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Abstract

Qualitative research is a multidisciplinary field of practice that acknowledges and values the situatedness and subjectivities of the researcher. Therefore, reflexively accounting for one's subjectivities is a crucial part of a research report. Less discussed is how subjective understandings are historically, culturally, and socially mediated, often challenging researchers' abilities to orient themselves critically to this self-reflective undertaking. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach investigating how phenomena such as subjectivity are constituted in experience. This makes phenomenology an essential resource for understanding how complex subjective responses manifest differently depending on one's orientation to the situation. This paper aims to familiarize qualitative research instructors and learners with a series of phenomenological activities that have proven helpful in disclosing multiple ways subjectivities are historically and contextually mediated, embodied, and technologically modified.

Keywords

teaching qualitative research, subjectivity, phenomenology, orientation, embodiment, lived experience, technology

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TQR
WHERE THE WORLD COMES TO LEARN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Peeling Away the Taken-For-Grantedness of Research Subjectivities: Orienting to the Phenomenological

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Qualitative research is a multidisciplinary field of practice that acknowledges and values the situatedness and subjectivities of the researcher. Therefore, reflexively accounting for one's subjectivities is a crucial part of a research report. Less discussed is how subjective understandings are historically, culturally, and socially mediated, often challenging researchers' abilities to orient themselves critically to this self-reflective undertaking. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach investigating how phenomena such as subjectivity are constituted in experience. This makes phenomenology an essential resource for understanding how complex subjective responses manifest differently depending on one's orientation to the situation. This paper aims to familiarize qualitative research instructors and learners with a series of phenomenological activities that have proven helpful in disclosing multiple ways subjectivities are historically and contextually mediated, embodied, and technologically modified.

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Introduction

Conducting research requires us to turn to a topic of interest and identify a particular issue worthy of study. As such, numerous texts demonstrate the process of crafting sound research proposals and designs (see, Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). In the interdisciplinary field of qualitative research, there is also an acknowledgment that our lived experiences are not only valid and valued sources of knowledge but infiltrate research designs and practices from beginning to end (Peshkin, 1988; Pillow, 2015; Rose, 1997; Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Less discussed, however, is "how this subjective view is formed in the first place" (Madison, 2012, p. 73). Soyini Madison (2012) continues:

> In order for there to be a perception or a subjective view, there must be a subject, and in turn this subject is composed of meaning and history.... This means that subjectivity is constituted by and within political, social, and cultural productions of meanings and practices. Therefore, it is important to see subjectivity as always historically produced within different contexts and not as a single, fixed identity. (pp. 73-74)

In other words, perception is itself the product of one's situational and historical orientation to meaning, and is, therefore, entangled in all aspects of the research process. It is one reason qualitative researchers emphasize the situated nature of human understanding and

the need for researchers to reflexively attend to the dynamic relationalities of the research context (Rose, 1997).

From a phenomenological perspective, perception "involves orientation; what is perceived depends on where we are located, which gives us a certain take on things" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 27). This phenomenological understanding is not only significant for phenomenologists but is consequential to all research endeavors. Sara Ahmed (2006) explains: "Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward" (p. 3). Attending to the ways different objects of study are apprehended, then, is not just about facilitating perceptual awareness in researchers but points to the way disciplinary and other social structures have also been implicated in creating "orientation devices" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 3) that prioritize certain perceptual frames, while obscuring or ignoring others.

For these reasons we believe that the understandings conveyed by the phenomenological tradition are important for researchers and students in all fields since they address the way human perception and understanding are constituted in experience in and through historicized concepts and contexts. Understanding "how this subjective view is formed" (Madison, 2012, p. 73) *is* the project of phenomenology (Mertens, 2014). Attending to its constitution brings awareness of the inseparability of humans from the world and works from this inseparability to reconsider the effects researchers' actions and interactions have on the premises and outcomes of their research. It is important to note that although phenomenological practices can cultivate researcher self-awareness, there are core distinctions between interpretivist and phenomenological research. Most interpretivist approaches distinguish between a context and participants' experiences of that context. The focus is on participants' perspectives, interpretations, or understandings. Phenomenologists, on the other hand, focus on how a phenomenon, such as belonging, manifests as a complex, unique constituent of lived life (see Freeman, 2021, for a more extended account of these distinctions).

