



Aesthetic Encounters, Canines, and Care: New Multispecies Methodological Avenues in Organizational and Business Ethics

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Abstract

How can we ethically include nonhuman animals during methodological considerations in organizational and business ethics research? Additionally, what methodological opportunities and challenges do multispecies research approaches present for these research areas? Building on critical posthumanist theory, the feminist ethic-of-care tradition in animal ethics, and the aesthetics of posthuman methodologies, this article develops a novel avenue for multispecies methodological research that expands current approaches to organizational and business ethics research beyond a purely human-centric lens. Empirical materials include diary excerpts about one author's daily ethical encounters with her dogs and video clips of dog–human relationships, along with aesthetic reflections from two other researchers. Our reflections are shaped by posthumanist theorizing and critically problematize the seemingly static, anthropocentric categorizations of *researcher*, *positionality*, and *research participant* within the ethically complex context of multispecies research. Beyond discussing our findings in relation to recent business ethics research, we propose a methodological avenue for studying the aesthetic hybridization of humanimal subjectivities, including subtle bodily interactions between dogs and humans. This avenue fosters more aesth-ethically attuned and species-inclusive research methodologies in animal organization studies (AOS) and the broader fields of business ethics and organization studies, which are especially critical in the Anthropocene.

Keywords Posthuman multispecies methods · Care ethics · Aesthetic hybridization · Vulnerability · Dog–human relationship · Animal organization studies

Bringing Aesthetic Wonder and Care Ethics to Life and Research with Animals

Despite the traditionally circumscribed anthropocentric values in the fields of business ethics and organization studies (OS), we—as humans—live, work, and organize *with* countless nonhuman animals (hereafter ‘animals’) on an entangled plane of existence.¹ Many animal lives are substantially organized or controlled by humans in human-organized spaces, such as businesses, as well as by broader cultural, economic, and political forces. The emerging field of animal organization studies (AOS) critically examines power-laden, context-specific human–animal interactions, as well as the

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¹ We are mindful that humans are animals among others and that the use of the term ‘animals’ may reproduce anthropocentrism. Nonhuman animals can also be referred to as ‘individuals of other species’; however, given that ‘animals’ is an established term in scholarly debate and in AOS, we use this concept for clarity and consistency, while positioning animals as sentient individuals with agency, emotions, and particular histories—“subjects for serious philosophical inquiry” (Odgen et al., 2013, p. 17).

varied relationships that humans craft with other animals across organized spaces (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022).

By developing an understanding of “the lived experiences of different species as they come into contact (or avoid one another),” AOS radically reconsiders *organizing* and *organizations* through an ethico-political multispecies lens (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022, p. 4).² This lens critiques anthropocentrism, speciesism, and asymmetrical power relations and demands serious philosophical consideration of more-than-human ways of sensing, moving, resisting, and being in the world. Animals’ interests and agency are brought from the margins to the center, where they are recognized as living subjects with unique perspectives and histories, not resources to be exploited. Thus, AOS invites us to critically rethink human responsibility for and impacts on individual and groups of animals by cultivating more attentive, ethical, and sustainable relationships with other species.³ Increasingly, OS and business ethics studies are focusing on issues related to human–animal relations (see, e.g., Coulter & Fitzgerald, 2019; Ehrnström et al., 2025; Fan, 2024; Labatut et al., 2016; Hamilton & Taylor, 2013, 2017; Huopalaïnen & Jammaers, 2023; Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022; Sayers et al., 2022), yet posthuman debates about animal ethics in the realm of business ethics remain underdeveloped.

Despite the establishment of AOS as a legitimate field within OS, there is an urgent need for deeper onto-epistemological, ethico-political, and methodological ponderings regarding *how* to study the emerging tactile, power-laden, and often ethically contradictory human–animal relationships in organizational life. As a novel field of study, AOS requires a posthuman methodological avenue that shifts away from human-centered research methodologies toward response-able multispecies⁴ approaches that embrace an

ethics of care (Donovan, 2006; Donovan & Adams, 2007a, 2007b) and engagement (Gherardi & Laasch, 2022). We need approaches that attend “to the individual animal, to the differences between animals and ourselves, and to controlling systems” (Donovan & Adams, 2007b, p. 4) and ethically attune to the material-discursive power relations present in every research context (Cozza & Gherardi, 2024; see also Hamilton & Taylor, 2017). Therefore, we must move beyond purely mind-based, rationalized ways of knowing and researching to embrace more sensory, somatic, and aesthetic avenues that incorporate this knowledge and reconsider the researcher’s positionality as one of co-becoming in a more-than-human world.

Researching *with* animals also raises key ethical, practical, and methodological questions for organizational and business ethics: How should we, as AOS researchers, address the ethical concerns inherent in researching *with* animals but rarely discussed in existing human-centered OS or business ethics literature? Can we address the persistent challenge of knowing animals by attuning more deeply to their needs, listening with care to their voices, respecting their unique lifeworlds, and recognizing their agency and subjectivity (Donovan, 2006, 2007a, 2007b)? In doing so, might we contribute to creating more affirmative and compassionate multispecies methodologies within OS and business ethics research?

This article responds to Freeman and Greenwood’s (2020) call to rethink our relationship with methods in business ethics—through care, purpose, aesthetics, and reflexivity (Islam & Greenwood, 2023)—and offers a methodological reflection that intertwines insights from posthumanist debates (Braidotti, 2013; Sayers et al., 2022) and feminist ethic-of-care theory about animals (Donovan, 2006; Donovan & Adams, 2007a, 2007b). This reflection is part of a broader ontological shift in qualitative traditions that attempts “to move away from persisting post-positivist epistemological ruins, and humanistic, human-centered and neo-positivist practices of research and scholarship” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2017, p. 1). To date, the feminist care tradition in animal ethics (Adams, 2007; Donovan & Adams, 2007a, 2007b) has not received the attention it deserves in organizational business ethics research. We build on this insightful tradition and reflect on cross-species inequalities, context, and connection to present what Islam and Greenwood (2023) refer to as “new forms of ethical empirical research” (p. 4).

We further identify connections between feminist ethic-of-care theorizing and posthumanist debates (see Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) by including resistance to “hierarchical

² We understand ‘ethico-political’ as the ethical dimensions and politics entangled (see Bancou, 2024; Antoni & Beer, 2024) within shared and uneven animal-human relationships, where adopting a caring and empathetic posture may help us, as humans, reorient our research practices to better recognize and do justice to the animal ‘other’.

³ While recognizing that other species also include, for example, fungi and plants, we have decided to focus on animals with a central nervous system. Humans also have a responsibility to and impact on other lifeforms that do not have central nervous systems, something worth developing in future research but beyond the scope of this article. Some strands of critical ecofeminism, for example, engage with both animal and plant ethics.

⁴ While multispecies research approaches across the social sciences are still evolving (see, e.g., Hamilton & Taylor, 2017), multispecies ethnography pays attention to nonhuman life and includes multiple species in its analysis. Ogden et al. (2013) define multispecies ethnography “as ethnographic research and writing that is attuned to life’s emergence within a shifting assemblage of agentive beings” (p. 6); hence, multispecies research is often concerned with human relationality to other beings and how to ethically include them in research, while also acknowledging onto-epistemological challenges

Footnote 4 (continued)

of being and knowing the perspectives and lifeworlds of others whom we cannot empirically question.

dominative dualisms” (Donovan & Adams, 2007b, p. 2) and emphasizing caring as relational attunement and material *doing*. Therefore, we build on critical posthumanist theorizing (Braidotti, 2013; Sayers et al., 2022)—a politics of knowing, ethic-of-care theorizing within animal ethics (Donovan, 2007a, 2007b, Donovan & Adams, 2007a, 2007b)—and the aesthetics of posthumanist methodologies (Strati, 2025 in press) to ask: How can we more (aesth)-ethically include animals in methodological considerations in organizational and business ethics research? What are the practical opportunities and challenges of multispecies research designs?

