

# Doing data together – affective relations and mobile ethnography in home visits

Qualitative Research

2021, Vol. 21(4) 515–530

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DOI: 10.1177/1468794120917913

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## Abstract

This article is concerned with the doing and production of data. We ask how data are made in intimate spaces such as the home in collaboration with the different parties involved in home-based care and services. The article builds on ethnographic field notes from 73 home visits, in the context of home-based mental health, substance abuse and social care for adults in Finland and Sweden. Drawing on affect theory, the article aims to foreground aspects of the production of data and research that are often edited out of the research process. In so doing, we argue that the production of data would not be possible without the active and affective collaboration of all parties involved in home visits. Thus, the article scrutinizes in detail the efforts made by different parties, such as researchers, clients and workers to do and produce data. While we study an atypical setting of institutional interaction, we contend that affects and affective relations gain particular importance in the home.

## Keywords

Affect, attachment, doing data, home space, mobile ethnography, movement

## Introduction – ‘write that!’

*Walid has just sat down on the sofa. “How are you?” Kristina, the worker, asks. “I just woke up,” Walid answers. “We don’t have to stay long”, Kristina says and asks if Walid has any plans for today. Walid looks tired but answers that he will meet Malin (his contact person from the*

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rehabilitation center) in the afternoon. "I came here Walid so that you don't have to come to us. With your multidose drug dispenser. But we can leave whenever", Kristina continues. Walid looks at me. "And she's writing her diary," he says. Kristina says that I am there to observe her work. "We don't need to pay any attention to her," she says. Walid gets a bit agitated and says that he gets slightly anxious when I sit there and write, because he doesn't know what I'm writing. Kristina tries to calm him and says that he usually only has paranoid thoughts when his symptoms worsen, and that he doesn't need to be paranoid about me. I feel bad about the situation. I'm worried that I have made things worse for Walid, and that I have messed up Kristina's work. As I have been in a similar situation before, I offer Walid to read my notes. I give him my notebook with the last things I have written. It reads: "Any plans today. To Malin. I come in Walid so that you won't have to come to us, multidose drug dispenser." Walid reads it out aloud. I can see that he relaxes as he reads it. When he has finished reading, he continues to make notes up. He laughs and pretend reads. "He was sitting on the sofa and looked beautiful. She fell in love", he says. He gives me back my notebook and laughs even more. "Write that!" he says. I laugh too. I also explain that I don't need to take notes if it feels strange or disturbing. Walid says that it's OK.

The excerpt above can be read as a meditation for much of what follows. It is an example of home-based social care and the ways in which mobile ethnographic fieldwork in intimate places such as the home is shaped by affective relations, and new roles and positions for the researcher and research participant. It shows how the researcher's position became visible and awkward, and how the research participant tried out the researcher's role, by dictating what the researcher should write. It illustrates a range of feelings: frustration and joy, tiredness and joviality. But most of all it illustrates the efforts involved in making data. It shows a client – who with some help overcomes his own problems – contributing in the production of data.

This article is about the doing and production of data. Our aim is to foreground aspects of the production of data and research that are often edited out of research projects (cf. Fraser and Puwar, 2008), for example, when studying institutional interaction. By what is edited out we mean all acts, affects, relations and positions happening during fieldwork. Based on our observations of an atypical case of institutional interaction – namely institutional interaction in the home – we saw that doing research inevitably shapes the encounters of clients and workers in clients' home spaces. Hence, we wanted to concentrate especially on instances in our empirical material where the different parties somehow made the research visible via their talk and actions. Our further aim is thus to scrutinize how clients, workers and researchers position themselves in relation to 'doing of data' and what affects influence and conduct their actions during home visit encounters. While it is well known that data are not merely 'gathered', but rather produced (Law and Urry, 2004), co-constructed (Jordan, 2006), embodied (Coffey, 1999), described (Wolcott, 1994) or inscribed (Goffman, 1989), we suggest that the production of data is not possible without the *active and affective* collaboration of all parties involved, especially when data are produced in intimate spaces. For us, affect connotes attachment and movement (Latimer and Miele, 2013). Drawing on affect theory, we ask *how data are made in intimate spaces such as the home in collaboration with the different parties involved in home-based care and services.*

