NECESSARY SPACES:

THINKING SCHOOL BATHROOMS WITH A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE
MATERIAL

by

KRISTIDEL MCGREGOR

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Student: Kristidel McGregor

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Education Studies by:

Lisa Mazzei   Chair
Joanna Good   Core Member
Gerald Rosiek   Core Member
Bonnie Mann   Institutional Representative

and

Andy Karduna   Interim Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Kristidel McGregor

Doctor of Philosophy

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While every public school in the United States has to accommodate the bathroom needs of

those who work and learn there, the bathroom spaces themselves are understudied

in education research. Simultaneously, school bathrooms occupy a distinct place in the

social consciousness. News reports reveal schools having policy debates about who

belongs in what bathroom space, while children in under-resourced schools face locked

and broken facilities. Schools are closed, and students suspended, for writing threats of

violence on bathroom walls, while administrations remove bathroom stall doors, and discuss

the merits of installing surveillance cameras in that most private of spaces. Evidence

suggests that school bathrooms are disciplinary sites, enforcing normalization of certain

cultural norms, but further investigation is needed, both on the historical functions of

school bathrooms as well as on their role in contemporary schools. School bathrooms are

spaces at the center of many of the current issues facing public schools, but educational

researchers have not studied bathrooms enough to be able to make informed

recommendations to school administrators and policy-makers. This study seeks to open

space to begin a more nuanced conversation about school bathrooms, in order to begin to

make policy recommendations and find directions for further research.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Kristidel McGregor

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Southern Oregon University, Ashland

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education, University
of Oregon
Master of Arts in Teaching, Southern Oregon University
Bachelor of Arts, English Literature

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructional Coach, Department Chair, and English Language Arts Teacher
Eastside High School & Lincoln Middle School, Gainesville, FL. June
2010 – June 2015

Grant Coordinator
Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska. July 2005 – June 2009

Instructor – Professional and Continuing Education
University of Alaska & Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska.
July 2005 – June 2009

Teacher and Curriculum Designer
West Anchorage High School, Anchorage, Alaska. June 2002 – July 2005

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS

Dissertation Support Grant, University of Oregon, 2019

Graduate Employee Award of Excellence, College of Education, University of
Oregon, 2017-2019

Teacher Technology Leader Grant, Anchorage School District, 2005

Outstanding Woman Graduate in English, American Association of University Women, Southern Oregon University, 2001

PUBLICATIONS:

McGregor, K., Chappell Belcher, D. & Fitch, K (2019). Reclaiming Your Time: Tools from culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) for making general interventions local, The Educational Forum, 83:3, 266-277, DOI: 10.1080/00131725.2019.1599655

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Like a monstrous snail, a toilet slides into a living room on a track of wet, demanding to be loved.

It is impossible, and we tender our sincerest regrets. In the book of the heart there is no mention made of

plumbing.

And though we have spent our intimacy many times with you, you belong to an unfortunate reference,

which we would rather not embrace ...

The toilet slides away ...

~Russell Edson (1985)

Little rooms, big issues

An average public school is home-away-from-home to hundreds of students and dozens of teachers every day. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, more than 50 million students reported to public elementary and secondary schools in the fall of 2020. All of these students, as well as the more than 4 million teachers and staff who work with them every day, have something in common: no matter where they are from, their racial or ethnic identity, their social and economic class, or their gender or sexuality, everyone needs to use the toilet.

Bathrooms are necessary – but provocative. School bathrooms are contested sites, a physical space where students' social, material, and discursive worlds have ontological weight, where the material-discursive is felt in the body. Studying school bathrooms is strange, and focuses scholarly attention in a place where attention is seldom welcome. However, as St. Pierre reminds us, "the too strange is, however, the provocation, the knot, the world kicking back, the too much that demands experimentation" (St. Pierre,

2017, p.607). Bathrooms provoke. These provocations have been helpful to my work –

particularly when I considered what theory to "think with" as I investigate this contested,

complex space (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

As the book *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* notes, the words

"public and toilet do not sit well together, and the discord goes beyond words" (Molotch

& Norén, 2010, p. 16). This discord is reflected in research; the scarcity of research that

is focused on bathrooms is an echo of our cultural unwillingness to look directly at what

happens there. While some research has been done on school restrooms, much of it was

not conducted in the United States, or was focused on the toilet training of small children

(Kistner, 2009; Norling, Stenzelius, Ekman, & Wennick, 2016; Ramos, Blea, Trujillo, &

Greenberg, 2010; Vernon, Lundblad, & Hellstrom, 2003). Sociologists have conducted

some inquiries on public toilets in general (Blumenthal, 2014; Horan, 1996; Molotch &

Norén, 2010), as have queer theorists and scholars of gender (Cavanagh, 2010;

Gershenson & Penner, 2009; Ingrey, 2012; Wernick, Kulick, & Chin, 2017), but

educational researchers in the United States have, for the most part, averted their gaze

from toilets and their effects on teaching and learning.

This is not because these spaces are insignificant. When I conducted a simple

investigation of publicly available information, gathered from social media and Google

news alerts, I found several common areas of concern in and around school bathrooms.

These issues included adult concerns about student vaping, access issues for gender non-

conforming students, locking bathroom doors in response to student misbehavior, and

student threats and other kinds of bullying. A glance at the new reports over the last few

years show how access to school bathrooms is part of an ongoing civil rights issue, which

can be seen in the experiences of students of color in both integrated and segregated

school spaces over the past 100 years, as well as in the current struggles for access for

gender non-conforming youth that are playing out in the courts. Exploration of social

media sites like Instagram and Twitter show that even middle-class white students can

find themselves in a struggle over access to the toilet during the school day; the

difference may be that, because of the availability of social media, the American public

learns of these contests over space before they become history.

One recent example occurred in May of 2019, as high school students in

Stillwater, MN staged a bathroom sit in, protesting for their right to unlocked bathrooms.

Some of their school bathrooms had be locked in response to vandalism, and the students

launched a full-throated protest on Instagram and Twitter, proclaiming "Let Us Pee." The

principal responded with his own video response on social media, and called for a

summit between administration and the students' group. The students even created a

mascot to champion their cause.

The administration's concern in Stillwater wasn't an unusual one. A survey of

social media and local news reports reveals bathrooms as sites of student misbehavior:

bullying, smoking, "juuling" or using other substances, lighting fires in the trash cans.

Meanwhile, lawsuits are brought as school boards furiously debate the rights of students

to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity; recommendations from the United

States Department of Education regarding toilet access are issued by one politician, and

rescinded by another.

Bathrooms provoke. For me, the strongest provocation to study school bathrooms

is that what happens in school bathrooms seems to be deeply linked to how students

experience schools, for better or worse. In May 2019, the journal Pediatrics published a quantitative study, based on a survey of more than 3500 gender non-conforming youth in grades 7 – 12. The researchers found that these students experience sexual assault, defined as unwanted sexual contact, at a much higher rate than their peers. Not only do gender non-conforming youth experience much higher rates of sexual assault in a given year than their gender conforming peers, lack of access to bathrooms is correlated with that risk:

> After adjusting for potential confounders, compared with nonrestricted youth of the same gender identity and sex assigned at birth, school restroom and locker room restrictions were associated with 1.26 times the risk of sexual assault for transgender boys, 1.42 times the risk for nonbinary youth AFAB (assigned female at birth), and 2.49 times the risk for transgender girls (Murchison, Agénor, Reisner, & Watson, 2019, p. 5).

Those students who are subject to restroom and locker room restrictions at school had an overall sexual assault prevalence of 36.0% (95% CI: 31.6%–40.3%); for some groups, this prevalence was as high as 46% (Murchison, Agénor, Reisner, & Watson, 2019). The fact that lack of bathroom access correlated so strongly with sexual violence against youth in schools makes it urgent that we study how bathrooms influence student experiences in schools. Bathrooms matter.

Ultimately, an inescapable conclusion is that school bathroom policies and classroom rules around bathrooms matter in the lives of students: that is, they have real and lasting material consequences. This study also underscores the need to tread with care when designing a research project that seeks to understand students' experiences of

school bathrooms – clearly, there is much at stake. How does one conduct research in such a space, and what are the ethical implications of this work?

Why study school bathrooms?

Restrooms in schools are a necessity but can also be points of contention for students, teachers, and administrators, as multiple layers of complex issues overlap and converge. The simple elimination needs of students and teachers, complicated by the needs of menstruating bodies, would seem to be issue enough to warrant investigation, but these needs are complicated by the cultured and gendered nature of bathrooms themselves, and how these spaces have become lynchpins in debates about transgender students' rights. Students and parents are also concerned about equity of access to working facilities, particularly for students in under-resourced schools. Finally, school bathrooms are also sites of misbehavior, threats, and even violence. All of these complex forces overlap in one small, unspoken space: the public-school restroom.

Student bathroom breaks are often strictly policed during the school day. In secondary schools, teachers stay in their classroom while students change classes anywhere from 4 to 8 times a day. These passing times can be as short as four minutes. Educators frequently debate the need to police and restrict bathroom passes for students during class time, a debate which is complicated by the fact that the time allowed between classes is often not enough for students to use the restroom. This debate also assumes that a clean, functioning, supplied restroom with adequate space is available.

Menstrual needs complicate things for schools wishing to provide restrooms that are clean and supplied, functioning well, and private and safe for students. Menstruation hygiene needs are a key part of healthcare: the facilities, time, and supplies needed to

attend to menstruation. Despite the fact that menstruation is a health issue for roughly half of our student population, discussion and consideration of how schools are meeting those needs in the United States is rarely undertaken, often because menstruation is still considered a taboo topic. According to the World Health Organization, making sure schools have adequate infrastructure and support for girls' menstrual hygiene needs is an essential part of making schools more welcoming to girls, and increasing girls' attendance, achievement, and graduation rates (Rüdiger et al., 2011). However, these studies all are based in developing countries, leaving the status of girls' menstrual hygiene in schools in the United States an open question, particularly in schools that are under-resourced. The fact that menstruation is such a social taboo makes this a particularly difficult topic to address in schools in the United States, although some states, communities, and schools are beginning to have the conversation, as I will discuss in the literature review.

A final complication for those seeking to meet menstrual hygiene needs for all humans in schools is the changing nature of the gendered public restroom. Not all of the people who menstruate in our schools identify as female, and students who are transgendered or intersex struggle to feel safe in schools. One recent study found "that feeling safe using school facilities helps to explain widespread inequalities between trans and cisgender students," and recommends ensuring that all students have the right to safely access restrooms as a way to begin to address this gap (Wernick et al., 2017, p. 917). This report highlights the issues of violence and misbehavior in school bathrooms, which is another issue that needs more study in order for educational researchers to make recommendations.

While there is little advice from research for those seeking to understand the role of school bathrooms in student learning, reports on local news channels and anecdotal stories from teachers and administration show that bathrooms are often sites of transgressions, violence, and vandalism, which can result in bathrooms being closed to students, or cameras being installed, or doors being removed from bathroom stalls. These policies are mainly concerned with safety issues in the bathrooms, but an argument could be made that schools are often breaking state law by not having open restrooms in public schools. For example, in October of 2017, students faced with locked bathrooms in Ralston County High School, in Colorado, went to their local news to complain and raise community awareness about bathrooms being locked for days at time. This is just one recent example of a long-standing, deeply rooted problem.

While lack of bathroom access may seem like a radical new issue, the Chicano school walkouts in East LA, which took place in 1968, also listed locked, inaccessible bathroom facilities as a student complaint. In an interview in *Rethinking Schools*, Sal Castro, a teacher involved in the walkouts, says "the kids were talking about the bathrooms being locked, the disrespect of teachers toward the kids, and so few students channeled to go to college" (Ochoa, 2011). This incident suggests a link between a lack of respect for minority students, low expectations, and bathroom access; this is a possibility that educational researchers should investigate.

As a site of struggle, school bathrooms are a smaller subset of a more general category of space/object: the public bathroom. Public restrooms are often contentious spaces, as cultural anxieties are played out in these most public and private of spaces. Public restrooms are a place where "social scientists as well as architects and designers

look for ways to understand how the social and the physical relate" (Molotch & Norén, 2010, p. 10). Despite this general interest, there has been limited research on how students experience school bathrooms, and how this experience then impacts teaching and learning. This study seeks to address that gap.

With this study, I hope to begin to open a necessary space for more research about school bathrooms, their relationships with students, and to begin to define recommendations researchers can make to those who create school bathroom policies. Toilets are not places that sit comfortably at the center of our attentions, but those who seek to educate children need to understand what bathrooms are producing in schools. Bathroom spaces are productive of the bodies in those spaces: productive of how those bodies are categorized, how they are policed, and how they navigate school. A better understanding of the relationships between school bathrooms, students and staff, and the material/discursive forces that come into play in this space will help schools better serve all students.

Research Questions

School bathrooms have rarely been considered as a focus for educational researchers. Instead, they appear briefly on the outskirts of other topics, seldom taking center stage. Consequently, one of the goals of this study is to develop directions for further research centered on school bathrooms: what questions need to be asked of school bathrooms? What kind of relationships do students have with these spaces, and where might some possibilities for positive interventions lie? In order to begin developing these ideas, I outlined broad research questions to guide this project:

• How have school bathroom spaces been situated historically?

- What is the current sociocultural context of school bathrooms?

- How do students experience their school bathrooms?

- What effect do these experiences have on learning?

These broad questions guided the design of the study. However, once I had data collected I began to use what Jackson and Mazzei call analytic questions (2012). Analytic questions are formed by "plugging in" theory and data, and seeing what analytical questions are made possible through the resulting co-constitution of theory and data. The analytic questions I developed during data analysis are posited at the beginning of each data chapter.

Scope of the Study

This study has two main pathways: one rooted in publicly available news reports and social media, and one centered on a study conducted with the eighth-grade students at a single middle school. This movement between the public and the private, the national and the local helps me understand how school bathrooms are constructed in the public imagination, while also staying close to how they are felt in particular bodies in a particular place.

To better understand how school bathrooms are situated in our sociocultural world, I set up a Google news alert for the terms *school bathroom* and *school bathroom* policy. These alerts allowed me to follow the school bathroom issues that would show up in smaller media outlets, often local news. I gathered and analyzed the results of those alerts from November 1st, 2017 to November 1st, 2019. I also conducted a search of Twitter, retrieving all tweets that used the term "school bathroom" over a period of seven days.

The empirical study took place in a single middle school, operating out of the 8th grade English Language Arts class. In total, 131 eighth-grade students participated in at least one part of the study, although several students participated in more than one study activity. These activities took place over several months in a single school year. In order to gather data for this project, I used photography, participant photography, semi-structured focus group interviews, student writing, and my own observations in the form of field notes. The data was then analyzed in part by participant analysis during the focus groups and student writing, which gave me a jumping off point for my own diffractive analysis of the photographs, the focus groups, and the student writing, as well as incorporation of my own field notes.

Summary

While every public school in the United States has to accommodate the bathroom needs of those who work and learn there, the bathroom spaces themselves are understudied in education research. Simultaneously, school bathrooms occupy a distinct place in the social consciousness. News reports reveal schools having policy debates about who belongs in what bathroom space, while children in under-resourced schools face locked and broken facilities. School are closed, and students suspended, for writing threats of violence on bathroom walls, while administrations remove bathroom stall doors, and discuss the merits of installing surveillance cameras in that most private of spaces. Evidence suggests that school bathrooms are disciplinary sites, enforcing normalization of certain cultural norms, but further investigation is needed, both on the historical functions of school bathrooms as well as on their role in contemporary schools. School bathrooms are spaces at the center of many of the current issues facing public

schools, but educational researchers have not studied bathrooms enough to be able to make informed recommendations to school administrators and policy-makers. This study seeks to open space to begin a more nuanced conversation about school bathrooms, in order to begin to make policy recommendations and find directions for further research.

Chapter 2 is entitled "Review of the literature: What lurks in every toilet." In this chapter I discuss the research streams that I drew on for this work. First, I consider the existing academic research and discuss the themes and gaps therein. Because of the sparsity of available research on school bathrooms, I also include work from fields outside of educational research and history of education, most notably law and architecture. Next, I turn to historical and sociocultural accounts of school toilets, and explore the connection to conceptions of bathing and public hygiene.

In Chapter Three, "Theoretical Framings: Phenomenology of the Material," I discuss the theory that underlies this study. I begin by outlining the two lines of theory from which I draw: feminist phenomenology and feminist new materialism(s), and consider what possibilities for research are opened by thinking these two different bodies of work through one another. Next, I outline the implications and possibilities of conducting research using a phenomenology of the material, and the possibilities of studying experience in a way that de-centers the human. Finally, I define some key terms and concepts that I will be working with as I conduct my analysis of the data.

Chapter Four, "On Methodology," considers how using phenomenology of the material as a theoretical framework informed and changed the methodological structure of this study. I discuss the onto-epistemological assumptions of the study, and how those assumptions impact data gathering and analysis techniques. I describe the school site that

was the location of the empirical portion of the study and discuss the possibilities and limitations of the study overall.

In "The Writing on the Walls," (Chapter Five) I begin to discuss and analyze the data. This chapter discusses how threatening messages on school bathrooms work to shape students and schools. The intra-actions, a term I define in chapter three, of threat and fear move between the virtual, the student, and the bathrooms to produce students as particular kinds of subjects: afraid and policed.

Chapter Six, "Public/Private Enactments" explores how access or lack of access to school bathrooms can co-constitute students and school communities. In this chapter, I first consider the bathrooms as places of surveillance in a traditional post-structural analysis, and then show what spaces can be opened by thinking that same data with a phenomenology of the material

I summarize my findings and discuss possibilities for future work in Chapter Seven, "The Bathroom and What I Found There." I consider how material spaces like bathrooms can produce the material-discursive in ways that *matter*, in what I call *material-discursive manifestations.* I discuss three main types of these material-discursive manifestations that I saw in the data: the biological, the affective, and the social. I go on to consider the implications of the study for further investigation, and to make some limited policy recommendations for school administrators and other policy-makers.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: WHAT LURKS BELOW

Even the "re-turn" of a diffraction pattern does not signal a going back, an erasure of memory, a restoration of a present past. Memory—the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra- activity—is written into the fabric of the world. The world "holds" the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is its memory (en- folded materialization).

Barad, 2011, p. 146

The problem of unseen experience

When I set out to write a phenomenology of students' experiences of school bathrooms, I faced an immediate problem: how do you study an experience you can't see, that cannot be directly observed? As I discussed in the introduction, the school bathroom is a space that sits in plain sight, but is also hidden by taboos. The school bathroom exists in an (in)visible state: it is always in plain sight, but rarely looked at directly. To conduct a literature review on this topic, I had to adopt a certain investigative attitude, a way of looking at the periphery of topics in search of information or ideas that related to or reflected on the school bathrooms. As a result, some sections of this literature review also ask the reader to use their peripheral vision: when a direct look isn't possible, one can piece together an idea of the view from the slices and bits we can see.

In this section I present the major literature streams that inform this study. First, I discuss the available academic research that addresses school bathrooms, either directly or indirectly. I then discuss a sociohistorical account of school bathrooms, situating the topic within larger discourses in the United States around class, power, and cleanliness. Finally, I consider some of the available data on school safety and threats, exploring how the bathrooms are situated as spaces in need of control.

Bathrooms in educational research: access, soap, and silence

While student experiences of school bathrooms are rarely studied directly, they have been indirectly considered in the work of researchers studying other topics, like school violence or student health. In this section, I explore the scope of the research on school bathrooms, outline the conclusions that can be drawn from them, and briefly discuss the gaps in knowledge that are left.

A few educational researchers, most notably school nurses, have directly investigated school restrooms as a health issue. In these studies, school restrooms are found to be dirty, or lacking necessities such as toilet paper, hand soap, and paper towels. One study concluded "there is an urgent need to improve the school toilet environment in order to respect the right of all students to void or defecate when necessary" (Norling, Stenzelius, Ekman, & Wennick, 2016). It is interesting to note that these studies did not discuss menstruation: a fairly predictable silence around a topic that is both taboo and generally associated only with women.

Additionally, students report school bathrooms are unsafe, dangerous, or distasteful. These reports often come with a tone of disgust that is reflective of the taboo nature, and may indicate a fear of punishment if one's remarks about, interest in, or discussion of the restroom are somehow perceived as stepping out of line. One scholar who investigated how school restrooms influence the production of gender went so far as to say, "for all bodies, the permanent structure of the public washroom represents a very potent and living practice of gender regulation and punishment" (Ingrey, 2012, p. 799). In this particular study, Ingrey used a poststructuralist theoretical framework for her analysis, drawing primarily on Foucault and Butler's concepts of disciplinary power and

performativity. She ultimately concluded that school bathrooms are a space that function as mechanisms of gender production, and understanding bathrooms was critical for those attempting to "understand the insidiousness of a gender normative system on student subjectivities and its insistence on self-perpetuation through the mechanism of disciplinary power in space" (p. 815). However, one of the limitations of poststructuralist analysis is that it doesn't account for the possibility of seeing the bathroom space as active in-and-of itself, separate from human intentions. The bathroom's "insistence" in the quote above hints at the possibility of more-than-human agency, but the theoretical framework doesn't allow for a full consideration of the bathroom space as active in the formation of human subjectivities.

Performances of gender permeate much of the literature around school bathrooms. In one account, a social worker describes his work with a "young men's club" at an alternative school (Malekoff, 1999). This brief article describes the club's discussion of their complaints with the school bathrooms as a bonding moment between the boys and the social worker. The article concludes with a poem penned by the social worker, one which emphasizes the masculine bonding that happened in the group around the topic of the bathroom. I include the poem here for your consideration:

> **squatters rights sonnet**
> *We were sent away to distant schools*
> *to learn some sort of special tools.*
> *So what's up with this lack of private space,*
> *in the crapper reserved for us in this place?*
>
> *We know that they got all our private files,*
> *that tag us with labels from years in the wild.*
> *But when we gotta go bad, our options are few,*
> *and stalls with no doors is a humiliating view.*

Now we are left with this terrible choice,
that drive us ahead in a unified voice.
For once and for all, we want to be heard,
to do what it takes for what we deserve.

Our dream is to one day move on from here,
dignity intact and a voice that is clear.

By Andy Makekoff, dedicated with admiration and respect to men's group
warriors, moving from mutual support to social action with grace and
style, on this day, December 7, 1998.

This poem, and its dedication, are one demonstration of the kind of social bonding that can happen in and around school bathrooms, particularly when that bonding is gendered and centered around the deficient nature of the space.

Some students are more subject to bathroom restriction than others. In particular, transgender youth can face many obstacles to bathroom access, from the architecture, which some writers have referred to as a classic example of Foucault's panopticon, in that the deign invokes a sense of being surveilled, whether or not anyone is actually watching (Bender-Baird, 2016; Cavanagh, 2010). For transgendered youth, though, the surveillance is often real. The fight to be allowed to use the bathrooms that match their gender identity is one that can be traced through court cases, although court actions do not always translate to access in schools.

Overwhelmingly, courts have upheld transgender students' right to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity; in fact, "the First, Sixth, Ninth, and Eleventh Circuits have all recognized that discrimination against a transgender individual based on that person's transgender status is discrimination because of sex under federal civil rights statutes and the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution" (Aruffo, 2019, p. 86). Despite this, many schools seem to still be limiting access when faced with parent

complaints, such as in the case of Gavin Grim. Grim, a transgender boy, had been using the male-identified bathroom without incident for more than two months into his sophomore school year when the school board, after parent complaints, abruptly created a new rule requiring students to use the restroom that matched their identified sex at birth. Gavin's case was going to be reviewed by the Supreme Court, but the Trump administration's reversal of previously issued guidelines regarding transgender students under Title IX sent the case back to the 4th circuit for review. Gavin ultimately graduated in 2017, still unable to use the bathroom that matched his gender identity. This case, though high profile, is just one among many; for many transgender youths, bathroom access is precarious at best, which can lead to health issues and has negative effects on school performance (Beese & Martin, 2017; Bender-Baird, 2016; Molotch & Norén, 2010; Philips, 2017; Wernick, Kulick, & Chin, 2017).

Restroom use is not just an issue for students; teachers are also affected. In most schools, there are separate restrooms for teachers, but they are often located in the front office or library, far from classrooms. In a recent survey by the American Federation of teachers, 21% of teachers reported "lack of opportunity to use the restroom" as a serious, everyday stressor in the workplace. Nearly half of teachers surveyed reported that they do not get adequate bathroom breaks, and 44% say they are not able to use the breaks they get (American Federation of Teachers, 2015). One of the reasons that teachers don't use the restroom is that they cannot get to it – it is literally not possible to get from the classroom, to the teacher restroom, and back in the brief time between classes. Adding another layer of complication, teachers cannot leave their class until all students have

exited, and students cannot enter until the teacher returns. As I discuss in an earlier manuscript, teacher bathroom use is a challenging endeavor:

> When I was a teacher, using the restroom between classes was a project that required advanced preparation, careful execution, and precision timing. I would wait until all students from the previous class had left my classroom, a minute or more from when the bell rang, while not allowing students in the next class period to enter. Then I would go in the hallway and lock the door to the empty classroom behind me, assuring the students waiting to enter that I would be right back. The halls would be crowded with students, bumping and jostling as they flowed in hurried streams on their way to their next destination, laughing and talking. Often a principal would be standing at a nearby intersection of hallways, blowing a whistle and yelling 'walk on the right!' to the river of students. At the end of my hallway, past that busy intersection, was a student bathroom. (2018)

Students and teachers both report difficulty getting adequate access to bathrooms during the school day.

School bathrooms have also been included in some research on school bullying, particularly of non-binary gender identifying students, but also of students in general. Bathrooms are often cited as locations of bullying and violence, either person-to-person or through lack of access to the toilet that matches one's gender identity (Ingrey, 2012; Perkins, Perkins, & Craig, 2014; Wernick et al., 2017). An alarming recent study in the journal Pediatrics showed that students who lack access to the toilet that matches their gender identity suffer far higher instances of sexual assault and unwanted sexual touching

at school (Murchison et al, 2019). A review of news articles also suggests that fights in the bathroom are common, and a quick YouTube search for the term "bathroom fights" include shots taken on cellphone of fights in school bathrooms, alongside bathroom fight scenes from popular movies.

However, researchers should be careful not to generalize all bathrooms as sites of bullying incidents: one recent study that used GIS mapping to locate sites of bullying within a school discovered that it was not all school bathrooms were sites of bullying, but those in particular locations in the school, suggesting that there is a more complicated dynamic at play in determining which locations in schools become sites of violence (Migliaccio, Raskauskas, & Schmidtlein, 2017). However, very few studies have considered this nuance of place, so many questions are left unanswered.

The reality is that there is very little research that has been done on school bathrooms, and no general consensus reached beyond the fact that there is often a lack of cleanliness and adequate supplies. Even meeting those basic needs can be struggle for schools. The taboo nature of the topic of bathrooms in general surely contributes to this lack, and that sense of taboo is heightened by the bathrooms in questions being intended for school children. Historically, school bathrooms have been locations shrouded by what Mazzei calls a *desiring silence*, "functioning to produce and maintain privilege" (2011, p. 667). The silence around school bathrooms has been one that works to maintain current relations of power within schools, particularly around heteronormativity, which I will discuss further in chapters five, six, and seven. However, this silence has been contested; recent events in the struggle for LGBTQ civil rights have brought school bathrooms into the public imagination, and the news cycles in the United States reflect that, even if our

educational research often does not. Interestingly, this is not the first time that toilets have been the site of struggle for those seeking to gain civil rights.

Sociohistorical contexts: toilets as "a site of struggle"

The American notion of public schooling has interesting historical links to American concepts of public hygiene. In Riis' famous history of the tenements of New York City, *How the Other Half Lives*, he noted that Jewish children went to public school, where the teachers would "inculcate lessons of cleanliness in the worst cases by practical demonstration with wash-bowl and soap" (Riis, 1890). Later in the book, Riis remind readers that an immigrant baby is, despite the dirt on its body and in its home, still human. This gives the modern reader a small insight into the complex relationship between hygiene, schools, and children.

Figure 1: Dilapidated Outhouses Behind NYC Tenements, 1904

One of the difficulties in conducting research into bathrooms is the nature of the topic. Bathrooms, and what happens there, remains in the realm of the unspoken. Even for a frank document like Riis', actual mention of toilets and toileting is unthinkable, and very likely would have been unpublishable. But the careful reader can infer much; although these histories do not specifically talk about toilets, the concerns about cholera outbreaks in America's urban areas, which are caused when human waste contaminates drinking water, indicates that a clean face and a clean floor were not the only public health concerns.

The concept of "bathing" is, in this sociohistorical context, a complicated one.

Figure 2: Outhouses behind New York City Tenement Houses, 1908

Public schools built before 1900 generally didn't have indoor plumbing of any sort, and for some students, like the Black students who attended segregated schools in Chicago, no toilets were available at school until well after 1920 (Hoy, 1996). In places like New York City, as documented by people like Riis and Jane Adams, indoor plumbing was rare, and bathing was often rare as well, and outhouses were the norm. In New York City, the Tenement House Act of 1867 required that tenement buildings have one outhouse for every 20 people living there.

Increasing immigration and an exploding urban population in the 1840s in the United States also brought with it concern for public hygiene, and a call for public baths. This call came hand-in-hand with the call for public schools to civilize and assimilate immigrants (Tyack & Lazerson, 1975). By the mid-19th century, municipal water supplies had provided middle and upper-class households with private bathing rooms. Meanwhile, the urban poor lived in squalid conditions with no access to sanitation, ultimately resulting in numerous cholera outbreaks in US cities, beginning in 1849 (Williams, 1992b). These outbreaks led to the rise of "Bath Reformers" who advocated for public baths, particularly baths to be located in public schools so the children could have scheduled baths at school. After the turn of the century, tenement reform efforts had created new building codes that required the construction of one toilet in each new

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apartment, and public baths had mostly disappeared by the end of World War II. But the ideological connections made between schools, cleanliness, and assimilation remained (Williams, 1992a).

By the progressive era, schools in Boston, New York City, and Baltimore had constructed baths in public schools, particularly those that educated immigrant children (Williams, 1992d). In 1901, New York City made school bathing mandatory for immigrant children, and Los Angeles followed suit a few years later; as the *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1904, school bathing was "the newest educational innovation" (Chua, 2017). In 1912, the New York City Department of Education sent a delegation to the Public Baths Exhibition organized by the International Conference of Public and School Baths, held in the Netherlands. At the end of the conference, recommendations were issued, including the inclusion of baths in all urban schools and in school curriculum (Williams, 1992c).

In many cases these baths were literal – showers and tubs were built for hygiene instruction to be delivered at the hands of the school nurse. But toilet spaces were also a part of these changes, as new school building codes first written in the industrial boom of the early 20th century would determine the general shape, type, and layout of school bathrooms for decades to come. Suggestions began with Henry Barnard's 1849 book *School Architecture*, which suggested that privy holes in schools be cut small to better accommodate children. In 1870, Samuel Eveleth suggested indoor plumbing in his book *School-house Architecture*. By the time of the publication of 1902's *Modern School Building Elementary and Secondary: a Treatise on the Planning, Arrangement, and Fitting of Day and Boarding Schools* by Felix Clay, architects had begun to suggest

separate facilities for separate genders, following the recommendations set by the "separate spheres" ideology popular at the time, which made a distinction between public and private space, and asserted women's need for privacy and protection. The separate spheres ideology asserted that women and men were essentially, biologically different, and schools built along these guidelines had separate entrances, cloakrooms, play areas, and (of course) bathrooms for girls and boys.

Interlude: Remembering Bathrooms

As I search for research on bathrooms and schools, I can't help but remember the bathrooms in the schools where I've been a teacher. My first classroom was directly across from a boys' bathroom. The school was large, and my female-identifying students used to complain that the boys had easy access to the bathrooms. Once, there was a string of fires set in that bathroom's trash can; disruptive incidents that caused evacuations and standing in the cold waiting for the fire-department to sound the all-clear. Despite the fires, the bathrooms were never locked.

In contrast, the last school I taught in was in a heavily-segregated district in the Southern US, one of those districts that waited for the court-order to begin integration, and then used "magnet" schools-within-schools to attract white students to the schools in traditionally black neighborhoods. The school looked integrated from the outside, but inside the building it was immediately apparent that there was one hallway for the neighborhood kids, and other for the students bussed in for the advanced program. A few short hallways connected the two main

hallways, like a huge capital H which connect to the front office at the top

of both verticals.

