projection is seen through a wall of falling water that ends in a rectangular and minimalist fountain. This work, by First Nations-Canadian artist Rebecca Belmore, entitled Fountain, was conceived for the Canada Pavilion of the 2005 Venice Biennale.

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As a basic element of nature, water can be a symbol of human destruction and control. The fountain, a public sculpture that contains and generates water, signifies prosperity (Martin, 2005). Historically fountains in Europe were commissioned by the nobility and papacy as monuments to their own strength and power (Martin, 2005). Today fountains are often commissioned by banks, corporations, and governments as a promise of economic stability. While great fountains help to memorialize colonial relations, Belmore’s installation Fountain is an exposure that ruptures the embedded violence of colonizing that took place over, through, and across water. The blood that splashes and dribbles along the screen is a powerful metaphor for the burden of First Nations’ history. Likewise her actions speak of the blood of all people whose sufferings are caused by greed and power.

In this paper I engage with this work and others created by Belmore in order to examine a/r/tographical research (which is a form of arts based educational research) from the perspective of an ethics of embodiment. While the field of arts based educational research and its constitutive variations 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 teaching, learning, and being (Slattery, 2003; Springgay, 2004a). Belmore’s work embodies the qualities and features of a/r/tographical research and teaching, and thus serves as a conceptual and theoretical example.

The paper begins with a brief examination of ethics from a feminist/social standpoint (see Ahmed, 2000; Jaggar, 1994; Todd, 2003), a position that contends that ethics is distinct from morality, where morality is a set of codes and behaviors. For instance, feminist cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2000) offers that: “Ethics 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” (2000, p. 138). As such, ethics involves a “being-with”. Following this section on ethics, I turn to introduce the features of a/r/tography with an attention to the in-between—a space I argue is necessary for the generativity of being-with. It is being-with and the in-between, I argue, that enables the possibilities of an ethics of embodiment. The paper opens to a discussion on the implications of “doing” a/r/tography in educational contexts.

**An ethics of embodiment as “being-with”**
In understanding the term “ethics” I 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” (2000, 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 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 through a relational understanding of being. Embedded in feminist/social ethics relationality rests on a complex view of everyday experience “in terms of human relations and social structures” (Christians, 2003, p. 223). For example, in discussing Luce Irigaray’s account of sexual difference, Judith Butler (2006) argues that an ethics premised on “imagining oneself in the place of the other and deriving a set of rules of practices on the basis of that imagined and imaginable substitution” (p. 111) assumes a symmetrical positioning of subjects within language. This substitution “becomes an act of appropriation and erasure” (p. 111) and thus ethics is reduced to an act of domination. Rather, the ethical relation emerges between subjects when one recognizes that self and other are incommensurable.

I am not the same as the Other: I cannot use myself as the model by which to apprehend the Other: the Other is in a fundamental sense beyond me and in this sense the other represents the limiting condition of myself. And further, this Other, who is not me, nevertheless defines me essentially by representing precisely what I cannot assimilate to myself, to what is already familiar to me. (Butler, 2006, p. 111) Such an understanding discloses the impossibility of putting oneself in the place of others.
In another performance-based video entitled Vigil Belmore embodies and bears witness to the missing women from the downtown east side of Vancouver since the 1980s. In the eyes of the authorities, these unnamed missing women were insignificant because they were native and worked in the sex trade. When questions of a serial killer where proffered the police responded that there were no bodies and that the women who led erratic lives were impossible to trace (Watson, 2002). In 2001 an intense examination of a pig farm in the lower mainland of British Columbia revealed DNA from numerous missing women. The list of DNA findings continues to grow.

Vigil is a thirty minute performance (and subsequent video installation) acted out at the corner of Gore and Cordova Streets in the downtown east side of Vancouver, the site of many of the missing women’s abductions. In the performance the women’s first names are written in black marker on Belmore’s arms. Screaming these names she rips a rose and its thorns through her teeth. Through her own body Belmore embodies the crimes committed against the native body, the woman’s body, and the social body. Her performance does not claim to speak “for” the missing women, nor about their lives and experiences, but rather weighs heavy with the flesh of the body. It is not possible to assert a feminine kinship with Belmore, or with the women whose lives are implicit in her work on the basis of identifying with some universal female experience, what we as viewers/co-participants experience is an awareness of the importance of the knowledge of the body as we engage in relations of bodied encounters.

