UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Generative Hanging Out

Developing Engaged Practices for Health-Related Research

Pols, A.J.

DOI
10.1080/01459740.2023.2271635

Publication date
2023

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Medical Anthropology: Cross Cultural Studies in Health and Illness

License
Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act (https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/you-share-we-take-care)

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Pols, A. J. (2023). Generative Hanging Out: Developing Engaged Practices for Health-Related Research. *Medical Anthropology: Cross Cultural Studies in Health and Illness*, *42*(8), 707-719. https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2023.2271635

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date:04 Dec 2024

MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
2023, VOL. 42, NO. 8, 707–719
https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2023.2271635

Generative Hanging Out: Developing Engaged Practices for Health-Related Research[1]

A. J. Pols[a,b]

[a]Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; [b]Department of Ethics, Law & Humanities, UMC Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

ABSTRACT
"Hanging out" with one's interlocutors generates ethnographic ways to creatively involve people in health care research. This special issue focusses on people who are difficult to engage in conventional research because they are not verbally fluent, such as people with dementia or learning disabilities, or who speak a language that the researcher does not understand. In this introduction I discuss how "Hanging out" shifts the goal-orientation of research practices toward relationships and settings. Hierarchies may be shifted to provide attractive possibilities for interlocutors to participate by doing things together with the researcher. The research practice itself becomes the object of analysis.

SAMENVATTING
Etnografisch onderzoek, en specifiek de methode van participerende observatie, biedt een creatieve manier om mensen in (zorg)onderzoek te betrekken. Deze special issue onderzoekt hoe mensen te betrekken voor wie meer traditionele vormen van onderzoek lastig zijn, omdat ze niet of moeilijk in voor de onderzoeker begrijpelijke taal kunnen spreken over hun situatie. Denk aan mensen met dementie of een verstandelijke beperking, maar ook aan moeilijk te verwoorden kwesties als "iets voelen." Ik bespreek in deze introductie hoe "uithangen" met onderzoeks-subjecten een verschuiving betekent van de het vooropstellen van het doel van het onderzoek, naar de relatie tussen onderzoeker en onderzochte, en van de mogelijkheden die de onderzoeks-praktijk biedt om die relatie te ontwikkelen. De traditioneel hiërarchische verhoudingen tussen onderzoeker en onderzochte veranderen in aantrekkelijke manieren om te participeren door samen dingen te *doen* in plaats van te bespreken. Hiermee wordt de onderzoekspraktijk zelf object van onderzoek.

KEYWORDS
Art-based research; ethnographic research methods; health care research; non-verbally fluent research subjects; participation

Collaboration is the new buzzword in social scientific research into health care practices.[2] It is one response in a series of reactions to research practices that have ruthlessly submitted research subjects to research designs which have been harmful to them, and even lethal.[3] In medical science such exploitative research designs are well discussed, but anthropology has also had its share of critical reflections about the power of researchers. The *Writing Culture* debate addressed the concern of powerful researchers who disowned patients and other research subjects from their stories and representations, hence the accusation of colonizing their research subjects (Clifford and Marcus 2010). Writing about people is always both a risk and a responsibility. How does one represent

CONTACT A. J. Pols a.j.pols@uva.nl Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, REC, Building B/C, Room C5.08, Amsterdam 1018 WV, Netherlands.

Media teaser: This special issue shows how using ethnographic and art-based methods make it possible to include verbally non-fluent subjects in healthcare in research.

Media teaser: Rather than striving to include verbally non-fluent research subjects in research by granting them the role of co-researcher, this special issue presents a collection of papers that explore how people may participate in ways that are more attractive and feasible to them.

© 2023 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

those who are not writing themselves? Those who may not be able to read English, the language that is ubiquitous in anglosaxon academia, or who may not be able to read at all? How does one represent people who are disenfranchised? The question is about how research subjects may put their mark on the type of knowledge that is created about them through research. How may we learn about their experiences, preferences, and values?

In health care research these problems are aggravated when the research includes people who have difficulty representing themselves verbally, for example people with dementia, long term psychiatric disorders, or intellectual disabilities (Driessen 2018; and this issue; Pols 2005; Hyvärinen et al. 2010). Also, researchers may not speak the language of their field (see Schurian-Dabrowska & Krause, this issue). State of the art social scientific methods are mainly operative by using language (but see Cleeve, this issue; and Scholtes, this issue). Alternatives to include "non-speaking" subjects are observations, or even biofeedback, but this makes it difficult to learn anything about their understandings of and positionings in the world. But even if people with chronic diseases or handicaps (or *any* people, for that matter) are verbally fluent, it may be unclear what type of knowledge they may bring to the table.[4] People may be unaware of the effects of their activities, for instance, or fail to notice things they find self-evident, or too unimportant to address. Tools and technologies may steer people's activities without them being aware of this, and taboos may restrain people from speaking (see Hirschauer 2006).

Van de Bovenkamp and Trappenburg (2009) analyze the participation of patients in the production of guidelines for treatments. The standards for what counts as knowledge differ between professionals and patients, and hence patients are often either disqualified, or seen as contributing "anecdotes" rather than "evidence." In a meeting I had with a Flemish patient organization in 2019, the members considered their concerns about being asked to sit in on quite different committees that address a great variety of problems. They were overwhelmed by these requests and were quite unsure what commitments and roles they should take on or not. We reflected on the question of what their expertise consists of, how this knowledge might differ from general scientific perspectives and how it may contribute to better situations for patients (see for the discussion about patient expertise (Akrich 2010; Callon and Rabeharisoa 2002, 2003, 2008; Epstein 1996; 2008; Pols 2014; Pols and Hoogsteyns 2016; Rabeharisoa et al. 2014; Scott 1991). In medical science, there are attempts to address "patient values" through quality-of-life studies, or patient satisfaction questionnaires, but there is a lot of critique about what these studies actually address (Pols and Limburg 2016). The call from the social sciences to start "listening to patients' voices" is a sympathetic one, but exactly how to do this, what research practices would allow for this voice to become audible, what may hence be articulated, and to what effect, is unclear. In this special issue we attempt to explore how creative practice approaches that make use of ethnographic methods may help to address these problems, and to include what matters to patients in research.[5]

How to collaborate?

