Hybrid Ethnography:
Access, Positioning, and Data Assembly

Abstract

Our lives have transformed into a blended world of digital and physical realms. While scholars have addressed the differences between online and offline ethnography, less research has investigated how online and offline ethnographies combine in a hybrid model. Drawing upon Small's typology of mixed methods, I propose three hybrid models combining the two: concurrent design, sequential design, and nested design. I then demonstrate how a sequential design was initiated through my one-year ethnographic study, moving from the field as separated sites to multiple connected sites, from position as given to position as chosen, and through online and offline data triangulation to validate the researcher's interpretations and explanations. I conclude that a sequentially hybrid ethnography can provide a flexible transition to navigate the post-pandemic era.

Keyword: hybrid ethnography, sequential design, online and offline fieldwork

Introduction

Our lives have transformed into a hybrid world of digital and physical realms. Ethnographers could no longer sidestep digital worlds when field accesses are mediated by technological interfaces and face-to-face gatherings are largely limited(Murthy 2008b). The inclusion of online world is especially urgent when cell phones, email accounts, social network sites, and text messages have become the primary dimension in our lives(Garcia et al. 2009; Kavanaugh and Maratea 2020). This is especially true for younger generations, who use technology and act as digital inhabitors since they were born. Although many studies explore online or offline ethnography separately, few discuss how the two intertwine. In this paper, I address the following questions to fill this methodological gap. First, how online and offline ethnography changes our understanding of what the field is, how to access the field, and how to position ourselves as ethnographers. Second, what are hybrid models out there in prior studies, and how do researchers decide which model to adopt when facing uncertainty? I illustrate these questions through my online and offline fieldwork in high school and demonstrate that a hybrid model can serve as flexible transitions in post-pandemic.

Ethnography, a methodological caveat that relies on researchers' complete immersion in the field(Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), has become a primary method employed by many qualitative scholars. Although research sites vary from home visits(Lareau 2011), sidewalk and neighborhoods(Goffman 2014), school settings (Khan 2011), and organizations(White, 1998), they share similar epistemologies and methodologies. In classical ethnographic work, scholars gain access at the beginning of the research, visit field sites, write and analyze field notes, and reflect their position-taking at the end of the process. These ethnographic toolkits can be divided into several discussion themes, such as participant observation(Akdeniz 2019), positioning (Reyes 2018), shadowing(Trouille and Tavory 2016), and thick description. However, the digital realm provides new perspectives on these old practices, pushing ethnographers forward. Questions arise such as how researchers position themselves when accessing the field relies on digital platforms; whether insider/outsider divide still apply; how data vary when print screen replaces field notes; and how participant observations differ when researchers can present in various virtual sites at the same time. Only by looking at online and offline ethnography can we better illustrate commonalities and differences between both.

Conducting online and offline research in a hybrid approach can provide insights into how ethnographies can be done and what strategies can be employed in modern society. As more and more researchers conduct both types of research, their work reveals different mixed models that have been regularly conducted but not specifically named. In this paper, I would like to borrow Small (2011)'s typology of mixed-method to name these hybrid ethnographic approaches: concurrent design, sequential design, and nested design. Concurrent design refers to doing online and offline work simultaneously. Sequential design refers to conducting the online or offline work first and then transit into another or adding components sequentially. Nested design refers to how multiple data are collected from the same actor, which is often employed by organizational and institutional ethnography.

Drawing upon my one-year fieldwork in Woodstone High, I will demonstrate how to initiate sequential design through three transitions. I describe how the role of interfaces intertwine the physical and digital world, reconceptualizing our notion of field. Second, I focus on the researcher's position-taking strategies online and offline and address the shift from fixed positioning to dynamic positioning strategies. Third, I compare my field notes to show how online and offline data speak to each other and what research ethics issues emerged from the two sites. I conclude that a sequential design enables researchers to designate flexible transitions and is beneficial for longitudinal, follow-up studies.

What We Have Known and Not Yet to Know

From Offline to Online Ethnography

Statistics released by the National Science Council reveal how researchers are affected by the pandemic from 2019 to 2020. 87 percent of researchers have reported disruptions and barriers caused by the pandemic, regardless of their career stages.[1] Scholars mentioned obstacles such as lockdown sites, lack of access to restricted data, limited opportunities for pilot studies, and the lack of control over future research projects (Levine 2021) that interrupt anticipated plans. But researchers also reflected taken-for-granted assumptions on how ethnography can be done after facing uncertainty. While many scholars turn to online technology for alternative options, not all scholars have consented the commonalities and differences between online and offline ethnography.

As researchers use new technologies to engage with research environments, they started questioning undisputable presumptions. Instead of simply transferring ethnographic methods online, tackling the virtual entails much more(Gyor 2017). For example, when analyzing how racial identity is formed, Ferguson (2017) uses online ethnography and challenges the insider/outsider divide as researchers can switch between different virtual sites and self-represent themselves in various ways. In a review article, Garcia et al. (2009) asked where ethnographers should put in their feet when people interact online in chatrooms but remain disconnected in offline settings. It is hard to say whether the conventional wisdom between participant observation and observant participation still guides researchers' practices. What is more is when the data collection no longer entails hand-written field notes but turns to screenshots, digital footprints, and account settings, how do researchers sustain confidentiality throughout the process(Pascoe 2012)? With the advent of digital interfaces, researchers ask more and more questions when old answers no longer apply and new questions can no longer be fully answered.

Even within digital ethnography literature, researchers made conflicting claims. First, while many scholars claim that online observations cannot clearly distinguish 'what people said' from 'what people do'(Jerolmack and Khan 2014), recent studies find that digital platforms make the invisible visible and reveal people's social networks and compound relations (Alinejad 2018; Murthy 2008a). Second, although some scholars lurk behind digital interfaces(Ferguson 2017), others researchers are more self-exposed in online settings (Bluteau, 2019). Third, even though scholars found that online

[1] Cited from "Report from the Field after Covid-19," released by Spencer Foundation.

ethnography can hurt participants because everything is so transparent, others reported that online interfaces empower participants because access to the field is handled by individuals. It is interesting that scholars made these arguments by referring to an implicit comparison between digital and typical ethnography, yet they never address what typical means.

While few scholars retain the view that online and offline ethnography are distinctly dichotomous, it is unclear to what extent the online world can be translated into offline settings and vice versa. Without combining both, it is hard to examine these claims and to make some judgment calls about when to use which approach, and when to combine both. Although some scholars would say that it depends on the types of questions being asked, different approaches to the same question can direct to different answers. In the following section, I will address how hybrid models are operationalized and methodological implications of these practices.

Hybrid Ethnography: Combining Online and Offline Fieldwork

The existence of a concurrent digital landscape to the offline settings has been irrefutable and increasingly, these two landscapes have touched, overlapped, and blended into one another (Bluteau, 2019). As more and more researchers combine offline and online fieldwork in their research designs, scholars use hybrid mode to explore various topics, from how academics and laypeople create online and offline distinctions, when their worlds are intertwined in virtual places but not in the physical worlds(Dong 2016) to how digital medias can be platforms for combating racial discrimination(Bonilla and Rosa 2015). Recognizing the hybrid world, researchers have observed the extent to which their online behaviors translate into offline actions or offline networks influence online representations.

Researchers, however, have not yet named these methodological practices. In an article regarding mixed methods, Small (2011) has developed three typologies to describe how scholars have mixed different approaches: concurrent design, sequential design, and nested design. Concurrent design refers to mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches simultaneously. Sequential design refers to collecting data in a sequential order. Researchers transit to another when one type of data does not fully answer the research question. Nested design is how multiple data are collected from the same actor and are often employed in the life course and organizational studies. While this article tackles the quantitative and qualitative debate, it provides insights into other mixed approaches that may emerge in modern society.

Researchers often employ a concurrent design when conducting multi-sited studies. Beneito-Montagut, Begueria and Cassian (2017) review a burgeoning of digital studies and found that researchers conduct ethnographies in multi-sites around the world to explore how globalization affect individuals' usage of social media. These studies aim to test some theoretical presumptions while selecting cases. Ethnographers are sent to different sites to provide a counter or supporting evidence and collaborate as a team. In the concurrent design, online and offline fieldwork is conducted at the same time by

different scholars, using standardized protocols and observation guidelines to describe variations between sites. This hybrid model is designated to examine influences and processes in terms of overall trends.

In contrast, scholars adopt a nested design to understand the consistency and inconsistency between people's online behaviors and offline actions. Compared to the concurrent model which is less conducted due to resources, collaboration, and teamwork, many qualitative scholars adopt a nested approach to enrich their analyses. The burgeoning of research has studied how accounts shape behaviors and vice versa(Winchester 2019). Some studies have focused on specific groups' online and offline behaviors. For example, Beneito-Montagut(2011) examines how older adults use media to maintain social relationships with others and deal with social isolation. Using nested design to collect digital and offline data, they show a sharking contrast between two worlds and how interfaces are used to balance the two. Not only about older generations, many studies focus on younger generations and their online selves(cite). The online field has extended the frontstage of the research population and blurred the boundary between the frontstage and the backstage of participants' worlds and generate new answers to the old questions.

Among explorative studies that combining the two, a sequential design is less studied. Although there are many researchers who claim they included the online world as a field site, most of these sequential designs are the results of the global pandemic. Oftentimes, researchers transit from physical to virtual world due to uncertainties caused by Covid-19, respondents' generous invitations to the online world, and limitations of offline data. Take Dong (2016)'s research for example, she aimed to address the geographic mobility of Chinese elites and started with offline research to interviews how elites use daily consumptions to draw a line between themselves with the ordinary. Yet, she found that online elements had been an integral part of the group because these elite migrants communicate in hobbyist platforms. This transition enables researchers to have different interpretations and explanations. A sequential design highlights mechanisms, processes, and events occurring in different social spaces at different points in time. It often specifies that in certain moments, without another layer of the virtual or physical world will result in incomplete answers to the process.

Questions drive methods. But new methods enable new questions to emerge and may direct researchers to different answers. Perhaps new answers will be similar to the old answers from non-hybrid models. Perhaps combining the two may find something surprising. The hybrid models that many researchers started exploring deserve further attention to rethinking what ethnography is, and how it can be done. It also enables researchers to view the classical work via new lens. Likewise, what if Willis (1981) conducts his research in a modern society where most teens are on Instagram to form their subculture. If that is the case, would peer culture developed by lads still the main driving factor that resulted in their immobility, when group boundaries are fluid in the digital era? In other words, what if Goffman's book is written in modern days, would frontstage and backstage divide still apply in daily interactions? Only by talking about hybrid models can we reflect our previous assumptions about ethnography, and the old

answers driven by ethnographic research.

Hybrid Ethnography: A Sequential Model

My dissertation research reveals how teens envision their futures, assess opportunities available to them, and negotiate with directions proposed by parents, teachers, and peers at each unsettled moment. Situating this puzzle in the context of Woodstone High, an information avenue between universities and high schoolers, I observe multiple actors' information flows to teens and compare how middle-class and working-class teens contextualize information surround them. Rather than using the inductive approach to counter existing explanations of the chosen theory(Burawoy 1988), I take a more deductive approach, theorizing from the data(Jerolmack & Khan, 2018). However, the pandemic forced me to be more inductive due to several changes. First, given that the Taiwanese government would immediately close each school if two students tested positive, I may lose access to my site farther down the road. Second, the school postponed the spring semester to control the spread of the pandemic, but my research places great emphasis on the effect of a single event and collective conjunctures on students from different class backgrounds. Therefore, I research for alternative options to complete my study, turning a study into a hybrid, sequential ethnography combining the online and offline fieldwork.

While researchers have transited from offline to online settings, few have addressed the judgement calls that researchers have considered, from whether to incorporate another site, which sites to incorporate, and how to reallocate your sparse time as more sites are included. Looking back, there are three criteria while making these decisions. First, if your research is seriously interrupted due to uncertainty and your proposed design is no longer applicable to new situations, then you should change the design in adaption to new environments. In my case, unlike other researchers who have not yet begun their research, I have spent four months doing fieldwork and cannot stop, waiting for things back to normal. Second, what virtual sites were included and why? I consider which virtual environments best reflected the physical environments in order to carefully select the sites to be included. I also mapped out whether the offline activities can be replaced by online activities. I replaced classroom observations with google classrooms, teacher-student communications on campus with Line apps and group chats, and peer interactions on and off campus with Instagram platforms. The virtual sites mirrored the physical sites, allowing me to flexibly move between digital and physical worlds.

A final criterion was when the researcher decided to transit from using physical sites as primary while others as secondary sites. This includes judgments about whether researchers have reached theoretical saturation, and whether there are unresolved matters. I have combined the two sequentially—staying with the physical setting, replacing it with online platforms, and retreating primarily to the physical setting at the end of the process. However, I left the school immediately after all my follow-up cases graduated. But I still stay on Instagram to maintain my relationships with them and prepare for future follow-ups.

Table1: Field Sites in Physical, Virtual, and Blended Worlds

Field Sites	Events	Interfaces	Participants
Physical Sites			
Classrooms	Classroom activities, career-exploring courses, courses introducing application rules.	Face-to-face	Teachers, students, parents
Counseling Office	Individual counseling, workshop on how to write application materials, choosing your college workshops…	Face-to-face	Teachers, students, alumni, college recruiters
Public Activities on Campus	Wishing me luck ceremonies; graduation ceremonies	Face-to-face	Teachers & Students
Digital Sites			
Google Meet	Online workshops and courses	Virtual	Teachers, Students, and Parents
Instagram	Individual sharing significant moments of their life snapshots, peer interactions, networks and ties	Virtual	Students
Line Chatroom (For each class)	Communications between individuals and indirect communications/announcements between teachers and students	Virtual	Students
Overlapping Sites			
Google Meet & Classrooms	Both	Both	Teachers & Students
Line chatrooms & Classrooms	Both	Both	Teachers & Students
Instagram showing offline events	Both	Both	Students

Mapping the Hybrid Terrain and Re-conceptualizing Field

The shift to multi-site environments in both the virtual and physical world has changed ethnographers' conceptions of the field. While access to the field no longer requires physical presence, in the hybrid world there is little emphasis on space as researchers can co-present in many virtual settings (Beaulieu 2010). In the first phase of my ethnography mainly relying on participant observations at the school, I conducted observations in the classrooms, workshops, activities to observe how teachers give guidance on career and educational choices. Many times, I was the only adult who was allowed to be in the room except the leading teacher. Turning into virtual sites, peer relationships in the classroom turned visible on Instagram. Students connect with each other via Instagram nametags and express their opinions about teachers, schools, and peers. Students created these sites for school clubs, events and ceremonies and loosely connected them through hyperlinks.

> Networks were so "visible" on Instagram. It took me 15 minutes to find all the participants' Instagram accounts and followed public-facing ones. Most of the students knew each other, even though they had probably never interacted at the school. Students constantly "watching" each other on Instagram.[2]

The user interfaces not only mediate social interactions between participants and researchers, but highlight certain types of social interactions that allow researchers to observe how social networks encourage some future options over others. These interfaces highlight certain actions when people interact with each other through screens(Ritter 2021). In my case, the group identity of teens are reinforced on Instagram, highlighting the number of followers, people who like your posts, and whether your friends have cared about you and looked at your 24-hour storyline. Line app highlights information processes, the content of information, and the timing when a particular message is given in daily observations. The platform not only visualizes when and who transmit information but also enables information exchanges in a timely manner. These transitions have shifted our conceptualization of the field. The notion of field is no longer a single, physical place or multiple places, but a more or less mixed, intertwined, and interrelated virtual and physical field (cite). Sometimes a physical field will have its direct platform in a virtual interface. Sometimes a single physical field may have several virtual platforms, representing its different dimensions. The physical site is relatively fixed in time, but the virtual site can disappear soon if no users on it.

During the course of my research, I immersed myself in both virtual and physical fields at different points in time, capturing significant moments in adolescents' college navigation. The digital world allowed me to be "co-present" on Instagram for their significant moments, although in reality I might have chosen another event to observe offline. Several times I had to decide between conflicting events that occurred at the same time for different follow-up cases. I kept a digital notebook of the times and subjects I chose to follow up, and made digital observations of other cases that could not be followed up immediately. I made criteria for these decisions based on whether the event was critical

[2] Cited from field notes written on 2021/02/10.

to each case or whether a less urgent event occurred in the course of their lives. For example, a student's reaction to receiving an acceptance letter may not be as urgent as a campus visit, which could dramatically change the admissions outcome. In addition, the informal office hours between faculty and students around college lists may be more important than the moments after students send out their college preference lists.

In the morning, I conducted traditional fieldwork at the school, following a particular peer group in the classroom, talking to interviewees in the counselor's office, and touring the activities happening in the library, classrooms, and academic buildings. In the evenings, I conducted digital observations of public-facing Instagram accounts, watching how teens presented their school life and how others responded. This hybrid model allows me to follow each teen in a short period of time, even if some events conflict with other events. At the same time, because of Taiwan's relatively strict epidemic control, I even had the opportunity to observe students in a physical space, interacting in a virtual world, while at the other end of the spectrum, teachers live-streamed videos from their own offices and tested several times about their appearing on screens. This not only enriched my imagination of the field, but also changed the way in which fieldworkers think about self-positioning, access to the field, and data collection.

From Position as Given to Position as Chosen

Negotiating Accesses to Multiple Spaces

The access to physical spaces relies on social networks, but interfaces mediate access to digital platforms. At the beginning of my research, to study how teens deal with critical conjunctures, I gained permission from school authorities and used the school to open up communications with teens. These authoritative figures granted access to the physical places, from classrooms, counseling offices, workshops, and informal chats on campus. My alumni status and network of parents assisted me in gaining access. My parents, two retired secondary school teachers seek help from one of their old friends, a former principal of Woodstone High. Using the former school principal as a one-time ticket, the school gave permission and assigned me a desk in the counselor’s office. As an alumnus who graduated from one of the most prestigious universities in Taiwan, my former teacher introduced me to other English, Chinese literature, natural science, and physical education teachers. They allowed me to enter into their classrooms and informal activities happening at the school.

Access on Instagram, however, is complex and contingent. The user interface creates a multiple-access digital space. Depending on how close your relationships with teens, scholars negotiate these accesses on Instagram, from whether to view a respondent's story line, whether to text a respondent, whether a teen classifies you as a stranger, a friend, or a close friend, and whether to be added to a group line chat room. Unlike other researchers who have found that online access is easier to maintain(Ferguson 2017), I found the opposite. My online presence is more intimidating than in the classroom because students drew a clear line between ‘their spaces’ from ‘teachers’ spaces.’ For

public-facing accounts, teens are more social and tend to open up their daily lives to strangers, yet for private-facing accounts, researchers have to establish trusts to enter into these digital spaces. Researchers, however, may find it is hard to know exactly which access they have gained because Instagram makes the information implicit in order not to hurt existing relationships. As physical access is more institutionalized and dominated by adults, online access is more contingent, uncertain, and unpredictably relying on teens.