    As I read, I remember that the bathrooms in the hallway for the

magnet program were rarely locked – only during common lunch time,

and only a few times. The bathrooms in the other hall, though, were often

locked.

All of these examples show that school bathrooms have never been neutral spaces. Ideology, particularly that of race and class, and who is considered dirty or clean, has always been at play in public bathrooms, but that analysis has rarely been narrowed to consider just the school bathroom. As sociologist David Inglis points out in his 2001 book *A Sociological History of Excretory Experience: Defecatory Manners and Toiletry Technologies*, toilet practices are often used as a weapon by the dominant culture, to point out the cultural and biological inferiority in subaltern groups, and these perceived deficits often drove innovation in public infrastructure and building regulations. Although Inglis's book is focused on Europe's social relationships of the aristocracy, bourgeoisie and working classes over several centuries, the use of acceptable/unacceptable defecation processes as a symbol of acceptable/unacceptable bodies is an analysis that requires very little adjustment to be extended to the history of public bathrooms in the United States.

In his 2020 book *Bathroom Battlegrounds,* Alexander K. Davis explores how public restrooms in the United States have been shaped (both culturally and architecturally) by ideologies, focusing particularly on gender and class. While Davis's analysis rests more broadly on the intersections of cultural ideologies with laws, architectural practices, and building codes, he also observes that "patterns of class

stratification have consistently shaped the definition of what a 'public' restroom in the United is, and that definition has almost always been more restricted than truly public" (p. 48). Both these books point out how the answer to the question of who gets access to 'public' restrooms is rooted deeply in cultural practices, which are then embedded in both policy and in the architecture itself. I argue that the public-school restroom is not an exception to these patterns.

When nine Black students integrated Little Rock High School in 1957, the white girls refused to use the same restroom as the Black girls. This was caused in part by a segregationist flier entitled "What kind of Public School do we Want?" which was circulated in the town. This flier suggested that "girls under 14 years of age are highly susceptible to [venereal] disease if exposed to the germ through seats, towels, books, gym clothes, etc." (Godfrey, 2003, pp. 63-64). Although the word toilet is once again absent, the seat in question is undeniably the toilet seat; historian Eileen Boris, commenting on the common practice of white women refusing to use toilets shared with black women in the American South, calls the toilet "a site of struggle" (as quoted in Godfrey, 2003, p. 65). In this way, the school bathroom becomes another site of violence for black children during the desegregation era (Tate, 1997). We see a similar struggle unfolding today in the United States, as public-school restrooms have become the location of struggle for LGBTQAA rights. The history of public-school toilets clearly shows they have always been implicated in race, gender, and class struggle, and that these liberation struggles aren't just experienced on the level of discourse, but are manifested in material reality by way of building codes, regulations, and policy practices.

Threats, safety, and bathrooms

As this review of the existing literature shows, school bathrooms are complicated spaces, and under-researched ones. This study seeks to bring the bathroom to center stage, and begin to ask questions about how that space functions in schools. It is clear that recommendations are needed for bathroom policy makers at all levels, from classroom teachers seeking to create a restroom pass policy for their students, to principals hoping to combat violence and misbehavior in the bathrooms, to school boards hoping to craft policy around transgender bathroom access that will work for their community, to state and federal government agencies that seek to settle policy issues where they intersect with the civil rights of students. Educational researchers' voices have been quiet on many of these fronts, with the bulk of our recommendations centering on bathroom access and safety for our LGBT students.

Threats and violence in school bathrooms is a common complaint of school principals. Despite the commonly held opinion that these types of threats are increasing in schools, hard numbers are difficult to find. One non-profit group, the Educator's School Safety Network (ESSN), has been collecting data in much the same way I did for this study, working from "a compilation of violent incidents and threats that have occurred in U.S. K-12 schools as reported from media sources" (Klinger & Klinger, 2019, p. 9). They recently released their first report, focusing on the 2018-2019 school year. However, the ESSN has compiled a quantitative analysis of the data, providing statistics that they use in their work training schools in violence response. The statistics they provide are descriptive, and are helpful in creating an overall summary of the state of school threats of violence. At the same time, it's important to remember that these

statistics have the same limitations my qualitative analysis does; specifically, "while multiple media reports are used to verify and update the accuracy of information related to an incident or threat, if no information was released by the school or the incident/threat was never reported in any fashion, then it is not included in the data set" (p. 9). This is arguably a more significant limitation for a study that is conducting a quantitative analysis; the likelihood that many events in school didn't make the local news, and thus didn't get reported, means these numbers could significantly lower than the number that occurred.

Additionally, the Educator's School Safety Network is an organization that schools contract with to conduct "Vulnerability Assessment" and "Threat Management Assessment," and to provide training to schools and teachers in how to have a better lockdown, or how to best reunite students with their parents after a violent event. I short – although they are a non-profit, they have a product to sell. I discuss some of the possible problems and limitations of this approach in chapter 5. Because of these shortcomings, I will not be reporting the ESSN's quantitative data, as I have significant concerns as to its accuracy and usefulness. However, ESSN's products and services are an example of the way schools are thinking about threats and bathrooms.

The ESSN is just one part of a much larger trend in school safety: selling schools pre-packaged threat-response programs. ESSN's report states that writing on school bathroom walls is the second most common way that schools receive threats, coming behind only posts on social media (p. 6). I suspect there is some conflating of these two sources, as well, as my own research has revealed many examples of writings on

bathroom walls that are then photographed and uploaded to social media; only then does the threat become newsworthy.

Despite the lack of research on these threats, there is a whole industry now devoted to preparing America's school for active shooter situation. The field is dominated by ALICE (alicetraining.org), which claims to have trained more than one million people, and more than 4,200 k-12 schools. But there are serious questions about the effectiveness of these programs, and increasing calls to consider the effect of the programs themselves on school climate.

Summary

Public bathrooms are spaces that are governed by rules and building codes that are, in turn, shaped by sociocultural discourses around appropriate/inappropriate bodies. This study seeks to put the bathroom space itself at the center of the study in the hopes of opening space for new ways of thinking about this most public of private rooms. I hope to encourage other researchers to enter the public conversation about school bathrooms, and help schools and policy-makers improve student and schools relationships with their bathroom spaces.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE MATERIAL

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-orients our seeing, re-orients our thinking, re-orients 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, & Mazzei, 2016, p.105

Introduction

The challenges of investigating a space like school bathrooms looms large as I consider how to ground this study. I'm interested in how students are affected by their experiences with and in school bathrooms, so phenomenology, the study of human experience, seems like a logical fit. On the other hand, I am also very aware of how the school bathrooms loom in discourse, as I discussed previously in my review of the poststructuralist work of Ingrey and Wernick, Kulick, & Chin (2017). Finally, I am also provoked by thinking of school bathrooms as active spaces, co-constitutive of students' experiences of school, which points me towards Karen Barad's (2003) provocative ideas of posthuman performativity and agential realism, which takes some of the basic concepts from Butler (performativity) and Foucault (power and discipline) and, thinking them with the principles of quantum physics, considers how the material world itself is performative in its intra-active entanglements.

What could be gained by rethinking the tradition of phenomenology within a new materialist theoretical framework? What new possibilities 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 (date) tell us – these things are not supposed to relate, yet they provoke: I find there is a productive intensity to be found in the pairing. If I think these two theories together and across one another, could I open some necessary space for new ways of thinking about and with school bathrooms?

Focusing my inquiry on the material 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. This conception of research is drawn from new materialist thinkers, such as Barad (2007) and Bennet (2010), and is a reframing of traditional empiricism.

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; 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 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 discursive is reified in the world.

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 experiences that can be in excess of 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" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 115). 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 (2003) 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 consider that humans may not have exclusive claim to the title "thinking beings?"

From this place of questioning I can begin to articulate the possibilities of thinking data with a phenomenology that decenters the human, and instead focuses on what is being produced by the material intra-action in that moment. I will define this term, intra-action, more precisely later in this chapter, but for now it is helpful to think of the phenomenon not as something that is revealed/determined by human observations. Thinking with Barad's intra-action, the phenomenon is instead the mutual coproduction of the world by both humans and non-humans; i.e. discourses, material things, physical spaces and landscapes.

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. They[1] describe diffractive methodology as an alternative to traditional critical reflective, representative methods (Barad, 2007). Using a diffractive methodology can help me 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 what possibilities are opened by using a phenomenology of the material as the framework from which I study school bathrooms. What does this method allow me to do, that can't be accomplished with either feminist phenomenology or feminist new materialisms alone?

I begin by grounding this 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. I discuss the implications of a phenomenology of the material: what does

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[1] Karen Barad uses they/them/their pronouns.

it offer me as an educational researcher, and how does using this theoretical framework influence the methods and analysis techniques I will use in my work. Finally, I offer a brief dictionary of sorts, defining and locating in theory the terminology I use in this project. Ultimately, this theoretical framework is attempting what can seem at first glance to be a fairly simple shift: what happens to my investigation of the experience of school bathrooms if I de-center the human as the creator/discoverer of experience, and instead consider the experience as being located in and with the space itself?

Feminist phenomenology: situated, relational, contextual

In this section, I will discuss the principles I draw on from feminist phenomenological theory, and what that theory can help me accomplish. Traditional phenomenological inquiry is centered around the act of phenomenological reduction. Reduction is an act of the mind, when one disregards or "brackets" out preconceived notions to leave the thing-in-itself. As explained by Alcoff (2000), the purpose of this reduction is to "to transform the world from the realm of the actual to the realm of the phenomenon…where validity is not yet determined" (p. 50). This mental trick, the phenomenological reduction in traditional phenomenological inquiry, is based on some assumptions about the world and human consciousness, assumptions that both feminist phenomenologists and feminist new materialists question, albeit in different ways.

St. Pierre (2013) describes traditional phenomenological inquiry 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*. These concepts—essence, revelation—can seem archaic to postmodern thinkers, something dusted off of old library shelves. But phenomenology continues to be of use to researchers, as it offers a unique perspective by locating the formation of knowledge ontologically, in how we meet the world, rather than epistemically, in our reflective consideration of the world.

In recent years, many thinkers have distanced themselves from the idea of "essence" and still found value in doing phenomenological inquiry. For post-phenomenologists, the idea of essence is often rejected outright in favor of a more nuanced view of intentionality (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Freeman & Vagle, 2013; Vagle, Clements, & Coffee, 2016). In general, the move from traditional phenomenological inquiry to more contemporary conceptions of phenomenology is exemplified by how "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). Moving from Husserl's concept of self-touching and embodiment to Derrida's deconstruction moves phenomenology into the poststructuralist realm; one can also argue that this moves phenomenology further from the material world. Feminist phenomenologists have contributed much to this rethinking and redefining of the concept of the phenomenon, and in 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 phenomenological inquiry, and articulated ways to bring phenomenology beyond its masculine, often essentializing roots. Alcoff's book chapter *Phenomenology,*

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Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience points out that

Husserl's phenomenological depictions already denote an embodied consciousness that is

entangled with the world, rather one that is separate from the world (2000). However, as

Alcoff (2000b) further 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. This

ethereal, generalizable mind, the mind that is considered neutral and normal, is

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. They take Husserl's idea that consciousness is embodied, and also

contend that embodied being-in-the-world is, therefore, 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 (2013), 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. The recasting of phenomenology

as a bodily relation with the world is also important for Al-Saji (2010), 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" p.18).

Thus, feminist phenomenology is oriented towards 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 a 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 *un*freedoms 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

In this section, I consider what my work can gain from drawing on feminist new materialist theory. 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 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 experience are displaced by intra-action and shifting agentic networks. This does not mean that questions of 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, particularly when thinking with the concept of posthumanist performativity, which I explain in greater depth later in this manuscript.

Stacy Alaimo (2010), in her book *Bodily Natures,* deliberately breaks the bounds of corporeality to begin theorizing experiences within a new materialist lens. Alaimo describes "the human is always inter-meshed with the more than human world," existing in what she calls a *trans-corporeal landscape* (2010, p. 12). Experience, for Alaimo, allows us to "trace how trans-corporeality often ruptures ordinary knowledge practices," (p. 17). These ruptures happen when humans navigate experiences of illness or threat, often associated with the "toxic landscapes" of a polluted environment, and find that their ways of knowing have been disrupted, upended, by how their ontological state has been changed. Alaimo 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" (ibid., p. 95). For Alaimo, humans are not experiencing an encounter with an outside world, but human experiences are produced in, of, and with their environment. Our experiences don't occur somehow

negotiated between our separate-standing self and the world, but rather with the air in our lungs, the microbes in our guts, the bits of plastic in our breastmilk, the heavy metals in our blood. Experience, then, is not made up of the isolated encounters of humans with the world; rather the world in its entangled intra-actions, which includes humans, is productive of experience.

Reading phenomenology and new materialisms diffractively

Now, I turn to diffractive reading of feminist phenomenological inquiry and feminist new materialist inquiry, to begin to theorize a phenomenology of the material and attempt to rethink the concept of experience in qualitative research. Diffractive methodology requires a turning away from representative analysis, and instead a careful attending to the places of entanglement, as accounts are read through and with one another (Barad, 2007; Taguchi, 2012; Mazzei & Jackson, 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 being objective, standing outside, resolving the differences, or proving one right or wrong. This is a quantum diffractive reading. I'm not looking for ripples or moments of difference, but instead reading the texts through one another, and in doing so setting up an apparatus that enacts an agential cut, that in turn entangles them with one another and with me in an intra-active phenomenon. Thinking from that space, I can begin to try to understand what is possible within this intra-active phenomenon. For a more detailed discussion of quantum diffractive reading and analysis, please see also the entry "Diffractive (reading, analysis)" in the terminology section in this chapter.

As I read diffractively across feminist phenomenological thought and Barad's agential realism, attending to places of entanglement opens space for me to think differently about experience. Quantum entanglements, according to Barad, "are not the intertwining of two or more states/entities/events, but a calling to question the very nature of two-ness, and ultimately of one-ness as well" (Barad, 2014, p. 180). I can begin to consider a material phenomenology, a phenomenology that is not located within fixed human agency and subjectivity "discovering" a revealed pre-existing world, but is instead in the act of looking itself, the agentic cut and the careful, thoughtful tracing of the marks left on 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 feminist phenomenological essays, Iris Marion Young (2004) says that "consciousness that constitutes its world is the body as lived in a tangible encounter with human and nonhuman others" (p. 8). The idea of consciousness and subjectivity as produced by embodied encounters with the world is a major theme of feminist phenomenological inquiry. Barad goes one step further whentheytells us "all 'selves' are not themselves but rather the iterative intra-activity of all matter of time-beings. The self is dispersed/diffracted through being and time" (2019, p. 531). Barad's claims about the self can be seen as running parallel to many feminist phenomenological 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, material phenomena as all co-produced by and co-constitutive of reality challenges our thinking. As Barad says, "matter and meaning are mutually articulated" (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 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. Even the researcher isn't outside the phenomenon. The apparatus we use to measure will always be part of the result. "Wave and particle are not inherent properties of objects, rather the atoms perform wave or particle in their intra-action with the apparatus" (Barad, 2014, p. 180) 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, Jackson & Mazzei, 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. Sims and Swartka describe feminist phenomenologists as "related to our participants, even 'entangled', and our phenomenological époche demands that we become aware of it" (2013, p.12). Thinking this entanglement with the Baradian idea of entanglement challenges me to expand my view – the phenomena in question is not just the material structures of the school bathroom, but also the building and room they inhabit, and the material-discursive forces of the world around them, the people they intra-act with, and even the researcher. This version of entanglement is a profound sense of not just a naïve notion of connectedness, but true inseparability; all things within the phenomena are co-constitutive of one another.

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 experience.

This is the stuff of posthuman performativity: another diffractive rippling. Performativity, as understood by post-structural 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 gave us an account of performativity, she did so in the essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: an Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988). 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 on thinkers from many disciplines. However, Butler's idea of performativity is rooted in poststructuralism and human interpretations, and allows little room for a material account. Barad later will riff on this idea of sedimentation: "Sedimentation does not entail closure. (Mountain ranges in their

liveliness attest to this fact)" (Barad, 2014, p. 168). Barad takes up and subverts this 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, that can enact their performativity according to what is made possible by their entangled intra-action. Seen through this lens, experience is a product of 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? There is an expectation that 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 herself.

Implications of a phenomenology of the material

What, if any, clarity can be found for a phenomenology of the material among this diffractive dancing? There are several key ideas that can be carried forward into my study methodology and analysis:

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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 non-human living things, the discursive and socio-cultural forces, all co-productive of the experience.

2. **Research as entanglement.** Phenomena are intra-active and performative – they are the world, in its becoming. Traditional 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 already entangled in that intra-action even as I enact an agential cut in order to study what is produced by that momentary fixing of the phenomenon. 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 phenomenological inquiry, 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 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 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" (2007, 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.

Secondly, bringing this kind of analysis to social science research promises both to open new possibilities for how we can exist with our research sites, and the inextricably linked new ways of enacting 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.

Terminology: defining and locating important terms

In order to use a phenomenology of the material to plan, execute, and analyze this study, I am using some very specific terminology. In this section, I will explain the terms I am using, defining them and locating them in theory. Because these concepts often build on one another, I present these terms not in alphabetical order, but in the order which will best allow the reader to understand not only each term, but also how they relate to one another.

Material/Discursive

Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither is reducible to the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. Neither is

articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually

articulated.

Barad, 2007, p.152

In this manuscript I use the term material/discursive to indicate that I am conceptualizing the material, the things of the world, and the discursive, the things of language, as inseparable in the production of knowing. Post-structuralist thought often focused on language and its functions (the discursive) and in many ways feminist new materialisms has been a way to re-center the material in our considerations of the world (Jackson, 2016; Mazzei, 2013; St. Pierre et al., 2016; St. Pierre, 2013; Van Der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2009). Writing the two together, as material/discursive, reinforces the inseparability of our world and the language functions that both describe and order our social selves. Neither matter (the material) nor meaning (discourse) exist without the other.

Using material/discursive as a concept in analysis allows for researchers to think their data in new ways. Seeing data as a part of the material-discursive can allow for researchers to see how certain phenomena "emerge as enactments of (material-discursive) intra-activities between entangled material environments and discursive notions in different and situated ways" (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013, p. 684). Using the term material/discursive indicates that I see these as a single concept: the matter and the meaning exist together, and not separable.

Intra-action and intra-active phenomenon

The world is intra-activity in its differential mattering. It is through specific intra-actions

that a differential sense of being is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency. That

is, it is through specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter—in both senses of

the word.

Barad, 2003, p. 817

In questions of research, the concept of the unit of analysis serves an important role in placing the study in a particular theoretical framework. For example, in traditional phenomenological studies the unit of the analysis is the individual, as the phenomenologist works to understand individual human experiences of the world. For sociological studies, often the unit of analysis is the group, as the researcher seeks to understand how group functions and social rules have shaped society.

What then, is the unit of analysis for a phenomenology of the material? Where does the researcher focus her inquiry as she seeks to understand the phenomenon? For this, I draw on Barad's notion of intra-activity. As I described earlier in this chapter, "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." For a phenomenology of the material, the intra-active phenomenon is the unit of analysis, and it's one that is always in motion. It's important to note that this centering of the phenomenon also de-centers the human; it is not on how the human experiences the phenomenon, but on how the human and non-human are co-constituted by the ongoing intra-action.

Agency

Agency cannot be designated as an attribute of "subjects" or "objects" (as they do not preexist as such). Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is "doing"/"being" in its intra-activity.

Barad, 2003, p. 827

The notion of agency, when viewed from a posthuman perspective, is different from traditional concepts of agency as an ability to act, one that is located within the human. Instead, within a phenomenology of the material agency is instead seen as distributed across the phenomenon, depending on the particular intra-active enfolding. Agency is something that only occasionally is attached/available to a subject, rather than being ontologically inherent in personhood.

This view of agency comes from both feminist phenomenological and new materialist thinkers. Phenomenologist Diana Coole (2005) recognized in her article "Rethinking Agency," the kind of powers we often discuss as agential are corporeal, located in the body and "emerging through corporeal processes" (p. 132). Coole goes on to describe how agency isn't an inherent given that resides in the human, but rather appears (and disappears) as a part of embodied experience. Coole advises the phenomenologist to take care in "observing the emergence of different forms and degrees of agentic capacity across the spectrum of the corporeal, the singular and the intersubjective" (p. 141) when attempting to describe a phenomenon.

For new materialist thinkers, agency is also in motion, but this motion includes both the human and non-human. The separation of human from non-human, or more than human, doesn't make a lot of sense when thinking within new materialism; Barad

describes agency as a part of the dynamic forces of worlding (2007, p. 141) that is inseparable from intra-active phenomena. Ultimately, the new materialism view of agency is not that different from that of the feminist phenomenologists: agency is something that occasionally emerges for humans and non-humans, and is contingent and always in motion.

Thinking with a phenomenology of the material, agency is the result of particular intra-actions, and the "ongoing flow of agency through which 'part' of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another 'part' of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of spacetime itself" (Barad, 2003, p. 818). Agency is created through intra-actions, and the enacting of agential cuts (which are discussed in their own section). Intra-action is productive of self, and can sometime result in human agency. But intra-action can also redistribute agency away from the human: "intra-action, or co-constitutive construction, mobilizes the forces of matter in ways that can require people to relinquish agency" (Hickey-Moody, 2018, p. 2). In this way, agency is not just the province of the human, but is a part of every intra-action and sometimes available to all human and nonhuman beings entangled there. How that agency is distributed at any given moment is a function of the agential cuts within the intra-action itself.

Agential Cut

Agential cuts – intra-actions – don't produce (absolute) separation, they engage in agential separability – differentiating and entangling (that's one move, not successive processes). Agential cuts radically rework relations of joining and disjoining.

Barad, 2010, p. 265

The idea of agential cuts come from Barad's theory of posthuman performativity, which is described in more detail in Chapter 4. Rather than considering subject/object relationships as inherent in humans and other beings, Barad sees these subject/object relationships as arising from acts of separation within intra-active phenomena. They[2] call these acts of separation agential cuts:

> A specific intra- action (involving a specific material configuration of the "apparatus of observation") enacts an agential cut (in contrast to the Cartesian cut—an inherent distinction—between subject and object) effecting a separation between "subject" and "object." That is, the agential cut enacts a local resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy.
>
> Barad, 2003, p. 815

It is via the agential cut the agency is distributed in the phenomenon.

It can be tempting to think that only humans can enact agential cuts. In particular, when doing research I am constructing an apparatus, which I know will enact an agential cut. But it is important to not fall back into a Cartesian way of looking at the researcher as always the subject, and the researched as always the object. Instead, that measurement is just one agential cut among many, a single instance of "part of the universe making itself intelligible to another part in its ongoing differentiating intelligibility and materialization" (Barad, 2003, p. 824). By enacting that agential cut, I am also entangling

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[2] Karen Barad uses they/them/their pronouns

myself in the ongoing intra-action, and I am a part of that ongoing materialization in ways that will not always enact me as agentic, as the subject doing the measuring.

Entanglement

Entanglements are not a name for the interconnectedness of all being as one, but rather specific material relations of the ongoing differentiating of the world. Entanglements are relations of obligation – being bound to the other – enfolded traces of othering.

Barad, 2010, p. 266

Entanglement is another of Barad's terms that is commonly misused and misunderstood. It is tempting to think of entanglement as another word for connection, but in this context it is important to follow Barad, who says, "entanglements are not a name for the interconnectedness of all being as one, but rather specific material relations of the ongoing differentiating of the world" (2010, p. 265). When I speak of entangling myself with my study site, I am referring to a specific result of the act of creating an apparatus to measure that school site. That particular agential cut, in addition to temporarily fixing the indeterminate possibilities within the intra-action, also acts to entangle me, implicate me, into the specific intra-active phenomena that is school bathrooms at the school I studied.

Another term Barad uses to describe the nature of quantum entanglements is *hauntology* "of intra-activity, of agential separability – differentiatings that cut together/apart – that is the hauntological nature of quantum entanglements" (2010, p. 245). This haunting nature of entanglement is a nod to the disruption of cause and effect that thinking with quantum physics entails. Entanglement isn't just in the now – it is also in the simultaneous past-present-future-here-there, a part of the ongoing intra-action that

constitutes, simultaneously, our present sense of self, and how we make sense of all the selves we have been/are being/will be. Entanglements are binding, obligating, haunting, and self-reconfiguring.

Diffractive (reading, analysis)

Diffraction/intra-action — cutting together-apart (one move) in the (re)configuring of

spacetimemattering; differencing/differing/differencing

Barad, 2014, p. 168

As Barad's theories have been taken up by social sciences, the waytheyis using

Figure 3: Ripples and reflection in a still pond
"Ripples in the Reflection" by Neillwphoto is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

diffraction and diffractive reading has been perhaps the most often misunderstood of all her conceptual theories. As Geertz and Van Der Tuin (2016) describe in their almanac entry

"Diffraction and Reading Diffractively," the notion of diffractive reading in feminist theory comes primarily from optics and is based in classical, Newtonian physics. Diffraction, in this view, is the "physical phenomenon that comes into being when a multitude of waves encounter and obstacle in their path, and/or when those waves overlap" (Geertz and Van Der Tuin, 2016). Think of the waves created when you drop a stone into a still pond. Then imagine dropping two at once, in different places, and how

they will interact. These ripples carry the weight of the metaphor of diffractive reading and analysis.

Classical diffraction, when used by feminist theorists, is often placed in opposition to reflection. Donna Harraway (2004/1992) calls diffraction a "more subtle vision" (p. 70) than reflection, in that it highlights the points of overlap and obstruction, which allows room for difference, and for tracking the way those ripples interact with bodies and ideas. Reflection instead amplifies and reifies what is already present in the phenomenon.

Consider our picture of ripples in the pond in Figure 3. If we see this still pond as a metaphor for our data, we have a few choices for analysis. More traditional forms of analysis would include an account of the reflection in the pond, describing the tree branches, clouds, and sky. The ripples might be described as well, but possibly only in terms of something that is unclear, or obscuring. An attempt would be made to fix these things, to define them and be able to say: this is what is clearly present, this is what is not clearly present. Feminist theorists like Haraway would instead analyze diffractively, looking at the ripples, the places where movement and overlap create difference and allows us to see the trees and pond in new ways, to describe how movement and interconnectedness act and how each element affects the others in this place.

Barad also draws on Haraway's ideas of diffractive readings, which rely on a theory of diffraction from Newtonian physics. But, as Barad (2003, 2007, 2014) patiently explains to us over and over again, quantum physics is a much more accurate description of the workings of the world than classic Newtonian physics, and quantum diffraction

works differently. Classical diffraction depends on optics, on reflection and refractions, on watching waves move and looking for overlaps and ripples: our stones in a pond.

Quantum diffraction is also a thing of light, which isn't a wave (but sometimes acts like one) but also isn't exactly particle. Quantum diffraction is also a thing of the measuring apparatus itself, as the nature of light seems (to us) to change depending on how we look for it. This is a queer trick, a slipperiness that defies our notions of cause and effect. One thing we know for sure is that light certainly isn't a simple binary: light isn't a wave or a particle but also resists such simple descriptors as either/or. Light is performative, and those performances are made possible by the spaces opened and constrained by particular agential cuts, intra-actions within entangled phenomena.

Diffraction experiments are the apparatuses that scientists use to argue about the nature of light. It's a classic disagreement of physics; campus mythologies tell of physicists getting in fistfights outside bars, each yelling "particle!" or "wave!" in turn, as fists fly. But, as Barad tell us in her 2014 article "Diffracting Diffraction," pinning down the nature of light isn't really the point here. The important thing to be taken from quantum diffraction is something else:

> Meaning is not an ideality; meaning is material. And matter isn't what exists separately from meaning…Difference isn't given. It isn't fixed. Subject and object, wave and particle, position and momentum do not exist outside of specific intra-actions that enact cuts that make separations – not absolute separations, but only contingent separations – within phenomena. (Barad, 2014, p. 175)

So considering our stones in the pond with quantum diffraction gives us something else entirely. First, our act of looking is part of the phenomenon. We are not outside, looking in. We are entangled, and our looking is an agential cut, implicating us in what we find. Next, the phenomenon, the intra-action, is all there is. Nothing in the phenomenon is discreet or separate, but is performatively acting in ways that are shaped, made possible, by the agential cuts that create contingent separations and entanglements within the intra-action.

I deal with many of these concepts in the discussion of new materialism in this chapter, but it's important to understand that my diffractive reading of these two bodies of work, feminist phenomenology and new materialisms, is a quantum diffractive reading. I'm not looking for ripples or moments of difference, but instead reading the texts through one another, enacting an agential cut that entangles them with one another and with me, and seeing what is made possible. I don't seek to unify these theories into some kind of whole: "entanglements are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entangles entail differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings" (Barad 2014 p 177). And so, I read theory and analyze data using quantum diffraction to explore the entanglements and differentiations that I find there.

Enfolding

Phenomena are not located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements enfolded and threaded through the spacetimemattering of the universe. Even the return of a diffraction pattern does not signal a going back, an erasure of

memory, a restoration of a present past. Memory– the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of

iterative intra-activity – is written into the fabric of the world.

Barad, 2010, p. 261

One final important concept from Barad informs my data analysis: enfolding. The term enfolding refers to how phenomena can change shape as a part of ongoing materialization. The phenomena itself doesn't change, but what is internal can become external, and what was seen may now be hidden. Think of folding a towel, or the fancy napkin shapes you might find in restaurants: what is interior and exterior can change, and sometimes those foldings leave creases and marks. Ongoing materialization is a process that is always in motion, and that process can be described as enfolding.

Power and agency are materialized through the mattering of intra-active phenomena, and these matterings leave marks. According to Barad (2007), "the history of phenomena is written into their materialization, their bodily materiality hold the memories of the traces of its enfoldings" (p. 383). Mattering isn't a linear, neat process, but an ongoing becoming that defies naïve notions of cause and effect. Mattering leaves sedimentation and traces of how "the past and the future are enfolded participants in matter's iterative becoming" (p. 180). Enfolding, then, is the shape and limits of a particular intra-active phenomena when it has moved temporarily from indeterminacy to fixed by intra-action with an apparatus.

Barad (2007) gives us an example of how this kind of enfolding can look whentheydiscusses Fernandes' account of workers on a factory floor. Barad describes how, on the factory floor as a part of the worker's intra-active phenomena, "class-gender-caste materialize through, and are enfolded into, one another. The nature of this enfolding

matters to the changing topology…" (p. 242). The apparatus of machine, factory floor, worker, boss, and observer all fix, for the moment, the intra-activity in a particular way, a particular enfolding, which in turn limits and creates the possibilities for the people being and becoming in that space.

To further illustrate this concept of enfolding, consider an example from my own work in schools. A student is walking down the school hallway, past the bathroom that is marked "gender neutral." A teacher directs the human traffic, and other students crowd the hall. From a doorway door, I watch. This apparatus of hallway, bathroom sign, teacher, students, and my own observation of the moment fixes a particular enfolding, one that materializes gender-class-status. This mattering is ongoing and iterative; enfolding leaves marks that can be traced.

The implications of enfolding have much to offer my analysis in this study. Gender, class, race, social position, and school community are enfolded into one another, produced with and through one another within the limits of a particular enfolding. As I traced the interplay between photos, architecture, and stories from my school site, I paid particular attention to how these things are enfolding to/with one another. I also had to consider how the local, physical site of my study was also enfolded with/to the data I gathered from online sources. By positing a material-discursive I am also contending that these two domains are not separate, fixed or discrete, but also work together in intra-active becoming. The materializations at my school site are always already enfolded with the discursive found online and in the news; these things work together in their becoming, in the shape they take within a particular enfolding of the intra-active phenomenon.