It is in this context that the notion of *collaboration* between researcher and research subject has been suggested, next to semantically related counterparts such as "co-creation" or co-laboring (De la Cadena 2015). The notion of collaboration is often used as a normative imperative that is meant to give patients a firmer position in health research and make their voices heard. But despite these noble aims, it is unclear what such collaborations could look like. The ideal of collaboration is generally to place interlocutors into a more symmetrical position by assigning them the role of *co-researchers*. Tools such as "participation ladders" (Arnstein 1969; Smits et al. 2020; Teunissen and Abma 2013), showing different degrees of participation in research or other projects, make different levels of patient involvement as co-researchers more explicit. Although there are always disclaimers for this, the ladders suggest a hierarchy in which the highest level of participation is that patients set the research agenda.

Enabling patients to be co-researchers is challenging, but especially problematic for the non-verbally fluent people I mentioned above. Working as a researcher puts emphasis on cognitive

abilities and skills. People may be afraid to engage in such a task, they may not like it, or may be unable to do so. Collaborative research practices have led to issues about the payment of co-researchers and practical experiences with collaborative frictions and failures. The question is, however, whether the position of the co-researchers is still based or modeled on the desires of the researchers rather than the research subjects.

In this special issue we take collaboration not as an ideal, but as an analytical category that allows one to study how any research situation constitutes a particular form of working together, however unidirectional the collaboration may be. We study how collaborations may take shape when using creative anthropological methods of "generative hanging out." In this way we start from the insight that research situations and methods generate certain kinds of knowledge.[6] We explore several ways of collaborating and developing research practices together with our research subjects who have health-related problems. We ask what "collaboration" through hanging out might entail, and how researchers and interlocutors may hang out in conditions that are not only those determined by the researchers, but also those of the people with whom the researcher wants to collaborate. We are particularly interested in collaborating with subjects who are less verbally fluent than the researcher, or who do not speak the language of the researcher. What does collaboration come to mean for researchers and participants? And how might different approaches make visible different things – and also ask different things – from our research participants?

The special issue

Through hanging out, research data are essentially generated through spending time and doing things together in ways that are of interest to both the researcher and the research subjects.[7] Such practices generate shared activities as well as mutual learning, demanding the use of creative forms of representation such as writing fieldnotes, making drawings or developing and recording a film together. Research subjects may participate actively, but also more passively, by allowing researchers to become part of their world and showing them around. Creative forms of activity, such as drawing or cooking, are alternatives to formal verbal exchanges, and are attempts to engage research subjects in ways that are accessible and pleasant to them. This serves the double purpose of generating knowledge about possible ways of being in the world and preferred ways of interacting, as well as testing suitable ways of interacting by putting them into practice. By "doing things together," we argue, the interlocutors will find themselves in a position that is or may become attractive to them, while the power-balance between researcher and researched is radically transformed.

We hope to further the debate on possible and fruitful collaborations and what these might lead to, by experimenting with research practices and methods in different health- related settings. Each article presents a problem for which creative hanging out approaches were experimented with. We also address the limits of hanging out and how these open-ended research practices impact on the originally formulated research plans. We explicitly aim to include an audience of health care researchers who are not familiar with anthropological methods. In this way we hope to inspire new collaborations and adventurous research, making the use of ethnographic and creative methods more accessible to colleagues in health research.

Generative hanging out

Anthropology's hallmark method is to join people in what they are doing.[8] Technically this is called "participant observation". Participating in the field as a way of studying a field is a particular way of creating relationships with one's research subjects. The classic idea in an anthropological study is to minimally disturb practices, and learn how these practices run their course "as usual". However, it is also clear that participation in the field leads to forms of involvement that transgress sheer observation. Different forms of more active research, such as action research, the use of images and film, focus

group discussions and digital interviews have entered anthropologists' toolboxes. These research practices lead to various forms of active collaborations (Sánchez Criado and Estalella 2018:8).

Clifford Geertz (1998) made the term "deep hanging out" famous, to denote the informal and enduring relationships that emerge when ethnographers "immerse" themselves in the lives of their interlocutors *out there* and thus become part of their everyday practices.[9] The silent assumption is that the field is far away, and more difficult to reach by traveling there compared to technological means that include social media (Ahlin and Li 2019). This is now different because of a rather more intermeshed world, where (dreams of) isolated forms of living have become rare.[10] So, rather than the metaphor of *depth* – involving processes of immersion and resurfacing, after which the researcher writes up their findings outside of the field – we want to specify the qualities and temporalities of different relationships. These relationships may continue even after the fieldwork has been completed. Our research subjects may live close to us (see Dronkert, this issue), and digital ethnography creates different global relationships (Ahlin and Li 2019). Anthropological encounters may consist of "moments" (Hastrup 2018; Hoppe et al. 2019), field events (Ahlin and Li 2019), or relationships that develop over time. And if there is no "immersion" from which to resurface and return to academia, how do these relationships develop or stop after the fieldwork period?

In this introduction I unravel some common characteristics of research situations and relationships between researcher and researched, in order to show how generative hanging out may create different collaborations. I discuss the goal orientation of research practices, and the shift toward an orientation on relationships and settings which form the shared practical constraints that make it possible to learn about some things rather than others. Hierarchies in research situations, then, may be shifted to create possibilities for interlocutors to participate in ways that are attractive to them. I discuss reflexivity and representation in research practices, in the sense of "speaking about" things that are not present in the here and now. I explore what happens when such practices are shifted from making representations *of* things toward *doing things together*. I will demonstrate how this turns the research practice *itself* into the object of analysis for the researcher.

