

УДК 316.772.3:004.738.5]:39

DOI: 10.26565/2077-5105-2021-25-06

Jan Kasnik

Bachelor's degree in Political Science, Sciences Po Paris, Student in master's degree in Gender Studies, El Colegio de México, Carretera Picacho Ajusco 20, Col. Ampliación Fuentes del Pedregal, C.P. 14110 Tlalpan, Ciudad de México, e-mail: kasnikjan7@gmail.com ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7485-9318>

FROM THE EVERYDAY USES OF TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM TO GAY ACTIVISM IN FACEBOOK: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PATH OF A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION THROUGH ONLINE ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS*

The research into online spaces has been of growing interest for the sociologists. Moreover, the relevance of this field of study has increased even more with the breakout of the COVID pandemics. However, there is still little consensus or a consolidated methodological guidance for beginning searchers concerning the ways of doing an ethnography in such spaces. The goal of this paper is to present some fundamental considerations to have in mind when doing digital ethnography, based on concrete examples from my ongoing master research about the ways of doing gay activism in Facebook by men living in Mexico City. This work is an example of how ethnographic research is a continuous dialogue between our own biases as searchers, the fieldwork observations and theoretical framework. In that sense, the present article offers some guidance for the searchers interested in doing online ethnographic research, concerning its implications for the searchers and the reflexivity of the research participants. In the first section, I demonstrate the vital importance of online ethnographic observations for the precise formulation of the research topic. Then, I show how this fieldwork helped me to reformulate the research to focus only on Facebook. Thirdly, I put emphasis on the importance of our own reflexivity as searchers, an essential component of every inquiry in social science that remains implicit most of the time, giving the mistaken impression that the reflexivity of the searcher is not so important. Indeed, I make the point that the reflexivity of both searchers and participants is instrumental for an in-depth understanding of the research topic and its adequate formulation. Finally, I present very succinctly the different decisions I had to make to personalize my Facebook research profile, as well as the implications of these for the recruitment and the communication with the research participants. In a nutshell, my intention is to contribute to the enriching and still ongoing methodological discussions about the implications of doing online ethnographical research in everyday online spaces such as Facebook.

Keywords: *digital ethnography, gay activism, Facebook.*

Introduction

The objective of this article is to present how I have constructed my research project through online ethnographic observations in the context of the COVID pandemic. The main intention is to expose clearly and transparently the process of constructing a research project in a constant dialogue between the immersion in the online ethnographic field, and relevant

theoretical discussions. Such a narrative is highly relevant insofar as online research techniques have gained much importance among the social scientists after the breakout of the COVID pandemic. Yet, there is no methodological consensus concerning the practices of doing online ethnography, and the present article aims to filling this existing

* I would like to thank very warmly my professors Karine Tinat and Ana Paulina Gutiérrez Martínez who have accompanied me in this online ethnographic inquiry from its very beginning.

gap. In the following sections, I will expose in a synthetic and systematic way the different observations I did in the online spaces, and their apports to the formulation and complexification of my research topic. The ethnographic descriptions will be articulated with several theoretical references. Thus, the article aims to showing to beginning searchers that doing an ethnography online is not a straightforward process, as one might think when revising some research findings, presented as if there were no difficulties, doubts nor adjustments all along the way. Therefore, it provides some clues concerning the online sociological research and its challenges.

The first formulation of my research topic: the uses of Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook by gay men in Mexico City

At the beginning of my research project, I wanted to research into the everyday uses of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram by gay men in Mexico City. I wanted to explore the multiple transitions and links between online and offline spaces, characteristic of the uses of such networks. My main interest was to see what the insertion in these online spaces could offer to gay men in terms of living their sexual and gender identities. Thus, I wanted to research in, about and with digital spaces. For me, this choice was not a forced one, in the pandemic context. Indeed, I had this idea even before the pandemic. However, in the current situation, it acquired even more relevance.

I was particularly interested in exploring the constant transitions between the digital and physical worlds. These cannot be understood as virtual. On the contrary, I consider them as being inherently interdependent with physical spaces [2]. That is also what Hine [6] suggests with her conceptual proposal of digital landscapes, which complexifies the multiple interactions between the online and offline settings.

