A PROCESS BECOMING...

AN EXPLORATION IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY & JOURNALING

by

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Date
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by Jeremy DeJiacomo
To be completely honest I had no idea what I was doing when I set upon the path to find a focus for my Applied Project. I kept spiraling around ideas from one to the next, never fully invested. It was like a million sticky-notes flying around with them all ending up in the trash bin. I felt a pull towards visual journaling as playing a role in my Applied Project, but was still unsure. One day a doctoral student asked me to participate in an interview as part of her research. She wanted to see how I engaged with visual journaling in hopes to gain insight in connection to hermeneutics, or the nature of human understanding. Through the course of this interview I presented my engagement with visual journaling, which spanned a few years. Though I did not view it as “visual journaling” until Fall 2010 when I was officially introduced to the concept in a secondary education course.

Here in this dialogue I began to see, or perceive as John Dewey (1934) might say, my connection with the journaling process. With several journals, spanning three years, laying on the table I saw the evolution of this relationship with the journal both as a physical manifestation and as an active process. Calling it a process is the best way to describe journaling for it is not a static event, but rather interactive. “It is a method of churning information over and over in order to make sense of it” (S. Scott, personal communication, September 5, 2012). Flipping through pages brought back the creation of them, what was flowing through my mind, and created awareness of how much these journals told a story about me and how I think. I began to wonder about the journaling process, and about autobiography. I was also studying theories of autobiography in curriculum and life narratives such as William Pinar’s (2004) currere and Carl Leggo’s (2008) views on writing personally, which only added to my wonderment. So I decided to explore autobiography and journaling as the focus of my Applied Project, but I would have to pursue it in a manner fitting to embodying this exploration. So I began to pursue it in the form of a visual journal.

I have come to call this work “a process becoming...” because it is the core of what I engage(d) in while exploring journaling
and autobiography. It has been, is and will continue to be a process of becoming for me. My interests in autobiography began in an art education curriculum, pedagogy, and practice course where I met the work of William Pinar (2004) and his ideas on currere, “the systematic study of self-reflexivity within the processes of education” (p. 35). His work focuses on making curriculum a more accessible process for both educators and students by interrelating it with lived experiences. The more I thought about it, I began to see a relationship between Pinar’s currere and the process of journaling. They both constituted similar aspects of regression/reflection, progression/exploratory, analytical/observational, and synthetical/creation, which I delve into these aspects through the course of this work. Jennifer New (2005) adds to this connection by breaking down the journal as a process of observation, reflection, exploration, and culminating in creation. Both processes are also ongoing and constantly in a state of becoming. For once we reach a culmination of synthesis or creation of new understandings and ideas we begin anew to continually evolve our understandings of self and the world around us. It is this point of blurring the barrier between such processes that I begin to explore autobiography through journaling and what they can be.

At first I engaged in large poster size journal entries, focused on synthesizing literature with visual journaling. While these were intriguing and allowed for an interesting evolution of thought across and around the page they presented a challenge when negotiating their size with academic text and formatting for a thesis-style booklet. So my process of inquiry needed a change; thus it evolved into smaller, standard letter paper size entries. I also find this is more intimate for the journaler and more accessible to the viewer than sprawling poster pages. These entries serve as the heart of my research and combine into a hybrid text with overlays to incorporate a narrative of the process (Barone & Eisner, 2012). For in researching autobiography, why not write personally since we live personally (Leggo, 2008).
What's autobiography?

Hmmm, where to begin...

What do you define, guys? (definitions, interests, theory... think?)

If you visual journals?

What's a visual journal?

Well, one way to describe autobiography is simply telling one's life account from their own perspective, but we can take the process of autobiography further...

Visual Journals

The basic idea is to use both written and visual forms to construct thoughts, ideas, and as a means of expression. It's taking the reflective inquiry nature of a conventional "journal," but taking it into exploratory process, a method of making sense of it. It's also a place for expression, a place to stand.
No, it's an action. It's not just a physical thing, it's an action the "journaler" engages in, it's a process, as I mentioned before. As Jennifer New (2005) discusses in her book *Drawing from Life*, the journal acts as art, she analyzes the primary uses of journals in processing, reflection, exploration, and embodiment of creation. These are all actions that the journal serves as a conduit for.

Journaling allows the journaler to engage with the surrounding world through observation, then engages one's experiences through reflection, allowing the journaler to become aware of interests in exploration, this ultimately leads to creation. This is a tangible product of the creation, it is a process that is similar to autobiography and journaling actually personally lived experiences that are then autobiographically expressed or told. Carl Leggo not write personally, or as, I don't why it, why not express personally, it, why not express personally, or as, I don't why it, why not express personally.
Pinar (2004) states that "currere seeks to understand the contribution academic studies make to one's understanding of his or her life (and vice versa), and how how both are imbricated in society, politics, and culture" (p. 36). We live in both professional and personal circles and currere seeks to understand the connections between the two. This creates an opening for Pinar's method to explore how we live, work, and study personally.