In the field of qualitative research, "one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17) and becomes visible in different ways in relation and in response to the contexts, individuals, interests, and events researchers encounter during their investigation (Preissle, 2008). Because subjectivities direct, constrain, skew, as well as illuminate aspects of a research endeavor (Peshkin, 1988; Preissle, 2008), understanding how "who researchers are in relation to what and whom they are studying" (Preissle, 2008, p. 844) is believed to be a crucial part of becoming a qualitative researcher (Watt, 2007) and of establishing research credibility (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Mosselson, 2010). Nevertheless, a researcher's subjectivity is often misunderstood as being the same as a person's biography or self when, phenomenologically, it is neither of these things while also encompassing aspects of both. Instead, subjectivity manifests a researcher's relationality to the specific contextual and historical dimensions of the research endeavor. Karl Mertens (2014) explains:

> To speak of "subject," "ego," "existence," etc. in the phenomenological perspective is not to refer to an isolated subject that stands in opposition to objects and other subjects. Rather, the phenomenological explication emphatically points out that subject and world are co-originary and are inseparably related to one another. This means that the subjectivity analyzed by phenomenological investigations is essentially characterized by the contents to which the subject is referring. (p. 168)

What is this content? An example might help. Mostly, we orient ourselves toward the world with an aim in mind. When we step out of the front door, we might do so to "go to the store" or "go for a walk" or "rake the leaves in the backyard." As such, our attention is directed

towards these things and, in the process of being so directed, often overlooks many facets of the experience of "walking" or "raking." In phenomenological terms, we overlook the many "phenomena" appearing and disappearing in our being and doing. Phenomena for phenomenologists are the manifest "ways in which we find ourselves being in relation to the world through our day-to-day living" (Vagle, 2018, p. 20). In other words, they are the experienced meanings that are produced as we encounter the world. Usually, however, we approach the world from what is often called the "natural standpoint" (Husserl, 1969, p. 101), which is an unquestioning state where we do not concern ourselves with why our environment is structured a particular way, or how concepts are being formed, feelings felt, or things named. In this state, "we fail to notice that it is from out [of] these centres of experience (*Erlebnisse*) themselves that through the adoption of the new standpoint the new domain emerges" (Husserl, 1969, p. 102). That is, the turn to the philosophical or phenomenological state—what Husserl is referring to as the "new standpoint"—does not require disciplinary knowledge or applied theory. It is simply a process of entering "into a questioning mindset, where we try to become curious about things that we have otherwise treated as obvious" (Vagle, 2018, p. 13). As we will show, the shedding of the obvious is a multi-layered process involving all the senses.

Although we do not necessarily agree with Colin Wringe's (2015) definition of what constitutes a self, we agree that an awareness of one's subjectivities assumes a self that "is aware, not only of its own nature as a self-reflective being but of being in a somewhat arbitrary situation not of its own design or choosing but with its own more or less coherent 'horizon' of consciousness within which there are other entities" (Wringe, 2015, p. 35). We also agree that educational activities can play a transformative role and seek ways to intentionally modify "the 'self' of the learner" (Wringe, 2015, p. 34), even when the nature or quality of an individual's transformation may not be directly discernable or measurable. As Mertens (2014) explains, "By changing our spatial perspective as well as the perspective of our consciousness, we are able to broaden our experience by making new experiences" (p. 173). In this process, we also begin to recognize that our selves are more porous, more pliable, more entangled with various cultural, historical, linguistic, and environmental modes of being than we are usually aware of. Our aim, then, is to show how phenomenology as a way of philosophizing how a thing (e.g., object, feeling, understanding, position, and so forth) appears to an experiencer "in the manner in which it appears" (Moran, 2000, p. 4), provides multiple entry points into understanding how subjectivity is constituted, and, therefore, how who one is may come to accentuate or overlook some things over others.

