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systems of inequality, Dallos argues instead that ‘an understanding of quality in small-scale societies as resulting from categorical age differences between men allows for a new parsimonious model of social evolution’. By identifying categorical age as a key component, Dallos develops a common framework for both simple and complex societies, relating this to theories of human evolution. Dallos concludes by calling for further investigation of the evolution of categorical age to advance our understanding of its relationship to cognitive-behavioural and accompanying organisational changes.

In short, Dallos presents a well-written, highly accessible and carefully crafted view of the Lanoh community in contemporary Malaysia. In studying how and why egalitarianism gives way to the development of social differentiation in hunter-gatherer trading societies, this valuable contribution to Orang Asli scholarship should also be of interest to a wider audience.

JULIET BEDFORD

ROBERT KOZINETS, *Netnography: doing ethnographic research online*, London: Sage 2010.

Kozinets’ *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online* is a strong introductory text for those seeking to conduct Internet-based social research. It provides the reader with recommended steps to follow in formulating their own ‘netnographies’ (p. 4) from conception and design to implementation, making it a handy how-to-do guide geared towards students and practitioners who are mostly new to web-based ethnographic inquiry. Sections on research planning, methods and ethics serve to further ongoing debates among media ethnographers.

Addressing a lack of methodological consistency in online research across the social sciences and consumer/marketing fields, the aim of the text is to fill this gap by providing ‘procedural guidelines’ or the necessary steps for researchers to conduct ‘an ethnography of online community or culture and to present their work’ (p. 5). The book therefore offers the term ‘netnography’, defined succinctly as conducting ethnography over the Internet, in the hopes of standardizing this popular and increasingly indispensable form of ethnography focusing on online communities, activities and pursuits.

Netnography, a term coined from within marketing and consumer research (p. 2), is not often heard amongst anthropologists. Upon reading the title of the book, I instinctively questioned the addition of yet another moniker for data collection techniques that already have a plethora of labels. To counter readers’ anticipated doubts about its utility, the author

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argues that the term is not superfluous, but necessary for the codification of clear and deliberate standards and ethical guidelines, whereas the terms ‘webnography’, ‘network ethnography’ or ‘digital ethnography’ lack common standards and the ‘stability, consistency, and legitimacy’ that such standards would confer (p. 6).

While this post-facto reasoning is not thoroughly convincing, Kozinets is largely successful in breaking down some preconceived disciplinary boundaries by presenting a balanced approach to online ethnography healthily sourced from both anthropological and consumer research backgrounds. Any opportunity for interdisciplinary knowledge-transfer such as this should be welcomed by all. As both a social anthropologist and a proponent of user-centered ethnography in design and the ICT industry, I read the volume seeking applicable interpretations of web-based research that would suit both social scientists (who study ‘people’ or ‘culture’) and information technology professionals (who study ‘users’ and ‘interactions’).

The introduction of the terms ‘culture’ and ‘community’ (pp. 6-7) early on in the book secure the anthropologist’s attention. A strong literature review in Chapter 2 covers how ethnographers have come to reject the notion of computer-mediated communication as impoverished and sets the basis for justifying the ethnographic approach pursued throughout the book. The anthropologists’ attention is sustained by the characterization of the Internet and online communities as *places* of ‘belonging, information, and emotional support’ that are present in many people’s lives (p. 15). The premise that ‘online communities are not virtual’ (p. 15) is a promising one, furthered by Kozinets’ stance against technological determinism. He eloquently describes the nuanced ‘complex dance’ between technology and culture and shows how understanding the cultural context behind technology or online activities in general requires in-depth ethnography (p. 22).

Internet research necessitates a complex and flexible methodological toolkit. Simplifying and standardizing this represents an impressive undertaking for a single volume. Structurally, the book is well-organized. Helpful context boxes filled with additional notes and further reading, as well as summaries at the beginning and end of each chapter, guide the reader-as-student. In Chapters 3 and 4 (dedicated to methods), netnography is described as both qualitative and quantitative, depending on what the researcher is hoping to learn (p. 42), and a structural overview and flow chart of the process of netnography is provided (p. 61). The next few chapters instruct the reader on how to decide on a research focus or questions to be answered (p. 84), and how to enter the online ‘field’ (choosing a website or discussion forum, for instance) practically and responsibly by finding and interacting with participants (pp. 80-94).

These sections are comprehensive, but perhaps too much time is dedicated to establishing the legitimacy of the netnographic method vis-à-vis traditional ethnography (p.

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60). This does not do justice to the author's meticulous efforts throughout the book to offer a strong framework built on solid methods that are already becoming indispensable to qualitative social research. Similarly, when delving deeper into the facets of the netnographic approach, some confusion may arise for the anthropological reader. 'Netnography' seemingly derives from 'ethnography', yet it is presented as having been designed as a separate, more convenient alternative. A comparison between the two labels (ethnography and netnography, pp. 55-56) focuses on the 'ease' and 'cost' of the methods, with ethnography being typified as more expensive and netnography positioned as cheaper and faster. For market researchers this may be the prime concern, but such a distinction is likely to fall short for anthropologists.

Furthermore, the two are certainly not exclusive, and the concerns of one type of data collection will extend to the other. When seeking cultural insights, web-based ethnography rarely stands alone (just one reason why it is not necessarily cheaper/easier). Speaking from my own fieldwork experience, for instance, my investigations into blogs, forums, Facebook and photo-sharing websites ('online content') in Spain were conducted only partially 'over the Internet'. Arriving at the context behind the interactions that I observed *online* required a lengthy *offline* ethnographic endeavour (and, as it turned out, the reverse was also true). In the end, the web-based *and* street-based interactions I witnessed equally shaped the direction and results of the research.

