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Project Report of 2023: SVP-2363

"Virtual Ethnography"

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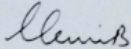
SRIVIPRA PROJECT 2023

Title: Virtual Ethnography

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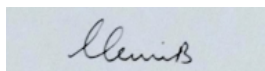
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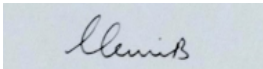
This is to certify that the aforementioned students from Sri Venkateswara College have participated in the summer project SVP-2363 titled "**Virtual Ethnography**". The participants have carried out the research project work under my guidance and supervision from 15 June, 2023 to 15th September 2023. The work carried out is original and carried out in an online/offline/hybrid mode.

Signature of Mentor

Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to our Principal Prof. C. Sheela Reddy for providing me with this opportunity to carry out my project under the Sri Venkateswara Internship Program for Research in Academics, and I would also like to thank the Sri-Vipra Convenors for facilitating the programme and ensuring its successful completion.

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DIGITAL HATE: An analysis of Social Perceptions

Submitted by Bhoomi Bohara, B.A.(H) Sociology, 0821011

I feel in the mood for a stupid and pointless argument in an online forum today.

— Walker, How the Internet Brings Us Together (2007)

Net hate is destructive but what all constitutes

the idea of hate speech on digital platforms (?)

is a beleaguering question in the contemporary times.

In the purview of incidence of increased hate speech on social media, the research is aimed to find out the social perceptions of digital hate by engaging in the method of carrying out interviews. What constitutes the idea of hate speech on digital platforms according to people? Who are the primary targets of net hate according to people? What is the motivation of digital hate speakers according to people? What is the difference between offline and online hate speech according to people? What can be the relation between digital hate and hate crimes according to the people? What can be the more viable solution to counter digital hate – counter speech or ban – according to people? The answer to all these questions lies in a sociological analysis of digital hate, focusing primarily on "according to people" aspect and moving past the generalisations to reach the particularities.

Numerous scholars of the legal and philosophical affiliation have recurringly taken upon them the task of defining hate speech in the meatspace and thus, a dive into the offline discourse serves as a desideratum before entering the unchartered waters of digital hate. In this regard, the literature review is divided into three sections, involving the seminal works of Mari Matsuda, Alexander Brown, Raphael Cohen-Almagor, Peter John Chen, Maxime Lepoutre, Christopher A. Bail.

(I) Myth of Hate and Family Resemblances

{Theorising Hate Speech in the Physical World}

"microaggression," by which they mean one of those many sudden, stunning, or dispiriting transactions that mar the days of women and folks of color." —
Richard Delgado

Professor **Richard Delgado**, also a Critical Race Theory pioneer, lobbied for tort remedy to deal with the harms of racist speech via "*Words that Wound: A Tort Action for Racial Insults, Epithets, and Name-Calling* (1982)". Following Delgado's breakthrough, **Mari Matsuda**, in her praiseworthy work, "*Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victims' Story* (1989)" laid down that formal criminal and administrative sanction with public prosecution can counter racist speech. Matsuda is a significant legal scholar who attempted to contrast legal concept (American – based) of hate speech with an ideal type of what the legal concept could or should be. She included various legal cases to show the limitations of the legal concept of hate speech as a form of protected speech. The term 'hate speech' was used to "*highlight the way in which the legal system in the United States failed victims of harmful racist speech by providing them with inadequate means*" (Brown 2017). Matsuda's novel work proved foundational in enriching the existing canon by inspiring many contemporary academicians like **Alexander Brown**. In addition to bursting the dominant rhetoric, Brown bridged the gap between the legal and the philosophical via a two-part article, "What is Hate Speech? (2017)".