Performativity, human and posthuman

There is a crack, a crack, in everything. That's where the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen

I want to start with an important reminder: performativity, in this case, does not mean that the subject is knowingly performing, or putting on an act. For Butler, performativity was a social act in response to discursive constructions. This social act was repeated over and over, enacted iteratively, enabled and limited by what she called "a culturally restricted corporeal space" (1988, p. 526). Within this limitation, however, she also posited that there was room for variations, for slippage, for imperfect performances. These imperfect performances allowed room for change; if our bodily comportments are "not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal" (p. 528). In other words, these imperfect performances can actually reshape the limits of what is possible in that culturally restricted corporeal space, as the performance and the boundaries mutually co-constitute one another over time. Performativity isn't about acting, or taking on a role. Butler is drawing on phenomenological theorists like de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, in whose theories "the body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibility" (Butler, 1988, p. 520). The body, in this view, is both productive of and produced by discourse.

Barad drew on Butler's performativity to describe her concept of posthuman performativity, initially in the 2003 article "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" and then again in her 2007 book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. This concept of performativity is, itself, a sticking point,

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a provocation that got me thinking about how the phenomenology Butler drew on might act if it was to be read through and with the new materialism of Barad. For Barad, performativity was also a provocation: a challenge to the supremacy of language and representation in poststructuralist thought. Barad says, "performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve" (2003, p. 802). Performativity cracks open representation, allowing both the body and our bodily enactments constitutive power in our lived world, power that goes beyond our ability to name and describe. Furthermore, Barad posited a performativity that includes much more than the human.

How, then, does this posthuman performativity come to methods? Traditional interviews are acts of representation and reflection. The researcher crafts questions they hope will bring out narrations of the participants experiences. Often (though not always) this narration is then taken as truth, or at least a kind of truth. Bypassing that traditional interview was one way to resist falling back into centering the human as I conducted this study. Using participant writing and photos as data are fundamentally different from an interview. Asking participants to take photos and then discuss those photos makes the act of representation that is narration more overt, the crafting of the story being told by the participants more transparent in its construction. To be clear, this is not an attempt to replace the "truth" of a narrative with a different kind of "truth" to be found in photography. Instead, I'm not so much seeking the "truth" from my participants as I am hoping to investigate how the intra-active phenomenon of school bathroom shapes the

possibilities for students. What is most visible to them in this particular enfolding? What possible framings of this space are available to them in this intra-action?

Basing my work in a phenomenology of the material means that I know that the participants are constituted by the intra-active phenomenon they are part of, that I am investigating. They will write/say what is possible to say in that intra-active space – and these utterances are performative, always already bounded by the enfolding of the intra-action.

Summary

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 that manifest in school bathrooms.

CHAPTER IV: ON METHODOLOGY

The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that

assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind

and body, matter and discourse. Onto-epistem-ology—the study of practices of knowing

in being—is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are

needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter.

Barad, 2003, p. 829

Introduction

My research methods are, of necessity, closely linked to the underlying theoretical

framework. Using a phenomenology of the material as a framework for this study brings

with it several assumptions about the production of knowledge, its connections to being,

and the ethical obligations that exist between humans and non-human: what St. Pierre,

Jackson, and Mazzei call "ethico-onto-epistemology" (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei,

2016). If I am to take the assumptions of a phenomenology of the material seriously as a

researcher, then my methods, the ways I move and operate as a researcher, also change.

Rather than more traditional post-positivist research methods, which are researcher-

centered and focused on a clear idea of the problem to be solved, even before the

researcher encounters the research site, a phenomenology of the material acknowledges

and accounts for the notion that the researcher changes the intra-action, just by being

entangled with the phenomena to be studied.

Methods, then, become not just research procedures to be followed, but a way of

thinking about oneself as researcher, and the questions at hand, and the research site and

the people entangled there. As St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei posit, "method, then,

might emerge in the middle of problems that are not to be solved but problems that need a different response— attending to the conditions under which problems emerge" (St. Pierre et al., 2016, p. 105). My challenge with this project, then, is to design a research method that respects the ethical entanglement of researcher with research site, takes account of the shifting nature of agency and power within a phenomena, continually centers the non-human as the heart of the phenomena, and allows space for iterative, "emergent method" while still being carefully planned and executed.

Phenomenological inquiry has long been concerned with documenting experience through a particular way of looking at the world, sometimes called "bracketed" or "pre-reflective" in which the experience is considered *in its givenness* (Adams & Van Manen, 2017; Alcoff, 2000a). For a phenomenology of the material, the a priori is not dismissed or bracketed, but I must instead remind myself that there *is no* a priori – nothing exists independently, but is instead produced from and with a complex system of intra-active entanglement.

Thinking with Barad, I see the school bathrooms at my study site as part of an intra-active phenomenon. Entangled within this phenomenon are human and non-human agents, the material world, and discursive and socio-cultural structures. The discursive is not separate from the world – it is instead the "material-discursive apparatus" that "gives meaning to specific concepts to the exclusion of others" – that is, the discursive is always already material (Barad, 2010, p. 253). It is this material-discursive apparatus that opens and limits how we assign meaning to particular concepts. In this way we can think of "doing research" as a particular kind of *mattering*, where "mattering is about the (contingent and temporary) becoming-determinate (and becoming-indeterminate) of

matter and meaning, without fixity, without closure" (Bail & Craig, 2017). In this way, I will ask of this phenomena what school bathrooms are *doing* in their intra-actions with students, and see if in that moment of temporary determinacy I can open space for school bathrooms to come to matter and meaning differently.

Ethico-onto-epistemological assumptions of the study

Methods are themselves an intra-active phenomenon, as well as an apparatus (Barad 2003). As I begin to articulate the "doings" of this study, the concept of indeterminacy becomes important to understand. Although popular culture's ideas about quantum physics tend to describe this concept in terms of uncertainty (consider Schrodinger's poor cat, dead and/or alive), the more appropriate term here comes from the physicist Bohr: indeterminacy. Thinking with indeterminacy is what gives us the realization that when we reach into the phenomena it reaches back – the configuration we find is co-constituted by the apparatus we construct to observe it (Barad 2007).

Intra-active phenomena exist in a state of indeterminacy, what Barad (2012) calls "the infinite touch of nothingness (that) is threaded through all being/ becoming" (p. 215). Think of that moment in quantum diffraction, when light is both/neither a particle and a wave, existing/becoming in some indeterminate state, when both particle-ness and wave-ness are possible but neither has come to matter. That is indeterminacy, "the indeterminacy at the heart of being" (Barad, 2012, p. 219). Light is both/neither a wave and a particle until it is fixed by an apparatus, and the measurement/documentation of one part of the phenomenon also fixes everything else that is entangled within that phenomenon, including the apparatus.

When I base my methods in this theoretical framework, I consider how I'm designing my research apparatus, and all the entanglements within the phenomenon I will be attempting to somehow measure or fix. My act of measurement will temporarily fix the intra-active phenomenon, as well as all else that is entangled there. It's important to attend to entanglement, for "entanglement isn't just any relation, or a fancy way to say we are all connected. It is a specific kind of connection born of being part of a shared system governed by some rules, and an indeterminacy about exactly how those rules play out prior to being measured" (Rosiek & Fitch, 2019). Even the very act of deciding to center school bathrooms in this study is a kind of agential cut, that creates boundaries around the phenomenon and gives it added power. The presence of the discursive in/with material becoming is always a function of power; together, as the material-discursive, they define what concepts can and cannot be made visible in a particular enfolded space, as discuss in more detail in my final chapter.

Research Design

Keeping these key concepts in mind, I designed a research plan that incorporates multiple data sources and modes of analysis, all centered on the physical space of the school bathroom. Throughout the data collection phase, I also took field notes documenting the process and my own observations of data gathering and the field site. To analyze the data, I conducted a diffractive analysis of the data gathered through focus groups, participant observation, and photographs. It's important to keep in mind that by measuring the phenomenon multiple times, I did not attempt a kind of triangulation, or hope to determine some kind of "complete picture" of this particular intra-active phenomenon. Instead, I was gathering examples of intra-active experiences in/with these

material places, which I could then think with and through one another, without seeking some kind of single answer or pure truth.

Participants, Data Collection, and Data Management

Data collection for this study had two main streams: 1) the on-site school study and 2) the analysis of news articles and social media posts. My on-site study took place in a middle school in a mid-sized college town in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The school enrolls just over 400 students who speak 14 languages and are roughly 70% white. About one third of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The study took place through the classroom of an 8th grade English teacher, and all eighth graders had the opportunity to participate in at least one part of the study. In total, 131 students participated in at least one part of the study.

The online data collection took place in the virtual world of online space. This unbounded space has its own rules and rhythms that affected the collection of data. My main sources of data for my analysis of online accounts of school bathrooms were Google news alerts and Twitter posts.

Interlude: Access and Consumption

When I began looking at news reports from smaller news outlets, I rarely had to do much beyond clicking the link to get access. But in the last six to eight months of the two-year data collection process, I found myself more and more often having to complete a marketing survey to access the article/story I wanted to see. At first it was just one question: do you use this product? Have you even been on a Hawaiian vacation? What brand of chips do you prefer? The surveys became more frequent; they also got

longer. Soon I was answering questions about what kind of pet I had

(cats), and how old they were (4-6 years), and what features do I want in a

pet camera (none, I don't want a pet camera).

All these surveys are clearly looking to create a picture of me as a

consumer, so that these websites I visit can better target me, deliver ads

alongside my news articles that I will be unable to resist. I am not the only

one being marketed to in this way. If I think about these particular

algorithms as intra-active in the phenomenon that is being online, I

wonder how their presence in our particular enfolded intra-actions echo

beyond what is immediately apparent.

To gather publicly available data from internet sites, I set up a Google news alert

for the search terms "school bathroom" and "school bathroom policy." An analysis of

news alerts from

October 16th –

November 16th

of 2017, the first

month tracked in

this study, shows

that violence and

school policies

effecting

Table 1: Results of Google News Alert "School Bathroom" and "School Bathroom Policy from October 16 – November 16th, 2017
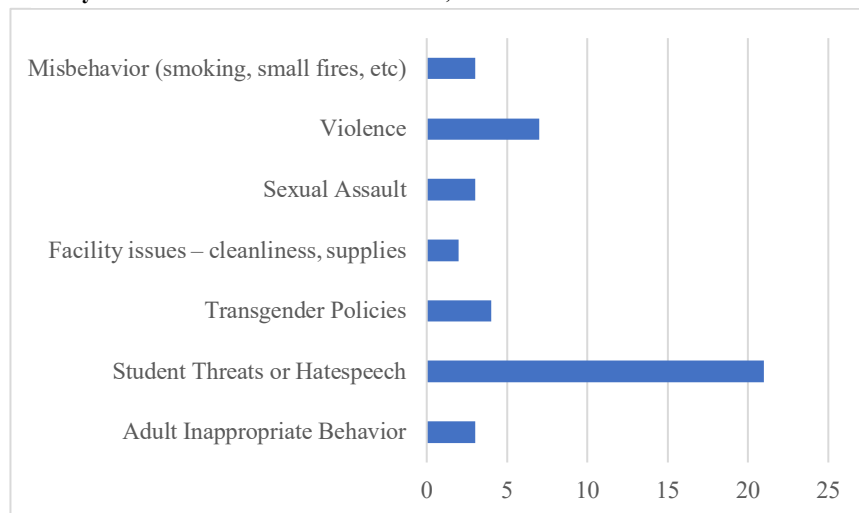
transgender students were the top reasons for school bathrooms being in the news. While

this graph is compelling, there several limitations on this type of data, most particularly that what incidents make the news can be a very subjective and contextual thing. The prevalence of student hate speech and threat incidents in the month considered, for example, seems to indicate that that is a considerable problem, but it's important to consider that the current political climate may be influencing whether or not these incidents are reported on as "news" rather than left to schools to handle as private disciplinary issues. For this study, I gathered stories from Google news alerts over a period of two years, from Oct 16th 2017 – Oct. 15th 2019. The nature of the internet makes this curation an imprecise and sometime fleeting act, as web sites are not static and often change. However, I was able to collect new reports on nearly five hundred newsworthy incidents that took place in and around public bathrooms.

The other source of data for the media portion of this study came from the social media platform Twitter. Using their public API (Application Programing Interface) I was able to capture all the tweets using the words "school bathrooms" during the week of Nov. 6th to Nov 15th, 2019. I obtained a database of more than 6000 tweets gathered by this one data grab, along with information about how many times the tweet had been interacted with, and links to the original formatting. In order to manage this level of data from both news sources and twitter, I used the software Nvivo; I didn't use the software to code or thematically analyze the data, but as a storage solution that allowed me to work with the data more easily.

My other main data stream was the data I gathered on-site at a middle school, working with an 8th grade class. I began on-site data collection with study participants by visiting the school and taking my own photos of the school bathrooms. The school is

organized into multiple interlocking hallways, set up around internal courtyards. There are three main bathroom hubs in the school, organized in boy/girl pairs. Additionally, there are two bathrooms that were originally reserved for faculty, and have been repurposed as gender-neutral bathrooms. I visited the school while no students were present and took several photos of each of the bathrooms.

The rest of my on-site data collection involved student participation. I was based in a small resource room, located just down the hall from the eighth-grade English classroom. I worked closely with the teacher to coordinate access to small groups of students for the participant photography and focus groups, and then I was able to work with the full class for the writing prompts. Every eighth-grade student in the school attends this class at some point in their day, and there are five classes taught each day, so over the course of a single day in the classroom I was able to work with every eighth grader in the school. Class sizes ranged from 26 to 34.

 For the participant photography, I was able to pull small groups of 4-5 students from the class. I asked those students to take supervised photographs of the bathrooms within their school. The students were instructed to take pictures that show points of interest or things of importance, but no people were allowed to be depicted in these photographs. The photographs were taken on cameras I provided, and anonymously turned in to me.

Because of the taboo nature of taking photos in bathrooms, I provided and supervised a time during class to take the photos when there were no other students present. Students used a digital camera that I provided, and returned the camera to me immediately after taking the pictures. All photos were anonymous – not even I knew who

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took which pictures. I walked with the students to the bathrooms, making sure the bathrooms were not occupied, and then let them enter one at a time to take photos.

The next data collection was a focus group of students working with a selection of the photographs taken by myself and their peers. Each group of 4-12 students was given printed copies of thirty of the photos of the bathrooms taken by the previous group of students, and asked to sort them into self-chosen categories. I asked them about the categories they chose, why they sorted the photos the way they did, and to reflect on the process. These focus groups took 45 minutes each, and were audio recorded. These focus groups took place at school, in an unused classroom.

The next activity took place in the cooperating classroom, with all students. Using a few of the photos taken by the students as prompt, I asked students to produce some writing for me.

The pictures in question are all from the student photos taken earlier in the study. Student instructions were as follows (read/facilitated by the researcher):

1. (indicating the photo, which is projected on the front board) Take a good look. Relax, get quiet, be mindful, and take a good look.

2. Take a few minutes to absorb the details in the photo. What's the main focal point? What's in the foreground or background? What about color, light, and small details?

Focus on how you feel emotionally (sad, happy, afraid) or physically (energetic, relaxed, tired). What do you think of or feel like doing? Maybe the photo dredges up a memory or reminds you of someone or something. The memory might not be complete, but that's okay.

3. Allow your senses to experience the photo and, at the same time, allow words to form.

A story may start. Maybe just a phrase or a few words come to mind. What would you tell a friend? Don't latch on to the words at a first; let them simmer a bit and get organized.

4. Start writing, whether words form in your mind or not. Start with anything even if it's just "This is a stupid bathroom." Write whatever comes to mind, and keep writing for the next three minutes.

5. Now that we've looked at four pictures, and you've written four things, I'd like you to choose one of the things you just wrote to expand on. You will have fifteen minutes to work on this. It can be a fictional story, a poem, a memoir, or even a documentary-style expose, or something else: whatever form of writing you like. I just ask that you focus on writing for fifteen minutes.

Artifacts were collected from the student work produced in these classes, but it was completely anonymous. At no time did I remove student work from the classroom; instead, after each class I asked that students email their writing to an email account I created for the project. These writings were downloaded with no identifying information, and then the account was deleted.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from online news and social media sites was initially overwhelming – I had literally thousands of news articles and tweets to examine. I used the software Nvivo to help me begin to organize and sort the data into clusters that were small enough to work with. However, it's important to remember that I was not

attempting to code for themes – my analysis in this project is based in Baradian diffraction, as I discussed earlier in the theoretical framework and will discuss further in chapters 5 and 6.

Data analysis of the school-site data began in the student focus groups, as the students sought to make sense of the photographs they were given. As students talked through the process of making meaning in the photos of the bathrooms, the topics that they discussed and the ways they interacted with each other were indicative of their own intra-active entanglements with bathroom space in their school. This pre-analysis was recorded and transcribed, and served in many ways as a basis for the researcher-driven analysis that followed.

I began analysis by reading the focus group transcripts for each group, five in total, quantum diffractively through one another, seeking points of entanglement and/or tensions, or places where the data provoked. Working with the transcripts of the focus groups, the collection of photographs, and the written stories, I conducted a quantum diffractive analysis, reading the transcripts, photographs, and student writing through and with one another, looking for tensions and provocations in the data. This diffractive reading allowed me to "consider how discourses and texts materialize and, at the same time, produce subjectivities and performative enactments" (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). This act, quantum diffractive analysis, is difficult to describe and difficult to enact. I had to resist the urge to fall back into traditional, humanist methods of analysis, and instead return and return to the data, looking for that provocation, that sticking point.

I hope that using a material phenomenologist lens allowed me to perform that balancing act described by feminist phenomenologists – to attend to material lived

experiences, while still articulating material/discursive structures. My analysis takes this central premise: the material-discursive is active within the intra-active phenomenon, both producing and produced by it. Conducting "a diffractive analysis functions to move me away from habitual normative readings that zero in on sameness toward the production of readings that disperse and disrupt thought as I plug multiple theories into data and read them through one another" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743). Reading these things together – photos, transcripts, writings – I am not looking for sameness or thematic groups, but instead looking for provocations, for moments when the sedimented traces of materialization and enfoldings can be traced on human and non-human bodies.

Material phenomenology allows me to consider the intra-action of material conditions of the school bathrooms and students, that *pluralistic real*, without reinscribing essentialism and thus reinforcing structures of inequity. As Barad 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" (2007, p. 244). This shift is important; this research does not "disclose" what was already there in the school bathrooms, but it opened space for me to think about the effects of students' ongoing intra-active entanglements with these spaces, and how those enfolding shape and limit what is possible. I hope to articulate how material-discursive forces come to *matter,* and recognize the effects of these forces on lived experiences.

As I thought my data with a phenomenology of the material, I encountered very different accounts of the bathrooms from different students. In keeping with diffractive

analysis, my goal was not to measure one against another in the search for a singular normalized account. Instead, I looked in my data for how "the materiality of the architecture in the photograph and the anticipated embodied materialities and emotional responses in the story become multiple performative agents" (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013, p. 680). The material/discursive is productive of bodies, as Barad reminds us, but it is worth again repeating here: "materialization is an iteratively intra-active process of mattering whereby phenomena (bodies) are sedimented out and actively re(con)figured through the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses" (Barad, 2007, p. 210). Bodies themselves are intra-active phenomena and are sedimented out by the shapes and enfoldings of those intra-actions, not just in the case of school bathrooms, but always and everywhere. We don't exist outside of phenomena. We are phenomena, intra-active and messy.

This focus on the production of bodies isn't a refocusing on the human, but rather an opening of our conception of what *matters*. According to Barad (2007), agency and power are not things that one has, but are enactments, are being/doings. These things don't act on us from some separate place, "there is only a reiterated acting that is power in its stabilizing and regimenting effects" (p. 234). The shift into a phenomenology of the material, then, is the realization that "the forces at work in the materialization of bodies are not only social, and the materialized bodies are not all human" (p. 235). When I analyze this data, I am also looking for the sedimented marks of power on bodies that are a result of enfolded becomings, both human and nonhuman.

Writing as data, writing as art, writing as method

Writing is an act of performativity, an expression of our entangled consciousness that allows for the "web of connections to be drawn on the zig-zagging paths of shared subjectivity and not merely on the tightrope of identity" (Braidotti, 2014, p. 168). Thinking about the act of writing with new materialisms allows for a conception of writing that acknowledges the entangledness of thinking with/through the act of writing itself, as we go about our inquiry.

While I ground my analysis in the phenomenology of the material that I previously articulated, I don't mean to abandon poststructuralism as a dead end, but to instead draw a thread of theory from the poststructuralist thinkers through my analysis. Foucault and Derrida "link language, subjectivity, social organization, and power" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 961), theorizing that writing has power, but the material effects of discourse are not centered as a part of the phenomena. Foucault spoke of language as self-referential; that is, language's meaning resides only in itself (1966), while Derrida's concepts of deconstruction and *différance* illustrate how meaning and language do not relate in a simple one-to-one reflection: meaning and language are always slippery, always elusive, always deferred (1967/74). The poststructuralists, with their focus on discourse and language, often are read as very separate from the material world. Much as Barad drew on Butler's idea of performativity in her conceptualization of posthuman performativity, I hope to draw on some post-structuralist theories, particularly around ideas of power and discourse, while thinking those theories through a phenomenology of the material to analyze my data.

As I discussed earlier when I defined the material/discursive, the binary between the discourse and material, much like that between nature and culture, obscures how patterns of language and discourse can act in/with/on the material world. In part, this was Barad's intervention whentheyfirst posited her notion posthuman performativity, to bring the world back into the act of knowing:

> Practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because "we" are of the world. Barad, 2003, p. 829

In this framework, data analysis is complicated by this being-in-the-world; there is no objective place from which to stand "back" and analyze data. Instead, my methods must come from the intertwined practices of knowing/being.

Writing is, in many ways, an act of knowing/being. Writing is not just putting one's thoughts to paper: as we write, we create something that is at once of ourselves but also of the world. Barad (2007) says in her introduction to the book Meeting the Universe Halfway, "this book and I have written each other," (p. iiv). This rethinking of our relationship with language becomes important to a phenomenology of the material.

Foucault claimed that language was not always dependent on the representation of something outside itself. Through this self-referential property, ideas and discourses could have, in some small way, a physical and historical reality, while still being rooted in the transcendental realm.[3] Thinking Foucault through Barad means radically rethinking the idea of language and knowledge as rooted in representation, and knowledge as being located in the realm of the transcendental. Barad would instead

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[3] To further consider the effects of Foucault's work on discourse and of materiality, and of inscription and the ontological status of the body, see Butler (1989) Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions.

remind us that there is no transcendental place outside of entanglement, and knowledge is instead a thing of ethico-onto-epistemology: knowledge has a physical and historical reality. This move of locating the epistemic in/with/of the ontological is central to Baradian thought. This move allows me to see discourses as having what Bennet (2010) calls "thing-power," that is, they have a physical and historical reality, and are a part of the ongoing intra-action of entanglement. As a part of that ongoing intra-action, there is always the possibility that a particular enfolding with allow discourses to, momentarily and as a part of intra-active becoming, be agentic.

It is a tricky matter to get data for this kind of research; the taboo nature of the topic can be difficult to overcome, in addition to the complex nature of the politics and power relations at play. Because of this difficulty, this project uses a creation-based approach to data collection, drawing data from participant writing and photographs in addition to more traditional field notes and focus groups. I use writing and photography as both mode of inquiry and data source. I see the writing and the act of photographing not as a documentation of thoughts already held by the participants, but as the "formulation and bringing into being of ideas that were not there before being written, a method of coming to know" (Elbaz-Luwisch, p. 414, 2002).

Resisting reflections: the *doing* of diffractive analysis

One of the ways diffractive analysis is often described is as a *doing* that goes beyond reflection (Haraway, 2010, 2016; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Taylor, 2016). With reflection, these theorists warn, one runs the risk of getting caught in the search for what something *is*: "much like the infinite play of images between two facing mirrors, the epistemological gets bounced back and forth, but nothing more is

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seen" (Barad, 2003, p. 803). Diffractive analysis instead seeks to open space to think differently, and moves from the epistemological question of what something *is* to ontological questions of what something is *being/doing/enacting*. Think again of the pond discussed in Chapter 2; diffractive analysis is not about describing what is reflected in that pond, but attending to the ripples, and quantum diffraction attends to how those ripples are formed through apparatuses enacting agential cuts and momentarily fixing the phenomenon. But as a researcher, the urge to reflect, to conflate, to generalize into knowledge of the epistemological kind is strong – it must be resisted, like gravity or the current of a river, lest one get sucked back into a more traditional humanist analysis and away from onto-epistemological knowing-in-being.

Instead, I return to the data not to reflect on what I found there, but to re-turn, "turning it over and over again—iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew" (Barad, 2014, p. 268). This return is literal; my initial data analysis involved reading and re-reading each bit of data, first alone and then together and through one another, looking for those ripples and currents, provocations, and places that stick.

Role of the Entangled Researcher

When I study a phenomenon, like the conditions and effects of school bathrooms, 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. As Barad says, "ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are a part, including new configurations, new subjectivies, new possibilities—even the smallest cuts matter" (2007, p. 384). In this way, phenomenology of the material has much on common with participatory action research, feminist methodology, and other traditions who do not do research *on* people or school sites, but *with*.

This is the apparatus of Barad – the measuring tool that determines the previously indeterminate. Thinking with indeterminacy gives me the realization that when I "reach into the phenomena" it reaches back – the configuration I find is determined by the apparatus I construct to observe it. Intra-active phenomena exist in a state of indeterminacy. My measurement fixes the phenomenon for a moment, and my measurement/documentation of one part of the phenomenon also fixes other parts, rippling in ways I cannot predict.

Perhaps most importantly, my act of measurement also entangles me in the phenomenon I study. When thinking with Barad, designing the apparatus, determining the ways I will measure the phenomenon of school bathrooms, is an act of intra-active entanglement. Barad reminds us of this by focusing on the importance of the act of measuring and the way that act determines what was previous indeterminate: "the agential cut enacts a local resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy" (Barad, p. 141, 2011).

So what does it mean to "resolve the indeterminacy?" Indeterminacy is a specific term in this case, referring to quantum indeterminacy. For non-physicists, the term

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uncertainty might be more familiar – and bring to mind cats in boxes. The most famous quantum physics thought experiment is Schrödinger's cat. In this somewhat morbid scenario, a cat is placed in a box with a bit of radioactive material that could potentially kill it, and the box is closed. That closed box is an intra-active phenomenon, and the shape of the enfolding allows for the cat to be both dead and alive – indeed, the cat is neither alive nor dead until an agential cut is enacted by opening the box and observing. Until the phenomenon is fixed, cut together/apart by the apparatus that is opening the box and observing, the dead/alive cat is indeterminate, which is often described as a state of uncertainty.

It's important here to remember that "indeterminacy" in physics doesn't mean that we don't know the "truth" because we haven't "discovered" it yet; indeterminacy means the truth isn't unknown, but rather that it's indefinite, undetermined, uncertain. So, a researcher uses an apparatus to measure the phenomenon she is studying. This measurement enacts an agential cut, which both determines the measurement and entangles the researcher in the phenomenon.

Ultimately, when we measure a phenomenon, we are a part of what we find. We do not cause what we find, because traditional notions of cause and effect don't make sense here. But we are a part of this particular instance of worlding, of becoming-with. These "intra-active entanglements make ethical relationality a touchstone, a key to the process of 'worlding' which involves us all, humans and non-human agencies together" (Taylor, 2013).

It makes no sense, in this theoretical framework, to speak of finding causes or a singular truth. Instead, I am seeking to better understand the intra-active phenomenon

with which I become entangled. Knowing that the things I seek to measure are indeterminate does not mean that I could find anything: toilets will not be made of candy and unicorns won't cavort in the stalls. By entangling myself I become part of this shared system, and while there isn't a singular truth I'm looking to discover, this system has some rules. Indeterminacy means those rules could play out in a number of ways (possibilities), but the rules are still there, and it is those rules I am hoping to get the shape of, to sketch the outlines of what is possible within those rules. This is phenomenological intentionality – the adaptation of the phenomenological stance – for a phenomenology of the material.

In the case of this study, this entanglement meant I needed to pay particular attention to my study activities on-site with the eighth-grade students. Understanding that each step of my investigation would enact agential cuts, I carefully considered all of the activities I conducted with the students. In the end, this meant that I rejected the traditional interview in favor of activities that were more collaborative and involved participant interpretation and analysis. The choice to use participant photos, to involve the students in discussion of the photos, and to then use those photos as their writing prompts was based in an acknowledgement that the act of meaning-making my subjects do is always going to be performative, in the sense of Butler's performativity and Barad's posthuman performativity.

Assumptions and Algorithms

One of the research questions I ask in chapter 1 reads "What is the current sociocultural context of the school bathroom?" When I asked that question, I underestimated the huge quantities of data I would gather from my two chosen measuring

apparatuses. While I initially intended a discussion of new reports to be a part of my literature review, as I began to intra-act with the data I was gathering I realized this was not just a literature review. These news reports and tweets were, in themselves, a kind of *mattering*, an important and active part of the material/discursive phenomenon I am studying. I have written previously about the material/discursive and the importance of collapsing this dichotomy, but I hadn't quite accomplished that in my study design. These *virtual matterings* are already entangled with the data I gathered from my study site, and I will analyze them together.

In October of 2017, I asked Google to send to my email inbox any news that included the terms "school bathroom" and "school bathroom policy." Every day, if there was any news meeting these criteria, the algorithms would gather them into an email and deliver them to my inbox, once a day. Nearly every day, for the next 730 days, I had an email from the algorithm delivered to my inbox. In October of 2019, I asked another algorithm to gather, from the social media platform Twitter, a weeks' worth of tweets that contained the phrase "school bathroom." The process took about two hours, and returned just over 6000 tweets.

Interlude: Gatherings

When I first set up the Google news alert that would bring me so much data, I didn't fully realize how this apparatus I was creating would change me. Thinking with Barad, I should have known better. All diffractive analysis, and Barad's quantum diffraction in particular, is a way to move us from "identifying bodies as separate entities with distinct borders" to seeing bodies, human and non-human, as co-constituting

material enactments (Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 271). Even (or maybe especially) researchers are subject to the intra-actions of the entangled phenomena we are a part of.

An apparatus, as described by Barad, is at once more-and-less than a simple measuring device. Some apparatuses are the result of human action (like my setting up the Google news alerts) and others are enacted by non-human agents. In fact, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, all become what Barad (2014) calls "normalizing apparatuses of power" (p. 413). Dixon-Roman (2016), in his discussion of algorithms, lists some of the specific non-human agents that are apparatuses of knowledge production, the things that matter to how we work with data: places (labs, offices, fields sites, server farms), material things (pens, paper, computers), infrastructures (the power grid I've plugged my computer into, the network that holds the reference managing software I use), even systems of thought (ideologies, rationalities, theoretical frameworks). So, even as I was setting into motion the particular apparatus of my study, I was also intra-acting and being produced by other apparatuses, as part of my ongoing-becoming. I keep slipping into the comfortable, Cartesian notion that I can somehow enact things from outside of this study, despite all the evidence and my own arguments to the contrary. This moment, setting up this algorithm, was/is/has-become such a delightful/distressing entanglement, and I am forever changed. Which I should have known. Apparatuses, like turtles, go all the way down.

Among all this talk of mattering and intra-active phenomena, it's important to take a moment to consider how the algorithm I set in motion co-constituted both myself (researcher) and the data in this study. Recently, some scholars have been re-turning to the idea of algorithms, and their increasing presence and importance in our lives. Dixon-Roman (2016) argues that algorithms are themselves posthumanly performative. The predictive capacities of algorithms are produced through their intra-active entanglements with other systems of meaning, and they go on to produce and re-produce those systems of meaning in other intra-actions. The particular algorithms I intra-acted with to curate this data shaped how I think about and relate to the concept of school bathroom, because that is what algorithms do: "through their immanent forms of soft thought and materialized performative acts of 'prediction,' they enact, form, shape, and produce both human and more-than-human bodies" (Dixon-Roman, 2016, p. 487). This production can be seen not just in my own relationship with the algorithm and the data it brought me. The students in my empirical study were intra-acting with the same algorithms I was via their own use of Google and Twitter, and the marks of this material intra-action were apparent in a variety of ways I will discuss in the next chapters.