But researchers gain a complete picture after conducting digital observations. I can see how collective events have affected each individual, and whether students from different social backgrounds have their own paces of navigating admissions. Sometimes, online access opens up opportunities for observing offline events. After my former high school teacher added me into a classroom group chat, I saw Lisa, one of my interviewees, requested a medical leave of absence in the class chatroom. I immediately texted Lisa and asked where she was and joined her and Emily to prepare their application materials. While sitting on the couch in Emily's living room, I saw how Emily and Lisa helped each other prepare application materials. Sometimes, things go on the other way. In Maria's case, she asked if I could help her book a hotel for skill tests, but I did not respond immediately when I saw the text. Maria soon recognized it and withdraw her request. I time to rebuild trust to enable my follow-ups.

It is through negotiating access to hybrid, overlapping spaces I realized that students from different class backgrounds perceive online spaces differently. Working-class teens reveal their close friendships online and sustain their inner cycles by using these digital tools. However, middle-class teens are more tolerant to allow a 'familiar stranger' to connect with them, perceiving relationships as resource. While sustaining access to offline settings require minimum self-exposure, I found online access relies heavily on self-representation.

Acting Out or Covering Up Class Privilege

Online ethnographers can gain access to field settings and recruit potential research subjects by displaying cultural competence of the norms of the group they are studying (Walstrom 2004a and 2004b). However, as a researcher who has followed two groups—middle-class and working-class teens—online and offline, researchers incorporate more complicated position-taking strategies. While in an offline, single field site, researchers deal with demographic characteristics and negotiate how people perceive their race, gender, and class(Reyes 2018), in online spaces, class becomes prevalent and visible as respondents also observe researchers' self-representation, networks, and who replies to their posts.

In the first phase of my dissertation research, I used my alumnus status to build trust with students, showing the commonalities with which we share. But my position as a graduate student from a prestigious, public school in the US, an alumnus graduating from the school they aspired for, and my English fluency all reveal the class position. These titles create tensions when I interact with middle-class and working-class teens. Middle-class students eagerly get in touch with me because they saw me as their future goals and

resources, whereas working-class teens distance themselves from me because I represent the world that they feel they will never belong. The tension constantly arises while maintaining relationships with them. If I act out my privilege, I distance myself from another half of the respondents.

In school settings and informal gatherings with teens, I made a few mistakes. I accompanied student athletes to the national skill exam. When we looked around to see which stores to drop by, I tried to explain some brands which were unfamiliar to them. But this action immediately created a distance between us because most of them want to shop in places where things are affordable. Another day when, Bin, a working-class boy, wanted to thank me for accompanying him to campus visit, we went to an Italian restaurant, Corridor, to celebrate his admission success. While the price was affordable for 10 per meal, Bin did not love the restaurant and whispered, "This is not my thing. I'd rather drinking and greeting with those workers, grabbing beers, and easily walk through the kitchens, making louder noises rather than having someone serves me."[3]

The lesson Bin taught me reminded me of my class habitus. I don't like eating food only for eating. I like a clean, nice place where customers seat and talk. But things I taken for granted reveal my class habitus—middle-class enjoyed the services, tend to have meals in a way that serving plates time by time, and eat the meal separately instead of getting food at once. Bin did not like being served by waitresses, but I thought this is an essential character of a good restaurant. In real settings, it is hard to cover up my class habitus even though I think about doing so. I learned to be more cautious when judging things in front of them, but I learned it through mistakes and their gentle reminders. I tried to cover up my class privilege, but they still "smell" the difference between us. Instead, being along with middle-class teens, I act out my privilege to gain respects. For example, a middle-class girl, Jenny, agreed to be interviewed after noticing I have knowledge about how to apply for universities abroad. She came late and spoke very little about herself, but asked a lot of questions at the end of the interviews. I have to sort of acting my authority or showing my privilege to get the interview done, and then sharing my experiences with Jenny after.

