Feminist activist ethnography through Arabic Twitter: Fellowship as a Method

Journal:	*Feminist Review*
Manuscript ID	FR-22-0133.R4
Manuscript Type:	Article
Keywords:	Feminist ethnography, Twitter, Ethical online ethnography, fellowship as method, activist transparency, critical allyship, activist silences, friendship
Abstract:	This article reflects on my journey conducting online ethnography through Iraqi, Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Yemeni feminist Twitters as an Iraqi researcher residing in the United Kingdom. It examines the intersection of online ethnography and feminist activism, emphasising the essential role of long-term immersion in social media spaces as an activist prior to undertaking this type of research. I gained crucial insights into the complexity, fluidity, and emotional dynamics of online spaces and relationships through years of visible presence and engagement with other activists before conducting my ethnography. While some level of intimacy and affiliation with feminist activists existed, the absence of offline encounters posed challenges to forging friendships. However, this difficulty served as a catalyst for developing an ethical method to navigate relationships with participants and address the limitations of a friendship-based approach (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). In this article, I propose an alternative approach centred around a fellowship affiliation, approaching other activists as 'fellows' in the two Arabic senses of zamāla and rifqa [peer- and comrade-driven] relationships. This shift in the researcher-participant relationship moves away from the intensity and demanding nature of the ṣadāqah [friendship] relationship. In doing so, it offers a politically powerful stance and a much-needed critical space for constructive debate while maintaining mutual respect and a shared commitment to the cause. The fellowship-based method necessitates activist transparency and critical allyship dedicated to collaboration and unconventional methods of knowledge co-production, promising solidarity, and transcending differences and disagreements. Nonetheless, achieving this can, at times, be challenging. While acknowledging the limitations of the approach, the article recognises that moments of silence or distance can also arise from a sense of activist responsibility and commitment to protecting others.

Title: Feminist activist ethnography through Arabic Twitter: Fellowship as a Method

Abstract

This article reflects on my journey conducting online ethnography through Iraqi, Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Yemeni feminist Twitters as an Iraqi researcher residing in the United Kingdom. It examines the intersection of online ethnography and feminist activism, emphasising the essential role of long-term immersion in social media spaces as an activist prior to undertaking this type of research. I gained crucial insights into the complexity, fluidity, and emotional dynamics of online spaces and relationships through years of visible presence and engagement with other activists before conducting my ethnography. While some level of intimacy and affiliation with feminist activists existed, the absence of offline encounters posed challenges to forging friendships. However, this difficulty served as a catalyst for developing an ethical method to navigate relationships with participants and address the limitations of a friendship-based approach (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). In this article, I propose an alternative approach centred around a fellowship affiliation, approaching other activists as 'fellows' in the two Arabic senses of *zamāla* and *rifqa* [peer- and comrade-driven] relationships. This shift in the researcher-participant relationship moves away from the intens~~city~~ and demanding nature of the *ṣadāqah* [friendship] relationship. In doing so, it offers a politically powerful stance and a much-needed critical space for constructive debate while maintaining mutual respect and a shared commitment to the cause. The fellowship-based method necessitates activist transparency and critical allyship dedicated to collaboration and unconventional methods of knowledge co-production, promising solidarity, and transcending differences and disagreements. Nonetheless, achieving this can, at times, be challenging. While acknowledging the limitations of the approach, the article recognises that moments of silence or distance can also arise from a sense of activist responsibility and commitment to protecting others.

Introduction

This article reflexively delves into methodological and ethical aspects of my journey conducting feminist ethnography through the Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Saudi, and Yemeni Feminist Twitters[1], building on years of activism on social media with a visible identity as an Iraqi woman living and studying in the United Kingdom (UK). My long-term immersion and interaction in social media served as the cornerstone of my ethnography. Without this experience, conducting research solely within the online realm would have been challenging, if not impossible. I needed extensive time to fully grasp the complexity of online fieldwork, which requires researchers to adapt to its fluidity, agility, and messiness (Hine, 2015). Over the years, I became aware of the different emotions that emerge during our encounters with others and the consequent diverse effects. Such experience was vital in enabling me to build rapport and a certain level of affiliation and intimacy with many women activists and feminists, mainly Iraqis, and to acquire a semi-insider status as I entered the field as an ethnographer. Although I use ~~am using~~ feminism in this article as a broad category that encompasses both self-identified feminists and women's rights activists, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all women's rights activists self-identify as feminists (and vice versa), for a variety of reasons. Moreover, following Delmar (1994), I understand feminism as more of an intellectual theory, a vision, and a field that precedes and may be intertwined with women's rights activism.

Tillmann-Healy's (2003) 'friendship as method' is a promising methodology that captures the impact of emotions on knowledge production and the researcher/participant relationship beyond the narrow lens of access to a particular group.[2] It thus seeks to dismantle the

[1] Final amendments to this article were completed prior to the rebranding of Twitter to X in July 2023. As such, the use of 'Twitter' and original Twitter-specific terminology, such as tweets and Twitter Spaces, has been retained for the purposes of clarity and connection to the period in which the ethnographic research was conducted.

[2] Although friendship as a method takes inspiration from feminist epistemology and may overlap with some tenets of feminist political friendship (e.g., Lugones and Spelman, 1983; Lugones, 1995) due to its focus on collective action and reciprocity, it remains ontologically distinct. Tillmann-Healy's friendship as a method

hierarchies between the researcher and participants, highlighting the former's commitment to 'research with them [participants], rather than look into their lives from the outside' (Ellis, 2007, p. 13). For these reasons, the method has been adopted by several scholars conducting offline ethnographies (e.g., Owton and Collinson, 2014; De Regt, 2015; Ramírez-i-Ollé, 2017; Anctil Avoine, 2022). In offline ethnographies, when we are 'in the world with others' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 732), our emotional encounters ~~affects~~ can develop friendship relationships between the researcher and the participants ~~because, during emotional encounters, we are 'in the world with others' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 732).~~[3] It is through these experiences that we get to know each other more, which is the essence of friendship (Owton and Collinson, 2014). Although I did not employ this method when I started to conduct my research, I gradually discovered both its potential and the challenges of this approach, the latter primarily being the difficulty of establishing friendships online without an in-person encounter. For several reasons, the absence of an offline dimension undermined the potential of developing the aforementioned affiliation to a friendship relationship. These difficulties included the nature of the online medium itself and the complexity of *ṣadāqah* [friendship], particularly as I personally understand and experience it through the lens of Arab culture.[4] Retrospectively, however, this was not an obstacle. On the contrary, it helped me to develop an approach whereby I could adhere to the core principles and ethics of a friendship relationship. This approach also involved setting boundaries with others to facilitate critique

employs interpersonal relationships between the researcher and their participants across social class and gender differences as a qualitative research tool in ethnographic settings to gain deeper insights into social phenomena. It 'involves the practices, the pace, the contexts, and the ethics of friendship' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 734).

[3] ~~In line with several scholars (Ahmed, 2014; Åhäll, 2018; Anctil Avoine, 2022), I use affects interchangeably with emotions given that the two cannot be easily distinguished, nor is there the scope within this article to unpack the intertwined meaning of both.~~

[4] I have used Arab here in a cultural sense to refer to Arab-speaking people, rather than to ethnicity per se (see Nydell, 2018).