"WHAT IS HATE SPEECH? PART 1: THE MYTH OF HATE"

Brown's prime work lies in the conceptual analysis of the term 'hate speech' which goes beyond legal texts by drawing a boundary between the legal concept hate speech and the ordinary concept hate speech. Using methods distinctive to analytic philosophy, Brown intended, "*to explode the myth that emotions, feelings, or attitudes of hate or hatred are part of the essential nature of hate speech*" (Brown 2017). Legal Scholars have implicitly or explicitly tried to reach the putative definitions of the term 'hate speech' which serves ideal in carrying out legal regulations. The legal concept hate speech is an umbrella concept covering from incitement to hatred laws to laws denouncing group libel and limiting negative stereotyping. Hate speech is not a mere legal concept breathing within legal systems but rather it is an ordinary concept as well marking its acquaintance among the non-legalese and thus, extending its reach to social, political, cultural, and economic domains. The term 'hate speech' was coined by legal scholars in the 1980s and currently occupies the place in historical succession of terms widely used to refer to forms of speech attacking members of groups identified by protected characteristics. The legal concept hate speech cannot exist without state's ratification but the same doesn't hold true in case of the ordinary concept. Inarguably, the legal meaning precedes the birth of the ordinary meaning and the overlaps are significant to the extent that philosophical body of knowledge is strikingly heavy with legal influences

too. Similarities can be traced between the works of legal scholars like Kent Greenawalt and philosophers like Susan Brison and Timothy Shiell. The top-down (legal-philosophical) approach is problematic as some assumptions common in the legal discourse make their way into philosophy blocking the possibility of raising a challenge against them. The two such dominant assumptions are, first, "*legal scholars have implied that emotions, feelings, or attitudes of hate or hatred are part of the essential nature of hate speech*" and second, "*the meaning of the term 'hate speech' is compositional, that is, a function of the literal meanings of the terms 'hate' and 'speech'.*" (Brown 2017). Brown challenges these assumptions by putting 'myth of hate' and 'myth of compositionality' at the centre and proving that the semantics of the term 'hate speech' are non – compositional.

"WHAT IS HATE SPEECH? PART 2: FAMILY RESEMBLANCES"

"*we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping*

and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small".

— Ludwig Wittgenstein

Brown's understanding of hate speech leads to its description as, "*a heterogenous collection of expressive phenomena.*" The term 'hate speech' is not a univocal term but is rather an opaque and equivocal idiom representing a family of meanings. It is applied to "*countless permutations of relatively unlimited types of context, speech content, emotions, feelings, or attitudes, speakers, and activity.*" Brown asserts his claims by employing four methods of conceptual analysis to explain the ordinary concept hate speech and its application. These include purpose-oriented analysis, folk platitudes analysis, intuitions about cases analysis, and ordinary language analysis. The need to define the ordinary concept hate speech pans across disciplines with Sociologists offering a glance into hate speech – group dynamics relationship while political scientists and cultural ethnologists engaging in the techniques of discourse analysis. In addition to having a pan-disciplinary character, the term has rapidly extended its boundaries by entering into popular culture, mainstream media. The 'speech act theory' is another medium of analysis which asserts that the term 'hate speech' fits in all the three categories of J. L. Austin's distinction of speech act – locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Brown's understanding of the term 'hate speech' through de-compositional analysis, purpose-oriented analysis, folk platitudes analysis, intuitions about cases analysis, and ordinary language analysis leads to the conclusion that hate speech is a 'family resemblances' concept. The family resemblances concept was given by Wittgenstein and its application to the term hate speech implies that, "*everything that falls under the*

concept shares at least one similar quality, feature, or descriptive property with at least one other thing that falls under the concept, even if there is no single quality, feature, or descriptive property that is common to all things that fall under the concept" (Brown 2017). And one can become a competent user of the term using 'participatory knowledge' (the term given by Oswald Hanfling).

(II) Conceptualisation of Digital Hate

{Ethics, Rule of Golden Mean, Big Data, Spiral of Silence, Quasi-statistical}

"The Internet is that opportunity we've been looking for … We never were able to reach the audience that we can now so easily and inexpensively"

- a statement by Don Black (Werts 2000).

