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Article

A/r/tographic Collaboration as Radical Relatedness

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Abstract

In this paper the authors examine a/r/tographical collaboration in a community-engaged research study investigating immigrant understandings of home and place. The study, *The City of Richgate*, involves a complex collaboration between community members, community organizations, educational institutions, and a research team comprising artist-educators. The study crosses border zones of cultural, ethnic, geographic, institutional, public, private, and disciplinary boundaries, reflecting the ever-changing character of postmodern reality. In this paper the authors reflect critically and theoretically on the lived experience of radical relatedness found within the complex collaboration, particularly within the

a/r/tographic research team. This offers a qualitative methodology of radical collaboration applicable to many fields of inquiry in the academy, art world, and community.

The City of Richgate: A Collaborative A/r/tographic Study

"The City of Richgate" is a community-engaged collaborative art and research endeavor that explores the lived experience of eight established and new immigrant families living in the thriving multicultural City of Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. The study includes participants with ethnic backgrounds from China, Estonia, Japan, South Africa, Western Europe, and India, reflecting a micro ethno-demographic profile of Richmond's wealth of diversity.

The Richgate study focuses on notions of identity and place and investigates issues of hybridity, transculturalism, immigration, displacement, and the changing nature of social and physical geography within communities. It involves a complex collaboration between community members, community organizations, educational institutions, and a research team comprising artist-educators. The study crosses cultural, ethnic, geographic, institutional, public, private and disciplinary boundaries reflecting the ever- changing character of postmodern reality. On critical reflection and writing, we invoke a notion of "radical relatedness" (e.g., Gablik, 1995), at the heart of collaboration and collectivity in community-engaged art and research.

In this paper we reflect critically on the lived experience of radical relatedness, particularly within the research team and moreover the collaborative methodology of a/r/tography (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008). Radical relatedness calls for a priority valuation of intersubjective coexistence with others, the environment, the community and the world. It challenges us to move beyond an isolated modernist paradigm and to shift toward an interrelational attunement of mutual respect and care (Gablik, 1992).

Over a 3-year period, artist-educators and members of the community came together to document through art and text their understandings of and experiences of "home and away." The art that initially emerged was exhibited at two universities in China in 2005. In 2007, new artwork was installed in the Richmond City Hall, its museum, cultural centre plaza, and eight bus shelters throughout the city. Public dialogue and engagement with this community-based art project in China and Canada has contributed to new understandings of being *home* and *away* for the researchers, project participants, and other members of the Richmond community. Through these provocative public installations, born out of difference, resistance, complexity, and multiple and diverse voices, this study exemplifies a/r/tography's commitment to "public pedagogy" (Giroux, 2003) and collaboration.

As a practice, a/r/tography incorporates both art making and writing (graphy) as essential components of inquiry. A/r/tography extends the modern and postmodern concept of artist, through acknowledging and drawing forward the interwoven aspects of the artist/researcher/ teacher relationship. From this interconnected platform, we propose in this paper that a/r/tographic collaboration is best understood and practiced with a combination of theoretical guidelines and practices that accrue from relational aesthetics (the artist's contribution), relational inquiry (the researcher's contribution) and, relational learning (the teacher's contribution). The primary principle of a/r/tography is that none of these contributors, aspects, or situations is to be privileged over another, as they co-emerge simultaneously within and through time and space.

A/r/tography is offered as a unique form of radical collaboration applicable to many fields of inquiry in the academy, art world, and community. Theoretically, it requires a relational practice that co-revises itself in/with community experiences. As qualitative researchers and artist-educators we find resonance in and challenge from Becker's (2002) conception of the post-postmodern integral artist's role as global citizen:

> In our collective Western consciousness, and probably our unconsciousness as well, we do not have images of artists as socially concerned citizens of the world, people who could serve as leaders and help society determine, through insights and wisdom, its desirable political course. . . . In their role as spokespersons for multiple points of view and advocates for a healthy critique of society, certain artists should be understood as public intellectuals . . . these amateur intellectuals [are] forever inventing themselves and renegotiating their place on the border zones between disciplines, never stuck in any *one* of them. (pp. 13-14)

This paper addresses the complexities of a/r/tography as a practice of collaboration. We share and problematize our a/r/tographic collaboration in border zones, potentially enabling a further transition from "heroic" artist to an "a/r/tographic" artist/researcher/ teacher, the latter, committed to an ethical-relational imperative of public pedagogy.