For me, setting up the algorithm to deliver to my inbox news about school bathrooms enacted an agential cut, the momentary fixing of what would otherwise be indeterminate in an intra-active phenomenon (Barad, 2003). The "cutting together-apart" of an agential cut is something Barad inevitably reminds us is *one action* – the apparatus acts to momentarily fix the phenomenon, together-apart in another re-turn, another enfolding of mattering. And as I've said before, these enfolding leave marks as they reconfigure intra-actions. The agential cut opens/ closes space, re-turning the boundaries

and shapes of the phenomena, which in turn limit/expand the kind of performativity that can be enacted in that space. Think again of that cloth napkin: the underlying matter doesn't change, but with each enfolding there are different possible shapes. Using these algorithms enacted an agential cut that enfolded not just my data but also me as part of the intra-active phenomenon.

I want to be clear that I make no claim that this data was collected with any kind of objectivity, or that gathering data via algorithm is a somehow a neutral act. Instead, it is important to always be aware that "the data and code of algorithmic acts inherit the sociopolitical forces of racializing assemblages from the iterability of millions upon millions of algorithmic intra-actions with the sociogenics of 'difference.'" (Dixon-Román, 2012, p. 488). The stories and incidents I discuss in this section are marked by their own enfoldings, and are subject to the apparatuses at work in the phenomenon of school bathrooms. They are iterations of the material-discursive.

Summary

For this study, I attempted to design methods that seek to understand the phenomenon of student bathroom experience in this particular place at this particular time – and place those results in the larger context of the socio-historical world seen through social media and news reports. This initial conception served as a stumbling block in many ways, as I had to constantly correct for the conception of the discursive (online) data as part of a separate phenomenon from the data collected at the school with students. While I feel I have overcome this division in my analysis, it is a potent reminder of the difficulty of working within posthuman and new materialism theory; one much always resist the pull of familiar, humanist thinking.

In conducting this study, I hoped to center public school bathrooms and investigate how these spaces shape and are shaped by the people who learn and teach there. School bathrooms are understudied, as they are locations of taboo and silence; but simultaneously they are provocative spaces, where the material and the discursive are felt in the bodies of students and teachers. In order to create better relationships with their bathroom spaces, those who work and learn in schools need to understand how those relationships are influenced by the interplay of the historical and cultural context, the current discourses the center school bathrooms as sites of controversy, and the material conditions of the space itself. This study was a way to begin to explore that dynamic, by centering the school bathroom as the heart of the experience to be studied. In doing so, I was able to develop both practical policy recommendations for how schools can begin to create better relationships with their bathrooms, and to begin to map lines of inquiry for further study in that most public of private spaces: the school bathroom.

CHAPTER V: THE WRITING ON THE WALLS

Well sung of Yore, a Bard of Wit
That some Folks read, but all Folks shit
But now the Case is alter'd quite
Since all who come to Boghouse write
(Boghouse was Brittish slag for outhouse)
Thrumbo (1731)

I begin my data analysis by spending time with the writing on the bathroom walls, in particular with the analysis of some of the data I gathered from analyzing 2 years of news reports that mention school bathrooms, and a week of Twitter posts that include the words "school" and "bathroom." Writing on bathrooms walls is a common cultural practice, as can be seen by the long history of bathroom-wall writing, including the ditty that begins this chapter. In these quiet places of retreat, we leave funny notes, little drawings, and (sometimes) clever sayings. These missives are literal marks left on place, sedimentation of years and decades, sometimes easily covered by a coat of paint, other times cut deep into surfaces—kilroy was here, quiet reflections, heart-shaped missives, scratched obscenities, dirty limericks.

In this case, the writing/data I am analyzing is that of threats of violence, written on school bathroom walls and then reported in the local news or sent via Twitter messages. In the brief time I was present in a middle school for this research, there were no new threats of violence on the walls. Even so, these threats were mentioned in focus groups, often as an aside comment, a "remember that time when," a kind of haunting. The data from my Google new alerts and Twitter posts, on the other hand, were filled with stories of violent threats on bathroom walls, and the pairing of these two sets of data

provides an interesting contrast: the event as seen in formal new reports, juxtaposed with the whispers and pleas and proclamations found on social media.

Writing in the intra-active phenomenon

Writing has always inhabited a unique place in human constructions. It is utilitarian: the jotted notes on scrap paper that accompany us to the grocery store, the hastily written note left on a kitchen counter. Writing is also an act of creation, extending even to the creation of self. Theorist Rosi Braidotti (2014) describes writing as "an intransitive activity, a variation on breathing, an end in itself" (p. 163). Writing on bathrooms walls is also collaborative; graffiti is written

Figure 5 – An image of a smiling face with a penis for a nose, taken by a student photographer

only to be altered, be given additional parts, or to have something written in response. The face in figure X, for example, could have been the work of one or multiple people; one person carves the penis, and other comes along and whimsically adds smile and eyelashes. These collaborations take place behind literal closed doors, without consultation or directives passed between writers, and they are observed the same way: by a person who is alone but also not alone, a person who is in the process of becoming-with the bathroom space.

We must be careful when we think about this agential cut, to avoid falling back into ways of thinking that center the human. The humanist argument would focus on the

person in the bathroom, claim that the person's observation of the writing on the wall is the apparatus that enacts the cut. After all, this kind of thinking fits neatly in the cause/effect model that is such a familiar and comforting thought pattern. But what if, thinking with Bennet's "lively matter" (2010) and Barad's conceptions of quantum field theory (2003, 2007, 2017, 2019), we instead decenter the human, disengage from our view of time, and see the writing, the material entanglement of the graffiti in the intra-active moment, as enacting the agential cut on/with, co-constituting, the human? What new ways of thinking about this intra-active phenomenon becomes possible with that shift in our thinking?

Barad considers this type of co-constitution between theory and material in her conception of nuclear theory and nuclear bombs, writing "quantum physics and the atom bomb are directly and profoundly entangled: the theory and the bomb inhabit and help constitute each other" (Barad, 2019, p. 528). Barad draws from Derrida, even as she challenges his claims about the limits of discourse, as she considers how the mathematical equations that allow for the nuclear bomb always-already contain the destruction, the colonialism, the injustice that would come of the bomb, its testing, and its use. This view has important implications for the conception of the "self," as Barad explains:

> What is being called into question here is the very nature of the "self"; all "selves" are not themselves but rather the iterative intra-activity of all matter of time-beings. The self is dispersed/diffracted through being and time. In an undoing of the inside/outside distinction, it is undecidable

whether there is an implosion of otherness with-in or a

dispersion/explosion of self throughout spacetimemattering. (2019)

I remind us all of this radically different conception of self before Iinvite you into this

data analysis, because it is all too easy to fall back into comfortable, well-worn thinking

habits like linear cause and effect, and the separation of nature and culture, and the

conception of self as separate and contained. In the analysis that follows, I ask you to

suspend these ideas and instead consider an analysis that centers on a phenomenology of

the material, and what possibilities for thinking differently might be found there.

Thinking Barad and this chapter's data together, I consider the graffitied threat of

violence and the human reaction to feeling threatened as *directly and profoundly*

entangled: that is, they both *inhabit* and *help constitute* one another, in a relationship that

does not necessarily follow the Newtonian notion of simple cause and effect. Writing, in

this conception, is an act of creation not only of words but of self and place. Writing is

not a simple expression of our bounded, individual selves, but is instead a mechanism for

co-construction of and by our contextual, situated, and relational self. However, the

constitutive powers of writing don't stop with the self; writing also co-constitutes the

world in all its posthuman performativity. As I discussed in the methodology section,

writing can be both data and method of analysis, as the focus shifts from asking *what*

does it all mean to *what is it all doing* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Writing on the

bathroom wall is both an expression/production of self and world, and these writings

have productive power, shaping both experience and discourse.

The material(s) matter in writing. It makes a difference that this act of writing is

conducted in the public/private space, on a wall. Thinking with new materialisms, it's

important to remember that matter is an active player in any creative act, that "materials have agency, they change ideas in certain ways, and they 'diffract' human agency in unexpected ways" (Hickey-Moody, 2018, p. 3). It matters that these threats are written on bathroom walls, as opposed to pieces of paper or on computer screens. The bathroom wall is historical and contextual, produced by the same enfolded shape of intra-action as the person in the stall. The complex history of bathrooms, the discourses of gendered safety, of public/private spaces, all are present. This conception of matter is important, for "even the smallest bits of matter are haunted by, indeed, constituted by, the indeterminate wanderings of an infinity of possible time-beings" (Barad 2019, p. 543). These haunting are present in-on-with the bathroom walls, and the phenomenon that includes writing on this material is also haunted. Like all phenomenon, they contain their own undoing, their possibilities for un/doing are always-already contained within the phenomenon. Considering the phenomenon in question here is centered on violence and threat, it is important to remember that, according to Barad and quantum field theory, the very forces that make a thing possible also contain hauntings of destruction; the "deconstructive element lives inside the forces of violence in their im/possible un/doing" (Barad 2019, p. 543).

As I consider these particular instances of writing-on-wall, pulling data from social media and from news accounts of incidents in school bathrooms, I am looking for marks of enfolding, the patterns of power and discourse that shaped the writing, the self, the world, the discourse, and the writing in an unending iterative act of becoming. The writing on the bathroom wall is active and lively, and shapes the self and world of

students and schools: it is a place of material-discursive becoming, a concept I will discuss further in the conclusion chapter.

In the next section of this chapter I will discuss markings on bathroom walls and what they are *doing* in their intra-actions with humans through a specific type of writing: the threat of violence. In this analysis of writing on the bathroom walls, I trace the lines of meaning/making/doing through the bathroom space, from the writing, through the virtual spaces of local news broadcasts and social media posts, to the material/discursive, in the body, and back to the writing on the wall. Although this movement is important, it's equally important to not think of this as a linear process, with simple cause/effect sequences of action. Instead, think of these movements as intra-active enfoldings, the results of agential cuts within the intra-action that cut them "together/apart (one move)" (Barad 2014, p. 168). These cuts may be enacted by the human but they also are likely to have been enacted elsewhere – the potential for agency is distributed across the phenomenon, and in each particular enfolding there is always the potential for non-human agents.

Barad tells us that, "what the world calls out for is an embodied practice of tracing the entanglements of violent histories" (Barad 2019, p. 539), and that this tracing can be done through examining the entanglements within the intra-action. The analysis that follows is such a tracing.

Interlude: the tweet

I did another pull from Twitter this morning, now that I think I understand how they work. This one is the official one I will use for data analysis for this project. I searched "school bathroom" and got 6000+ tweets, just

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from the past week. I loaded them into my analysis software to isolate the retweets into a single place, and started playing around with nodes and keywords and word clouds and sentiment analysis, looking for things that catch me and pull me in a direction, for sticky juxtapositions that make the way I see the world shift. Then I stop, because this is all coding and relies on traditional representation, and isn't very useful for me, although it's somehow comforting.

Then I notice that one of the tweets says this: "Call 911, or if your school has a cop ask to go to the bathroom and go tell the cop!!" The time stamp is about 30 minutes ago.

I feel my stomach drop, a wave of nausea and fear starting from my sternum and oozing down in a slow-motion eternal second. My limbs tingle and my head comes up, like I think I can somehow sniff the air, scan the horizon, and stop this thing I am now imagining. Adrenaline, buzzing buzzing through me.

Wednesday I came out of a class I was teaching to the news of another school shooting in California. Thursday a young man was sentenced to life in prison, for a shooting he committed when he was 14. He killed a 6-year-old. I've been avoiding it all, my eyes skipping past (but still taking

in) the headlines, hoping to push through the week to weekend, close the door and shutters of my home with my family inside and huddle together against the cold. Today is Friday.

I go back to Twitter and find that tweet, and see who they were replying to. It is picture of a picture on another phone – a first person view of a hand holding a gun, pointed at a school cafeteria. The words above the picture say:

> *i'm fuckin scared*
>
> *as real as it looks, i hope it's fake* 😳

I follow the action for the next hour, all through the twitter "eyes" of a single student. Their cover photo and avatar are bright, neon green and playful, and seem to be so alive.

The school goes into lockdown as I watch, jumping back and forth from tweet to tweet sent by the students at the school. Administration announces they are investigating the picture, and not to panic. The original tweeter takes a short video of their classroom – a group of students looking out their second-floor classroom window, peering

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through the vertical blinds, looking down on police and emergency

vehicles in the school's fire lane.

Suddenly word comes (via another tweet): it's fake – someone

photoshopped the hand with the gun into the picture of their school

cafeteria, and sent it to several students.

I think about fake images, the deep-fakes I see warnings about on the

news and this (admittedly shallow) fake that has disrupted my morning. I

think about the political turmoil in our country, the endless gun debates. I

think about the schools paying for "active shooter drill" trainings that

traumatize students and teachers.

And for a moment I think about a student deciding to photoshop a gun

into an image of their school cafeteria, and then share that image. I think

about how children (people) find capacity and possibilities of action, and
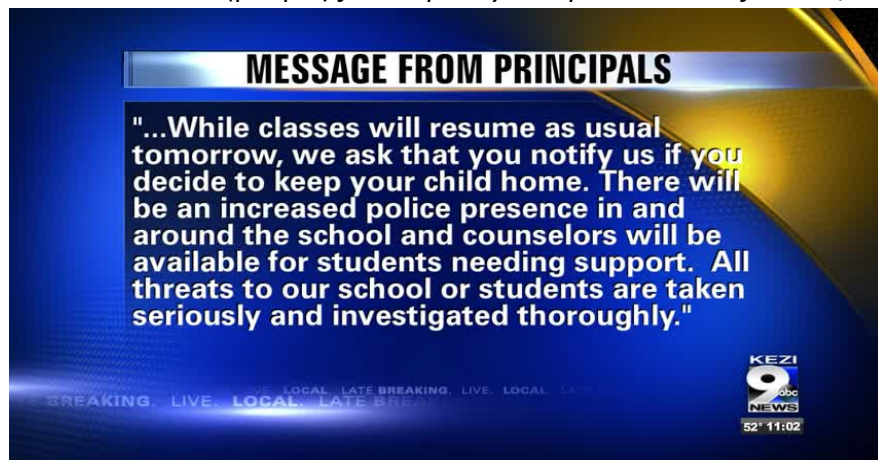

Figure 6: News coverage of a school threat at the researchers' neighborhood school

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how the discourses they intra-act with enfold/limit/shape those actions in

particular, heartbreaking ways.

I briefly wonder if I will see this in my news feed alerts the next morning

when Google's algorithm delivers me the day's news that includes my key

term, school bathroom. And then I realize this didn't take a place in a

school bathroom, and doesn't inform my study. Time to get back to work.

Analytic Questions

When I began thinking with the writing on bathroom walls I gathered from news

reports and social media, I considered what kind of analytic questions I could ask of the

writing on the wall, if I thought this data with a phenomenology of the material (Jackson

& Mazzei, 2012). I began my analysis thinking with a few broad questions: How is this

writing produced as part of the intra-active phenomenon? How are the marks of this

particular enfolding made visible? What does this intra-action open space for in the

experiences of students and schools?

These questions are not static, and have shifted and changes as a result of my own

entanglement with this data. The agential cut that Barad describes in the act of

measurement momentarily fixes the intra-action, and my questions are a part of that

fixing. But my sustained engagement with this data extends beyond a single moment of

measurement; I am instead orienting my researcher self ontoempistemologically to "seek

what is simultaneously materially and discursively produced" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012,

p. 120). In my thinking with this data, I attempt to understand how the material

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conditions of writing on bathroom walls intra-act with the discursive constructions of schools, bathrooms, and violence, and what is being produced by that intra-action.

Threats on the Walls and in the News

Figure 7: Threats on a bathroom wall that triggered a school lockdown, as reported in a local news report.

Reading a threat produces a certain feeling in the body. Even secondhand via the local news or social media feed, looking at photos of threats of violence on bathroom walls makes my stomach turn over, my limbs tingle. They are more powerful first-hand. A scrawled massage on a bathroom wall provokes. Students who see a threat often capture it on their phones, and send the image splashing in exponentially growing waves through the virtual, across schools and communities. Analyzing data from two years of new reports from small, local news outlets in the United States and from a week of twitter posts, I found that threats written on walls are productive in the intra-action in interesting ways. As threats on school bathroom walls have become part of common discourse about schools and school violence, they have also become always-already a part of every school bathroom in America, a part of the material/discursive intra-actions in this space. The

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discourse of dangerous threats of violence has become part of the intra-action, and in doing so has changed the enfolding of the particular phenomenon that is school bathrooms. With this new enfolding come new possibilities, not always positive.

Often, the person who actually writes the message is eclipsed by the presence of the threat itself; a small gesture or impulsive act (made material on the wall) becomes larger and somehow more powerful than the simple material thing itself and its erstwhile creator in its entangled intra-activeness. The action of writing enacts an agential cut, rearranging the phenomenon (for a moment) in a new way. The writing itself then also acts on those who see it, as part of the intra-active phenomenon producing what is possible in that particular enfolding. Schools go on lockdown, parents arrive, the police are called, children are arrested. Threatening messages on school bathroom walls seem to take on a life of their own. In this section, I will discuss threats written on bathroom walls, as reported by the local news, and how those threats intra-act within the phenomenon with schools and discourses of un/safety to produce both a public perception of schools as unsafe and the increased policing of children's bodies.

Threatening messages are rarely stationary – that is, they do not sit still, but they move and spread. They often repeat, whether by an act from the same person or by a copycat, being cleaned up or painted over in this bathroom only to pop up in another. It is common for threats to be repeated in the same school over a period of days or weeks, or in nearby schools. In one case, a high school dealt with written threats in the bathrooms four separate times in one week, as reported here by their local news:

> The first message, sent Monday, details a message saying "I'm
> shooting up the school, I'm not joking. I have a gun in my lock

(sic)." That message was discovered on Monday, and Dimond

High and APD (Anchorage Police Department) found it not to be a

credible threat.

Thursday, a note to parents said that similar messages were

discovered in other bathrooms on Tuesday and Thursday.

Friday morning, another message was discovered, which prompted

the increased response from Anchorage Police, and holding

students in their first-hour class longer than usual.

(Polk & Horazdovsky, 2018)

The student or students involved with writing this particular threat were never identified,

but I found the repetition of threats here to be common, and to lead to heavier

consequences for students at the school – in this case a lockdown that disrupted the entire

school for a morning.

These kind of outsized consequences, lockdowns and suspensions and police

responses, are not unusual in response to threats written on bathroom walls, particularly

in their repetition. In another school in a different part of the country, students were not

allowed to wear backpacks to school for weeks after "a student scratched graffiti on a

bathroom stall door," an act that the news report says was the latest in a series of threats

made at the school (Glynn, 2018). Lacking backpacks means students could bring only

what they could carry in their arms, and caused considerable changes to the regular

patterns of the school day for students and teachers, certainly impacting learning.

Bathroom threats rarely occur in isolation, and the repetitions have echoes in the material

worlds of students and schools. The threats repeat within and between schools, and this

repetition enacts particular enfoldings, makes certain things im/possible, for schools,

teachers, and students.

Sometimes this lively repetition isn't just local, but rather is a national enactment,

as a particularly powerful event/idea enters the discourse. One of the most potent

examples of this I saw during my study was the aftermath of the Parkland, FL shooting.

The shooting at Parkland High School took place on Feb. 14th,
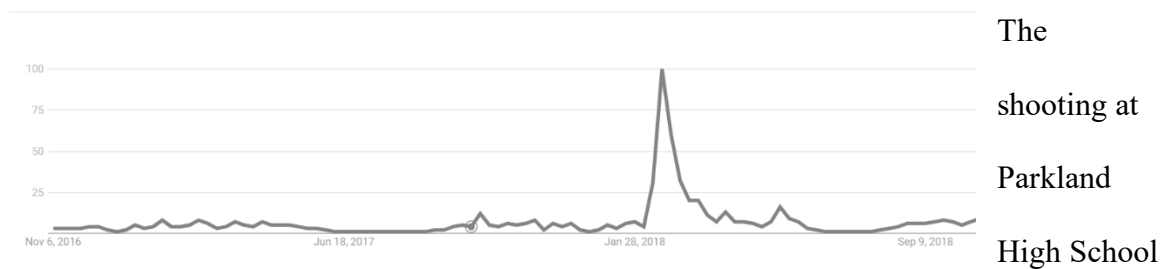
Table 2: data from Google Trends showing search frequency for the term "school threat" during the two-year data collection period for this study.

2018, and was a news sensation. According to Google Trends, searches for the term

"school threat" spiked dramatically the week of Feb 18th to 24th, reaching the highest

level of interest in the term since Google Trends began keeping this kind of data (see

figure x). My algorithm delivered news story after news story of threats and panic in

schools across the country, corresponding with the spike in search terms.

On February 18th, 2018, the New York Times ran a story called "Copycat Threats

and Jittery Nerves Force School Shutdowns Across the U.S." which detailed school

closings, lockdowns, and other forms of heightened surveillance at schools around the

country, as well as incidences of increased drills and preparations for active shooter

situations. In one school district in Kentucky, five different students were arrested in a

single week for making threats, and charged with crimes ranging from disorderly conduct to terroristic threatening (WCPO, 2018). While not all of these threats were made in school bathrooms, most were. The school bathroom wall is often the place these threats are written and discovered. The bathroom is implicated in the intra-activity of school threats of violence, an inseparable part of the phenomenon.

Figure 8 -racist language as part of threat on a bathroom wall

Another disturbing common thread in these bathroom threats is the inclusion of white supremacist rhetoric. Although I stopped collecting this data before the mass demonstration of the Black Lives Matter movement after the police killing of George Floyd, the discourse of white supremacy seems to have been always/already part of this enfolding. In the examples I collected, just over one third included some kind of racist imagery or language. For example, one news report details writing on a bathroom stall, saying "'school shootings are fun,' and 'don't come to school 11/19' were part of the threats. The N-word is repeated, as well as 'blacks will die'" (Macannaly, 2018). In another incident, a student wrote the term "white lives matter" as well as a racial slur across a bathroom mirror (Held, 2017).

At this point in the analysis, it's very tempting to begin to reach for the "logical" explanations of traditional humanist analysis that centers human agents. After all, I could discuss the election of 2016, and the racist rhetoric that we have seen from the executive branch since then, and decide to assign a cause/effect relationship to that rhetoric and

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these bathroom walls. I could speculate about how the children writing these threats must hear this kind of language at home, from their parents, and assign a causal relationship there. This humanist analysis is comforting in a way, as it pulls me out of the unpleasantness of children writing racially targeted threats, and lets me categorize and explain away the phenomenon. But I'm carefully, deliberately resisting that pull to see if considering these same data points through a phenomenology of the material, where the focus isn't on human agency, can help me think this data in a different way. I instead renew my focus on my analytic questions, as they have emerged through thinking this data with Barad's theories of intra-action, of enfolding, of production of agency within phenomenon.

At the onset of this analysis I asked, "How is this writing produced as part of the intra-active phenomenon?" Emerging in that analysis is a complimentary question: What is this writing producing? I feel the difficulty in avoiding cause/effect thinking very strongly here, as there is something deeply provoking about the intra-action of discourses of white supremacy and school violence, especial when juxtaposed with the material conditions of children. I am not just observing this phenomenon, I am also entangled not just by my research but also by my own ontoepistemological position as mother, as teacher. My emerging analytic question asks how these things, the material of the school bathroom graffiti and the discursive concepts of fear of violence and white supremacy, are being simultaneously produced by this intra-action.

Racially targeted threats on bathroom walls also show the lively repetition I

discussed in the previous section on violent threats. One news report described a wave of

anti-Muslimism threats found in bathrooms in the San

Francisco area in the week following a national student march protesting gun violence,

which took place on March 14th, 2018. In a single week, schools in "Berkeley, Lafayette,

Milpitas, San Leandro, Morgan Hill, San Jose and Union City" all reported racist threats,

many of which were written in the school bathrooms (Davis, 2018). Another news report

from two years prior details graffiti found in an Illinois school that said "F*** the arabs"

and "kill all the arabs" (Hosley, 2016). Other threats are less specific, and include

incidents of graffiti that includes hate symbols like swastikas (Crompton, 2017; Hall,

2017; Stein, 2018; Turtinten, 2018). Again, many of these reports include that the racist

graffiti in the school bathrooms were part of a pattern of racist incidents that occurred

over time.

While it is tempting to consider these threats all as the work of juvenile delinquent

racists, I am instead examining more entanglements within the phenomenon, as I can

identify them. The discourse of news reports of violence at schools, especially racially-

motivated violence, seems to be at work in this phenomenon, implicated in that lively

repetition seen in so many of these incidents. One argument for this kind of analysis can

be found in an examination of the children who write these threats. Traditional humanist

notions of agency place the threat-writing child at the center of the phenomenon, and thus

focus prevention efforts on the individual level: punishment and rewards, focused on

changing individual behavior. By focusing my analysis on the material-discursive intra-

action I hope to open space to think differently.

When the author of these threats can be identified, they are often cooperative. Sometimes they even seem eager to help, although they can face disproportional punishments. One teenage boy who was accused of writing threats based on surveillance camera data "admitted to writing both threats and provided the pen that he used" (Port Charlotte, 2018). Furthermore, the children who write these threats almost never follow through with any actual violence. David Finkelhor, the
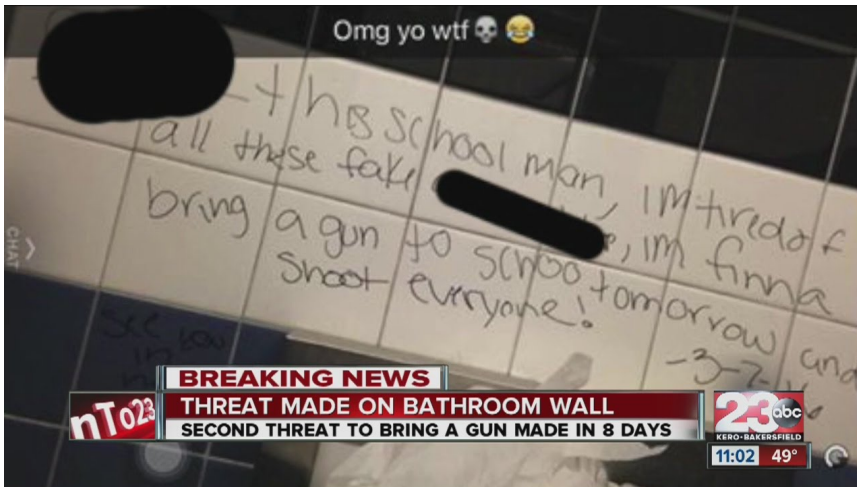
Figure 10: News report of threat on bathroom wall

Director of the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, was quoted in a newspaper article about threats of school violence as saying, "Even if there are a few dozen of these cases that we can study, that's not really enough to fully characterize the nature of the more serious (threats) from the less serious ones. Lots of kids make threats, have fantasies. But the number who actually act on it are quite small" (Duffort, 2018). Actual data on the ratio of threats to actual acts of school violence are not available – these kinds of threats are not reported to any kind of central authority that could collect concrete data, as I discussed in the literature review. But the threats themselves are enough to add to the perceived validity and seriousness of the danger of the threat of violence at school, and thus leads to stronger punishment for the children who write these threats.

This material/discursive enactment of threat and fear is intra-active with schools, students, and parents. One thing I noticed again and again in these reports of threats written on bathroom walls was the involvement of police and criminal charges for the students, even when they actually did not commit any violence – the threat written on the bathroom wall was enough. It seems that one of the things produced by/with bathroom wall threats is criminal charges for children, and an increased police presence in schools. The bodily act, the writing on the wall, does not in and of itself produce these material effects. Instead, sometimes it is the intra-action of the discursive forces centered on violence in schools and the writing itself that produce these effects.

At this point in the analysis, the analytic question that I am asking as I think the data with Barad brings me back to this question: what is being produced by this material/discursive phenomenon, threats of violence of bathroom walls in schools? The news reports often conclude with a summary of the criminal charges the students will face for the writing on the wall, and detailing of how police will be more involved with the school. A typical example tells how the threat resulted in "increased police presence for the remainder of the school year after a teenage girl was charged with making a threat via social media" (Record, 2018). Sometimes the writing itself is cited as the reason to call police, as officials explain that "a 'disconcerting' and 'violent sort of writing' was enough reason to call the police" (Times, 2018). Police involvement is the norm in these cases, and is justified by that same discourse of threats at school that makes these relatively minor discipline incidents newsworthy.

Occasionally a news report will consider student motivations to write, but even in these cases the writing itself often overshadows the student who enacted it. One such

case, when a student wrote a racially charged threat on the bathroom wall, is described

here:

> The student, whose name has not been released, said she wrote it because
> she believes some things go unattended at the school and she wanted to
> see how school officials would react to the message, Owens said. The teen
> is facing a charge of making a terroristic threat, which is a Class C felony
> in Alabama. (Robinson, 2019)

In this case, the student clearly had no intention to commit any kind of violence at the

school, and explained her impulse to write as a way to get school officials to engage with

racism at their school. This child was clearly not a threat, and yet was charged with a

felony. These news reports seem to defy logic when considered alongside the qualitative

data available through the Nation Center for Education Statistics: while schools have

been getting increasingly safer, fear of violence, and the resulting police presence and

charges against children, have also increased (NCES 2018).

These school bathroom threats and the discourse of fear that they are entangled

with create a fear that is unwarranted, as I discussed in the literature review. Schools are

one of the safest places you can be, and have only gotten safer in recent years. In fact,

between 1995 and 2011, the number of students who said they were afraid of attack or

harm at school dropped dramatically, from 12% to 4% (Rogers, Kemp, Rathburn,

Morgan, & Snyder, 2014). Despite this, American culture has a thriving discourse of fear

in/for/with schools.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2015-2016, the most

recent year these numbers are available for, 42 percent of schools had a police officer on

campus, a rate that had grown 10% over the last decade. There was an even larger jump over that decade in schools that employ some kind of security guards, which was up 42%. Overall, 57% of our nation's schools have a security presence. This has happened despite the fact that schools have gotten dramatically safer during this same time period.

Such an increase in police and security seems counter-productive. Some recent studies, in fact, have linked increased police presence to a decrease in academic achievement (Legewie & Fagan, 2019; Weisburst, 2019). The writing on the bathroom wall is just one part of this intra-active phenomenon, but acting with/through the virtual space of news reports, one mark we can trace of this particular enfolding for schools is criminal penalties for students who write on walls, and increased police presence.

> **Interlude: School Safety, Statistics, and the Entangled Researcher**
> *School shootings, at this point in United State history, are almost mythical, and are not somewhere I though this data would take me. This entanglement with school violence was unexpected for me, and I'm not sure I was ready for it. But my algorithms kept delivering these new reports to me: threats, lockdowns, violence, fear. As an entangled researcher, I am not somehow separate from these phenomenon, although in this case I imagine it is much easier to somehow be an outside, impartial observer.*
>
> *I went to the Educational Center for Educational Statistics (NCES.com) to find out how bad it was, how much more dangerous schools had become since my time in them, in the late '80s. When I first landed on the page*

from their Condition of Education report on school crime and safety, I

thought I had clicked on something wrong. Surely that couldn't be the

right page? The splash quote across the top of the page read: "Between

2000 and 2018, the rates of nonfatal victimization both at school and

away from school declined for students ages 12–18. The rate of

victimization at school declined 61 percent, and the rate of victimization

away from school declined 81 percent." The graphs presented all trend

downward. How could this be? In the wake of the Parkland shooting, in

particular, I had been reading about ALICE trainings traumatizing school

staff, about students buying bullet-proof backpacks for elementary

schools. Surely things were getting worse?

So I went looking for more data, thinking maybe the NCES was wrong

somehow. After all, they reported on "nonfatal incidences of

victimization" so maybe including fatal changed things. A gruesome

thought.

I found a 2017 report from the U.S. Dept of Justice, titled "Summary of

School Safety Statistics," and it only confirmed what the NCES had

reports: schools today are much safer than they were when I was in

school. This report went a step further, saying, "In light of recent school

safety incidents, it is understandable that people would develop beliefs

about trends and safety issues at the nation's schools. It is helpful to

examine these beliefs and consider to what extent they reflect reality."

Tweeting and the Paradox of safety/threat

So far, I have discussed how student behavior (writing on walls) becomes of/with the virtual material/discursive (news reports) and the material reality of increased surveillance and punishment (police/security presence and criminal charges), as these incidents of bathroom threats are reported in local newsrooms and papers. These reports are news articles, and as such focus on the who/what/where information that makes for a good news story, and those virtual news stories become part of the enfolding material-discursive phenomena of school threats and school safety.