The online platform provides user-interfaces for researchers to have more time before positioning themselves. Researchers may ask themselves while doing online ethnography, do I reply to teens' posts? Do I press likes under their posts? If someone tag me, do I reply when others can see it on Instagram? I choose to position myself based on my relationships with each interviewee. For those who have close relationship with me and perceive me as their older peers, I will reply their posts or comment on the post if they tag me in their pictures, showing that I am with them. For those who perceive me as a teacher's assistant, I look at their posts and press likes to tell them "I've seen it" and reaffirming that I will not expose their messages at the school. For those who block my access to their storyline but still want to see my post, I enable them to do so. In school settings, I assisted coaches, teachers, counselors and other adults to accompany students' college admissions, but rarely intervene only if they directly ask my advice. At night, I

[3] Cited from field note written in May 2020.

acted like my participants' older sister, listen to complaints, anxieties, insecurity and worries by using my account, sharing personal lives, as well as pictures of my dog.

Data Assembly and Research Ethics

How do data from digital and physical platforms differ from each other? What kind of data are generated when digital and physical platforms highlight different parts of social interactions? In the following section, I will focus on how I write field notes in online and offline platforms; what kind of data are generated from both sites; and how researchers triangulate data for analytical purposes. I will focus on data assembly, and turn to research ethics to discuss how hybrid modes can enhance our understanding of the research site but also empower research participants to negotiate how they are studied with researchers throughout the process.

Data Assembly

Ethnographers write field notes to document daily interactions. Depending on the research purpose, scholars may include events, places, conversations in the notes. Traditionally, field notes are written by ethnographers and represent scholarly voices. Researchers may eliminate some details and focus on the most significant part for analytical purposes. However, when ethnography turned online, most activities have already been documented by user interfaces. Screen shots, posts, pictures, thread replies, followers, hyperlinks, hashtags, and story lines become data and most of them are generated by respondents. These e-field notes incorporate multiple voices from research participants. In e-field note, researchers mostly write down analytical notes on how to represent these online materials. This creates two layers of data-generating process, one is from researchers, another is from respondents.

The data assembly online and offline creates a complex process for researchers to triangulate data. When I was trying to combine online and offline data to observe what types of future envisioning are encouraged or undermined among teens, I compare what I wrote with what teens perceive. An event of "letter for myself three years later" better address this triangulation process. In the classroom settings, I documented how teachers organize the activity, delivered their hopes to teens, and enable teens to open up the letter and read out loud their dreams. However, in an online setting, I found that most teens in lower-level courses view the event as not desirable. Instead, the event reminded them of their compromises, hopeless, and their routes of lowering their ambitions. I noticed the comparison between emotions created in the classroom, versus emotions get spread on Instagram. Many respondents posted their letter, anonymized their names and words, and then posted on Instagram and saying, "I need to work harder, let us make another wish for the future." This allows me to compare what I saw from what happened through teens' perspectives. If I did not observe posts on Instagram at the same time, I would have viewed the event as successful and joyful.

One difficulty to triangulate online notes and offline notes is that researchers are often

confused around the timing of events happened by seeing the posts. Sometimes, teens post things happened three days ago and expose their feeling. Sometimes, teens post things happened at the moment. Sometimes, teens circulate their friend's posts to show that they are also present virtually. It is easy to trace offline events because researchers participate in these events, yet it is hard to trace online events when they happened. While time is my primary focus, I have to look at the timing of the posts, and when it happened, and then matched them with real timeline in the field to observe how things happened in real settings as well as how teens represent them in online settings. This enables researchers to travel across different platforms and contextualize how people make sense of these events.

Data generated online are formed in various ways. Most posts on Instagram are pictures and videos, including messages and replies of visual materials. Most field notes are typed on computer and reflect researchers' perspectives. There are also other conversations in the Line chat that reveal my private conversations with teens, checking through their reasoning around a particular choice, and what drives their decision-making. The offline materials are primary data, including in-depth interviews, field notes, and what happened in teens' lives. However, online data serves as a supplementary material to triangulate researchers' points of views from students' point of views.

Research Ethics

To what extent can we use online data to study teens, even if the minors have given informed consent to the study. Previous scholars have mentioned the informed consent should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time procedure. But when participant observations are moved online, research ethics become more complicated as the boundary between public and private is blurred in online spaces. Therefore, the questions remain, to what extent can we use online data even if some of the teens' accounts are public-facing? Should researchers lurk online or constantly inform participants about their role? How to researchers balance the tension between informing participants and retaining access? This section will introduce research ethics and explain why online settings can give participants ability to negotiate with researchers.