The context for this study is home-based mental health, substance abuse and social care. Recent changes in mental health care and substance abuse service delivery policies have led to a deconstruction of institutional-based settings. Scholars describe this as the development of a ‘spatial’ turn, highlighting the increase of ‘floating support services, where care and support are provided in service users’ own homes, in spaces which are culturally understood as spheres of privacy’ (Juhila et al., 2016: 102; see also Ferguson, 2006; Tucker, 2010). On a political level, this transition can be described as ‘changing geographies of care’ in the sense that the home space becomes the location of professional care (Williams, 2002: 142–144). In the broader research project of which this article is a part, we focus on home environments where adults (but not the elderly) with complex needs live and receive the care and support they need. Here, complexity means living a day-to-day life with different levels of mental health or drug-related problems and occasionally, homelessness. During our fieldwork, it became obvious to us how providing care in culturally sensitive spaces like the home changed the traditional client-worker positions (e.g. Juhila et al., 2016), and tested our own positionality as ethnographic researchers (cf. Ferguson, 2016; Jordan, 2006; Quinlan, 2008).

In our fieldwork, we utilized mobile ethnography methods (e.g. Büscher and Urry, 2009; Novoa, 2015; Urry, 2007). According to Novoa (2015: 99), mobile ethnography ‘means that the ethnographer is not only expected to observe what is happening, but also to experience, feel and grasp the textures, smells, comforts and discomforts, pleasures and displeasures of moving life’. Specifically, we draw on the mobile ethnographic approach known as shadowing (e.g. Czarniawska, 2007; Ferguson, 2016; Lydahl, 2017; Quinlan, 2008). Rather than implying total invisibility, shadowing means to move along with the ones you are studying. For us, this meant moving along with workers and the clients in clients’ homes and nearby communities to get as near to the reality of their everyday life as possible (see e.g. Novoa, 2015; Urry, 2007). We applied shadowing as method that ‘entails a researcher closely following a subject over period of time to investigate what people actually do in the course of their everyday lives, not what their roles dictate of them’. (Quinlan, 2008: 1480). This strategy was decided, as the aim of the broader research project was to observe naturally occurring client-worker interactions in the home. In practice, this meant that although we aimed to participate in home visits as researchers who tried to disturb the customary flow of client-worker interaction as little as possible, we were aware of our overlapping roles as participants and observers during the fieldwork (see also Gold, 1958). What later surprised us was how contradictory and unpredictable our different roles were in home environment and how meaningful switching between different roles and taking on different roles – that is, role-play – was for clients and workers (cf. Jordan, 2006). Gold (1958: 218) states that researchers use role-playing as a way to balance the demands that fieldwork causes for them as experienced observers and as themselves. We contribute to this discussion by arguing that in home spaces, role-play is a tool for all parties involved to protect themselves and get control over the demands of doing of data.

The complex nature of the home space has been well documented in the field of cultural and human geography, where the concept has been approached as an ambiguous construction of materiality, embodiment, transnationality and non-human world (e.g. Angus et al., 2005; Blunt, 2005; Cloutier et al., 2015; Dyck et al., 2005; Schillmeier and

Domènech, 2009). Considering all these elements, it became concretely real to us how 'home is a shadowy territory for researchers' (Twigg, 1999: 382). As noted by Jordan (2006: 172), doing research in the home entails challenges that are not unique to this setting but that 'may be magnified because one is inserted into a more intimate and private environment'. Similarly, we suggest that while affect is important in all types of data production it is especially important and visible in the home. Therefore, we focus on the affective doing of data in the home space.

In the following, we introduce our theoretical point of view, which takes affect theory as a point of departure. Next, our empirical material, the context of our fieldwork, and our methods for analyzing data are described. We then describe and discuss the affective doing of data in the home space, followed by a concluding discussion of the ambivalent positionality of the researcher in home spaces and of the delicacy of doing data in such settings.