Collaboration and Collectivity

We write this paper as a collective, entering the complexities of collaborative art making, researching, and teaching. Each member of the a/r/tographic team wove their thoughts and words into this paper thus complicating the notion of an authorial singular voice through interactive co-writing. Dunlop (2002) acknowledged the risk and courage involved in truly collaborative practices:

> Our conversations, our collaborations, our writing, and our theorizing together provide us with radical revision of community, academic or otherwise. Our collaborations open us up to a feminist imagination that moves us beyond the "ism." This is an imagination that explores the nature and value of our relationships to each other, [and] of taking risks. This imagination demands courage. (p. 12)

The risks began from conceiving the Richgate study as a collaborative project and extending it to a with/and experience that calls each participant to join with the collective, moving beyond their own personal self to create something that is greater than the individuals involved. Feminist artist and educator Stewart (1993) stressed the importance of:

> Collaboration is an alternative and highly resistant model of creative interaction. It is a process that demonstrates a method of art making which can be democratic,

transformative, and empowering, and which has the potential to renew and build community. (pp. 43–44)

Collaboration, as fundamental to participative (and emancipatory) action research in qualitative methodology (e.g., Heron, 1996), is a complex undertaking engaging creative imaginings that move far beyond individual abilities, and when fully engaged can extend an individual's and community's capacity to have a significant impact on the world.

The Richgate study engaged a process of listening and viewing from multiple perspectives. The initial steps of the research involved the a/r/tographers reaching out to the community of Richmond. This began by contacting local community organizations and sharing the vision of the study. The local public art gallery responded to the project with enthusiasm and invited the artist-researchers to become part of a lecture series addressing the changing landscape of Richmond. At this presentation we spoke of the project, our interest in the changing landscape of Richmond and its dynamic community, and invited local residents to participate in the study. Some of the participant families who joined the project knew one another whereas others entered not knowing others but with the desire to connect and expand their sense of community.

Once the initial families were in place the inquiry process began with two or more of the artist-researchers conducting two informal interviews in each family's home. During these audio-recorded interviews we listened, asked questions and in turn where asked questions. Listening to many of the family members for whom English was a second language required a heightened sense of listening and attention that at times required translation from the Chinese Canadian artist-researcher on the team or from the bilingual child in the family. Family members revealed family photos, memory-filled objects, told their family immigration stories, shared food, and taught us about their changed and changing lives. We looked and listened as artists, researchers, and teachers through witnessing and participating in their home environment.

The research team met monthly and more often bimonthly throughout this initial stage of the collaboration to discuss and reflect on the different experiences we were having in the interviews. We read transcripts and wrote narrative stories based on the interviews as a means to find themes, patterns, and metaphors we could collectively work with. Working collaboratively with each other and the families we strove to reciprocally inform each other. In addition to the team meetings and family interviews we gathered approximately every six months for a group dinner where updates on the project where shared. It was at these dinners that families and the research team intermingled less formally, establishing new individual connections while stories of historical connections in Richmond between different family members were revealed (Figure 1).

After listening from and for multiple perspectives in the interactions with the families in the first stage of the project, we invited the families to guide us on walks within their community. They took us to significant places that were part of their daily lives. Family members told stories while leading us along the pathways of their weekly rituals, which included: their homes, the library, the leisure centre, parks, their favorite coffee shops; shopping; and daily commuting by car and bus. The walks also traversed places of worship and memorials, and places that no longer physically existed but remained graphic and significant in the participants' memories. The walks, as a relationally aesthetic experience, became a symbolic mapping of family members' memories of moving to and living in Richmond. These walks were documented by digital photography, video and audio-tapes, which were then rendered into visual and audio narratives by the artist-researchers as part of the a/r/tographic process. In addition, these walks inspired the phrase "You are here," which became a relational visual memory map in the form of posters placed in bus shelters in the City of Richmond (Figure 2).

Figure 1. A dinner gathering of the families with the research team. Richmond, British Columbia. Beer, R., Gu, X., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. (2005).

Figure 2. Richgate Bus Shelter Poster, installation photograph. Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. Gu, X., Beer, R., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. (2007).

The collective process of the artist-researchers involved regular meetings which involved sharing ideas and insights, while questioning our assumptions. The underlying agreement to cooperate by listening to and viewing all perspectives, during sometimes heated moments and despite divergent ideas and understandings, was essential. Taking on the role of public pedagogue concerned with the learning experiences of the families and themselves in relation to the families and the City of Richmond assisted, in varying degrees, the process of redefining our overly self-contained modern identities (be it artist, researcher or teacher) into that of post-postmodern a/r/tographer.