"Writer and reader both are responsible for the universe brought into being through the act of reading" (Greene, 1995, p. 77)

New (2006) writes "there is a logical argument that all fiction is generated on the basis of the inner experience of the writer and that we read it by matching it to our own inner experiences" (p. 122). When we are engaged in narratives we are lending the work a part of ourselves to make it accessible to us and not solely taking from the work. Fiction is thus created by both the author's experiences and our own, giving them new context and new meaning.

"Recall that Jean-Paul Sartre reminded readers that, when confronted with a fiction, they have to create what is disclosed when they read—they have to give it life" (Greene, 1995, p. 77)

Leggo (2008) writes that "the stories we tell about our living experiences will teach us how to live with more creativity, confidence, flexibility, coherence, imagination and truthfulness" (p. 27). Essentially our stories inform us. We relate to them through our experiences and so do others, informing them about you and themselves simultaneously.
New (2005) describes these stages as lying on a circle for "a journal keeper can enter the process at any point" (p. 10). It is also circular because each stage is constantly feeding into the others. New also notes that journals "help an author to look outside his or her usual confines and to revive the senses" (p. 10).

I further explore journaling as an "act." Not just a passive practice but an active engagement in both the physical and cognitive sense. I refer to it as a "process," a way of continuous thought exploration. It is similar to Jennifer New's (2005) analysis of the purposes of the journal. New (2005) discusses journaling as observation, reflection, exploration, and creation. Journaling embodies each of these aspects in a continuous process that culminates in creation of new understandings, physical or not. Then the process starts anew. A single understanding or creation is not merely the end, but another beginning.

I recall the day in my secondary curriculum class that I was officially introduced to the concept of visual journaling. I took to the practice almost too naturally and later realized I have been engaging in this practice of thinking and processing for years, but just did not have a name for it. This was just the beginning though, for it marked the start of my journey of what journaling can be and the creation of this work. Looking at my own entries, at the entries of fellow classmates and hearing how people respond to individual styles of journaling, I began to see how telling of the journaler this practice is. It is a process that is imbued with the journaler’s perspective.

Leggo (2008) also says "everybody lives autobiographically, all the time" (p. 10). In this sense we therefore cannot separate ourselves from ourselves. We live autobiographically, we live personally, so why not write, or more appropriately journal, personally?

Bruner (1996) writes that "nothing is culture free, but neither are individuals simply mirrors of their culture" (p. 14). We are influenced by the culture and environment that surrounds us, but it is an interaction between use and our surroundings that gives rise to shaping and influencing us.

I have begun to see how journaling embodies autobiography. These entries are personal and tell the story of my own perspective as informed through reading, experience, and the world around me. I recall Bruner's (1996) work on culture and how it informs us. This idea informs us how journaling is a means of engaging not only ourselves, but also the world around us. I also see the value of embracing this personal nature, as Carl Leggo (2008) says "There is no need to separate the personal from the professional any more than we can separate the dancer from the dance" (p. 6).
I begin through a discussion with a few characters that have manifested themselves in my visual journal practices. They act as embodiments of how I interact with readings, experience (creating understandings), and the world around me. They are able to pose questions, support or contend my understandings and offer a way of negotiating multiple perspectives. Here I ponder where to start my exploration of autobiography through journaling after a long road to finding a focus for my applied project. Now all I have to do is begin...

What might autobiography and journaling be? To define autobiography in the conventional sense is to simply tell one’s life account from one’s own perspective. A traditional view of a journal is along the lines of a diary, which is simply a reflective/descriptive recording tool. While these ideas are one understanding of journaling and autobiography, they can be so much more. I see the basics of a visual journal as a means of utilizing both visual and verbal thought processes to reflect and express ourselves. It takes the reflective inquiry of a traditional journal, but applies it to visual communication and expression.

Simply put, Moon (2006) defines a learning journal as “essentially a vehicle for reflection” (p. 1). She goes on to further develop what a learning journal is: “an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer’s processes of reflection. The accumulation is made over a period of time, not ‘in one go.’ The notion of ‘learning’ implies that there is an overall intention by the writer... that learning should be enhanced” (p. 2). In this general form, learning journals have vast creative possibilities.

I view visual journaling more in line with Jennifer Moon’s (2006) “learning journals,” but also see them as inherently autobiographical no matter the purpose of inquiry whether it is personal, professional, or educational. It is an organic evolutionary process of thinking, which also allows for better understanding of self the more we engage in it.
I pull from Leggo to inform my understanding of narrative in journaling and autobiography and the personal nature of life, but I utilize Pinar's (2004) work on *currere* to form the basis of my view of autobiography. Pinar (2004) outlines *currere* as a process in which there are “four moments in the method...the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical” (p.35). I relate these to New's (2005) ideas I discussed earlier: observation, reflection, exploration, and creation. The “moments” of re/progression and analysis are similar to observation, reflection, and exploration, while synthesis and creation flow along similar lines and are usually the culmination of the process and from which it can start anew.