Given that I was not familiar with the uses of Twitter and Instagram, on the contrary of Facebook that I have used for more than nine years, I decided to do my first ethnographic observations in these two spaces. The goal of these observations was to know better the modalities of functioning of both networks, and to better apprehend the different ways of interacting with the users in these spaces.

These platforms were not distant from my everyday reality [4], because spending time online is a very current activity for me. Nevertheless, these networks that could appear as relatively close to me, turned out to be quite unknown and complex, since I have not used Twitter nor Instagram for several years. That is why I had to think critically about these online fields, close and far away at once from my everyday reality [5].

First aim: get to know and describe the functioning of Twitter and Instagram

The first thing for an ethnographer to do when he enters to a completely unknown field is to observe very carefully its features, how it functions, who lives and acts in the field, how the interactions can be described and explained. According to Guber [5], Malinowski pointed out that one of the biggest challenges for an ethnographer was the linguistic barrier. Even if my research has not required a geographical voyage, I did have to discover the basic principles of functioning of both networks, Twitter and Instagram. But what was the most appropriate manner for me to enter the two unfamiliar fields? I decided to create research profiles in both spaces, which had a double advantage. First, it granted me a certain presence in both networks, which would eventually allow me to get in touch with my subjects of study. Second, creating the profiles from scratch is an effective way of discovering how an online space works out, from the very first steps of the profile configuration.

In my first observations, I focused on the following elements: the necessary information to open an account, the steps to follow, the ways of publishing and interacting with the others, the main menu, and functions. I would like to stress that, all along the observations, I was writing down my more personal impressions. Considering this more subjective dimensions is crucial when doing ethnographic research, since an ethnographer has to recognize – without imposing them – his perceptions concerning the study field. In that sense, Instagram seemed to me as being much easier to use than Twitter, because it has less navigation options than Twitter and these are more intuitive. However, I also realized that it is very important to precise from which device one uses the networks. For practical reasons,

I was doing the observations from my laptop. However, we shall notice that both Twitter and Instagram are more frequently used on cellphones.

One of the crucial questions I had to address concerned the elements that shall be included in the research profile. The decision whether creating an *ad hoc* research profile or using an existing one has important ethical implications, not only for the research participants, but also for the searcher. This issue will be further discussed later. Given that I am not using neither of these networks, I decided to create *ad hoc* profiles. This creation implied addressing many more questions to figure out the best manner of “being there” [4]. The first consideration had to do with my username. I was thinking of putting my real name, but I finally decided to put *Investigador* (searcher), to be clear and explicit towards my research participants. I got inspired from Cook [3] who was very transparent concerning her position of searcher and the finality behind her communication with the participants. Personally, I considered it more convenient to interact with the participants through an *ad hoc* profile. I made this choice mostly for ethical and security reasons, but also to keep a distance between my private and academic life.

At first, I put no profile photo. However, I felt like I had to include some more personal elements to enhance a confidence of the research participants. Indeed, there was a little chance that someone would even get in touch with a completely empty profile, given that it is a commonplace that there are false accounts. To establish a relation of mutual trust, I included my true age, my place of residence – Mexico City – and the following description. “Sociologist, researching into the uses of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram by gay men in Mexico City. Do you want to help me? Just contact me”. Through such a presentation, I wanted to be completely transparent with the participants, but also to address my preoccupation for reducing the physical distance that was separating me from them [3].

After these initial observations, one thing remained unclear: what type of content is published in both networks by gay men from Mexico City? Finding this out was the aim of my second series of observations.

Second goal: describe and analyze the contents in Twitter and Instagram

The main goal of the second round of observations was not to reach an exhaustive description of everything that gay men were publishing in Twitter and Instagram. Indeed, my intention was rather to study the different networks in a comparative perspective, which supposed the necessity of knowing generally what the main features of each network and the types of content published by gay men were, to better apprehend the possible transitions between the different online spaces.

I began my research in Twitter, where I searched with the word “gay”, limiting my results to Mexico City. The first results were the following: gaytest, gayzoom, gayl, gay videos, gay boy. According to these results, it became clear to me that at least one part of the publications had an explicit sexual dimension. This was doubly relevant for my research. First, because before focusing on social networks, I wanted to research into dating apps, but I decided to change in order to get beyond the sexual dimension, without imposing, of course, my perceptions on the research findings. Indeed, I consider that social research is a constant oscillation between theory and the fieldwork [7].

Thus, the first findings in Twitter made me understand that I could not ignore the sexual uses of the networks by gay men in Mexico City. However, it rose also other, even more challenging question: How to get access to profiles of gay men who do not actually seek something sexual? One possibility was to revise the search options and try to search with new words or through different people and LGBT collectives. The second option was to part from my circle of friends and to get in touch with more people through the technique of snowball. I finally opted for the second alternative.

Concerning the forms of interactions, I found out that it was possible to send messages, retweet a publication, answer to a publication or give it a “like”. A tweet can contain texts, photos, videos, or gifs with practically no censure, including explicitly sexual content. A detailed presentation of the different profiles goes beyond the scope of this article. In short, we could say that observing just few Twitter profiles

enabled me to see that there is an incredible multiplicity of uses of the networks, the presentation of oneself and acting in these online spaces. In that sense, I fully agree with Hine [6] and her conceptualization of digital landscapes, which puts forward precisely the multiplicity of the online experiences and of the construction of meanings conferred to these. I drove the same conclusions from my first explorations of the Instagram profiles. In both cases, it was quite straightforward to find out sexually explicit content, and the main methodological challenge for me was to go beyond it.

Reformulation of my research topic: moving to Facebook

After my first online observations, I did an exploratory interview, and I could confirm that there was a multiplicity of the possible uses of a social network by every single user. The observations and the interview made me see that understanding the dynamics of a social network was far more complex than I initially thought. Indeed, before getting closer to my study field, I was focused on the features of every network and the influence it had on the behavior of the individuals. I completely ignored the capacity of agency each person to explore and appropriate herself of these spaces in many distinct ways. Once I realized that, it was clear that studying three networks at once was too challenging given the limited time available for this research.

Considering this constraint gave place to a long reflection about the network I was going to focus on. Moreover, I had to address other challenge. My research had to focus on a gender problematic. For all these reasons, I finally decided to research into how the uses of a social network could contribute to the sexual liberation, through the different forms of activism that the presence in an online space offers nowadays, and more in the current pandemic context.

The other important issue I had to resolve was to determine the network I would work with. Finally, I opted for Facebook. This choice has different justifications, linked with its adequacy to my research topic, but also with the uses of the different platforms by the research participants. Indeed, it is important not to choose an online space according to one's personal preferences, but rather according to rigorous research

relevance criteria. In that sense, digital ethnography corresponds to the premises of the traditional ethnographic method. We can say that Facebook is the most frequently used network in Mexico. Secondly, in Facebook, a searcher has much more access to information about the users: their photos, list of friends, previous publications, and commentaries. Third, in Facebook, there are groups, specific spaces dedicated to discussions and exchange of information about particular topics. In Twitter and Instagram, such equivalent groups do not exist. Indeed, in Twitter, the "groups" are in fact just group chats, invisible until someone invites you to participate.

However, when choosing the social network, everything was not determined only by my searcher point of view. Indeed, as Guber [5] points out, the multiplication and diversification of the possible ethnographic fields was accompanied by a huge transformation in the relations between the searchers and the research participants, in the sense of major equality and horizontality between both. Thus, my role as searcher was not to impose my perceptions to the participants, but rather to comprehend their actions to interpret them. Thus, the information that the participants shared with me was crucial for my selection. Indeed, they explained to me that they were using Facebook on a much more regular basis than Twitter and Instagram, and that it was much more linked to their everyday lives and routines. Moreover, they stated that in Facebook, it was more common and easier to establish a continuous interaction with the other users than in other online spaces.

For all these reasons, I focused on Facebook, when I created my research profile to contact my research participants.

My new approach to Facebook: a reflexive exercise

There was one more reason that motivated the selection of Facebook as my fieldwork. Indeed, in Facebook there is a much more important diversity of the people we have in our list of "friends". These can be our relatives, closer or more distant friends, colleagues from work or school, or even unknown people. This criterium was highly relevant for me, because I wanted to study precisely the different profiles of doing gay activism, beyond the publicly known

and recognized activists. My works aims at demonstrating that one can do activism online also through little actions that are not necessarily considered as activists.

In that sense, I had the impression that it was more interesting to study Facebook, rather than Twitter and Instagram, since in Facebook we often interact with close people who do not necessarily know about our sexual orientation. That is what one of the research participants explained to me in an exploratory interview. Indeed, he confessed to me that his family was very religious and that they never accepted the fact their son was gay. That is why when they found out, through a photo in his Facebook profile, they pressed him to leave the house. These severe repression of his sexuality from his very close familiars caused profound changes in his uses of Facebook and the ways of doing online gay activism. Indeed, he no longer has his familiars among his friends, and he does not publish intimate photos neither.

This sad example demonstrates well the relevance of choosing Facebook, with its great diversity of the people we interact with, and the impact it has on our ways of using this space.

However, the fact that I have been using Facebook for more than nine years obliged me to do a reflexive exercise, to identify my own biases, following the footprints of Bourdieu [1]. I have been using Facebook since 2010. When I opened my account, Facebook was a fashion thing, all my friends had it. I remember that when I started to use it, I add my friends from school, and I was spending my time chatting with them. The information I put in my profile was true, but I put only the strictly necessary details: my name and surname, my birth date (visible only for my friends), my profile photo. These were basically my uses of Facebook at the beginning of the 2010. Then, in the secondary school, I started to be interested in political and current issues, and I used Facebook also to follow different media of communication.

A clear rupture happened when I was 16 and I went to study to France. In that time, Facebook stopped to be a diversion to become the principal mean of communication with my family and friends. The same thing is true even nowadays, when I am studying in Mexico. In relation with my research topic, I must recognize that, sometimes, I used Facebook for my coming out. Not in a literal

sense, since I never had to hide my sexuality, but more in a sense of sharing some photos of my first participation in the Gay Pride March back in 2015 in Prague.

One could think that these publications have nothing to do with activism. Yet, for me as an individual user, they did have a strong signification. Indeed, when I was a teenager, one part of my family did not agree with me participating in LGBT public events. Thus, when I first participated, I took some photos of myself, and I posted them on my Facebook. I even chose one of them to be my profile picture, with people kissing themselves and many rainbow flags. For me, this was a good way to affirm clearly who I am, with determination. To say to everyone who I am and that I feel very proud of being this way.

This anecdote may be at the origin of my interest for this research topic. Facebook was for me a tool I used to send a message to people with whom I would not like to talk about these issues in person. This personal bias is crucial to recognize, insofar as it may very probably influence the perceptions I have about the different meanings of gay activism in online spaces. After recognizing my own position as an ethnographer interested in online gay activism, the next step consisted in creating my Facebook research profile.

The creation of my research profile in Facebook

In the same way as I did with Twitter and Instagram, I decided to describe thoroughly the functioning of Facebook, from the perspective of a new user. I will not dedicate more space in this paper to this technical description. Indeed, I will put an emphasis on the reflections and decisions that accompanied the creation and configuration of my profile in this platform.

In Facebook, I decided to create an *ad hoc* research profile, to have some separation from my private profile. However, I followed up with questioning the presentation of my profile to make it look the less cold and impersonal possible, so that the research participants could trust in my credibility. Thus, I attended once more the preoccupations of Guber [5] concerning the necessity of establishing more horizontal relations with our research participants, taking into account their perceptions and feelings.

When creating my profile, I put as my nickname "Jan Investigador". However, after

some reflections and discussions with my companions and professors, I started to think more critically about the unequal relations of power between me and the participants, and the negative consequences that the manner of naming myself could imply for my relationship with the participants. That is why I finally decided to put my real name and surname. In a Facebook profile, one can personalize many features. But there are in particular two elements that call most the attention of the users, because they are the first two elements that appear when consulting a profile: the profile picture and the username. I put a photo of my face, smiling. I chose this one to inspire trust and confidence to my research participants.

I would like to recall once more that I considered with much attention the uses of my personal or *ad hoc* profile for this research. I finally opted for an *ad hoc* profile, but it does not imply that I completely hide my identity so that my participants do not know anything about me. That is why I personalized it, beyond the profile picture and my username. Indeed, I put a photo of my university – El Colegio de México, and I also added a personalized description: Sociologist in formation, gender studies. Colmex. Researching into Facebook and LGBT activism.

The last important element to figure out was to fill in some details about myself. Even if this information is not mandatory, I decided to provide it to reduce the information asymmetry between myself and the participants. In short, we can say that for me, the decision of creating an *ad hoc* research profile did not imply a complete isolation from my research participants, and that the creation and the configuration of my profile was made hand in hand with the feelings and perceptions of those.