By approaching this aim through concrete activities, we seek both to demonstrate core phenomenological assumptions without predetermining how these might be taken up by research instructors or learners. We believe that applied activities such as the ones we offer next have transformational potential regardless of whether someone is taking a phenomenological approach or not. In our experience as instructors of qualitative research, we have found that these activities help students better understand

- How perception, and therefore subjectivity, is always mediated by language, context, culture, personal characteristics and experience.
- That not all bodies are comfortably "at home" (Ahmed, 2006) in the world. On the contrary, many bodies find themselves always already in states of "being disorientated" (Ahmed, 2006) or excluded from contexts that the majority take for granted.
- That who we perceive ourselves to be is always permeated and augmented by objects and technologies that alter our being in ways that are often too complex to fully comprehend.

What these facets of subjectivity have in common is the assumption that humans do not stand apart from the world as individuals or unaffected beings; that deepening awareness of constituting forces opens new forms of relationality with the world and others; and that this awareness is fundamental to developing research practices that result in understandings that can potentially re-shape the world that constitutes it. As Ahmed (2006) aptly points out: "It is by understanding how we become orientated in moments of disorientation that we might learn what it means to become orientated in the first place" (p. 6). The activities that follow orient to different layers of subjectivity by engaging in turn, its mediated, embodied, and technologically modified character.

Mediated Subjectivities

One of phenomenology's core commitments is "the refusal to accept the taken-for-grantedness of experience." This commitment, Weiss et al. (2020) explain, "entails the perpetual interrogation of the most familiar features of our everyday experiences, not to deny them but in order to know them better" (p. *xiii*). Two phenomenological concepts necessary to understand human inseparability with the world are "intentionality" and "phenomena." The following activity has been helpful to orient learners to these concepts and can easily be adapted to meet different classroom contexts, learner accommodations, and modes of delivery.

Activity: Intentionality, Not Intention

This activity helps individuals recognize the way perception itself discriminates; that is, how it attends only partially to the multisensory clues surrounding it. This activity asks students to shift the nature of their attention as they carry out an errand. For example, this is how the activity unfolded in a graduate course on phenomenology. The classroom where the course took place was located down a hall and across a lobby from a community, multipurpose room, commonly called the sunroom. Once students had gotten settled, the instructors casually mentioned that they were planning a social gathering so could the students please walk over to the sunroom to count the chairs and tables and to help them consider whether the space was suitable for a gathering. Once they had carried out this task, they were to return to the classroom.

When the students returned, they reported on how many chairs and tables there were, providing different accounts depending on whether they counted several outside tables and chairs and whether they included high seats at a counter that ran across one side of the room. In general, they felt the space was clean and bright and would accommodate a gathering. As the discussion moved to a focus on the space, the instructors began to ask more specific questions such as about the lighting, the pictures on the wall, moving into questions about their walk there. What color was the hallway? Did it feel warm or cold? How lit was it? Were classrooms they passed in use? Did they run into anyone on the way? If so, what was that person doing? Were noises to be heard, and if so, what kind of noises? If silent, what kind of silence? These questions produced a mixture of responses. More importantly, what they also produced was recognition that, for the most part, the students had not paid much attention to the details of their environment nor to the effects of the activity on any of their senses. They had been given a task and it was to that task that their thinking and actions were orientated.

At this point, the instructors introduced the concept of "intentionality," a phenomenological term that should not be confused with the usual definition of intend which is to have a plan or purpose. Rather, intentionality simply means that when humans think, feel, or respond, they are doing so always in relation to something or someone. "Human experience does not present itself as a flow of purely internal, mental events. Rather, it is always related

to something and that something is usually out there in the world" (Luft & Overgaard, 2014, p. 11).

> Phenomenology shows that the mind is a public thing, that it acts and manifests itself out in the open…. The mind and the world are correlated with one another. Things do appear to us, things are truly disclosed, and we, on our part, do display, both to ourselves and to others, the way things are. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 12)

This definition is concretized by sending the students back to the sunroom but this time with directions to attend to as much as possible to the sensory, the acoustics of the landscape, the lighting, their feelings, thoughts, and anything else picked up or noticed by their senses. Upon their return, the conversation took on a very different tone as each sensation shared revealed the magnitude of "phenomena" manifesting themselves to their senses. Phenomena such as "self-consciousness," "amusement," "recollection," "feeling crowded," "surprised," now took center stage in the discussion, and generated understandings about what phenomena are for phenomenologists. Phenomena are not predefined entities such as a physical object or the definition of a feeling like fear. Rather, phenomena "are *brought into being* through our living in the world" (Vagle, 2018, p. 20), and "can appear in innumerable ways" (Vagle, p. 22). In other words, phenomena "are already part of the fabric of meaning" (Freeman, 2021, p. 277) and manifest as an embodied experience—just think of how your knees may tremble from stage fright.