I also tie in Martha Manrique's (2012) work with visual research in which she discusses “autobiography as a borderland between fiction and nonfiction; a fertile territory” also dubbed “autobiofictionalography” by Lynda Barry (p. 106). But does this potential of fiction in autobiographical narrative pose a problem? I do not think so for there is still much to be learned from insights in fictional situations. Carl Leggo and Patricia Leavy demonstrate through their work the role of fiction in autobiography. Leggo (2012) utilizes fictional characters to tell his own autobiographical story of his teaching experiences in his book *Sailing in a Concrete Boat*, does this de-legitimize his experiences? Leavy (2011) informs her fictional writing in *Low-Fat Love* with her own lived experiences. I do not view fiction as a hindrance or problem in autobiographical narrative, but rather a tool to de/re/contextualize experience.
CALL A ROUND TABLE

What do theorists do

As a "linear" journaling can become a space that can be re/constructed, a place and its inherently political and culturally imbued nature. We can change it from what it is perceived to be and free it to become something new, perhaps it will become a "space".

Journaling is a practice of imagining, or releasing the imagination. Also, as the intense reflective/observational aspect leads to a better perception, it also helps in becoming "perceiving" the world around us.

From my work in "Art as Experience," links could be made between journaling and autobiography as a conduit for becoming a "live creature," through reflective living/thinking practices, we gain insight into the world around us.

Journaling is dialogic, it allows thought to unfold organically, it embodies the process of problem solving in design, it is the act of engaging.
I wonder what literature says about autobiography and journaling and in the words of a professor “what do theorists do for journaling?” So I call a “round table,” so to speak, of the theorists I look to to inform this autobiographical journal inquiry, I have invited such guests as Maxine Greene, John Dewey, Charles Garoian and Jennifer Moon, among others, to participate in the proceedings (all accept of course). Let’s begin by seeing what they offer.

Dewey (1934) jumps right into the fray by linking journaling to his ideas of “perception” and “live creature.” The perceptive nature of journaling, that is to say the merging of seeing, sensing, and emotion into the reflective and exploratory nature of the act is conducive to actively (and awareness of) perceiving the world around us. Embracing our senses as a part of how we interact with and live in the world around us leads us down the road to becoming a “live creature” that is to say we are able to engage in “experiences” (specifically aesthetic experiences). When we are engaged in an “experience,” aesthetic or not, we are actively perceiving with the full engagement of our cognitive consciousness and not simply experiencing through instinct, there is an awareness of the tension between ourselves and the world around us. Greene (1995) adds to this through her work on thoughtfulness and releasing the imagination leading to “wide awareness.” She says that by awakening our imagination our bodies are brought into play, exciting our feelings, and opens the doors of perception (Greene, 1995, p. 28).

“The role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (Greene, 1995, p. 28). To become wide awake we must be aware of the other places, voices that reside within the space of the in-between. It is seeing with awareness of and engagement of the “other.”

These ideas are similar to Leggo’s perspective with personal narrative and living autobiographically. Leggo (2008) states “we need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living-professional, academic, administrative, artistic, social, and political” (p. 3). We engage in life physically, mentally, emotionally, personally and professionally, so we should embrace and express how we engage life. Journaling allows us to transcend barriers, to imbue and embody expression, thought, and experience. It is an embodiment of Leggo’s view of autobiography as “both transcendent and immanent, both inside and outside, both internal and external, both personal and public” (p. 3). Bruner (1996) also discusses narrative as a mode of thought. He discusses it in terms of

I view journaling as a method to work with these theories’ work. It is a way of liberating the work of these authors so they may be represented in terms of autobiography and journaling. Jones/Okomo (2009) discusses how she works “together every time we work individually,” which is in relation to working with others’ work or writing, not necessarily collaborating with them (p. 195). I view how I work with these theorists in a similar fashion. I work with and interpret their work in terms of an autobiographical journaling process.

“No creature lives merely under its skin; its subconscious organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest” (Dewey, 1934, p. 12). We are not lone beings living in a void, we are part of a world that demands the use of our body faculties to their full potential. To engage in living any less “fully” is to deprive us of experiential living.

“We represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative” (Bruner, 1996, p. 40). We automatically relay ourselves in a narrative manner, should we cut that aspect of ourselves out when pursuing academic work?
managing and organizing knowledge of the world in terms of the treating of people and their plights (p. 39). “Skill in narrative construction and narrative understanding is crucial to constructing our lives and a “place” for ourselves in the possible world we will encounter” (Bruner, 1996, p. 40).

Pinar’s method of *curriculum* essentially lays out the process of autobiography. Though he bases it on the interaction with curriculum and for academics, the method embodies the journaling process. *Curriculum* is inherently based in autobiography, forging links between academic study and lived experience. It is personal and is a continuous flow of learning about one’s self, the world around us, our interactions with others, and our studies. Pinar argues for curriculum as “a coursing, as in an electric current” and that we should “tap this intense current within, that which through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person’s energy source” (p. 37). *Curriculum* flows through the moments of regression, progression, analytical and synthetic. These also make up the basic flow of journaling as observational, reflective, exploratory, and creative (New, 2005, p. 10).