To address these questions, we conducted an empirical study incorporating aesthetic diary notes, video clips, and reflections derived from our lived experiences of vulnerable, contextual, yet middle-class, privileged canine–human relationships. The canine–human bond has evolved over thousands of years, with domestication fostering mutual benefits and attachments between dogs and humans (Tancredi & Cardini, 2023). As a process of co-construction and co-organization between species, domestication plays a central role in modern societies, and as the oldest and (arguably) closest interspecies bond, the canine–human relationship is well suited to a closer study of how animals might be included more meaningfully in OS and business ethics research.

In the context of business ethics research, by aesthetics, we refer to the hybridized “corporeality of knowing and acting, as opposed to merely mental and rational knowledge” (Strati, in press, p. 1). In this study, we build on the multispecies nature of aesthetic knowledge, here meaning hybridized feeling or affective knowledge in flux (see also Gorodeisky & Marcus, 2022), to analyze empirical material. We challenge human-centered knowledge production and aesthetics by sensitizing our perception to diverse forms of aesthetic expression and relationships with often-unacknowledged animal ‘others.’ Regarding ethics, we view the human body’s interdependence and intertwining with other bodies, such as animal bodies, as foundational (Diprose, 2009). Paying detailed attention toward individual animals through the senses is key both for us and for feminist ethic-of-care theorizing (Donovan & Adams, 2007), which aligns particularly well with our interactions with companion animals (Clement, 2018) due to its emphasis on care, closeness, and attachment in relationships. This sensory, care-based approach requires us to reassess identity and difference by focusing on relationships and responsiveness in animal–human relationships (Oliver, 2010; Satama & Huopalaainen, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; Townley, 2010).

More broadly, animals are shaped through their relational bonds with humans, just as humans *become-with* through a “hybridization with other corporealities” (Strati, in press, p. 1) within sociomaterial landscapes that include animals (Labatut, 2023), plants, and other agential

materialities (Gherardi, 2019, 2024). This onto-epistemological perspective highlights experiential ways of ‘being-with-the-world’ *with* and *through* our dogs. Thus, aesthetic hybridization refers to the corporeal becoming-with in which the domesticated ‘dog’ and ‘human’ become entangled in the ‘humanimal’ subjectivity that emerges from the intimate, embodied entanglement of human and animal beings—particularly through shared sensory and nonverbal interrelations in their day-to-day lives—explored through reflective thought and verbalized by humans. By looking beyond human actors, aesthetic knowledge becomes a hybrid form of posthuman aesthetics in which the boundaries between the human and animal are fluid and dynamic. For example, the bond between a human and a domestic household pet⁵ is not simple companionship; it involves a deeper, reciprocal process of continuous aesthetic attunement to the other and mutual transformation rooted in the aesthetic realm. While humans receive service, protection, assistance, and other work-related benefits, dogs receive food, shelter, medical attention, and companionship in these relationships; however, not all dog–human relations are entirely positive, as demonstrated by the cruelty against and neglect of dogs worldwide. Thus, the highly complex and problematic bonds in dog–human care relationships encompass multiple aesthetic dimensions. Through these entanglements, humans and dogs shape one another’s sensory worlds and ways of being.

This study explores how experimental posthuman inquiry into a lived canine–human relationship leads to the hybridization of subjectivity by producing some(one/thing) beyond a dog or a human, namely, a *humanimal* (Huopalaainen, 2022; Jammaers, 2023; Jammaers & Huopalaainen, 2023). We highlight the lived experiences of mutually constituted, entangled humanimal relations imbued with power relations, which are further enriched by the aesthetic reflections of two other researchers. As our key contribution, we construct a new multispecies methodological direction for business ethics, AOS, and OS research, aimed at exploring the aesthetic hybridization of humanimal subjectivities and affective relations. This approach is framed through a post-human ethic-of-care lens that better achieves the more-than-human positionality and moves beyond an anthropocentric lens toward multispecies inclusivity (Tallberg et al., 2024). This approach—*aesthetic hybridization*—extends current organizational and business ethics research beyond a purely human or animal lens while supporting a more nuanced understanding of how power and politics operate within multispecies research contexts. Moreover, this approach allows us to more fully experience and tease out these complex

⁵ We use the term ‘pet’ here due to its common usage but acknowledge that this is a problematic term with inherent power tensions.

dynamics, thereby fostering deeper interspecies connection and attunement. However, by reflexively acknowledging the limits of our study, we recognize that our focus on domestic household pets—relatively privileged animals—may overlook the most vulnerable or provocative aspects of potential revelations from multispecies organizational research.

A Conversation on Posthuman Methodologies

Animal Organization Studies as Our Point of Departure

Posthumanism, sometimes described in the plural form ‘posthumanisms’ (see Tallberg & Huopainen, 2024; de Vaujany et al., 2024), is often referred to as a bundle of theories that question and seek to disrupt the onto-epistemological binaries that prioritize culture over nature, mind over body, and humans over other animals. Posthumanisms also acknowledge the relational entanglements between animals and humans (Tallberg & Huopainen, 2024). While Rosi Braidotti’s influential works (2013, 2019) are increasingly recognized by OS scholars (Sayers et al., 2022; Simpson et al., 2021), we are particularly inspired by critical posthumanities to explore posthumanist ethico-onto-epistemologies and consider the implications (for AOS) of a paradigm shift from Eurocentric and anthropocentric knowing, acting, and being to hybrid humanimal “processes of subject formation” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 85). While posthumanism is often criticized for being overly philosophical and abstract, it offers imaginative ways to reject human exceptionalism, such as through Braidotti’s “figurations for an alternative posthumanist subjectivity” (Gherardi, in press, p. 3). It also highlights urgent nonhuman ethical concerns in OS, such as speculative fiction and business ethics (Sayers et al., 2022). Posthumanism is also part of a biosocial paradigm shift toward more relational, processual perspectives that acknowledge nature–organizational relations and challenge ontology and epistemology in OS research (Labatut, 2023).

Reconceptualizing organizations’ roles in more-than-human ecosystems requires researchers to work *with*, rather than *on*, animals and nature by transitioning from anthropocentric methods to relational approaches (Labatut, 2023; Tallberg et al., 2022). In the intimate canine–human relationships we focus on, it is not only the relationships themselves that matter but also how they make us feel and what this says about us and our lived experience beyond the rationalized, mind-based knowledge that often creates separation from others and the world around us. In such intimate relationships, “through which the social, the biological, the discursive and the physical emerge” (Gherardi, in press, p. 3), a new level of knowledge—one that transcends human-centric

lived experience—is formed. In AOS, posthuman framing offers a more critical and species-inclusive research perspective that decenters humans from their anthropocentric and colonial historical and organizational trajectories and attempts a more balanced ethical framework that positions humans as part of the ecological whole. Moving animal issues from periphery to center requires advancing traditional field-specific research methods toward multispecies methods and innovating, questioning, and experimenting with how we create and communicate knowledge (Spence, 2022).

On Multispecies Methods in OS and the Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics

To rethink human–animal relationships, where “reason cannot be isolated from embodied emotional experiences” (Gruen, 2011, p. 37), we draw on feminist care theory in animal ethics, particularly the work of Josephine Donovan. Donovan (2006, 2007a, 2007b) advocates learning from animals and their communication (“What are they actually telling us?”) by attuning to and reading their body language, emphasizing dialog, and foregrounding compassion, caring, and sympathy in our shared relationality. Rooted in sympathy as an attentive and caring practice, Donovan’s (2007a, 2007b) approach envisages both the personal and the political through passionate caring about animal well-being. Lori Gruen (2021/2015) develops these ideas when she argues that, as a form of attention, empathy is different from sympathy and involves “attending to another’s needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities” (Gruen, 2021, p. 3).

Tying both Josephine Donovan’s and Lori Gruen’s points into a related ethical approach is Ralph Acampora’s concept of corporal compassion, which emphasizes the “phenomenology of body because somaticity is what opens us out into our environment – and that environmental opening is what provides the shared space of convivial worldhood across speciated horizons” (Acampora, 2023, p. 12). These interrelationships across species are mediated by vulnerability and togetherness in the lifeworlds of actors.⁶ One feels and experiences concern for another’s vulnerability and well-being somatically, while togetherness is realized through

⁶ As a contested concept, vulnerability in OS has traditionally been understood as related to weakness, dependency, and powerlessness (Satama, 2025; Corlett et al., 2021). We recognize the interconnectedness and aesthetics of vulnerability in dog–human relationships, as well as their attunement to difference and complicated power dynamics (Tallberg & Huopainen, 2024). Hence, we position vulnerability as the core ‘force’ of aesthetic, relational, and lively experiences between humans and their dogs.

intimate reciprocity, as in interspecies activities (e.g., with dogs or horses).

Tallberg et al. (2022) build on Donovan and Gruen by extending their feminist animal ethics to OS and business ethics and creating an empirical feminist stakeholder argument for animals in practice through care theory. This approach relies on a more subtle form of attentive listening to animals in organizations, such as sled dogs and shelter dogs, and Tallberg and colleagues describe different ways of attuning to the dogs' voices and interests, including 'care about' and 'care for' dog–human relationships; the former created by customers acting as intermediaries or employees posting social media comments on behalf of the dogs, and the latter created through more intimate employee relationships with the dogs. Such insights inform our consideration of the intimate contexts, individual personalities, and experiences of those to whom we attune while ethically engaging with the perspective of the other without overlooking power dynamics, an approach that inspires new ways of practicing animal ethics.

By studying humanimal entanglements (Huopalaainen, 2022) or by seeking novel ways of voicing entangled human–animal emotions (Tallberg et al., 2021), OS researchers have sought ethical ways to include often silenced and hypervulnerable animal *other(s)*. Inspired by Braidotti's (2013, 2019) work and recognizing Haraway's (2003, 2008) contributions, we seek to think "across bodies by emphasizing their interconnections" (Cozza & Gherardi, 2024, p. 60), despite the challenge of the 'unknown' presented by the inclusion of animals in organizational and business ethics research. This fear of the unknown might be intensified by the fact that many traditional OS and business ethics research methods are less suited to including animal perspectives. Responding to the relative absence of animal perspectives in OS and business ethics, multispecies ethnography, one example of posthuman methodology, involves "studying the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds" (Kirksey & Helmrich, 2010, p. 545), or what Odgen et al. (2013) call "ethnographic research and writing that is attuned to life's emergence within a shifting assemblage of agentive beings" (p. 6). Various economic, cultural, and political factors affect and shape the livelihoods of nonhuman beings, such as animals, fungi, plants, and microbes, which multispecies ethnography may include (Kirksey & Helmrich, 2010, p. 545).

Hamilton and Taylor (2017) note that "one of the great strengths and limitations of posthumanism is that it paradoxically both resists and embraces method" (p. 168). Current social science research methods are limited in addressing the challenges of researching beyond the human experience. Openness, flexibility, and curiosity are required to develop more inclusive multispecies qualitative methods that genuinely advance the study of more-than-human ethics in

business by broadening research ethics beyond traditional methods (Islam & Greenwood, 2023). For example, Sayers et al. (2022) use feminist speculative fiction to expand subjectivity in human–animal relations, while Valtonen et al. (2020) adopt a postanthropocentric lens to explore multispecies encounters in tourism. Similarly, Huopalaainen (2022) builds on feminist dog-writing as introduced within cultural studies (see Haraway, 2003, 2008; McHugh, 2012), and Tallberg et al. (2014) develop crystallization to voice emotions in animal organizations. Taken together, an important yet overlooked direction for future qualitative OS and business ethics research involves the development of multispecies methods of affirmative ethics, inclusivity, and care—a call to which we respond.

On Canine–Human Relationships and Coexistence

Regarding canine–human relationships, we acknowledge the positionalities of dogs in societies and their inherently unequal power dynamics. Some dogs are companions, colleagues, workers (even 'tools'), test animals, refugees, and family members, while others are considered pests or, in some places, food. This variety of relationships also raises various ethical questions, especially about human-controlled practices, such as dog breeding, adoption, and rescue processes, and the entanglement of many dogs' lives in unsustainable industrial food systems. These questions are particularly relevant when considering that, historically, dogs and humans have shared the longest coevolved companionships. While theories vary on where, why, and when the domestication of dogs from wolves occurred, geneticists suggest that canine–human coexistence likely began over 40,000 years ago (Tancredi & Cardini, 2023). This dynamic is therefore a natural entry point into humanimal relationships and is highly relevant to business ethics, given that our relationships with the natural world and animals are fraught with harmful and exploitative practices. We recognize the extensive social science literature on canine perspectives, from Haraway's (2003, 2008) classic works to more recent studies (e.g., Andrews & Beck, 2017; Horowitz, 2019). As working (companion) animals in society, dogs often live closely with humans in shared multispecies homes and (work) spaces, yet humans' paradoxical treatment of dogs reflects a mix of care, domination, and violence (Coulter, 2016). Despite affective bonds and dogs' presence in organizations, OS research on canine–human relationships remains limited (for exceptions, see Charles & Wolkowitz, 2019, 2023; Cunha et al., 2019; Huopalaainen, 2022; Skoglund & Redmalm, 2017; Satama & Huopalaainen, 2019). Studies exploring human–animal relationships or work involving dogs may overlook the inclusion of animal perspectives and the addressing of ethical considerations. More focus is needed, particularly concerning research on shared embodiment, aesthetic knowledge, and

senses at work (Beyes et al., 2022), the advancement of post-human ethical thinking (Fan, 2024; Sayers et al., 2022), and our ethical sensibilities toward the nature around us (Antoni & Beer, 2024; Labatut, 2023).

Methodological Starting Points

Inspired by Bull et al.'s (2006) work and recent studies of the senses in organizational contexts (e.g., Bell & Vacchani, 2020; Riach & Warren, 2015), we view the senses as a relevant point of departure for a methodological understanding of the aesthetic hybridizations of bodies. The senses consist not only of physical and biological features and the body's "surface" but also of cultural and political perceptions (Bull et al., 2006, p. 5). Sensory approaches align well with feminist care ethics, as both often combine phenomenology with political analysis (Donovan & Adams, 2007b) and carefully attuning to animal diversity and particular individual histories within dominant or oppressive structures.

This article's empirical material comprises Anna's (pseudonym) aesthetic reflections about her dog-human experiences (written from 2015 to 2024) and video clips gathered over the past ten years. The two other authors, Emma and Jenny (pseudonyms), jointly analyzed these materials in an embodied and messy process. Methodologically, we challenged ourselves to consider the aesthetic hybridization of bodies within dog-human relationships and explore how ethics and care intertwine in this process (Donovan & Adams, 2007; Gruen, 2021), in which we consider our dogs as partners and animal friends (Townley, 2010). We also explored how to further elaborate on aesthetic hybridization collaboratively. Once the field descriptions were somewhat complete, we created the first 'sketch' of the two key aspects of aesthetic hybridization while highlighting the significance of sensory, highly vulnerable interactions in dog-human relationships.

We used short video clips that evoked aesthetic experiences and bodily memories (Puwar, 2021) in us and in other viewers (Quattrone et al., 2021; Warren, 2008) to experiment with the methodological potential of this research in studying the aesthetic hybridizations of dog-human bodies. This visual material was an invitation to ourselves and others to engage in the lived experiences of (and subsequent reflections on) dog-human relationships from an ethic-of-care perspective. In an attempt to allow the reader to sense and feel ethical matters happening in everyday situations, we use these video clips alongside the reflective diaries to construct livelier accounts of canine-human relationships through embodied sensations toward the hybridization of bodies. We deepened our analysis by moving between theory and our research material while actively discussing our thoughts and interpretations. While writing, we focused our

reflections on in-depth interpretations, at times honing in on specific examples and, at other times, expanding to more general interpretations.

Finally, to further develop the aesthetic hybridization (see Strati, in press) of the dog-human relationships, as well as that of the researchers, we draw on our embodied encounters with our dogs and each other. In doing so, we attempt to shift the research focus from discursive to embodied forms of relating by showing how the enactment of humanimal relations is made simultaneously visible and invisible through the complex power issues present in these encounters. Our multispecies research approach embraces the vulnerable, relational, and sensual knowledge created by humanimals and highlights our common lifeworld with animals. This approach aligns with feminist animal care theory's dialogical mode of ethical reasoning (Donovan, 2006), although it may not be fully theorized as such. Posthumanist methodologies, for us, are holistically sensory and enable the aesthetic hybridization of our bodily experiences as the three authors. In our reflexive analysis, we focused on our bodily sensations and the sensory atmospheres of the empirical episodes, quotes, and video clips alongside an empathetic understanding of each other's perspectives co-constructing the analysis. Thus, we embrace both the heartfelt and painful moments with our dogs and each other and recognize these connections as posthuman expressions of care, relationality, and coemergence ("who we are" in conjunction with each other) that encourage us to be response-able and "to act inspirationally in our lives" (Ferrando, 2024, p. 2). Acknowledging the new subject position's sensory details is needed to nurture a more ethically inclusive research tradition in OS and business ethics.

Researching the Aesthetic Hybridizations of Multispecies Bodies

Cultivating Different Forms of Attentive Care Through Vulnerable, Breath-Filled Encounters

Synchronous breathing (Pérezts et al., 2024) captures the aesthetic hybridization of the multispecies body in which the emergent dog-human agency slowly unfolds: "The potential of breathing rests on an inherent relationality: manifested in the biological rhythm of breath; it is unnoticed but persistent" (Pérezts et al., 2024, p. 4). In this way, breathing techniques extend our sensory observations with felt affectivity, connectivity, and corporeal mutuality; therefore, we observed how the subtle breath sounds of seemingly relaxed dogs mediate an ethics of care and relationality felt in the human body. Anna recalls the calming power of rhythmic breathing during childbirth, when she anchored her own breath to that of her dog, Helmi, who soothed Anna's pain

with her calming presence. During this fragile life event, the traditional human–animal power dynamic was momentarily reversed, with Helmi guiding her human through coping with pain.

Similarly, Jenny experienced a deep feeling of rooted safety and calm with her canine companion Beau, with whom she practiced canine–human breathwork to manage both of their chronic pain conditions. Harmonious breathing contrasts with other instances of listening to the breath of hypervulnerable animals in factory farms, which reminds us that not all animals (or humans) have access to clean air or the ability to breathe safely and that breathing is the “critical result of complex organizational, material, and political processes” (Pérezts et al., 2024, p. 1).

Breath and sound are intricate aesthetic parts of organizational processes that involve power, vulnerability, bodies, and the broader dynamics of life and death, while also facilitating felt affectivity and embodied connectivity. The art exhibition *Pigs*, particularly the artwork “Waiting Room,” prompted Emma to reflect on whose breathing humans prioritize. She listened to the soundscapes of pigs’ during their final night in a production unit, caught between life and death. This process induced affective, entangled, and embodied empathy with these hypervulnerable animals, which echoes Pérezts et al.’s (2024) reminder that “the air we breathe and the activity of breathing, with its life-defining rhythms of pulse, taking and giving, ethically binds us to the world we inhabit and share with others” (p. 6). Jenny was reminded of her research with even more violent soundscapes of cows breathing and vocalizing while being forced through a slaughterhouse, their bodies moving through the production systems that transform them from *livestock* to *deadstock*.

Attuning to the Aesthetic Interplay of Joy and Grief with Dogs

This second analytical section illustrates the ways in which intersubjective experiences of joy and grief can be explored through multispecies methods, foregrounding the aesthetic hybridization that emerges in shared affective and embodied encounters between species. Despite learning aesthetic sensibilities from dogs in daily life, humans sometimes have human-centric expectations that, when unmet, lead to painful experiences. These expectations also entail an ethico-political aspect; for example, when buying a pedigree dog, the human desires to build healthy companionship between her and her dog and commits to taking care of her for the rest of her life:

I hoped to share my life with a dog who would be healthy and thrive, offering companionship built on mutual trust and love for many years to come. I will

never forget the desperate sadness, disappointment, and anxiety I felt flowing through my body when the vet stared seriously at the CT images and told me that my 1-year-old dog was chronically ill. The disease would slowly creep into our shared life. It felt horrible for me, but I imagine she didn’t feel it, or maybe even know about it. It was my worry—very heavy subject matter that I didn’t want to know about, but instead wanted to throw out of our bodies, as if casting out the illness that was beginning to inhabit hers.

The episode above renders visible the metamorphosis of devastating news experienced through shared embodiment and the ethico-political aspect of the experience. The human accesses a cognitive understanding of the dog’s condition through the veterinarian’s evidence-based explanation, which affects her embodied experience of her image of a ‘carefree life’ shattering. However, casting the disease as an intruding agent reflects human metaphors of illness and control, rather than how animals might experience or relate to disease, acknowledging that the perceptual worlds of humans and animals likely differ significantly (Ingold, 2021). The human’s wishful thinking, unrealized desires, and hope that the dog does not feel her illness progressing creates an internal experience for the human, unseen by others, yet anchored in the physical realm through bodily sensations. Despite the human’s close relationship with and intense feelings for the dog, how much the dog knew is unknowable, yet dogs are highly intuitive, especially in very close dog–human relationships (Merritt, 2021), which might suggest a *knowing* beyond rationalized human thought.

Such grief is an aesthetic process filled with somatic sensations and worked through primarily by the human rather than the dog, who might not be aware of the painful situation (at least not in the way we can access it as researchers at this time):

Grief is a tricky feeling, a bodily process—like a creature to befriend when living with a chronic disease. I worked on grief throughout my dog’s life. I felt stressed at every kidney checkup, and at times, I felt envious of my dog, who seemed to live fully in the moment. I wanted to feel such freedom myself, not worrying about the future but enjoying our life together in each moment. She knew how to do that, and I tried to learn it through her.

