Sheffield Hallam University

'I'm always on Facebook!': exploring Facebook as a mainstream research tool and ethnographic site

STIRLING, Eve <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8989-4984>

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Digital Methods for Social Sciences: An Interdisciplinary guide to research innovation

Part I: Big data, thick data: Social Media Analysis

5. 'I'm always on Facebook!' Exploring Facebook as a mainstream research tool and ethnographic site.

Eve Stirling (Sheffield Hallam University)

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Introduction to the research

This chapter discusses a research project which explored the everyday use of the social network site (SNS) Facebook by first-year undergraduate students in their transition to university. It explores the opportunities and challenges of using Facebook as a research site and how this digital approach may differ from a 'mainstream' ethnography but argues for this approach to be viewed as 'mainstream' due to the mediated nature of contemporary social life.

The chapter begins with an overview of the research undertaken, introducing the context, study design and study ethics. A discussion of debates in digital ethnography then follows, highlighting some key positions and terms in the field of digital ethnography. Next the terms 'field site', 'participant observation' and 'field notes' are discussed as digital methods and some of the issues and ethical tensions of using these are explored using examples from the study. After a reflexive discussion of my experiences in the field, in which I consider my own shifting position in an already 'fuzzy' environment, the chapter concludes with a case for considering such approaches as part of the mainstream ethnographer's toolkit.

The data discussed in this chapter is taken from an empirical study undertaken in 2010 on how first-year undergraduate students in the UK use Facebook (Stirling, 2014). The study used ethnographic methods to observe student Facebook use, and then looked at whether Facebook helped or hindered the students' transition into university life. It explored the cultural practices of the students' use of this social network site in the context of their university experience. The students, their habits and their rituals were of interest, along with their interplay with technology. Facebook is both a pathway and a destination, one that the students used on a daily basis as part of their everyday lives. This site was (and still is) ubiquitous in a great many of the lives of young (18-21 year old) undergraduate students in the UK (CLEX, 2009; Ipsos MORI, 2008), with research findings (at the time of the study) showing that 91% of undergraduate students describe themselves as using SNS 'regularly' or 'sometimes' (Ipsos MORI, 2008, 10). Research in this area suggests that Facebook is a key tool used for social support and supporting academic study (Madge et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009). It is acknowledged that students do use other SNS and that not all students use Facebook, but this particular site is embedded in everyday student life, and it was the nature of this 'embeddedness' that was the focus of the research.

My Facebook Friends (FbF)

The study consisted of two stages of data collection. Stage one was an online survey questionnaire of the full population of new undergraduate students (approx 4700 students). Stage two was a 'connective ethnography', which spans both the virtual and physical spaces of a small volunteer sample of these respondents (n=6). The six ethnographic cases were narrowed down through a series of correspondence

and discussions about the detail of the study which resulted in six participants wishing to take part. These were called my Facebook Friends (FbF). The reasons for this longitudinal approach was that much of the research into students' use of SNS prior to this study was either quantitative and experimental (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Vie, 2008) or based on short term qualitative analysis using interviews (Selwyn, 2009). There was a lack of longitudinal ethnographic studies that looked in depth at Facebook use over time. At the time of the study there was much that was unknown (and it could be argued there still is), not least the cultural developments in digital life. A range of authors (Beer and Burrows, 2007; boyd, 2008; Selwyn and Grant, 2009) called for a development of *thick descriptive* ethnographic accounts of the present day use of social network sites *in situ* as opposed to offering research into the potentials of these applications. This idea of writing thick descriptions of how students were using Facebook was a driving factor in the research design. To enable this, a longitudinal 'connective' ethnographic approach was taken lasting the whole of the academic year 2010/11. The focus was the experiences of students in their transition year and so following them through to its completion was important.

Debates in digital ethnographic practice

Ethnographies and ethnographic practice draw on a wide range of sources of information collected over a period of time from the participant's everyday life to make sense of the world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Historically, the term has been intrinsically linked to (and is at the core of) Western anthropology but over time it has been appropriated by a variety of disciplines and this has led to fuzzy boundaries around the use of the term (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Hammersley and Atkinson propose that 'ethnography plays a complex and shifting role in the dynamic tapestry' (2007, 2) of the social sciences in the twenty-first

century. Seminal authors such as Clifford Geertz (1973) and Margaret Wolf (1992) undertook the anthropological study of 'other' cultures and this took place overseas in a land very different from the homeland inhabited by the ethnographer. More recently the 'other' culture studied may be technologically-mediated. Some of the ways researchers have chosen to describe ethnographies which have some element of digital or Internet within the field site or as a data collection method, include: 'connective ethnography' (Leaner & McKim, 2003); 'cyberethnography' (Robinson & Schulz, 2009); 'digital ethnography' (Murthy, 2008); 'internet ethnography' (Sade-Beck, 2004); 'online/offline ethnography' (Markham, 2005); 'netography' (Kozinets, 2010); and 'virtual ethnography' (Hine, 2000; 2005). The last twenty years have seen a growth in exploration and ethnographic understanding of life online through many 'new digital phenomena'. Robinson & Schulz (2009, 692) suggest the continual evolution of the Internet 'necessitates continual reassessment of fieldwork methods'. It has been a time of flux and methodological terms to describe ethnographies of the Internet have jostled to gain credence. The focus of this chapter is on the use of Facebook as an example of a digital ethnographic site and digital method for undertaking an ethnography. The term digital is chosen over 'online', 'virtual' or 'Internet' as I believe it best describes the use of digital devices, spaces and interactions and moves the focus away from a binary description which has historically been used. To foreground this discussion, attention is given in this section to three of these terms: 'virtual ethnography', 'netnography' and 'connective ethnography'. These were chosen for their differing approaches to highlight how ethnographic practice has been viewed in relation to digital lives and how they influenced the present Facebook case study.

Virtual Ethnography (Hine 2000) draws upon a case study of a media event to

explore computer-mediated communication on and about the Internet. This seminal text suggests that the Internet is both a cultural artefact as well as a site for cultural practice. Hine began by trying to understand whether the 'virtual' was different from the 'real' and by approaching Internet use this way, drew a divide between online and offline interactions. She proposes that a virtual ethnography is 'not quite like the real thing' (2000, 10) in that by only observing the virtual the researcher did not see all of real life. The terms online and offline are not helpful when describing social practices which take place in the digital and/or physical environment. Consequently, it is not helpful to segment the ethnographic practices to digital and physical.

Kozinets (2010) advocates a differing approach when studying online and offline communities. He argues that the two ought to be treated differently and contends the importance of 'the physical component that is always attached to human social behaviour' (Kozinets 2010, 63) while maintaining that a separation between the online and offline is possible. In *Netnography* (2010), Kozinets makes the distinction between researching 'online communities' – those that are communities, having elements that cross into the physical – and 'communities online' – those that are solely based in the digital, and that different approaches can be taken to explore each. Netnography supposes that this line can be drawn but this is problematic as the layered nature of digital life is more nuanced.

In contrast, the term '*connective ethnography'* has been used by Hine (2007) and Leaner and McKim (2003) to describe ethnographic studies in which the field sites span both digital and physical spaces. Leander & McKim propose participants are 'in and travel across more than one space at one time' (2003, 238) and so therefore we as researchers should pay attention to these multiplicities by tracing the

flows of their movement between and across the physical and the digital environments and the intersections therein (Leander & McKim, 2003). A connective ethnography describes the use of two or more field sites and describes the connection found between them. The everyday uses of the Internet are more nuanced than the simplicity of one physical site and one digital site. There are layers of digital a person may be involved in, which may include a Facebook Page[1], a twitter stream[2], a 'WhatsApp' group chat[3] and a 'Snapchat' message[4]. The ethnographer needs to be able to move where the participant travels and therefore being 'connected' across the spaces was most appropriate in engaging students' digital practices.

Facebook in Everyday Life

The Facebook project took a multi-sited connective ethnographic approach to researching both the digital and the physical environments of the undergraduate students. This built upon a previous study that took a solely digital approach to studying Facebook use (Stirling, 2009) which found that to view the digital only was missing many of the social practices which included face-to-face interactions. When studying something that can be transient and fluid, across the digital and the physical, the concept of a field site becomes fuzzy and less rigid. The importance of being embedded in the practices of the participants in order to have an insider view was paramount in understanding this. One of the findings from this study was that students used Facebook Group Chat within lectures. Being an insider Group member

[1] A Profile for public figures, businesses and organisations. Users can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and liking them to receive their updates in their News Feed.
[2] The stream of tweets (140 character text messages) a twitter user would see in their Home space.
[3] An instant messaging application (app) for smartphones.
[4] A time-limited photo messaging app where users send text and/or photo and video messages which are then deleted after a pre-set amount of time (10 seconds).

was key to viewing these practices and digital methods facilitated this. The next section explores the methods that can be used when undertaking such digital research and how these spaces can complicate our understanding of 'mainstream' ethnographic concepts and practices.

Undertaking an ethnography in digital spaces; *field site, participant observation* **and** *field notes***.**

This section moves the discussion to key terms that can be used when undertaking an ethnography and explores some nuances between mainstream ethnography and those ethnographies that include digital spaces. I explore the concepts of *field site*, *participant observation* and *field notes* and draw upon practice from the connective ethnographic study of students' Facebook use.

What is the field site?

Bailey (2007, 2) describes field research as 'the systematic study, primarily through long-term, face-to-face interactions and observations, of everyday life'. These observations of everyday life, in 'everyday contexts' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 3) are 'increasingly technologically mediated' (Murthy, 2008, 849), thus meaning that our understanding of the 'field site' can be problematic. What was once viewed as involving face-to-face contact with participants has, over the last twenty years, broadened to include relationships that are mediated by technology and digital in nature. These digitally-mediated interactions take place alongside and within the physical environment which, I argue, cannot be viewed as separate from

the digital spaces and interactions. The concept of a field site has broadened to include virtual worlds, gaming environments, social network sites and smartphone apps. In all of these examples the ethnographer is ideally as far as is possible embedded within the digital technologies and the field site, for example, a Second Life character (Boellstorff, 2008), a World of Warcraft player (Taylor, 2006), A Facebook Friend (Raynes-Goldie, 2010) or a user of an app (Crooks, 2013).

Gaining access to the field

One of the field sites in this study was the participants' Facebook Profile. The participants added me as a Friend on Facebook to take part in the study. Prior to this a face-to-face discussion regarding the study took place and informed consent was sought and granted. Buchanan proposes that online and offline are now so interconnected that we should view them as 'a fluid sphere' (2011, 89) but she contends that this then 'blurs the research boundaries' and the ethical issues relating to this are also blurred. To counter this, participant and researcher expectations and behaviours were discussed to ensure all were happy with the approach. The choice of the participant to add me as a Facebook Friend was so that the participants had agency over taking part in the study. They did not have to add me if they decided not to take part and they could delete me from their Friend list whenever they wished. I was not controlling the access to their Profile.

The boundary of the field site

When undertaking an ethnography it is sensible to define the parameters of the study from the outset but to allow for a level of flexibility to follow the movement

of the participants. Facebook and the Profiles[5] of the six participants' were the main focus of the study to explore the broader relationship between students, Facebook and the university context. The movements of the participants were followed across the digital and physical spaces through the students collecting photographs of their spaces (wherever they used Facebook - student bedroom, outside a lecture theatre, and walking into university were a few examples). I took screenshots and downloads of their Profiles and undertook face-to-face interviews. The field sites were where the student interactions took place within the digital and physical university environments, including the library, a lecture theatre, their laptop and Profiles. Connections between the field sites were explored by asking the questions, not only 'What is Facebook?' but also 'When?', 'Where?' and 'How is Facebook?' (Hine, 2000). When is Facebook used by the students? Where are the environments in which Facebook is used? How does Facebook fit within the university experience? Facebook has many different sections within the architecture of the website. The original intention was to stick to my participants' personal Profiles as the boundary of the digital field site. This was driven by an ethical decision to focus the research on those people who had given informed consent. Observations were focused only within this space for the majority of the participants. One participant invited me to join a private Facebook Group[6], which was set up by his classmates to discuss issues relating to the course they were studying. Information on the study and a request for participation in the study were communicated to the Group members via a Wall post. Informed consent was gained from all the group members before I was added to the Group space. Joining the Group offered a set of different interactions and Facebook practices to explore. This meant that the Facebook Group then became a field site in

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[5] Profile with a capital P here forward is used to describe a Facebook Profile.
[6] A Profile for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. It is aimed at non-commercial use.

addition to the personal Profiles I was already studying. This is an example of the expanded 'fuzzy' boundary of the field site. This was only possible due to the digital nature of the ethnography which afforded access to the Facebook Group.

Participant observation

Participant observation is a key method of ethnographic research, which differentiates it from other qualitative practices (Boellstorff et al, 2012; Delamont, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), such as interviews or observation (without participating). Observation of the participants is undertaken in the everyday setting of the field site (as discussed in the previous section) and the aim is to understand the cultural practices of those being studied by living alongside them, taking part when appropriate and talking to them about their lives and actions (Delamont, 2004). Boellstorff et al. suggest that participant observation 'entails a particular kind of joining in and a particular way of looking at things that depends on the research question, field site, and practical constraints' (2012, 66). Accessing the everyday life of Facebook involved sitting in front of my computer and observing and taking part in the day-to-day activities of my Facebook Friends (FbF) (the participants on Facebook). As Boellstorff et al. (2012) suggest, it was necessary to prepare myself both technologically and physically before entering the field. A researcher must have the appropriate equipment to be able to access the field site. If a researcher does not have good Internet access and an understanding of how the site works, studying it is challenging. I used a laptop computer and based myself in my own home and also used my smartphone to access Facebook when out and about as the study progressed. I also moved to locations beyond my own home with both my laptop and smartphone. This meant that my observations were not routed in a static location. I visited the physical spaces my participants visited: the student's union, their halls of

residence cafe and the university library, and visited Facebook in these locations too. For me I was experiencing the spatialised practices of Facebook use that I saw my FbF doing. The connective ethnographic approach afforded me the opportunity to view the blending and layering of Facebook use across the digital and physical environments.

Field notes

As noted by others, field notes are a key element of recording ethnographic observations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Sanjek, 1990; Wolf, 1992). The focus in this section is to describe the practice of writing field notes when in the field site of Facebook.

Facebook operates both synchronously (at the same time) and asynchronously (not at the same time). As a result, depending on the practice the researcher is involved in, field notes can be written when observing and experiencing the cultural practice as a notebook can sit alongside the laptop and note taking would not be seen as a distraction to the participants. This is something that is not so easily undertaken in the physical world due to the disconnection from the activity being observed (Boellstorff et al., 2012). The use of digital screenshots to record what was seen was helpful and supplemented traditional hand written field notes. The types of digital screenshots taken included a participant's comment on a Status update or Photo, or those that typified a cultural practice, such as 'Tagging' (highlighting their face and/or name) a Friend in a post or 'Checking in' (highlighting on a digital map) to a particular physical space within the university. The ethics of capturing visual data needed attention (due to the privacy of a participant's identity in photographs) and I ensured I had consent from all my FbF to capture visual data to

be used for academic purposes. The visual nature of these notes offers a richer view of the practice than written notes alone. These shots can also be used at a later time to work up to fuller written notes. Boellstorff et al. (2012) compare these to 'scratch notes' (Sanjeck, 1990), but these are also key pieces of visual data, which can be used (with the permission of the FbF) as part of the presentation of the study as illustration. This digital nature of recording my field notes was used alongside the more traditional note taking on paper particularly when away from the main computer using a smartphone. My involvement and experience of participant observation, and the field notes that I took of these experiences, culminate together to create the ethnographic texts. In this manner the digital methods supplemented the more traditional ethnographic practices. This mix of digital, multimodal and analogue note taking mirrored the practices I was viewing and offered me a rich array of insights into these practices.

'I am a Facebook addict': field experiences.

The focus of this chapter has been to discuss the use of Facebook as a mainstream ethnographic site and research tool. Thus far, I have drawn on understandings from connective ethnography to present differences in the terms field site, participant observation and field notes in digital spaces. In order to bring to life how these differences are experienced and the associated challenges negotiated in traditional, face-to-face ethnographic practice, this section presents a reflexive excerpt from my research journal.

Fieldwork

The time I spent in the 'field' of Facebook was an intense weekly occurrence. I would look at what each of the participants had posted and I would take

screenshots of their profiles. I would take field notes of what I was seeing and being involved in, for example when my participants posted on my Facebook Wall; when my participants were involved with a specific Facebook practice; and uploading and tagging photos from a night out. Although I intended to only check the participants' Profiles once per week, I ended up viewing posts on a daily basis as the participants' Status updates[7] would be visible in my News Feed[8] alongside my other Friends posts. This made the separation of my personal Facebook interactions and my professional, research interactions fairly difficult. At times, it felt like I could not leave the field as my personal interactions were taking place alongside my research interactions. This context collapse (Vitak et al., 2012) meant that gaining separation from the field at the time of data analysis was difficult.

'I'm deactivating my account'

My time off Facebook July 5th 2011 – September 5th 2011

The yearlong ethnography came to an end with a self-imposed temporal boundary on 10th June 2011. I decided at the start of the study to limit my interaction with the students to the academic year 2010-2011. Throughout my year of study, I watched the students' Updates appearing in my News Feed and had become accustomed to the ebbs and flows of their lives. Watching their experiences of university life and academic life roll out, punctuated with assignment and exam crises, excitement about Christmas or a flatmate's birthday or a funny joke a Friend had posted. As June went on and my detailed analysis of the Profiles was beginning, I found it increasingly hard to stop reading the participants' Facebook updates. I

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[7] Status update allows users to inform their Friends of current thoughts.
[8] The News Feed highlights what a users' Friends post.

completed the final round of face-to-face interviews and made the decision to hide the participants from my News Feed. I did not want to 'Unfriend' the participants on Facebook, as this was my main form of contact with them and my data source, but I felt I needed some space from the field. At this point I decided to do something I had been toying with for a while. I decided to deactivate my Facebook account for a month.

This action may seem inconsequential; some readers may think 'so what? Why is she making a big deal out of this? Does she really *need* to deactivate her account? Can't she just turn it off? Leave it alone?' I thought that would be possible, but it was not. My life had revolved in and around Facebook for the last two years and as I admitted at the beginning of my MA dissertation, 'I am a Facebook addict' (Stirling, 2009). I was beginning to feel that I could not gain the distance for an analytical view of the site or my participants' use of it. This ethnography had been immersive. Madden proposes an ethnographer who is immersed in a society or culture they are studying as being 'at one' 'with the sociality of their participant group' and that this can lead to the ethnographer being 'lost' in the field, and that it is important to be able to step back (2010, 78). There were concerns that there the boundaries were blurred between 'participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, 102) and this made analysis of the field lack rigour or a level of higher thinking. I felt too close and comfortable to be critical. Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that the ethnographer should be wary of feeling 'at home' in the field and that:

> There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual
> distance. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytical work

of the ethnographer gets done…the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 102).

At this point I needed some space to consider the data away from the field. I had mixed emotions about leaving Facebook. For the first time in this study, I was experiencing what I imagine other ethnographers feel when they have to leave the community they are part of. The difference in researching Facebook is that I had had unlimited access to my FbF Profiles for the last year. The access I had been afforded through the digital field site, it could be said, could not be expected when observing Facebook practices using traditional ethnographic methods. The digital approach meant I could view the Facebook Profiles twenty four hours a day, should I have wished. I had to manage the blurring of my personal and professional identities which were both a part of my many interactions on Facebook. I believe this was similar to the experiences of my participants' and I shared the challenges they experienced. My aim was to be authentic within and about the culture being studied. I was making sense of Facebook practices through my own use of Facebook, both personally and as a research tool. This duality of Facebook use, both personal and professional, research site and research tool was complex to manage.

Advancing debates in digital ethnography

In viewing Facebook as a field site there exists some tensions relating to the dichotomy of the online versus offline. Online and offline are not separate entities; they often co-exist in the same space. boyd proposes 'the Internet is increasingly entwined in peoples' lives; it is both an imagined space and a architectural place' (2008, 26). This 'imagined' space is becoming a central focus of many peoples' lives

and 'a real' place as our online or digital lives are a ubiquitous part of day-to-day life. The dichotomy of the terms online and offline create is problematic when used alongside ethnography and particularly when used in relation to Facebook. In the study of university students the site was most often used as part of the face-to-face cultures and practices of the participants. In studying students' Facebook use, I have observed that they very rarely operate in a single domain, space, or site, digital or physical. They access Facebook from their smartphone on the way to lectures or they chat to classmates on Facebook Chat on their laptops while sitting next to them in a lecture. This duality of spatial use is a common and an important theme when exploring Facebook use in HE. By paying attention ethnographically to the wider sphere, beyond the digital space, the multiplicity of the cultural practices taking place can be explored. In this project, a multi-sited, connective, ethnographic approach allowed for observation both on Facebook and face-to-face and it enabled me to explore the complex relationship of the embedded and ubiquitous nature of Facebook. In a connective ethnography there is a blurring of the boundaries of digital and physical spaces.