New (2005) urges that “visual journals may provide stronger records of the cultural milieu in which they were created than their purely written counterparts. Rather than describing the stuff of the day, they are often made from it” (p. 12). The journal is telling of not only ourselves, but also of the culture we are embedded in. “They are a place to play, a safe haven from our embedded editor” (New, 2005, p. 13). New situates journaling as a place that transcends personal and professional and is an antidote for the fact that “our society makes little room for reflection; we are so focused on the future that thoughtful examination of the past and present are rarely encouraged” (New, 2005, pg. 64). Journaling allows, encourages, even requires reflection, but it is more than just simple descriptive recording. That is not reflection, reflection is an active process. Burnard and Hennessy (2009) discuss reflective practices, which is an aspect of the journaling practice. They consider many forms of reflection, whether it is reflection on action, for action, in action, but they come to the understanding that “reflective practice” does not imply a precise format of instruction, but rather learning to take multiple perspectives: a mutual engagement in self-reflective workouts” (Burnard & Hennessy, 2009, p. 9). Burnard and Hennessy (2005) maintain that reflection is not simply a recollective form in a thought or action that is already passed or lived through, but that it constitutes action, though it may be in different time frames (p. 3).
So where does that leave the Big Map?

Learning Journal

De/re/territorialization

Dewey

Greene

is there a place in literature and theory to place visual journaling? Or is it the place/space that de/re/constructs literature and theory?

Bruner

Post-Structural modernist theory

"liberation" Freire

Mmm... Uhuh

hey switch those back, heh?
Charles Garoian (1999) offers his work with limens in terms of the journal being a “liminal servant,” in which its mission is “to create thresholds, to expand the parameters of liminal space and to dwell in its polemical space where ‘meaning is contested and struggled for in the interstices in between structures’ (Conquergood, 1991, p.184)” (p. 43). Limens are essentially thresholds, borders, or “a neutral zone between ideas, cultures, or territories that one must cross in order to get from one side to the other” (Garoian, 1999, p. 40). Journaling offers a space in which we can explore multiple thresholds, to explore the places we inhabit, to de/re/construct them, to cross them to reach new understandings (Garoian, 1999).

So if journaling is a space that de/re/constructs place, then does that leave it in the in between? As a process of de/re/territorialization as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) might say. It is a form of embodied knowledge, it is a way of knowing that engages the body, mind and social limens (Davidson, 2004). Patrick Slattery (2006) might say that the journal allows us to explore our own perspectives of understanding for “society has become a global plurality of competing subcultures and movements where no one ideology and episteme (understanding of knowledge) dominate” (p. 19). Is there a more important goal than to find a way to navigate through the plethora of plurality and move through/with/in experience and understanding in the world...

"The potential for spatial critique through performance finds its compliment in cognition in the form of liminal, contingent, and ephemeral epistemologies where knowledge is not "narrativized in advance" but determined by the coexistence of cultural experiences that each participant acts out through performance" (Garoian, 1999, p. 51). Journaling is an autobiographical performance in which we "act out" our narratives, giving them shape and voice.

"What is Post-Modernism?" It is a question... that can be answered only by recognizing that postmodernism is in continual growth and movement, and thus no firm definitions are possible—at least until it stops moving” (Slattery, 2006, p. 23). I find this appropriate for autobiography and journaling, for they are active processes, therefore they have evolutionary definitions that allow them to continually grow and change. They live just as we live and cannot reach a definite "name" until we stop living.

"What defined the embodied consciousness of the living human being was 'the capacity of going beyond created structures in order to create others" (Greene, 1995, p. 55). As "living beings" we have the potential to go beyond created structures, to further the bounds of understanding.

"Postmodernism itself must be deconstructed and problematized” (Slattery, 2006, p. 21). Journaling allows us to de/re/construct ourselves, our perspectives, and how we live autobiographically to come to further understand our interactions with the lived world.
Perhaps the most comprehensive work on the reflective practice of journaling is Moon’s writing. Moon (2006) offers the perspective of ‘learning journals,’ which she defines as essentially any form of reflective practice that the end goal is to further our understanding of knowledge and can be geared towards anything (p. 17). She approaches learning in a constructivist view in which “new material of learning (e.g. a new idea) is linked into the network, but in being linked in, it may be modified in the process of assimilation (Piaget, 1971)” (p. 19). This view is also how Moon approaches journaling as a means to learn. As a means for meaning making, but Moon writes that meaningfulness is dependent upon the learner. “The same idea can legitimately be meaningful to one learner and not to another—because of different prior experiences” (Moon, 2006, p. 20). This is similar to the value of the form of a journal. Someone who does not think visually will not find the visual journaling method as meaningful as say a literal, oral or performative one.

Through engagement with learning journals Moon proposes that we learn more about content and learn about learning. The more we progress and engage with this process the better we become at learning both content and learning strategies and methods. Essentially we learn more about how we ourselves learn. Moon describes and discusses all aspects of learning journals from what they are to possible forms (though she focuses primarily on the written form) and classroom uses. She even briefly offers the potential for story in learning journals. Though I situate visual journaling closely with some of Moon’s learning journal views, I differ on the aspect of narrative in that journaling is inherently autobiographical therefore it is already imbued with our narrative whether it is purposeful or not, overt or subtle. Also for me journaling embodies everything that learning journals offer, but it allows us to transcend the boundaries of classroom and personal, public and private, subject from subject. It is a space where the learning flow is possible no matter where it begins or ends, which it doesn’t really end, but rather reach a new place of beginning.