In Vigil, a red dress is pulled taught over the weight of a woman’s body. Repeatedly, it is pulled to a point of unendurable tension. This is not representation of the body but the phenomenology of flesh, of nailing and tearing; the body as meaning as opposed to a container of meaning. Belmore’s performance does not re-enact the violence against the unnamed women, nor does it lecture on the moral victimization of the colonized, but rather through the physicality of the body, of touch, and sound it undoes meaning. This could be further expressed through the words of feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (2001) who writes:

“The space in-between things is the space in which things are undone, the space to the side and around which is the space of subversion and fraying the edges of any identities limits. In short it is the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it.” (GROSZ, 2001, p. 93).
As Allison Jaggar (1994) writes in the introduction to the anthology on feminist ethics, how we engage with bodies/subjects cannot become simple applications of moral principles. Ethical principles, she argues, are not understood prior to or independent of identity or of individual’s actions, but rather derived from the very contradictions, ambiguities, and multiplicities of encounters between bodies/subjects.

Feminist/social ethics also 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). Art educator Candace Stout (2006) urges educators to reconsider their responsibilities with regards to research participants, and asks the question: “How shall I be toward these people I am studying?” (p. 100). Such a question approaches ethics from the point of view of behaviour. How must I behave, and what actions will this entail in order for me to ethically treat Others? This assumes that the ethical behaviour is something already known prior to the encounter with the Other. Yet, Butler (2006) in her re-visititation of the work of Irigaray contends that the ethical relation is premised on the “never yet known, the open future, the one that cannot be assimilated to a knowledge that is always and already presupposed” (p. 115). Ethics does not claim to know in advance, “but seeks to know who that addressee is for the first time in the articulation of the question itself” (p. 115). This argument, Butler (2006) suggests poses a more difficult question: “How to treat the Other well when the Other is never fully other, when one’s own separateness is a function of one’s dependency on the Other, when the difference between the Other and myself is, from the start equivocal” (p. 116). It is the never yet known that Todd (2003) argues is at the heart of pedagogical (and here I would also add research) relationships, stating that “our commitment to our students involves our capacity to be altered, to become someone different than we were before; and, likewise, our students’ commitment to social causes through their interactions with actual people equally consists in their capacity to be receptive to the Other to the point of transformation” (p. 89).

Thus, ethics shifts inquiry from “getting to know the other” to research grounded in bodied encounters that are themselves ethical in nature. Instead of “getting to know the other” I want to consider an ethics of embodiment from the
perspective of being-with, where ethics is figured around bodied encounters. Todd (2003) explores this sense of lived ethics in her discussion on teaching. I extend her words on the pedagogical encounter to include research and lived experiences.

Teaching 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).

We cannot create a simple list of expected behaviours and have them function as ways of being ethical rather ethics itself involves a rethinking of embodiment as being-with. This argues Todd (2003) moves us from empathetic understandings where the Other is ultimately consumed, to openness and risk, attention to ambiguity and to what we cannot know beforehand, and “to be vulnerable to the consequences and effects that our response has on the Other” (p. 88).

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, co-mingling 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 (2000) 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 (2000) “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 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 its 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) re-iterates 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.” (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.

It is these acts of engagement as being-with that are taken up and embodied in Belmore’s actions. Another of Belmore’s installations also makes reference to “missing bodies” and likewise enacts the theories of flesh that it also interrogates. Blood on the snow evokes the massacre by the United States Calvary at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota. On December 29, 1890 some three hundred unarmed Sioux, mostly women and children, were killed. The bodies, frozen under a blanket of snow, lay obscured for four days before being buried in mass graves. This slaughter is marked as one of the most violent incidents in the history of the American settlement of the west.

The installation includes a chair enveloped and surrounded by an expanse of white quilted fabric onto which blood red pigment seeps. The comfort and purity of the white quilt is violated; white violated by red blood. However, it is not a static representation of the massacre itself, nor the people whose lives it commemorates, rather it exists in-between, in the encounters between bodies/subjects, and between our own singularity.