Crossing multiple boundaries, both inner and outer, the project reflects the ever changing character of globalization and in particular accentuates moments of collaboration and collectivity. As Smith (2000) has proposed, to understand the future of urban change, we must focus our attention on communication circuits, no matter how complex, by which people are connected to each other, make sense of their lives, and act on the worlds through which they see, dwell, and travel. This collectivity occurs as we arbitrarily gather to take part in different forms of cultural activity. However, the performed collectivity that is produced in the very act of being together in the same space and compelled by similar activities, produces a form of mutuality that is not always based on normative modes of shared beliefs, interests, or affiliation. In other words, collectivity alters a hegemonic perception of community, where community is understood solely through roots of origin, and replaces it with a process of becoming community—a mobilizing force that has no end (Nancy, 2000).

Our team recognized through the many interactions of all participants that a most prevalent theme was the momentary aspects or fleeting appearances (with chronic disappearances) that characterize postmodern urban life and the telling of one's life journeys together. Collectivity in this sense is engaged with what Hannah Arendt (1950) called the "space of appearance" characterized by speech and action or a coming together for a momentary expression and then coming apart again. Arendt's space of appearance is not a physical space demarcated by buildings, environments, or tasks but one that comes into being through relational understandings of actions and of the bodies/ subjectivities created through these actions. Rather than an understanding of self and other as oppositional, community becomes imbricated and reciprocal, offering a reconceptualization of self and other in which these previously distinct parts constantly inform each other and their relationship. The potentiality of this space of appearance said Arendt,

> is that unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men . . . but with the disappearance or the arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever. (1958, cited in Rogoff, n.d.-a, p. 117)

The collaboration within the Richgate project resembles Arendt's notion of collectivity, which engenders a form of power: not power in terms of strength, violence, or the law but a power created through the ephemeral coming together in momentary gestures of speech and action in the family interviews, group gatherings, the team meetings. The space of appearance in which these momentary actions took place were sites of protests, refusals, affirmations, and/or celebrations. These sites do not necessarily bear the markings of traditional political spaces but, rather, animate the spaces of everyday life by temporarily transforming them through reciprocity and relationality. We found that to locate and transform such sites, a network of new relations as a means of radical relatedness was required.

Radical relatedness

The intersubjective thrust of the Richgate project can be described as radical relatedness where boundaries between self and Other are permeable, not fixed. This requires interrelational attunement that includes a postmodern paradigm of reciprocal empathetic listening rather than a limited modernist paradigm of objective viewing and spectatorship (Gablik, 1995, p. 82). Gablik (1992) wrote that to move beyond modernism and "radical autonomy and individual uniqueness," we need a "politics of connective aesthetics (p. 51). She wrote,

> To redefine the self as relational, rather than as separate and self-contained, could actually bring about a new stage in our social and cultural evolution. The self that sees beyond merely personal existence to intersubjective coexistence and community is the ecological self, opened up to our radical relatedness. (p. 51)

Through embarking on a study that incorporates an investigation of the land in relation to the people who currently live within the City of Richmond, the Richgate study opens a gateway to understanding the relational and the intersubjective coexistence of the community with its ecological self. In each instance of encounter, the act of witnessing, listening, questioning, and being with each other on an ongoing basis during the study assisted in opening and connecting the coexistent containers held between the land, the city, the disciplinary fields, and institutional organizations involved. Likewise, by combining a research team of artist-educators, the project invited a restorative encounter between the distinct contemporary disciplinary fields of art education, arts-based research, and art. The latter "territories" both created barriers working collaboratively and were tensions that invited critical self-evaluations among us as a research team. Theorizing on collaboration in the field of art by Rogoff (n.d.-b) and reflections on the work of various artist collectives in postmodern times, helped us get some bearings on what we experienced and assisted our growth toward radical relatedness.