"Reflective writing could be likened to using the page as a meeting place in which ideas can intermingle and, in developing, give rise to new ideas for new learning" (Moon, 2006, p. 17). I liken this to my own perspectives on the journal as a facilitator of dialogue between ourselves and the world we inhabit. It is a place where the boundaries and walls can intermingle and be transcended.

"Learning is a matter of relating and balancing existing knowledge and new material of learning" (Moon, 2006, p. 19). Through journaling we balance the knowledge we know about ourselves with new insights our journal inquiry brings to light.
what about performance pedagogy and embodiment?

WHAT ABOUT SITUATING IT WITHIN AUTO/TOGRAPHY...

Do we put it in with autobiography?

we could place it as an extension of Moon's Learning跻身视觉研究。

Should we have to situate visual journals?

much about what does the journalling autobiographically as the round table discussed, but what theory does for journalling.

Do we care about journalling in literature?

The reason to focus on what it is because its place is implicated in literature is because of its place implicated in the autobiographical.
Just as Bruner's curricular spiral circles around from introduction of a concept to later circle around back to gain better understanding, so does journaling "spiral" in a similar fashion. As we continue to explore ideas and thoughts, we are positioned to make continuous improvements. The adoption of Bruner's forward process in our educational journey is critical to our success.
Bruner’s (1999) spiral in curriculum is an interesting concept that allows us to begin at an intuitive understanding and later spiral back to it to come to a more advanced generative understanding. I interpret Bruner’s spiral in terms of journaling and autobiographical processes. It allows us to move forward and backward, inward and outward, through life, experience, learning, and understanding. It is reminiscent of how we engage in life for we are constantly returning to previous knowledge to build upon it. We are in a constant state of learning, spiraling around our understandings to continue to build upon them.

I am reminded of my engagement with journaling over the years, how I have spent six years engaging in some form of visual inquiry or visual thinking. It is evident that I have been spiraling around my understandings in visual thinking processes as I look over past sketchbooks and journals, though now I view all of them as a form of journaling and do not delineate between sketchbooks and journals. Though it was not until I was introduced to the name/idea of visual journaling that I began to really take off. Having a name for this process liberated my perception of what it was and what it could be, it gave me agency over alternative modes of thought and perception.

Paulo Freire (1970) discusses liberation in terms of being liberated from oppression and that naming grants the oppressed agency. I somewhat interpret this as before I was able to name the thought process I had been engaged in that I was oppressed by what I perceived to be how I was “supposed” to process thoughts. The naming of the visual journal process has liberated me in a sense from such a limited perspective on modes of thought.

I recall my journey to find a focus for my applied project (resulting in this work here), how I always brushed the idea of visual journaling and increasingly brought it in from just a tool to brainstorm for a focus, as being incorporated into my project, to becoming the focus and form my research would take. My realization took extensively discussing my engagement with journaling with a fellow classmate as part of her hermeneutic research for me to finally be struck with the epiphany of engaging in this work.
I walked into the interview balancing a stack of journals that spanned the course of three or four years. If that wasn’t enough I pulled a couple more out of my backpack that I was currently using. There was anything from studies in mark making and imaginative explorations, to travel journals and class journals. I even had a sketchbook I was using as a weekly planner that turned out to be characteristic of a visual journal. It is easy to forget what you have done, how invested you are and the diversity of a form of thought, especially with journals, if you put them on the shelf once they are full. I saw all of these on the table and dived into them to answer some inquiries, but the true connections and understanding this discussion. The diverse forms the journals take as they build up to something Did I begin to become aware. I always difference in knowing it as it is embedded ‘aware’ of it. This is when that awareness “wide awareness” so to speak (Greene, 2006).

Through this dialogue I began to “Process” would be the best term I would use to describe my engagement with visual journaling as a way for me to process my thoughts, ideas, even class lectures. It is a method of churning information over and over in order to make sense of it. Anything and everything is fair game when it comes to what I might include or express in the pages of my visual journal. It is a place for expression as well as cognition. I feel visual journaling has great potential not only as a creative thinking tool, but also as a method to understand one’s self. For me this is a natural way to process information for I was doing a form of “journaling” before I was formally introduced to visual journaling. Previously I have engaged in exploratory journals where I develop and explore an idea, mostly in a visual format. Visual journaling for me has opened up the way I think so my mind can move beyond just drawn images to incorporate other representations of information. I can correlate image, text, meaning and perception together to create a better understanding in my head as well as a lasting connection in reflection. So in short I feel that my engagement with visual journaling has been enlightening to my perception of the world around me as well as to the innerverse of my mind (S. Scott, personal communication, September 5, 2019).
An Enlightening Interview...

I see visual journals. So, how did you start visual journaling?...

Me & My Stack of Visual Journals

I see how my journals are telling of my perspective, how I think, as well as how my visual processing has evolved...

Well after talking about these journals, I see that I have been engaged in the visual journaling process in some aspect.