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: “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 as being-with 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.” (GATENS. 1996, 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**

A/r/tography is a research methodology that entangles and performs what Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) refer to as a rhizome. A rhizome is an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum. The rhizome operates by variation, perverse mutation, and flows of intensities that penetrate meaning, opening it to what Jacques Derrida (1978) calls the “as yet unnamable which begins to proclaim itself” (p. 293). It is an interstitial space, open and vulnerable where meanings and understandings are interrogated and ruptured.

A/r/tography invites educators to contiguously bring together the various elements that constitute our creative and educative selves. For example, rather than thinking of teaching, learning, art making, and researching as disparate and
fragmented entities, a/r/tography is engaged in the process of actively folding and unfolding such multiplicities together. As such, a/r/tography attends to the spaces between artist, researcher, and teacher. This is not to suggest that it privileges one form over another, but allows for these dynamic practices and identities to interface and collide with one another so that meanings, understandings, and theories generated become multiple, tangled, and complicated.

Drawing attention to a/r/t (artist/researcher/teacher) is not intended to single one identity out, rather it is an encounter between bodies that releases something from each. It is in this disjunction that meaning is made. Similarly, the slash is the place of negotiation. It is a place to move and a position from which to create a rupture. According to Deleuzian (1994) principles, in a/r/tography, binaries are not abandoned, but played off of each other, rendered molecular, so that their realignments in different systems are established. Likewise, a/r/tographical inquiry punctures artistic meaning, research, and pedagogical practices.

A/r/tography is a process of living inquiry (see Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Immersed in action research, hermeneutics, and phenomenology a/r/tographical research insists on contemplative practices. In other words, a/r/tography is embedded in living experience. How we perceive ourselves and our world sensuously and creatively impacts how we examine educational phenomena. Moreover, because it is a research methodology informed by the arts, it is necessary that encounters with contemporary art as theory become part of our constitutive understandings of self, other, community, and education (Rogoff, 2000).

While many forms of arts based educational research focus on the creation of artistic products as representations of research, a/r/tographical inquiry is constituted through visual and textual understandings and experiences rather than visual and textual representations (Irwin, 2004). A/r/tographical research may culminate in an artistic form (e.g. art installation, poem, or dramatic monologue), however it doesn’t need to. While many arts based methodologies focus on the end result, a/r/tography is concerned with inquiry—the mode of searching, questing, and probing—insisting that these elements be informed by and through the arts. Likewise a/r/tography interfaces art and scholarly writing not as descriptions of each other, but as an exposure of meaning pointing towards possibilities that are yet unnamed. Neither is subordinate to the other, rather they operate simultaneously, as inter-textual elements and often in tension with each other.
On many occasions I have noticed that the best conversations happen when my video camera is buried deep within my backpack, raising the question: when is data? Yet for all the absent tape recorders, video cameras, and failures to write legible field notes, the constructed nature of data and the research encounter needs to be further questioned. It is not a matter of consideration of which method is better suited to extricate “experience” but rather the realization of the impossibility of ever understanding the other’s experience. Rather than viewing experience as a concrete reality with a fixed essence that can be simply reflected by language (text and/or image), a/r/tographical research argues that experience is itself constituted through relational encounters, and thus constituted by and in language. Thus, the representation of research cannot be seen as the translation of experience. Instead a/r/tographical research as living inquiry constructs the very materiality it attempts to represent. In other words engaging in a/r/tographical research constructs the very “thing” one is attempting to make sense of. Thus, a/r/tography is a strategy both methodological and ontological that is reflective of the ongoing practices of identification and as such emphasizes that the stories of identification are unfinished, multiple, and conflicting ones.

The features of a/r/tography include six renderings through which research can be imag(e)ined, enacted, and understood: living inquiry, contiguity, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations, and excess (see Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005). Renderings enable artists, researchers, and teachers to interrogate the interstitial spaces between things, and to convey meaning rather than facts. To be engaged in a/r/tographical research means being open to a continual process of questioning. Renderings are not criteria. Rather, through the inquiry process and the space of representation one needs to become attentive to these renderings; to contemplate experience in light of living inquiry, contiguity, and so on.