A relational paradigm

A relational paradigm (epistemology) is where we believe a/r/tography is largely situated in its practice. A/r/tography has developed conceptually with a focus on a rhizomatic understanding of radical relatedness. Rhizomes act as interconnected networks with constantly negotiable entry points (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The Richgate study employed a radical relatedness from its conception as a collaborative research study between artist-educators at three different educational institutions of higher education, to its extension into the Richmond community. Although a/r/tography blurs the boundaries between the roles and practices of artist, researcher, and teacher, we found that throughout the research study, to different degrees we struggled with attachment to our most familiar identity as artist, researcher, or educator. In practice, the study evolved as a collaboration between individual artists-educators and community members not always involved in an a/r/tographic practice. The ideal would be an understanding of a radical relatedness and participatory collaboration among a/r/tographers, representing different communities, as a collective entity.

For Deleuze (1989) the "'whole" is by definition "relation." Relation is not a property of objects, for it is always external to its terms. Some postmodern museum curators have contrasted the relational paradigm with the traditional modern centralized "institutional and epistemic paradigms"—arguing that; "Relationality is a concept that enables us to intervene controversially in the debate on art institutions and their audience, restoring political density . . . "("Another Relationality," 2006). Further articulations of a "relational epistemology" can be found in Taoism and Confucianism (Sang-Chin, Gyuseog, & Chung-Woon, 2007, p. 330), in the anthropology of

animism as participatory consciousness (Harvey, 2005, p. 21), in psychology and its relation to human nature and knowing as always relational (Copley, 2000, p. 144), and in feminist and animal rights ethical philosophies. "A relational epistemology paves the way for a metaphysical shift because it acknowledges the value of relationships, and of thinking relationally" [toward all beings] (Adams, 1996, p. 78).

Implicitly, a relational paradigm is at the root of the Richgate study. The 3-year research time frame allowed the layers of relationality to shift, expand, and become more explicit as the research team came to greater understandings of the complex layers in which they engaged.

A/r/tographic collaboration within a relational paradigm

A/r/tographic writing has for several years engaged various paths of theorizing around the centrality of the concept of *relationality*. For example, Kind (2006) has written that a/r/tography "takes a relational view" (p. 63). It has also been recognized as an experience of living as intercorporeal being[s] in relationship. Irwin et al. (2006) wrote;

> A/r/tography is based in relational aesthetics, relational learning, and relational
> inquiring [p. 78] . . . that intentionally unsettles perception and complicates
> understandings through its rhizomatic relationality [Deleuze and Guattari, 1987]. In
> so doing, space and time are understood in different ways. In the visual arts,
> rhizomatic relations can be seen in shifting relations among artists, art productions,
> and their locations, and audience involvement. (p. 79)

We connect the three different aspects of rhizomatic relationality described here to the concept of situations within a/r/tography (a/r/t). These are distinguished by, but not exclusive to, an art making situation in regard to relational aesthetics, a researching situation in regard to relational inquiry, and a teaching situation in regard to relational learning. We define *situation* in a/r/tography as unanticipated connections that occur in the in-between spaces, connections that are complex spatial and temporal encounters that reach beyond linear and binary ways of knowing the world. The three situations of art making, researching and teaching inscribe a contiguous, albeit sometimes challenging, complexity to the unique praxis of an a/r/tographer.

The art making situation as relational aesthetics

Relational aesthetics was defined in a recent issue of *Flash Art* as an approach "in which the artist loses his [sic] ego-centrality, in order to create a good communication with his "object"—but at the same time [is] always deeply respected as a "subject" (cited in Ross, 2006, p. 138). Relational aesthetics considers intersubjectivity to be its central objective "the being-together" its central theme, so as to facilitate "the encounter" between the viewer and the art work, together with the "collective elaboration of meaning" (Ross, 2006, p. 138).

Within the Richgate study, a/r/tography draws forth patterns and experiences of the collaborators through the act of "being with" the similarities and the uniqueness of others. Relational aesthetics brings into question any form of marginalization as the modernist role of artist in the community is shifted to become a facilitator, community mediator, and/or creative contributor. Traditionally, artists are not trained to know how to do this and are only recently beginning to explore the facilitation role that relationally based art requires. Gade (2005) wrote:

> Relational aesthetics, which include much of the art produced during the recent
> decades, are characterized by moving beyond the field of art and the relative

autonomy of this field (cf. Pierre Bourdieu). In their social orientation, artistic practices have thus moved far from the self-referentiality of modernist art, and there is a new expansive interaction with fields outside of the art world. The art field appears today, in the words of Bourriaud, as "porous" rather than strictly autonomous. (p. 89)

Our team of artist-educators worked with the participating family members, drawing forth their stories through images and artifacts, while simultaneously developing relationships with each family and supporting developing relationships among the different families. During regular meetings the research team had to reach consensus in decision-making around the art making, issues of representation, and the exhibiting of art among themselves, and at the same time keep in consideration the various family members' contributions to the art. This was not an easy task as there were several areas to be taken into consideration and negotiated between the artist-educators, the families, the City of Richmond, the educational institutions involved, and Canada as the art was made public through exhibiting the art in Canada and China. Individual, family, institutional, and government identities and positions were and are continuously at stake.