Drawing from this personal experience, I find the greatest contribution of the volume to be in Kozinets' model for blending (online) netnography with (offline) ethnography. 'Blended netnography' (p. 65) involves mixing online data collection via blogs, forums, etc., with offline interviews and physical interactions. It most accurately resembles the kind of work that anthropologists of new media – or more 'traditional' anthropologists prompted to venture on to the web – might be inclined to pursue. While the entire netnographic approach will appeal to Internet specialists, this 'blending' aspect may attract a wider audience of anthropologists who are already familiar with, and engaging in, traditional ethnography.

Kozinets clarifies that the extent to which the two can be combined will depend on the subject or subjects under investigation (p. 63). For example, the author makes a useful distinction between studying 'online communities' and 'communities online' (p. 64), each of which requires a distinct approach to belonging, place, geography, physicality and/or virtuality. He also draws on the results of other CMC research (pp. 66-67) suggesting that, as online communities grow in importance and are woven into most people's daily interactions, the 'value of "blended" netnographic accounts is only going to magnify' (p. 67). I would also add to this that netnographic methods will increasingly be of value even in fieldwork, where the web and online culture or subcultures are not the primary focus of investigation.

As far as putting netnography to practice is concerned, Chapter 6 ('Data collection') is easy to follow and comprehensive, differentiating between 'archive data' (the pages of text

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we encounter online and can openly read, record, scan, download or data-mine without any form of interpersonal interaction) and how to produce actual field notes through interviews and participant-observation online (pp. 94-117). The author not only describes, but also evaluates the usefulness of each suggested research strategy that he offers, including when it should or should not be used depending on the project at hand. Readers producing their own netnographies can follow up on relevant scholarly journals (pp. 82-83), survey design tools (p. 43) and qualitative software packages for data analysis (pp. 128-129) noted throughout the text. This will be immeasurably helpful to both undergraduate and graduate students who are new to research design.

What media anthropologists know, but what may be news to others who have yet to approach the web as a field site, is that website communities are socially, hierarchically and culturally rich forms of interaction that develop through people's actions and relationships (pp. 32-4). Netnography therefore consists not just of keyword analysis, coding data and studying 'text', but learning about people's interactions through technology (p. 113). The author draws attention to this fact to dissuade those who think that merely reading or 'lurking' on websites confers the status of ethnographer. The distinction is all the more important in 2011 as fashionable social media gurus of the IT industry proceed to matter-of-factly append 'digital anthropologist' to their grandiose lists of marketable titles. If held to the standards put forward in this book, such loosely proffered credentials would actually be meaningful.

A final significant contribution within this volume is to ethics and the pragmatics of being a netnographer. Kozinets' call for respect, patience and researcher accountability is matched by personal, anecdotal examples that establish a good ethical tone throughout the text. Illustrative case studies of first-hand fieldwork experiences present readable and engaging vignettes to the student reader that reveal in clear terms how key ethnographic moments (such as entering the field for the first time or making first contact with participants) have analogous forms in netnography, including the intricate process of becoming a community member by respectfully building relationships slowly over time. The author's candid reflections (such as his own failed entrée on pp. 76-77) advise the reader on how – and how not – to observe online communities.

Online ethnography is anything but simple. A single research question can evolve quickly, and the ethnographer is forced to jump between Facebook, Twitter, chatrooms, blogs, etc. (p. 87). The public nature of most information on the web also adds complexity in finding and choosing which online communities, persons, voices or opinions to seek out (pp. 88-90). As with any other anthropological fieldwork, researchers must use their intuition when encountering people and their lives online. This includes heightened awareness of the cultural sensitivities of online populations, such as the rules and regulations guiding behaviour that can change from website to website.

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Chapter 8 ('Conducting ethical netnography') warns researchers to tread carefully to avoid potential harm to online subjects, whose statements, for instance, can be difficult to anonymize when they are so easily indexed by search engines. Chapter 9 presents a cogent analysis of ethnography to date followed by a list of ten criteria that should be applied to netnographic research (pp. 163-173). These evaluative standards – better viewed as guidelines – include 'verisimilitude', 'groundedness' and 'reflexivity', and directly address the stated aim of the book; that is, to instil quality control into online social research.

I believe that this type of research will definitely become more commonplace within the social sciences as the Internet, computers and mobile devices continue to make their way into the everyday existence of peoples around the world. We may soon arrive at the stage where ethnography over the Internet is simply recognized as 'ethnography', rather than relegated to a specialist niche. Until then, *Netnography* constitutes a thoughtful, helpful and long-awaited first step towards the noble goal of standardizing web-based ethnography. By the end of the book, readers who might have previously under-estimated the complexities of online ethnography will be sold on the notion that better guidelines for ethical online research can only benefit both ICT professionals and social scientists alike. Of course, a single label would help establish methodological consistency or transferability, allowing discussion between the sciences. Whether or not netnography is that word does not detract from this book's many contributions. It will undoubtedly assist those engaging in online research to do so creatively, effectively and ethically.

FRANCINE BARONE

DANIEL MILLER, *Tales from Facebook*, Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press 2011, xx, 218 pp. £14.99 in paperback.

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has grown at a phenomenal rate. It now has 750 million users and in 2010 overtook Google to become the most visited website in the United States (Dougherty 2010). The key question arising from this growth is what impact Facebook has on our social lives. In this book Daniel Miller aims to explore Facebook from an anthropological perspective, examining how the lives of ordinary people in Trinidad have been changed by using the website. The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, Miller explores the impact of Facebook on people's social relationships through twelve detailed case studies, whilst in Part II he broadens his view and attempts to construct nothing less than a 'theory of Facebook' (p. 205). The book is aimed at both academic and non-academic readerships, with Part I written