Don Black established the Stormfront site in January 11, 1995 and compelled us to ponder whether internet is a useful asset for hate mongers amplifying the hate phenomenon. Net has huge potential to enhance partisan interests and gives people access to hate sites containing textual, visual, or audio-based rhetoric of hate. Such sites spew hate and promulgate anti-religious, anti-abortion, anti-liberal, anti-communist, and anti-feminist propaganda. Raphael Cohen – Almagor, in his "*Countering Hate on the Internet*" laid down practical proposals to counter net hate, delegating discussions around education, counter speech, net citizenship, Corporate Social Responsibility, international cooperation, adherence to international laws and conventions, search engine results, etc. There is a need to strike a right balance between free speech and responsible speech for which Aristotle's Rule of the Golden Mean can be applied and a middle ground between the extremes can be found. It is essential to change the net human behaviour by updating our vocabularies and adapting our theoretical frameworks to new circumstances and innovations. In "*Fighting Hate and Bigotry on the Internet*", Cohen-Almagor discusses the role of applied ethics to fight digital hate by accentuating upon moral and social responsibility. It is a neglected approach in the New Media literature but the perspective can supplement various discussions in the realm of law. Internet is continuously abused by hate mongers and it can be deduced that, "*The Internet is not the problem. The problem arises where it is utilized to undermine our well-being as autonomous beings living in free societies.*" (Cohen-Almagor 2011). There is growing importance of internet and contemporary world holds in great potential for social media. The digital world serves as a field of enquiry in the universe of academia for political scientists (explaining political

mobilization), public health scholars (focusing on twitter trends in diseases), communication scholars (using twitter to predict stock market fluctuations), humanities scholars (pioneering the field of digital humanities). Similarly, one such arena of interaction is created by combining theoretical foundations of cultural sociology with methodological capacity of computer science to move beyond micro-level analysis. The big data movement have the potential to fix cultural sociology's theory–data disequilibrium but the amalgamation of the two disciplines has its own vexing issues. The interaction of the two can serve as a guide for scholars to study digital hate using methods of automated text extraction and classification to understand the associated cultural frames. Christopher Bail, while measuring culture with big data, accurately suggests "*big data methods should be viewed as a complement - not a replacement- for the tried and tested techniques of cultural sociology*" (Bail 2014).

The digital environment is expansive and open with a belief that, "*Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it*" (a quoted observation of Heath Gilmore cited in Elmer-Dewitt, 1993). But is it true in entirety or not is an underlying question. Does internet play a role in reinforcing 'popular opinion' by suppressing dissenting views through "*generation of disparaging meta-commentary, hostility and negativity*" or not? (Chen 2013). This can be examined by the theory of 'spiral of silence' proposed by Elizabeth Noell-Neuman. Spiral proposes that media systems generate a zeitgeist encouraging public discussion on 'popular or acceptable' topics and at the same time discouraging views which fall outside the 'charmed circle'. It might be true to an extent but functioning of digital media challenges the grounds of theory in cyberspace. This leads to another question – whether 'quasi-statistical sense' (achieved in interpersonal interactions) is supported or undermined by digital media? Quasi-statistical sense allows people to assume that they can sense and figure out the prevailing public opinion and digital media plays a large part in determining what the dominant opinion is since our direct observation is limited to a small percentage of population. Another dimension to feature in the spiral theory is Foucault's panopticism which reflects how the routinely surveillance of the online behaviour of individuals limits the creative nature of internet which can further lead to suppression of diversity of speech by majority opinion. Spiral theory along with quasi-statistical sense and panopticons can be used to analyse digital hate.

There are vital differences between online and offline hate speech. Brown's hypothesis,

"*as compared to offline modes of communication, the Internet encourages forms of hate speech that are spontaneous in virtue of the combination of qualities that online communication possesses*" (Brown 2018) summarises the distinction very well. A concerning issue regarding online hate speech is that it has become a choice of method among hate groups and they use it extensively to build a sense of community. A related discussion arises on what can be done to control the public expression of hateful viewpoints. Academicians like Jeremy Waldron suggests bans as the most compelling way to regulate hate speech in public discourse. Waldron's argument draws a line between hate-banning and hate-allowing societies which is highly problematic as suggested by Maxime Lepoutre because the former is overly idealistic while the latter is overly charitable. If left on the targets of hate speech, how will they block the harm? Well, they frequently lack the authority. Corey Brettschneider label both state ban and response of private citizens to hate speech as misleading. An alternative to bans is then state-based counter speech where the state dawn the attire of an active speaker endowed with expressive powers but active involvement of the State can simultaneously give rise to Robin West's 'Hypocritical State'. In fairness, counter speech and bans are companions in guilt but bans are treated as guiltier in the current discourse on hate speech. In relation to digital hate however, the Internet Companies play a crucial role in management of harmful content and in the past, many such companies have been charged with breach of corporate social responsibility (Raphael Cohen-Almagor wrote extensively on Facebook acting as a forum of hate mongering in his, "*Holocaust Denial is a form of Hate Speech*").