From the point of view of relational aesthetics, a/r/tographic collaboration needs to risk and courageously engage with the complex relations of art making, which includes a social science paradigm of research, and a commitment to public pedagogy. Modernism still holds a lot of power within contemporary art discourse, and this has entered into our regular conversations and often conflicted with the post-postmodern approaches to relational aesthetics that guided the overall project. Not all the artist-educators involved had experienced such intense collaboration previously. The steep learning curve of these art making situations was sometimes disorienting from the point of view of the artist situation.

Figure 3. Richgate Exhibition, installation photograph. Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China. Beer, R., Gu, X., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. (2005).

The "Gates" as the first major art installation of the project (Figure 3) facilitated the embodied intersubjectivity of relational aesthetics. It was central in that viewers were invited to walk around, through or under the "Gates" to encounter and make meaning of the family stories held within them. Later art works became less based on family archival photographs, although they always derived from the relationships with the families. For example, the "Bus Shelter Posters" (Figure 2), the last series of art works, were placed in public transit bus shelters at various locations in the City of Richmond. Although not as obviously intimate, historically narrative, or information giving as the "Gates," citizens of Richmond were still able to create their own meaning from being with these images as part of their everyday lives while waiting for buses.

The Researching Situation as Relational Inquiry

"Inquiry is relational because it involves being in relationships with others in many different ways" (Meyers, 1998, p. 148). Writing within clinical social psychology, McNamee and Gergen (1999) observed, "Change is a relational and social matter" and conceptualized that

> relational inquiry is a way of thinking and acting that, in practice, is responsive to the emerging context" (p. 165). Such engagement in relational inquiry challenges inquirers to open themselves to "possibilities for change that they had not yet imagined. (p. 165)

This can be facilitated through relational inquiry as meta-skill and/or value orientation with a concomitant sense of ethical responsibility to others.

In relational inquiry, the self is no longer conceived as an ideal autonomous entity but, rather, as a "more fluid, dynamic . . . self as a relational entity . . . a 'self-in-relation.'" Constructed within "relational theory," relational inquiry "identifies the *conditions*, sets of beliefs, and stance toward others that underlie the motivation to create opportunities for collective growth" (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003, p. 28, emphasis in original). Relational inquirers require a significant capacity to "tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty" (p. 29).

From within a postcolonial perspective, Alexander (2005) has addressed relational inquiry as essential to political inquiry. She wrote, "Our knowledge-making projects must therefore move across . . . borders to develop frameworks that are simultaneously intersubjective [p. 253], comparative and relational, yet historically specific and grounded" (p. 254). Within curriculum theorizing, "research is political" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995/2004, p. 255). Cornbleth (1991) has further emphasized that the "relational nature of social reality" within political research has to be located and embodied, not just theoretical (cited in Pinar et al., 1995/04, p. 256).

We had an unusual and privileged political location, relative to the artist and teacher situations, because all of us were explicit agents of a research-intensive university and thus the most comfortably located in the institutional and social science paradigms of modernity. Furthermore, we were directly accountable to the funding body, in this instance, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. As well, we were responsible to the university ethics committee, in this case the Behavioral Research Ethics Board. In general, the research situation was deeply tied to the hierarchical university academic system.

The researcher's position is often the most challenging because in the relational paradigm of a/r/tographic collaboration, the role of researcher is not given a dominant privilege. This position is equal in importance to the other two positions in a/r/tography – those of artist and teacher. Because of this, researchers are somewhat more at risk to encounter strong critique from research

colleagues, whether in conference presentations, refereed publications or ethical reviews. In the midst of the demands of the art production, a large component of this project, the theoretical engagement was often overshadowed, further exacerbating the vulnerability of the research situation. From this perspective, the entire relational/collaborative form of qualitative inquiry was susceptible to marginalization within the academic community.

In presenting our work at academic conferences, public presentations in the community, and in writing, the collaborative aspect and learning from the study was fore-fronted and acknowledged. When possible all members of the research team, including graduate students, and the family members-collaborators were present to give voice to the complexity of the relationships and the value of study.