Conventionally, before researchers collect data, they are supposed to inform teens and their parents about what kind of research activities participants are involved in, how researchers treat the data collected throughout the process, and how confidentiality is maintained throughout the process. At my first recruitment event held in the counselors' office, I distribute my flyers to each 12^{th} grade classroom. The flyers described my background, my reasons of conducting this research, experiences I would share, and specific activities in the future that teens will be involved in. After the recruitment event, I printed out hard copies of the informed consent forms and asked the teens who are interested in being a participant to deliver the form to parents. In the document, I ask parents to sign an agreement if they agree. The one-time procedure worked well due to the cultural of Taiwanese contexts and the regular communication between teachers and parents.

However, parents and teens have various understanding about the research activities in which they participated. Some teens think they are willing to talk because they have no plans for future, and talking through it may give them some ideas. Some parents consider me as a resource that can help their children get into prestigious universities. For activities I was later involved in, some teens considered I was a counselor's assistant who was doing research as well as assisting teachers. It was relatively easy to inform teens while conducting participant observation on campus. However, it was harder to inform teens about online activities I was engaged with. For the online field, I attempted to limit the observations to respondents with public accounts to comply with IRB rules. But even these rules are tricky because it draws a line between public and private in online settings.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our lives have encountered uncertainties and bumps after the pandemic, and as we are forced to move into a hybrid world including digital and physical terrains, ethnographers can no longer separate the digital from the physical in conducting ethnography. However, existing scholarship either addresses physical or digital ethnography separately. Rather, how a hybrid model can be operationalized deserves further scrutiny to reimagine what ethnography is, and how ethnography can be done.

This paper demonstrates that how a hybrid model can be conducted, and what kind of challenges researchers may encounter along the road by combining the both. Drawing upon Small's typology of mixed-method, I argue that mixing online and offline work can be categorized as three hybrid models: concurrent design, sequential design, and nested design. While many studies have demonstrated how each design is conducted, scholars rarely explain many judgment calls around how, when, and whether to combine online and offline approaches. I show that a concurrent design is often applied to team ethnography, testing variations in multi-sites based on the general trend. In contrast, a nested design is employed when researchers want to explore how online actions influence offline behaviors and vice versa. I argue that a sequential design is the most flexible design for individual scholars who have conducted follow-up studies, and can be a strategy to navigate the post-pandemic era.

In my dissertation research, I demonstrate that a sequential model can be divided into three phases—relying on participant observations in offline settings, turning and adding digital components as a hybrid model, and retreating from online or offline worlds. Depending on researchers' purposes, these stages can be reversed or reinvented to answer the question. The sequential design provides several implications for ethnographers to rethinking ethnographic toolkits, particularly positioning, field access, and data assembly.

By breaking the toolkits into three parts, I show how the notion of the field, positioning, and access can be greatly changed in the hybrid terrain. While classical work often focuses on single or multi-sites (e.g., comparative studies, international studies, and urban ethnography), field can be reconceptualized as a more fluid and interconnected spaces rather than separate, independent field sites. The emphasis on place is eliminated versus

how multiple-sites are connected is more important. The ways in which we conceptualize the field should focus on the interconnection and the intertwining part of sites. Second, while many scholars have paid attention to strategic position-taking, in a digital terrain, what matters is your self-representation, and to what extent your self-representation looks "natural" as digital inhabitors. Moreover, how to articulate your physical appearance or distance your appearance from your positions can be an issue for a hybrid model. Researchers can navigate multiple strategies in position-taking, especially utilizing the digital interfaces to reduce their disadvantages. Third, I found that the insider/outsider divide is modified when conducting both. Fourth, online and offline data can be triangulated as inter-situational contexts so as to provide a great area for each of which to look at how participants construe their own world.

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