From pursuing research goals toward creating optimal settings: the "donation model"

Research is oriented toward a goal. There are aims and objectives, and there are specific questions to be answered. These goals are set by the researcher, and are formulated within a wider network and understanding of what counts as acceptable and researchable questions, and what are methods to shape and answer these questions properly. In the research situation, it is the researcher who is responsible for ensuring that her research goals will be met. Researchers do this by arranging practical situations to meet these goals.

Although research subjects may enjoy research situations, the *surplus value* of the research situation is "what is in it" for the researcher. This is the value that remains after the work of the interlocutors is done, when the work continues beyond the research encounter itself. These are the analyses and publications, generated under the banner of a contribution to knowledge and a common good. Still, it is the researcher, not the interlocutor, who benefits, be it in terms of publications, H-indices, knowledge, or their career. Apart from memories of a good conversation, or some useful insights, the interlocutor is usually no longer part of this phase of the research.

It is due to this inequality that social scientists have discussed whether interviewees should be *paid* for giving interviews and sharing their experiences. However, paying research subjects does not challenge the conventional idea that research subjects are there to *donate* something, to give (or sell) away something of themselves. They may cherish the sweet feeling of having done something altruistic, of having made a small sacrifice for the benefit of future generations (Carrera et al. 2018; Williams et al. 2008). In this perspective, research subjects, for example patients, give something to the researcher ("raw material", blood, measurements), but it is not clear if patients get something in return, or, if they do, what this something might be. It is a donation model for the role of research subjects in research.

Hanging out offers possibilities to work in a way that is oriented toward the relationship between researcher and researched and the material setting in which they do so. This means that the research process takes more explicitly into account "what's in it" for the interlocutors. "What is in it" for them would become one of the reasons for participating in research. Clearly, this is time and attention from the ethnographers (see Merrett 2006 on the Hawthorne effect). It is rare that someone takes so much time to listen to one's stories and helps one to make sense of them or develop new insights.[11] Yet this relationship can be extended by researchers being both more active and more passive. Hanging out is relationship- and setting-oriented in the sense that it is about engaging in an activity together (even a "non-active" activity if it involves chatting or sitting on a couch together) in a relaxed and pleasant way for both. Hanging out means "doing something (or not so very much) together." "Chatting" is a form of doing something together. It diverts attention away from the research. When going for a walk, for instance, walking is the first thing to arrange, with research questions coming only after this is achieved. The topic of conversation can evolve freely. At one moment it can be about the activity itself, the next it can be about something that is happening around you. Or one can talk about an anecdote from a past event, tell a joke, make a random association, or sing a song. Such chat-walks can be used to offer good advice and consolation, to celebrate, or simply to have a good time. And occasionally, chats can also be about the research topic or something that approaches this topic, to help the researcher to learn what they are interested in. But if and how this is the case can often only be learned gradually, or indeed found out later during the analysis.

Open questions

It is a common experience for ethnographers that, when one enters "the field," one experiences the uselessness of all the theory read before. Here is a story from my very first piece of ethnographic research (quoted from Pols, forthcoming).

> I prepared for conducting fieldwork during my Master's in philosophy and psychology by reading up, under the guidance of a literature professor, on the semiotic approach of C.S. Peirce. I was about to start studying the use of signs by people suffering from dementia in a nursing home. At that time (at the end of the 1990s), dementia was not a topic that had received much attention. The nursing home I went to was unpretentious and located in a sleepy town. With my backpack full of texts about Firsts, Seconds and Thirds, Symbols, Rhemes and Dicents, Qualisigns, Arguments, and semiotic triangles, I went to the nursing home to meet its residents and learn about their world.
>
> One of the first things I had to do was to get rid of all my theory. It was useless for thinking about my life in the nursing home. I did not encounter many "signs" at first, but I did learn to engage in small talk, which allowed me to spend time together with the residents. Such talk was not about exchanging information but about being together with the residents. The type of conversation that they were good at involved using general words to describe general situations, which were often pleasantries that could be shared with nonspecific others. I, the academic nerd, had to learn how to hold conversations about the weather, about nice new dresses or hairdos, about domestic things, and how good it is to see you today. I learned to hold conversations in which the content did not matter very much, but these conversations were a way of relating to others. That is, they allowed me to "hang out" with the residents. I learned that intonation is far more important than substance when engaging in such general conversations. It was only when I was safely back at my desk, physically removed from life in the nursing home, that I could again pose my questions to C.S. Peirce.

The theoretical knowledge acquired during preparation does not quite fit, or does not fit at all, to the concerns at hand for the people in the field. This is because the process of hanging out focuses less immediately on the research topic itself, but instead engages with the situations at hand. Researchers have to move from their own analytical questions toward the question of how to participate in the world of their research subjects. Their questions then become: What is going on here? What is this practice about? What is important here? What are the frictions? What holds it together?[12] It is the ethnographer's job in doing fieldwork to look for answers to these questions. Clear answers to these questions, however, are continuously postponed. This can be very difficult for novice researchers (What am I doing here? What is all this about?! How can I handle being an outsider in the field? I do

not have a clue what is going on! I am useless at this practice!). Interesting connections between what happens in the field and the research questions will have to be figured out later.

The way that topics can drift and shift when hanging out, in combination with the relative uselessness of theory, shows how hanging out can be thought of as less goal-directed than other forms of research. The golden rule of this type of research is to accept that you do not know what is going on, and that you are there to gradually find out. It is a method of asking open questions. The trick is to learn to live with this not-knowing, allow it to be just that. Eventually one will start to make links, and this is the treasure, initially hidden in a place where the researcher did not know to look, but that they will eventually find. This happens by patient probing, persistently asking questions, observing, collecting different views and turning judgments into questions. It is acceptable to not know because, at some point, one will be able to develop an analysis.