Conclusion: recruitment and communication with my research participants

To conclude my reflections, I would like to tell few words about the strategies of getting in touch with the research participants in an online setting. Before starting to add people, I created a publication in my profile, explaining the nature of my research. I also made sure that everyone could share the publication freely and easily. In this way, I have started to build up my network of contacts, with the

technique of the snowball. My network is now integrated for more than 120 people. Thus, Internet does not represent only a fieldwork, but also a tool that offers me a possibility of being present and of getting closer to the research participants [6].

Once the original publication was created, I started to add my friends who helped me with sharing the publication with their respective circles of friends. I was not sure about the efficiency of such a strategy, but we can say it was successful. Indeed, within less than 24 hours, 19 people sent me a friend request. I wrote them back and I have used the private chats to establish some more informal communication with them and to create relations of confidence and trust.

Finally, in this paper I have shown how my first approaches to my online fieldwork helped me to reformulate and complexify my research topic. First, I got closer to two networks that were not so familiar to me, Twitter and Instagram. Through these first ethnographic observations, I could demonstrate the great heterogeneity of the possible uses of such spaces and the construction of meaning by the users who dispose of a huge capacity of agency. I finally opted for focusing on Facebook. I am much more familiarized with this network, but it did not dispense me from addressing various methodological challenges concerning my visions of the significations associated with Facebook uses. To address them successfully, I did a reflexivity exercise, to situate myself clearly on this issue. Afterwards, I created my research profile, thinking critically about the ethical implications of this decision for my research. These first experiences enabled me to see much more clearly what the next steps of my ongoing master research would be: leading a constant dialogue between my hypotheses, the theoretical references and the fieldwork observations to see each time with more accuracy the complexity of my fieldwork, that cannot be separated from the physical settings. Thus, this article has shown the necessity of taking into account the reflexivity of both the searcher and the participants while doing online sociological research. It may offer prospects for further research, insofar as online ethnography is still a field of social science that needs to be consolidated.

Received by the editorial office 10.06.2021

References

1. Bourdieu, Pierre (2003) Capítulo 3: Por qué las ciencias sociales deben ser tomadas como objeto, in Bourdieu P., El oficio de científico Barcelona: Anagrama pp. 149-195 [in Spanish]
2. Braidotti, Rosi (2004) 'El ciberfeminismo con una diferencia', in Gedisa (ed.) Feminismo, diferencia sexual y subjetividad nómada, pp. 107-130 [in Spanish]
3. Cook, Christine (2012) 'Email interviewing: generating data with a vulnerable population', Journal of Advanced Nursing, 68: 1330-1339 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2011.05843.x>
4. Geertz, Clifford (1987) 'Descripción densa: hacia una teoría interpretativa de la cultura' y "Juego profundo: notas sobre la riña de gallos en Bali" in La interpretación de las culturas [in Spanish] Gedisa, México, pp. 19-40 y 339-372 .
5. Guber, Rosana. (2011) 'Introducción' y "1. Una breve historia del trabajo de campo etnográfico", in La etnografía. Método, campo y reflexividad. Buenos Aires Ed. Siglo Veintiuno, pp. 15-37 [in Spanish]
6. Hine, Christine (2004) Etnografía virtual. Barcelona: UOC, pp. 9-23 [in Spanish]
7. Sautu, Ruth (2004) 'Acerca de qué es y que no es investigación científica en ciencias sociales' in Wainerman, Catalina y Sautu Ruth (comp.) La trastienda de la investigación, Lumiere: Buenos Aires, pp. 53-79 [in Spanish].

Ян Кашник

бакалавр політичних наук, університет Парижа, магістрант в області гендерних досліджень, Мексиканський коледж, Carretera Picacho Ajusco 20, Col. Ampliación Fuentes del Pedregal, C.P. 14110 Tlalpan, Ciudad de México, e-mail: kasnikjan7@gmail.com ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7485-9318>

ОТ ПОВСЕДЕННОГО ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ TWITTER И INSTAGRAM К ГЕЙ-АКТИВИЗМУ В FACEBOOK: ВЫСТРАИВАЯ ТРАЕКТОРИЮ СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ОНЛАЙН-ЭТНОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ НАБЛЮДЕНИЯ

