

# Bumbling Along Together: Producing Collaborative Fieldnotes

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# 13 Bumbling Along Together

## Producing Collaborative Fieldnotes

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and Anna Harris*

### Introduction

There is often a “just do it” attitude when it comes to ethnographic research, a recognition that no amount of planning can fully prepare researchers for fieldwork, as the experiences of the field clarify the significance of the place, people, or process chosen for study. Anthropologist Janelle Taylor (2014) characterized this messy approach to ethnographic research as “bumbling” (p. 524). She argued that while ethnographers continue to bumble about in practice, the figure of the bumbler is disappearing from “professional discourse” (p. 524). Taking its place is a “regime of accountability” in which “ethnographic research . . . [appears] increasingly as [a matter] to be carefully planned, controlled, policed, documented, and accounted for in terms of measurable outcomes, testable competencies, standardized and bureaucratized procedures, and controllable risks” (p. 524).<sup>1</sup> Taylor lamented the demise of the bumbler as marking a change in the valuation of experience in higher education, likely because experience is difficult to hold accountable when the definition of accountability is documentation and measurement. In other words, the move toward a regime of accountability marks a move away from valuing the immeasurable.

Taylor was not alone in pointing out changes in the way research is structured. Scholars studying research processes have generally agreed that they are shifting (Hessels & van Lente, 2008). The increasing use of team ethnography in the social sciences is arguably part of these changes (Barry, Britten, Barber, Bradley, & Stevenson, 1999; Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani, & Martin, 2008; Mauthner & Doucet, 2008; Scales, Middleton, & Bailey, 2011; Woods, Boyle, Jeffrey, & Troman, 2000). Funding schemes encourage multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, or cross-national research (Akrich & Rabeharisoa, 2016; Creese et al., 2008). Advances in technological infrastructure facilitate communication (Antonijević, Wyatt, & Dormans, 2012; Beneito-Montagut, Begueria, & Cassián, 2017; Woods et al., 2000), and teamwork provides an advantage in studying phenomena distributed across multiple sites (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Cabantous, 2015). Team ethnography explicitly departs from the trope of the lone

ethnographer who bumbles through fieldwork alone. Yet, as we explore in this chapter, bumbling does not disappear in team ethnography, even in the context of increased institutional regimes of accountability.

In this chapter, we consider the role of bumbling in team ethnography. By exploring the productive and creative ways in which we bumbled as a team of ethnographers conducting fieldwork at three geographically distant medical schools, we support the reanimation of the bumbler in professional discourse. When we zoom into our collaborative ethnographic practice, we find that accountability is more than the documentable, measurable, and testable accountability of funders, ethics boards, and home institutions. We must also be accountable to one another, as members of a team. We suggest that bumbling together can enrich accountability in teams, and we describe our practice of producing collaborative fieldnotes to support this claim.

In what follows, we first contextualize our research about medical education within constellations of accountability in order to demonstrate the various forms that accountability can take within team ethnography. We engage with literature about how teams produce and share fieldnotes as well as the effects of sharing material. We then describe how we designed “activities” (collaborative fieldnotes) for three ethnographers working in three geographically distant fieldsites. We explore the relationship between bumbling and accountability in producing collaborative fieldnotes with a focus on instructing, sharing, and discussing research material. To conclude, we reflect on the broader implications of our practice for producing and sharing fieldnotes in team ethnography.

### **Constellations of Accountability**

We situate our discussion of fieldnotes in the context of a comparative study called Making Clinical Sense.<sup>2</sup> Based in Maastricht, in the Netherlands, this project explores the role of technologies in how doctors learn sensory clinical diagnosis skills. Comparison informs the project in many ways. This includes comparing across place, by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in three sites, and across time, by bringing insights from ethnographic and historical fieldwork together. Our seven-person research team includes Anna Harris as the principal investigator, Andrea Wojcik and Rachel V. Allison as PhD candidates, John Nott as a post-doctoral researcher, Harro van Lente and Sally Wyatt as the PhD candidates’ supervisors, and Carla Greubel as the project’s research assistant at the time of fieldwork and writing this article. Each ethnographer is responsible for their own fieldsite, while John, the historian, traverses the archives and oral histories of all three locations.<sup>3</sup> Andrea conducted her fieldwork in Tamale, Ghana; Rachel in Budapest, Hungary; and Anna in Maastricht, the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> We conducted between eight to ten months of fieldwork simultaneously in 2017/2018. As we discuss later, being in

geographically distant fields at the same time played a large role in inspiring the form of our collaborative fieldnotes.

We are a publicly funded project, awash with both external and institutional support, and thus exist within myriad institutional regimes of accountability that push us “to account explicitly, and in advance, for the value, outcomes, and impact of [our] work” (Taylor, 2014, p. 529). With generous financial support from the European Research Council, we must meet the council’s protocol for research, including open access for project-related publications, public engagement, and specific requirements regarding ethics approvals, data management and security, and budget. These protocols, along with our university’s institutional requirements, have practical implications, such as producing comprehensive research plans and ethics applications before conducting research, and communicating our findings to different communities as part of the practice of valorization. Valorization is a “compulsory feature of research proposals in the Netherlands and broadly refers to the ‘use,’ ‘impact,’ ‘relevance,’ or ‘added value’ of research beyond the place where it was carried out” (Older, 2015, p. 5) which has been formalized in the Netherlands.

Yet, we argue that there is still room for the bumbler within such regimes of accountability. For instance, *Making Clinical Sense* is funded under a grant scheme encouraging “high risk, high gain” projects, meaning that in addition to being asked to account for the value and impact of our work, we are tasked with the goal of reaching “out of the box,” for we are funded to conduct “risky” research. For us, this includes the promise of methodological innovation. It was important to then experiment, as a team, with the ways we made fieldnotes in order to explore the ineffable qualities of learning sensory skills. In designing our methods, we worked with assumptions that posit learning as an embodied, material, sensory process (see, for example, Ingold, 2000; Pink, 2009; Prentice, 2013). Prior to fieldwork, we had experimented with and found sensory methods useful for attending to bodies, materials, and sensations and for tracing this learning (Harris, Wojcik, & Allison, 2019; see also, Pink, 2009). During our experimentation with methods such as drawing, video, and photography, we needed to bumble along, to try different techniques and learn from our experiences of using them, so that we could attend as closely as possible to medical students’ learning process.

In bumbling along, we realized that we needed to attend to a different kind of accountability than Taylor (2014) discussed—the accountability between members of a team. We focus in this chapter on the collaborative practice of engaging with academic researchers, and how this became evident in our fieldnote making practices. Our approach to team ethnography does not represent a straightforward replication of traditional, individual ethnographic work on a larger scale (Scales et al., 2011, p. 24). Team-based ethnographic research operates within various constellations of accountability that necessitate careful consideration of

communication within the group about material collected and shared, and about techniques for sharing and comparing. Attention must be paid to the role of fieldnotes (Creese et al., 2008; May & Pattillo-McCoy, 2000), the use of digital software (Beneito-Montagut et al., 2017), methodological practices of comparison (Deville, Guggenheim, & Hrdličková, 2016a), and the framework through which we, as a team, engage with one another's fieldsites and material. In our study, we needed to share ethnographic material across contexts (institutional, national, and geographic, for instance) and between researchers (person, position, academic background, and digital infrastructure).

Our team chose to approach the comparative nature of our project in a fundamentally collaborative manner. We worked with comparison as a reflexive collaborative practice and sought to understand how the material and insights produced at each specific fieldsite might inform the research conducted at the other two sites. In practice, this meant engaging throughout fieldwork so that our research had opportunities to influence one another. It also meant that every team member needed to have access to all collected material: fieldnotes, photographs, videos, sound recordings, interview transcripts, etc. We saved this material on the university's server, coordinating our sharing across time and space, and attempted to incorporate the technological infrastructures specific to each locality.

We could have lost our sense of stumbling amongst the various constellations of accountability discussed here, but our anthropological training is imbued with the value of stumbling. We view our research as the study of people and "things" (see Henare, Holbraad, & Wastell, 2007; Pfaffenberger, 1992) and the social and cultural meshwork in which they are entangled (Ingold, 1992, 2001). We believe in the ethnographic method as the primary source of empirical material collection and as a window to understanding human experience (Eriksen, 2001). We subscribe to a "being there" methodology, which proposes that we learn about the topics of our research from within the context of our interlocutors' own lived experience (Atkinson & Pugsley, 2005; O'Reilly, 2005), and thus strive to locate ourselves in the daily goings-on of each medical school (Rapp, 1999). In the following section, we describe our attempt to produce fieldnotes that would allow us to stumble along through fieldwork together.

### **Building a Collaborative Fieldnotes Practice**

Sharing material is central to team ethnography. It does not matter whether members conduct research at the same or different sites, simultaneously or asynchronously, or from the position of a research assistant, PhD candidate, postdoctoral researcher, or principal investigator. All teams share material. What differs from team to team—due to deliberate choices, implicit assumptions, or idiosyncratic behaviors—is what, how, when, and with whom researchers share material as well as how sharing material affects the team. We knew that we needed to share fieldnotes in more

or less real time to achieve a reflexive collaborative practice (rather than conducting fieldwork and sharing material upon returning from the field), so our first challenge was to find a format that could complement the immersive experience of fieldwork.

When looking at ethnographic practice, the form of “sharable” fieldnotes varies widely. For instance, one team of nine ethnographers shared 5,000 word summaries each month (Miller et al., 2016); another team shared two to four singled-spaced, typed A4 sheets weekly (Creese et al., 2008); some have shared photos and videos while in the field (Burrell, 2016; Horst, 2016); and still another team shared “memo-notes” via email (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015, p. 22). Each of us planned to produce traditional written fieldnotes, and we agreed to upload them to a shared drive. Yet we could not expect to stay up-to-date with each other’s in-depth fieldnotes because we were all conducting fieldwork intensively by going to class, hanging out with teachers and students, examining teaching texts, conducting interviews, and typing up observations. Furthermore, we were aware that fieldnotes are difficult to interpret by anyone other than the original author; a difficulty we expected would be magnified because we would not share the same fieldsite(s) or the same experiences (see, for example, Burrell, 2016).<sup>5</sup> For this reason, long, text-based fieldnotes would not support our collaborative goals.

In the summer of 2017, prior to our fieldwork, we established a team-based model of notetaking that could help to facilitate the wider aims of our comparative and collaborative project. We created “activities” (as a form of collaborative fieldnotes) to produce and share fieldnotes, and as a means to afford both individual and team-based insights into our three field locations, in real time. We designed the weekly activities to take as little as five to ten minutes to complete, and to be incorporated into our daily fieldwork practice, where possible. Before leaving for the fieldwork, we created a shared folder on the university’s server and a word document containing a table, with dates in the left-hand column and blank spaces for the activity instructions in the right-hand column. Every week, on a rotating basis, one of us would write the instructions for an activity for each of us to complete individually in our fieldsite that week. For example, the instructions might read: *Capture, with your sound recorder, some of the sounds of the cities and spaces you are in, or, Climb on a table or somewhere high and take a picture of one of the teaching or learning spaces.* We each uploaded our outcomes—sound recordings, drawings, video clips, textural notations—to the shared folder for each of us to access and view at our leisure. We began the activities in September 2017, a few weeks into the fieldwork, and completed them in May 2018, when we left our fieldsites. In total, we designed and completed 25 activities.

Our second challenge was how to articulate sensory experiences of technologically aided sensory learning in medical education. Prior to fieldwork, we conducted three days of team ethnographic experiments (Harris et al., 2019). These experiments afforded us the opportunity

to work with different elicitation methods that imaginatively attended to sensory learning. We decided to continue to play with photography, video, and drawing in our activities. As a team of ethnographers, we had varying degrees of experience with visual and sensory methods. As such, we committed to making multi-media fieldnotes in the true spirit of bumbling, allowing our activities to create space for us to playfully learn about themes and forms outside of our daily individual ethnographic inquiries.

We chose not to require all activities to explicitly draw on, or relate to, sensory learning, because we anticipated that many activities would have unexpected outcomes related to other social and material aspects of our fieldsites (see, Guillemin & Harris, 2014). We wanted to be open to the possibility of learning from and adjusting to our experiences in the field. Our collaborative fieldnotes allowed us to probe into one another's ethnographic practice by providing windows into our daily lives across contexts. The snippets of one another's fieldsites helped "unlock" memories from our different sites (Burrell, 2016, p. 147), and triggered questions about how we chose to complete a weekly activity and the significance of the resulting fieldnote.

One of our explicit goals with the activities was to allow the fieldsites to inform one another. In our telephone and face-to-face meetings, the activity outcomes in our shared drive triggered observations and questions about our fieldsites. These early interpretations and analyses then influenced our later observations in the field and allowed us to focus on site specificities. Several scholars have similarly acknowledged that sharing and discussing fieldnotes as a team influenced how fieldnotes were interpreted and directed future field observations (Creese et al., 2008; Erickson & Stull, 1998; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). Judith Wasser and Liora Bresler (1996) called this collaborative interpretation in group research the "interpretive zone" (p. 6). Collaborative interpretation, however, is not the focus of this chapter. Instead, we turn our attention to demonstrating the ways that producing collaborative fieldnotes helped to hold us accountable to each other.

### **Instructing Fieldnote Production**

Writing the instructions for our activities was an individualized task that also foregrounded our dependence on one another. Designing the activities allowed us to both challenge "the cult of individualism" within ethnography that can counter team research (Erickson & Stull, 1998, p. 26) and pursue our particular interests as individuals. Striking such a balance was important because, when the project ends, we still need to be able to show our individual contributions. This is especially true for Andrea and Rachel, who are working toward their PhDs. Being flexible and responsive to our individual experiences in the field—allowing each other to

bumble—was crucial in striking this balance. Therefore, we suggest that bumbling and accountability are intertwined.

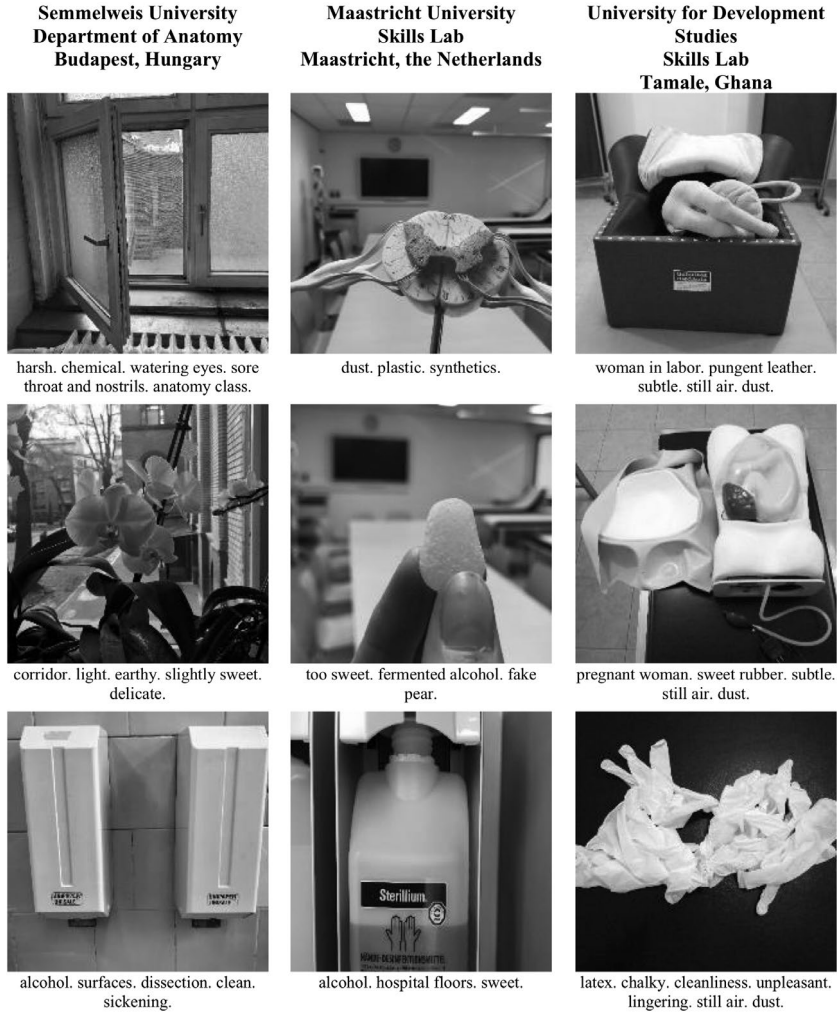
Bumbling was embedded in our activities' design. We had only a few rules: that activities should incorporate multi-media and explore our shared interest in the relationship between the sensory and the technological in medical education. Halfway through fieldwork, we added themes of materiality, sensorality, getting outside yourself, history, and recording equipment to help guide our instructions. Even when we decided to sharpen our focus, the particulars of weekly instruction were always up to an individual's discretion. Sometimes, for instance, an individual invented her own activity, and at other times, she was inspired by external influences such as, Miranda July's (2007) *Learning to Love You More*, Andrew Causey's (2017) *Drawn to See*, and Dara Culhane's (2016) "Sensing."

For example, inspired by the Instagram account "Scents of Sardinia" (scents\_of\_sardinia, 2018) and struck by the smell of formaldehyde in the dissection laboratories where she spent much time during her fieldwork in Budapest, Rachel was curious about the other ethnographers' experiences of smell, and what objects were particularly "smelly" in their sites. She wrote "sensorality" instructions for week 15: 1) *Find five "smelly" objects—three from your fieldsite, and two from your city (if/where possible); 2) Take a photograph of these objects; 3) Add three–five relevant scents in a caption of the photograph and "geotag" it (i.e. add a location, time, and date stamp); 4) Upload to our shared folder.*<sup>6</sup> This activity gave our noses the lead to explore the pungent odors of laboratories and classrooms as well as the subtle aromas of cupboards and hallways. We stole sniffs of dusty models, cherished manikins, sugary candies, and decorative flowers to find many smells had become all-too-familiar, all-too-quickly. We scrunched our faces up at cleaning products, invited dust to tickle our noses, and delighted in undertones of sweetness. Most importantly, however, Andrea and Anna gave themselves over to Rachel's inclinations as inspired by her fieldsite.

In some ways, our activities brought bumbling beyond the individual to the level of the team. Taylor (2014) identified faith and surprise as positive characteristics of bumbling, and these elements were certainly present in our practice of producing collaborative fieldnotes. We never stipulated that our writing instructions should be able to predict the value of an activity for the team. Instead, we trusted that activities, inspired by our individual fieldsites, would yield interesting insights for everyone. We expected to be surprised by one another. Our bumbling allowed us to be open to our experiences of the field as individual ethnographers, while also enabling us to be open to what might come from relating our fieldsite to each other.

The photographs from the "smelly objects" activity (see Figure 13.1) illustrate the kind of surprises that we encountered by performing these





*Figure 13.1* Collection of photographs and descriptions of “smelly” objects from the field

activities together. Andrea found it striking that within the variety of smells documented, everyone submitted a photo of sanitary objects. From Budapest and Maastricht, Rachel and Anna submitted photos of hand sanitizer and soap dispensers, while Andrea submitted a photo of gloves from Tamale. In the classes for pre-clinical students that Andrea attended, hand sanitizer was not incorporated into the classroom infrastructure. Instead, portable hand sanitizer pumps were often saved for formal assessments, where pre-clinical students would demonstrate their clinical skills.

Andrea interpreted these differences to reflect the limited budget available to the medical program at the university in Ghana.

This general insight into the material conditions of our fieldsites demonstrates Jenna Burrell's (2016) point that the "value of fieldnotes is partly in their explicit contents but also in what they unlock in the fieldworker's memory" (p. 147). Importantly, the comparative material generated by Rachel and Anna, rather than individually generated and analyzed fieldnotes, unlocked Andrea's memory. Our insights from our collaborative fieldnotes are, of course, only starting points for further exploration. In relation to the "smelly objects" activity, Andrea must now carefully consider how the university's limited budget might affect learning medicine. Our collaborative fieldnotes have the potential to highlight the specificities of our fieldsites. Our commitment to bumbling together allowed individual interests to inform our project rather than demanding that they be subsumed by it.

### **Sharing Multisensory Snapshots**

It was important for us to share fieldwork as it happened, rather than to compare at the end, in order to push our assumptions, to highlight local specificities, to connect across project themes, and to assist our individual analytical work at each site. With little time to engage with other literatures, let alone others' empirical material in the midst of the all-consuming immersion of fieldwork, we looked for ways to quickly but genuinely engage with one another. During our pre-fieldwork experiments, we developed a toolkit of smartphones for taking videos and photos, digital drawing notebooks for making sketches, and audio recorders for recording sound and interviews. We felt these methodological "tools" could help us both in exploring the sensory details involved in learning clinical diagnosis and in generating bite-sized snapshots of the field. We needed to adapt our toolkit to work with our field observations: how medical students learned to palpate, how teachers moved across blackboards making drawings, and how course designers wrote sensory instructions. Soon we were sharing textures of our sites' materials in drawings, conducting performative re-enactments, and making collages using archival material.