Diverting the eyes

This is a way of learning about something by looking at something else, or learning by diverting one's eyes. To "stay with the trouble," Donna Haraway (2018) might say, of not knowing the values and "no-goes" of the interlocutors. During a study that I conducted in psychiatric hospitals, I learned much about what people appreciated, not by having them tell me, but by observing how they took pleasure in certain things, and hence enacted rather than told me about the things they liked (Pols 2005). The role of the material environment was important in these enactments.

> Morning coffee is a moment of conviviality on this ward in the residential home, and indeed, there is a lot of talking going on. Mrs Jansen asks for an ashtray; Mrs Jones hands one over to her. There is a lively discussion about yesterday's football match. Dora does not join the conversation. She sits just around the corner knitting with admirable speed. She is having her cup of coffee there. I can see from where I am sitting that she is listening to the conversation and occasionally smiling at what is being said while never stopping with her knitting. When coffee time is over, she collects the coffee cups and washes them. She then returns to her spot and continues her knitting. (Pols 2005:207)

Although somewhat removed from the social situation, Dora was nonetheless able to join and enjoy it. For her, a good social life is to be at a short distance from the center of activity. Hanging out on the ward made these appreciations visible.

Everyday ethics

The approach of "diverting the eyes" from one's research goal has its difficulties and concerns that have no general solutions. The additional meaning or surplus value of what researcher and interlocutor do together may not be all that clear to the interlocutor, or at least not right away. Fieldnotes are often written up when the research subjects are out of sight. And researchers' concerns with publications may not be truly clear to interlocutors. Rather than emphasizing "informed consent", which happens in biomedical research and also much social science research, which formalizes an interlocutor's willingness to "donate" their surplus value, the hanging out situation creates an ethically ambiguous space. Sarah Banks (2020; Banks & Brydon Miller 2018; Banks at al. 2013) calls this the "everyday ethics" of research practices in which the everyday negotiations between researchers and research subjects take place (see also Pols forthcoming). Everyday ethics in research can be about things as varied as establishing p-values or giving young researchers proper contracts, but it also pertains to the relationship with the interlocutor. This relationship remains an ongoing concern that has to be reconsidered again and again as the relationship unfolds. Everyday research ethics do not stop "when consent is given", but remain part of that relationship.

Yet it is hard to predict how exactly this process will take place and what the stakes will be. It is not an ethical issue that signing informed consent forms is able to solve. Nothing discrete is "given" to researchers, and anthropologists often argue that their research materials are not owned by them, but are co-produced with their interlocutors, and hence are also partly owned by the research subjects (De

Koning et al. 2019; Dilger et al. 2019). Ownership of data is a huge topic in itself, but here I want to highlight the co-authorship of ethnographic data or material. They are conversations rather than donations, products of practices of doing things together on terms that are meaningful for the research subjects.

When sticking to informed consent and "donation models" too strictly, some subjects may never be represented in research "on their own terms." If anthropologists do not write about them, then nobody will have *any* idea about their situation and way of being in the world, apart from the people who take care of them or live with them. Nobody looks over the caregiver's shoulder to see how they are doing and how they respond to care. There is no firm ethical ground to stand on here. It can only be done by trying out, evaluating continuously, and by critically relating to descriptions with the help of dedicated readers. This implies a shift from a donation model to an ongoing concern with everyday ethics. Simultaneously these everyday negotiations are the object of research, as they will show what the collaborations teach about the experiences of the interlocutors and the researcher.

In hanging out situations, a minimum of two people have to practically achieve something in a material setting. They have to, at least temporarily, live together and develop trust by negotiating the terms that allow the research situation to become a pleasant endeavor for both. If an interlocutor does not accept the terms or appreciate the arrangements, they will, consciously or unconsciously, "vote with their feet." They can allow the researcher to be present, or they may close the door on them. There is pleasure to be found for both in the research encounter, even if the interlocutor also has to accept a certain amount of the vulnerability in case the attempt at establishing a relationship fails or errors are made.

There are pitfalls here as well. A situation can become asymmetrical if the researcher must play too many roles or research subjects become more dependent on them than the relationship can bear. There are also relationships in fieldwork that are threatening or dangerous for the researcher.[13] The temporality of the relationship is also a concern here. The researcher can often easily step away from the situation, but interlocutors cannot, or at least not as easily, because the research is also an intervention in their life that may be characterized by poverty or a lack of friends. And what will happen when the data are collected? Will the interlocutor be part of the further development of what they have helped create or bring into being? The article by Dronkert in this special issue addresses these concerns and shows how a fruitful collaboration developed after the project was finished. Again, these are issues with everyday ethics that cannot simply be resolved. It cannot be clearly defined on a consent form and signed away. It is not a donation, but something that emerges from the process of hanging out and from the negotiation of terms upon which this can be done.

From goals to settings

Hanging out provides a research tool that allows interactions to be as open and responsive as possible to the ways subjects may structure the research process through what they do, what they like or dislike, and how they direct (or "nudge") researchers. They do not do so "on their own." Rather than stepping back in order to make interlocutors speak their minds, the hanging out researcher understands that such talk is always generated in a particular situation, through particular methods and material constraints, and in particular relationships. How active or passive someone wants to or is able to be is to be explored, just like the question of what kind of activity would suit them is to be explored.

The difficulty for the researcher is that they have to bracket their research questions, and engage in a relationship in which it is not clear from the start how it will contribute to their research questions. Uncertainty about how the process of hanging out will unfold is something that researchers must accept in exchange for allowing the habits, characteristics, responsibilities, circumstances and preferences of interlocutors to shape the situation in ways that they find acceptable and even pleasant. It is a radical way of "giving space" to research subjects by (de-)structuring this space to allow interlocutors to also structure this space as much as is possible and doable for the researcher. Doing things together demands that both the researcher and the interlocutor find these things acceptable. This requires the

researcher to divert their eyes from their research questions while focusing on the present situation, and shaping this in a way that is acceptable and pleasant to both parties.