Исследования онлайн-пространств вызывают растущий интерес среди социологов. С началом пандемии COVID актуальность таких исследований еще более возрастает. Однако до сих пор не существует единого методологического подхода относительно проведения этнографических исследований в онлайн-пространствах, что было бы особенно ценным для начинающих исследователей. Цель данной статьи – представить некоторые фундаментальные идеи, которые следует учитывать при проведении исследований в области цифровой этнографии, которые основаны на конкретных примерах дипломной работы автора, посвященной исследованию гей-активизма в Facebook мужчин, живущих в г. Мехико. В статье формулируются некоторые рекомендации относительно проведения этнографических исследований в сети, касающиеся представлений/значений, присущих самим исследователям, и рефлексивности респондентов-участников исследования. Автор акцентирует внимание на значении онлайн-этнографических наблюдений для точной формулировки темы исследования; демонстрирует, как такие полевые исследования помогли ему переформулировать тему своей работы, чтобы сосредоточиться только на анализе Facebook; доказывает важность собственной рефлексивности ученого как значимого компонента любого социального исследования, который преимущественно остается неявным, создавая ошибочное впечатление, что рефлексивность самого исследователя не имеет большого значения. Автор подчеркивает, что рефлексивность как исследователей, так и участников опроса является инструментом для более глубокого понимания проблематики исследования и ее адекватной формулировки. В статье представляются некоторые решения, которые пришлось принять автору, чтобы персонализировать свой исследовательский профиль в Facebook, а также анализируется их влияние на рекрутинг участников исследования и общение с ними; определяется вклад автора в методологические дискуссии о значении и последствиях проведения этнографических онлайн-исследований в таких онлайн-пространствах, как Facebook.

Ключевые слова: *цифровая этнография, гей-активизм, Facebook.*

Ян Кашник

бакалавр політичних наук, університет Парижа, магістрант у галузі гендерних досліджень, Мексиканський коледж, Carretera Picacho Ajusco 20, Col. Ampliación Fuentes del Pedregal, C.P. 14110 Tlalpan, Ciudad de México, e-mail: kasnikjan7@gmail.com ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7485-9318>

ВІД ПОВСЯКДЕННОГО ВИКОРИСТАННЯ TWITTER ТА INSTAGRAM ДО ГЕЙ-АКТИВІЗМУ У FACEBOOK: ВИБУДОВУЮЧИ ТРАЄКТОРІЮ СОЦІОЛОГІЧНОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ОНЛАЙН-ЕТНОГРАФІЧНІ СПОСТЕРЕЖЕННЯ

Дослідження онлайн-просторів викликають зростаючий інтерес серед соціологів. З початком пандемії COVID актуальність таких досліджень ще більше зростає. Однак досі не

існує єдиного методологічного підходу щодо проведення етнографічних досліджень в онлайн-просторах, що було б особливо цінним для дослідників-початківців. Мета цієї статті – представити деякі фундаментальні ідеї, які слід враховувати при проведенні досліджень у галузі цифрової етнографії, які засновані на конкретних прикладах дипломної роботи автора, що присвячена дослідженню гей-активізму у Facebook чоловіків, які живуть у м. Мехіко. У статті формулюються деякі рекомендації щодо проведення етнографічних досліджень у мережі, що стосуються уявлень/значень, які притаманні самим дослідникам, та рефлексивності респондентів, які беруть участь у таких дослідженнях. Автор акцентує увагу на значенні онлайн-етнографічних спостережень для точного формулювання теми дослідження; демонструє, як такі дослідження допомогли йому переформулювати тему своєї роботи, щоб зосередитись лише на аналізі Facebook; доводить важливість власної рефлексивності науковця як значущого компонента будь-якого соціального дослідження, який переважно залишається неявним, створюючи помилкове враження, що рефлексивність самого дослідника не має великого значення. Натомість автор наголошує, що рефлексивність як дослідників, так і учасників опитування є інструментом для більш глибокого розуміння проблематики дослідження та її адекватного формулювання. У статті представляються деякі рішення, які довелося прийняти автору, щоб персоналізувати свій дослідницький профіль у Facebook, а також аналізується їхній вплив на рекрутинг учасників дослідження та спілкування з ними; визначається внесок автора у методологічні дискусії про значення і наслідки проведення етнографічних онлайн-досліджень у таких онлайн-просторах, таких як Facebook.

Ключові слова: *цифрова етнографія, гей-активізм, Facebook.*