A point to make here is that phenomenology is "not only interested in going back to the sources of meaning in our transcendental experience, but also in clarifying that these features are experienced by concrete subjects living in a social, historical, and cultural world" (Mertens, 2014, p. 177). What this means is that the context of the activity, as well as the unique characteristics of the players also play a role in what transpires. To illustrate what we mean, let us first describe how this activity can be adapted to an online class and then provide an example where context dramatically altered the results of the activity.

In an online version of this activity, we ask students to think of everything they do in the morning to get ready for work or school. We then spend some time talking about how each activity like making coffee, taking a shower, taking children to the bus stop, and so forth, all contribute, that is, are means to an end; the end being, for example, making it successfully through the day. The phenomenological turn takes place when students are paired up and asked to now pick one of these routine activities, but this time describe the activity as if it were a meaningful experience engaging all the senses. During the whole class discussion, similarly to the in-class activity, the discussion turns to various ways phenomena appear when the phenomenological attitude is prioritized.

However, when this activity was carried out online during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, we found that the students' relationships to their environments had already been significantly altered, making a typically mundane activity like going to the grocery store no longer something they could do in a taken-for-granted way. This suggests that this kind of activity relies on a certain level of taken-for-grantedness in the lives of the students, so historical and situational factors should be considered or integrated into the conversations surrounding it. For example, students living with a disability or students of color living or studying in white contexts may find the idea of a "natural" attitude a foreign or even condescending stance to be asked to direct their attention to since they likely already live with a heightened perceptual awareness.

Embodied Subjectivities

Ahmed (2006) informs us that "Orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others" (p. 3). The point of reference for this registering process is the body. Embodiment has played an integral role in phenomenology, and, in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In his influential work *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (2014) articulates the role of the "body schema" as being "not merely an experience of my body, but rather an experience of my body in the world" (p. 142). Wedding the implications of orientation and bodily experience gives way to the idea of embodied subjectivities, an awareness of how one's body (and specifically the characteristics of one's body) is orientated in the world and how that orientation has direct bearing on one's lived experience. The next activity is particularly useful for foregrounding this notion of embodied subjectivities and the various ways it can be experienced and articulated.

Activity: Experience as Embodied/Disembodied

This activity is an adaptation of one Don Ihde (2002) describes in his book, *Bodies in Technology*. When teaching phenomenology, he often asked students "to imagine doing something that they had not in fact done, but would like to do, and then begin a critical phenomenological description of this imagined action" (p. 4). A re-occurring example of such an activity is parachute jumping. What he noticed, however, when students described such an experience is that they usually fell into two groups, those who undertook an embodied mode to describe the parachute jump and those who undertook a disembodied mode. Ihde (2002) describes the two:

> The embodied parachutist described takeoff, attaining altitude, the leap from the open door to experience the rush of wind on the face, the sense of vertigo felt in the stomach, and the sight of the earth rushing toward the jumper. The disembodied describer sees an airplane take off, climb, and sees someone (identified with himself or herself) jump from the door and speed toward the earth. Obviously, in these two cases, where one's body is located in the self-identification is a major issue. (p. 4)

Ihde then goes on to have students vary their descriptions between modes, asking for example, "Where does one feel the wind? Or the vertigo in the stomach? Can it be felt 'out there' in the disembodied perspective?" (p. 4). Although not part of Ihde's description, one can imagine a variety of ways to extend this activity. For example, asking students again to share their descriptions, identifying the primary mode within each description, and discussing the potential effects of these modes on other activities they might engage in, including qualitative inquiry. Since one's "self-identification" in relation to a context or to participants matter, to what extent does an understanding of one's dominant experiential mode of engagement matter in relation to research practices such as, for example, interviewing or observation?