The teaching situation as relational learning

Writing within community service and higher education, Rhoades (1997) argued for a curriculum in which we no longer support "institutions [that] favor competition over cooperation, individualism over collaboration, and an ethic of justice over an ethic of care" (p. 60). The challenge ahead in postmodern times of multiplicity is developing a "relational curriculum" and educational experience, like that proposed by hooks, which "challenges us to transform our worldview and move away from dualistic thinking" (cited in Rhoades, 1997, p. 60).

Within adult education, MacKeracher (2004) distinguished two basic approaches to learning, autonomous and relational, of which the latter has tended to be ignored in favor of the more highly valued paradigm in education and learning theories. However, she noted relational learning is more supportive, cooperative and collaborative as well as interested in social action. The political and theoretical roots that articulate "the nature and role of relational learning . . . [come] out "of feminist . . . native . . . and cross-cultural" education (p. 19). She has further recommended that both autonomous and relational learning be used in learning sites.

Relational learning has also been linked to "holistic processing of information," to learning for "solving social problems [rather] than simply for the sake of knowledge" (Belgrave & Allison, 2009, p. 250), and "relational pedagogy" (Fassett & Warren, 2006; Giroux, 1996; Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2003; Magolda, 1999; Rinaldi, 2005), often based in critical theory.

The teaching situation in the Richgate study is relatively less visible, but it plays a pivotal role in the facilitation of the three situations simultaneously. The teaching situation offers a relatively free and objective distance from the production of research and art because the focus is on the community of learners and not on producing art products and research findings. It has less at stake in terms of its position within the modern paradigm of the art world and the research-intensive academy.

Education in public spaces throughout the project has been facilitated largely by the teaching situation, in what we refer to as public pedagogy. For example, community meaning-making took place through group dialogues within the gallery in China between art students and the a/r/tographers (Figure 4). As well, community conversations between family members, Richmond community members, Richmond City councilors, and the a/r/tographers occurred at the Richmond City Hall exhibition. The sharing of visual story telling extended into the local school community and then out to the larger community in the *Post Cards from Home* exhibition held at the local museum. The social premise of the study and of the a/r/tographers is that the arts are powerful forces for shifting and rearranging patterns of community through public art as public pedagogy.

Figure 4. Richgate Exhibition: A/r/tographers in dialogue with students, installation photograph. Art Gallery of Southwest Normal University, Chongqing, China. Beer, R., Gu, X., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. . (2005).

A teaching situation was required to facilitate the steep learning curve for us as we were often crossing new borders. This situation probably carried the strongest desire to have all involved in the project fully engage and learn the a/r/tographic inquiry process. In general, participant family members could not sustain the learning interest and capabilities to be a/r/tographers on their own. As well, those on our team who predominantly identified with the artist situation found it difficult at times to sustain a learning interest in a/r/tography.

The teaching situation continually offered new information on a/r/tography to all involved, especially our team. Dialogue was facilitated and an overall learning context was held within the teaching situation as an intervention when conflict arose. The teaching situation prefers to envision the research team as a learning team. We found that questions about what the team was learning, and how learning could be better facilitated were important means to keep the inquiry both relational and growth motivated.

New understandings and offerings

Collaboration

New understandings continue to emerge for our research team as we critically reflect and write about this study. The lived experience of the collaboration is a challenge given our diverse areas of expertise and institutional affiliations. We have struggled with the allocation of research team members' names applied to the individual art productions, as certain team members put more work into some pieces and have more expertise as art makers than others. We also come from different faculties and institutions where professional careers are more dependent upon credit for

solo works than collaborative works, typical of the modernist paradigm. The writing productions are also intended to be full collaborations but because there is a conventional system of attributing authorship there is a clearer acknowledgment of the primary author in publications. Although not as large an area of contention, issues of author order still require much group discussion.

Because a/r/tography is moving towards the post-postmodern, the collaboration struggles to accommodate aspects of the modernist and postmodern academic paradigm and art discourses. A/r/tography's contiguous premise creates a confrontation between the visual (modern) and listening (postmodern) modalities, and creates the space in-between these for the working through of paradigmatic conflicts. We suggest that within an overall relational rhizomatic and collaborative paradigm, that honors and embraces the three situations of the artist/researcher/teacher, the practice of a/r/tography moves us towards a post-postmodern paradigm.