### **Attachment and movement – to be shaped by the contact with others**

Affect and emotion have gained increased momentum in social research (Wetherell, 2013), so much so that some speak of a 'turn to affect' (Leys, 2011) or an 'affective turn' (Clough et al., 2007). In this article, we understand and draw on affect as defined by Latimer and Miele (2013: 8) as *attachment* on the one hand and *being moved* on the other. Latimer and Miele see emotion as individuated, while affect connotes embodiment and relation. Important for our understanding of affect is that it is not limited to humans. Building on Latimer and Miele, we instead include non-human elements in our analysis, for example, audio recorders, notebooks and ashtrays. Similarly, Robinson and Kutner (2019: 112) argue that affect 'is only thinkable in a relational ontological arrangement in which affect emerges as necessarily entangled with memories and materials, sensations and spaces'. Moreover, we draw on Athanasiou et al. (2008: 6) who emphasize the multiplicity of the notion of affect and describe how it can be seen as 'social passion, as pathos, sympathy and empathy' as well as 'unconditional and response-able openness to be affected by others – to be shaped by the contact with others' – all at once. Thinking with and through affect, we wish to reflect on and bring to the fore the multiple movements, attachments and relations we have had and experienced in the field when trying to make data happen.

This approach reflects several current claims about neglected and depreciated aspects of social science and its methods. Law and Urry (2004: 390) argue from a performativity perspective that methods are productive, meaning that the social sciences do not 'simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it'. Wolcott (1994: 13) also draws similar conclusions, arguing that because of its specific ways of 'constructing data out of experience', ethnography can never provide 'pure description'. However, Law and Urry (2004: 403) claim that social science methods are ill-adapted to the 'global complexity' of the 21st century, since they have developed little in the last century. Notably, they contend that current social scientific methods 'do not resonate well with important reality enactments' as they deal poorly with increasingly important aspects of everyday life, for

example, ‘the fleeting’, ‘the sensory’ and ‘the emotional’. Similarly, Fraser and Puwar (2008) note that social science researchers in debates about methods and methodology rarely consider how the sensory, emotional and affective relations we develop with our research material shape the making of knowledge. The importance of affects and emotions have also been noted in methodological discussions in ethnographic and anthropological research (cf. Beatty, 2013; Feldman and Mandache, 2018; Kisfalvi, 2006).

## Setting the scene – context and method

This article is a part of a research project that combines ethnomethodology and human geography, focusing on how homes and nearby communities as places of service interactions matter. The ethnographic fieldwork, analysed in this article and accomplished by four researchers, took place in 2017–2018 in Finland and Sweden, in five different settings. Our settings varied depending on their organizational structures and the needs that clients’ mental health- or substance abuse-related problems produced. Thus, the length and the frequency of home visits varied from several visits per week to single visits. The support delivered to clients’ homes included both supportive discussions and concrete help to accomplish, for example, daily chores or personal hygiene. In addition, the clients’ housing conditions were diverse: some lived in their own apartments around the cities, while some lived in community-based housing units. All of the clients participating in our study lived independently (or in some cases with partner or relative) in their own apartments. Other integrating factors between our settings were that the home visits were based on the client’s voluntariness and client-centred care. All workers participating in the study were qualified social and health care professionals who had expertise in the clients’ problems that were on each setting’s agenda, such as in mental health, substance abuse and housing issues. Before the fieldwork begun, Regional Ethics Committees in Finland and Sweden reviewed and approved the project plan. All participants gave informed consent to the study.

We audio-recorded home visits when the participants gave permission for it and made field notes during and after every home visit. Here, we focus only on the written material, which contained detailed descriptions of atmospheres and affective relations we were interested in. The length of the fieldwork varied between 2 and 6 months depending on the setting. Thinking with and through affect, we analysed field notes from 73 home visits, altogether 235 pages of written texts.

We analysed our material individually and collectively to ensure the quality and the reliability of the analysis. Collectively, we discussed our field notes and talked about differences and similarities. We noticed that we shared many similar feelings (e.g. care and confusion), experiences (e.g. whether to participate in the interaction or not) and observations (e.g. the various roles of the researcher) concerning our actions and positions in home spaces. Individually, we carried out a first round of inductive, data-driven coding (Gibbs, 2007). In this phase, we decided on a loose coding framework to unify analysis and coded the data from the perspective of our *mobility* in the field, adapting and taking new *roles*, being *visible* in an intimate space and *affective relations*. This analysis phase helped us to reach the diversity of affective elements that were present during the home visits. Collectively, we decided to do more concept-driven coding (Gibbs, 2007:

44–45). In this round, we individually coded *bodily doings* (e.g. walking, sitting and shaking hands), *feelings* (e.g. confusion, joy and impressed), *senses* (e.g. smells, hearing and sight), *roles* (e.g. client, co-worker and cleaner) and *visibility* (e.g. as ‘self’, as a burden, as a researcher). This round collectively made us draw attention to how movements, attachments and relations mutually moved between all parties involved in situations connected to data production. This led to the third round of coding where we deepened our analysis and coded *collaboration* (e.g. between client and worker or researcher and client), *role-playing* (e.g. client or worker playing researcher) and *role transformations* (e.g. from researcher to guest or cleaner) in home visits from the viewpoint of doing data together, which is similar to the abductive analysis method suggested by Tavory and Timmermans (2014). Collectively, we wrote, edited, commented on, and rewrote the article. We used the coding as a tool to develop the following analysis and its structure.

### **‘I am already informed’ – role-playing and different forms of collaboration**

We argue that the production of data is both relational and affective. Our study shows that it is something that happens due to the constant efforts and collaborations between client, worker and researcher. We contend that the culturally sensitive home space and certain artefacts linked to fieldwork give rise to specific affective relations and a tendency to role-play. We see role-play as a facilitator of collaboration and doing data. By taking on certain roles, clients, workers and researchers enable the production of data. Furthermore, role-play can be interpreted as a way of managing affect.

One clear example of role-play in our data is guest–host collaboration, which builds on cultural norms that hosts are supposed to make the rules and decisions in their private territories and guests are expected to respect them (Juhila et al., 2016: 09). Entering someone’s home made us researchers act like guests (cf. Jordan, 2006: 177–179). We followed the rules of politeness, were grateful that we were allowed to participate and tried to position ourselves as invisibly as possible so as not to disrupt the focus of the home visits and the interactions between client and worker. Moreover, when we entered clients’ homes, the clients (and sometimes also the workers) behaved like hosts. Interestingly, workers often took an active role not only in playing the host but also in enabling the doing of data. They showed us where we could leave our shoes and outdoor clothes, made sure we had somewhere to sit, and reassured the client or vouched for our trustworthiness. Sometimes the workers even collected the consent forms before the actual fieldwork started, and in many cases, they were eager to know how many home visits would be needed to suffice for our research project.

In addition to the workers, the clients participated actively in the doing of data. They allowed the crucial first step involved by giving permission for recording and the taking of field notes. The following excerpt, where the presence of the audio recorder during the home visit is discussed, intriguingly illustrates this. The worker and the researcher did not know beforehand that Milla, the client’s friend, would be present at the client’s home during the visit. Milla had suddenly appeared from the bathroom, to the surprise of the

researcher, who decided to take a more visible role and ask for written consent from the friend:

*When Lauri (the worker) and Joni (the client) went to the kitchen to see whether there was a need for curtains or other supplies, I stayed in the living room with Milla (the client's friend) and I asked if the recording was OK for her. I began to explain in more detail what kind of research I was doing, but Milla interrupted me with a firm tone and said that the recording was "of course" OK for her. Milla said "I am already informed", meaning that Joni had already told her about the recording.*

The starting point of the conversation between the researcher and Milla is the audio recorder, which makes the researcher's role visible. After Joni (the client) and Lauri (the worker) had gone into the other room, the researcher invited Milla into the research project by asking her about recording the conversation. Moreover, the excerpt illustrates how Joni – out of view of the researcher – played researcher and supported the doing of data. Joni facilitated it by acting as a proxy researcher, by informing Milla about the study before the home visit. Even though Joni himself was not present during the discussion, Milla was making this role visible. She was also allowing the doing of data by agreeing to participate in the study. If Joni had not taken the proxy researcher's role and prepared Milla for the doing of data beforehand, it is possible that she would not have allowed the recording in the first place.

We also have examples of active participation and role-play happening in view of the researcher. Let us return to the introductory excerpt, where the client Walid, the worker, and the researcher were negotiating the collaboration and artefacts of data production. This excerpt is an example of how workers enabled and participated in the doing of data. When Walid commented on the researcher's presence and activity, Kristina (the worker) stepped in, explained the reason why the researcher was observing, and added: 'We don't need to pay any attention to her'. Kristina's offer of non-attachment can be interpreted as a way of caring about both Walid and the data. By ignoring the researcher, Kristina tried to ensure that the interaction would continue and to reassure Walid, both of which would benefit the doing of data. So here we can see how different forms of care and attachment are intertwined and connected.