Black Embodiment

Arguably the most prominent and well-articulated phenomenological discussions of embodied subjectivities focus on the experience of Black bodies in White spaces. For example, Ahmed's (2006) discussion of how "white bodies are somatic norms that make nonwhite bodies feel 'out of place'" (p. 133) and Frantz Fanon's (2008) observation that the ontological reality of Blacks who've been colonized by Whites is one of "being for others" (p. 89) both speak to

the subjective and racialized experience of the world. Contrary to the universally experienced "body schema" of Merleau-Ponty, this racialized experience is instead a "historical-racial schema" (Fanon, 2008, p. 91) imposed on Black bodies by Whites who've self-servingly constructed a dehumanizing discourse around the Black body "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (p. 91). In this way, race has proved to be the most salient of phenomenology's and society's "orienting devices" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 3) and is evidenced by the way White spaces deny Black bodies in those spaces the comfortability of being and feeling "at home."

For those willing to explore embodied subjectivities there must first be a dis-orienting that takes place. As Ahmed (2006) points out:

> We say that phenomenology is about whiteness, in the sense that it has been written from this 'point of view,' then what phenomenology describes is not so much white bodies, but the ways in which bodies come to feel at home in spaces by being orientated in this way and that. (p. 138)

Dis-orienting in this case involves dislodging and disconnecting the somatic norm of Whiteness from phenomenology in order to make space for the embodied subjectivities of others. Toward this goal, the next activity has proved to be particularly useful as a "disorientation device" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 177).

Activity: The Class Photograph

One creative way to disrupt the phenomenology of Whiteness and introduce the topic of Black embodiment is through a class activity using a class photo. The activity itself takes place in three parts. First there is a lecture/presentation, then the taking of a class picture accompanied by a brief question and answer, and then a follow up presentation. An example of the full activity is presented here as it was carried out in an actual class of undergraduate students at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU). The activity centered around a PowerPoint presentation on phenomenology.

Knowing that the undergraduate students were probably unfamiliar with phenomenology and its roots, the talk began with a PowerPoint slide entitled "Foundations of Phenomenology" that included the byline "From Description, to Interpretation, to Embodiment." On the slide itself three philosophers most associated with phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, were intentionally foregrounded. Underneath their enlarged headshots that had been cropped into centered spheres on the page was listed the type of phenomenology they were associated with (descriptive for Husserl, interpretive for Heidegger, and embodiment for Merleau-Ponty). Next, a few bullet points under each figure detailing key aspects of their phenomenology were listed. As expected, (and quite frankly, as designed), the talk about philosophies undergirding phenomenology coupled with the biographies of dead White men failed to connect with the undergraduate HBCU students and their disinterest was becoming increasingly clear. By the end of talking through the "Foundations of Phenomenology" slide, the students were displaying visible signs of disinterest. At this moment the activity moved into phase two, the class photo.

Before moving to the next slide and without warning, an iPad was retrieved, and a picture of the entire class was taken making sure that the sound of the picture being taken was audible to everyone. Next, slowly walking down each aisle of the classroom, the students were instructed to look at the picture that had just been taken on the iPad. When everyone had a chance to view the picture the question was asked, "What is the first thing you looked for when you saw the picture?" There was silence at first then a young lady responded, "For real, I was

looking for myself to make sure I wasn't looking crazy!" The ensuing laughter by the class confirmed that each of the students had all done the same thing, they all looked for themselves.

Locating oneself in one's work became the theme for the rest of the talk. The comments to the students from this point on were, "Of course the first thing you look for is yourself because that's the natural inclination for ALL of us, to see ourselves in the representations put before us." Building on this principle, the question was asked, "Now what does this have to do with the talk just given on the foundations of phenomenology you might ask? The answer is EVERYTHING!" Continuing to drive the point, "We've just spent the last 10 minutes learning about the dense and obtuse philosophies of dead White men and most of you had checked out. That's to be expected. Look at these images. None of these men look like you. Their philosophies don't resonate with you. Black people and Black realities are missing from what has been discussed so far. So, just as with the picture on the iPad, it's completely normal to look for ourselves or how things relate to us and it's also understandable that, when we don't see ourselves, we often reject or, at best, become uninterested in what's presented." At this point phase three of the activity ensues with the advancement to the next slide of the presentation entitled, "*Reframing Phenomenology: Reclaiming & Reawakening Black Personhood.*"