From representing to doing

Research situations are often *reflexive* because they ask research subjects to talk about or fill out questionnaires about *something*. This suggests a subject-object relationship, not between researcher and researched, but between the researcher-interlocutor dyad and the topic to be researched. Because of this reflexive character, there is "a topic" or rather an event in the here and now. Generative hanging out, as in anthropological fieldwork more generally, foregrounds the practices of *doing things together*. In this way the research situation itself shows something about what one's interlocutors find important, how they experience the world, and how researchers and others may relate to them.[14] The reflexivity for making these things explicit is the task of the researcher.

More than in other forms of research, in hanging out a situation is created by participants as they go along. Research situations rely to differing degrees on either language or doings. Of course, "talking" is itself an activity which needs to be taken into account.[15] What does it mean for an interlocutor to speak somewhere? What are the characteristics of a particular speech situation? Questionnaires with closed questions leave less space for improvisation than semi-structured interviews. There are always mixtures of structure and non-structure (or of becoming, or "allowing to happen") in collaborations. These range from staging and conceptualizing researchers and research subjects as independent individuals where one donates something to the other, toward staging and understanding them as mutually dependent beings who are given (or who take) the time to hang out together, and who share the responsibility for the outcome of this in particular ways. An interview can also take on the explorative and emerging character that "hanging out" has, but only if the interviewer and interviewees can flourish under the conditions that are set by the interview, and only if the topic is of mutual interest. Semi-structured interviews are generally less symmetrical than hanging out because the researcher initiates these conversations. But the interviewee has the space to shape the interview situation on their own terms – or sabotage it.

> Fieldnote: I asked one of the inhabitants at the psychiatric residence if I could interview him about his new housing. He said yes and pointed for me to sit at his table, but he was clearly not keen on answering questions. He tried to make a deal with me, namely that I would put his freshly washed shirts in the closet, and then he would answer one of my questions. It soon became clear that he did not plan to keep his end of the bargain.

While hanging out together, one could say that the two subjects – researcher and interlocutor – are *creating* or constructing a research object *together* (see again Pels et al). This happens in an overt way. Researcher and interlocutor negotiate how they may do things together and what these things might look like. It is a concrete, immanent, actively created, and emerging object that is not fully determined at every stage of this process. The object becomes clearer the longer the relationship lasts, but it may also fail to take shape. There is always "noise," and there will be misunderstandings, sudden dislikes, betrayals, or changes of mind. Rather than "representing something" that exists, hanging out involves the *creation* of something that is *becoming*. This may sound theoretical, but it is actually quite practical. It is the shift toward practices of doing things together. This can be a completely non-verbal thing, and the "things," technologies, concepts, and situations that influence this also play a role in its creation and good qualities, even if not a single word is uttered. This makes the method of hanging out particularly suitable for research involving non-fluent speakers, and even animals or plants.[16] But hanging out can also provide fresh perspectives on the situations of those who *are* verbally fluent. Because there are always things that people do not notice in their practices, there are always potential insights to be gained.

Foregrounding practices allows researchers to study how people, words and things are dependent on one another in terms of how they take shape or become articulated. It allows researchers to study how they support or resist these articulations in their specific research

practices. It is not possible to do research without making representations in speech or writing, but it is possible to temporarily escape the problems of representation by hanging out with others and engaging them in creating situations. The task of the researcher is to analyze these interactions and link them to research questions that may well have shifted from the original ones. This is not an easy task, but it promises to be a fruitful way of shaping processes of collaboration in research where each participant finds a task that suits them, and so may also help researchers to learn from them.

The articles in this special issue

Leonie Dronkert writes about alternatives to making people with Mild Learning Disabilities co-researchers. She argues that being a co-researcher demands a form of collaboration that her interlocutors are not happy with and are not good at. She embarks on a collaborative adventure to make a Science Fiction film in the Netherlands. This was an idea from her informant, but a task with which none of them have experience with. Leonie sees herself faced with a lack of footholds and research questions. How can this SF film become part of her PhD research?

Annelieke Driessen works with Dutch dementia patients and asks how they can be included in research in a way that shows something about what concerns them. She calls this the quest for *interesting* subject positions for people with dementia. By hanging out and experimenting with her own influence on everyday life as a researcher, she develops ways of presenting people with dementia in a joint collaboration of adjusting wanting things ("willwork"), of experiencing pleasure and individuality, and as "appreciating" beings. In this way she aims to develop a counter position for the ink-black popular ideas about dementia as a loss of subjectivity.

Two papers radically adjust methods of hanging out by exploring what *drawing* things during fieldwork might bring. Helena Cleeve is hanging out in a Swedish dementia care home. She explores how the process of drawing and engaging with the resulting drawings together with interlocutors offers meaningful ways to see what mattered in daily life in dementia care units, but also to "unsee" ideas she had before. She argues that drawing during fieldwork can elucidate what matters in everyday situations, shows how different interlocutors see different things in the ethnographic drawings of their daily practices, and analyses the emotions that come into play here.

Ulrike Scholtes has another object of research: she studies three different care practices in the Netherlands in which caregivers aim to make their patients *feel* things in their bodies. Scholtes asks how drawing the situation can help clarifying that there are different ways of touching and feeling things in practice. Rather than drawing being a particular type of method, she argues that different ways of touching and feeling lead to different styles of drawing. As a non-verbal method, drawing may hence help to put situations into words that are otherwise more difficult to articulate.

Ruud Hendriks makes a plea for using art-based methods to improve dementia care. To evaluate these interventions, Hendriks proposes to hang out in practice to see what comes to matter to people with dementia and their carers. He analyses a Dutch project where clowns invite people to engage with dressing up one of the clowns. He analyses his findings in relation to theoretical debates about, respectively, the quality of relations, embodiment, materiality and playfulness in person-centered dementia care. Hence his aim is to offer an alternative to quantitative evaluations of art-based interventions in health care, which, he argues, do not lead to helpful results.