The excerpt continues with a distinctive interaction between Walid and the researcher. After the researcher offered Walid to read her field notes, Walid took on the researcher's role and read out some made-up field notes while laughing. By trying out the researcher's role in this playful way, Walid appeared to feel that he was in control of the situation again. In this sense, role-play can be seen as a way of managing affect. The excerpt also shows how an artefact can give rise to both affective relations and role-play. Like the audio recorder in the previous excerpt, the notebook also triggered a desire to mirror the researcher. In a sense, the notebook made visible the research position – it signified that what is needed to be a researcher is a notebook – and it therefore invited clients and workers to test this role. We see role-play as examples of clients and workers being moved. They literally *move* from one role to another, and this movement happens because of their interaction with both researcher (human) and notebook (non-human).

Our field notes are full of examples of role-play. One common role the clients played was that of our friends. This often happened either after some kind of test or evaluation, or after we had spent some time in the field. For example, when greeting us, one client said that the researcher could ‘have a hug the next time when I know you better’. Playing the role of a friend can be interpreted as both a way of showing attachment and trust, *and* as a way of retaining power. Friendship may be the last thing the clients have to hold onto in this delicate situation, where we have intruded to some extent on their personal space by carrying out observations in their home. Giving us, the researchers, their friendship can therefore be seen as an attempt by clients to insist on equality.

Clients also maintained their power when resisting the doing of data and when not wanting to be our friends. This was not common during the fieldwork, but it became evident at least in one home visit when the convergence and icebreaking attempted by the researcher was denied from the client’s side, as she ignored the questions and the presence of the researcher. Previous research has shown how the ‘intimate environment of home will almost certainly be altered when an outsider breaches the (family’s) boundaries’ and can transform researcher as a negative agent (Jordan, 2006, 179). By either playing the role of our friend or not doing so, the clients could retain some of their own power and privacy. Importantly, playing friend or playing host can also be interpreted as a way of normalizing the situation to maintain the doing of data. By playing our friends, clients potentially felt more comfortable in the somewhat delicate and intrusive situation and could re-transform the researcher from a negative agent.

### **‘Don’t forget your recorder!’ – role transformations during data production**

*When the meeting is about to finish I start to pack up my things. Roland (the client) reminds me not to forget my audio recorder.*

This short excerpt highlights how we as researchers become visible during the home visit, illustrating a client actively involved in the doing of data by reminding the researcher not to forget her recorder. The researcher became affected and moved by the client’s concern for her and the doing of data, and with this movement the researcher’s role transformed from that of a distant observer to that of herself (Gold, 1958: 218) – a person moved by Roland’s considerate gesture. This highlights the nature of fieldwork in home spaces and is an example of the many role transformations we recorded in our field notes. These transformations were often rapid and included examples of transformations from participant to observer and from observer to participant (cf. Gold, 1958).

We also noted how the clients’ and workers’ roles transformed, going from playing one role to another. In this sense, role-playing and role transformation are related. This is evident in the next excerpt, in which the client, two workers and the researcher are discussing the ending of the fieldwork after cleaning the client’s home.

*Heidi (the client) said that she had once again forgotten that the audio recorder was on. Jaakko (the worker) said that this was good because then “the matters will come up as they are.” Heidi agreed: “Right.” Lauri (the worker) quipped that he was careful not to sing when the audio recorder was on*



*because he often sang when doing the cleaning. We all laughed at this. Heidi asked me whether I was going to stop doing my research now. I answered that I might record a few group meetings, but I was not going to record home visits anymore. Lauri said “the researcher is going back to her office,” but I said to Heidi that I was, however, going to visit the project’s facilities every once in a while. Heidi said to me “let’s say hi if we run into each other in the city.” That made me feel good, and I answered “of course”. I put the audio recorder in my bag before we left. Heidi offered to help with the stuff that needed to be carried to the car. I helped carry the stuff too.*

Several types of role-play and role transformations can be identified in this excerpt. First, we can identify the worker, Jaakko, playing researcher when commenting with respect to making audio recordings. Moreover, we can see the other worker, Lauri, reflecting on his own transformation that he rarely sings when he knows he is being recorded. Indeed, Lauri transforms from being a singing worker to being a somewhat self-aware research participant. Third, we observe how the role of the client, Heidi, changes from research participant (which she made visible in the first line by saying that she forgot that the audio recorder was on) to one or more of a friend, when she suggests to the researcher that they should ‘say hi’ if they bump into each other in the city. The fourth role transformation is seen when the researcher transforms from the researcher role to Heidi’s friend, in accepting Heidi’s suggestion of greeting each other. Fifth, the researcher transforms back into the researcher role when collecting her audio recorder. A final transformation occurs when both the client and the researcher become co-workers by helping carry the stuff to the car with the actual workers.

We contend that role transformations are also a way of making data happen. More precisely, they are a way of not interrupting the flow but of making adaptations when necessary. In addition, role transformations and artefacts seem related. Specific artefacts in our data invited participants to transform role: the client offering coffee created host–guest transformations and cleaning equipment transformed researcher to cleaner. From the researchers’ perspectives, different role transformations served as a way to get closer to participants and secure collaboration. Moreover, they sometimes helped us as researchers to become less visible in the home space.

Just as with the notebook in Walid’s introductory excerpt, the audio recorder also prompted different forms of attachments and movements. In particular, we can trace two tendencies. First, the audio recorder seems to trigger care for the researcher and for the data. When Roland reminds the researcher not to forget her recorder, we interpret this as a form of attachment activated by the physical artefact of the recorder. Second, the audio recorder seems to trigger a movement of self-control. Given its dual position as almost invisible but nevertheless there, the audio recorder moves Lauri not to sing – as he would often do when doing the cleaning – but instead to control his urge to ensure the doing of data. In contrast, Heidi ‘again’ forgot the recorder, implying that during the fieldwork, the audio recorder was not an obstacle for her to participate in the doing of data.

### **‘It’s disgusting’ – hiding affects to make data happen**

Although as researchers we were continuously moved and affected by the people, things and situations we encountered in the field, we did not always show these movements. We

noticed that this was particularly true when something unexpected or uncontrollable happened in the home space. In many instances, not showing movement and attachment emanated from a place of care; as researchers, we did not want to interfere in the client-worker interaction or hinder the efforts made by the worker. In this sense, not showing movement and attachment can sometimes be a way of being attached and committed.

We interpret the hiding of attachment and movements as a way to maintain the continuous doing of data *and* as a way to care for and about the clients and workers. By hiding our attachments and movements, we were able to avoid situations that could hinder the doing of data by being embarrassing and uncomfortable for clients and workers, or for us researchers. This point is illustrated in the next extract, where the researcher is observing and participating in a home visit aiming to help the client clean her apartment.

*We take action eagerly and begin to efficiently vacuum around the living room, collecting trash, bottles, etc. I am grateful for the rubber gloves that Leena, the worker, has brought along as they make the job much more pleasant. Occasionally Anna, the client, sits on the sofa, goes to kitchenette, and then puts some stuff in the trash, dirty laundry in the basket, etc. When emptying a trash bag I get ashes from an ashtray straight into my face. It's disgusting.*

*I am collecting dishes and for the first time during fieldwork, I am worried, because of the knives that are found around the apartment. Would I want to be here alone, just with Anna? During the home visit, Leena tells me that she has known Anna for years. Leena acts very naturally in the situation. I notice that I am alarmed. I don't know if it's because of Anna's appearance. She's wearing combat boots, a black hoodie, and she's quite big. Moreover, she seems to be quite confused and dozy. Her eyes close easily when she's talking, she doesn't finish her sentences, and sometimes she doesn't remember what we were talking about. From time to time she seems absent. I don't know. On the other hand, she's friendly when answering my questions about the trash, etc. and it seems as if our presence is totally OK for her.*

In this excerpt, the researcher is surrounded by different affects. She felt disgusted when she got ash from an ashtray on her face, and she was alarmed because of the knives found around the apartment and because of the dozy behavior of the client. Still she keeps going: she collects the trash, dishes and asks questions concerning the cleaning. In our interpretation she transforms from observer to participant, or from researcher to cleaner, not to interrupt the flow of the home visit. She was doing what was needed to make the data happen. She stilled her doubts and fears and continued cleaning.