In this activity the "Reframing Phenomenology" slide is kept in the exact same format as the previous slide except that the faces of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty and the descriptions of their phenomenologies were replaced with pictures of the notable Black phenomenologists W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and George Yancy along with descriptions of their Black phenomenologies. Describing this slide and its significance, it was noted that:

> Just as you looked for yourself in the picture on the iPad you should also look for yourself, your Blackness, in the study of phenomenology. By doing so, you are able to find your life and experiences reflected in the works of pioneering Black phenomenologists. So, whether you study Du Bois' phenomenological project of reclaiming the humanity of Black people, Fanon's phenomenological project of the Black reawakening, or the contemporary phenomenological project of George Yancy grounded in notions of the Black lived experience born of struggle, seeing yourself in the field not only makes phenomenology more attractive, it also translates into research projects centered around what's relevant and meaningful to you and your community.

In this example it is a class photo that acts as the disorientation device that peels away the taken-for-granted Whiteness of phenomenology in order to make room for the embodied subjectivity of Blackness. By doing so, the Black bodies of the HBCU students at once felt comfortably "at home" in the phenomenological world.

Technology-Modified Subjectivities

Humans engage with technologies every day. Just consider all the items used throughout the day (e.g., toothbrush, pen, chair, shoe, bicycle, stove, and so on) without much thought as to their meanings or their effects on our lives. And although what is understood by "technology" has shifted across time—from the study of the practical arts to its current use as applied science—it has retained the idea that technologies are those artifacts, tools, instruments, or machines designed with a particular use or result in mind, as opposed to the creative arts which is thought to be produced without practical purpose (Schatzberg, 2006). Once we turn our attention towards them, however, it is difficult to conceive of humans without their tools, clothes, shelters, machines, and instruments. We do not exist, and perhaps could not exist,

without them. And yet, while technologies surround us, they are, for the most part, taken for granted, unlike the creative arts that we have been in many ways socialized to understand as something worth contemplating and thinking about.

Because of their ubiquity and diversity, scholars and scientists have theorized human-technology relations in a variety of ways. For example, technology might be conceived of as a tool designed by humans for human use, or as a necessary part of scientific progress, or as a menace to human "nature" or human's authentic relationship with the "natural" world (Ihde, 1974). In most of these cases, however, what technology *is* goes unquestioned and its threats or advantages presume an accepted understanding of the relationship between humans and technologies. Post phenomenologist Ihde (1974) states that "it is precisely at the level of basic presuppositions and of implicit pre-understandings that phenomenology finds its entrance into an inquiry into the question of technology" (p. 267). Developing an awareness of the technologies mediating our experience in the world, then, becomes an essential part of understanding who we are in relation to what we study.

Activity: Machines and Us

This activity gets students to take stock of the technological objects and machines they use daily. To begin, we ask students to list all the human-made practical items they have interacted with since the beginning of the day. After they have had a chance to jot down their list, we have them create two charts. The first chart should depict the frequency or duration of use for each item or groups of related items. For example, a chair, desk, light, pen, paper, laptop, can be clustered as one item, as would be the clothes we are wearing. As charted, however, the clothes worn throughout the day might get an 8-hour line, while the coffee maker might get several short bursts, the dog two short lines before and after work, the car ride might be measured by the distance or time it takes to get to and from work or school, and so on. The second chart takes each item listed in the first chart and determines its necessity. For example, while clothes may be necessary beyond social convention to protect bodies from outside elements, the coffee maker is not, and the car could be replaced if public transportation were available.

Once the two charts are created, the students pair up or work in small groups to discuss each other's lists and charts. In our prompts, we have students seek out overlooked technologies such as heat, light, air conditioning, doors, keys, and so on; discuss the way some things make it into our memories while other things are overlooked; and consider the criteria used for determining if a technology is necessary or not to our living and working. We then bring the discussion back to the whole class to consider in more depth human entanglement with technology.