Drawing on Nydell (2018 [2006]), Al Jallad (2018, p. 51) distinguishes between Western and Arab friendships, describing the latter as more intense and requiring a process of 'balancing favours against obligations.' From a social and religious perspective, friends are valuable in Arab culture and keeping them is deemed 'a priority' (Al Jallad, 2018, p. 51).

and constructive debate. In doing so, some of the pitfalls associated with closer relationships with participants were avoided, such as biases and the expectation of agreements or likeness (see Ellis, 2007; Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014). Drawing on the work of Söderström et al. (2021), and as my research progressed, I developed what I now term a fellowship-based method. ~~framing I fram fellowship~~frame fellowship in two Arabic senses: *zamāla* [peer-driven relationships] and *rifqa* [comradeship in the struggle] (Al Jallad, 2018).

I contend that a fellowship-based method ~~this method~~ addresses some of the limitations of the friendship-based approach (see Tillmann-Healy, 2003; Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014; De Regt, 2015; Ramírez-i-Ollé, 2017; Anctil Avoine, 2022) by potentially allowing the researcher and the participants to have a critical space for constructive debate. Concurrently, it departs from the close association between *ṣadāqah* and religion (see Al Jallad, 2018)~~,~~ whilst maintaining mutual respect and a commitment to the feminist activist cause. This method requires activist transparency centred on active participation, engagement, and ongoing negotiation with the participants. Additionally, it seeks to build forms of critical allyship (Gates et al., 2021) through practices oriented towards collaboration with fellow activists based on integrity and rigour. As such, this method offers solidarity with such fellows irrespective of their subjectivities and disagreements. Nevertheless, this potential allyship can be hard to achieve and sustain in an environment where volatile conservative and authoritarian forces collide, endangering the lives of society's most vulnerable groups. In my feminist ethnography, silence has sometimes become an inevitable choice. Although a limitation of the approach in itself, silence can function as a necessary activist-driven decision to protect the lives of others.

My work contributes to the exciting, emerging literature focused on digital ethnographies (Markham, 2005; Postill and Pink, 2012; Hine, 2015) and its intersection with feminist theories (e.g., Gajjala, 2004; Danley, 2021). A fellowship-based method ~~This approach~~ is guided by the principles of feminist scholarship, particularly postcolonial, decolonial, and transnational

Commented [A1]: This sentence is a bit unclear. Please consider breaking into two sentences from this point.

Commented [A2]: Spell out the method.

Commented [A3]: This is a bit unclear. What is this approach?

feminist paradigms (e.g., Liu et al., 2015; Falcón, 2016; Smith, 2021). Such principles~~,~~ ~~which~~ allow~~s~~ the researcher to see through the eyes, stories, and aspirations of women feminist activists from the four countries in question. Accordingly,~~,~~ ~~imagining~~ alternative means of ~~and for~~ knowing and understanding are imagined. Reflexivity lies at the heart of this process, as I continuously negotiate my positionality and privilege as a researcher with my fellow female activists (Alcoff, 1991; Gajjala, 2002; 2004; Davis and Craven, 2020). Although my proposed methodology is focused on fieldwork conducted in online spaces, it can be adopted partially or fully in offline ethnographies. However, the challenges and opportunities in both settings can be different. For ~~example,~~ example, face-to-face encounters make it easier to build~~ing~~ trust with participants and befriend~~ing~~ them than in online settings. ~~the potential for befriending participants can be stronger in offline settings due to the absence of technological mediation.~~ Nonetheless, it would have been impossible for me to interview women with limited mobility on the ground due to sensitive political situations and socially conservative contexts.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I begin with an overview of my experience as an activist prior to commencing my ethnographic research, reflecting on my positionality and interaction with other activists on Twitter and Clubhouse.[5] This section engages with literature focused on the key features and affordances of social media spaces. The second section moves to the online fieldwork, and the blurred boundaries between insider and outsider status. Here, I discuss the fundamental tenets that inform ~~ing~~ my online ethnography through Twitter, paving the way for proposing fellowship as a method. In the third section, I describe my methodological intervention, defining the method and its characteristics. Sections four and five ~~present~~ illustrate the method's main dimensions: activist transparency and critical allyship. Both sections provide concrete examples from my research, primarily focusing on the Iraqi case and, to a lesser extent, the Saudi one. ~~, to show the potential of the method through its main~~

[5] Clubhouse, 'About', Clubhouse: Here you are [last accessed 22 October 2022].

Commented [A4]: This needs to be another sentence.
Also do you mean "means of and for" or just "means of". If you mean both of and for, please simply clarify what they mean and how they are different.

Commented [A5]: This is a bit unclear.

~~dimensions: activist transparency and critical allyship~~. In the penultimate section, I acknowledge the limitations of the method, particularly silences, which a sense of activism can paradoxically drive. I conclude the article with further reflection on my research journey so far as I move to Instagram following Elon ~~Mask's~~ Musk's takeover of Twitter and the resulting changes to the platform, which, according to initial personal observations, have impacted the visibility of fellow women activists and my connectivity with them.

Commented [A6]: This sentence is not very clear. Consider revising. You may wish to break the sentence to shorter ones.

Commented [A7]: Musk

Entering the field as scholar-activist

I have used Twitter since 2014 from my diasporic position in the UK. My initial purpose was primarily academic: collecting data related to my academic research about media translation in the context of the terrorist group Islamic State. This objective later shifted when I ~~subconsciously engaged~~started to engage in activism through non-academic writing and posting via tweets at crucial socio-political junctures in my home country, particularly during the 2018 and 2019 Iraq protest movements. Therefore, I gradually built networks with Iraqi activists inside Iraq or in the diaspora as we individually and/or collectively attempted to document the protests and the security crackdown against the demonstrators. Fortunately, being on Twitter for an extended period has enabled me to establish a salient and transparent identity among feminist and activist communities. My interaction with these communities was the main inspiration for embarking on an online ethnographic activist feminist journey ~~two years later~~in 2021.

Commented [A8]: Is it possible to find another word? Subconsciously is a very loaded word. Or just say "when I started to engage".

Commented [A9]: Consider specifying the actual year.

Initially, I did not identify as a feminist [*nasawiya*] in Arabic. The visibility of my identity and presence as an Iraqi feminist became more potent following, or perhaps in response to, the remarkable participation of Iraqi women from different social and economic backgrounds in the 2019 *Tishreen* [October] Revolution, the largest social movement in the contemporary

history of Iraq. Meanwhile, I immersed myself in what Flowers (2019) describes as the 'territories' of Feminist Twitter, interacting with feminists from Iraq and other countries in the region connected by shared events and experiences, as well as sociality and mobility (see Fay, 2007; Postil and Pink, 2012). Notwithstanding the mediation of the medium and how it dictates the organisation, ranking, and visibility of online communities, these territories are organised by 'similar kinds of affects' (Flowers, 2019, pp. 1-2) produced by hashtags and, more recently, Twitter Spaces.[6] Affects conceptualise the social. They 'are created and exist within the encounter, while emotions constitute the subjective reaction arising from affects' (Lilja, 2017, p. 346). Despite this distinction, affects and emotions are intertwined in the process of meaning-making and our social interaction with others (see Tafakori, 2023). Therefore, in line with several scholars (Ahmed, 2014; Åhäll, 2018; Anctil Avoine, 2022), I use affects interchangeably with emotions. What concerns me the most is what emotions can do to bodies in their online circulation and what practices they can create (see Lilja, 2017; Anctil Avoine, 2022). The shared histories and ideologies align certain bodies, including those in the diaspora, with the material space. The latter is akin to what Brah (1996, cited in Tuzu, 2016) describes as 'diaspora space', in which 'affects of belonging are animated by the sense of being part of a network and one's movement through interdigitated locations' (Tuzu, 2016, p. 153). Like many women in the diaspora, I could relate to other women's struggle for equality and social justice.

