

# EDITORS

## NOTE

*We are proud to present the newest volume of *Ethnographic Encounters*!*

We are pleased to publish this special issue of *Ethnographic Encounters* on digital research methods. The idea of this theme arose as we noted how the Covid-19 pandemic shifted many aspects of our lives to online contexts, and we reflected upon what this shift has meant for research practices. For the first time in the history of the journal, we have opened our submissions to all the departments of the University of St Andrews and to both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The first two articles of this issue focus on methodology of digital research with interdisciplinary features. Nicole Cizauskas and Benjamin Kao's work draws upon the authors' experiences of doing ethnographic research in online settings and compares insights from institutional research and sociocultural anthropology and considers the role of creative methods in both areas. They present a "Leaky Box" theory suggesting combining quantitative and qualitative methods for a more inclusive digital research methodology. Ann Gillian Chu's contribution expands upon this interdisciplinary perspective, as it draws upon her experience of conducting doctoral research in theology in Hong Kong and the potential of ethnography to move beyond "written theology" to "lived theology". The ethnography reflects on whether it is necessary to be physically present to conduct ethnographic research and considers the use of qualitative secondary data as a way of overcoming limits set by the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of access to the fieldsite.

Following methodological discussions, this issue incorporates four pieces of digital ethnographic research from undergraduate anthropology students at the University of St Andrews. Claire Percival's work reflects upon the use of online dating apps by students at the University of St Andrews during the pandemic. This allowed her insight into how

individuals define dating and how connections are created in virtual settings, but also how this has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the online turn of many social interactions. Alice Palfreyman's contribution draws the notions of 'vanity' and 'validation' to show the cultural dilemma around young Scottish women's experience with posting selfies on Instagram. With thick descriptions of the motivations behind and interactions around selfies, Palfreyman argues that beyond the misogynist moral panic over vanity and narcissism and pressure on fake appearance under the male gaze, there is a claim to a broader space for female self-expression in the selfie culture. Eilidh Gilmour's contribution explores drag in the city of Dundee after the onset of the television show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and how this online space in which drag can be virtually expressed translates to in-person drag communities. Gilmour consulted "anthropological theory regarding digital, gender studies and anthropology of the future" to contextualize the "social structure" of the drag subculture of Dundee and the ways in which it has been impacted by the television show. Evelyn Hoon's work interconnects her personal experience with becoming vegan and online communities. Hoon self-reflects on her personal journey of becoming vegan and connecting with other vegans, exploring how this identity can manifest and flourish within online spaces.

With these diverse contributions, we believe this issue of *Ethnographic Encounters* creates space for interdisciplinary reflections upon the new opportunities and challenges brought by the conditions of digital research, with an emphasis on what this means specifically for ethnographic research practices. If you have any queries, or if you are interested in joining the editorial team, please feel free to reach out to us at [encounters@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:encounters@st-andrews.ac.uk).

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