This activity opens to various discussions of the way we, as corporeal beings, not only live in the midst of technologies but these technologies mediate our every move. As part of the discussion, we share and unpack a quote by Robert Rosenberger (2012) who points out, "Technology becomes incorporated into the user's bodily and perceptual experience; it becomes part of the manner in which a user encounters and engages the world" (p. 83). Or this one by Ihde (2002) who notes that, "all human-technology relations are two-way relations. Insofar as I use or employ a technology, I am used by and employed by that technology as well" (p. 137). In this way, we get students to think of the effect technology has on their lives and well-being; how the layout of a room, the placement of furniture, the quality of the air flow, lighting, and temperature, the dependability of everyday utensils and objects, all play a role in shaping daily routines and their senses of selves.

Depending on the aims of the class, the activity can be followed by a brief presentation and discussion of three ways Ihde (1974) describes the experience of human-technology or

human-machine relationships. To illustrate these relationships, we provide the students with an example: Imagine you are sitting in a lecture hall taking notes in your notebook. As the instructor speaks, you jot down key points. Your mind is focused on listening and the pen extends that listening as notes on the smooth paper of the notebook. You and the pen in this situation act as one, you experience the notetaking "through" the pen as it glides easily across the page, especially if you had carefully selected the pen for its flow. Ihde (1974) describes these kinds of experiences as "sensory-extension-reduction" relations (p. 273). These are relations that mediate the embodied experience extending your body's capacity to act in particular ways. By virtue of the focus on notetaking, the body-pen relationship also reduces or mutes other sensory cues.

But today is not your lucky day and right in the middle of the best part of the lecture, your pen begins to dry out. Now your attention moves from the lecture to the pen itself, which is failing its task. Your experience now becomes the experience "of" this simple machine which has stopped working. Ihde (1974) explains that now the machine has become "other" opening a "hermeneutic relation" requiring analysis and interpretation posited as a kind of dialogue with the machine (p. 276). As you stress about having missed a whole section of the lecture and dig into your bag for another pen, you realize that you are sweating profusely. At first you think it is stress but as you look around and see that others are sweating too, you become aware that the cooling system in the room seems to also have failed. When we are comfortable, our experience with machines such as the texture of a seat, the light in a room, or the heat and cooling systems often occurs without our noticing. Ihde (1974) calls these relations "among machines background relations" (p. 278). Ihde (1974) notes:

> Human-machine relations pervade the entirety of the correlational possibilities as possibilities. Machines become, in technological culture, part of our self-experience and self-expression. They become our familiar counterparts as quasi-others, and they surround us with their presence from which we rarely escape. They become a technological texture to the World.... We live and move and have our being among machines. (p. 279)

While this example is something that happens to us all the time and could be considered a small matter of inconvenience, similar experiences with technologies or machines are far more significant to our well-being and may even have dire consequences if ignored. For this reason, we also have students read Rosenberger's (2012) paper, *Embodied Technology and the Dangers of Using the Phone While Driving*. In this paper, Rosenberger (2012) provides an account of a phenomenological analysis of driving while using one's phone, including hands-free phones. Rosenberger argues that studies that have not accounted for the experience itself of driving and using a phone fail to understand what is occurring in these events. In this post phenomenological approach, Rosenberger draws on studies on the experience of driving, studies on the experience of talking on a cell phone, and studies on the experience of driving while talking on a cell phone. In this way, he can account for multiple factors, such as the amount of experience the user has with each object, the level to which the car or cell phone is able to recede into the background, the nature of the field of awareness that characterizes driving and using a cell phone, as well as how habitual these actions were to the user (Rosenberger, 2012). What Rosenberger discovers often prompts students to think twice about driving while talking on the phone. Driving and talking on the phone are similar experiences, Rosenberger explains, because like the example of taking notes "through" the pen, they are "sensory-extension-reduction" relations that enable the user's attention to focus on something other than the object itself. While driving, the car recedes into the background so that the awareness can stay focused on the road ahead. Similarly, while talking on the phone, the phone

recedes into the background so that the user can have a conversation with the person inhabiting the voice coming through the speaker. The issue here is that a conflict arises between the field of awareness required to drive a car and the one required to carry on a conversation on a phone. Not only are the fields of awareness different—one focused forward and outward with attention to peripheral movement, and the other focused inward with attention on the voice and the content of the conversation—they are actually incompatible with each other. Rosenberger (2012) concludes that the reason cell phone use during driving presents risks is because "the content of these two experiences—what occupies awareness, what does not, how it is shaped, the direction of habitual pull—appears largely incompatible" (p. 90).