I have, therefore, broadened my network of activists to include feminists and women's rights activists from Iraq and other countries in the region. Connecting with other feminists was further facilitated during the COVID-19 global pandemic, when the Clubhouse application[7] (a voice-based social media platform) was launched in March 2020, a time when vast numbers of populations were isolated because of the pandemic and the related lockdown measures. When

Commented [A10]: It seems that the "similar kinds of affects" and the "shared histories and ideologies aligning certain bodies" are two different layers of the feminist twitter territories. You have explained the latter - the spaces - drawing on Brah's description, while what affects mean is unclear here. Consider adding 1 sentence to clarify what you mean by affects.

[6] Twitter Spaces is a voice-based feature similar to Clubhouse.
[7] Hereafter referred to as 'app', the abbreviated colloquial phrasing that is now commonplace vernacular, in alignment with the contemporaneous nature of this article.

Clubhouse was first launched, its access was limited and invitation-based, allowing only certain groups of people to use it, including politicians, filmmakers, artists, and activists (Zhu, 2021). For these reasons, Clubhouse provided a relatively safe space for feminists before it was open to ~~anyone~~everyone.~~gained immense popularity at first before the hype it initially attracted began to fade.~~ The application played a crucial role in bringing feminists together, especially when there was a spike in gender-based violence (GBV) globally mainly due to lockdown measures and 'the increased insecurity and stress the pandemic has inflicted on the society' (Gemen, 2021).[8] I participated in many chat rooms opened and organised by feminist activists from different places in the Middle East and Nort Africa~~MENA~~ region. Identifying as a feminist and building a feminist identity on Twitter, and later Clubhouse, was instrumental in connecting and interacting with feminists from the region with a common struggle and shared concerns. Many feminists speaking in Clubhouse chatrooms also had Twitter accounts. Therefore, I could maintain my connection with them on Twitter when the hype around Clubhouse faded (see Boyko and Horbyk, 2022).~~Many of the feminists speaking in Clubhouse chatrooms also have Twitter accounts, and so, through Clubhouse, I could follow them on Twitter as well I could maintain my connection with them on Twitter.~~

During my encounters with other feminists in Clubhouse discussions, different ~~affects~~ emotions were generated. These are relational and dialectic and share social and political dimensions (Ahmed, 2014; Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014; Anctil Avoine, 2022). For example, in response to the tragic death of Malak al-Zubaidi, an Iraqi woman from the southern province of Najaf who set herself on fire after being subjected to domestic violence (Aldroubi, 2020), we were collectively angered by the endless cycle of GBV. Further, we were disappointed with the lack of political will and legal regulations to protect women. Crucially,

[8] For a discussion of the reasons contributing to the rise of gender-based violence during the pandemic, refer to Mittal and Singh (2020).

Commented [A11]: The sequence of the events in this sentence is not very clear. Also how did it gain immense popularity if it was invited only?

Commented [A12R12]: I meant popularity among activists because they felt it provided a safe space for them to discuss feminist matters away from the gaze of anti-feminist or misogynistic accounts on other platforms.

Commented [A13]: Consider adding a sentence so the reader knows why there was a spike in GBV (or a footnote).

Commented [A14]: Spell out the MENA

Commented [A15]: This sentence is not very clear.

Commented [A16]: Here, affects are less understandable than the one mentioned in the next paragraph. Do they mean the force to be affecting and affected (including in both bodily and emotional terms), or just emotions, or even any kind of senses/sensibilities?

the voice feature of the Clubhouse app gave women with anonymous accounts authenticity, legitimising their cause while also establishing intimacy with others (Radcliffe, 2021).

Additionally, hashtags about domestic abuse were created on Twitter, where women called for the legalisation of the anti-domestic abuse bill in Iraq, expressing their collective anger and sorrow. When affects emerge, they enact politics of care (Tillmann-Healy, 2003; Rentschler, 2017; Anctil Avoine, 2022). Women shared their experiences and validated them through hashtagged tweets and Clubhouse conversations, seeking support and advice from one another. In doing so, we were brought together around a set of common interests, a 'sense of alliance', and solidarity (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 371).

Clubhouse and Twitter serve as arenas for debate, disagreements, and contestation, not only between feminists and their opponents, but also ~~prevalent occurrences among the former~~among feminists themselves. We sometimes shared different visions about specific issues or priorities. For instance, sexual freedom was frequently contested, with some activists viewing it as central to women's emancipation while others dismissing it as unnecessary or problematic at this point in time. For the latter, their logic is that the topic is too sensitive to discuss in their communities and may be counterproductive, further widening the gap between feminists and other women in society. In her research on GBV within the Middle East, Al-Ali recounts the tensions of working in an activist, feminist environment marked by divided positions and opinions around specific issues, irrespective of the activists' location due to the diversity in their 'experiences, aims and approaches' (2019, p. 28). In the 'polyphonic' social media spaces (Winter and Lavis, 2020, p. 56), ~~on the other hand~~, polarisation tends to be more severe than in offline communities (Du and Gregory, 2017). A mere clash of distinct opinions can sometimes be inevitable. Online spaces are not detached from emotions, which may not always be positive. More importantly, emotions are 'mediated' by social media affordances and practices, which prioritise

Commented [A17]: This part is a bit unclear. Do you mean, not only prevalent among feminists, but also between feminists and their opponents?

Commented [A18]: Why on the other hand?

instantaneous responses and reactions, influencing how users experience them (Papacharissi, 2015; Tafakori, 2021).

Further, posts, including tweets or comments, do not remain static or in a fixed position within feminist territories. They can move outside ~~the latter~~these territories and enter new ones through the process of sharing and dissemination, where they are assigned new meanings and narratives. For instance, in June 2021-, I tweeted about an Iraqi mother from the south who lost her son to militias during the Tishreen Revolution in 2019. I tried to commend her bravery to take to the streets alone to protest, defying the masculine, militarised presence of the security forces, viewing her act through a feminist lens. In my tweet, I linked Um Ihab's [Ihab's mother] act of resistance to feminism when I wrote in Arabic:

> Whoever hates feminism and considers it an offence, Um Ihab's act is a feminist act, even if she is unaware of that and even if she is not a feminist. To demand justice and challenge patriarchal authority is a feminist act ... A woman's anger and loud voice are a feminist act, as feminism is, in essence, a cry against injustice.

Posting the above tweet was an emotional strategy, with the aim of removing the stigma associated with feminism by referring to ordinary women from Iraqi culture and society (see Tafakori, 2021). The tweet went viral, moving beyond Twitter to Facebook when a member of a Facebook page dedicated to misogynistic and anti-feminism discourses and titled 'Men Without Limits' screenshot my tweet and then posted it on the page, along with a personal attack directed at me. This post depicted me as someone who was 'exploiting others'' sacrifices for personal gains to circulate destructive ideologies. The post opened the door for a torrent of offensive comments that smeared and tarnished my reputation, characterising me as an 'immoral' person. The experience was intimidating, especially since many family members, relatives, and friends residing in Iraq have Facebook accounts and could have read the offensive

Commented [A19]: What is this latter?

post. This example underlines the impact of the embodied dimensions of digital technologies on our understanding of location and belonging. Even though my geographical location Britain, I am still materially linked to my home country through online spaces. As a result of this incident, I had to retreat from my social media temporarily.