However, news stories are not the only kind of media that is present in this intra-action, especially for the students themselves. Threats on the bathroom walls are also a part of the twitter discussion in the Tweets that I gathered for this project. The Tweets manifest from the material/discursive phenomenon in different ways than the news reports: more intimate, at once public/private, with less awareness of audience. Here is a typical example from one twitter discussion of school threats:

> woah   a similar thing happened at my school where someone wrote on the
> bathroom stall: 'school shooting (when it was supposed to happen)' and I
> stayed home, they never found out who did it but still. I'm still scared that
> somethings gonna happen tho (a 2019)

On Twitter, the material/discursive manifestation enacts differently than it does on the more formal local news, but through twitter posts we can see how the material that is writing on the walls enacts an agential cut on students who see it, creating a particular

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enfolding that limits/allows for that moment their position and performative possibilities within the phenomenon. Figure 11 shows a picture taken by a student and posted to twitter. This tweet is remarkable only in its ordinariness; it received under 10 likes and no retweets. There was only one responder, and they and the original poster exchanged only a few messages:

Figure 11: Bathroom wall writing posted to twitter by a student

> R (responder): u better not go.
>
> OP (original poster): i dont want to but idk yet it's up to my parents honestly
>
> R: bruh don't die pls 🥺
>
> OP: i'm not going it's official 🥺

This exchange demonstrates many of the traits of twitter communication that I saw: informal writing, the use of emojis and shorthand like idk (I don't know), and other slang. It also demonstrates an odd combination of total seriousness about the possible threat and hyperbolic emotional reaction that was also common in the Tweets. The "bruh don't die please" comment is almost over-the-top silly yet simultaneously truly heartfelt, accompanied by an emoji: a pleading, unhappy face with tears welling in its eyes.

Even in the single week that I collected messages, the tweets from students describing feelings of fear as a result of writing on the bathroom walls at their school were numerous, and often posted onto Twitter as an act of hope or courage, or a request to peers for support. Tweets like this one seem to be primarily looking for support from peers: "so there was a school shooting threat for tomorrow at my school written on the BATHROOM WALLS and also a kid was stabbed with a pencil over some vape pen in

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the bathroom TWICE today so........ pray for me ❤️" (b 2019). Reading these Tweets, one could get the feeling that schools were places of terror, and students are constantly under threat, despite the fact the schools now are the safest they've ever been (Goldstein, 2018; Rogers et al., 2014).

Being constantly afraid of violence in a place where you are very safe seems to be a kind of paradox. But the tweets reporting fear of school violence are heartfelt, and students often express and display that fear in the virtual, on Twitter, for their peers to see, relate to, and comment on: "Bro dead serious is today the day of school shootings or something my cousin school was on lock down because potential school shooting and the threats of shooting on the bathroom walls" (g 2019). Lockdowns are common school responses to perceived threats, and in the week of Tweets I collected I saw multiple references to schools going on lockdown in response to threats written on bathroom walls.

The intra-active phenomenon of lockdown/student/social media produces students in particular ways, manifesting the discourse of fear of school violence through their tweets. One student writes, "is it weird that I'm scared of school? Like now I'm starting to locate exits, trying to prevent myself from going to the bathroom incase...I get trapped, and keeping my phone with me at all times in case I need to say I love you and goodbye one last time..." (c 2019). This vivid description of how one student is being material/discursively produced by the threat of school violence is clearly felt deeply, and emphasizes the paradox of simultaneous school safety/threat that seems to be manifesting in schools.

The Tweets that deal with threats on bathroom walls carry with them a sense of anxiety, and also anticipation. Many students Tweeted that they were afraid of being "next," that the possibility of attack was always already present at school. This sense of anticipation can be felt in Tweets like this one, which reads "I shouldn't be sitting here, crying alone in the bathroom bc I'm scared for my life, bc I'm scared that my school could be next!! My cousin shouldn't have to text her mom that she's scared that someone is gonna come and shoot up her school" (d 2019). This student was not in a school that had a threat, but her cousin's school had a rumored threat. This heightened anxiety on behalf of the students echoes the administrators' need for increased police presence I discussed in the last section, and these anxieties produced by the discourse of fear of violence in schools manifesting through/with the material of school bathroom writing are also implicated in the production of school spaces, which I discuss more at the end of the chapter.

At the same time as this sense of heightened threat, there is also a sense of cynicism. A few of the Tweets I captured expressed an irritation at school responses to the threats, a sense that "nothing ever happens, we go on lockdown bc some stupid kid writes a threat for attention and you all freak out. grow up!" (l 2019). Another reads, "literally my school has shooting threats and nothing has happened to a point where there was a threat graffitied on the bathroom wall like it's the fucking chamber of secrets or sum [sum is slag for something]" (k 2019). Other Tweeters blame school administrators for overreacting to potential threats, like this one who says, "I remember in high school we had a "bomb threat" because someone left their German homework in the bathroom

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by mistake and administrators read 'die' (pronounced 'DEE') as 'die.' Apparently the fact that it also said 'Deutsche Klasse' (German class) on it didn't matter" (h 2019).

Tweets exist only in the virtual, but they are a small window into how bathroom wall writing exists not just on the walls, but also is simultaneously in virtual space and is productive of bodies in schools. The material-discursive manifestations of potential threat are felt in student's bodies as fear and anxiety, despite the fact that schools are the safest they have ever been. That fear and anxiety is expressed through the virtual space as social media posts, and the intra-action continues. I want to again caution us against reading these tweets as the cause or result of each other or some other action. Material/discursive manifestations are not cause/effect chains of actions—they instead manifest in the performative possibilities that are shaped by the intra-active phenomena. The shape of the enactment, the manifestations, are the results of the intra-active enfolding and re-enfolding of the phenomenon: posthuman performativity. As I said in previous chapters, the imperfect performances that come with intra-active enactments can actually reshape the limits of what is possible in that culturally restricted corporeal space, as the performance and the boundaries mutually co-constitute one another over time. In this particular enactment of bathroom wall threats and Twitter posts, fear and anxiety in/with schools seems to be increasingly possible, despite the statistical safety of schools.

Bathrooms "writing" students: Memes and Myths

So how do these virtual expressions of discourse make themselves felt in the intra-active phenomena of school bathrooms in a neighborhood middle school? In my time working with eighth grade students, there were no threats reported at the school, and little overt mention of race issues or school violence. Indeed, the school is predominantly

white and affluent. But in the student writing and focus groups, a feeling of fear or threat around the bathroom was a topic that came up often. Some examples of this kind of writing are in the table X. For a number of students, using the bathroom at school was a nearly unthinkable act, rooted in a sense of revulsion and fear.

When I first began thinking the data from my school site with the data I collected from Twitter and Google News Alerts, there seemed to be little connection. But thinking with quantum diffraction can open new ways of thinking about intra-active phenomenon. As I said in Chapter 3, "quantum diffraction is also a thing of the measuring apparatus itself…a queer trick, a slipperiness that defies our notions of cause and effect." In thinking this data with Barad, I returned to her conception of meaning: "Meaning is not an ideality; meaning is material" (Barad 2014, p. 75). The analytic question I thought with for this school-site based data is, then, rooted not in making meaning from the data, but in observing how the data itself is being materially produced by/with the intra-active phenomenon of which I am a part. The students at the school I studied in/with did not write threats on bathroom walls, but the discourse of fear of school violence was certainly present in the intra-active phenomenon, and students material conditions that were produced from that phenomenon. The bathrooms were, in a way, "writing" on/with the students, through the medium of the "marks" left by the intra-active, enfolded production of the students themselves.

Table 3: Examples of Fear/Safety in the Bathroom in Student Writing and the Student Focus Groups
it looks like you are walking into a deep dark tunnel leading to a scary place where all the bad kids hangout and you feel like it is super exposed to people just walking in and just feeling like you are going into a scary place
(in a sarcastic voice) All the thugs be jullin' in that bathroom! My homies!
Oh, god, that's the bathroom that I go to cry in! *laughs*
The girls in that bathroom are so scary! Yeah, no one goes in there alone! *laughter*
this picture makes me feel isolated and in the corner as like some prisoner it makes me feel trapped and makes me fell [*sic]* uncomfortable it looks like if someone just could look over the stall and see you.

These "marks" include expressions of the discourse of fear and violence in school bathrooms. Expressions of fear were common in the focus groups, as students discussed the pictures their peers had taken in the bathrooms. In these focus groups, students worked in small groups to sort the photos of the bathrooms into self-created categories. These expressions of fear were often framed as jokes, made between students as they were working to sort the photos into piles. Several of the focus groups even went so far as to include "scary" or "creepy" as a category of photograph.

When the students responded to the photographs in their writing prompts, many of these expressions of fear were included in stories, reminiscent of fairy tales. In these stories, that bathroom was transformed into a place of mystery, a place of fearsome things like witches or unseen beasts. One response describes the bathroom as alive and part of the wilderness, saying "the bathrooms natural prey is the student. There is no predator for the bathroom. It is the apex predator. The bathroom is an avid hunter." This attribution of liveliness was especially interesting to me; while I think it was intended as a metaphor, and anthropomorphism, the liveliness of the bathroom and the sense of threat that seemed to come from the space itself was clear in many student writings.

As I began to analyze this student writing, I found myself thinking of Richardson and St. Pierre's provocative question, "what else might writing do except mean?" (2018, p. 969). They describe how things that "are always already in my mind and body…cropped up unexpectedly and fittingly in [my] writing" (p. 971). In this analysis, I take the idea of thinking through writing and apply it not just to the researcher, but also to the participants, who engaged in writing as a part of the study activities.

The emergence of stories as a part of this writing was not a complete surprise to me, but I was struck by the frequency of these stories in the participant writing, and the narrative structures that the writing took. These responses often read like fairy tales. As one response read, the bathroom "looks like an entrance to a maze or dungeon where you would find a spooky witch stirring a cauldron over a fire made on the dirt and earth thats [*sic*] emerging through the tiles." Like fairy tales are a part of childhood, bathroom stories would seem to be part of the intra-actions of students and school bathrooms.

This idea of story as active in the intra-active phenomenon can be seen in posthuman theorist conceptualizations of agency, and how agency is distributed in a phenomenon. When I consider the question of stories as agentic, and think of stories as part of an ongoing intra-active phenomenon, I am reminded of Barad's definition of agency. She reminds us that agency isn't something that is an inherent quality, but is instead something that is enacted within a phenomenon. So in this discussion of stories, I cannot designate agency "as an attribute of 'subjects' or 'objects' (as they do not preexist as such). Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is 'doing'/'being' in its intra-activity" (Barad, 2003, p. 827). Instead of making a claim that stories *are* agentic, I am instead claiming that the stories of bathrooms that are a part of the intra-active phenomenon of

school bathrooms could, at times, act on/with students in particular ways, enabling/preventing certain possible performances in the enfolded phenomenon. These stories are sometimes made possible, made desirable, by a particular enfolding of the intra-active phenomena that is the school bathroom, and sometimes, when the agency is distributed across the phenomenon in particular ways by the current enfolding, these stories are acting on/with students. By attending to these stories, and the act of telling them, I can begin to see the marks left by this enfolding.

Another common story I found in student responses was the idea of a quest, a student entering the bathroom to confront some terrible fear or threat. Doors and walls are described as mazes, as dungeons, as fortresses. One student wrote about how "a [*sic*] opening in the brown and white wall led into a room like a dungeon, the entrance dark at first, but some light spotted inside." The act of entering the bathroom was often phrased in terms that made it seem dangerous, a place of disgust and fear.

One function of the stories in student accounts of their bathrooms was to allow students to discuss things involved with the bathrooms without actually directly expressing those fears. Sometimes these writings almost seemed to morph as they were being written. In the story below, the use of "Anon" throughout indicated a desire for the writer to remain unseen in the story. But the use of the gender-neutral pronoun "they" quickly gave way to "he" and "his."

> *Anon was scared as they stepped into the bathroom stall. They were*
>
> *unsettled as he saw the slight yellow on the toilet. Bacteria would*
>
> *probably consume it as Anon looked at it. Anon pulled a crap ton of toilet*
>
> *paper out of the dispenser and put it all over the toilet seat, hoping to not*

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get infected by whatever was on that toilet seat. Right as anon was done

with wrapping his toilet seat a slimy monster plopped out and said "GET

OUT OF MY HOUSE!!!" and closed the toilet's lid.

The distance this student hoped to achieve from the bathroom with the use of "Anon" is

undone by other word choices that seem to go beyond a simple sense of fear, instead

expressing a kind of existential anxiety. Words like "unsettled," "consume," and

"infected" might suggest that this student is afraid of being influenced or affected by the

bathroom. In considering this passage, it's useful to think of the work of CJ Pascoe,

whose work centers on how the public order of masculine and feminine is *done* in school

through the meaning-making practices of students (Pascoe, 2005). She discusses in her

work how the term 'fag' occupies "the 'abject' position, a position outside of masculinity

that actually constitutes masculinity" (p. 808). For male students, performing their

"masculinity, in part becomes the daily interactional work of repudiating" those things

that occupy that abject position (p. 809). I speculate that discussions of the school

bathroom may occupy a similar position, and thus invoked a similar response in the male-

identified students in my study; they certainly felt the need to reject and repudiate, as can

be seen in table x, which details this rejection in the writing of several students.

 This anger, fear and resistance were especially present in the participants who

identified as male. In the stories participant told about the bathrooms, I found a particular

enactment of gendering in relation to the school bathrooms: the female-identified

students were enacted as social in bathroom spaces, while the male-identified students

were often unable or unwilling to even speak of the bathrooms, and displayed overt

hostility despite opting to participate in the study. When thinking about the bathroom as

an intra-active, entangled phenomenon, "discourse and matter are understood to be mutually constituted in the production of knowing" (Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 628). The material-discursive productions of gender and of the bathrooms produced particular ways of knowing in my research participants, which can be seen in their bathroom writings.

Table 4: Examples of rejection and repudiation in male student writing
I see...a bathroom. A boring bathroom with paper on the floor. The paper makes me very angry. I could be eating that paper right now.
it's just a doorway it looks really stupid why would a person take a picture of the outside of a bathroom that is just really dumb.
this is just a dumb stupid bathroom, so why are wasting our class time doing a study on restrooms?
At some point in your life i think you've used a restroom and that's basically all it is a bathroom not a study hall or some crap. It doesn't affect our learning just if we gotta piss or not. Like we see these bathrooms every day a picture isn't gonna spark some magic facts in our brain about it.
All of these photos make me go on such a rant. I don't even know why. Dumb, stupid bathroom.
It's a damn bathroom. Like we all know how they work and what they do and you have now wasted my time and had me put very much effort into this. I hope very much you now are all knowing about the infamous school bathroom. *UwU* . Wack. Crazy. *UwU* Thanks for wasting my precious time once again *UwU*
It's a bathroom in the hallway? What is the fuss about? I killed the bathroom's family and I will not stop my reign of terror until I have successfully destroyed every bathroom in the school.
Look at the toilet. Look at the toilet. LOOK AT THE BLOODY TOILET. why? because someone thinks that they will somehow get magical results and fix all the worlds bloody problems by making a load of uninterested teenagers stare at a STUPID BLOODY TOILET.

To further consider these acts of repudiation of the bathroom by the male students, I'd like to closely consider one written response. When I first looked at the file, it seemed the student had chosen not to respond; but when I looked closely, I could see that there was a response typed with font colored the palest of blue, just barely visible on a computer screen. It read:

> *Someone just forgot to throw way trash. I really could care less*
>
> *about the simple fact that there is a paper towel on the floor. It's not going*
>
> *to cause any harm, it is literally just a paper towel. Nothing cool. Nothing*

new. Nothing angering. Nothing special. Is the image supposed to show how 'disgusting' school bathrooms are? I could just name a few things more disgusting than a lousy paper towel on the ground.

It's just a toilet? I don't understand how this is supposed to make me feel again. It's a school toilet. Three minutes is an excessively long amount of time to write about just a toilet. I'm just going to make up a story because I want to look like I am actually doing something. THIS TOILET HAS HURT ME IN MANY WAYS.

Third image. Still nothing special. In my opinion these images are awful, serve no purpose, and are just normal things. IT IS JUST A SINK, WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL? THIS SINK KILLED MY FAMILY. I hate this sink, and I will not stop until I get revenge for them.

It's a bathroom in the hallway? What is the fuss about? This time I killed the bathroom's family and I will not stop my reign of terror until I have successfully destroyed every bathroom in the school.

Once upon a time
jerry liked the school bathrooms
Nobody liked jerry
Because jerry liked school bathrooms
someone saw jerry pick up trash in the bathroom
they tried to drown jerry in the toilets

jerry never went to the bathroom again

the end (thanks for attending my ted talk)

This response is a particularly interesting example of the invocation and repudiation of the school bathroom, as both happen repeatedly in this text. The participant insists there is no emotional response or investment in any of the photos, and also repeatedly invokes violent imagery. The all-caps messages about killing and having one's family killed by the toilets are immediately repudiated by the insistence that there is no reason to be excited by or invested in photos of the school bathroom. The closing poem describes a boy being invested in the bathroom's cleanliness and being physically assaulted as a result. This self-policing and invocation of punishment for straying outside of acceptable gender boundaries echoes the finding of Ingrey, who found that school bathrooms are a place where one can see "the insidiousness of a gender normative system on student subjectivities and its insistence on self-perpetuation through the mechanism of disciplinary power in space" (2012, p. 815). I will further consider this idea of discipline and self-regulation in the bathroom as a result of panoptic power in chapter 6.

For the students who identify as girls, social issues seemed to be the main concern in their writing. The bathroom stories written by the girls centered on social interactions with others – either being with friends, being excluded, or constructing an out-ward facing, social self. Girls also described the bathrooms as spaces for social anxiety and self-presentation. The intra-actions with the bathroom mirror stood out as a place where female-identifying students were enacted by the space, acted on/with the bathroom mirror:

I know exactly what bathroom that is. at the beginning of 8th grade, I went through a time where I hated myself. my body, my face, everything. I didn't like looking in the mirror at all. then, I started hanging out with an old friend and she made me feel really good about myself. I would take bathroom mirror pictures in that mirror. currently, I feel meh about myself. I know people think I'm pretty and yeah that's cool but like, I don't think I'm pretty. my skin could be clearer, I could lose weight, my but could be bigger, and my boobs could be bigger. when I look in the mirror and everything around me is trashed, I feel trash about myself. I don't know why talking about bathrooms is making me feel bad about myself.

One particular writing again employed anthropomorphism, this time in relation to the bathroom mirror:

The mirror sits, waiting to reflect someone's face, their eyes, the details of their nose, their eyelashes, tilted upwards to collect the mascara being brushed upon them. Waiting to be flashed by the flash function on a 7th graders phone as they pose stupidly and take a mirror selfie (participant writing).

Nearly every research participant discussed how the bathrooms were gendered at their school. As one participant wrote, "all of the school bathrooms have tiles on the walls; there are blue tiles in the boy's bathroom and red

Figure 12: The sign outside the gender neutral bathroom, which shows binary gender

in the girls bathroom." This visual clue, in addition to the sign posted outside,

immediately define the bathrooms as gendered. Interestingly, even the so-called gender-

neutral bathrooms at the school are marked with binary gender, see figure 12. This

reinforcing of the concept of gender as a binary works with the concept of panoptic

surveillance, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, to create an illusion that

gender is innately binary, that male/female is the only way of knowing or understanding

gender.

Perhaps the most interesting thing I found in student writing was the ways their

writing echoed the data I gathered on Twitter, including the use of memes. Memes are

snips of content, either words or images or a combination of both, often considered to be

units of cultural information. These are spread via imitation (with slight variations)

through the internet. Memes are, in many ways, a main unit of information on the

internet. Using memes is a way to signal a large amount of information, and the cultural

context of that information, in a very small space. These memes can be seen as an

indication of the entanglement of the students in my study with the virtual spaces of

Twitter and other online platforms.

Many of the students concluded their writing with the phrase, "thank you for

coming to my Ted talk." This phrase is a meme-like closing that is common on Twitter,

indicating that a person has just expressed and supported an opinion that is deeply held

and important to them. Other, less-benign memes were also present. A few of the

responses included this symbol: 👌. This particular sign, commonly thought of as the

"ok" sign, has been weaponized on the internet by the far-right, white-supremacists, and

neo-fascists. According to the Anti-Defamation League, "it has become a popular gesture

used by people across several segments of the right and far right—including some actual white supremacists—who generally use it to trigger reactions, or what they would describe as 'trolling the libs.' This is thanks to a 2017 hoax campaign started by members of the notorious website 4chan that has since taken on a life of its own" ("How the 'OK' Symbol Became a Popular Trolling Gesture," 2017). This hand gesture is an invention of virtual space, one that is designed to intra-act in particular ways, as people's virtual intra-actions shape more of their worlds.

The presence of this sign in my data is less important as a particular expression by a particular child. Instead, I'm more concerned with the sign as a material/discursive manifestation, a clear mark of the presence of the virtual in the co-constitution of the students.   As the Southern Poverty Law Center described on their website:

> Dismissing the spread of the hand signal as a hoax overlooks two hard realities: first, that its increasing use gives open license to actual racist ideologues to operate and recruit under the cover of the "plausible deniability" established by less ideological young trolls; and second, that any kind of wink-and-nudge interaction with the racist right is a direct route to its normalization.

It's entirely likely that the three students who included this symbol were not alt-right or racist; there was a subset of boys who expressed quite a bit of anger at writing and talking about bathrooms, despite opting to participate in the study. I suspect they were trying to "troll the lib" in making the reference; that is, they hoped to get a response from me. Two other students also ended their written responses with the note "gg," which means "good game" and is commonly said at the end of online gaming sessions. I suspect these were

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also an attempt to get a reaction from me; before one focus group it came up in conversation that I play videos games, so they knew I would be familiar with the term. But I was surprised by the extent of these marks of entanglement with the virtual in students' responses.

Summary

Writing on bathroom walls is an ancient practice, and also one that shapes not just the writing but also the writer and their world. In this age of virtual communication, an additional aspect of intra-activity has been added to the writing in school bathrooms, as pictures and descriptions of writing and the effects of that writing become part of the intra-action.

I began this analysis by asking how bathroom writing is produced by and productive of the intra-active phenomenon? How are the marks of this particular enfolding made visible? What does this intra-action open space for in the experiences of students and schools?

The influence of the virtual and of discourse on student bathroom writing is large, and is productive of material conditions for students. The written threats themselves intra-act with the news media and are reproduced, spread, and enact agential cuts within the intra-action. A threat at one school is felt in the bodies of students in the entire community, and large events, like the Parkland shooting, can become part of the intra-actions of students and schools nationwide. The presence of the virtual in intra-active entanglements with students was made clear by the presence of internet-speak and memes in their writing at my school site, and by the Tweets that expressed the always-already-present fear of being "next" to experience school violence. This material/discursive manifestation of fear and threat also can be seen in the writing the students created that describes the bathrooms as

fairy tale dungeons, labyrinths, and sources of infection. Additionally, adults are not separate from these intra-actions and manifestations, as can be seen in the increasing police presence in our increasingly safe schools, and resulting criminal prosecution of students who write on the walls.

CHAPTER VI: PUBLIC/PRIVATE ENACTMENTS

Time is out of joint. It is diffracted, broken apart, exploded, scattered in multiple directions. Each moment is an infinite multiplicity where other moments are here-now in particular constellations. Barad, 2019, p. 528

School bathrooms stories loom large in our own personal histories. As I worked on this project, I became accustomed to confessions: when people heard what topic I was studying, they were compelled to tell me their school bathroom story, often breaking taboo. I once heard a story from a university administrator, told in front of an entire classroom of undergraduates, about wetting his pants in his seat in 5th grade, after his teachers wouldn't let him go to the bathroom. Among adults, these discussions grow as everyone present seems to have a school bathroom story to tell. This public sharing of bathrooms stories highlights the seemingly contradictory nature of the space.

In this chapter, I explore how these seeming contradictions are enacted in the intra-action of the school bathroom. As I do so, I attempt to answer the question, "Why Barad? What does a posthuman analysis do that a poststructuralist argument could not? In many ways, Barad is in conversation with and building on the ideas of post-structuralists throughout her work. In Barad's famous 2003 article, "Posthuman Performativity: Towards an understanding of how matter comes to matter," the main argument presented begins with the work of Foucault and Butler, but then draws on quantum physics and posthuman theory to make an argument for a "performative metaphysics" (2003, p. 813). In a way, this chapter follows the rhythms of that 2003 argument, in order to move us beyond the post-structuralist account of the school bathroom and, by thinking with posthuman performativity, open space to think differently.

I first consider the fairly common poststructuralist account of bathrooms as panopticon, and then I reconsider that account through and with posthuman performativity. I consider the seeming contradictions of the bathroom as sanctuary and as social space, and then explore places where slippage between the public and private nature of school bathrooms opens the intra-action for possibilities beyond disciplining, which is the focus of the post-structural analysis, and opens space for student activism.

Analytic Questions

The sticking points in this chapter deal with the contradictions of public/private, hidden/surveilled, and silenced/speaking out that I saw in school bathrooms. As I began thinking this data with a phenomenology of the material (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), I developed the following analytic questions: What are bathroom spaces *doing* in the intra-action that makes these seemingly contradictory things possible in the experience? How are each of these contradictions (sanctuary/sociality, hidden/watched, discipline/activism) produced by the material/discursive intra-action of the phenomenon, and what do they produce in turn?

Beyond the Panopticon

School bathrooms have contradictory natures. These spaces are designed to house the most private acts, but to also be public. In my data it's very clear that students have internalized the bathroom space as one that is both private and subject to constant surveillance, the very picture of a panopticon. However, at the same time and in the same data sets, it's clear that the school bathrooms are also places of sanctuary and respite. Simultaneously, school bathrooms are also depicted in the data as social spaces. How can one place hold so many contradictory functions?

The school bathroom as a place of surveillance and discipline can be explained through a poststructuralist analysis, but that analysis isn't enough to also account for the other complex intra-actions in these spaces. It is, however, a place to begin thinking about the private/public sense of school bathrooms space. When Foucault discussed schools as places of discipline, he included the design of the bathrooms, saying "latrines had been installed with half-doors, so that the supervisor on duty could see the head and legs of the pupils, and also with side walls sufficiently high that those inside cannot see one another" (Foucault 1977, p. 173). In this view, school bathrooms are designed to enable adult surveillance of the students, and to encourage students' self-regulation.

According to one post-structuralist account, all public bathrooms, including school bathrooms, function as what Foucault and Bentham call a panopticon. As Bender-Baird (2016) articulates in her post-structural analysis of public bathrooms as places of gender policing:

> People do not wait for appointed figureheads to surveil bodies moving about in designated spaces. Instead – and as a function of the panopticon – they start disciplining themselves and policing each other via the surveilling gaze. Not waiting for a security guard to indicate which bathroom to enter, people check the signs, decide which space is meant for them, and then watch each other, ensuring that the unwritten rules of accessing public restrooms are being followed. (p. 985)

Foucault discusses the chapter "Panopticon" of his book *Discipline and Punish* how physical spaces like school bathrooms, with the gaps designed for surveillance, produces this kind of self-policing (1975).

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This internalized sense of surveillance is very present in the data from my study.

As one student participant wrote of the picture of the school bathroom, there is "a crack in almost every toilet door which can't be too hard to fix I don't know if there's a reason it exists but by god it makes pooping so much more

Figure 13: the gap in the stall door, as seen in a participant photograph.

uncomfortable." Additional examples of student writing that share this feeling of being surveilled can be found in table x. A participant photograph of the gap in the stall doors is depicted in figure 13.

Table x: participant comments about a sense of being watched in the bathroom

Table 5: Examples of Student Awareness of Being Watched in the Bathroom in Student Writing and the Student Focus Groups
HUGE CRACKS RIGHT WHERE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO THE BATHROOM SO PEOPLE CAN JUST GLANCE THROUGH AND SEE YOU PEEING WHENEVER THEY WANT TO!!!!!!!!!!
It makes me feel trapped and makes me feel uncomfortable. It looks like if someone just could look over the stall and see you.
since there isn't a main door to the bathroom, you can hear what goes on in it. Its uncomfortable for people hearing you rip your pad open
it looks like someone is peeping in on someone in the bathroom. it looks like some person watching you. the toilet looks very sad
The space between the door and the rest of the stall - you know, the little peephole area - is a bit too wide I think. I certainly wouldn't mind if I had a bit more privacy when I'm in a stall

The panoptic nature of the bathrooms is also illustrated by other photos the

students took.

Many of the

photos are of the

gaps in the

bathroom stall

panels, or of the

view into the

bathrooms from

the hallways. In

fact, the bathrooms

Figure 14: the view into the bathroom from the hallway at the study site

at the school where I did my study didn't have doors at all; instead, they opened directly

into the hallway. This opening is somewhat offset by a short hall that blocks some of the

view, but there were multiple photos that demonstrated the fact that, if one stands slightly

to one side, one can see into the bathroom space from the hallway (see figures x and x).

In addition to the evidence from the school study, the news reports I collected also

have some evidence that support this idea of the bathroom as panopticon. These reports

highlight one common response when issues arise in the school bathrooms: increase

surveillance. School administrators may remove bathroom doors or install cameras or

"vape" detectors to increase the ease of surveillance (Doran, 2018; Kellogg, 2017). The

prevalence of descriptions of school bathrooms as places where students are being

monitored seems to fit with the poststructuralist argument of the bathrooms as a

panopticon.

However, while the bathrooms certainly can and often do function as a panopticon, I want to complicate and ultimately move beyond the poststructuralist account. The problem, as I see it, is that an account of school bathroom as surveillance mechanism and space of gendered bodily discipline leads us to one theoretical place, one that leaves little room for resistance or change. One poststructuralist account of bathroom spaces concludes with this passage: "faced with a built environment that denies their existence and facilitates gender policing, trans and gender non-conforming people exercise various strategies, including avoiding public bathrooms or engaging in situational docility by adjusting their bodies, to
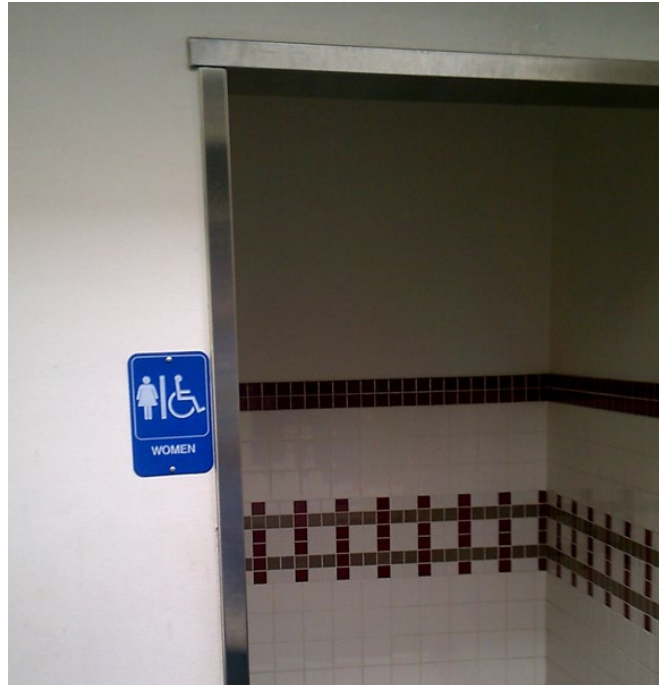

Figure 15: a bathroom entrance at the field site

comply with gender norms" (Bender-Baird, 2016, p. 986). In this account, it is up to the individual bodies to make changes and be strategic, independent of the discourse and the material space. The problem with this is that it leaves us with a separation between the built environment and bodily production, as if the discursive power of gendered bathrooms were somehow separate from the space itself, and these bodily adjustments toward situational docility were somehow accomplished entirely in the individual human, separately from both the discursive and the material space. For Foucault (1975), the discursive is historical and contextual, not phenomenological: these material conditions

support or sustain the discursive, which affect the body but are not of/with the body. Foucault's discussion of the discursive is an epistemological one, locating the discursive as knowledge that is apart, separate from material conditions and bodily productions. Power, for Foucault, is seen as an imminent field of relations; but what about bodies, and the the constitution of material conditions?

Instead, I'd like to propose that we consider the material-discursive and the embodied self as all being co-constituted by the same intra-active, iterative phenomena, and in doing so, reconsider our emphasis on individual human actions. Much as Barad reconsidered Foucault's account of discursive practices through the lens of posthuman performativity in her 2003 article "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," I would like to use this chapter to reconsider the poststructuralist account of school bathroom as panopticon through posthuman performativity. In order to make this move, "the notions of materiality and discursivity must be reworked in a way that acknowledges their mutual entailment" (Barad 2003 p. 820). To accomplish this reworking, I will examine some seemingly contradictory bathroom phenomena through and with one another: bathroom as sanctuary/social space, and bathroom as space of discipline/activism.

Sanctuary/Sociality

Over and over in my data I encountered accounts of bathroom space functioning as places of surveillance, places of respite and retreat, and places of social connection; often these occurred in the same bit of data. How can one place contain all of these functions?

Directly in opposition to the previous account of school bathrooms as spaces of discipline and surveillance is the account of the school bathroom as place of safety, place of respite, place of retreat. I saw these accounts on social media, in tweets like this one: "watching adventure time in the school bathroom while i skip 3rd period, i have either peaked or hit rock bottom" (crackdnp 2019). This idea of the school bathroom as a retreat from the social interactions required of schooling was echoed in the writing from my fieldwork. One student wrote a story about it in her writing:

> Once upon a time there was a girl who loved heavy metal and she wanted to start a band with her friends, but then her friends started to hate her and now she is all alone because everyone hates her even her teachers think she is annoying. Every day at lunch she sits in the bathroom at lunch and watches youtube.

The school bathroom serves as a place of retreat when a student feels like there is nowhere else to go. Another Tweeter echoes this idea when they write, "sup its me avoiding lunch at school and hiding in the bathroom everyday" (wanabekoul 2019). This idea of the bathroom as a place to retreat from the world of school was also brought up many times in the focus groups.

In the focus groups, sometimes the bathroom was described as a place to hide when a student was experiencing distress. Additionally, the bathroom was often described as a place to just take a break and regroup, such as in this exchange:

> Student 1: Some people use bathrooms as a safe place to be on their phones without being caught.

Student 2: I don't know, I mean – I do that sometimes, I go to the bathroom when

I don't need to. But it's not, like, about my phone. I mean, yeah, I use my phone,

but   mostly I just need a minute, you know?

Student 3: to gather-

Student 2: yeah, to gather myself (dramatic voice)

laughter

The concept of bathroom as sanctuary was also present in Twitter. One person wrote,

"do not want to be at school everyone is dragging me into things that dont involve me ive

had like 2 panic attacks in the bathroom i feel like i cant breathe" (k 2019). This tweet

shows that student who feel overwhelmed use the bathroom as a place to go when things

feel unsafe – something that seems to be in opposition to the idea of the bathroom as a

panoptic place of surveillance.

Surveillance, sanctuary, and social interactions all coexist in the same space in the

school bathroom, sometimes at the same time. One student, writing in response to

bathroom photos, writes:

All these pictures remind me of all the people listening, looking, and

judging you in the bathroom. Every time I go to the bathroom, I feel like

people are going to

think that I'm weird if they hear me. Also, it's very awkward when there is

a crowd of girls in the bathroom, they are talking, and then they go silent

so it's awkward when all of them are listening to every sound you make,

and it can be very embarrassing. (participant data from the writing

activity)

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This writing shows that while the student was concerned about being watched, there were also other students engaging in socializing in the same space.

One reoccurring complaint in the data from my field site was that socializing groups were actually making it harder to physically access the restrooms. As one student put it in her writing:

> People really need to stop going into bathrooms and making a mess and getting into same stalls together. As a 6th grader at the time, there were multiple times when some 8th grade girls waddled into the bathroom with their friends and phones and just stood there. It made me super uncomfortable to get out of my stall and to wash my hands. Bathrooms are supposed to be where we do our business and not where we hang-out!!

Figure 16: an image taken by a student participant of one of the larger bathroom stalls used for group socializing.

The bathrooms as socializing space was also associated with particular social statuses and gendered bodies. In all of the data I collected at my field site, I didn't see an example of male-presenting bodies socializing in the bathrooms. I discuss this entanglement of school bathrooms, silence, and masculinity in Chapter 7.
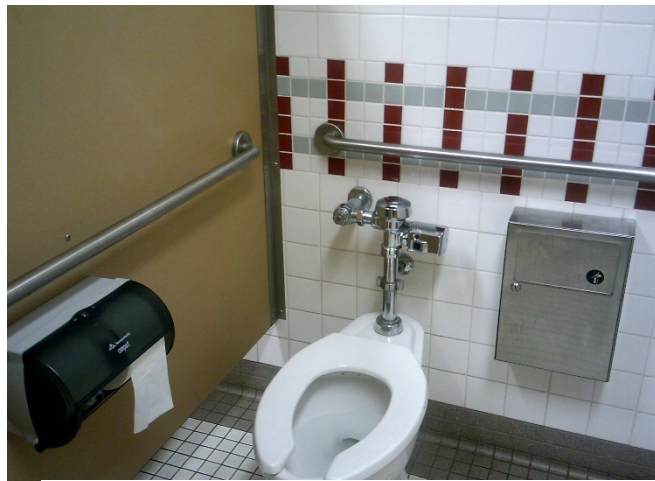
The complaints about socialization in the bathrooms also tended to identify the social groups by grade level, and imply that the groups who are social in the bathroom are the girls who are considered more "popular" or who have more social status at the school. In one focus group, there was a discussion about how "in that bathroom there's usually a group of seventh grade girls gossiping about other people and how they are trash. they are usually mean to younger kids, and sometimes go into the stalls so that you can't use that bathroom." Socializing in the bathroom came up in every focus group, and the discussions often centered on people complaining about the students who used the bathrooms in that way. But a few students expressed that the bathrooms were an important part of their socializing at school. One student wrote about the picture in figure x, saying, "it is the handy-capped stall and sometimes my friends and I will go in there and cry or just go in there to hang out. one time i went into the bathroom and there were already like 10 girls in the stall and my friends and i were like "let's go in!" so like we all went in there and there were like 15 girls in the stall. some people were standing on the toilet, some were sitting, some were standing. it was really fun." The image painted by this description is not something out of a panopticon; in fact, the threat of being watched or regulated by the bathroom space seemed largely absent in this account, and others like it.

So how should we make sense of these accounts of the experience of school bathroom space? How can it be a place of surveillance, socialization, and sanctuary? What is the material space of the bathroom doing in this intra-active phenomenon that makes all these things possible in the enfolded intra-action, sometimes even at the same time?

In this chapter I find myself having quiet conversations with Derrida (who seems to always-already be in my head). I feel him haunting these discussions of a space that simultaneously contains its own contradiction, and while I am tempted to leave this ghost resting, I find I can't. I also can't resurrect this ghost – I have too many ghosts in my head to spend time with them all (Foucault, de Beauvoir, Butler, Merleau-Ponty, even Hegel and Heidegger who mostly hide on the back stairs but occasionally flit through the living room, a whiff of acrid pasts).

But Derrida will not be ignored. As he himself said, "it is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it" (1994, p. xix). I first read these words in Barad's 2010 article "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come," published in the journal Derrida Today. This is an article that often gets ignored when we in the social sciences are discussing Barad, relegated to the side as we focus on their articulations of posthuman performativity in the article (2003) that grew up and became a book (2007). Surely, we think (as I thought when I first read this article), it's enough to understand the main points they made, the thrust of their argument? Must I grapple with this odd article, its nuclear scientists and talks of justice, entanglements and enumerations?

But again, this feeling contains its own contradiction: Barad's main point is that the nature of reality is intra-action, is relational in that intra-activity, is ongoing in its becoming, is connecting/connected in ways that we can't quite grasp because we, too, are intra-active entanglements and are creatures of our own enfolded bits of material-discursive spacetimematter and what we are capable of seeing is always limited and made possible by those entanglements. And in this article, Barad tells a story of the things that haunt us and possibilities for (in)justice.

This article leaps and cavorts, slipping back and forth in time and in space and making a mockery of a simple sense of organization, of what an article should look like, of how we think about time and causality and relationality. In it, Barad writes that they hope that "what comes across in this dis/jointed movement is a felt sense of différance, of intra-activity, of agential separability – differentiatings that cut together/apart – that is the hauntological nature of quantum entanglements." (p. 245). The English teacher in me loves this article, the playfulness and whimsy that are combined with careful craft in the writing. One of my favorite Barad quotes about diffraction is in this article: "diffraction as synecdoche of entangled phenomenon, intra-active meta/physics, différance" (p. 243). I desperately wanted to include this quote in my terminology section, but ultimately decided not to. I just couldn't face having to define synecdoche,

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and deal with the invocation of Derrida's ghost that lurks in the word
différance, *in the midst of everything else on the page. Yet here I am.*

Barad tell us that their article (2010) is about this:

> *joins and disjoins – cutting together/apart – not separate*
>
> *consecutive activities, but a single event that is not one.*
>
> *Intra- action, not interaction. Center stage: the relationship*
>
> *of continuity and discontinuity, not one of negative*
>
> *opposition, but of im/possibilities. (p. 244)*

So I too am here writing this chapter, and it is about joins and dis/joins,

public and private, hiding and being surveilled, desiring privacy and

broadcasting the self, restrictions and revolutions. These are not negative

oppositions, but im/possibilities, each already a part of the entanglement

that is the school bathroom, the shape of enfoldings in this space, the

marks of sedimentation on bodies. And each always already includes its

own possibilities for (in)justice.

Barad never directly addresses Derrida in this article, instead invoking

his ghost through introducing article sections with extensive quotes from

his 1994 book Specters of Marx. But his ideas of the Other, of différance,

are ideas that speak of/with entanglements.

> *Entanglements are relations of obligation – being bound to*
>
> *the other – enfolded traces of othering. Othering, the*

constitution of an 'Other', entails an indebtedness to the

'Other', who is irreducibly and materially bound to,

threaded through, the 'self' – a diffraction/dispersion of

identity. 'Otherness' is an entangled relation of difference

*(*différance*). (p. 265)*

And so I too will let this haunting be just that: a haunting. Derrida's ghost

will neither be invoked nor dismissed.

Discipline/activism

I've already written about how bathrooms are places of discipline; both self-

discipline when students internalize the sense of being surveilled and adjust their

behavior accordingly, and discipline from without on the part of school administrators,

security guards, and police. If you speak to school administrators, you will hear stories of

school bathrooms as hubs of disciplinary problems. As a teacher, I was often asked to

"keep an eye on the bathrooms!" by my administrators. In one school I worked in,

teachers were required to spend part of their prep time in the nearest student bathroom,

presumably so we could prevent discipline problems. It was a directive most of the

teachers, myself included, usually ignored.

When reading about school bathrooms in the news, it is easy to get a sense that

these are spaces that require administrative control. Demonstrations of that kind of

control are not hard to find. In one Tweet, a student says, "if you ever feel bad about

going to school be thankful you don't go to mine cuz it's literally prison. they don't let us

go to the bathroom, there's cameras in each class, we get swats, 5 days detention if they

see a phone..." (luverhong 2019). As I discussed in the literature review, locked or otherwise unavailable school bathrooms have been a civil rights issue for as long as we have had public schools. Accounts of school bathrooms on twitter would seem to agree; as one tweeter quipped, in the form of a popular meme: "conventional school: we're training the leaders of tomorrow. Also conventional school: you future leaders can only use the bathroom if we allow it" (numalum89 2019). Another tweeter complained, "Tell me how I'm supposed to go to the bathroom at school when every frickin bathroom is locked?" (taraalodem 2019). This kind of control over access seems to fit right into the idea of school bathrooms as panopticon, as places of discipline.

Locked bathrooms have often been reported in local news accounts, as parents and students complain take their complaints to local news (Phelps, 2018). In one case, a student attempting to enter a locked bathroom was suspended: "two of the bathrooms at the high school were closed after they were vandalized, leaving open only two bathrooms for all of the 1,300 students. One student attempted to enter a locked bathroom, damaged the handle to the door, and was suspended" (Maye, 2018). Some schools have even gone so far as to require students be escorted to the bathrooms by school security. As one school newspaper reporter put it:

> It's insane for the school to say the students here are young adults than not let them walk to the bathroom by themselves. It's also insane to expect students to make a huge financial decision on whether or not to go to college when you won't let them do a normal human function by themselves. (Schohn, 2018)

These accounts of bathroom escorts may seem extreme and unlikely, but the data from this project show news reports of at least three different schools that attempted to use escorts as a solution when parents and students objected to locked bathrooms.

In every case, these accounts of discipline in the bathrooms are centered on human actors. Principals lock bathrooms, students act out through vandalism, teachers police bathrooms. But how could thinking with Barad and posthuman performativity open space to consider other possibilities, to think differently?

These kind of access problems were also reported at the site of my study. In some cases, it seemed to be clear that school

Figure 17: example of graffiti in student photography

bathroom closures were the result of vandalism or messes, such as when one student described in focus group that "sometimes people decide to spread feces on the wall. Then they put the bathrooms on lockdown." But this statement deserves closer consideration. The declaration that "people decide" seems a naïve one, rooted in a humanist notion of cause and effect. Also, a "person deciding" to smear feces makes little sense if we are thinking about bathrooms as panoptic spaces where students have internalized self-discipline and surveillance. Could posthuman performativity help schools think about these moments in new ways, and consider interventions that are not rooted in individual choices?

One place where ideas of individual choice and human-only, always-equal agency are centered is in matters of teacher bathroom policy. One student wrote this about trying to access the school bathroom while she was menstruating:

> Different teachers have super different outlooks on when you must go to the bathroom and if you have to ask. Some don't really care as long as you take a hall pass, but others make sure that you ask. Last year, my gym class was directly after lunch. I asked to go use the restroom (because of something personal) and my teacher had me wait until she told the entire class to make sure they use the bathroom before coming to class because "you should know you'll be in class." I was super embarrassed but I had to head off to the office to get a feminine product from the nurse. Not a great experience.

The student in this account describes how her ability to respond to her bathroom needs is limited by the policy set by her teachers, That response, which the student described as "super embarrassed," is part of the material conditions of menstruating women. I have written about this particular intra-active phenomenon before, when I wrote a material phenomenology of menstruating teachers. One of my conclusions was that, "the hegemonic discourse surrounding menstruation mak(es) its way into the intra-action via materiality…these material conditions reveal how patriarchal discourse is built into the system of schooling" (2018, p. 11). This student, and other accounts like hers, are feeling the intra-action of school and teacher policies, the material structures, and the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The resulting shame, that super-embarrassed feeling, emerges from the enfolding of the intra-action that places the student standing in front of the

room, unable to stop menstruating, waiting to be allowed to leave and attend to her bodily needs.

Within the intra-action, students use what agency that have to avoid bathroom-related shame, instead disciplining their bodies to avoid the material place altogether. In an odd reflection of the self-disciplining response to the panopticon I opened this chapter with, students in the study expressed some of the elaborate planning they employ when attending/refraining from their biological needs throughout the day. One written account from a field site participant says, "I had a teacher in 6th grade where you could only go to the bathroom like 3 times per trimester. Luckily I had that class during 1st period so I never had to go, but I feel sorry for the people that had it at the end of the day or right after lunch." This moment of "feeling sorry" from this student is a reflection on how students' bodies are disciplined by the intra-action of material space, time,
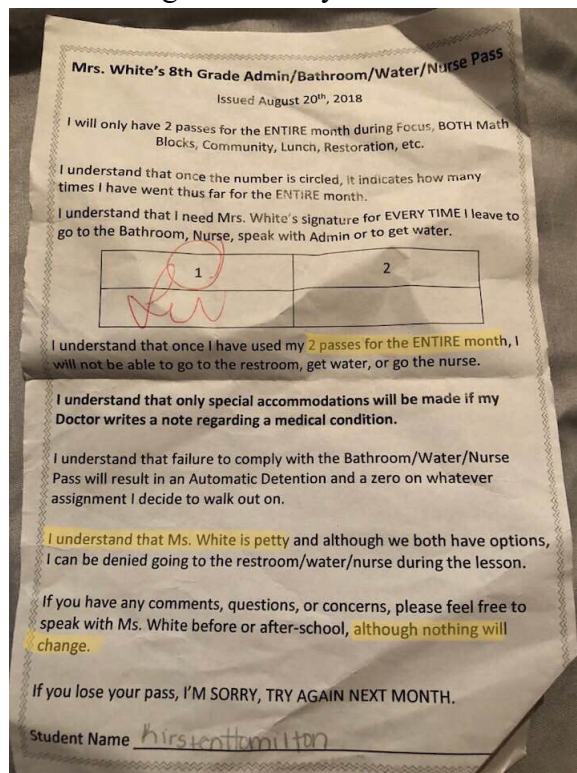

Figure 18: an example of a teacher's pass that went "viral"

and policy. The data I collected is full of examples of the self-regulation that students perform in their intra-active relationships with school bathrooms.

In some cases this self-regulation is in response to teacher and school policy. As one student said in focus group, "It's always nice when there is a teacher that you just have to ask and they just say yes or no but they usually say yes. Those are the classes that

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you plan to go to the bathroom during." Teacher policy looms large in the accounts I collected at the school, as well as the news reports I collected. In one incident that made multiple new reports, a mother posted on social media the pass her daughter was given at school, figure x. This pass indicated that students are given two opportunities to use the bathroom, get water, talk to administration, or go to the nurse per month. This wasn't just for a single class; this pass covered much of the students' day, including lunch. The pass was shared widely on social media, and eventually made local and national news reports and showed up in news alerts, because of the tone the teacher used. She included things like "please feel free to speak with Ms. White before or after school although nothing will change" and "if you lose your pass I'M SORRY, TRY AGAIN NEXT MONTH" (Earl, 2018). While this example of teacher policy was extreme, it shows the role that teacher policy, including the material items that are the proxy for those policies, play in students' lives.

If we look at these account of "planning" bathroom trips, or "avoiding" through a traditionally humanistic lens, this disciplining of the body is explicit and deliberate, a choice that students make. But using a Baradian lens, we can instead understand these accounts differently, begin to see the limits and shapes of possible performances for students within this particular enfoldment of the intra-action. These accounts are often framed as choices students' make – but as I listen to and read these accounts I begin to wonder how much choice is really available for students as they self-regulate their bodies during school hours.

Many students expressed in their writing and in the focus groups using strategies to regulate their bodies to avoid the need to used the bathrooms, because of the shame,

embarrassment, and disgust of being there. One student expressed this as a personal choice, saying "I wouldn't poop in a school bathroom because the toilets are disgusting so I have trained my body to never have to poop in a place where I would need to use any public bathroom." Social media posts echo this comment, but acknowledge the discomfort and distress that can result, with students posting things like, "i don't care how bad my stomach hurt i'm still not using the bathroom at school' (LowKlassKurfew 2019). Students had lively discussions in the focus groups of using strategies to self-regulate their bathrooms needs, like avoiding drinking water during the day or jumping up and down to suppress the urge to urinate until the feeling passed. These stories were shared proudly among a group of students who experience a position of relative privilege in world, being mostly white, middle class, and living in an affluent area of the city.

Even in this place of relative affluence, the intra-action of student, policy, and school bathrooms produced students who felt that shame and disgust. But the recent introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms into the school seems to have changed the intra-action, made available other possible actions for students. One strategy that some students used to avoid the bathrooms was to use the gender-neutral one, even if the student was not gender-nonconforming. The gender-neutral bathrooms were relatively new to the school, and consisted of two faculty bathrooms that had been repurposed as gender-neutral facilities a year before the study began. They were the only student bathrooms in the school that had full doors, and some students expressed that they used these bathrooms for the privacy. One student wrote,

> Looking at the photos made me slightly uncomfortable because I
> sometimes feel like I can't use the public bathrooms, so instead I use the

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gender neutral bathrooms which are more private and they don't have

other people in them. The photos didn't make me super uncomfortable but

mostly just reminded me why I use the alternative bathrooms.

This student's feeling, that they were not able to use the gendered bathroom, but these

ungendered ones were available, was echoed by students across the study. This student's

use of the word "public" to describe the gendered bathrooms, and then "private" to

describe the gender-neutral ones, may give us a clue as to how the introduction of those

bathrooms changed the intra-action. The discourse of hegemonic masculinity, including

the feelings of shame and fear that I saw so often associated with bathrooms, is felt less in

these new, gender neutral bathrooms. The material intra-action in this bathroom is not the

same as the others; the physical space is different, with full doors that shut out the

hallway and only one toilet per room. The intensely gendered experience of the main

bathrooms, which includes gendered signs, blue and pink coded tiles, is lessened. The

phenomnenon of gender-conforming students using the gender neutral bathrooms was

echoed on social media, with one Tweeter writing, "Gonna go take a shit in the One

gender neutral bathroom at school and have the door pounded on every three seconds

disturbing my peace" (m 2019). These tweets seems to indicate that using the gender-

neutral bathroom for privacy, regardless of your gender, is a common practice. This was

also mentioned in the focus groups. Several students indicated they had never used the

bathrooms before, but when the gender-neutral ones became available they used them,

despite not being gender-nonconforming. While the students mention privacy, the

differences in how these bathrooms are discussed and treated by students seems to go

beyond privacy. The introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms made using the bathroom at school thinkable for some students, when it had been unthinkable before.

All of these accounts of discipline and self-regulation of bathroom needs seem to indicate that the bathrooms are indeed functioning as a panopticon, encouraging discipline and the internalization of that discipline in students. But in these accounts of the intra-active phenomenon of school bathrooms there are hints of other things, the hauntings of entanglement with human/nonhuman actors that are shot-through with possibilities, changing with each enfolding, each agential cut. Remember, agential cuts, unlike Cartesian cuts, are local, interior, and ontological. Nothing is separated from the phenomenon, but instead is in what Barad describes as "the local condition of exteriority-within-phenomena" (2011, p. 125). What is momentarily separated by the agential cut is always already and still within the phenomenon – nothing is ever really external or excluded. Barad also reminds us that "all bodies, not merely human bodies, come to matter through the world's performativity—its iterative intra-activity" (2011 p. 125). This iterative nature of becoming can be seen in the shifting of relations and entanglements in response to the gender-neutral bathrooms – these things were always within in the phenomenon, but what is visible and accessible to us can change during our performative ongoing becoming of/with the world.

I've already discussed one such place of seeming contradiction, the intra-action of students and school bathrooms produce the bathrooms as both a private sanctuary and a place of social activity, sometimes at the same time. The gender-neutral bathroom being felt as private in the intra-action with students, while the gendered-bathrooms are felt as public, is another seeming contradiction that demonstrated how the phenomenon has

always contained possibilities for both, but what is visible to us is the result ongoing iterative enfoldings, all of which are haunted by possibilities of the other. In her discussion of quantum entanglements and hauntological relations, Barad explains that, "agential cuts – intra-actions – don't produce (absolute) separation, they engage in agential separability – differentiating and entangling (that's one move, not successive processes). Agential cuts radically rework relations of joining and disjoining" (2010, p. 265). This cut, joining and separating in one move, includes continuing relations/entanglements/obligations, as nothing is ever outside of the phenomenon. Social/sanctuary, public/private, these things are not separate but always entangled, each containing and defining the Other. Barad discusses how "entanglements are relations of obligation – being bound to the other – enfolded traces of othering. Othering, the constitution of an 'Other', entails an indebtedness to the 'Other', who is irreducibly and materially bound to, threaded through, the 'self'" (2010, p. 265). In this way, the perception of the gendered bathroom as "public" is produced by the same intra-active phenomenon that is contained/entangled/obligated to the production of the gender-neutral bathroom as "private." The social space of bathroom experienced by some study participants is materially bound to the "other" of bathroom-as-sanctuary. Each enfolding of the phenomenon is threaded through and indebted to the joining/separating of the agential cut, and the other is always-already a part of each phenomenon.

So can we account for the bodily discipline that is produced by school bathrooms through a Baradian lens, not a Foucauldian, and what will be gain if we do so? We have seen many examples of students disciplining their bodily production in relation to school

bathrooms. But I would suggest that this discipline also always-already contains, and is entangled with and indebted to, another kind of production: student as activists.

Student activism in and with their school bathrooms occurs frequently, often in the same space as bodily discipline in response to school bathrooms. In the data I collected for this project, this activism fell into two main categories: access and menstrual needs. Both are strongly present in the data from the field site, and in social media and news reports.

Students who are gender non-conforming report nearly universal difficulties in access to the bathroom, and as I discussed in the literature review, these students' ability to access the bathroom that matches their gender identity is critical to their school success and wellbeing (Beese & Martin, 2017; Bender-Baird, 2016; Murchison, Agénor, Reisner, & Watson, 2019; Philips, 2017; Porta et al., 2017; Wernick, Kulick, & Chin, 2017). Student advocacy online for bathroom access often includes access to bathrooms that match one's gender identity. However, news reports about school bathrooms and gender non-conforming students tend to focus on places outside the school bathrooms space: school board meetings, parent and administration conversations, and courtrooms. The data I gathered in the field had very few references to the actual experience of gender non-conforming students in school bathrooms. One student at the field site wrote, "give the trans kids some love. If you want to investigate the issues with bathrooms, I highly recommend paying some attention to the kiddos who don't even have one." Other than this single heartbreaking mention, the data from the field site did not include a discussion of the experiences of transgender and non-binary students. I speculate on why this might have been the case in the last chapter, when I discuss questions for further inquiry. While

I did not get enough data to comment directly to gender non-conforming students and school bathrooms, it is clear that their access to safe, functional bathroom spaces is less than secure. This insecurity is reflected in the advocacy I saw for more general access to bathrooms, as well as the tendency for many students, not just those who are gender non-conforming, to want to use the non-binary bathrooms.

The issue of locked bathrooms is common in local news reports and student newspapers, and most often it is students who are advocating for their access and rights through organized protests or other kinds of advocacy. One student wrote in her school paper,

> Many of the bathrooms here at South get locked, but one bathroom above others needs to always remain open: the all-gender bathroom. This second-floor bathroom, which was transformed from female-only to all-gender in 2015, is meant to be a comfortable place where transgender and nonbinary students can have access to a non-gender specific bathroom. But because of the disrespect it faces from students and its common inaccessibility, for some students using the bathroom has become more of a privilege rather than a right. (Tomkowitz, 2018)

This article went on to explain that many students were using the privacy of the all-gender bathroom, including some who used it to vape or skip class, which would result in locking the bathroom. This echoes the accounts I gathered from the field site of students who felt unsafe in or unable to use the gendered bathrooms being able to use the all-gender ones, regardless of their gender identity. These efforts to make bathrooms accessible, and bathrooms as a point of advocacy for students, has long been part of the

intra-active phenomenon of school bathrooms. As I discussed in the literature review, bathroom access advocacy has been a part of rights-activism historically, including in the integration of Little Rock, Arkansas, and the student Walkouts in East LA.

An emerging kind of bathroom advocacy is that of menstruation rights. The taboos around menstruation, despite the common need, would seem to indicate that students would self-discipline to be as silent and hidden as possible around their menstrual needs. Indeed, I discussed how school bathroom intra-actions can produce menstruating students as

Figure 19: The broken tampon dispenser at the field site.

shameful and "too embarrassed" earlier in this chapter. But this production of menstruating students as ashamed also always contained the possibility for otherwise: students as vocal advocates for their own menstrual needs. In every focus groups, students commented extensively on the photograph of the tampon dispenser that was included in the photo sort. One student said,

> I just need to talk about the tampon dispenser. Those NEVER work.
>
> They're always empty or they're broken. It's really a pain to go through
>
> the embarrassment and try to get one and end up with none. The worst part
>
> is, since there is none, there is literally no other way but for me go to the
>
> office and ask for one because the dispenser is broken. Why have that
>
> dang dispenser if it's broken!?

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The broken dispenser was a common theme for students at the filed site. "I think the one thing that really bothers me is that the tampon dispenser is broken and that is horrible," wrote a student. Another student wrote extensively about how the teachers in the school could better meet the menstrual needs of students:

> maybe the office should have supplies for when girls get their periods, and if they do, they should have some sort of sign or something that says that they have pads and stuff, and the girls won't be judged for asking for them. I know a lot of teachers have some pretty strict rules about going to the bathroom and how many times you can go, but there should be exceptions. No girl wants to explain that they've had to go to the bathroom in the same class for the past five days because of their period, especially when their teacher is a guy. I don't know; maybe that's just me, but I think that feminine supplies should be easily accessible, or more than they are now.

This advocacy didn't just begin with my arrival at the school. Students in the focus groups talked about the how, a few months prior to the study, a gender non-conforming student had worn tampon earrings to school to raise awareness of menstrual needs among students and staff. These creative and innovative acts of self-advocacy were also present on social media. This broken dispenser, along with other material conditions in the school, acted as part of the intra-action of bathroom space at my field site, and that intra-action sometimes produced students as self-advocates, speaking out not just to me as the questioning researcher, but to the administration of the school.

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The possibility for student advocacy as a part of the menstruating student/school bathroom intra-active phenomenon can be seen in the news as well, as students push their schools to accommodate menstruating bodies. Some students use social media as a tool to push back on taboo, or other creative demonstrations. In one tweet, a mother described menstrual activism among 7th graders, saying, "My friend's 7th grader goes

Figure 20: Tampon cookies used to protest lack of access to menstrual products at a middle school.

to a school where the kids organized for free tampons in the bathroom. The male principle said no because they would "abuse the privilege." The kids decided to stage a cookie protest. Behold the tampon cookies!" (Houge, 2019). New reports from around the country also show how this activism is increasing.

Student-led organizations, like Nadya Okomoto's *Period. The Menstrual Movement* (https://www.period.org/) organize to provide menstrual products to people in need, including those experiencing homelessness. They also work with local, student-led chapters to lead efforts to get free menstrual supplies in schools and universities. The effects of this advocacy can be seen in

Figure 21: pads prepared for a school awareness drive

high schools and middle schools around the country, as they begin to provide menstrual supplies alongside the toilet paper, soap, and paper towels (Hewitt, 2017; Knisely, 2018; Oster & Thornton, 2016). This advocacy has led to real change, including the states of California, New York, and Illinois passing legislation that requires schools to provide free menstrual supplies in at least half of their bathrooms (Malbon, 2018). At the time of this writing, many other states are considering measures to enact similar laws. Also, national attention has been draw to efforts to eliminate taxation on menstrual products, and a 2018 a federal law was passed that allows women to pay for menstrual supplies out of their health flexible spending accounts (Gaudiano, 2018).

Enfoldings, Othering, and Posthuman Performativity

How then, can these contradictions in the school bathroom be accounted for? The seeming dichotomy of sanctuary/sociality and discipline/activism can be understood if we think the data with Barad's ideas of entanglement and the Other. Barad describes entanglements as "relations of obligation—being bound to the other—enfolded traces of othering. Othering, the constitution of an 'Other,' entails an indebtedness to the 'Other,' who is irreducibly and materially bound to, threaded through, the 'self'—a diffraction/dispersion of identity. 'Otherness' is an entangled relation of difference (différance)" (Barad, 2011, p. 150). If we think of the panoptic nature of bathrooms as part of the intra-active phenomenon, rather than a property of the discursive, it becomes possible to think these manifestations of the intra-actions as something more than a fixed expression of panoptic power.

The moments of panoptic power seen in the data are part of an ongoing, entangled, intra-active phenomenon. These momentary manifestations of the material-

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discursive aren't forever fixed – they are the result of an agential cut that temporarily fixed the indeterminacy within the phenomenon, as it cut together/apart all entangled there. This is one enfolding, and while the panoptic power of school bathrooms might be visible in one moment of determinacy, the marks of other enfoldings are still present. These particular panoptic material-discursive manifestations are always already entangled, implicated, and active in the constitution of, and are indebted to, the "Other." Specifically, the sense of sanctuary and respite some students find in the bathroom is also already a part of the social interaction others find there, all possible and present but indeterminate within the phenomenon until an agential cut enacts a momentary enfolding. Discipline and activism are entangled, and both are possible, depending on how the phenomenon is enfolded in a particular intra-action.

A reminder about the importance of enfolding: as I said in chapter 3, enfolding is the shape and limits of a particular intra-active phenomena when it has moved temporarily from indeterminacy to fixed by intra-action with an apparatus. Every time an agential cut is enacted within a phenomenon, there is an enfolding, a reshaping that changed what is manifesting, but not all that is possible. Some enfoldings allow for the bathroom space to be panoptic – surveilling, disciplining. Other enfolding can allow possibilities contained with the phenomenon to come to the fore: sanctuary, respite. Other enfoldings enact the social. These changes don't mean that these things are not all always a part of the phenomenon, but that what performances are possible with a particular enactment of a phenomenon changes with the enfolding.

What difference does it make to shift from thinking about school bathrooms as an example of the poststructural concept of the panoptic, to an understanding of the panoptic

as a part of the material-discursive intra-active entanglement of the phenomenon that is the school bathroom? Moving from thinking of the bodily enactments of self-regulation and discipline as individual strategic adjustments, accomplished independently of the discursive or the material space, to considering these adjustments as a material-discursive manifestation of entangled intra-active phenomenon, opens space for possibilities of justice. As Barad says, "an ethics of entanglement entails possibilities and obligations for reworking the material effects of the past and the future. There can never be absolute redemption, but spacetimematter can be productively reconfigured, reworking (im)possibilities in the process" (2010, p. 150).

I am left with that question: how can schools productively reconfigure the spacetimematter of school bathrooms? Possibilities for activism and change are already entangled with/of the conditions of panoptic discipline and bodily regulation. But too much of our intervention and attention to school bathrooms relies on analyzing and explaining individual behaviors. If instead we could consider the ways particular enfoldings are produced within the phenomenon of school bathroom space, we might be able to find space to (re)work and (re)turn these (im)possiblities, and make space for justice-to-come.

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CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

Barad's (2007) ethico-onto-epistemology is both provocative and generative for education because it forces us to pay attention to which kinds of matter, human and non-human, matters.

Taylor & Ivinson, 2013, p.

School bathrooms are necessary, even essential, spaces in schools, but they are also spaces where complex issues tend to emerge.   They are contested sites, places where the material-discursive can be felt in the body, places that *matter* in students' lives and learning. Many pressing issues facing public schools, like student anxiety, threats of violence and other misbehavior, are seen acted out in and through the spaces of the school bathroom, but educational researchers have not studied bathrooms enough to be able to make informed recommendations to school administrators and policy-makers.

Historically, the school bathroom is a space that sits in plain sight but is also hidden by taboos. The school bathroom exists in an (in)visible state: it is always visible, but rarely looked at directly. Students often report that school bathrooms are unsafe, dangerous, or distasteful. The few research studies conducted, as well as student anecdotal reports, show there is often a lack of cleanliness and adequate supplies. Even meeting those basic needs can be a struggle for schools; bathrooms lacking soap and toilet paper cause disruption for the entire school. Acts of vandalism or other student misbehaviors can lead to locked bathrooms for the whole school.

News reports reveal schools having policy debates about who belongs in what bathroom space, while children in under-resourced schools face locked and broken facilities. Schools are closed, and students suspended, for writing threats of violence on

bathroom walls, while administrations remove bathroom stall doors, and discuss the merits of installing surveillance cameras in that most private of spaces. Evidence suggests that school bathrooms are disciplinary sites, enforcing normalization of certain cultural norms, but further investigation is needed, both on the historical functions of school bathrooms as well as on their role in contemporary schools.

In this study of school bathrooms, I aimed to open space to begin a more nuanced conversation about the role of school bathrooms in students' lives, in order to begin to make policy recommendations and find directions for further research. In order to open that space to think school bathrooms differently, I used a phenomenology of the material to frame the investigation and guide data analysis. By enacting a phenomenology of the material, I hoped to accomplish two major things. First, it allowed me to attend to material experiences rather than focusing on language and representation, as I attempt to articulate the tracings of material/discursive structures of inequity that leave marks when enfolded into phenomena. Material phenomenology takes the role of matter seriously, as material discursive is active within the intra-active phenomenon, both producing and produced by it.

A phenomenology of the material let me consider the material conditions of the bathrooms and how students are produced within the intra-action, while attempting to resist reinforcing structures of inequity. Instead of seeking to discover or uncover the inherent meaning of school bathrooms, I was able to articulate how social/discursive forces come to *matter* for and with students in those bathrooms, and recognize the effects of these forces how students are produced in these spaces. Additionally, using a phenomenology of the material also allowed me to articulate how the material structures

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of the world are also productive of the social/discursive as part of the intra-active phenomenon, such as in the discussion of how gender is produced of and with student intra-actions with the school bathrooms.

The second major thing a phenomenology of the material allowed me to accomplish in this study is to open new possibilities for how we can exist with our research sites, and the inextricably linked ways of enacting 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 in this work. When we entangle ourselves in our research site, we cannot pretend to some kind of objective observer status. Instead, as a researcher who has entangled myself with school bathrooms, I have an obligation to work towards justice in and with these spaces.

Thinking with a Phenomenology of the Material and Baradian theory moves this understanding of justice away from a human-centric conception of researcher as justice bringer, a construction that has a complicated history and is embedded in notions of paternalism and imperialism. Instead, thinking with quantum entanglement and intra-action opens space to consider how each intra-action always already contains possibilities for otherwise, possibilities for justice, in it's posthuman performativity. As Barad discusses in her essay, "After the End of the World:

> Each bit of matter, each moment of spacetimemattering, is shot through
> with an infinite set of im/possibilities for materially reconfiguring worlds
> and pastfuturespresents; surely these matters are nothing less than matters

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of justice. Is matter's un/doing not the mark of the force of justice that is
written into the fabric of the world? (2019, pp. 543-544)

For Barad, the idea that each intra-action contains its own possibilities for justice is a
critical one. She goes on to say that, "a force of justice is available with-in every moment,
every place, every bit of matter," and reminds us that traditional, colonial ways of
knowing cannot access these (p. 544). This shift away from human-centric, from colonial
ways on knowing, from epistemology to ethico-onto-epistemology, is neither simple nor
easy. It requires "welcoming the other in an undoing of the colonizing notion of selfhood
rather than as a marker of not us, not me" (pp. 544). This unmaking of colonizing notions
of selfhood is an uncomfortable but necessary part of a Phenomenology of the Material; I
do not claim to have performed this act perfectly as a researcher, but my view of the self,
of my/self and those iterative intra-actions that I am enfolded within, is forever changed
for having done this work.

Sometimes this iterative intra-active work is messy, and makes telling a story with
a clear beginning, middle, and end a more difficult task. When developing my research
design and considering how I would approach analysis, I attempted to seek to understand
the phenomenon of student bathroom experience at my field site, and to then place those
results in the larger context of the socio-historical world seen through social media and
news reports. This initial conception served as a stumbling block in many ways, as I had
to constantly correct for my own initial, naïve conception of the online data as the source
of the discursive. I originally conceived of the online data collection as part of the
literature review, providing a kind of background noise and historical context for the data
collected at the school with students. As I began to work with the data, however, it

became increasing clear that the online data was always already a part of the material-discursive that was present at the field site. While I feel I have overcome this division in my analysis, it is a potent reminder of the difficulty of working within posthuman and new materialist theory; one must always resist the pull of familiar, humanist thinking.

In conducting this study, I hoped to center public school bathrooms and investigate how these spaces shape and are shaped by the people who learn and teach in proximity to them. School bathrooms are understudied, as they are locations of taboo and silence; but simultaneously they are provocative spaces, where the material and the discursive are felt in the bodies of students and teachers. In order to create better relationships with their bathroom spaces, those who work and learn in schools need to understand how those relationships are influenced by the interplay of the historical and cultural context, the current discourses that center school bathrooms as sites of controversy, and the material conditions of the space itself. This study was a way to begin to explore that dynamic, by centering the school bathroom as an active participant in the experience to be studied. In doing so, I was able to develop some practical policy recommendations for how schools can begin to create better relationships with their bathrooms, and to begin to map lines of inquiry for further study in that most public of private spaces: the school bathroom.

While this data is one point of this study, there is another thread to be followed in this account; putting a phenomenology of the material into practice and seeing if and how it allowed me to think differently about the data I found. I brought a practice of seeing based on Material Phenomenology into this study deliberately, hoping to see how data analysis could be done differently, but I even so I was surprised by the themes and

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connections that became evident when I thought my data with this theory. As I consider results, I also will reflect on the process of analysis and how thinking with this theory of a phenomenology of the material led me to unexpected places, opening different ways of thinking about the intra-active phenomenon of the school bathroom.

Research Questions

I began the study by outlining some broad research questions that could guide my design and implementation. These questions are outlined below:

• How have school bathroom spaces been situated historically?

• What is the current sociocultural context of school bathrooms?

• How do students experience their school bathrooms?

• What effect do these experiences have on learning?

However, once I began data analysis, I began working with analytic questions (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). These questions are formulated by thinking research data with and through a specific theoretical framework.

I developed two sets of analytic questions for thinking with specific data from the study. First, I considered writing, both the writing on the bathroom walls and the writing that study participants did in response to photo prompts. For the analysis in chapter 5, I developed these broad analytic questions to guide my inquiry: How is this writing produced as part of the intra-active phenomenon? How are the marks of this particular enfolding made visible? What does this intra-action open space for in the experiences of students and schools?

Chapter Six deals with the contradictions and dualities, including public/private and sanctuary/sociality, that I saw in school bathrooms. As I began thinking this data

with a phenomenology of the material (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), I developed the following analytic questions: What are bathroom spaces *doing* in the intra-action that makes these seemingly contradictory things possible in the experience? How are each of these contradictions (sanctuary/sociality, hidden/watched, discipline/activism) produced by the material/discursive intra-action of the phenomenon, and what do they produce in turn?

Summary of Significant Findings

One of the major moves that I was able to enact in this study was considering school bathrooms as part of the co-constitution of the school environment and students as a community. In other words, … I was able to move away from thinking of student bathrooms as a tool for students to use, and considering the bodily enactments of self-regulation and discipline that students perform there, as individual strategic adjustments, accomplished independently of the discursive or the material space. Instead, I considered these relationships and enactments of/with bathroom space as a material-discursive manifestation of entangled intra-active phenomenon. While this move may seem theoretical, it can also have some very practical applications. By thinking of school bathrooms as active space in the constitution of a school community, it is possible to consider what those spaces are doing in our attempts to address school problems, rather than focusing on individual student behavior or misbehavior. From my analysis, I have identified three main areas in which bathrooms are co-constitutive of students in schools: biological, affective, and social.

Bodily Functions

When we think of school bathrooms our first thought is often of biological needs, or basic bodily functions. Students elimination and menstruation needs can shape the course of their entire school day. Four-minute passing periods don't allow much time for student bathroom use, and many teachers discourage bathroom use through offering extra credit or limiting the number of passes a student may receive. Access is further limited when administration locks the bathroom doors in response to violence, vandalism, or vaping. Many students in the study reported that they rarely eat much, and certainly don't drink, while they are at school.

These simple accounts take on more complexity when considering bathrooms as part of an ongoing intra-active phenomenon that co-constitutes students, teachers, and schools. School bathroom spaces are historical and contextual, and can't be separated from that history and all that comes with it. Public bathrooms in general and school bathrooms in particular have been civil rights battlegrounds since they began. The bodily function of self-disciplining of biological needs required by lack of access is shot through with these historical traces of hierarchies, power, and violence.

Another less obvious way school bathrooms intra-act with bodily functions is discussed in chapter five's discussion of threats written on bathroom walls. These material marks intra-act within the phenomenon with schools and discourses of un/safety to produce both a public perception of schools as unsafe and the increased policing of children's bodies. This bodily function, increased policing and controlling of certain bodies in our schools, is felt by students and teachers alike, and is reflected in the fear of violence at school they all feel, even when statistically, schools have never been safer.

This safety is not reflected in the experiences of teachers and students in schools, as I discussed in the literature review. Teachers and students are subjected to "shooter" trainings, which requires them to hide, to flee, to be shot "execution style" by rubber bullets (Sakuma, 2019). In schools, young children sing songs about, "Lockdown, lockdown, lock the door. Shut the lights off, say no more" (BBC News, 2018). These expressions and experiences of fear are not separate from the material conditions of schools, but are felt in the bodies as fear and trauma. An additional product of this intra-action is that students who write threats on bathroom walls face disproportionate discipline based on this fear, including criminal charges, despite the arguable safety of these spaces.

In chapter six, the analysis examined school bathrooms impact on bodily functions related to access: principals lock bathrooms, students act out through vandalism, teachers police bathrooms. Thinking with Barad, we saw students who bear the traces of the enfolded intra-action of school and teacher policies, the material structures, and the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. The resulting shame, that super-embarrassed feeling, results in discipline of bodily functions, both in the failure to respond to bathroom needs, and in the feelings of shame and disgust that come with using, or even thinking about or discussing, the bathrooms. The introduction of gender-neutral bathrooms, for some students, changed this intra-action enough to allow the possibility of bathroom use while at school, where it hadn't existed before. Even though these students do not identity as gender non-conforming, the gender neutral spaces changed the intra-action, creating new enfoldings that, for some, allow this bodily function to be possible.

This examination of ways that the intra-actions we are a part of both make possible and limit our bodily functions is a slippery bit of theory, once again needing the reminder that is not a traditional humanist, cause/effect process. Instead it is a process of agential cuts, joining/separating in one move within a phenomenon, fixing the indeterminate just for a moment, enfolding the shape of what is possible.

Affective Functions

School bathrooms also function affectively: they play a role in how students' affective domain, which, according Bloom's taxonomy concerns students' emotional response, attitudes, values and appreciation for motivation in learning (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia 1964). At best, students use the bathroom to help them self-regulate; frustration in class can be briefly escaped, and a moment of respite can leave students ready to meet the challenges of class. In other enfoldings, an angry student writes a threat on bathroom walls, while another student enters a stall for a moment of privacy and shuts the door with a sigh of relief.

The affective function of bathrooms is again not a simple cause-effect, one-size-fits-all theory. But the intra-action of student and school bathroom is productive, as we saw in the data. In chapter five, the students who wrote threats on bathroom walls often didn't seem to grasp the severity of the action or the consequences they would face. The bodily act of writing on the wall does not itself produce these material effects. There is a much more complex intra-action of the discursive forces centered on violence in schools and the writing itself and the bodies in these spaces that produce the outsized effects of police involvement and criminal charges. This intra-action also produces the feelings of fear and respite, of sanctuary and threat, that I saw throughout the study.

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These feelings are important to pay attention to, as they can be clues to help us map the shape of repeated enfoldings of the intra-action. The gender-neutral bathroom being felt as private in the intra-action with students, while the gendered-bathrooms are felt as public, is another seeming contradiction, but it reminds us that phenomenon has always contained possibilities for both. What is visible to us is the resulting ongoing iterative enfoldings, all of which are haunted by possibilities of the Other. When a student describes her trips to the bathroom, saying "I do that sometimes, I go to the bathroom when I don't need to. But it's not, like, about my phone. I mean, yeah, I use my phone, but mostly I just need a minute, you know?" she is expressing how the bathroom plays a role in her ability to self-regulate her emotions, but this enfolding also contains possibilities for otherwise. The production of school bathroom as a place for pause and reflection is also entangled with the production of bathroom as threatening, as I saw from the examples of anger at even being asked to think about the bathroom on the part of some of the male-identifying students in the study.

 Despite (or perhaps because of) the range of possible productions, the intra-active phenomenon that includes school bathrooms is implicated in students' attitudes of emotional responses to their world. Interestingly, this seems to be true regardless of whether an individual student actually feels able to use the restroom or not. Ironically, when one considers the lengths some students go to in order to avoid bathroom use, by being a part of the intra-action that produces students at school, the school bathroom is felt in student's lives whether they use it or not.

Social Functions

Finally, school bathrooms function socially. The places and times students interact with the bathrooms constitutes them as particular types of people, indicating big things like social status, class, gender, and sexuality; as well as more subtle things like friend groups and interests. As one student wrote, school bathrooms are associated with "all the people listening, looking, and judging you."

The bathrooms can reinforce feelings of aloneness or isolation, as well as enhance feelings of self-worth and social belonging. This is a function of how each enfolding of the intra-action always contains possibilities for doing or being differently. What is momentarily fixed by an agential cut as "exterior" is always already and still within the phenomenon – nothing is ever really external or excluded. Barad also reminds us that "all bodies, not merely human bodies, come to matter through the world's performativity—its iterative intra-activity" (2011 p. 125). This iterative nature of becoming can be seen in students describing bathrooms in terms of social interactions with others – either being with friends, being excluded, or constructing an out-ward facing, social self. These things were always within in the phenomenon, but what is visible and accessible to us can change during our performative ongoing becoming of/with the world.

Implications on Policy

While I am hesitant to attempt to generalize from this study, these findings have some immediate implications for school bathroom policies. Ultimately, bathrooms play an important role in the life of a school, and bathroom policies need to be carefully crafted in response to the needs of the student body. This issue is complicated by the

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taboo nature of the bathrooms and their implication in complex formations of students'

self-identities, which makes it difficult for students to self-report their own needs.

However, even acknowledging these limitations I am able to make some simple

suggestions for
school-level
policymakers.

The
privacy that is
provided by the
all-gender or
gender-neutral

Figure x: the renovated, all-use bathrooms at Grant High School in Portland.

bathroom isn't just needed/desired by a few gender non-conforming students. The

moments of privacy afforded by a single-stall bathroom can allow students a chance for

necessary physical elimination, a place with adequate space and privacy to cope with the

effects of menstruation, and also provide students with a moment to self-regulate their

emotional responses to the day. While renovation to all single-room bathrooms isn't

practical for most schools, new construction and renovations to existing facilities should

prioritize these kinds of single-stall spaces that have doors and walls that close

completely and extend from the ceiling to the ground. One example of this kind of

construction can be found at Grant High School in Portland, Oregon, where they have

renovated that bathroom to be "all-user" and privacy friendly, with enclosed stalls and a

sign that displays a simple toilet, rather than the binary-reinforcing male and female

figures found on most bathroom signs. The school had previously converted a few single-

stall faculty bathrooms into gender-neutral bathrooms for students, but found that these

bathrooms had higher demand that anticipated. Wilcox, the lead designer on the

renovations, says, "What the students observed was that no one wanted to go into the

traditional bathrooms; it's not just a transgender issue; it's about privacy" (Basalyga,

2019).

Another main finding of this study is that attempts by teachers and administrators

to limit student bathroom use can impact students in unintended ways. The first priority

of bathroom policies should be providing all students access to safe, functioning

bathrooms during the school day. When teachers put classroom restrictions on bathroom

use it reinforces the material-discursive constitution of students with strict bodily

discipline and self-regulation that can lead to physical problems as well as mental

distress. Also, while individual acts of vandalism or misbehavior may happen, closing the

bathroom has a larger and more negative effect on students than many administrators

realize.

The final policy recommendation that arose from this study would be to

decriminalize bathroom graffiti and student threats of violence. A threat at one school is

felt in the bodies of students in the entire community, and large events, like the Parkland

shooting, can become part of the intra-actions of students and schools nationwide. Adults

are not separate from these intra-actions and manifestations, as can be seen in the

increasing police presence in our increasingly safe schools, and resulting criminal

prosecution of students who write on the walls. But adults are in a place where they can

intervene in the criminalization of these students. We know, despite the discourse of

violent and fear associated with schools, that schools are the safest they have ever been,

and our policies should reflect this by handling incidents like threatening graffiti without the involvement of law enforcement.

Future Research

This study approached the investigations of school bathrooms very broadly, in an attempt to begin scholarly conversation about the ways bathrooms and students intra-act. As such, there are many possibilities for further, more specific research to be found in this data. A few stand out in particular as possibly fruitful areas for further inquiry.

First, the connection between hegemonic masculinity, school bullying, and bathroom spaces seems to be important. Researchers could learn a lot by considering what the effects of removing the gender-binary markers on school bathrooms in favor of all-gender bathrooms has on masculine-coded violence. The problems of gender-coded violence and fear in schools are complex and have far reaching effects. Removing gender-codes from school bathrooms could be an effective way to provide access to safe bathrooms without stigma for gender non-conforming youth, which is an urgent issue.

Also, the effects of bathroom policies on menstruating students warrants further investigation. Providing free menstrual supplies in bathrooms is an obvious intervention that has yet to be studied in a serious way, and could have a large effect on girls' school performance. I suspect the addition of menstrual products into the intra-action will open space for new and different intra-actions, which, as we have seen, do not always lead where we may expect with a naïve notion of cause and effect.

Summary

Reflecting on this study, from the initial conception to study design, through data gathering and analysis, leads me to wonder: Did this study of school bathrooms, using

phenomenology of the material as a method, accomplish what I intended when I began? The very actions of designing and completing the study entangled me in the phenomenon I studied. At the onset of the study, I asked some very broad questions. What questions need to be asked of school bathrooms? What kind of relationships do students have with these spaces, and where might some possibilities for positive interventions lie?

In addition to these questions about the bathrooms themselves, I also had questions about my methods of design and analysis. Could thinking with feminist phenomenologists about being-in-the-world, through the lens of Baradian methods, open space to see what school bathrooms are producing and produced by in the intra-active phenomenon? Would using a quantum diffractive analysis with my data open space to think differently?

These questions inevitably led me to places I didn't expect to go, but they were places that allowed different ways of thinking about the intra-actions of school bathrooms, students, schools, and learning. The entanglement of students, discourses of school violence, and feelings of (un)safety have real, material consequences for students and teachers, and thinking with a phenomenology of the material allowed me to consider these entanglements in new ways. The ways students articulated their (un)social experiences through stories told with/on school bathrooms allowed me to consider the possibilities opened by gender-neutral bathrooms not just for the immediate concerns of gender-conforming students (which are urgent and need addressing), but also how removing gender-markers from toilets could affect the entire student body.

These results suggest that when I center my phenomenological account of a space on the material space itself, and am guided by Barad and other new materialists to

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diffractively read across the data, it is possible to open space to see differently, and to

consider new ways of being in that space. Especially in places that are elusive or difficult

to study using more conventional methods, a phenomenology of the material can be a

useful tool to help us understand how intra-active phenomenon are producing schools in

particular ways. Perhaps most importantly, this kind of analysis can help us move beyond

seeking solutions in changing individual behavior, or relying on reactive punishments.

Instead, we can think about interventions that disrupt or change the current enfolding of

the intra-action, creating space for new enfolding, and possibilities for doing differently.

Finally, the lessons of intra-activity are not just methodological, but also ethical. We are

entangled with the word through its/our ongoing iterative intra-activity. When we do

research, we are bound to and with the work. Barad discusses how considering intra-

actions allows, even demands, "an opening up to all that is possible in the thickness of the

Now in rejecting practices of a-void-ance, taking responsibility for injustices, activating

and aligning with forces of justice (Barad 2019 p. 534).

We are responsible for what we are entangled with; we are part of its becoming,

as it is part of ours. Barad discusses how matter, when understood through quantum

physics, "entails in its very structure the undoing of identity, individuality, essence… The

self is dispersed/diffracted through being and time." (2019, p. 541-542) These

connections of entanglement are not mere new-age meditations, expressions of my

discrete self touching the immanent. Instead, according to Barad:

> the self—or should we say 'itself,' which is not 'itself'—is not merely
>
> interrupted by human others but also by a host of other others, including
>
> the hauntological relationalities of inheritance and the hauntological

wanderings/wonderings of nothingness. In the example we've been

discussing this would include the irruptions of the forces of capitalism,

colonialism, and militarism, but also an infinite set of possibilities for their

undoings. (2019, p. 534).

In this account of school bathrooms, we have seen irruptions of forces of hegemonic

masculinity, the bodily functions of discipline, social hierarchies, and the paternalism of

schools. But Barad would have us understand that inside each of these phenomenon, part

of the intra-active becoming, is also the haunting of the Other. Barad reminds us:

This is no small matter! Inside the nucleus of the atom is an implosion of

violent legacies, sedimenting historicities of colonialism, racism,

extractivist capitalism, militarism, neocolonialism, and also the seeds of

their downfall and possibilities for living and dying otherwise. (2019, p.

534).

So in this way, entangled research is also obligation, and a necessary always-already

orientation towards justice.

APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

DATE: November 06, 2018   **IRB Protocol Number: 09102018.009**

TO: Kristidel McGregor, Principal Investigator
             Department of Education Studies

RE: Protocol entitled, "Necessary Spaces: Student Experiences of School Bathrooms"

Notice of IRB Review and Approval
Expedited Review as per Title 45 CFR Part 46 # [6,7]

The project identified above has been reviewed and approved by the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research has been determined to be no greater than minimal risk and qualifies for expedited review procedures.

For this research, the following additional determinations have been made:
- The study as described satisfies the requirements for additional protections for children involved as subjects in research under 45 CFR Part 46.404.

- The IRB has waived the requirement to obtain parental permission under 45 CFR 46.116(d) to allow for the use of the "passive consent" procedure as described in the study materials.

Contingency:

- Approval or permission must also be obtained from the school(s) where this research will be conducted. Please provide documentation of approval to Research Compliance Services once obtained.

The IRB has approved the research to be conducted as described in the attached materials. As a reminder, it is your responsibility to submit any proposed changes for IRB review and approval prior to implementation.

Approval period: November 06, 2018 - November 05, 2019

If you anticipate the research will continue beyond the IRB approval period, you must submit a request for continuing review approximately 60 days prior to the expiration date. **Without continued approval, the protocol will expire on November 05, 2019 and human subject research activities must cease.** A closure report must be submitted once human subject research activities are complete. Failure to maintain current approval or properly close the protocol constitutes non-compliance.

You are responsible for adhering to the *Investigator Agreement* submitted with the initial application for IRB review. The responsibilities of the agreement are reiterated at the end of this letter below. You are responsible for conduct of the research and must maintain oversight of all research personnel to ensure compliance with the IRB approved protocol.

The University of Oregon and Research Compliance Services appreciate your commitment to the ethical and responsible conduct of research with human subjects.

Sincerely,

Brandi Fleck
Research Compliance Administrator

INVESTIGATOR AGREEMENT

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

A. Conduct of the Research

1. I accept responsibility for the ethical conduct of this research and protection of participants as set forth in the Belmont Report, Declaration of Helsinki, the Nuremberg Code, the Common Rule, and the ethical principles of my discipline.

2. I accept responsibility for the conduct of this research ensuring this research is conducted according to

       a.   sound research design and methods;
       b.   the IRB approved protocol including the informed consent process;
       c.   the applicable terms of the grant, contract and/or signed funding agreements; and
       d.   applicable laws and regulations, including those for protecting the rights, safety, and welfare of human subjects.

3. I certify that I am or my faculty advisor is sufficiently qualified by education, training, and/or experience to assume responsibility for the proper conduct of this research. I accept responsibility for ensuring that members of this research team, including study staff and trainees, are appropriately qualified, trained and supervised.

4. I accept responsibility to personally conduct and/or directly supervise this research. I certify that I have sufficient time and resources to properly conduct and/or supervise this research for which I am responsible.

B. Ensuring and Maintaining Compliance

1. I will comply with relevant regulatory and institutional requirements, including those relating to conflicts of interest, responsible conduct of research and research misconduct.

2. I understand it is my responsibility to ensure that any research personnel, including myself, responsible for the design, conduct, and reporting of research declare any potential conflicts of interests related to the research and to maintain current records. I will ensure changes in conflicts of interest are promptly disclosed to the IRB.

3. I will ensure that informed consent is obtained as approved by the IRB and a copy is provided to participants, unless the IRB waives these requirements.

INVESTIGATOR AGREEMENT
Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

4. I will obtain initial IRB approval prior to implementing human subject research activities as well as prior approval for any amendments to this research.

5. I will conduct this research within the approval period issued by the IRB. I agree to submit a request for continuing review of this research at least 45 days in advance of the expiration date.

6. I will submit a closure report form prior to protocol expiration or within 45 days of completion of all activities involving human subjects or identifiable participant data.

7. I will maintain approval, as applicable, with collaborative entities including approvals from other countries or jurisdictions.

8. I will promptly report to the IRB (no later than seven days of discovery) any instances of noncompliance with the approved protocol or requirements of the IRB and any unanticipated problems.

9. I will assist in the facilitation of any monitoring and/or auditing of study activities and/or records as required by the IRB, funding entities, sponsors, and any federal and state regulatory agencies.

C. **Investigator Records, Reports and Documentation**

1. I will maintain research records, all protocol materials, and any other documents associated with this research (e.g., research plan, signed consent forms, and IRB correspondence).

2. I will maintain records for at least three years after this research ends, or for the length of time specified in applicable regulations or institutional or sponsor requirements, whichever is longer. I will take measures to prevent accidental or premature destruction of these documents.

3. I will ensure the safe and secure storage of this research data (whether in paper or electronic formats) and for protecting the confidentiality of the data in accordance with the approved protocol.

4. I will submit written reports to the IRB and permit inspection of the research records as required by the IRB.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
	Note: When amending this form, highlight any changes (e.g., adding a new researcher, change in research role) **Name** (Last Name, First Name)	**Email**	**Institutional Affiliation** (Name of the researcher's home institution If not affiliated with an institution, indicate "N/A")	**If not affiliated with UO, does home institution have an IRB?** (Yes/No or N/A)	**Research Role/Title** (limited to those listed in the drop-down list)	**Human Subjects Training Date**	**Responsible for Design, Conduct, or Reporting?** (Yes/No)	**Interact with Participants and/or Identifiable Participant Data?** (Yes/No)	**Include on General Corresp.?** (Yes/No)	**Brief Description of Research Responsibilities (e.g., research design, data analysis, data collection, etc.)**	**Additional** Relevant Training (e.g., translator qualifications, blood borne pathogens, fMRI, first aid/CPR, specific methodology, etc.) include **short description**, training dates and expiration date, if any (if none, indicate "N/A")
	McGregor, Kristidel	Kristide@uoregon.edu	Univeristy of Oregon		Principal Investigator	renewed 8/14/2018	Yes	Yes	Yes	research deign, data collection, data analysis	N/A
	Mazzei, Lisa	mazzei@uoregon.edu	Univeristy of Oregon		Faculty Advisor		No	No	Yes	faculty advisor	N/A

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Research

Study Title: Necessary Spaces: Student Experiences of School Bathrooms

Protocol Number: TBD

Principal Investigator: Kristidel McGregor

A. Introduction and Background

An average public school is home-away-from-home to hundreds of students and dozens of teachers. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, more than 50 million students reported to public elementary and secondary schools in the fall of 2017. All of these students need to use the bathroom at some point throughout their day. School bathrooms are public spaces for private parts, and what happens there is often unspoken and taboo, yet every public school must have them.

As the book *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* notes, the words "*public* and *toilet* do not sit well together, and the discord goes beyond words" (Molotch & Norén, 2010). While some research has been done on public school restrooms, most of it was not conducted in the United States, or was focused on the toilet training of small children (Kistner, 2009; Norling, Stenzelius, Ekman, & Wennick, 2016; Ramos, Blea, Trujillo, & Greenberg, 2010; Vernon, Lundblad, & Hellstrom, 2003). Sociologist have conducted some inquiries on public toilets in general (Blumenthal, 2014; Horan, 1996; Molotch & Norén, 2010), as have queer theorists and scholars of gender (Cavanagh, 2010; Gershenson & Penner, 2009; Ingrey, 2012; Wernick, Kulick, & Chin, 2017), but educational researchers have, for the most part, averted their gaze from school bathrooms and their effects on teaching and learning.

A few educational researchers, most notably school nurses, have investigated school restrooms as a health issue. In these studies, school restrooms are found to be dirty, or lacking necessities such as toilet paper, hand soap, and paper towels (Norling et al., 2016; Ramos et al., 2010). Additionally, students report school bathroom are unsafe, often because of a lack of privacy. Stalls may lack doors, or

have large gaps between panels, or be overcrowded (Gewertz, 2003; Ingrey, 2012; Perkins, Perkins, &

Craig, 2014; Vernon et al., 2003). Bathrooms are often cited as locations of bullying and violence,

either person-to-person or through lack of access to the toilet that matches one's gender identity

(Ingrey, 2012; Perkins et al., 2014; Wernick et al., 2017). But once recent study that used GIS mapping

to locate sites of bullyingwithin a school discovered that it was not all school bathrooms that were sites

of bullying, but those in particular locations in the school, suggesting that there is a more complicated

dynamic at play in determining in which locations

bullying occurs (Migliaccio, Raskauskas, &
Schmidtlein, 2017).