...during my first and second year, and in an applied project phase...
If you were to explain to someone that has never visual journalism before, how would you explain it to them? How would you make them understand it?
There really isn't a right and wrong way to visual journal. As long as you are engaging in thought, as long as you are engaging in something that is thinking, whether it's verbal or visual, that is the whole point of the journaling process. (S. Scott, personal communication, September 5, 2012)

Through this dialogue I began to form a basic definition, well my definition, of what journaling is. Essentially it's your safe place. It's the place where you can explore anything whether it's your thoughts or your notes for class or your stories you want to write, or poetry. You can explore, and you don't have to explore it in a literal, in a verbal sense, you can explore it in a visual and verbal sense. It's safe because it is for you essentially. The purpose of it is not to get a grade in a class, it's not for a specific objective. The objective is for you to have better self-understanding of whatever it is you are trying to explore at that time. The whole journal could be dedicated to one thing, or it could just be your everyday thought. That is very valuable as well, and so it's kind of like the idea of a diary almost, but it is so much more.

It's not just actively doing it, you gotta have that reflection so you can get that further understanding. Because that is the whole point, is understanding in my opinion. So it gets you to thinking farther, and you might need to make a whole other page about, furthering the same thought. A whole other book about furthering that thought even further, and that's awesome in my opinion. Because it's about the knowledge, which whether it's about yourself or about your ideas, so the more you investigate it the better you can express it and communicate it, and the better you can do that, the better you can succeed at whatever you are trying to do. So reflection is key in my view. (S. Scott, personal communication, September 5, 2012)

"Looking back I was like, okay reflection is definitely a major point when it comes to the drawing process because if you don't reflect on it and look back then you can miss understandings." (S. Scott, personal communication, September 5, 2012).
Perception and thoughtfulness are important aspects of visual journaling. We are not simply descriptively recording our lives, our experiences. We are engaging in them. We interact, react, and dwell within them. It is through the tension between us, others, and our environment that shapes us (Dewey, 1934). The philosophies of Dewey and Greene intertwine and blur the edges of personal and professional experiences for we inhabit both just as they inhabit us. There is not a clear delineation between one aspect of our lives and another. This is where journaling lives. It lives in the in-between.

Garofan (1999) also discusses the “in-between” in terms of limens, as the space borders occupy, in which we must cross to come to new understandings. "This in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the ‘web of human relationships,’ indicating by the metaphor its intangible quality" (Greene, 1995, p.70). Just because I cannot see and grasp the in-between, the other, it does not make it any less meaningful.

"Giving perception a "primacy" in our lives, because "perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us"" (Greene, 1995, p.73).

"All we can do, I believe, is cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same" (Greene, 1995, p.70). Journaling is fertile land for such cultivation.
These ideas are very important when it comes to engaging in visual journaling, no matter in what form or reflective process. When we engage in any journaling, we are creating an autobiography. We are living our lives in a state of self-reflection, and that is what journaling is—living thoughtfully. We are to name it to be a state of "living creatures" and that is what journaling is.
The idea of situating research has been problematic for me. It has caused a great deal of tension. Where should I situate my research for this applied project? Then it dawned on me, why am I so concerned with situating it. I have situated literature in terms of this research thus making where it stand implicit. It is embodiment.

Embodiment refers to the perspective that knowledge resides within the mind, body, and social spheres. We know more than just what is contained within the confines of the mind and it is through bodily interaction that we begin to learn and know the world around us (Davidson, 2004, p. 198).

Visual journaling inhabits the in-between, for that is where we live, it is where experience begins to take form and where we begin to engage with ourselves, others, and the world. It is not so important to place visual journaling, but rather to place things in relation to/with journaling. A journal is whatever you put into it and whatever is put into or onto you and so on, therefore it embodies much more than just our own experiences and knowledge we have accumulated.
"In the analytic stage the student [we are all students in some sense] examines both past and present." (Pinar, 2004, p. 36)

I have mentioned before how Pinar's currere forms the basis of my approach to autobiography as well as the journaling process. I link its moments to the journaling "moments." Observation and reflection go along similar lines as regression and analysis, while progression is more characteristic of exploration and finally synthesis and creation are similar in that they produce understandings. It is a cyclical process just as New describes journaling and we can enter in at any time. Each moment informs the others over and over. It is a process where there are many beginnings and endings, but never a definite beginning or ending.

"In the second or progressiv step one looks toward what is not yet the case, what is not yet present." (Pinar, 2004, p. 36)

Journaling embodies the moments of currere as a process of understanding, meaning making, and negotiating life experiences in order to construct knowledge. I delve into what these moments of currere are and how they are intercon...
In exploring visual journaling you begin to wonder, “well how long has this really been around?” It is a method that may have a new name, but it has been around a long time. Some of the more notable examples of historical journaling are the entries of Leonardo da Vinci, who actively kept journals filled with visual and verbal observations, thoughts, explorations and ideas. Naturalists, scientists, all sorts of people not just notable creatives such as Guillermo del Toro keep visual journals to record, explore and create. Lynda Barry is a contemporary visual journal artist who utilizes journaling to create stories that are a hybrid of fiction and autobiography. So utilizing visual methodology in journaling is not necessarily a new thing, it is just we have not “officially” named it until more recently.