This excerpt illustrates an ethical dilemma within post-humanist aesthetics, intended to prompt organizational researchers to investigate the everyday metamorphosis of human sensible mourning and aesthetic judgment as experienced here by the human through canine–human companionship. The grief of anticipating and worrying about each test creates a human struggle to return to the present and enjoy

the moments in between. This human struggle is endemic in many relationships, especially when attachment is strong and moves us cognitively from the present moment to the imagined future when we are separated from loved ones. Therefore, grief and loss can cloud the present moment, even when happy, through often intense somatic sensations that might seem strange or out of place for the dog (who has limited access to the human cognitive process):

I sensed that all was not well with her, and my body was feeling heavy as well. A couple of days before she passed away, I had a compelling feeling to take my dogs out on the sea ice for an overnight ice-fishing trip and not to leave them at home. Kerttu was running at full speed on the sea ice, even though her kidney values were sky-high inside her body. I felt how we were enjoying life together to the fullest. Each of us probably knew, in our own way, that soon things would never be the same again.

This excerpt illustrates the empirically derived understanding of this temporal, embodied process and the aesthetic sensibilities that intertwine the dog and her human.

Animal death is a complex, sensitive topic, and understanding how animal deaths are confronted, diminished, or represented through visual data is critical to driving change and increasing scholarly awareness. Video 1 shows the dog on ice with a live fish in her mouth, which she then drops and watches while it struggles to stay alive. Due to the sudden pressure change of being displaced from the water, the fish is suffocating. This moment—joyful for the dog—human hybridization, filled with aesthetic yet painful cues regarding the dog’s imminent death, and the terror and death of the fish—highlights the layered temporality of grief, the acknowledgment of death, and the species hierarchy implied in both. Moreover, the question of which animal deaths we mourn and honor them is tied to the intimacy and proximity between humans and animals (Johnston & Probyn-Rapsey, 2013). Video 1 reminds us that animals like the fish, not often considered companions or individuals, occupy a distinct ethical space. In this context, death offers one response to the call for more critical approaches to organizational ethics, urging a reconnection of “existential and political considerations with organizational life” (Reedy & Learmonth, 2011, p. 127).

While witnessing the event in the video, Jenny experiences an intense bodily experience, becoming nauseous, and feeling as if she is choking and her lungs are collapsing. Her response reflects the different sensibilities among us as researchers and the profound potential effects of visual imagery on our bodies when attuning to nonhuman bodies and how our actions shape lives (and deaths). Jenny’s bodily somatic response is sharp, immediate, and almost subconscious. Its origin is not cognitive, as no thought

(i.e., “The fish is suffering”) preceded the bodily reaction; rather, the analytical framing (i.e., “This is what posthuman interspecies solidarity⁷ in action feels like”) is overlaid upon the somatic response. Such reactions serve as ‘portals’ into exploring differences in the authors’ personal ethics about animals and reveal that for some, the connection to all animals is subconscious and immediate. The video also prompts a strong sensory experience for Emma and brings to mind the words of Judith Butler (2012):

When any of us are affected by the sufferings of others, it is not only that we put ourselves in their place or that they usurp our own place; perhaps it is the moment in which a certain chiasmic link comes to the fore and I become somehow implicated in lives that are clearly not the same as my own. (p. 149)

Without access to the dog’s experience—whether or not she is attuned to the fish’s pain—and since the dog cannot comprehend the numerous fish studies that exist, we assume that such insights are, at the very least, not transmitted cognitively, as they are for humans. However, despite limitations in accessing dogs’ experiences (methodologically or otherwise), knowing that dogs have more attuned sensibilities than most humans, she might have a more instinctual understanding of the fish’s suffering, which is perhaps why she seems keenly interested and a bit perplexed. Although somewhat speculative, such thinking is at the core of the suggested framing in this study.

In this specific moment in the video clip, through the aesthetic hybridization of multispecies bodies, we ask the following questions: Whose experiences do we (humans) allow ourselves to feel, with whom do we connect, and how do the sensory and aesthetic dimensions of these intimate encounters transmute our bodily experiences? How are moments of shared joy for some simultaneously moments of suffering for others? How can feeling into both experiences inform a more holistic and inclusive understanding of the more-than-human lifeworlds to which we belong? How does knowledge gained from attentive listening and ethical reflection shift traditional boundaries to invoke care and justice for animals with whom we do not have immediate personal relations?

Video 2 (below) captures the dog’s dying presence and final hours, returning us to the theme of death, which profoundly affects the aesthetic hybridization of canine–human relations. In the video, Kerttu wags her tail slowly as she looks at Anna with a slightly absent gaze, and traces of entangled empathy (Gruen, 2021) are

⁷ Interspecies solidarity is a form of multispecies consideration that emphasizes the felt connection within the relational space *between* (inter-) animals and humans. While ‘multispecies’ refers to the involvement of different species, it does not necessarily imply a focus on the relationships between them.

perceptible in this fragile moment. Kerttu's aesthetic cues suggest that she still wants to live, or perhaps they signify pleading with her human, asking her to remove the pain. Kerttu might also be offering support to Anna by wagging her tail and gazing at Anna to communicate her love and corporal compassion after sensing her human's devastating grief (Acampora, 2023). Without access to Kerttu's thoughts, we simply do not know, which is firmly and methodologically bound up with ethical issues of bodily knowing and what we can say, after all, about the dog's knowledge and experiences.

Nevertheless, based on our combined dog–human experiences, we conclude that in moments of intense human suffering, such as grief, dogs are often moved to comfort us by licking our hands or faces, lying or placing their paws on our bodies, or leaning against us. Often, dogs look deeply into a human's eyes, almost as if silently attuning to the relational suffering between species (Gruen, 2021). In the dog's and human's shared vulnerable moment, the relational, sensory-based interaction between the two bodies is tragically and almost violently interrupted by the slowly approaching moment of death:

The video shows the needle puncture from the cannula on Kerttu's right front paw that had been inserted at the veterinary hospital the night before. She had been given fluids and an opiate-based painkiller directly into her veins to reduce her pain and help her survive another night. The vet let me take Kerttu home for her last night. She told me to get her to eat something, that it was our last chance, but I couldn't. Afterward, when I watch the video clip (which I took in shock in a last attempt to have some memory of us), taking her home feels like such a selfish and unethical act. In a way, Kerttu's life was prolonged because of my grief. She was in a drug-induced delirium with dilated pupils visible even in the video. The vets were thinking about the emotional well-being of the human, not the dog, and I allowed them to do that. (Anna)

At this moment, the dog's and human's bodies are nearly hybridized aesthetically; however, taking a video of a dog on the verge of death raises ethical questions about power dynamics. The dog looks at her human with blurred eyes, while the human behind the camera searches for ways to cope with the difficult situation of making a decision about the dog's death. In retrospect, the human feels ashamed of making the video, which seems like a staged act that intrudes too deeply into the dog's vulnerability, disrespecting her in a sense. Yet, the video is also an important aesthetic reminder of the beautiful love between the dog and her human. Although it is possible to position the video as a mechanism of human control, of grasping onto the moments before death, it is also an act of love whereby the memory

of the dog's last moments are eternalized and can later be shared, remembered, and cherished.