Subsequently, a/r/tography radically transforms the idea of theory as an abstract system distinct and separate from practice, towards an understanding of theory as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive and relational. Theory as practice becomes an embodied, living space of inquiry. Theory is not pre-determined nor a stable interpretive scaffold, but part of a relational encounter, itself capable of creative change and development (Meskimmon, 2003). Thus, meaning finds its place in the in-between where language hesitates and falters, where un/certainty cannot be represented, and where knowledge remains unspoken.
It is precisely this in-between of thinking and materiality that invites researchers to explore the interstitial spaces of art making, researching, and teaching. 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. Concepts, argue Deleuze and Guattari (1994) “are centres of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other” (p. 23). 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). As living inquiry, a/r/tography expresses meaning as an exposure—never yet known.

Opening to the never yet known

Belmore’s art highlights the need to find alternative ways of re-conceptualizing the body outside of the binaries that reduce it to an object; to an Other. In her performative-installations we are offered flesh filled singular gestures that place the body of the artist, the body of the women, and the body of the viewer at the in-between. The implications of such a way of thinking is bound up with understanding the relations between identities rather than in terms of describing identities, intensions, or acts of individuals or groups. Her art, I argue, maintains the alterity and unknowability of the Other.

In 2002, when Belmore performed Vigil on the streets of Vancouver, fifty-one women had been “identified” using DNA. Many more women were still “missing”. Slaughtered body parts were still being unearthed on a pig farm. Fifty-one roses slashed through screaming teeth. Fifty-one names articulated, opened, and embodied. Understood in this way never yet known becomes an interstitial space, the in-between, the space of perverse mutation, and force. The possibility, or impossibility, of the never yet known invites us to face the Other not through particularities that are descriptions of her body, but as bodied encounters. As Sara Ahmed claims: “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). Beyond the veil of blood, Fountain, Vigil, and blood on the snow offer the power to conceive of knowledge and research as embodied and as being-with.

A/r/tography materializes the in-between and thus effectively invites researchers and teachers to move beyond static dualisms which pit theory against practice, self against other, and mind against body. A/r/tography is deeply rooted in corporeal theory (Meskimmon, 2003), where the body’s immersion and intertwining in the world creates meaning. It is a way of living in the world as being-with, of touching the other not to know or consume the other, but as an encounter that mediates, constructs, and transforms subjectivity.

A/r/tography is a mode of thinking about or theorizing multiplicities. It is not about framing rules or understanding principles, but about the possibilities of intertextual relations. Instead of requiring logical certainty and the guarantee of universal validity a/r/tography is embedded in imagination, experimentation, uniqueness, and conjecture. It seeks to provoke, to generate, and to un/do meaning.

Likewise, embodiment, according to Grosz (2001) is an attitude of endless questioning. Thus, a/r/tography as an ethics of embodiment is a “thinking [that] involves a wrenching of concepts away from their usual configurations, outside the systems in which they have a home, and outside the structures of recognition that constrain thought to the already known” (Grosz, 2001, p. 61). Such a thinking is situated in the in-between.

However, while scholars like Homi Bhabha (2004) and Trinh Minh-ha (1989) have examined the liminal place of hybridity and uncertainty, as a place where one might go beyond the contained grid of fixed identities and binary oppositions, other scholars like Jen Ang (2001) worry that there is a romanticizing tendency in the valorization of the in-between. Such concerns are based not only on the assumption that the deconstruction of binary oppositions is subversive, but that we overstate the power of the in-between. Moreover as Sara Ahmed (2000) argues there may be ways in which relations of power are paradoxically secured through the very process of destabilization. Examples from popular visual culture include the ipod advertisements where fragmentation, fluidity and marketing through the exploitation and exoticization of difference are central elements. Therefore rather than assuming the in-between as inherently subversive, there is a need to pay attention to the different ways in which
specific forms of liminality are positioned and to the possibility of their different effects (Gonick, 2003). What I mean by this is that it is not sufficient to make claims that understanding the body as unstable, fluid, productive and in-between enables its resistance, rather we need to examine the in-between as a space where intercorporeal encounters and the relationality between beings produces different knowledges and produces knowledge differently.

Issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and multiculturalism (bodied identities) are now being discussed as essential to postmodern education and in many cases have advocated particular understandings of liminality, uncertainty, and the in-between. I believe that such pronouncements are necessary and important but what a/r/tography adds to this already redolent space is a pedagogical practice and a research methodology that is located at the in-between, where the never yet known is interrogated and ruptured.