Interestingly enough the state of Georgia has included visual journals as a part of the state performance standards for the art education classroom, but unfortunately they did not include a comprehensive idea of what a visual journal (or a journaling process) might be. This is no problem for those who have engaged with journaling practices such as myself, but what about others who are lost to the idea of visual journaling let alone including a journal practice in the classroom? I wonder if my definition of journaling here in this work may be of help, perhaps a process such as this work could act as a possible example?

Perhaps this work could also serve as an example to pre-service teachers when dealing with the role of visual journals and academia. As a way of showing possible uses in collusion with academic literature or how to trouble the idea of journaling as separate from academic discourse. To show journaling as a dialogical process.

I also believe work such as this exemplifies the role of experience in shaping our own practices as learners and educators. Showing pre-service educators that their own experiences are shaping the teachers they are becoming and will continue to become.
Just as learning is an evolutionary process, so is the journaling process. We engage in it and may have a plan or goal to reach but we do not really know if it will take us there. It may move us to a different understanding or shoot off to evolve into something completely different. One thing is sure, journaling is an evolutionary process. It changes with us and through us.

When I began to explore a form for this applied project to take, I started to create vast journal entries on huge sheets of paper. They allowed the entries to flow, but they seemed to problematize accessibility. So I threw out that idea and returned to the notion of smaller more personable and accessible journal entries. These previous explorations continue to inform me though they are no longer a direct part of this work.
just as visual journalism is an act of evolution, so are our thoughts. We experiment with the way we think in constantly changing our process. The journaling process is an evolutionary one. It begins with the simple practice of writing. As we become familiar with this form of this writing, we begin to synthesize literature with the journaling act, but upon reflection and thinking about the inaccessibility and thinking about the inaccessibility and page size, they did not want to a journal accessible because we are familiar with it. But the evolution of this work is not yet done. I foresee it becoming a hybrid of theoretical narrative and actual research.
"The in-between disrupts dualisms" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 106). That is to say, it allows us to see the multi-perceptiveness of the situation.


"Artists do not create in a void" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 111). This is true of how we live as well. We do not live in a vacuum, we are constantly in contact with the world around us. We are constantly troubling how we perceive the world so it is only natural that journaling is similar. We do not journal in a void either. It is a process that is continuous and evolutionary. Just as we get better at learning the more we engage in learning practices, the better we become at journaling through engaging in the process. It allows us to become more aware of how we see ourselves, how we live autobiographically and how that shows through into how we journal. We live in and through the spaces between, the moments between. This is where our "ahah!” moments begin to take place and I view visual journaling as a place to embody these moments.
"Theory is understood as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive, and relational, which is continuously in a state of reconstruction and becoming something else together" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 106). This reminds me of de/ re/territorialization and how it is an instantaneous and continuous process (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).

"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" (Garcian & Gaudelius, 2007, p. 9).
Journaling tells stories about the Lynda Bengs uses visual journals to create stories that are part fiction and part autobiography. She has dubbed visual autobiography as "autobiographic fictionography."
While my own engagement with journaling is primarily within the visual journal methodology, I understand that there are multiple forms journaling can take. It all depends on the mode of thought that is best for you. Bruner (1996) talks about how there are various modes of thought, not just one single approach. I think journaling (visual or other) provides a way for us to explore what our mode of thought might be. Visual journaling is a “new” approach to thinking in a more visual manner, but I believe it is just the beginning. In our technologically driven era there are already many people who have taken to online journals and blogs or even creative outlet websites to begin a form of journaling. I argue that these are new forms of journaling for they are just as thoughtful, reflective, expressive and telling of the people who are “actively” engaged in them as those like myself who are engaged in more physical forms of visual or literal journaling. I believe there might even be those who create a form of performance journaling for those who think in a more bodily aware manner. In the end, I do not try to delineate or create borders where journaling cannot/can go, as long as it furthers our understanding and knowledge (personal, academic, or metacognitively).

My own Facebook page I view as a form of autobiographical journal for it has recorded the life I show to an internet audience. It is a mediated view of me, but it is still telling of myself. It is a form that embraces mediating how we are perceived as well as mediating how we perceive ourselves, though I feel I am more aware of an audience utilizing a digital form such as Facebook than when engaged in visual journaling. I have a more private audience awareness when journaling in my toteable visual journal.
Grauer (2004) talks about having time to 'read' back the ideas in the pages of our journals (pg. 75). This is important for students to have adequate time to do so in order to build upon and forge connections. It is also important for teacher-educators and pre-service teachers to allow time for them to ‘read’ back their ideas and preconceptions to allow them to step back from themselves in order to really "see" the self as both educator and student.