The reality is that there is very little research that has been done on school bathrooms themselves. The taboo nature of the topic of bathrooms in general surely contributes to this lack, and that sense of taboo is heightened by the bathrooms in questions being intended for children. School bathrooms are spaces with complex, overlapping, and important effects on teaching and learning in public schools, but we currently do not have the research to make informedrecommendations. This study is designed to begin to fill that gap.

B. **Specific Aims/Study Objectives**

I've outlined a broad research question to guide this project: How do students experience their school bathrooms, and how do these experiences influence learning? As I begin to "think with theory" during dataanalysis, I will use this overarching research question to develop analytical questions to ask of my data.

C. **Methods, Materials and Analysis**

Throughout the data collection phase, I will be taking field notes documenting the process and my own observations of the field site. These field notes will be written at the end of each day on site, and will consist of my overall impressions of the day and activities in the classroom, or with the picture group, focus group or zine group. I will not include names or other identifying information in these notes, and they will be used to help me reflect on my data collection process. These notes will be kept in a journal that will be kept in a lockerdrawer or will be on a password-protected laptop computer.

I will work with 1-3 English teacher(s), in 1-3 classrooms, depending on interest at the field site. The field site isa high school with classes running 72 minutes, and activities for the Some of the data collection activities involve collaborative work with these teachers, notably the Classroom Writing Lesson Plan, and as such some parts of that plan are left somewhat vague. However, my interactions with students are well-defined.

The first stage of the project includes student participant photography and analysis. Recruiting students participants with ELA teachers from their classrooms, I will ask a group of 3-18 (depending on participating classes, 3-6 students per participating class, 1-3 classrooms participating) students to take photographs of thebathrooms within their school (see Photography Instructions). The students will be instructed to take picturesthat show points of interest or things of importance, but no people may be depicted in these photographs.

Photographs will be anonymously turned in to me on cameras or onto the website. When I am downloadingdata from cameras or the website, I will first scan for any images of people, body parts, or anything inappropriate. Any photo of this nature will be deleted and not included in the data collection for the study.

Because of the taboo nature of taking photos in bathrooms, I will also arrange to provide and supervise a timeto take the photos when there are not other students present – such as during class, or after school. These times will be in addition to any photos the students take on their own. Students may use their own cameras, such as on a smartphone, or they can use a digital camera that I provide. After one week, students will turn the cameras in to me, or they can upload the photographs they take on their own devices onto the project website. All photos will be anonymous – not even I will know who took which pictures.

Next, I will conduct semi-structured focus groups with small groups (4-5) of students, using the Student PhotoFocus Group protocol. The number of focus groups will depend on the number of classrooms participating inthe project – one focus group for each participating class. These students could be the same students who took the photographs, or they might not; either is acceptable. Each group will be given printed copies of the

photos of the bathrooms taken by both myself and the students and asked to sort them into self-chosen

categories. Then I will ask them about the categories they chose, why they sorted the photos the way they did, and to reflect on the process. These focus groups will take 45 minutes and will be audio recorded. These focus groups will take place at school, in a conference room, and will take place during class. The class will not be one that is focused on the writing workshop, but will be a separate class. Because sStudents will miss one English class to participate in the group, and participatinging will require permission from the teacher.

These focus groups will be audio-recorded, and later transcribed for analysis. I will not record identifying information about the participants, beyond the assent forms.

Once the photos have been sorted and discussed, I will meet with the participating ELA teachers and curate a series of the photos to be used in class as prompting photographs to produce additional art and writing about students' school bathroom experiences. Participating classes will do a three day (72 minute classes) writing workshop, to be conducted in class during class time, using the photographs and a series of mini- lessons to produce a variety of art and writing about their school bathrooms. The mini-lessons will cover specific writing skills, and be developed jointly by myself and the participating teachers. These writing mini- lessons will respond to areas of need for the class, as determined by the ELA teacher. In total, these classroom activities will take 60 minutes per day, for a total of 180 minutes. I will be available to co-teach as many of these lessons as the participating teacher(s) desire, and will be taking field notes throughout the classes.

Artifacts will be collected from the student work produced in these classes, but will be completely anonymous. At no time will I remove student work from the classroom; instead, after each class I will cover identifying information and either digitally scan or photograph the student work to be included in the project. No record will be kept of student identifying information in relation to these artifacts.

Additionally, acknowledging the sensitive nature of the topic, I will also create a web site to go

along with theproject. On the site, there will be a place for participants to upload their artwork, writing, and poetry anonymously to be included in the project, if they do not want to share it publicly in class.

The website will also house a survey that participating students can take anonymously, the Student Online Survey. The survey should take 10 minutes to complete. The maximum number of student who might take the survey is 90 students,(in the case of 3 participating classes of 30, and they all participate. The actual number of participants could be much lower. The upload site and student survey will be password protected,and the password given to students only after they have turned in an assent form for the project.

The culminating product for this project will be the creation of a Zine. "Zine" is the term for a self-produced magazine or web-magazine. The Zine will be curated by a group of no more than 15 students, myself, and any ELA teachers who want to participate. This group will meet after school for 60 minutes, 3 times, for a totalof 180 minutes to review submission and determine the layout and production for the final project. This Zine will be published publicly on the project website, and will also have a limited-number paper of paper copies, to be provided to the ELA teachers for distribution to students. All work will be published anonymously.

Participant time engaged varies, depending on activities participated in:

Classroom mini-lessons =

180 minutesFocus group = 45

Survey = 10

Zine production = 180 minutes.

Least time engaged (classroom only) =
180 minutesMost time engaged (all activities) =
415 minutes

The teacher is mainly operating a point of access for me. She is allowing me time in her classroom, and access to these students. I'll be team-teaching the writing lessons with her. If the study were not happening, there would still be writing instruction in the classroom, but it

would take a different form.

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The teacher(s) will be taking the lead in identifying what writing skills are to be taught. I will be working with them to figure out the best ways to teach those skill through the content of school bathrooms (the haiku about the bathroom, for example)" I'm working with the teacher involved to make the study as "organic" as possible, but the teacher will be involved only with suggesting writing content to be taught, and working with me to develop the writing portion of the classroom activities. These are also the activities that would be happening regardless of the study. I will be responsible for developing those activities that will only happen because the study is being done.

So, the writing lesson would be happening regardless of research, but that fact that the content of the writing practice will be about school bathrooms is a result of the study. For example, students would already be learning about rhetorical techniques for persuasion - but they would have been writing about something other than school bathrooms. A simpler example would be: students are already learning about haikus - but they are writing haiku about school bathrooms as a result of the study. The photos would not be classroom assignment, but are only being done as a result of this study. The Zine is also an extra project that would not be done if not for the study.

The focus group data, classwork (photographic, drawing, writing), and the Zine will then be analyzed qualitatively, using thematic and linguistic analysis through a phenomenological lens, in conjunction with theethnographic field notes taken throughout the process.

D. **Research Population & Recruitment Methods**

The research population is high school students. The study materials will be provided in English.

For each participating class (I anticipate 1-3), I will recruit 3-6 students (total of 3-18) to take photographs ofthe school bathrooms during a one-week window. These students will be recruited in consultation with the participating teacher, who will recruit students in their own class.

I have access to these classrooms through the permission of the teacher(s) involved, and their principals, andultimately their districts. I located teachers through my personal networks, and am securing their permissionand interest first. Next, I am approaching principals and explaining the study activities, and will secure their permission for all stages of the study before beginning. Once I have permission from teacher and building administrators, I will take those permissions to the district level to request permission. Currently, I have a fewteachers interested in the project, and will be approaching

principals after I have secured IRB approval. I anticipate possibly having to adapt the study to address concerns of the principal or district involved, and I will file an amendment to this document describing any changes made to the research plan at the request of the school site.

Once those permissions are secured, I will be securing permissions for the photos, focus group, and zine group in the form of assents from the students. I will come to the classroom, pass out the opt-out form, and explain the project to the students. I will also mail home a copy of the opt-out form for parents. I will verbally explain the photo, focus group, and zine as extra activities that students may choose to participate in, using the verbal assent acitivies explanation script. I will leave a sign-up sheet with the teacher, for students to express their intent to participate in these activities. One consideration is that students will miss class to participate in these projects; therefore, the teacher also needs to give permission for the student to be gone.

For the photo group, I will come to the classroom on the agreed upon day, and the students who expressedinterest will come with me to a separate location, like a conference room. I will explain the photo project

again, using the assent form and the script on that form. At that time, students will sign the assent forms ifthey want to participate.

For the focus groups, I will again come to the classroom at an agreed upon time, and take the students who expressed interest in participating to a separate location, most likely a conference room. Once there, I will explain the focus group, using the focus group assent form and the script on that form. Students who chooseto sign the assent form and participate will stay and the focus group will take place then.

For the zine, students who express interest in participating will be asked to meet after school in the classroom.At the beginning of that first meeting, I will get students' assent using the language in the assent forms.

As I progress with the project, I will also be in constant communication with school administration. I may need to make accommodations to the research plan in order to comply with school policy; if I do, I will file anamendment to this document.

Right now, I am in conversation with two possible school sites, one at South Eugene high school, and one in the Bethel district. In any case, students participating in this study will be in 9-12th grades, with an age rangefrom 14-18.

E. **Informed Consent Process**

Student participants will have several layers of consent. The parents of every student in the participating classes will recieve an opt-out letter explaining the project and giving parents a chance to opt out their childfrom the study. This opt-out letter will be sent home from the school in the mail, as well as emailed to parents by the participating teachers, (when parent emails are available), and also will be posted on the project website.

If parents DO NOT want their students' work in class to be used, they can return the form to opt-out of the study entirely. This project meets the requirements for opt-out because 1) it is not exclusionary – participation is based on classroom membership, 2) students rights and welfare will not be adversely impactedby opt-out, students will retain the right to have their work not included and can assert this right whenever they wish, 3) it would not be practical to require a returned consent for all participants, and requiring that would make the research extremely difficult to carry out, and finally 4) the risk to participants is minor, embarrassment at discussing a minorly taboo subject, and the risk is comparable to the day-to-day risks of participating in class.

For the additional student activities of taking photographs, the student photo focus group, and the Zine production group, students will complete assent forms confirming their desire to participate in that part of theproject at the beginning of each part of the project.

For the photography group, I will come to the classroom, and collect the students who signed up with the teacher to possible participate in the group. I will take them to another part of the building, most likely a conference room or a section of the library. Once there, I will pass out the verbal assent form. I will read the form to the students, and ask if they have any questions. I will answer their questions if they have any. At thattime, if the students still want to participate, I will have them complete the assent forms. If a student does notwant to participate, they will return to class at this time. After I collect the completed assent forms, I will give the group of students their directions for the project.

For the focus group, I will come to the classroom, and collect the students who signed up with the teacher to possible participate in the group. I will take them to another part of the building, most likely a conferenceResearch
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room or a section of the library. Once there, I will pass out the verbal assent form. I will read the form to the students, and ask if they have any questions. I will answer their questions if they have any. At that time, if thestudents still want to participate, I will have them complete the assent forms. If a student does not want to participate, they will return to class at this time. After I collect the completed assent forms, I will give the group of students their directions for the project.

For the Zine, I will have the teacher ask the interested students to come to the classroom after school for the first scheduled meeting. At that time, I will pass out the verbal assent form. I will read the form to the students, and ask if they have any questions. I will answer their questions if they have any. At that time, if thestudents still want to participate, I will have them complete the assent forms.

The online survey is completely anonymous, and if consent forms were collected for this portion of the study,they would actually increase the only risk of participation, breech of privacy. Instead, before the survey, I will have an assent page, and particpants will indicate by checking a box that they understand, before they can take the survey.

F. **Provisions for Participant Privacy and Data Confidentiality**

All identifying information will be removed from all focus group transcripts and substituted with pseudonyms.These pseudonyms will not be connected to identifying information in any way, and records of what pseudonym is attached to what participant will not be kept once the focus group is transcribed. Audio recordings will be erased once they are transcribed, and will be stored on password-protected devices while they are retained.

Photographs will uploaded anonymously, or will be collected from digital cameras that were turned in anonymously. Artifacts from the classroom (art, writing, etc) will have all identifying marks removed as they are entered into data collection. There is no reason to attach participant information to data during this study, so it will not be done. Participant information, such as student assent forms, will not be kept after thestudy ends.

The online survey is completely anonymous.

G. Potential Research Risks or Discomforts to Participants

This study offers minimal risk to participants, mainly emotional discomfort or embarrassment from talkingabout a mildly taboo topic, bathrooms.

The use of photography also brings in the risk that participants will take photos of body parts, people, or other inappropriate things. This risk is minimized by making the photography completely anonymous – noteven I will know who took what pictures. Students will be using generic, unnumbered cameras, or anonymously uploading from their own devices using a standard, generic login. There will be no way to know, even for the researcher, who took what picture.

Additionally, as I initially download the pictures, anything that includes a person or any part of a person, or any effluvia (bodily fluids) will immediately be deleted. The only person who is at risk of seeing these things ismyself, and I will not mention or include any mention of that kind of picture in any of my research report or databases, should it occur.

The assent for the photography group also includes the warning that if any pictures include people, bodies, orbodily fluids the pictures will be deleted and not included in the study. Because students will not be supervised while taking these photos, I have included very clear language ~~in the assent form~~ ~~and~~in the photograph instructions that no body parts or bodily fluids of any kind are permitted. I also included examples of the kinds of photographs that are permitted, as well as a discussion of Allowed and Not Allowed

<div align="center">Research
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photos, to limit the possibility of confusion. This strong wording has the potential to influence results, butwas included in an effort to make sure students are very clear about the kinds of photos that will be permitted.

I have considered including language mentioning possible legal consequences for photos. My concern is thatthe threat of legal consequences would be in and of themselves a risk for students. I set up the picture sessions in such a way that would allow students to be anonymous – this seems the best way to minimize riskfor participants. However, that anonymity also makes it impossible to know who took which picture, so a threat of legal action if something inappropriate is turned in would put all students participating at risk.

Considering all these factors, I decided that deletion of any photos that include people or bodily fluids wouldbest protect the participants from harm. However, if any of the pictures turned in to me include private parts,I would have to turn those photos in to the school administration. I have included this information in the assent form.

H. Potential Benefits of the Research

School bathrooms are at the center of several current policy debates, including basic student access to facilities, use and importance of non-instructional time, concerns about hydration and learning, and transgendered students' access to bathrooms that match their gender identities. Despite this, these is a lack ofresearch to inform these debates. This research hopes to develop practical recommendation for school bathroom policy, as well as pointing the way to additional lines of inquiry around school bathrooms for futureresearch.

I. Investigator Experience

The principle investigator is a doctoral candidate in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education. She has published articles related to gender and education, and to qualitative methods in educational research. Shealso is an experienced high school English teacher, instructional coach, and

continues to hold a teaching license in the area of secondary English language arts.

Necessary Spaces, Teacher Recruitment email script:

I am locating teachers to approach via my own network of teachers, administrators, and other school district personnel. Once I am introduced to the teacher by this third person over email, I send them this email script:

Dear XXX,

Hello, my name is Kristidel McGregor, and I'm getting my PhD in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education through UO's Ed Studies dept. It's a mouthful, but basically means that we do qualitative research looking at schools in their contexts, socially and historically, through a variety of critical lenses. It's wonderful work!

My research interests are focused on the material things and places of schools, and how they influence teaching and learning. For my dissertation work, I'm looking specifically at school bathrooms.

School bathrooms are just one of those things that are hard to research, for a lot reasons. I'm attaching a prospectus that outlines more of the history of school bathrooms, and what research has been done so far, but ultimately we just don't know much. That concerns me, because school bathrooms are at the heart of so many current debates, from big picture issues like access for transgender students and safety for LGBTQ students, to the day-to-day business of managing students' bathroom passes. I think educational researchers should be a part of these conversations, and provide some guidance and help, but so far we aren't doing a very good job of it.

So part of the challenge is looking for ways to gather data that are meaningful, can give some guidance to teachers and policy makers, and also point the way for further research. For this project, I'm using writing as a way to gather data. I'm thinking about how writing is in itself an analytical process, and how it allows us to "think through" things in ways we might not otherwise. I want to get a group of students to write, photograph, and create art about school bathrooms.

The idea is to find a few English classes to work with for this project. Here is the short version: first, students take photographs of the school bathrooms. The pictures would then be

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sorted and curated by a small student focus group. Next, those pictures would serve as prompts for a short (3 5 day) writing workshop in the English class. The art and writing produced would serve as data for my project, and also as source material for a student-produced web Zine exploring school bathrooms.

If this sounds like something you may be interested in doing, I'd love to take you out (or deliver to your classroom) a beverage of your choice, and discuss it further!

Thanks again, and I hope your year is of off to a great start,

Kristidel McGregor

Verbal explanation of assent activities script

Hi! I'm Kristidel McGregor, and I'm studying at the department of education at the University of Oregon. I'm doing a study with high school students like you to learn more about how school bathrooms influence students' learning.

This is a research study, and the goal of the study is to help researchers learn about how school bathrooms influence learning, and to help schools develop effective bathroom policies. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to.

The risks of participating in this project include talking about uncomfortable topics, like bathrooms, and possibly being embarrassed. Participating will not directly benefit you.

We'll be doing some actives with the whole class, mostly involving writing. If you do not want to participate in this at all, you can have your parents fill out this opt-out form. You'll get an alternative assignment for the days I'm here in class working with you all.

There are also three other opportunities to help with the project. If you decide to help with any of these projects, but then change your mind you can stop helping at any time.

The first involves taking pictures. I'll ask a small group of 3-5 students from this class to take some pictures around the school. All pictures will be anonymous: your name will not be attached to the pictures you take, or to any documents about this project. This project will last a week.

The second project is a focus group to talk about the pictures you all take. This would take 45 minutes.

Finally, I'll be creating a Zine to showcase the pictures, writing, and art from the project. I'd like to ask a small group of you to meet with me three times after school, over the course of two weeks, to choose which pictures and writing to include.

All of these projects involve missing class, so I'll need your teachers' approval. If you are interested in being a part of these projects, please let your teacher know, and they can put you on the list to get more information.

(the teacher will collect a list of students who want to be included. This list will be kept privately by the teacher, and the teacher can refuse permission if the student should not miss class for the project.)

Assent for Participation

Necessary Spaces: Student Experiences of School Bathrooms

This is a project that Kristidel McGregor is doing with high school students to learn more about how school bathrooms influence students' learning. This is a research study, and the goal of the study is to help researchers learn about how school bathrooms influence learning, and to help schools develop effective bathroom policies. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to.

The risks of participating in this project include talking about uncomfortable topics, like bathrooms, and possibly being embarrassed. Participating will not directly benefit you. One-three classes will be participating in this project, about50 people.

Your English class will be spending three days talking and writing about school bathrooms. If you participate, your writing and artwork from these classes may be included in the project. Your work will not leave the classroom, but it may be photographed or scanned after your name is removed.

Your name will not be put on any papers written about this project. Your namewill not be put on the tape recordings and they will be erased after the study is done.

If you decide to help with this project but then change your mind you can stop helping at any time. If you do not understand what Kristidel would like you to do, please ask her questions.

If you want to help with this project, please write your name on the line at thebottom of this page. You may also keep a copy of this assent form.

Student's Name_____Date

Student's Signature _____

Hi Website Visitor!

My name is Kristidel McGregor, and I am a PhD student from the University of Oregon. I am conducting an anonymous survey about school bathrooms. I'm trying to learn more about how school bathrooms affect student learning, so I can make recommendations to make bathroom policies batter for students and teachers.

To participate, you must be a student in one of the Necessary Space project classrooms. In fact, you won't be able to participate unless you have the username and password you got from me when you signed the assent form in class.

The survey is voluntary. You don't have to take it, and you can stop taking it at any time.

Since your answers are to remain anonymous, PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY.

The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. Please answer the questions to your comfort level.

To access the survey, put in the username and password I gave you, and check the box.

Username:
Password:

☐   By checking this box, I agree to volunteer to take the survey. I understand that the responses will be used as part of a study, and that I can stop at any time with no penalty.

Necessary Spaces: Student Assent Pictures

This is a project that Kristidel McGregor is doing with high school students to learn more about how school bathrooms influence students' learning. This is a research study, and the goal of the study is to help researchers learn about how school bathrooms influence learning, and to help schools develop effective bathroom policies. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to.

The risks of participating in this project include talking about uncomfortable topics, like bathrooms, and possibly being embarrassed. Participating will not directly benefit you. About 15 people will be participating in this project.

For this activity, you would be taking pictures of your school bathroom, using either a borrowed camera or your own device, over a week. No people are allowed in these pictures. If any photographs are turned in that include people, body parts, or any bodily fluids, those pictures will be immediately deleted and not included in the study. **Also, be aware that if any pictures of private parts are turned in, I will immediately turn those pictures over to the school principal, who may have to pursue additional action, including possible legal consequences.**

All pictures will be anonymous: your name will not be attached to the pictures you take. Your name will not be put on any papers written about this project. Your name will not be put on the tape recordings and they will be erased after the study is done.

If you decide to help with this project but then change your mind you can stop helping at any time.

If you do not understand what Kristidel would like you to do, please ask her questions.

If you want to help with these photographs, please write your name and sign on the line at the bottom of this page. You can keep a copy of this form for your own records.

Student's Name_____Date: _____

Student's Signature _____

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Necessary Spaces: Student Assent Zine

This is a project that Kristidel McGregor is doing with high school students to learn more about how school bathrooms influence students' learning. This is a research study, and the goal of the study is to help researchers learn about how school bathrooms influence learning, and to help schools develop effective bathroom policies. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to. The risks of participating in this project include talking about uncomfortable topics, like bathrooms, and possibly being embarrassed. Participating will not directly benefit you, but might help the researcher develop some recommendations for schools about bathroom policies that will help students.

For this activity, you and a small group of other students will be designing an online Zine to showcase the art, photographs, and writing your class produced during this project. We will meet in the classroom, after school for an hour, 3 times to review submissions and determine the layout of the zine. .

Your name will not be put on any papers written about this project. Your name will not be put on the tape recordings and they will be erased after the study is done. The website will not include any student names.

If you decide to help with this project but then change your mind you can stop helping at any time.

If you do not understand what Kristidel would like you to do, please ask her questions.

If you want to help with the Zine, please write your name and sign on the line at the bottom of this page. You can keep a copy of this form for your records.

Student's Name_____Date:_____

Student's Signature _____

Necessary Spaces: Student Assent Focus Group

This is a project that Kristidel McGregor is doing with high school students to learn more about how school bathrooms influence students' learning. This is a research study, and the goal of the study is to help researchers learn about how school bathrooms influence learning, and to help schools develop effective bathroom policies. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to.

The risks of participating in this project include talking about uncomfortable topics, like bathrooms, and possibly being embarrassed. Participating will notdirectly benefit you.

For this activity, you and 3-5 other students will be looking at and discussing some pictures of your school bathrooms. The focus group will take place during class, in a private location like a conference room in the office or the library. It will take 45 minutes. I will be audio recording the discussion.

Your name will not be put on any papers written about this project. Your name will not be put on the tape recordings and they will be erased after the study is done.

If you decide to help with this project but then change your mind you can stop helping at any time.

If you do not understand what Kristidel would like you to do, please ask her questions.

If you want to help with this focus group, please write your name and sign on the line at the bottom of this page. You can keep a copy of this document for your own records.

Student's Name_____Date:_____

Student's Signature _____

Necessary Spaces: Opt-out letter

Dear Families,

My name is Kristidel McGregor and I'm a researcher at the University of Oregon. I'm going to be working on a research project in your child's English classroom that I wanted to let you know about.

The purpose of this study is to explore how school bathrooms are influencing student learning. There is not a lot of research on how bathrooms impact students, and this study will help your school and other schools develop effective policies for school bathrooms, and maybe even improve students' lives!

There is very little risk to your student in participating in this project; the main risk is that it can be embarrassing to talk about bathrooms. There is no benefit to your student, beyond learning more about writing from participating in the writing projects in class.

The project will take place from XXXX to XXXX. The main activity will be a writing workshop that will take place in class on XXXXX. for 3 total class days. This writing workshop is the only activity that will take place with the whole class.

During this workshop, students will learn some writing techniques, and try them out in class. Students will be asked to share their opinions and experiences of their school bathrooms in writing during this time. Some student work will be photographed or scanned during this time, but no student work will leave the classroom. No student names will be attached to any of the data collected during this activity.

There will also be a few other activities that your student can volunteer to participate in: taking some pictures, talking about those pictures with other students from their class, and bringing together photographs, artwork, and writing from the project to create an online 'Zine. This is a study about school bathrooms, so the pictures taken will be of bathrooms, but are not to include any people. Participation in these activities is completely voluntary, and only some students will decide to participate.

The option photography and focus group activities will take place during class time, and students participating will miss parts of class that day. They will need the teacher's permission to participate, and will be responsible for making up any work they miss.

If you do not want your student's work included in this study, you can opt out at any time. To opt-out, please sign and return the form below to the school.

If you have any questions or concerns, I'd be happy to talk with you. You can email me at kristide@uoregon.edu, or give me a call at 352-665-2000.

Best,

Kristidel

Necessary Spaces Opt-Out Form

By returning this form, you are letting me know that you DO NOT want your students' work included in the Necessary Spaces research study, and that you DO NOT want your student to participate in any of the extra activities. Your student will not be penalized in any way by opting-out, and you can opt-out at any time.

Parent Name: _____

Student Name: _____

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_____   _____

Parent Signature   Date

Necessary Spaces: Website Plan

Front page: explaining the project

        Links to: opt-out form

                                   Zine (to be constructed during project)

                                   Student pages (password protected)

Student front page: project outline in student-friendly language

        Links to: Upload page

                                   Student Survey

Necessary Spaces: Student Photography Instructions

Script for researcher to students:

"Thank you for participating in this project. I really appreciate it!

For this project, I'd like you to take some photographs of your school bathrooms over the next week. You can take as many as you like, but please take at least ten.

The pictures should be of anything you think is interesting, important, or notable about the bathrooms. Whatever catches your attention can be photographed, with one exception!

It's very important that you not include people in these pictures**, In fact, if any of your pictures do contain people, they will be deleted and not included in the study**.

For example, a picture of your elbow IS NOT acceptable: no body parts of any kind are allowed. Some examples of things that are acceptable are a picture of the toilet paper holder and graffiti next to it, a picture of toilet paper on the floor, or a picture of the stall doors.

So: let's practice. I'm going to give you an example, you tell me if it's allowed. Example 1: bathroom floor with tile, toilet paper, and a smudge of dirt. Allowed, or Not Allowed? (listen to answers – should be Allowed, correct as needed). Example 2: picture of the bathroom wall that includes a mirror. There is a slight glimpse, in the corner of the mirror, of someone's hair. (listen to answers – should be Not Allowed – correct as needed. Example 3- an overflowing toilet (listen to answers – this one is trickier, but is Not Allowed because of the possibility of bodily fluids. Correct as necessary). Example 4: the trash can. (listen to answers. This one is Allowed) Can you think of any way that a picture of a bathroom trash can would NOT be allowed? (listen to answers, discuss presence of body parts of images of what are clearly bodily fluids would be NOT ALLOWED.)

Ok – so we are all very clear of the rules. No people, or bodily fluids of any kind, can be in these pictures. If those rules are broken, there could be serious consequences for us all, so please take this rule seriously.

You can take these pictures two ways: on your own cellphone, or you can borrow one of these digital cameras from me. If you take them on your own device, please email them to me at the email address on this handout. If you use one of these cameras, I'll be back to collect them in one week, on XXXX day. You will leave then in XXX's classroom, in the basket on her desk.

Remember, you can decide to stop participating at any time, with no penalty at all. Thanks again for helping me with this project."

Handout for Participating Students:

Thanks for taking pictures for this project!

For this project, I'd like you to take some photographs of your school bathrooms over the next week. You can take as many as you like, but please take at least ten.

The pictures should be of anything you think is interesting, important, or notable about the bathrooms. Whatever catches your attention can be photographed, with one exception!

It's very important that you not include people in these pictures**. In fact, if any of your pictures do contain people, or any bodily fluids, they will be deleted and not included in the study. Also, if any**

pictures are extremely inappropriate, I will have to pass them along to principal. Here are some example of appropriate and inappropriate pictures:

Appropriate:	Inappropriate:
bathroom sink	a foot near the bathroom sink
graffiti	your hand near graffiti
bathroom mirror	bathroom mirror with anyone visible in the reflection

You can take these pictures two ways: on your own cellphone, or you can borrow one of these digital cameras from me. If you take them on your own device, please email them to me at the email address on this handout. If you use one of these cameras, I'll be back to collect them in one week, on XXXX day. You will leave then in XXX's classroom, in the basket on her desk.

Remember, you can decide to stop participating at any time, with no penalty at all.

There are two ways to turn in your photos:

1) upload them to this website: (url to come). You will need this password to upload your pictures: XXXXX

2) take pictures on a borrowed digital camera. You will turn in your camera to the basket on in (teachers name)'s room on XXXXXXX (date TBD).

Thanks for helping, and if you have any questions let me know at kristide@uoregon.edu! Happy picture taking!

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Necessary Spaces: Classroom Writing Lesson Plan

This 3 day writing workshop is planned for 50 minute class sessions. Each will follow roughly the same format.

Writing Mini-lesson: 10 minutes. These lessons will be developed jointly with the teacher, to meet student needs, and could include anything from poetic tropes to grammatical forms.

Guided Practice – 15 minutes. Teacher and researcher will show examples of the writing concept in action, and model how it can be used to think about school bathrooms. Adults write with the students, share examples.

Student Practice – 25 minutes. Students spend the rest of the time working on own writing, as teacher and researcher circulate and support.

Students will turn in work at the end of class.

At the end of all classes, the researcher will scan or photograph artifacts from the class that day, removing or obscuring student names.

Necessary Spaces: Student Focus Group Protocol

This is an open-ended protocol, and is expected to evolve as the focus group progresses. Not all questions can be anticipated, but the basic format is as follows.

Focus group of 4-5 students sit around a table; 30-50 printed photographs from the project will be on the table.

<u>Researcher script:</u>

Thank you all for helping with this project today. I have an activity for you to do together, and then I want to ask you a few questions.

For the activity, I'd like you to look at the pictures on the table. Then, sort them into at least 5 categories. The categories can be anything – you need to come up with ways to sort the pictures that make sense to you.

You will have 20 minutes to do this activity. Do you have any questions?

(sorting activity)

<u>Basic questions for after activity (follow up questions will be iterative, depending on answers):</u>

What categories did you come up with? Please explain them to me.

What stands out to you about these pictures?

What surprised you about these pictures?

Necessary Spaces Online Survey

Hi. My name is Kristidel McGregor, and I'm a doctoral candidate at the University of Oregon. I'm doinga research project on school bathrooms, and this online survey is a part of it.

If you are here, you already got the access code from me in class. But I want to remind you of a few things before you start the survey. This survey is anonymous, so PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAMEanywhere on the survey!

This online survey consists of open-ended questions, and will take about 10 minutes to complete. Pleaseanswer the questions to your comfort level, and remember that you don't have to answer, and can stop atany time.

Likert Scale Questions:

Strongly agree   agree   neutral

                        disagree   strongly disagreeI

often use the bathroom at school.

I am comfortable using the school bathrooms.

I am confident that when I'm at school, I can go the bathroom if I need to.

The bathrooms at school have all the supplies I

need to meet my bathroom needs.The bathrooms at

school are clean.

The bathrooms at

school are open when

I need them.I feel safe

using the bathroom at

school.

My teachers' rules about

bathroom use are fair for all

students.My teachers all have

similar rules about bathroom

use.

I feel like I have enough privacy when I use the bathroom at school.

Complete these statements:

- When I think of school bathrooms, I think about…
- One memory of school bathrooms I have is…

What is the most important thing teachers should know about school bathrooms?

Is there anything else that you think the researcher should know about your school bathrooms?

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