Luise Schurian and Kristine Krause do field work in a setting where neither of them speaks the language: in Polish care homes for people with dementia. They attune to what opportunities this brings for doing ethnographic fieldwork. They learn to attend to sounds and what people do, rather than to the meaning of words. This leads to new discoveries of what matters in everyday life in the care homes.

Barbara Nino Carreras and Brit Ross Winthereik make a plea for the use of comics and alternative narratives (alt-narratives) when engaging mental health service users and trauma survivors in research. With these methods they propose to create more space for accommodating diversity as well as differences in knowledge production. Collaborative visual analyses, the authors demonstrate, provides this space.

Together, these articles present a rich set of examples that we hope will inspire anthropologists and other social scientist working in health related research to explore the limits and possibilities of their favorite methods. We also hope that the special issue will inspire creative experiments with methods to fit their research to unexpected subjects!

Notes

1. The analysis in this introduction is based on chapter 12 ('Towards Research Practices for Studying Everyday Life Values by "Hanging Out") of my book *Re-Inventing the Good Life. An empirical contribution to the philosophy of care*, UCL' (forthcoming).
2. Participation thereby leads to forms of involvement which transgress sheer observation and turn into various forms of more or less active collaboration (Sánchez Criado and Estalella 2018:8). These collaborations emerge often without these having been a constitutive element or strategic design of the research. However, while "collaborative" methods have become a buzzword in general anthropology and in health related research (Gilbert 2004; Goodley 1996; Lassiter 2005; Niewöhner 2016; Rappaport 2008), it often remains unclear what forms these collaborations may take.
3. The critical position stems from the gross abuse of medical practices, especially in research that occurred in the 20th century (see for example Lederer 1995), during and after World War II (eugenics programmes, see for example Proctor 1988), but also after that, for instance the Tuskegee syphilis trials (see Brandt 1978; Reverby 2000, 2009). Today, dubious medical research practices are those that recruit poor people from developing countries as research subjects, for example see Benatar (2001), Petryna (2007, 2009), Petryna et al. (2006).
4. Hirschauer (2006), Faubion and Marcus (2009), Fortun et al. (2014), De la Cadena (2015). See also art based approaches for including non verbally fluent subjects in research: Strohm (2012), McKearney and Zoanni (2018), Driessen (2020) and this special issue.
5. Lawy (2017) shows how speaking always also implies "listening." Moser and Law (2003) show how technologies may assist in "making a voice.' I prefer the concept of "making a voice' over "giving voice' because it implies a relationality of the subject voicing something, which is dependent on the situation in which one speaks, whereas "giving voice' implies the taking away of barriers to hear an authentic voice. See Pols (2014); and for a development of this idea Pols forthcoming.
6. See Derksen and Morawski (2022). They argue for a plurality of methods in order to learn different things about certain phenomena.
7. See for example Ballestero and Winthereik (2021), De la Cadena (2015), Lassiter (2005), Niewöhner (2016); Fortun et al. (2014), Hastrup (2018), Pols (2005), Strohm (2012), Bachman (2016).
8. Taylor (2014) writes about hanging out as a way to discover unexpected things.
9. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo is often credited with first using the term, "deep hanging out," in relation to ethnographic research methodology. See Clifford (1996). Geertz (1998) made the term more widely known (Redman 2019).
10. Colonial relationships have been ever present with different roles for anthropologists withing them.
11. This role of qualitative researchers might be taken into account in health care more, as a role that potentially adds to the well-being of patients by helping them sort things out.
12. Famously, Garfinkel 2017) taught how one can learn about norms through breaching experiments. Such breaches can be purposefully staged, but also always lead to awkward situations and concerns about "deceiving" research subjects. When one starts participating in a practice one is not familiar with, however, one can be fairly sure there will be such breaches. And these are excellent moments to learn how "things are done' or ought to be done in this practice.
13. Fieldwork often involves establishing relationships with individuals we would avoid or not come across in our everyday lives. This comes with risks of mental health problems or sexual harassment (Berry et al. 2017; Schneider 2020; Williams (2017). Fieldworkers should prepare for this. See Hopmans et al. (2022).
14. This is also different from experiments in psychology, where subjects perform tasks that point to underlying psychological processes or phenomena. In hanging out, it is a more open question as to what research situations "represent" about the research subjects. This also depends on how the researcher eventually frames this process, as being about experiences, ways of living together, values in everyday life, and so on.
15. See Smith et al. (2015) on interviewing and what it brings.
16. Fox Keller (2000), d'Hoop (2023), and Despret (2006, 2015) about asking interesting questions, see also Driessen, this issue.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The author(s) reported there is no funding associated with the work featured in this article.

Notes on contributor

A. J. Pols is professor Anthropology of Everyday Ethics in Healthcare at the University of Amsterdam. She connects ethnographic research with ethics research, and works at the departments of Anthropology and in the Department of Ethics, Law & Humanities of the Academic Medical Centre.

References

Ahlin, T., and F. Li 2019 From field sites to field events: Creating the field with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Medicine Anthropology Theory 6(2):2. doi:10.17157/mat.6.2.655.

Akrich, M. 2010 From communities of practice to epistemic communities: Health mobilizations on the internet. Sociological Research Online 15(2):10. doi:10.5153/sro.2152.

Arnstein, S. R. 1969 A ladder of citizen participation. Journal of the American Institute of Planners 35(4):216–24. doi:10.1080/01944366908977225.

Bachman, J. W. 2016 The problem with patient satisfaction scores. Family Practice Management 23(1):23–27. https://www.aafp.org/fpm/2016/0100/p23.html.