I have come to see visual journaling as imbued with a transcendent nature. I feel it has the ability to blur the lines between borders, personal/professional, academic/private. It is not simply an educational tool nor is it solely a self-initiated metacognitive study. It is all of them. Journaling has the ability to help students and educators to explore what their mode of thought is. It allows better understanding of how we learn as well as seeing our interpersonal connections and how we engage with the world around us. Moon (2006) extensively discusses possible uses for journals in both teacher and student education. She even includes guides for assessing journals in the classroom. There are examples of visual journals being used in classrooms to help students make meaning, foster creativity, and introduce children to explore forms of thought (Grauer, 2004). Some educators utilize visual journals because "images can be more accessible than most forms of academic discourse" and "images are likely to be more memorable" (Gouzouasis, 2011, p. 137).

Image is one of our earliest forms of communicating and thinking. We all think differently, process information differently and interact with our surroundings differently, so I argue that journaling methodology allows us to negotiate multiple perspectives in order for us to find our productive method of thought.

Through reading back the pages of my own journals I have become more aware of my own thinking and learning methods. It is only through this regression through the pages that themes and modes of practice begin to emerge, which may have eluded my understanding had I not engaged in the reflective/regressive practices of journaling.
As part of my applied project research, I wanted to share and invite others to interact with the work I had created and been working with. So I set up a show perhaps installation is more appropriate. In that installation, I loosely arranged the journal.
Through the course of my applied project work and the massive amount of time it consumed I had a longing for something more than a simple defense as the end of my journey. A show, or a sharing of this work that I have invested so much time in. I began to wonder how might my journal entries be engaged with in an exhibition space. I found the entries in their present size too small for engagement in a larger gallery space. So I blew them up and arranged them in our Art Education department gallery. They were hung very simply with the bottoms loose so they gave the feel of pages and impermanence. The space was also furnished with supplies for viewers to use in an open gesture of engagement with the work.

Rather than being a passive or neutral observer through the course of this engagement exhibition, I also participated in my own invitation to engage with the work. I did this as both a means to help viewer engagement with the work as well as approaching my journal entries from a new perspective. I also view the role of artist/researcher as being a part of the audience or group we are studying not separate. It is important for us to participate in our studies in order to observe and engage with greater awareness of the experience as lived
an intimate discussion about my work, a formal defense.

I proposed the initiation of this applied project work. I couldn't help feeling almost helpless like the decision to move forward was totally out of my hands. I also had a similar feeling as I turned in my work to my defense committee. So after I had engaged in discussions concerning the defense process. In my continuation exam, in which I didn't feel powerless in the research proposal. To create a space for my defense to take place in response to the feeling I previously noted. This urge to manipulate or control the poster size copies of my journal entries used in the exhibition I previously noted. This urge to manipulate.
the WALL OF WORK SPEAKS

A process becoming... defense!

With the completion of my applied project and the awaited defense of my work, I decided to install the large print-outs of my journal entries which make-up the basis of my work. We all would sit in a large circle and my committee would then discuss the printed thesis proplets of my completed work. This turned out to be an interesting dialogue between us and the installation, thus the importance of including it was realized.
So where does this leave visual journaling?

That is a good question. What does this all mean for journaling? What are some implications or conclusions...

VISUAL JOURNALING...

Auto-biographical visual journaling, I feel as though it shouldn't even have to be named it for it is implicit in its form, in its process. It is a method of living and inquiry that crosses borders, inhabits liminal, and merges personal with academic. Journaling is left as a facilitator of dialogue within our surrounding world and lived world.

It's beneficial if we engage in living practice as a facilitation for ourselves, to sustain and acknowledge the power and potential of visual journaling as an inherently auto-biographical method of inquiry.
Well what is the conclusion to this all? What is the take away? (If there is one.) I have processed countless articles and books, negotiated theory after theory. I have situated visual journaling as a mode of thought, which is intrinsically autobiographical. We are personally invested in how we journal so it is only natural that it shows through into our entries. Granted it is a methodology that is highly time intensive and takes prolonged practice to sharpen our skills. After it all I believe that the take away is that journaling has been redefined, reconstructed as an active practice. It is not solely for art education nor only for the classroom. I believe with better awareness of multiperspective thinking processes such as journaling that it will help open new avenues of perception. I am not saying that everyone should visual journal because not everyone thinks in a predominantly visual manner, but I am saying that through introduction of journaling processes in line with the evolutionary open nature of visual journaling then others (students, educators, professionals) can begin to explore how they think and learn, and can forge new understandings.

I propose that through awareness of how we learn, of how we think, then we can live more fully, more creatively. We are alive and awake.

I hope that the definition of (visual) journaling I have built will help build what journaling can be as a personally engaged experiential action and mode of thought. Perhaps this will serve as a helpful example of visual journaling or a new perspective on journaling methodology. Now whether it is scholarship is perhaps a different story. I propose that it is a form of embodied scholarship. It is only through study of theorists, the act of engaging in visual journaling practice, reflection and analysis, as well as synthesis of literature that I have come to understand journaling in terms of embodied learning. I do not think there is a blanket take away from this body of work, but rather what each viewer/reader/engager gives to it and takes from it.

Isn't one goal of education to help us discover how we think? It's not just about giving us a foundational knowledge of the world, because we probably absorb more information outside of school than in it. The aim is for us find how we work so we can take that awareness and engage it in how we live and progress through the world.
References


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Comments, thoughts, ideas, notes and responses are welcome here: