

Toward a Phenomenology of the Material

Qualitative Inquiry
2020, Vol. 26(5) 507–513
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DOI: 10.1177/1077800419836690
journals.sagepub.com/home/qix



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Abstract

Can phenomenological approaches to experience allow me to attend to not just the human experience but also the material discursive forces that are a part of the shifting, moving network of agents at work in a phenomenon? Focusing on the material structures of experience means not asking what materiality is, but rather asking what it is doing in the context of an intra-active phenomena. In this article, I consider what possibilities for data gathering and analysis are opened if I think the Husserlian concept of encounters with the world within a feminist new materialist framework, and find the tensions provocative.

Keywords

feminist qualitative research, feminist methodologies, methodologies, new methods and methodologies, qualitative research and education, qualitative research

Some encounter with the world jolts us and demands our attention. It sets our curiosity to work; sends us to the library to read hoping to find others intrigued by the same problem; intrudes in our conversations with colleagues (“Have you ever wondered about —?”); saturates that liminal space–time between sleeping and waking; and, eventually, re-orientes our seeing, re-orientes our thinking, re-orientes being, so that orthodox distinctions fail, normalized boundaries dissolve, and things that are not supposed to relate connect and surge into new intensities.

—St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016, p. 105)

Introductory Musings

Phenomenology is often seen as an essentially (and possibly essentializing) humanist and realist endeavor, one that requires a fixed, stable human subject for which the world can appear. However, phenomenological approaches to experience could allow me to attend to not just the human experience but also the material discursive forces that are a part of the shifting, moving network of agents at work in a phenomenon. Focusing on the material structures of experience means not asking what materiality *is* but rather asking what it is *doing* in the context of an intra-active phenomena. Likewise, investigating the experience of an intra-active subjectivity isn’t asking what a separated, discrete subject discovered in the world, but rather examining how that subjectivity was produced with and in the world, as agency and subjectivity are continually re-constituted and fluid.

In this article, I ask what could be gained by rethinking the tradition of phenomenology within a new materialist

theoretical framework. What new possibilities for data gathering and analysis are opened if I think the Husserlian concept that consciousness is always *of* something—how subjects meet the world—within a feminist new materialist framework, and find the tensions provocative? As St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei tell us—these things are not supposed to relate, yet there is a productive intensity to be found in the pairing.

Traditions of phenomenology are in need of unsettling yet have much to offer educational researchers who seek to re-imagine our conception of the *real*. Poststructuralist theorists like Foucault and Derrida rightly rejected a naïve conception of empiricism as something fixed and awaiting human discovery, in favor of seeing the world as socially constructed. But as the new materialists point out, matter *matters*, and when we ignore matter in favor of interrogating our human interpretations of the world, we risk losing sight of how the material of the world can both affect significant differences in people’s lives, and resist human attempts at interpretation (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008b; Bennett, 2010; Mann, 2014; Mol, 2002; Rosiek, 2017). My attempt at articulating a phenomenology of the material is an attempt to articulate a kind of realism that acknowledges both sociocultural and material factors, what Rosiek calls a “pluralist realism that frames reality as constituted by the methodological and semiotic apparatuses we use to interpret the world *and* constituted by

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the activity of a world that is obdurately other than our interpretations of it [emphasis in the original]" (Rosiek, 2017, p. 3). A phenomenology of the material could be one way to approach this pluralist realism, one that has the potential to take seriously the ways that matter co-constitutes human subjectivity, while not losing sight of how the material discursive is made real in human experience.

I turn to theorists, particularly new materialist feminists and feminist phenomenologists, to help me think between and across poststructural accounts of semiotics and discourse, and material lived experiences that can be beyond language. I hope to think a phenomenology of the material based on a subjectivity that is entangled and posthumanly performative: a consciousness that is continually becoming aware not *of* but *with* the world. Thinking a phenomenology of the material means seeing the subject-object relationship as shifting and always emergent. The semiotic and the ontic, the bodily and the material, are shaped by and with one another in an ongoing *becoming*.

The tension created by considering a phenomenology of the material is thick. Elizabeth St. Pierre seeks to draw a bright line between the empiricisms of phenomenology and the new materialisms, criticizing those who would "base their epistemological claims on lived experience, when they insist on preserving the phenomenon exactly as described by participants in careful word-for-word transcriptions of interviews, and refuse to theorize in analysis, and when their research reports only 'describe,' as if description is not an interpretation" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 115). The post-phenomenologists have engaged this criticism, responding that a phenomenon doesn't have a stable essence, but rather that within phenomena "intentional connections 'exist,' but they become plural lines of flight—they elude, flee, entangle, and take on various intensities in and over time, across contexts" (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 336). In all this discussion, the central questions of the conflict remain—Should we continue to consider lived experiences as a source of knowledge as we move away from a humanist view of the world? If so, how can it be done without reinscribing the human as the center of the phenomena? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what is to be gained by unsettling phenomenological traditions, but continuing to include accounts of lived experience in our research?

To provide possible answers to these questions, I turn to Barad's agential realism, which posits a relational ontology that displaces subjectivity into a broad, always shifting and becoming agentic dance of human and nonhuman. This material turn I'm attempting in phenomenology provokes immediate tensions—if human subjectivity is no longer seen as the entry point to the phenomenon, is it still phenomenology? There is something useful to be found, though, in this tension; as Barad says, "if we follow disciplinary habits of tracing disciplinary-defined causes through to the corresponding disciplinary-defined effects, we will miss all the crucial intra-actions among these forces that fly in the face of any specific set of disciplinary concerns"

(Barad, 2003, p. 810). What if we cease to consider subjectivity as something that is predetermined, always already a part of each human being, but instead think of subjectivity as something that is not exclusively reserved for the human?

I enter this tension using Barad's methodology of diffractive reading, in an attempt to articulate the beginnings of a phenomenology of the material. As Barad said in a 2006 interview, "diffractive readings bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with" (van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2009). Thinking phenomenology and new materialism(s) together could be called an inventive provocation; perhaps Barad would approve. She describes diffractive methodology as an alternative to traditional critical reflective, representative methods (Barad, 2007). By using a diffractive methodology, I can avoid the impulse to critique previous theories, and to relieve or neatly resolve the tension between them. Instead, I dwell in the provocation that comes with thinking feminist phenomenology and new materialism(s) together, to begin to articulate what phenomenology of the material might look like in practice, and to consider what implications of this approach on other "post" phenomenologies might be.

I begin by grounding the discussion in theory, in particular the feminist phenomenologists and feminist new materialist thinkers I think with in this text. Next, I describe how I use diffractive methodology to "read" feminist phenomenologist thinkers with and through feminist new materialist thinkers. I then move into diffractive "reading" at the site of a diffractive overlap/ripple between feminist phenomenology and new materialism(s): the question of phenomena as experience. Finally, I discuss the implications of a phenomenology of the material: What does it offer educational researchers, and how does it compliment/complicate other "post" phenomenologies?

Feminist Phenomenology: Situated, Relational, Contextual

Traditional phenomenology is centered around the act of phenomenological reduction. As explained by Alcott, the purpose of this reduction is "to transform the world from the realm of the actual to the realm of the phenomenon . . . where validity is not yet determined" (Alcott, 2000, p. 50). St. Pierre (2016) describes traditional phenomenology as a study of "phenomena, things in themselves, essences, as they appear to us in our consciousness" (p. 115). Traditionally, phenomenology is concerned with the moments when the (bounded, singular) human conscious examines the (external, stable, waiting) phenomenon, and brackets out all that is not "essential" to the phenomenon, so something "essential" about the world can be "revealed."

In recent years, many thinkers have distanced themselves from the idea of "essence" and yet found value in phenomenology. For the post-phenomenologists, the idea of essence is often rejected outright in favor of a more nuanced view of

intentionality (Freeman & Vagle, 2013; Vagle, Clements, & Coffee, 2017). In general, the “conceptions of phenomena move from stable, idealized essences that are immediately “present” in time and space (Husserl) to unstable, contextualized, and historicized deconstructions (Derrida)” (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 335). Feminist phenomenologists have played a large role in this rethinking and redefining of the concept of the phenomenon, and articulating what is at stake and at risk when using phenomenology as a method.

Feminist phenomenologists have pointed out the limitations and possibilities of traditional phenomenology, and articulated ways to bring phenomenology beyond its masculine, often essentializing roots. Alcoff’s (2000) book chapter *Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience* points out that Husserl’s phenomenological depictions denote an embodied consciousness that is entangled with the world. However, as Alcoff argues, masculine mind–body dualism limits the effectiveness of this view of subjectivity—It loses the material realities of lived bodily experience in the world, and locates reason as separate from the world, in a generalizable mind (Alcoff, 2000). This ethereal, generalizable mind is often masculine, thus firmly cementing the association of reason with masculinity, and devaluing any experience that is embodied/feminine as unreasonable. Feminist phenomenologists, trying to think beyond the masculine generalized mind, establish distance from the concept of “essence” through a unique way of theorizing subjectivity: Consciousness is embodied, and being-in-the-world is necessarily situated, contextual, and relational (Coole, 2005; Mann, 2009; Young, 2005).

These two strands, the embodied consciousness and relational being-in-the-world, are woven throughout feminist phenomenological thought. Lisa Guenther, in her phenomenological account of solitary confinement, describes this corporeal being-in-the-world as a relation between body and world that unfolds as a conversation (Guenther, 2013). The recasting of phenomenology as a bodily relation with the world is also important for Al-Saji, as she considers how Husserlian conception of touch and sensing can allow for “opening new avenues for understanding the complex interplay of social positionality and felt embodiment” (Al-Saji, 2010, p. 18). Thus, feminist phenomenology is oriented toward movement and entanglements, as it seeks to “articulate the *relation* and *process* between macrostructures of gender and lived experiences of gender” (Mann, 2009, p. 87). For these thinkers, the phenomenological account is one of a lived, gendered, raced, classed, positioned body encountering world shaped by discursive and structural forces.

Feminist phenomenology is very much a critical realist practice: There is work to be done, and the political and material consequences of that work are manifested in lived bodies. This is what is at stake for feminist phenomenologists. As Mann describes, a feminist phenomenology must “give a meaningful account of politics and power, of the *unfreedoms*

that structure our lives in heinous ways . . . yet to give account of these structures without attention to how we live them is to risk an equally abstract objectivism that can’t grasp the *lived meaning* of structural injustice” (Mann, 2009, p. 91). Feminist phenomenologists seek to explore how semiotic and discursive practices have material consequences, manifested in embodied, lived experiences, so they can recommend interventions to disrupt oppressive patriarchal practices. This quest to account for not just the shape of structural injustice, but how that injustice is lived is at the heart of feminist phenomenology, and is a key practice that helps articulate what is lost when we lose phenomenological accounts of the real.

New Materialism(s): Being-With-the-World

A feminist new materialism(s) approach to our encounters with the world turns the humanist, Cartesian idea of the human subject on its head. First, the concept of a mind/body split is rejected in favor of a view of the self that is ontic, forever situated, always embodied, and located in context. Rejecting the “medical model” of human embodiment, the bounded edges of selfhood begin to blur, become permeable (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008a; Mol, 2002). Material things—the writing on this page, pebbles, plastics, the sound of a jet flying overhead, the cup I drink from—are “lively matter” and agentic, acting on and with me (Bennett, 2010). From this body of work, I focus on the work of Karen Barad, and her articulation of a way of thinking about science and the world based on Bohrian physics, rather than Newtonian, to help me articulate how a material phenomenology might be theorized.

Barad uses the word “phenomenon” in a very different way from phenomenologists. For Barad, phenomena are “ontologically primitive relations,” relationships that don’t assume the prior existence of independent “things” that then act upon one another. In this view, things, including people, *only exist* in their intra-actions. The shift from *inter*-acting with the world to *intra*-acting highlights the importance of this move. The term *inter* implies the previous independent existence of the things that are acting; intra-action, then, posits an ongoing co-constitution of the world, with nothing existing independent of this ongoing relational ontology. The lively matter of the world—buildings, floors, books, animals, plants, people, the sounds of the train going by—is entangled. This entanglement is what Barad calls an ongoing *intra-active phenomena*, becoming not just a collection of things together, but an entanglement of relationships and shifting patterns of agentic forces. For Barad, individual subjectivity becomes eclipsed—We are not being-in-the-world so much as we are being-with-the-world.

What is the role, then, of phenomena? For Barad, phenomena *are* the world; there is no *a priori*, not for subject or object. In fact, “objects and the agencies of observation are inseparable parts of a single phenomenon,” and the roles of subject

and object only emerge through ongoing intra-action (Barad, 2007, p. 315). The phenomenon, then, is not how discrete individual subjects meet and experience a separate, waiting world, but rather how subject and world co-constitute one another in an ongoing *becoming* (Barad, 2003, 2007). However, Barad does not spend much time theorizing subjectivity itself; in many ways, for Barad, the questions of subjectivity and lived experience are displaced by intra-action and shifting agentic networks. This does not mean that lived experience should be ignored. It means those seeking to do their work from a new materialisms framework need to carefully rethink how experience is conceptualized in our research.

Stacy Alaimo, in her book *Bodily Natures*, deliberately breaks the bounds of corporeality to begin theorizing lived experiences within a new materialist lens. Alaimo (2010) describes “the human is always inter-meshed with the more than human world,” existing in what she calls a *trans-corporeal landscape* (p. 12). Lived experience, for Alaimo, allow us to “trace how trans-corporeality often ruptures ordinary knowledge practices,” as humans navigate experiences of illness or threat, often associated with the “toxic landscapes” of a polluted environment. Alaimo (2010) tell us that “the sense of selfhood is transformed by the recognition that the very substance of self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped or understood” (p. 95). For Alaimo, humans are not living an encounter with an outside world, but human experiences are in and of their environment, from the air in their lungs, to the microbes in their guts, to the bits of plastic in their breastmilk, to the heavy metals in their blood. Human lived experience, then, is not made up of isolated encounters with the world; rather the world in its entangled intra-acting is productive of human lived experience.

Reading Phenomena Diffractively: Ripples and Overlaps

Now, I turn to diffractive reading to begin to theorize a phenomenology of the material and rethink the concept of experience. Diffractive methodology requires a turning away from representative analysis, and instead a careful attending to the places where “waves overlap” as accounts are read through and with one another (Barad, 2007; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012; Taguchi, 2012). As Barad explains, “intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement” (van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2009). In keeping with that ethic, as I read, I do not focus on resolving the differences, or proving one right or wrong. Instead, I seek places where different ideas meet and overlap, creating a ripple of entanglement in which the differences can be productive.

As I read diffractively across feminist phenomenological thought and Barad’s agential realism, attending to these places of entanglement allows me to open space. In attending to the echoes, ripples, and patterns of this reading, I can

begin to consider a material phenomenology, one that is located not within fixed human agency and subjectivity “discovering” a revealed pre-existing world, but in the careful, thoughtful tracing of the marks left on living bodies (human and nonhuman). In articulating this phenomenology of the material, I hope to articulate a theory that attends to the pluralistic nature of the real, one that takes seriously how the material *and* the discursive come to matter in experiential, intra-active phenomenon.

In the introduction to her book of phenomenological essays, Iris Marion Young says that “consciousness that constitutes its world is the body as lived in a tangible encounter with human and nonhuman others” (Young, 2005, p. 8). The idea of consciousness and subjectivity as produced by embodied encounters with the world is a major theme of feminist phenomenology. Barad’s claims can be seen as a radical expansion on these ideas; however, instead of limiting the productive power of intra-actions only to those between humans and their world, and the co-constitution as only effective on human subjectivity, Barad decenters the human and distributes the productive powers among and between all “human and nonhuman others.”

The implications of this move are profound. Feminist phenomenology has long sought to explore the relationship between material phenomenon and discursive practices. Thinking of subjectivity, discursive practices, and material phenomena as all co-constitutive of reality challenges our thinking. As Barad says, “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (Barad, 2007, p. 152). If I consider a phenomenon in which all factors are inseparably entangled, and nothing has privileged status, I can begin to articulate the entanglements of material discursive practices in lived experiences. Attending to these entanglements allows me to begin to explore how sociocultural structures are co-productive of lived experience, even when these material discursive experiences elude traditional interpretation (McGregor, 2018).

This is the challenge and promise of a phenomenology of the material: human subjectivity, material phenomena, and discursive practices must be seen as functioning together to produce a world that is always *becoming*, without granting causality or primacy to one or the other. This challenge is not to be taken lightly—as St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei state, “this new work is philosophical and its application in conventional social science research grounded in the old materialisms, empiricisms, and ontologies is not possible” (St. Pierre et al., 2016, p. 102). I cannot rely on the methods of traditional phenomenology; if I want to retain a meaningful account of experience as a researcher practicing materialist phenomenology, I must move differently.

For Barad, there is nothing but the phenomena, so by definition, the researcher is a part of the phenomenon she studies. There is no place to stand outside the phenomena, no perch from which the human, be she researcher or phenomenological subject, might peer into the experience and make meaning. Instead, the experience is, itself, the phenomena: productive

of the world, co-constituting all that is entangled there. This is the central premise of what Barad calls “a relational ontology” that rejects the firm boundaries and individualism inherent in a Cartesian, humanistic epistemology (Barad, 2003, p. 814). Human subjectivity is not an isolated island but rather is continually produced through relations with other people, ideas, events, discourses, and material things.

Feminist phenomenologists also consider connectedness as an inescapable part of being in the world. Simms and Stawarska (2013) describe feminist phenomenologists as “related to our participants, even ‘entangled,’ and our phenomenological *époche* demands that we become aware of it” (p. 12). Thinking this entanglement with the Baradian idea of entanglement challenges me to expand my view—It is not just the researcher and participants who are entangled but also the chairs they sit in, the building and room they inhabit, and the material discursive forces of the world they live in. This version of entanglement is a profound sense of not just connectedness but true inseparability.

The feminist phenomenological concept of “intersubjectivity” adds another layer of meaning to the idea of entanglement. Latina phenomenologist Martinez describes the role of communication and culture in phenomenology as fundamentally intersubjective, “and as such, part and parcel of the ongoing flow of cultural meanings and historical circumstances as they directly affect the lives and relationships of people communicatively engaged” (Martinez, 2014, p. 222).

Martinez is focused on communication and culture, but the ideas she expresses about relationships/entanglements that precede and produce individual subjectivity is remarkably Baradian, as is the concept of an “ongoing flow” of material discursive forces within the phenomena, that directly affect lived experience.

This is the stuff of posthuman performativity: another diffractive rippling. Performativity, as understood by poststructural theorists, is a repetition that produces a subjectivity; importantly, this “repetition is not simply a performance by a subject but a performativity that constitutes a subject and produces the space of conflicting subjectivities that contest the foundations and origins of stable identity categories” (Jackson, 2004, p. 675). Interestingly, when Butler (1988) gave us an account of performativity, she did so in the essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: an Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” She says that “there is also a more radical use of the (phenomenological) doctrine of constitution,” and describes how actions and repetition constitute subjectivity, which can be seen as “the legacy of sedimented acts” (p. 97). Butler’s account of performativity and how these repetitions shape and re-shape subjectivity have had considerable influence. However, Butler’s idea of performativity is rooted in poststructuralism and human interpretations, and allows little room for a material account.

Barad takes up and expands on the idea of performativity, positing that it is not just subjectivities that are constituted through repetition and continual becoming, but the

world itself. Barad writes, “all bodies, not merely ‘human’ bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity—its performativity” (Barad, 2003, p. 823). With this move, Barad conflates intra-action and performativity, expanding the concept to include not just human agents, but nonhuman ones. Seen through this lens, lived experience is created by the performativity of everything that is entangled in a phenomenon, not just the human.

How, then, can I take up a new materialism phenomenology that takes both matter and experience seriously? As a researcher, I am seeking to *know*—to somehow assert, discover, or create knowledge. But within a relational ontology, I am entangled in the inseparability of “observed object” and “agencies of observation” (Barad, 2003). I am implicitly situated in a world from which I come to act and which both limits and makes possible my actions; I become what I am through intra-actions and my ongoing entanglements with the world. Any practice of phenomenology from a new materialist perspective must have a theory of experience that accounts for all that is entangled in the phenomena, including both the material, the discursive, the human, and the researcher themselves.

Implications of a Phenomenology of the Material

What, if any, clarity can be found for a phenomenology of the material among these diffractive overlaps? There are several key ideas that can be carried forward into the next intra-active iteration of this theory:

1. **Experience as phenomena.** Subjectivity is never singular, never individual. We do not exist prior to our relationships with human and nonhuman beings, with the sociohistorical context, with the discursive; we are instead co-constituted, produced by and producing of, our intra-active relationships with these things. Thus, the unit of analysis of a phenomenology of the material is not how a singular human subject experiences a waiting world. Instead, a phenomenology of the material will consider entangled phenomenon as experience, and that experience/phenomena as the unit of analysis: the material things and places of the world, the human and nonhuman living things, the discursive and sociocultural forces, all co-productive of the experience.
2. **Research as entanglement.** Phenomena are intra-active and performative—They are the world, in its becoming. Tradition notions of causality and pre-determination of subject/object relationships do not translate well. When I enter the phenomena/experience as a researcher, I am entangling myself in that intra-action. I am, quite literally, a part of my research, and thus have ethical obligations to what I enact there. Taking my own entanglement as a

researcher seriously will entail a different approach to the research site, one that requires further thought.

3. **Material as active in experience.** Taking the material seriously as an actor in experience changes the focus dramatically from traditional phenomenology but might allow us to articulate an account of how the material discursive comes to be lived in a pluralist reality. This means not just attending to the material things but also the material discursive forces that are a part of the shifting, moving network of agents at work in the intra-action. Focusing on the material structures means not asking what materiality *is*, but rather asking what it is *doing* in the context of this intra-active phenomena. Likewise, focusing on the experience of an intra-active subjectivity isn't asking what a separated, discrete subject discovered in the world, but rather examining how that subjectivity was produced *with* and *in* the world, as agency and subjectivity are continually re-constituted and fluid.

There are two major things to be gained through enacting a phenomenology of the material that includes the three concepts articulated here. First, it allows researchers to perform that balancing act described by feminist phenomenologists—We can attend to material lived experiences, while still articulating material/discursive structures of inequity. Indeed, material phenomenology takes this a step further: The material discursive is active within the intra-active phenomenon, both producing and produced by it.

Material phenomenology allows researchers to consider material conditions, that *pluralistic real*, without reinscribing essentialism and, thus, reinforcing structures of inequity. As Barad (2007) says, considering experience as intra-active phenomena “makes it possible to take the empirical world seriously once again in the construction and testing of theories, but this time with the understanding that the objective reference is phenomena, not the ‘immediate givenness’ of the world” (p. 244). This shift is important; research using a phenomenology of the material will not “disclose” what is already there in the world, but it will allow us to think about the effects of our own intra-active entanglements with the ongoing becoming of the world. We can articulate how social/discursive forces come to *matter*, and recognize the effects of these forces on lived experiences, without reinscribing essentialism. In turn, material phenomenology also allows us to articulate how the material structures of the world are also productive of the social/discursive, as part of the intra-active phenomenon.

Second, bringing this kind of analysis to social science research promises both to open new possibilities for how we can understand our research sites, and the inextricably linked new ways of understanding our own role as researchers. The possible advantages of conducting research from a new materialist framework lie not just in being able to open new ways of thinking about particular phenomena, although that

is not an insignificant thing. There is also an inescapable ethical imperative to be found here, one that has many implications for social science researchers.

When I study a phenomenon, whether it is violence in schools, gender disparities in science education, or equity in advanced coursework, I am entangling myself. This isn't an act of my own agency, but a product of the intra-action I have been of/with. I don't just observe what appears to me from the phenomena; rather, what is “discovered” is the effect of the intra-active engagement of (my) participation with/in and as a part of the world's differential becoming” (Barad, 2007, p. 361). Rejecting the ethics that accompany the idea of human individualism, *doing* a phenomenology of the material entails an entangled ethics, an ethics based on connections and relationships. Those who conduct research from a material phenomenology framework do not do research *on* people or school sites, but *with*.

Ultimately, there is much to be gained from rethinking phenomenological accounts of experience through a new materialist lens. Material phenomenology allows for an accounting of experience that is not based in a humanist subjectivity, “but is instead emergent and contingent, part of a trans-corporeal landscape that includes other material and non-material beings, political and economic systems, and even dominant discourses” (McGregor, 2018). Whether a phenomenology of the material can fulfill all these promises remains to be seen, but this theorization opens up possibilities for exploring a conception of experience that can avoid essentialism while taking seriously both material conditions and material discursive forces.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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