Ballestero, A., and B. R. Winthereik, eds. 2021 Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Banks, S. 2020 Ethics and Values in Social Work. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Banks, S., A. Armstrong, K. Carter, H. Graham, P. Hayward, A. Henry, T. Holland, C. Holmes, A. Lee, A. McNulty, N. Moore, N. Nayling, A. Stokoe, and A. Strachan 2013 Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research. Contemporary Social Science 8(3):263–77. doi:10.1080/21582041.2013.769618.

Banks, S., and M. Brydon-Miller, eds. 2018 Ethics in Participatory Research for Health and Social Well-Being: Cases and Commentaries. London: Routledge.

Benatar, S. R. 2001 Distributive justice and clinical trials in the third world. Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics 22 (3):169–76. doi:10.1023/A:1011419820440.

Berry, M. J., C. C. Argüelles, S. Cordis, S. Ihmoud, and E. V. Estrada 2017 Toward a fugitive anthropology: Gender, race, and violence in the field. Cultural Anthropology 32(4):537–65. doi:10.14506/ca32.4.05.

Brandt, A. M. 1978 Racism and research: The case of the Tuskegee syphilis study. The Hastings Center Report 8 (6):21–29. doi:10.2307/3561468.

Callon, M., and V. Rabeharisoa 2002 The involvement of patients. Associations in research. International Social Science Journal 54(171):57–65. doi:10.1111/1468-2451.00359.

Callon, M., and V. Rabeharisoa 2003 Research "in the wild" and the shaping of new social identities, technology in society. Studies in Science, Technology, and Society (STS) North and South 25(2):193–204. doi:10.1016/S0160-791X(03)00021-6.

Callon, M., and V. Rabeharisoa 2008 The growing engagement of emergent concerned groups in political and economic life. Lessons from the French association of neuromuscular disease patients. Science, Technology, & Human Values 33(2):230–61. doi:10.1177/0162243907311264.

Carrera, J. S., P. Brown, J. G. Brody, and R. Morello-Frosch 2018 Research altruism as motivation for participation in community-centered environmental health research. Social Science & Medicine 196:175–81. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.028.

Clifford, J. 1996 Anthropology and/as travel. Etnofoor 9(2):5–15.

Clifford, J., and G. E. Marcus, eds. 2010 Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Chapel Hill: University of California Press.

De Koning, M., B. Meyer, A. Moors, and P. Pels 2019 Guidelines for anthropological research: Data management, ethics, and integrity. Ethnography 20(2):170–74. doi:10.1177/1466138119843312.

De la Cadena, M. 2015 Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds. Durham: Duke University Press.

Derksen, M., and J. Morawski 2022 Kinds of replication: Examining the meanings of "conceptual replication" and "direct replication". Perspectives on Psychological Science 17(5):1490–505. doi:10.1177/17456916211041116.

Despret, V. 2006 Sheep do have opinions. *In* Making Things Public. Atmospheres of Democracy. W. P. Latour Bruno ed., Pp. 360–70. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Despret, V. 2015 Thinking like a rat. Angelaki 20(2):121–34. doi:10.1080/0969725X.2015.1039849.

d'Hoop, A. 2023 The Slightest Attachment: When Psychiatric Spaces Enact Affinities. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Dilger, H., P. Pels, and M. Sleeboom-Faulkner 2019 Guidelines for data management and scientific integrity in ethnography. Ethnography 20(1):3–7. disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html doi:10.1177/1466138118819018.

Driessen, A. 2018 Pleasure and dementia: On becoming an appreciating subject. The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology 36(1):23–39. doi:10.3167/cja.2018.360103.

Driessen, A. E. 2020 A Good Life with Dementia: Ethnographic Articulations of Everyday Life and care in Dutch Nursing Homes, Illustrating Anthropology. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam. https://illustratinganthropology.com/annelieke-driessen/.

Epstein, S. 1996 Impure Science. Aids, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Epstein, S. 2008 Patient groups and health movements. *In* The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies E. J. Hacket, O. Amsterdamska, M. Lynch, and J. Wajcman, eds., Pp. 499–539. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.

Faubion, J. D., and G. E. Marcus. 2009 Fieldwork is not What It Used to Be. Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Fortun, M., K. Fortun, B. Costelloe-Kuehn, T. Saheb D. Price, A. Kenner, J. Crowder 2014 Experimental ethnography online: The asthma files. Cultural Studies 28(4):632–42. doi:10.1080/09502386.2014.888923.

Fox Keller, E. 2000 The Century of the Gene. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Garfinkel, H. 2017 Routledge Revivals: Ethnomethodological Studies of Work (1986). London: Routledge.

Geertz, C. 1998 Deep hanging out. The New York Review of Books 45(16):69–72.

Gilbert, T. 2004 Involving people with learning disabilities in research: Issues and possibilities. Health & Social Care in the Community 12(4):298–308.

Goodley, D.1996 Tales of hidden lives: A critical examination of life history research with people who have learning difficulties. Disability & Society 11(3):333–48.

Haraway, D. 2018 Staying with the trouble for multispecies environmental justice. Dialogues in Human Geography 8 (1):102–05. doi:10.1177/2043820617739208.

Hastrup, K. 2018 Collaborative moments: Expanding the anthropological field through crossdisciplinary practice. Ethnos 83(2):316–34.

Hirschauer, S. 2006 Putting things into words. Ethnographic description and the silence of the social. Human Studies 29 (4):413–41. doi:10.1007/s10746-007-9041-1.

Hopmans, J., N. Tasneem Anonnya, and B. De Kok. 2022 Guidance Document, Prepared for the Masters in Medical Anthropology and the Masters in Cultural and Social Anthropology, Department of Anthropology. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.

Hoppe, Silke, Laura Vermeulen, Annelieke Driessen, Els Roding, Marije de Groot, and Kristine Krause 2019 Learning in collaborative moments: Practising relating differently with dementia in dialogue meetings. Anthropology in Action 26(3):10–22. doi:10.3167/aia.2019.260302.