The excerpt shows how the researcher is seeing and feeling all the 'dirt' and hazards but acts as if they are invisible. This can be interpreted as an act to care both for the data and for the clients. First, the researcher hides her attachments and movements because she is in the client's home. It is a gift for the researcher to be invited into the client's home and culturally questionable to comment on the tidiness (or lack of it) of the private home environment. Pretending not to see the chaos in the home is a way of respecting the client and to ensure that data happen. Moreover, active participation gives her the possibility of hiding in the home environment as a researcher when doing fieldwork.

## Problems in doing data – on opposing attachments and roles

During our fieldwork, there were situations in which we were torn between our attachment to the client, while also being attached to the data and the doing of data. This becomes evident in the next excerpt in which the researcher got into an unexpected and difficult situation right from the beginning of the home visit, and attempts to solve her contradictory positioning to avoid prejudicing the client. After some struggles, with cancelled home visits and difficulties in finding suitable clients, this was supposed to be the researcher's last day of fieldwork. If she missed this observation, she needed to schedule another one. Therefore, she was particularly attached to the doing of data.

*Kristina, the worker I am following, asks Camilla, the client, if she remembers that I was coming today. Camilla says that she knew that I was coming. Still, it's clear that Camilla thinks it's a bit troublesome that I'm there. I'm not comfortable doing this observation and I'm not sure how to act.*

*"Should we come in as usual?" Kristina asks. Camilla says yes and we go in. Kristina suggests that she and Camilla sit on the sofa and that I can sit at the kitchen table. "Maybe it will be easier to focus then?" Kristina says. A screen made of bookshelves stands between the kitchen table and the sofa. Camilla says that I can sit at the table but she sounds skeptical. I think to myself, what should I do? Is this in line with our research ethics? How will I get any data out of this when I'm sitting behind a screen? Everything feels wrong.*

*Perhaps I can ask if I can leave the audio recorder with Kristina and wait outside. In that way, I would not be disturbing them, but I would still get some data. I ask Kristina and Camilla if this option would be OK with them. I say that I don't want to disturb and intrude. Kristina is visibly relieved at my suggestion. Camilla says yes, and I think she sounds less skeptical than before. I leave my audio recorder, the information letter, and consent form with Kristina. When Kristina comes out, she has the signed consent form with her. She says that she thought that worked very well, and that it's a good alternative to collect data in this way from time to time.*

In this excerpt, the researcher felt that her attachment went in opposing directions. On the one hand, she was attached to the doing of data. However, when seeing how disturbed the client became by her presence, she also felt attachment and care for the client. Doing fieldwork under these circumstances, with a troubled client and behind a screen felt neither ethical nor productive. By removing herself from the situation while leaving the audio recorder behind, she thought she found a way of caring about both the client and the data. However, after discussions and considerations she decided, albeit the informed consent from the client, to exclude the recordings from the data corpus, as it did not feel ethical or caring to keep them.

In the following excerpt, we see problems in the doing of data that were mainly noted and prompted by the researcher. Here, the worker and the researcher are visiting a client for the second time. After the first home visit, the researcher evaluated her behavior and thought that she participated quite a lot in the discussions. That bothered her because one aim of the fieldwork was to concentrate on the in situ client–worker interaction. For this

reason, the researcher decided to stay in a more distanced researcher role this time and take the role of an observer.

*Paula, the worker, sits in the corner of the sofa that looks like a divan. Maria, the client, sits at the other end. I say to Maria that I don't want to shake her hand because I don't know if her breast cancer treatments are finished or not, and I think her immune system might still be vulnerable. At least her hair has begun to grow back. Maria says that the treatments are over. I ask if I can sit on a chair near the wall. Maria looks at me and asks why I don't sit on the sofa. I say that I doubt if there will be enough room for all of us, especially because Maria's daughter is also coming. Maria says that we will all fit on the sofa. I take a seat at the other corner of the sofa.*

*Quite soon after, Maria's daughter arrives. I get up from the sofa and suggest that I should sit on the chair near the wall. Maria looks at me again, and says that we all fit on the sofa. The daughter easily finds room to sit between Paula and me. I wonder why this "sitting close to each other" is so troublesome for me. Should I try to be polite and give enough space for the "main characters" of the scene or is it the physical closeness that bothers me? Odd. (Thinking about this scene, I think I was worried that I might pass my cold on to her (breast cancer!).*