Such uses of technology can awaken the human's bodily response to the dog's death and continue the somatic intimate relationship, even after the dog's physical body is gone. During the intense moment of a loved one's death, impressions, feelings, and events can be too overwhelming to acknowledge or remember. Producing video footage or other visuals allows humans to remember, revisit the moment, and perhaps process often deeply traumatic bodily experiences. Although doing so might seem 'disrespectful' or controlling (by distancing oneself from emotions in the moment), it might also be perceived as an *act of care* and part of the healing process that allows the human to attend to grief at a less traumatic time.

After making the decision to euthanize an animal, humans commonly question their choice, regardless of their rational, cognitive understandings of why it is necessary. Attuning to the dog's 'voice,' learned through a human's physical relationship with the living dog, offers an inner dog–human dialog (within the human), which may be intuitive, instinctual, or imagined—the exact nature is unimportant for our purposes. Knowing, fearing, and anticipating a future loss is a core aspect of our attachment to loved ones and a central tenet of human lived experience. In some traditions, contemplating death and loss are everyday practices that promote living each moment more fully and provide comfort through deeper experiences. Hence, the loss and grief involved in intimate dog–human relationships are empirically fruitful for understanding the aesthetic hybridization that occurs across bodies and affects human experiences of animal–human and human–human relations. These intense experiences may disrupt the constructed human dualism that often controls, organizes, and sanitizes society through 'rationalized' organizations. By accessing such intimate events and moments of transcendence, OS and ethics researchers can expand beyond limited constructions to engage in deeper and more honest inquiries into the phenomena under study.

Challenges and Opportunities of Multispecies Research in Organizational and Business Ethics

Our study addresses the urgent need for species-inclusive methods in OS and advocates sensory ways of knowing and being beyond that of humans. We illustrated how shared aesthetic moments arise from the intimate dog–human relationship in which attunement to and the intuitive sensing of each other's presence, mood, and subtle gestures and movements underscore these experiences. In this way, we have shown how dog–human relationships may create an aesthetic hybridization of bodies that facilitates a holistic

understanding of subjectivity beyond a purely human-centric or animal lens. As a key contribution, we propose a post-human aesthetic methodological approach based on intra-affective relations viewed through a posthuman care lens that better achieves the hybridization of subjectivity and more-than-human positionality.

Our analysis revealed two aspects of the aesthetic hybridization of multispecies bodies through which this research phenomenon's methodological potential may be actualized: first, by describing intimate, breath-filled encounters in humanimal relationships, and second, by highlighting the vulnerable openings produced through the grief of pain, loss, and trauma. Humans are often highly attached to our dogs, which engenders a unique love–death cycle experience, since dogs have much shorter lifespans than most humans. These intimate animal relationships allow us to contemplate death, feel loss, and experience love in profound ways; however, critically examining the dog–human relationship reveals an uneven power dynamic in which most dogs are confined to our homes and eat, sleep, and exercise based on human decisions. Posthuman aesthetics does not deny these entangled ethical challenges, nor does hybridization imply becoming less-than a dog or less-than a human. Rather, we frame the exploration as an intra-action between sensating bodies—articulated in reflections—that highlights elements of canine–human bonds relevant to business ethics, such as ethical decision-making.

Beyond methodological contributions, this article advances business ethics in two important ways. First, we extend the discussion of the posthuman affective ethics of *humanimal* relations in business ethics (see Sayers et al., 2022) by adding an aesthetic layer that uses sensory and somatic knowledge to reflect on the cycles of life and death. Second, through a methodological approach that extends human sensitivities into aesthetic hybridizations rather than separating humans from animals, we extend business ethics discussions on humanimal care relationships, especially regarding affective knowledge. We also illustrate how the affective, mutual bond between dogs and humans may serve as a mechanism for exploring embodied relationalities beyond rationalized notions of acting and being.

Novel empirical developments in business ethics research are required both to understand the ethical aspects that underlie everyday behaviors and research practices (Babalola et al., 2022) and to engage “with the imaginary in business ethics” to cultivate new forms of social relationships and interactions between humans and nonhumans (Islam & Greenwood, 2021, p. 3; Labatut, 2023). Multispecies research attends to the relationality of humans and other beings and thus expands possible ways of conducting critical and innovative research within this field. Such approaches consider (and seek to dismantle) hierarchies among species while critically pondering who does or does not (normally)

take an interest in animal concerns. Previous studies have acknowledged the salient roles of aesthetic knowing and interaction in organizational life (e.g., Bell & Vacchani, 2020) and specific human–animal relations in general (Satama & Huopalainen, 2019). Our findings add nuance to these studies with empirical illustrations of a methodological approach to describing the ways in which bodies are *subtly* hybridized in everyday processes of humanimal creation, negotiation, and communication. Furthermore, this approach advances aesthetic and ethico-politically entangled understandings of human-and-other relationality, thereby contributing to the development of a more affirmative multispecies OS research methodology and inviting further contemplation: Can we work toward a future in which humans experience sensory hybridization with animals and nature? A sense of ‘oneness’ rather than separation?

Finally, we contribute to the inclusion of multispecies video footage in the realm of business ethics and OS, where these are rare but have great methodological potential. Multispecies video footage materials foreground animals' cues, actions, and perspectives and help us tell a more aesthetically attuned and potentially more complete story. Our analysis demonstrates the value of video material as a methodological resource that enriches written descriptions and facilitates the methodological representation and analysis of aesthetic elements of the dog–human relationship.

Challenges of Aesthetic Multispecies Research in the Discussion of Feminist Posthuman Care Ethics

Throughout this article, we have transparently included our doubts, thoughts, and aesthetic sentiments about the challenges of involving animals in OS, business ethics, and AOS research. Ethical issues may intensify when navigating highly emotional states and triggering events, but we see these moments as invitations to deeper reflection, especially in cocreating knowledge processes across different bodies. Without reiterating the obvious critiques faced by many postqualitative research projects, our study is complicated by the inclusion of our nonhuman companions, who have their own understandings of our shared lived experiences that differ from our own. Nevertheless, similar limitations are inherent in any qualitative study since researchers can never truly access the internal thoughts and feelings of human research participants. Our article offers one way forward by proposing a methodological approach that uses the bodies of ourselves and our dogs as research contexts that are rich in aesthetic knowledge and experience to be teased out and learned from. As true informed consent poses an ethical challenge when conducting research with animals, using humans' own embodied experiences as a setting might allow for more ethical human–animal research of the kind proposed in this article.

Throughout the study, we have sought to convey a communicative intracorporeality experienced with dogs that transcends verbal language through the interpretation of nonverbal language, such as gestures, expressions, and movement (Nimmo, 2016). That we cannot seek verification or traditional ‘informed consent’ from dogs raises ethical issues regarding ‘correct’ interpretations and attunement sensitivity. Per Motamedi-Fraser’s (2024) reflections on conducting social study research with her dog, consent may be implied by the dog’s *lack* of behavior (i.e., not resisting involvement); however, as animal captivity and domestication studies demonstrate, animals may ‘give up’ and are trained by humans to control their urges and fit into human lives. Thus, overt forms of resistance by some individual animals, which constitute agency through nonconsent, do not mean that a dog who does not run away consents to participation; rather, this may be the result of behavioral conditioning. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the imbalanced power dynamics between humans and dogs that are present in this study and pose a challenge to multispecies methods more broadly. Methodological questions, such as how the researcher frames the project, uses language, and seeks to give voice to research subjects, raise methodological and ethical concerns that require careful consideration. How a researcher chooses to include or exclude nonhumans in an OS study remains a central concern regarding power in research topics such as ours.

Accordingly, our primary areas of concern are about how best to move beyond our ingrained anthropocentric dispositions and embrace humanimal or animal experiences of living and acting within human-controlled societies, as well as how this can be accomplished in an aesthetic and ethical manner without sacrificing qualitative scientific rigor. These are ethically challenging questions to consider when conducting multispecies research in practice. For example, through detailed and time-consuming noticing and attunement, multispecies researchers seek to understand the animal’s subjective lived experience by sensing the overall atmosphere of a situation, subtle nuances in the human–animal relationship, and aesthetic dynamics between animal and human (see also Donovan, 2022), which was our overarching goal throughout the research process. The challenge here is the issue of aesthetic muteness (Warren, 2008), which is present in all sensory-based research topics involving nonverbal activities that resist verbalization, especially when writing about human relationships with animals.

We are intrigued by this methodological challenge and have attempted to address it by using verbal and visual materials to better illustrate the aesthetic hybridizations of canine–human bodies. Noticing the smallest details of everyday life with dogs offers a new perspective on including animals in research; however, strong emotions may prevent researchers from approaching their findings analytically or

distance them from grief. Thus, it is important to remain cautious about oversentimentalizing our relationships with dogs. We can learn from biologist Mark Bekoff’s (2007) ‘dogocentrist’ approach, in which he advocates for practicing ‘dogomorphism’ in research. This means acknowledging our inherently anthropocentric perspective, since, as humans, we inevitably sense and perceive the world through human senses, while striving “as hard as possible to combine the animals’ viewpoints to the ways in which we study, describe, interpret and explain their behavior” (p. 74).

Finally, the use of visual materials raises ethical concerns. It is as important to remember how video materials function as emotional artifacts as it is to analyze their representation (Christianson, 2016; Quattrone et al., 2021; Warren, 2008). The video material analyzed in this study was not originally collected for research but as a personal and intimate recollection of a canine–human companionship by one of the authors. Despite this, we believe it offers an engaging method that complements aesthetic diary reflections by facilitating authentic, creative, and immersive storytelling about the vulnerable hybridization of bodies.

Possibilities for Developing Multispecies Methodological Encounters for a More Inclusive Business Ethics Field

To highlight our contributions to business ethics research, we look at recently published articles in the *Journal of Business Ethics* (JBE) and consider how these researchers might have better integrated multispecies perspectives and animals into their studies. Furthermore, we consider how we, the JBE community, might address and overcome the ethics of exclusion that sustain speciesism at the individual and societal levels (c.f. Holmberg, 2025). We highlight four key areas: refugee care, ethical sensibilities, life and death, and stakeholder inclusion.

First, a recent article about Greek refugees could transcend species boundaries through including shared vulnerabilities (Mandalaki, 2025). Using a feminist care ethics perspective, Mandalaki (2025) highlights the need “to reframe business ethics research around care, affect, and reflexivity, especially when studying vulnerable contexts” and argues that it is not “only what we *do* [in terms of research], but *how* we do it” (p. 2). Our illustrative research challenges how we might conduct research in business ethics through a feminist ethical lens by recognizing humanimal entanglements and making space for unspoken, affective, and somatic connections.

We ask whether including animals in the empathy extended to refugees might transform the ethics of civil aid and care. As the circumstances of refugees make domesticated animals even more vulnerable than usual, applying a multispecies lens to the shared vulnerability of displaced

humans and animals might contribute to even more “embodied, affective and non-representational business ethics research” (Mandalaki, 2025, p. 2). Our research lays the foundation for considering relational multispecies interconnections when conducting affective research. As Holmberg (2025) notes, the inclusion of animals and whether they are regarded as subjects of security remain largely underexplored. We envision future studies in *JBE* that recognize displaced animals by exploring the ethical implications of their inclusion in refugee care and the role of multispecies solidarity in humanitarian efforts.

Second, Antoni and Beer’s (2024) research on ethical sensibilities for practicing care in management and organizational research aims to include more attentiveness and responsiveness by using a feminist lens to consider the personal in the research process. They identified “three ethical sensibilities at the heart of enacting care: encountering the ‘other’ interpreting roles and responsibilities and deliberating needs and resources” (p. 291). These three sensibilities are integral to our relationships with domesticated animals and how we research them, and the extension to animals in the article is a missed opportunity in business research. Although these authors do not consider the multispecies relationships of humans, like us, they question how the social world can be understood if care—the fabric of the social world—is not considered in the formation of ethical relationships. Because domesticated animals rely entirely on human care throughout their lives (and often approaching their deaths), these are some of the most impactful care relationships in which humans engage. Hence, we envision future studies in *JBE* that theorize more interspecies care.

Third, del Rio and Suddaby (2025) recently asked the following question: “How can we organize a good death?” (p. 674), noting that the contemporary Western medical industry has created rationalized and commercialized structures that separate the lived experiences of life and death, thereby impacting the ethical fabric of organizations. Given that animal death is quantifiably the most prominent form of organizational death (e.g., animal industrial farming), the inclusion of multispecies perspectives in any dialog about ‘good’ and ethical organizational deaths is imperative. Including the personal, as we have done here, broadens the scope of affective care we experience in our relationships with animals and allows it to be theorized in more abstract and impersonal contexts, such as animal agriculture.

Fourth, this theorization of intimate *humanimal* relationships requires further development within established business theories. In 2022, Tallberg et al. advocated animal stakeholderhood in this journal and a broader recognition of various human–animal care relations in businesses and stakeholder theory; however, in a more recent article on non-human stakeholder inclusion (Gulari et al., 2024), animals are regarded merely as ‘beasts’ in the natural environment,

which neglects the close, often entangled human–animal relationships that impact decision-making. The language used in this article reinforces prejudices, with the negative term ‘beasts’ constructing ethically problematic associations with ‘bestiality’⁸ that contrast with our advocated values, which emphasize care, empathy, and recognition. Gulari et al. (2024) mention Donovan’s animal care ethics but do not develop this through affective bonds in the way that we and Tallberg et al. (2022) have done. Similarly, Gulari et al. (2024) use Cozza and Gherardi’s (2024) posthuman and relational process-oriented epistemology to propose more ethical and sustainable business operations based on a plural and dynamic interplay of nonhuman inclusion (p. 19), yet the personal, entangled aspects of the humanimal relations on which we focus here are unexplored, which we consider a significant problem for any posthuman ethics.

Hence, we respond to the call for novel and ethically attentive methodological approaches (Babalola et al., 2022; Freeman & Greenwood, 2020) that take seriously the agency and “power of nonhuman subjects to shape the world” (Odgen et al., 2013, p. 16), including how subjectivities emerge through multispecies relationality, the lived experiences of boundary crossing, and corporal compassion between species (Acampora, 2023). In doing so, we map new ontological approaches that unite the natural and social worlds (Labatut, 2023). Our starting point was the central ethical issue of problematizing OS and business ethics research with animals by asking how we can better and more equitably include sensate animals in research while speaking to the core of future methodological concerns. These are important issues for AOS, and we consider them necessary for OS and business ethics more broadly. Addressing these issues will support explorations of how we can more thoughtfully consider the voices and interests of animals in business ethics research, thereby facilitating knowledge of the world through asymmetrical, affective, and sensorial multispecies relationships that respect the interconnectedness and dignity of all beings.