There are many other methods available to study Facebook, which were not used in this study but could have tracked this blurring of boundaries. For example, the use of a video screen-cast[9] of the user's computer screen would allow the researcher to view the participant's movements within and outside of Facebook. Which order did they navigate the site? What is the relationship between Facebook and the other websites and computer programs they are running? This would help to answer the question: 'in which tasks is Facebook embedded?'

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[9] A screen-cast is a digital recording of computer screen output, also known as a video screen capture.

This is a fluid and somewhat changeable landscape. Ellison and boyd suggest researchers of social media do not 'become too enamored with these new systems' (2013, 169), by being critical and taking time to understand the social practices and the technology. A key approach is to be true to the social practices at the time of study. This study took place in 2010 when the Facebook interface was very different from 'Timeline' we see today, including separate tabs and images hidden in the photo tab. People threw sheep[10] at each other and 'Pokes'[11] were a daily occurrence. By keeping immersed in the 2010 data I tried to be true to my documentation of Facebook practices in 2010 and not to be influenced by the newer interfaces, communication and interaction practices, such as the 'Timeline' and video streaming which developed over the three years of analysis and writing up the data. Moreover, a researcher needs to aware of the power structures that exist between the website and the wider audience of users. Facebook, the company, protects its assets. There are now very strict guidelines regarding the use of the Facebook logo and the 'brand assets' (Facebook, 2013). In the early days of the website these did not exist, social practices were new and developing (arguably they are still in this process). Now the company has very clear definitions of what 'Like', 'Tag' or 'Comment' mean. Social norms are beginning to develop and it seems from these brand asset definitions that there are expectations from Facebook that users will behave and use these 'tools' in a certain manner. Although these behaviours are also negotiated amongst Friends, (see also the work of Davies, 2012), I see this as challenging the use of Facebook as a research site in that there are powerful structures controlling and shaping social behaviours.

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[10] A digital practice, whereby a cartoon 'sheep' is thrown at another user by clicking a button which then shows the sheep on the other users' Wall.
[11] A Poke is a way to interact with your Friends on Facebook. It allows one user to digitally poke another, through a 'Poke' message on their Profile.

The digital is now interwoven, in many of our lives, increasingly through the use of portable devices such as smart phones and tablets. This mainstream use of the digital (for most, but not all of us) must be an influence on those researchers who are studying peoples' social lives, whether that be within a digital research site or not.

Conclusion

The approaches detailed in this chapter offer a reflexive view of the use of Facebook in a connective ethnography of students in higher education in the UK. The cultural practices of students' Facebook use across digital and physical environments were studied and Facebook used as one of the field sites and one of the methods of data collection. I propose the culture being studied should be the starting point in influencing the choice of ethnographic methods and that to study the practices of the participants is the important focus whether that is through a digital and/or face-to-face approach. The increasing use of digital devices and digital environments (in this case, by university students), follows that the ethnographer's focus should be responsive to the field and therefore studying these practices moves to digital methods and to multi-sited approaches. In this example the cultures of Higher Education and Facebook use in the UK were explored using a preferred method of a 'connective ethnography' (Hine, 2007). The traditional definitions of field sites when studying students are perhaps the lecture theatre, seminar room or student halls of residence. The digital field site was Facebook and this is a layer over the physical, traditional sites. This is not divide from, but an extension of, the traditional field site and should be viewed as 'mainstream'. This project provided scope for thinking about 'fuzzy' boundaries in a research project. The use of the digital is not always tangible. My duality of Facebook use, both professionally and personally meant that my own

role was fuzzy. This could be viewed as a tension for other researchers approaching similar projects, and wondering whether to use their own SNS account. Given the insights this insider position generated, I propose this was not a negative. A focus for the future is to pay attention to the socially constructed nature of space and the way in which peoples' practices flow between the digital and physical and the professional and personal spheres.

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