What worked so well in making multisensory fieldnotes was that we could share them with each other as rich, bite-sized windows into our fieldsites. These fieldnotes opened up new insights, meanings, and possibilities for finding localities and generalities in a way which written text would not have allowed. For a start, they were accessible and took little time for us to engage with, meaning that it was feasible to watch a video from Tamale in a lunch break in Maastricht, or to look at some drawings from Budapest while catching some late-night Wi-Fi in Ghana. We could be accountable to each other in ways that did not impede upon the demands of our own fieldwork. The videos, photographs, and sounds

also provided insights into the conditions of each other's fieldsites in ways that extended beyond the content of the material, as well as offering insights into our own fieldwork. For example, in week 23, Rachel asked us to make short videos of a typical day in the field: *Choose one day next week and make 5–10 video recordings for each hour between 0800 and 1800 (work hours, essentially, with a little before and after)*. In watching these short videos, we saw the different ways that we traveled to our fieldsites (see Figure 13.2): by bike, along the windy bridges and cobble streets of Maastricht; by the ancient ornate metro, under the car-filled streets of Budapest; and by breezy yellow-yellows, past busy markets and stalls in Tamale.

We also saw the insides of Skills Lab classrooms, lecture halls with digital microscopes, the potted plants and green tiles of the anatomy department, and the Tamale medical school library. We saw and heard where we took fieldnotes—at our desk, homes, and in public libraries. All of this sensory detail helped us understand each other's material, and



*Figure 13.2* Stills from videos, from top Maastricht, Budapest, and Tamale

the conditions of their existence. Creating and appreciating the connections between our sites, we took responsibility in sharing details of our lives as ethnographers, bumbling along within the local routines of our interlocutors.

### **Discussing Bumbling**

Our collaborative fieldnote making also required that we purposefully created space and time for discussing both the processes and outcomes of our instructions and activities. We pre-planned both virtual and in-person discussions. In the field, we organized periodic one-hour, three-way meetings, using a free video call service. We also met face-to-face twice at our faculty in Maastricht in January and July 2018 (for one to two hours each meeting), during which we consulted our fieldnote materials on our individual computers, as well as on the larger meeting-room screen.

In her discussion of the contemporary place of bumbling within anthropology, Taylor (2014) made clear that ethnographers have not ceased to bumble. In line with Taylor, we found that bumbling was very much intertwined within our research practice, particularly during entry and the initial stages of fieldwork. We bumbled along through setbacks, accommodations, and concessions that occurred in gaining access to our fieldsites and interlocutors. The beginning phase of fieldwork was a busy and stressful time, and team communication was most difficult as we settled into our new localities. During this time, we each bumbled in different ways regarding the specificities of interactions at each medical school. This included unexpectedly drawn out ethics approvals, communication failures, delayed email responses, differing expectations when dealing with external researchers, and the initial busyness of gatekeepers at the beginning of the academic year.

We did not formally discuss access to our fieldsites, nor was access codified in our written outputs or reporting systems. Indeed, this type of experience or practice is ill-fitted within the “carefully planned,” “documented,” and “accounted for” (Taylor, 2014, p. 529) regimes of research today. While difficult to fully discern, the initial lack of any “official” recording of the processes of bumbling in the beginning stages of fieldwork also has likely to do with aspects of pride and/or fear of amateurism or incompetence that might exist for researchers. In particular, Rachel and Andrea sought to earn a marker of professionalism in their first long-term fieldwork project (see, for example, Marcus, 2009). These extra stressors highlight the added importance of our collaborative fieldnote process in projects with multiple members and many moving parts.

However, during our January meeting, access and our vastly different experiences in gaining it bubbled to the surface of the discursive space we had created, through a discussion of one particular activity. In week five of fieldwork, each ethnographer was asked to make three “spatial drawings”

of her fieldsite. In Budapest, Rachel made a series of maps of the city, highlighting the routes she took to and from the anatomy department where she would eventually be conducting her fieldwork. In Tamale, Andrea produced a map of the clinical skills classroom that she had been attending, along with an instructive map of abdominal examination. In Maastricht, Anna drew three maps of the floors of the Skills Lab building, also noting places relevant to her, for instance the “copy machine” and “tea room.”

Discussing this activity, questions arose as to the temporality of our stages of fieldwork. A little over a month into fieldwork, Anna had access to storage rooms and building blueprints and Andrea was already drawing abdominal examination; whereas Rachel was drawing her metro route. The assigned activity had no intended outcome and did not directly address our research questions in the same way as, for instance, the “smelly objects” activity had. Instead, the maps emphasized timing differences within our ethnographic practices, prompting us to note how access was different for each ethnographer. We began to speak more openly about our individual difficulties gaining access in three different institutional settings. These discussions highlighted anxieties about both falling behind and having perhaps achieved access “too smoothly.” This activity gave each ethnographer a window into her fellow researchers’ progress and daily life, and carved out a safe space for us to discuss stumbling, both personally and in relation to working within a team.

We submit that “access to the field” can be embroiled in contingencies and disruption, where local specificities have the power to disturb and shape the collaboration and comparison that occurs within teams. However, these processes and their outcomes are often obscured (and perhaps even hidden). Our activities, and the conversations around them, allowed us to consider our individual practices of ethnographic stumbling, particularly in the initial stages of fieldwork. Bringing our difficulties, anxieties, and fears to light prompted us to take seriously each other’s struggles and to remain accountable to one another by opening up and shifting the temporalities of our wider, shared research project. Deville, Guggenheim, and Hrdličková (2016b) note, “most discussions of comparison conceive of it as if it were a smooth and transparent practice . . . This is equally true of those who critique comparison as being oppressive for forcing entities together” (pp. 112–113). Our collaborative fieldnotes allowed us to notice, speak about, and push back against any potential “oppressive” or homogenizing forces of comparison that may present themselves within team-based research.

## **Conclusion**

Given the increased popularity of team ethnography, this chapter has elucidated some of the dynamics of producing collaborative fieldnotes in the context of medical education research. In particular, we have shown that Taylor’s (2014) regimes of accountability do not always devalue stumbling in research. We also find other forms of accountability in team

research, which do not fit neatly into the documentable and measurable accountability of bureaucratic institutions. Drawing on our experiences of instructing, sharing, and discussing weekly activities as a team of ethnographers distributed across three fieldsites, we argue that bumbling and accountability are intertwined in team ethnography.

Our commitment to bumbling held us accountable to each other in various ways. Writing instructions allowed us to explore individual interests in the field while simultaneously creating opportunities for us to better understand how our fieldsites relate to one another. Experimenting with and sharing multisensory forms of inquiry enabled us to glimpse into each other's fields, in more or less real time, while also attempting to address the multisensory character of our project. Carving out space to discuss the activities, both periodically while in the field and in greater depth when together in Maastricht, helped emphasize our bumbling research practices. This helped us to readjust our expectations regarding the temporality of our individual fieldsites and wider team project, and to retrieve the figure of the bumbler within our own, shared discourse. In conclusion, we suggest that bumbling is valuable because it can help positively shape accountability in teams in ways that are not bureaucratic and instrumental. Producing collaborative fieldnotes created opportunities for bumbling within regimes of accountability and bumbling in our fieldnote practice held us accountable to our commitment to collaborative ethnography.

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## Notes

1. Taylor (2014) identified this trend in both anthropology and medical education. We are only concerned with the former in this chapter, specifically as it relates to ethnographic research.
2. For more information on the research project "Making Clinical Sense: A Comparative Study of How Doctors Learn in Digital Times," see [www.makingclinicalsense.com](http://www.makingclinicalsense.com).

3. At the time of writing, John was conducting roughly three months of field study at each site. He played a formative role in our collaborative fieldnotes by writing historically attuned activity instructions (see more on writing instructions later). However, he only sometimes contributed to generating material for our collaborative fieldnotes as he was not in the process of collecting material at the same time we were.
4. We respectively conducted fieldwork at the University for Development Studies, Semmelweis University, and Maastricht University.
5. Sometimes we selected parts of our individual notes to share with the team in the form of typed updates or, upon returning from the field, presentations. While sharing our individually generated research material was part of our collaboration, we focus (in this chapter) on our efforts to produce fieldnotes together, because it is these efforts that shaped our accountability to one another.
6. We were not able to include as many figures as we would have liked in the chapter due to spatial constraints. For more images of our collaborative fieldnote instructions and outcomes, please see <http://www.makingclinicalsense.com/bumbling-through-fieldwork-activities>.

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