Here, we can see the client playing host, offering the researcher a comfortable seat. This gesture is in line with the cultural norms of how guests should have the best seats when visiting someone. In this case, however, the researcher perceives the guest's role as an obstruction to the doing of data. Rather than transforming to a guest role, she tried to remain in the role of a distant observer, for example, by trying to sit on a chair near the wall. The excerpt gives an apt example of mutual role conflicts that were present during home visits. Moreover, the researcher worried that she might pass her cold on to the client who had recently undergone cancer treatment. The researcher's initial refusal of the guest's role is therefore also a form of attachment to the client. However, by refusing the invitation to play the role of guest, the researcher did to some extent disturb the flow of interaction during the home visit.

## **Discussion and conclusions – affective relations and the delicacy of doing data in home spaces**

In this article, we have focused on the affective doing of data in sensitive home spaces. With detailed analysis, we have demonstrated how the production of data during depends on an active and affective whole of collaboration, role-play and role transformations that balance between attachments for all parties involved and for the doing of data. This approach is important, as it can question some tenacious norms connected to qualitative research (e.g. Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and the role of ethnographic researcher as 'naive stranger or marginal native' as described by Coffey (1999: 19–20). We argue that doing research in home spaces being an invisible or naive stranger is difficult, if not impossible, because of the affects existing in or caused by the intimacy of the home.

While active and affective researcher–client–worker interactions exist in field-sites beyond our own (such as hospitals, social work offices, residential care homes and police

stations), the home is a unique research setting. In the home, the researchers must negotiate their presence and find position that combines and is balanced between acceptable social science practice and comfortable interactional behaviours with those studied (Jordan, 2006: 172). However, the reflexivity needed to manage this position is rarely discussed in qualitative research. As noted by Bashir (2018: 641) qualitative research handbooks ‘cover generic issues but fail to adequately reflect the challenging research realities experienced by qualitative researchers interviewing vulnerable people in specific settings’.

Based on our findings, two different strategies can be discussed here. The first strategy, which we initially tried out during our time in field, was to try to remain an unobtrusive and invisible part of the home visit. However, we instead often became what Quinlan (2008: 1491) calls *conspicuously invisible*. The second strategy, which we have discussed in more detail in this article, is role-playing. Jordan (2006) describes how she both was assigned and adopted different roles to find balance in the home setting. Moreover, the research participant ‘themselves often switched roles over the course of their involvement in research’ (Jordan, 2006: 173). Evidently, this is also the case in our research. In addition, we see how these roles both function as a facilitator in the doing of data and as a way to manage affect. Thus, role-play can be seen as a strategy, for the researcher and the research participant alike, to find balance when research is produced in the delicate home space.

Contemplating the delicacies of home as research setting is not a new subject. Already 20 years ago, Twigg wrote about the methodological difficulties of doing research in home spaces and about the home as a shadowy territory for researchers. She sees the home as a ‘private space and the mutual recognition of this puts up barriers between the researcher and his/her subject. To research private space is to disturb and even violate it’ (Twigg, 1999: 382). We therefore find it increasingly important to foreground the affect and relations we have encountered, experienced and initiated in the field rather than editing them out of the research process. Rather than hiding the possible disturbances and violations, as well as the intimacies and affectivities, it is important to be transparent and make them visible. The home in itself is always a place associated with affect. It is a private space full of culturally, materially and bodily constructed meanings that influence people’s actions during home visits. Perhaps attachment and movements are therefore even more visible in the home than they are when doing data in other spaces and places.

Thinking with and through attachment and movement makes visible otherwise invisible aspects in the production of empirical data. This approach has helped us highlight how data are not something ‘out there’ (or rather ‘in there’ – in the homes) waiting to be collected by the researchers. Attending to affect have helped us to make visible the continuous efforts of the clients, workers and other research participants, handling the different roles at play, and everyone’s collaboration involved in the doing of data. We have thereby become more aware of what it takes to produce data when doing fieldwork during home visits. This article shows that research participants are active and affective, and that researchers doing ethnography in home spaces are seldom invisible and detached.

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## Acknowledgements

The authors thank all the clients and workers who kindly contributed to the doing of data. Moreover, they would like to thank and acknowledge the efforts and contributions made by all the other members in the GEOHOME-project.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was supported by the Academy of Finland (decision number 307661).

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