I decided to reactivate my Twitter account shortly after ~~, however, when~~after other Iraqi fellow activists offered support in many ways, including reporting the post or some of the comments to Facebook, or directly contacting the admin of the page in question to ask that the derogatory post be removed. Although the post was not deleted, the solidarity of other activists encouraged me to reclaim my voice on Twitter. Their support points to a certain level of intimacy, rapport, and 'affiliation' beginning to be forged between us (see Weiss, 1998). Such emotions enabled me to have a degree of insiderness in a 'familiar' field (Sharp and Dowler, 2011, p. 156) as I shifted to an ethnographer position in January 2022 after securing ethical approval from my institution. This affiliation was not friendship per se. As I understand it through the lens of my cultural background, the concept of friendship is a complicated one ~~requiring~~ that requires several characteristics, including honesty, trust, intense feelings, and 'unlimited commitment' (Barakat, 1993, p. 19 cited in Al Jallad, 2018, p. 51). These elements of friendship need both time and social activation in the offline world to emerge and strengthen (see Décieux et al., 2019). Gradually, I could develop some of these characteristics with a small number of activists, who are currently 'prospective friends' because our friendship has not yet been socially activated in the offline realm (Chambers, 2013, p. 92). In hindsight, my inability to establish friendships with most feminists helped me overcome the shortcomings associated with befriending informants before or during the research, while allowing me to approach all of them, including prospective friends, as *fellows,* as I explain later in the article.

A mobile semi-insider in a 'familiar field'

My online ethnography examines four contexts: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Being an Iraqi woman, a feminist, and an Arabic-language native speaker, with a visible activist presence established on Twitter and Clubhouse before embarking on my research journey, has granted me a semi-insider status. Such a status enabled me to access prospective participants quickly, most of whom consented to be interviewed. Nevertheless, in a dynamic and quickly evolving field such as Twitter, it is impossible to be known to all feminists from the above countries. New female activists continually join Twitter, with many using pseudonyms to protect themselves. As I discuss in this article, the case of Saudi Arabia was particularly challenging. Based on my ethnographic observations, most Saudi women activists use private accounts and anonymous identities for protection (see Khalil and Storie, 2021). To many of them, I was an outsider.

~~This demonstrates~~As such, ~~that~~ the dichotomy between insider and outsider is not clear-cut, especially in the online field (Paechter, 2013). In my case, the fieldwork was not clearly bounded or identified. It resembles what Sharp and Dowler (2011, p. 153) describe as a 'set of practices, experiences, and emotions' taking place in specific contexts. In other words, my fieldwork was partly contextual and partly 'meta' (Airoldi, 2018), meaning my ethnography methods had to be flexible, mobile, and 'multi-sited' (Marcus, 1995), taking place through Twitter ~~rather than *for* or *in* (Hine, 2015)~~. Therefore, it distinguishes itself from 'virtual ethnographies' undertaken in a specific community or network seen as the online equivalent of physical 'fieldwork' (Beneito-Montagut, 2011). I move across various apps and platforms, following diverse individual or collective feminist accounts on Twitter and Instagram. Meanwhile, I use an auto-ethnographic approach to fill in the gaps by reflecting on my personal experience as an Iraqi woman.

Commented [A20]: "This" means the different positionalities in relation to the specific contexts/locales? Spell out.

Commented [A21]: This is not too clear. What does it mean by for twitter?

This mobility complicates and challenges the insider/outsider binary and raises ethical quandaries concerning the unintentional exploitation of communities and their data (Stacey, 1986), the risks of lurking through mere observations (Morrow et al., 2015), and the issue of (mis)representing others' voices, views, and experiences. Other researchers have shared similar concerns related to their position as insider ethnographers who face certain expectations from their community members to be represented in a particular way (Labaree, 2002; Taylor, 2011) and their vulnerability towards social relationships, which may cause them to make compromises or even divulge private information to others (e.g., Humphrey, 2007). To address such risks, researchers who enter the field as insiders must switch to an outsider position at some point, maintaining a physical and emotional distance from the community being examined, the research, and the fieldwork (Cuomo and Massaro, 2016). Conversely, outsiders need to 'go native' to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and people (Labaree, 2002; Paechter, 2013).

While it was essential to continu~~cing~~ to build rapport with potential interviewees and the broader online feminist community on Twitter ~~was essential~~ to gain insights and access to the field and participants, I found it critical to establish a method whereby a distance was in place between myself and other feminists so that disagreement, critique, and even judgments were not shunned (see Ferguson, 2010). A space for critique was crucial to prevent biases. Maintaining this delicate balance on a platform as dynamic and chaotic as Twitter required ongoing introspection, reflexivity, and negotiation with my participants. ~~At this early stage~~When I started my online ethnographic research, I had not yet thought of specific terminology or developed any strategies or parameters. My primary concern was establishing a level of transparency that went beyond revealing my identity and research to women activists or listing certain privileges. This transparency would soon become the pillar of what I now term 'fellowship as a method'. In the following section, I define the terminology and

Commented [A22]: Could you please add a date or some sort of clearer marker?

characteristics of this method before sharing practical examples from my work to discuss its dimensions.

Fellowship as a method

In this article, I employ the concept of fellowship in the two Arabic senses of *zamāla* and *rifqa*. The former is closer to fellowship in the sense of a peer-driven relationship. The latter aligns more closely with female comradeship in the struggle towards social justice (Al Jallad, 2018). Fellowship as a method captures both senses. Although it is a variant of a friendship relationship, fellowship remains distinct. Unlike the former, the latter is based on 'deliberation, mutual recognition and equality', whereby each legitimises the other as fellows, activists, or feminists in my case (Söderström et al., 2021, p. 498). In using fellowship rather than friendship, I aim to de-associate the fellowship affiliation from specific characteristics found in relationships in the Arab culture, including *ṣadāqah* (see Al-Kandari Gaither, 2011). These include 'a strong commitment to religion, loyalty to the group, rejection or hesitance to change … pride in history, nostalgia to the past, and clear recognition of hierarchical order' (Al Jallad, 2018, pp. 51-52, Al-Kandari Gaither, 2011).[9] Moreover, the proposed method aims to overcome the potential pitfalls of expectations, compromises, bias, scrutiny, and insider blindness that arise through developing close friendships (see Ellis, 2007).

Fellows do not necessarily have a shared vision. Nor do we have to feel intimate or warm feelings towards each other. This does not mean that a fellowship relationship is affect-free. On the contrary, it is an affective relationship. Nevertheless, it does not prioritise 'intensity in

[9] In the *ṣadāqah* relationship context, same-sex friendships are the norm, whilst those between 'boys and girls are not common and in some cases simply prohibited' (Al Jallad, 2018, p. 52, also see Hamed, 2012). It is important to recognise that this situation varies according to certain factors, including context, social class, and age. Ultimately, *ṣadāqah* is a contested concept and its interpretation is also shaped by individual experiences and understandings.

Commented [A23]: Up to here, affect seems to be a very broad concept in the way you use it. Perhaps you need to clarify this to the readers (perhaps somewhere earlier or the first time you mentioned it [in the Introduction]).

Commented [A24R24]: Done.

the interaction' (Söderström et al., 2021, p. 498) but instead attempts to nurture collective feelings towards the structural root causes of women's oppression. As fellows, we are also *rafyqāt* [female comrades] in our struggle against structural inequalities and patriarchal powers. This Arabic concept is, indeed, being adopted by some Arabic-language feminist platforms and accounts. For instance, the Mauritanian *naḥwa wa'iy nasawy* [Towards a Feminist Awareness] uses *rafyqāt* to refer to feminists who are *rafyqāt* in their shared struggle.[10] This sense entails some of the principles of friendship, including the crucial values of 'moral obligation', 'cooperation', and 'non-domination', which Söderström et al. (2021, p. 498) associate primarily with friends, not fellows.

Fellow comrades ally during times of collective resistance and mobilisation while at the same time, guarding themselves against merging their experiences into a homogenous narrative (Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014). Boundaries between people need to be kept through sustaining 'the mutual otherness' (Frank, 2004 cited in Owton and Allen-Collinson, 2014, p. 297) which is also essential to overcome the difficulty of reconciling the diverse identities of the researcher and their 'acquaintance' participants during interviews in ethnographic settings (Garton and Copland, 2010, p. 545). Eventually, there is no neutrality of bodies as they encounter one another in research processes. Bodily encounters are 'deeply political … [and] do not occur in a political and social vacuum: they happen in a society where bodies are hierarchised by markers of gender, race and class' (Anctil Avoine, 2022, p. 12). Put simply, as researchers, we must always think of unusual and non-traditional methods to explore our privilege and constantly 'examine, scrutinise, and critique ourselves' through 'radical reflexivity' (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, pp. 740-741).

[10] Twitter post, نرفع تضامننا مع الرفيقات ومع مامة المصطفى أمام العنف القبائلي والذكوري وتواطؤ نحو وعي نسوي on Twitter: "#العدالة_لمامه_المصطفى / Twitter "أجهزة الدولة الموريتانية في ادامة العنف الأبوي وحمايته. مازلنا نتابع القضية وسنقوم بنشر مستجداتها. [last accessed 10 November 2022]. *Rafyqāt* is also being adopted by some Iraqi feminists. See https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0bPhw5qX3JFhnju4mfyPj5ZXm2Kcrh92yZLUAzYtRnLgmkd4QHRW4GXcwRbre5dREl&id=100077492946417 [last accessed 25 August 2023].

Acknowledging our privileged positionalities is not a mere list of these privileges. It is an ongoing process that demands constant honest and thoughtful communication with the self and the other (Ghabra, 2015). Communicating with our communities would allow them to make informed decisions, not only about participating in our research, but also about voicing their opinions more freely. A fellowship-based method would help sustain the space required for a critical and nuanced discussion. This then opens up new opportunities for collaboration, while adhering to the principles of solidarity with other fellow activists with whom we may disagree. This can be achieved first and foremost through *activist transparency*, which is the focus of the following section.

Activist transparency

Activist transparency creates a commitment to respectful, responsible, and active online participation and engagement with others. As I demonstrate later, it importantly allows researchers to discover means for possible collaboration with fellow feminists. The activist and participatory element in activist transparency refers to the researcher's interaction with other activists and engagement in the public 'local discourse' (Danley, 2021, p. 408) while 'being open, frank [and] candid' (Baltzersen, 2010, p. 792). I frequently tweet about my research in the Arabic language, negotiate some of the methodological and ethical dilemmas with other feminists, and summarise other English-language feminist scholarship through translation, inviting others to share their thoughts and comments.

As mentioned earlier, through activist transparency, the research becomes more accessible and transparent, allowing the prospective participants to make informed decisions about whether to participate in our research (Danley, 2021). Such decisions may not be straightforward, requiring thoughtful (re)-consideration and negotiation between the researcher and potential

interviewees. When I approached prospective Saudi interviewees, they were initially happy to be interviewed online. However, after careful reflection and consultation with the ethics committee, I made the conscious decision not to interview any Saudi women activists, given the politically sensitive situation in the country and the potential risks involved in online interviews.

A fellowship method is an ethically responsible methodology that prioritises the safety of the participants and the researcher. I had honest informal conversations with potential Saudi informants to explain my decision and seek better, safer alternatives. I understood that many activists would favour a questionnaire for its anonymity. Therefore, a qualitative questionnaire was a compromised solution to mitigate any risks resulting from recorded online interviews.[11] I could eventually share the questionnaire with five Saudi feminists only through an anonymous link by email. Even those who initially agreed to participate in my research later hesitated, and did not respond to my emails or messages inviting them to take part in the questionnaire. My status as an outsider for Saudi feminists, coupled with the sensitive political situation in their country, could have impacted their decision.

Activist transparency has a degree of reciprocity with the goal of co-producing 'situated' knowledge (Haraway, 1991) and 'a respectful framework within which to frame, design, carry out, and circulate the results' (Davis and Craven, 2020, p. 288). While conducting my ethnographic research, I negotiated with Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and Yemeni women activists I interviewed to discuss whether they preferred their identities to be revealed or protected in my research findings. Together, we agreed that the use of pseudonyms would safeguard everyone involved.

[11] The questionnaire did not collect any personal information from the participants or contain any political or religious questions.

Reciprocity demands that 'we listen, do not speak for the other, and become aware of cultural differences through identity, privileges, and oppressions' (Ghabra, 2015, p. 8). Speaking in Twitter Spaces from a diasporic position is a privilege that must be recognised and acknowledged. Therefore, I tailored my approach with consideration of this privilege from the beginning. In each instance, I introduced myself to the space's (co-)hosts and audience, briefly summarised the purpose of my research, and then asked the space's (co-)hosts for permission to participate and speak. Asking for permission to speak from women who live in authoritarian contexts concurrently blurs the boundaries between the 'privileged' and the 'vulnerable' and highlights the continuous shifting positionalities in this context.

The distinction is further blurred when addressing and interacting with multiple audiences. Activists and scholars in diasporic locations find themselves amidst a tornado of contested discourses in Western locations and their home countries, which they must challenge and deconstruct without prioritising certain discourses over others. As Al-Ali (2019, p. 24) explains, 'a diasporic positionality is highly complex and challenging in the current climate of heightened Islamophobia, racism, anti-refugee and anti-immigration sentiments and the rise of right-wing movements and constituencies in Europe and North America'. Therefore, talking about sensitive issues in the Middle East, such as GBV, may require scholar-activists in the diaspora to constantly draw parallels between Western and non-Western contexts to illustrate that GBV, for instance, is inherent in different societies and cultures. Nonetheless, for activists inside these countries, the local dynamics and actors may be far more critical than the global ones.

Scholar-activists must recognise participants' diverse positionalities and viewpoints towards these issues, and work with them to negotiate the possibility of a more nuanced and critical approach. In my interviews, as well as in Twitter Spaces I have attended, I deliberate these dilemmas with other feminists, empathising with them and their views while simultaneously

drawing their attention to the issue of positionality and the target audience, explaining that global structures converge with local ones to enhance women's oppression. In such encounters, my aim as a researcher and activist is to 'speak with' rather than 'speak for' fellow activists (see Alcoff, 1991), negotiating our different positions from an ethic of fellowship through which we validate and legitimise our heterogenous experiences and viewpoints without being excluded from the narrative.

As the following section demonstrates, speaking with fellow activists can open up opportunities for forms of critical allyship with a morally critical stance, and also foster collaboration and solidarity.

Critical allyship

Critical allyship is understood in this article as an ongoing process of acting by working with others. It is, therefore, a practice, not an identity (Gates et al., 2021). Critical allyship is a crucial dimension of building fellowships grounded in honesty, responsibility, care, and accountability (Indigenous Action, 2014 cited in Gates et al., 2021, p. 378). When anti-street harassment mobilisation took place in Iraq through witnessing and documenting such actions via mobile phones and then sharing the footage on social media, I spoke with other Iraqi feminists on Twitter. Although ~~in our tweets and posts~~ we collectively supported women who filmed the harasser in our tweets and posts, some of us were mindful of the potential consequences that could arise as a result. I found that merely commending their bravery was not enough as it fell short of considering women's safety, a position some fellow activists agreed with. In an environment dominated by tribes, armed factions, and religious clerics at the expense of strong institutions and laws, questions remain about the safety of women who decide to take this step and the consequences they may face should their identities be

revealed. In tweets and a Twitter Space, we shared tips and strategies for protection in the street, reminding girls to weigh the risks and potentials of filming the harasser. For example, if they are not surrounded by people, it may be risky to challenge the harasser with a phone, as we cannot predict the reaction. Their safety in this and all scenarios should be prioritised.

Such mobilisation marked an instance of critical allyship as *rafyqāt*, resisting together from our diverse positionalities to act with responsibility and care about others (Ghabra, 2015). To expand and elaborate on the aforementioned concerns, I wanted to write a ~~n Arabic-language~~ non-academic in-depth piece about harassment in Arabic. From a decolonial and transnational perspective, writing in Arabic challenges the dominance and entitlement of the English language 'as the main linguistic lens to shape our intellectual thoughts' (Falcón, 2016, p. 189). However, I wanted it to be a co-authored piece with an activist living in Iraq. I initially discussed the idea with a fellow activist who took part in my study. Given that choosing the right platform to support non-academic means of knowledge production is as important as the act of writing and publication, we chose *Jummar Media*, a non-partisan Iraqi platform launched in early October 2022. The platform is committed to the ethics of journalism produced 'for and from the community, dealing with the issues of its marginalised groups and highlighting their stories'.[12] These values are compatible with critical feminist principles and the ethics of the activist fellowship method. Moreover, I knew the managing editor from an earlier collaboration on the Tishreen Revolution, so I trusted this platform would be the right place for the article. Coincidently, the editor approached me, proposing that I write something about the visual documentation of street harassment. When I asked the editor if they were interested in publishing a co-authored article, the response was positive. I have since ~~have~~ co-authored another Arabic piece with the same activist and continue to collaborate with other Iraqi feminists through various

[12] Jummar-Media, 'About', Who are we? - جمار (jummar.media) [last accessed 01 November 2022].

means, including offering to both read their written work and provide feedback for development.

Although writing in Arabic is crucial for communicating my research to local communities, writing and circulating it in English is equally important to reach a broader academic and non-academic community in the West. Thus, translation becomes a necessary, yet challenging, tool to use in our research practices so that 'feminist thoughts that are developed in non-English-speaking Global South countries … [reach] feminists in the Global North' (Bose, 2011, p. 748). It is a strategy for engaging in bilingual communication, moving away from monolingualism, and overcoming language barriers (Falcón, 2016, also see Marcus, 1995). For these reasons, I consciously translated the co-authored piece into English and published it on the same Iraqi platform after negotiating the point with the founders and editors. My major in Translation Studies facilitated this task for me, and I endeavour to continue translating my work in both directions whenever possible.

Critical allyship is a committed practice of demonstrating solidarity with other fellow activists, irrespective of our differences and disagreements. For example, one famous Iraqi female activist was shamed online, following her involvement in an online outcry against article 398 of the Iraqi penal code stipulating that the penalty of the rapist can be annulated should they marry their victims. Her Twitter account was suspended due to reports, but many other activists who do not share the same vision supported her nonetheless.[13] As bell hooks (1984, p. 67) reminds us, 'Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity ... [they need] ongoing commitment'. However, one must ask, is it always possible to express solidarity and ally with all fellow activists, regardless of all dimensions

[13] #ماسة_فخرنا - Twitter Search / Twitter

of differences, including political or sexual orientation? In the penultimate section, I discuss the limitations of the fellowship-based method, with a focus on moments of inevitable silence I have confronted in my research and activism.

Activist silences

The dimensions and examples I have shared thus far reflect the strengths of a fellowship method and its potential to navigate relationships between the researcher and ~~her~~ their informants, as well as the broader community online., ~~ethically~~ Ethically adhering to activist transparency and critical allyship can foster, ~~fostering~~ collaboration and solidarity around shared struggle. This could not have been possible without speaking up and courageously breaking the silence around sensitive topics, actions that lie at the heart of feminist activism and research. However, there are times when speaking up becomes not only challenging but also potentially dangerous, leading to unintended consequences that endanger the lives of others. In such cases, silence may become a necessary choice.

Commented [A25]: Their?

Commented [A26]: Sentence a bit unclear. Maybe start a new one from this point.

Silence may sound counterintuitive to feminist epistemology, research, and ethics, but as Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010) remind us, it does matter. The meanings and effects of silence vary according to our geographical location, positionality, relationships with other participants, and the broader context we are involved in as researchers. There are various ways in which 'one may silence or be silenced, keep silent out of respect, rage, fear or shame, or even as a mode of resistance' (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010, p. 1). Silence can be a responsible choice arising from legitimate care for the safety and security of those living in authoritarian contexts. In the Saudi case, expressing a political view critical of Mohammed Bin Salman's rule in a space opened by women inside the kingdom may be life-threatening. I have chosen to remain silent in such spaces even though I fully recognise

that I will, in all likelihood, be muted should I dare share unwelcome political views. Herein lies the limitations of the fellowship method.

Further, in my activism and ethnography, I could not engage with women who are not within the domain of heteronormativity. On Twitter, I follow those who dare to reveal their sexualities, most of whom live outside the four countries in question. Moreover, I do intervene to challenge homophobic discourses. Nevertheless, I cannot do more within these parameters. A strong stigma already exists around feminism in the context of the four case studies, where feminism is equated to lesbianism in a demeaning, dehumanising, and demonising way. Speaking up about marginalised sexualities would affirm the latter narrative, running the risk of tarnishing all other women, endangering them, and jeopardising their safety. Unlike the vulnerable position of my participants and other fellow activists, I enjoy a relatively safer position in speaking, researching, and writing from the UK. I would not be affected by the same consequences the women in these regions may be subjected to. Meanwhile, openly speaking up about such taboos can harshly backfire on these marginalised groups, further generating intense feelings of hatred and incitement.

In December 2022, a founding member of the Basra Feminist Team, a voluntary group of young feminists from the southern Iraqi province of Basra, reached out to me, expressing her fears after a newly launched Iraqi media platform posted an anti-feminism video on YouTube. In this video, and another one released shortly afterwards, the platform used content from the Basra Feminist ~~team~~ Team to create their anti-feminist narrative. ~~To explain,~~ ~~an~~An online session was organised by the Basra Feminist Team and published on their YouTube channel, in which ~~-~~ a ~~team~~ Team member and co-founder responded to a question about homosexuality. This was taken out of context and reframed by the Iraqi media platform to demonise the team as promoters of homosexuality and atheism. The member in question asked me not to share the videos on my Twitter account or to talk about

Commented [A27]: ???