Hyvärinen, Matti, Lars-Christer Hydén, Marja Saarenheimo, Maria Tamboukou, and John Benjamins. 2010 Beyond Narrative Coherence, Studies in Narrative. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Lassiter, L. 2005 Collaborative ethnography and public anthropology. Current Anthropology 46(1):83–106. doi:10.1086/425658.

Lawy, J. R. 2017 Theorizing voice: Performativity, politics and listening. Anthropological Theory 2(17):192–215. doi:10.1177/1463499617713138.

McKearney, P., and T. Zoanni 2018 Introduction: For an anthropology of cognitive disability. The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology 36(1):1–22. doi:10.3167/cja.2018.360102.

Merrett, F. 2006 Reflections on the Hawthorne effect. Educational Psychology 26(1):143–46. doi:10.1080/01443410500341080.

Moser, I., and J. Law 2003 Making voices: New media technologies, disabilities, and articulation. *In* Digital Media Revisited: Theoretical and Conceptual Innovation in Digital Domain. G Liestol. A. Morrison & T. Rasmussen, eds. Pp. 491–520. Cambridge: London MIT Press.

Niewöhner, J. 2016 Co-laborative anthropology: Crafting reflexivities experimentally. Analysis and Interpretation. Helsinki: Ethnos. 81–125.

Petryna, A. 2007 Clinical trials offshored: On private sector science and public health. BioSocieties 2(1):21–40. doi:10.1017/S1745855207005030.

Petryna, A. 2009 When Experiments Travel: Clinical Trials and the Global Search for Human Subjects. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Petryna, A., A. Lakoff, and A. Kleinman, eds. 2006 Global Pharmaceuticals: Ethics, Markets, Practices. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pols, J. 2005 Enacting appreciations: Beyond the patient perspective. Health Care Anaylsis 13(3):203–21. doi:10.1007/s10728-005-6448-6.

Pols, J. 2014 Knowing patients: Turning patient knowledge into science. Science, Technology, & Human Values 39 (1):73–97.

Pols, J. forthcoming Care as an attempt to do something good: Studying normativity in practices of health care and research. In L. Cubellis & R. Lester (Eds.), Traces of Care: Discernment and the work of recognition. Durham, Duke University Press.

Pols, J., and M. Hoogsteyns 2016 Shaping the subject of incontinence. Relating experience to knowledge. Alter 10 (1):40–53. doi:10.1016/j.alter.2015.07.005.

Pols, J., and S. Limburg 2016 A matter of taste? Quality of life in day-to-day living with ALS and a feeding tube. Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry 40(3):361–82. doi:10.1007/s11013-015-9479-y.

Proctor, R. 1988 Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rabeharisoa, V., T. Moreira, and M. Akrich 2014 Evidence-based activism: Patients', users' and activists' groups in knowledge society. BioSocieties 9(2):111–28. doi:10.1057/biosoc.2014.2.

Rappaport, J. 2008 Beyond participant observation: Collaborative ethnography as theoretical innovation. Collaborative Anthropologies 1(1):1–31. doi:10.1353/cla.0.0014.

Redman, S. J. 2019 Deep hanging out as historical research methodology: The national anthropological archives at the Smithsonian institution. History of Anthropology Review. https://histanthro.org/bibliography/archives/deep-hanging-out-as-historical-research-methodology/#:~:text=Anthropologist%20Renato%20Rosaldo%20is%20often,relation%20to%20ethnographic%20research%20methodology, acccessed March 28, 2023.

Reverby, S. M. 2000 Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Reverby, S. M., ed 2009 Tuskegee's Truths: Rethinking the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Sánchez Criado, Tomás, and Adolofo Estalella, eds. 2018 Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography Through Fieldwork Devices. Pp. 1–30. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Schneider, L. T. 2020 Sexual violence during research: How the unpredictability of field work and the right to risk collide with academic bureaucracy and expectations. Critique of Anthropology 40(2):173–93. doi:10.1177/0308275X20917272.

Scott, J. W. 1991 The evidence of experience. Critical Inquiry 17(4):773–97. doi:10.1086/448612.

Smith, K., J. Staples, and N. Rapport. 2015 Extraordinary Encounters : Authenticity and the Interview. New York: Berghahn.

Smits, D., K. van Meeteren, M. Klem, M. Alsem, and M. Ketelaar, et al. 2020 Designing a tool to support patient and public involvement in research projects: The involvement matrix. Research Involvement and Engagement 6(1):30. doi:10.1186/s40900-020-00188-4.

Strohm, K. 2012 When anthropology meets contemporary art: Notes for a politics of collaboration. Collaborative Anthropologies 5(1):98–124. doi:10.1353/cla.2012.0004.

Taylor, J. S. 2014 The demise of the bumbler and the crock: From experience to accountability in medical education and ethnography. American Anthropologist 116(3):523–34. doi:10.1111/aman.12124.

Teunissen, G. J., and T. A. Abma 2013 Patients at the negotiating table. Exploring appraisal criteria of health research and quality of care used by patient advocacy groups in the Netherlands. European Journal for Person Centred Healthcare 1(1):232–39. doi:10.5750/ejpch.v1i1.656.

Van de Bovenkamp, H. M., and M. J. Trappenburg 2009 Reconsidering patient participation in guideline development. Health Care Analysis 17(3):198–216. doi:10.1007/s10728-008-0099-3.

Williams, B. C. 2017 #MeToo: A Crescendo in the Discourse about Sexual Harassment, Field work, and the Academy (Part 2). Savage Minds. https://savageminds.org/tag/fieldwork/, acccessed January 25, 2022.

Williams, B., V. Entwistle, G. Haddow, and M. Wells 2008 Promoting research participation: Why not advertise altruism? Social Science & Medicine 66(7):1451–56. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.12.013.