Radical relatedness

The co-inquiry and co-writing of this paper assists in further articulating and understanding the significant and radical post-postmodern relational components of an a/r/tographic praxis. As a multilayered collaborative undertaking, involving a complex combination of new and established immigrants, universities, and art institutes along with artist-educators who are individually exhibiting artists, this project engages multiple identities/roles/situations that require stepping out of comfort zones and familiar ideologies, theoretically breaching established discourses to include "radical possibilities for a revision of the relation between imagination, cultural activity, and artistic institutions" (Rogoff, n.d.-b).

Some have critiqued a/r/tography as an impossible undertaking. A/r/tographers readily admit that transforming perception into an experience and experience into perceptions complicates the process. A/r/tography is limited to the impossible only if one is trying to achieve some form of completion or mastery. A/r/tography is not about mastering a method but rather requires an ongoing rigorous, messy, and radical multiplicity of relationships. Within the academic world of art, education and qualitative research, collaborative a/r/tographic research has the potential to enhance our understandings of what art, education and qualitative research are.

Through co-reflective writing, the concept of radical relatedness emerged to act as a nodal for increasing the rhizomatic connections to theoretical and conceptual richness for a/r/tography. In other words, radical relatedness leads to further knowledge sources and cross-disciplinary experience in regards to relational aesthetics, relational inquiry, and relational learning. We've provided here only a sketch of the possibilities of these three rhizomatic connections and see developing them further in the future. However, even in this sketch there is significant overlap and triangulating validity for the importance of relationality in a post-postmodern context.

The collaborative engagement with the making and public presentation of artwork requires an ongoing dialogue and questioning of assumptions. The multiple "home" locations/ideologies within the situations force a continual stopping, checking, and rechecking of ideological and situational assumptions. The reciprocal empathetic listening requires conscious practice and at times has broken down, requiring a backtracking of the communication trails to move forward again. The commitment to the Richgate study questions, art making and public installation processes has kept bringing us back together again and allowing us to continue the dialogues.

The study enables family participants and the artist-researchers to address the multiple metaphoric meanings of home and away. The a/r/tographer is always in an active state of renegotiating perceptions of self in conceptions of situations (Rogoff, 2000). Working within radical relationality, individuals on the research team work at home, immersed in their own comfort and confidence with what they contribute to the team, as well as away, seeing that immersion from a distance, moving in juxtaposition, yet together, to open connective spaces where new knowledge is acknowledged (Sameshima, 2007).

The new understandings that have emerged from the contiguity of situations, identities, roles, and paradigms can be closely paralleled with the new understandings of community brought to light with the participating immigrant families. The immigrant families who shared their narratives of immigration and of their adopted city not only interrupt the cultural centers of cities and replaced them with multicentered multicultural realities of pluralistic societies, they interrupted the marginalization that comes from the lack of connections when these multicentered realities are ignored. Likewise, as our research team continued to work together and share narratives of self in relation to Other, we, too, broadened our minds to plurality. Through the research/creation community-engaged project, the immigrant families found a way to engage with their community that was previously inconceivable. So, too, the artist-researchers were positioned to attempt to make sense of collected data and experiences in dialogic spaces, developing a connectedness not possible without the study. In addition, as with the immigrant families and with the viewers of the various exhibitions integral to the project, the research team invited questioning of taken-for-granted conceptions of place, identity, and culture; considering the sociocultural influence of the project; and reimagining their definitions of home and away.

A radical relationality requires a shift from the individualistic modernist paradigm to an interrelational post-postmodern paradigm. This is not a simple or easy transition. New skills, practices, and ways of understanding the world as a global citizen are required before this shift can take place. The importance of having a confident individuated self is a prerequisite for this transition. Within a modernist paradigm, artists and academics have been encouraged to be individuated members of society. Despite the isolation that can occur when working individually, a return to the collective membership found in radical relationality might appear to be a loss of freedom and autonomy. Compromises, adjustments, and educational praxis is required to retain one's sense of autonomy while simultaneously contributing and benefiting from the diversity of offerings to the collective Other. We suggest that an engagement with a/r/tography provides an interrelational map to assist the transition from a modernist viewing paradigm to a postmodern listening paradigm to a post-postmodern viewing and listening paradigm. This involves maintaining the autonomous viewing self while adding the reciprocal listening self to one's practice as an artist/researcher/teacher within a complex and diverse multicentered society.

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