Likewise, as educational researchers many of the questions we grapple with take into account how we conduct research with others; how do we negotiate diverse voices; and how do we re-present their stories? A/r/tography maintains that the representation of research (which we all do by imaging and writing about research) does not reproduce violence towards the other, but rather looks to a network of relations that are continuously being produced in and through the inquiry itself. A/r/tography refuses to locate ethics within a rational, autonomous body/subject but rather in the “very forms of relationality that structure our encounters with other people, ones that are frequently infused with powerful feelings and emotions” (Todd, 2003, p. 141). As educators and educational theorists we need to recognize that the very things we seek to understand are produced in the moment of inquiry and hence slip from our ever knowing them fully. From an ethical point of view, being-with cannot be a matter of policy but is a fundamentally a personal, practical matter where our encounters with difference and otherness are brought fully to bear on us, and for which each of us is responsible.

Once again I return to Nancy’s (2000) writings. Nancy contends that excess is not a numerical equivalent (10, 400 or 2 million) but discourse in its totality. Excess is not a degree of magnitude. It is being-with; an unheard of measure. In other words being-with is not qualifying something against something else—the setting of criteria or an established norm. Rather the conditions for being-with are contingent upon and exist within the structure itself—an absolute measure. In this sense an a/r/tographical
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act is its own possible measure. Instead of thinking of our actions, encounters, and thoughts—our living inquiry as substance that can be arranged in discrete moments, counted, and subjected to normative evaluations, we need to understand living inquiry in education as never yet known. What I am suggesting is a complex understanding of the ways we participate in attending to difference within institutional contexts, and also to the ways that education and research as practices already contribute to the conditions that create difference. Thus, what I am proposing is an ethics committed to ambiguity, uncertainty and to the never yet known.

References


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1 The interpretations of Rebecca Belmore’s work are the authors, intersected with writing by contemporary art scholars, feminist theories, and conversations with the artist. The style of writing used to discuss her work follows closely the work of such visual cultural theorists as Irit Rogoff (2000), and while may appear different from traditional writing in education, it attempts to write in the in-between. In other words the author understands contemporary works of art as theoretical, and thus theory and art interpretation are not intended to be “separate” but embodied and enmeshed.

2 I chose to use the term “opening” as opposed to the idea of a conclusion, as the paper nor the ideas expressed within it come to deduction, termination, or judgment. Rather, the concept of “opening” allows additional rhizomes and in-between frameworks to co-exist.

3 see http://www.belkin-gallery.ubc.ca/belmore/main.htm for a video clip

Un/folding is where perception is doubled, embodied, and tangled. A fold is both exterior and interior. In a fold inside and outside remain distinct, but not separate, rather they are doubled. Un/folding is not the reverse of a fold, but may result in additional folds. Thus, the fold appears interconnected, embracing touch and intercorporeality. The condition of the fold is the premise that it is not a void or an absence in the sense of nothing. Rather the fold is being as turned back on itself—touching. Deleuze (1993) translates the fold as sensuous vibrations, a world made up of divergent series, an infinity of pleats and creases. Un/folding divides endlessly, folds within folds touching one another. “Matter thus offers an infinitely porous, spongy, or cavernous texture without emptiness, caverns endlessly contained in other caverns” (p. 5). Challenging Descartes, Deleuze is mindful of the fold as matter that cannot be divided into separable parts. A fold is not divisible into independent points, but rather any un/folding results in additional folds, it is the movement or operation of one fold to another. “The division of the continuous must not be taken as sand dividing into grains, but as that of a sheet of paper or of a tunic in fold, in such a way that an infinite number of folds can be produced….without the body ever dissolving into point or minima. A fold is always folded within a fold” (p. 6). Perception is not a question then of part to whole but a singular totality “where the totality can be as imperceptible as the parts” (p. 87). Perception is not embodied in perceiving the sum of all parts rather it is distinguished by and within the fold.

Postmodern art education has been replete with various scholars arguing for a critical examination of race, gender, sexual orientation etc. within and through visual art and culture. There are far too many to name in the context of this paper. For one such discussion see the recent article published by Jennifer Eisenhauer (2006) in Studies in Art Education, 47(2), 155-169.