You explain to the readers, or the founding member of Basra Feminist explain to the public (or whom)?

them publicly, lest it draw more attention and increase their visibility. She told me that if the video reached the families of her fellow members, it would be 'catastrophic'. She needed only support and empathy rather than public activism. I respected her request and never commented about the two videos on my Twitter account. Further, I can only write about this situation now after negotiating the matter with the activist in question. It is important to the Basra Feminist Team that the world knows the challenges they face and how such adversity can cripple their activism. Indeed, the ~~team~~ Team published a statement on their Twitter and Instagram accounts denying the accusations without re-posting the videos or revealing the name of the agency in question and, moreover, without subscribing to homophobic tropes.[14] However, their activism has been significantly impacted and undermined ever since.

Commented [A28]: Previously, team wasn't capitalised. Be consistent throughout.

Conclusions: The way forward

Feminist activist ethnographic research exclusively conducted online is challenging. First and foremost, it requires long-term immersion in social media as an activist with a prominent and active presence. Such immersion is vital to gaining access to dynamic and ever-evolving fieldwork with no clear boundaries, building rapport with other feminists, and establishing ties with many of them. In my personal experience as an activist in social media spaces, I found it hard to develop friendship relationships with other women activists in the traditional sense of the word and through the lens of my cultural background, lacking the in-person encounter. I illustrated in this article how this difficulty was fruitful in paving the way for adopting a method based on a fellowship affiliation in the two senses of peer- and comrade-driven relationships. Drawing on Söderström et al. (2021), I contended that this method enables the researcher and

[14] فريق البصرة النسوي on Twitter: "▼بيان صحفي على هامش مايتم الترويج لهُ في الفترة الأخيرة عن فريق البصرة النسوي. https://t.co/8K08m0dV5E" / Twitter

her participants to work together from a stance of critique, respect, and responsibility, without feeling the heavy burden that may come with a friendship relationship.

It is almost impossible for activists from diverse backgrounds to agree on everything. Conformity may become counterintuitive and unproductive in the long term. In practice, researchers need to be committed to a continuous process of activist transparency and critical allyship beyond the mere disclosure of one's identity and research, and more towards action. I have presented concrete examples from my work to demonstrate the potential of honest, respectful, and compassionate interaction with others in creating an environment where collaboration, reciprocity, and solidarity can be achieved. Nevertheless, the potential of allyship can be challenged and undermined when we find ourselves caught between a rock and a hard place. Silence can become a very hard, yet less risky, alternative.

Additionally, in a rapidly changing internet-mediated medium, questions remain about our ability to connect with other feminists and women activists across borders through Twitter. At the time of writing in May 2023, Elon Musk, Twitter's new owner, announced significant changes to the platform, including re-branding the app as X, and fees to obtain the 'blue tick' verification mark (Conger, 2023). My initial observations of the changes that have so far occurred indicate that the feminist territories that I have discussed earlier in the article are increasingly becoming interrupted. In other words, visibility and connectivity with other feminists who do not subscribe to the verification tag ~~is~~ are impacted, an issue that requires our attention in future studies. Because of this, in January 2023, I decided to utilise Instagram to communicate with other feminists in addition to Twitter. Would Instagram provide a better alternative to resisting the changes brought to Twitter (X)? Would its visual affordances create new opportunities for feminist connectivity and consciousness-raising? While it is early to answer such questions, moving to a different platform highlights the dynamicity of online

spaces and digital ethnographies and the constant need to experiment and negotiate with new tools and platforms.

Notwithstanding the significant challenges associated with non-academic activist work, particularly the exhausting, demanding, and time-consuming nature it involves, and the continuous pressure on researchers to satisfy institutional and epistemological requirements (Flood et al., 2013), a fellowship-based method instils a lifelong commitment to others, whether participants or communities. Responsibility and commitment~~This is~~ make~~s~~ our academic work meaningful, valuable, and rewarding. When the cause is the field, there is no departure.

Commented [A29]: For this sentence to be clearer, spell out what "this" is and implicates should be important.

Commented [A30]: Very powerful!

References

Åhäll, L., 2018. Affect as methodology: Feminism and the politics of emotion. *International Political Sociology*, 12(1), pp. 36–52.

Ahmed, S., 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Airoldi, M., 2018. Ethnography and the digital fields of social media. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(6), pp. 661–673.

Al Jallad, N., 2018. A lexicological study of friendship in Arabic. *Transletters: International Journal of Translation and Interpreting*, (2), pp. 49–62.

Al-Ali, N., 2019. Feminist dilemmas: how to talk about gender-based violence in relation to the Middle East?. *Feminist Review*, 122(1), pp. 16–31.

Alcoff, L., 1991. The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural ~~critique~~Critique*, (20), pp. 5–32.

Aldroubi, M., 2020. Uproar in Iraq over woman allegedly set on fire by husband. The National, 13 April. Available at: https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/uproar-in-iraq-over-woman-allegedly-set-on-fire-by-husband-1.1005660 [Last accessed 15 October 2022].

Al-Kandari, A. and Gaither, T.K., 2011. Arabs, the west and public relations: a critical/cultural study of Arab cultural values. *Public Relations Review*, 37(3), pp. 266–273.

Anctil Avoine, P., 2022. Insurgent peace research: affects, friendship and feminism as methods. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 22(5), pp. 435–455.

Baltzersen, R.K., 2010. Radical transparency: open access as a key concept in wiki pedagogy. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(6). pp. 791–809.

Barakat, H., 1993. *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beneito-Montagut, R., 2011. Ethnography goes online: towards a user-centred methodology to research interpersonal communication on the internet. *Qualitative Research*, 11(6), pp. 716–735.

Bose, C.E., 2011. Eastern sociological society presidential address: globalizing gender issues: many voices, different choices. *Sociological Forum*, 26(4), pp. 739–753.

Brah, A. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London and New York: Routledge

Boyko, K. and Horbyk, R., 2022. A Medium is born: Participatory media and the rise of Clubhouse in Russia and Ukraine during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 10(1), pp. 8-28.

Chambers, D., 2013. *Social Media and Personal Relationships: Online Intimacies and Networked Friendship*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Conger, K., 2023. How Elon Musk is changing the Twitter experience. The New York Times, 7 April. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/07/technology/elon-musk-twitter-changes.html [Last accessed 30 June 2023].

Cuomo, D. and Massaro, V.A., 2016. Boundary-making in feminist research: new methodologies for 'intimate insiders'. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(1), pp. 94–106.

Danley, S., 2021. An activist in the field: social media, ethnography, and community. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 43(3), pp. 397–413.

Davis, D.A. and Craven, C., 2020. Feminist ethnography. In N.A. Naples, ed. *Companion to Feminist Studies*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 281–299.

De Regt, M., 2015. Noura and me: friendship as method in times of crisis. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 44(1-2), pp. 43–70.

Décieux, J.P., Heinen, A. and Willems, H., 2019. Social media and its role in friendship-driven interactions among young people: a mixed methods study. *Young*, 27(1), pp. 18–31.

Delmar, R., 1994. Defining feminism and feminist theory. In A.C. Herman and A.J. Stewart, eds. *Theorizing Feminism: Parallel Trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 5–28.