The historical reliance of OS on positivist methods highlights the need for alternative methodological approaches that can better guide research on and theorizing about multispecies encounters and relationality—even when such approaches may appear strange or ‘untestable’ in traditional

⁸ Describing animals using the term ‘beasts’ often dehumanizes and objectifies them, stripping away their agency and individuality, and reinforcing the idea that animals deserve less moral consideration. It also evokes ideas of wildness and lack of control, which justify human dominance and control over animals. This language may perpetuate negative stereotypes of savagery and danger, as well as fear-based attitudes that hinder empathy. Ultimately, it disregards animals’ capacity for complex emotions and relationships, which undermines their ethical treatment.

senses (Babalola et al., 2022; Islam & Greenwood, 2021). By embracing these methods, the aim is to foster richer ethical understandings and ways of being that help us “live better” (Freeman & Greenwood, 2020, p. 1) within entangled multispecies worlds. Our article illustrates how affectively intense moments of multispecies recognition, care, and suffering, as well as moments of interspecies boundary crossing “when the ordered world of species difference shatters” (Odgen et al., 2013, p. 9), are moments of embodied insights that illuminate knowledge about the human experience glimpsed through a more-than-human lens. These moments of vulnerability occur when our relational bond with animals transcends species boundaries to ‘care for’ and ‘care about’ them. The feeling of being cared for is an aesthetic form of knowledge that lies in the human body’s predisposition to hybridize with other corporealities (Strati, in press). In the almost hybridized, intimately close, and unique relationships that dogs and humans have developed over thousands of years, we experience intense somatic feelings of grief and love.

Exploring the dog–human bond may inform ethical deliberations on more abstract or less intimately personal relationships, such as those with the earth or weather systems, which are not often considered in business research but are integral to many Indigenous ontologies. Although dogs have special relationships with humans and are often cherished as family members, domestication has had negative consequences, such as medical and physiological problems created by selective breeding and the so-called behavioral issues linked with solitary lives indoors. Moreover, consumer demands drive puppy mills and anthropomorphized trends in dog paraphernalia, such as clothing (although some breeds now require such items). Thus, as we reflect on the multispecies relations closest to us, through attentive love and grief, we may become more readily able to consider other interspecies relationships in our lives.

For example, grief over biodiversity loss is increasingly prevalent, and many are now considering planetary well-being beyond human interests; however, few organizations or businesses address these issues, and there is a large gap between what they do and what we feel. We argue that the aesthetic feeling of interconnectedness with other living bodies and matter that at times transcends human egoism permits ethical awareness to emerge. The closest bonds may thus give rise to ethical ponderings and pathways that extend to more distant and alien beings, such as trees, plants, oceans, and waterways. Beyond perspectives on dog–human relations, future research might explore the impacts of the posthuman aesthetics of grief and love for biodiversity on individual, organizational, and business ethics. In a reality where many businesses exploit nature beyond her capacity to sustain herself, we must cultivate a sense of response-ability that goes deeper than rationalized profit maximization or cognitively based ethical theories,

one that centers on the felt knowledge of interconnectedness and shared lifeworlds, and on the recognition of how human actions harm both others and ourselves. Such a connection requires methods beyond the rational. Because dogs are intimately connected to human evolution and history, our feelings toward them reflect our humanity and the potential to afford ethical care to others. Thus, by transcending the dog–human relationship, aesthetic knowledge might inform ethical decision-making in business.

Methodologically, future research might explore the possibilities of developing qualitative research methods, such as arts-based approaches, multisensory walking methods, video materials, or sensory narratives, to systematically observe and document cues such as body language, vocalizations, touch, spatial proximity, and affective atmospheres, in order to examine the meaningfulness and multimodality of human–animal relations in contemporary work organizations. Developing such approaches is critical, because language loses its primacy in human–animal relations. For example, can we explore multispecies vibrancies or how animals experience spaces in multisensory ways to reconfigure human modes of sensing (Baxter & Hamilton, 2025)? Specifically, Baxter and Hamilton (2025) discuss natural scientist Foster’s (2016) longitudinal study, in which the researcher sought to inhabit the lifeworlds of various animals—dwelling in burrows and consuming earthworms like badgers, swimming in rivers like otters, and scavenging through urban waste like foxes in order to immerse himself in their sensory experiences.

Moreover, speculative feminist and Indigenous fabulations (see, e.g., Hartman, 2008; Kimmerer, 2013, 2024) might offer creative paths forward by transcending limited anthropocentric methods in OS and business ethics and focusing on conducting multispecies research in practice, even in the absence of formal animal behaviorist training. These approaches offer the opportunity to choose ways of thinking, acting, and behaving that promote multispecies well-being and thriving. Rejecting or living separately from our aesthetic experiences vis-à-vis (non)humans diminishes our human experience of the world, especially since our treatment of others often signifies who we are as moral beings. Ultimately, the posthuman condition (see Braidotti, 2013, 2019; Ferrando, 2019) currently offered to social scientists presents opportunities to explore humanity and the phenomena that touch us more deeply. Combined with theorizing care in relation to animals, this framework has plenty of capacity to analyze pressing ethical issues.

Concluding Thoughts

Modern societies are multispecies in nature. At this time, research methods focused on human actions, discourse, and exceptionalism dominate OS and business ethics, thereby

minimizing approaches that “sensitize us to the wonders and contradictions of multi-species encounters” in a more-than-human world (Odgen et al., 2013, p. 9). One important direction for the future of qualitative research in OS and business ethics involves including multiple species and adopting multispecies methods that prioritize affirmative ethics, relational care, and justice for animals and nonhuman nature in organizational applications. This article offers a point of entry into a realm in which we have experimented with methods that shift the focus away from humans as the sole locus of empirical knowledge and participation, thereby supporting more exploratory and multisensory endeavors by extension. We hope that this approach encourages reflexivity and deeper ethical analysis in the field (Greenwood & Freeman, 2018).

As our shared planet experiences multiple crises, the challenges of how humans treat, relate to, and learn to become more ethically attuned to nature and other animals are critical for the planet’s survival and well-being (Ergene et al., 2023; Fan, 2024). At their core, these circumstances are the ultimate test for determining what kind of humanity might survive the process of transcending thoughts and behaviors that cause violence, injury, and suffering to animals and other humans, and which are systemic and endemic in many of our organizations, systems, and societies. For these reasons, incorporating animals into qualitative research more organically, reflexively, and carefully is essential. Because our ethical framings always impact the knowledge we create, this core concern must become a more integral part of the research we conduct and the methodological approaches we adopt in OS and business ethics research. Could we not strive to connect—emotionally and intellectually—with those who are different from us, rather than molding them (especially animals) to align with our own human-centered preconceptions (Donovan, 2006)? How might we seek to learn to live well together?

The most apparent answer is to develop a variety of social science research methods that include nonhuman perspectives. After all, how can we study and hope to understand the world if we exclude the perspectives of the majority of life forms from our studies? Using methodological developments to elevate the voices of the traditionally silenced presents opportunities for reconciliation and affirmative ways forward in OS and business ethics studies. To do so requires continuous learning and unlearning to raise awareness of what human ideological constructs currently overlook to better grasp and comprehend what remains unidentified and unacknowledged within these constructs (Donovan, 2006) and to facilitate the ethical inclusion of those who have been silenced and marginalized for too long.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest No conflicts of interest.

Informed Consent For human participants yes (as this work is largely autoethnographic). The animal participants could not give informed consent. This research has received a research ethics approval (decision number D/1337/03.04/2023) to cover collecting and analyzing qualitative data in multispecies contexts.

Research Involving Human and Animal Participants Yes. This research focuses on human–animal interactions analyzed and interpreted from a human point of view.

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