Although these examples are drawn from phenomenological studies, the actual naming of the layers of experience is less important than the numerous ways that developing an awareness of our embodied relations with technology can assist in better understanding the intentional and unintentional effects technologies have on our senses of self, routines, actions, and interactions.

Conclusion

Going back to Madison's question about how the subjective view is formed, we offer phenomenology as a particularly adaptive philosophical orientation. The activities shared can help students of qualitative research gain a deeper appreciation of the way subjectivities are embodied, relational manifestations of meaning arising from orientations to situations. From a phenomenological perspective "to be situated entails that the knower is always 'embodied,' located, 'is a body,' and this must be accounted for in any analysis of knowledge" (Ihde, 2002, p. 68). The activities illustrate how accounting for one's subjectivities encompasses multiple layers of consideration needing continuous and deliberate unpeeling. Not only is everybody unique, but every body takes its shape and orientation within a complex intersection of biological, political, cultural, technological, and experiential circumstances. In this way, the activities highlight the way our subjective selves are always selves-in-relation and help us "attend to how our subjectivity *in relations to others* informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of others" (Madison, 2012, p. 10).

We believe that these activities are flexible enough to be incorporated in a variety of research classes. Qualitative inquiry is an interdisciplinary and theoretically diverse field. What the different theoretical and methodological approaches have in common is a human inquirer who, regardless of paradigmatic orientation, reads, writes, engages, and interprets from a particular embodied location. What we hope the activities show is that this embodied orientation not only shifts and changes depending on the circumstances of the situation, but it can also be shifted and re-oriented if care is taken to turn attention to overlooked influences and intersections. Furthermore, the activities push qualitative researchers to go beyond subjectivity statements and see themselves as always constituted in a world full of human and nonhuman others. This is an engaged and situated process where attention to the language we speak, the way we orient our bodies and senses in particular ways, and the many layered—natural, social, historical, technological—environments surrounding us intersect and effect our understanding of self, other, and the context of inquiry. Drawing on learnings from phenomenology provides qualitative researchers a way to focus:

> Attention on the deeply embedded frameworks of tacitly known, taken-for-granted assumptions through which humans make sense of their lives.... Phenomenologically inflected methods seek to make explicit the lens or frame or way of seeing ... that makes such perceptions make sense. (Yanow, 2015, p. 15)

Attending to how the subjective view is formed is important because it helps us better understand our interconnectedness with others and the way our understandings are situated, embodied, and historically constituted. More importantly perhaps, this kind of attentiveness can provoke a deeper awareness of the effects our subjectivities have on the kinds of questions asked, relationships developed and ignored, and assumptions made. It is only by attending to the orientation devices permeating our practice that new relationships to meaning and understanding can be formed.

Epilogue

This project began when Melissa Freeman, a professor in the Qualitative Research Program invited E. Anthony Muhammad, a doctoral student in the Ph.D. in Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methodologies program, to carry out his teaching internship by collaborating on the development and instruction of an interdisciplinary graduate course on phenomenological research. During the semester, we met weekly, each sharing ideas for what we might do in class, and each contributing to what we would ask the students to read and to do. Besides our shared interest in phenomenology and desire to present a more diverse range of voices and perspectives to phenomenology, as unique situated individuals, we also brought different perspectives and lived experiences to the conversation. For Melissa, these included her experiences as an older, cisgender, heterosexual, White female from the Northeast who grew up overseas in a French speaking area. For E. Anthony, his experiences included being a middle-aged, heterosexual, Black Muslim male from the Midwest who subscribes to critical and racially salient frameworks, standpoints, and philosophies. We also collaborated on a workshop, *From Essences to Orientations: Innovations in Teaching Phenomenologies*, which we carried out at the Qualitative Report conference in January 2020. Since that time, we have had continued conversations about teaching and have shared insights around phenomenological activities that we have tried out in our individual classes. The melding of our individual positionalities and our time spent crafting both a phenomenology course and workshop have greatly informed our thinking on and orientations toward phenomenology. This work is a product of those experiences.

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