Du, S. and Gregory, S., 2016. The echo chamber effect in Twitter: does community polarization increase?. In H. Cherifi, S Gaito, W Quattrociocchi, and A Sala, eds. Complex Networks & Their Applications V: Proceedings of the 5th International Workshop on Complex Networks and Their Applications. Cham: Springer, pp. 373–378.

Ellis, C., 2007. Telling secrets, revealing lives: relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Research*, 13(1), pp. 3–29.

Falcón, S.M., 2016. Transnational feminism as a paradigm for decolonizing the practice of research: identifying feminist principles and methodology criteria for US-based scholars. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 37(1), pp. 174–194.

Fay, M., 2007. Mobile subjects, mobile methods: doing virtual ethnography in a feminist online network. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 8(3): art. 14.

Ferguson, M.L., 2010. Choice feminism and the fear of politics. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(1), pp. 247–253.

Flood, M., Martin, B. and Dreher, T., 2013. Combining academia and activism: common obstacles and useful tools. *Australian Universities Review*, 55(1), pp. 17–26.

Flowers, J.C., 2019. The affective politics of Twitter. In D. Whittkower, ed. 2019 Computer Ethics – Philosophical Enquiry (CEPE) Proceedings, 2019(1), p. 15.

Frank, A., 2004. The Renewal of Generosity. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gajjala R., 2002. An interrupted postcolonial/feminist cyberethnography: complicity and resistance in the "Cyberfield." *Feminist Media Studies*, 2(2), pp. 177–193.

Gajjala R., 2004. *Cyberselves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Garton, F. and S. Copland., 2010. 'I like this interview; I get cakes and cats!': the effect of prior relationships on interview talk. *Qualitative Research*, 10(5), pp. 1–10.

Gates, T.G., Bennett, B. and Baines, D., 2021. Strengthening critical allyship in social work education: opportunities in the context of #BlackLivesMatter and COVID-19. *Social Work Education*, 42(3), pp. 371–387.

Gemen, R., 2021. Gender-based violence during COVID-19. European Public Health Alliance, 25 November. Available at: https://epha.org/gender-based-violence-during-covid-19/ [Last accessed 20 June 2023].

Ghabra, H., 2015. Disrupting privileged and oppressed spaces: reflecting ethically on my Arabness through feminist autoethnography. *Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research*, 14 (1), pp. 1–16.

Hamed, G., 2012. Friends, relationships, and family in the Arab society. Canada: Institute for Middle East Studies, 7, pp. 2–11.

Haraway, D., 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. New York: Routledge.

Hine, C., 2015. *Ethnography for the internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London: Routledge.

hooks, b., 1984. Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. Boston: South End.

Humphrey, C., 2007. Insider-outsider: activating the hyphen. *Action Research*, 5(1), pp. 11–26.

Indigenous Action. 2014. Accomplices not allies: abolishing the ally industrial complex. Indigenous Action, 4 May. Available at: http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/ [Last accessed 28 June 2023].

Khalil, A. and Storie, L.K., 2021. Social media and connective action: the case of the Saudi women's movement for the right to drive. *New Media & Society*, 23(10), pp. 3038–3061.

Labaree, R.V., 2002. The risk of "going observationalist": negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), pp. 97–122.

Lilja, M., 2017. Dangerous bodies, matter and emotions: Public assemblies and embodied resistance. *Journal of Political Power*, 10-(3), pp. 342-352.

Liu, W., Huang, A. and Ma, J., 2015. II. Young activists, new movements: contemporary Chinese queer feminism and transnational genealogies. Feminism & Psychology, 25(1), pp. 11–17.

Lugones, M.C. and Spelman, E.V., 1983. Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism, and the demand for "the woman's voice". Women's Studies International Forum, 6(6), pp. 573–581.

Lugones, M.C., 1995. Sisterhood and friendship as feminist models. In P.A. Weiss and M. Friedman, eds. Feminism and Community. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 135–146.

Marcus, G.E., 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), pp. 95–117.

Markham, A.N., 2005. The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 793–820

Mittal, S. and Singh, T., 2020. Gender-based violence during COVID-19 pandemic: a mini-review. *Frontiers in global women's health*, pp.1-7.

Morrow, O., Hawkins, R. and Kern, L., 2015. Feminist research in online spaces. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(4), pp. 526–543.

Nydell, M.K., 2018. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times*, 6th edn. London: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Owton, H. and Allen-Collinson, J., 2014. Close but not too close: friendship as method (ology) in ethnographic research encounters. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 43(3), pp. 283–305.

Paechter, C., 2013. Researching sensitive issues online: implications of a hybrid insider/outsider position in a retrospective ethnographic study. *Qualitative Research*, 13(1), pp. 71–86.

Papacharissi, Z., 2015. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Postill, J. and Pink, S., 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia*, 145(1), pp. 123–134.

Radcliffe, D., 2021. Audio chatrooms like Clubhouse have become the hot new media by tapping into the age-old appeal of the human voice. The Conversation, 25 February. Available at: https://theconversation.com/audio-chatrooms-like-clubhouse-have-become-the-hot-new-media-by-tapping-into-the-age-old-appeal-of-the-human-voice-155444 [Last accessed 30 July 2022].

Ramírez-i-Ollé, M., 2019. Friendship as a scientific method. *The Sociological Review*, 67(2), pp. 299–317.

Ryan-Flood, R. and Gill, R., eds., 2010. *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process*. London: Routledge.

Rentschler, C.A., 2017. Bystander intervention, feminist hashtag activism, and the anti-carceral politics of care. *Feminist Media Studies*, 17(4), pp. 565–584.

Sharp J. and Dowler L., 2011. Framing the field. In V. Del Casino, M. Thomas, P. Cloke and R. Panelli, eds. *A Companion to Social Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 146–160.

Smith, L.T., 2021. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Söderström, J., Åkebo, M. and Jarstad, A.K., 2021. Friends, fellows, and foes: a new framework for studying relational peace. *International Studies Review*, 23(3), pp. 484–508.

Stacey, J., 1988. Can there be a feminist ethnography?. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(1), pp. 21–27.

Tafakori, S., 2021. Digital feminism beyond nativism and empire: affective territories of recognition and competing claims to suffering in Iranian women's campaigns. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 47(1), pp. 47–80.

Tafakori, S., 2023. Wild intimacies: Justice-seeking mothers in Iran, networked activism and the affective politics of mourning. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26-(5), pp. 698-721.

Taylor, J., 2011. The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research. *Qualitative Research*, 11(1), pp. 3–22.

Tillmann-Healy, L.M., 2003. Friendship as method. Qualitative Inquiry, 9(5), pp. 729–749.

Tuzcu, P., 2016. "Allow access to location?": digital feminist geographies. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(1), pp. 150–163.

Wang, D. and Liu, S., 2021. Doing ethnography on social media: a methodological reflection on the study of online groups in China. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(8-9), pp. 977–987.

Weiss, R.S., 1998. A taxonomy of relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(5), pp. 671–683.

Winter, R. and Lavis, A., 2020. Looking, but not listening? Theorizing the practice and ethics of online ethnography. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 15(1-2), pp. 55–62.

Zhu, B., 2021. Clubhouse: a popular audio social application. In Proceedings of the 2021 International Conference on Public Relations and Social Sciences (ICPRSS 2021). Paris: Atlantis Press, pp. 575–579.