(III) Synthesis

The existing body of literature on hate speech focuses on primarily defining the term 'hate speech' by distinguishing it from the legal concept 'hate speech' along with challenging 'myth of hate' and 'myth of compositionality'. Most of the works focus on finding ways to counter hate speech and how 'instantaneousness' serves as a major characteristic in defining online (as compared to offline) hate speech. The role of Internet Service Providers in the regulation of digital hate is accentuated and there are deliberations on the part played by the State as well. The obsession to arrive at a universal and generalised definition is understandable but enough attention has not been given to the subjectivist position of individuals. Hate speech in the physical world is said to be directed against groups mostly but digital hate can very easily be inflicted on an individual who, sitting behind a screen can be traumatised more in the absence of a sense

of community. Individual experiences and opinions acquire a significant place in this discourse of digital hate. Through this paper, I intend to bridge the gap between theory and practice by checking the extent to which theoretical concepts regarding hate speech/digital hate are applicable in reality by reflecting upon the general/public view. A micro-level analysis shall be productive to better understand the social perceptions of digital hate while drawing a comparison with the larger canon of knowledge available.

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Impact of Social Media on Community Life in Odisha

Darpan Bhalla

Introduction

The research looks into the prevalence of social media and its consequent impact on the idea of a traditional community through the tool of ethnography of people living in a village by trying to understand how social media has made them switch to digital medium of interactions in opposed to the earlier human to human interactions which fostered the idea of a traditional community and also through observations trying to understand how deep it is.

With the availability of cheap smartphones & internet rates, the access to social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter & Instagram has increased particularly in the rural areas of the country, linking people who are assumed to have not had access to quality education. This eventually translates into the fact that the majority of the rural population might not be competent enough to understand the impact of such platforms. These platforms not only serve as places where people can connect to each other digitally but also get a sense of values, beliefs, knowledge or languages that might not be associated with the traditional community they are already a part of, thereby eroding the sense of 'togetherness' earlier understood to be central for functioning of a community.

It is therefore important to understand what role social media is playing, how much is it impacting the traditional practices, are people aware about such changes as a consequence of their social media use, does it impact people unequally and is there a flipside as well — in the sense that by sacrificing the idea of a traditional community we might be transiting to global interconnectedness in terms of cultural relations and how we as humans interact.

Literature Review

Interactions taking place on online platforms particularly through social media may be seen as lacking the intricate part of face-to-face interactions which is an important component of an 'offline' community. Technology is seen as a threat to the idea of community since it has made people more mobile across vast geographical networks. People still look to derive a sense of belonging from their local 'offline' neighbourhood communities. It is important to understand how people are functioning within these communities in the face of a ubiquitous social media (Nick Foard, ?). Madianou and Miller (2013) describe the multiplex of interconnected media spaces and the multi-plex of these platforms as 'polymedia'. The broad shift to social media can be associated with the increased availability and affordability of digital spaces and mobile phones.

Social media has been intertwined with our day-to-day interactions. Technological developments through the internet, mobile phones, and social media have now been integrated with the everyday life or the 'real world' through their 'hard' infrastructural supports, capacity to link people and places and through the mediation of social spaces by digital information (Marlowe et. Al, 2017). These sites can also serve the purpose of overcoming social isolation experienced when one migrates by maintaining the connection with not only friends and family but also create new connections within the local community at the place of destination. This on the other side can in most of the cases make them reduce the number of visits back home since there is always a sense of being 'connected' on social media. It may be important to note that excessive use of these platforms would come at a cost to maintenance of 'real life' proximate connections which require time and emotional investment (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013).

Cultural identity, consisting of the set of ideals, traditions, values and day to day practices that a community may engage in, is very centric to the human experience. Social Media's effect on that identity is a matter of concern and it is important to gauge if there is any change in terms of its impact on the variables of culture. A study on the same lines from Egypt found that at least 40 percent of people sound a shift in their cultural identity in relation with their use of social media platforms (Radwan, 2022).

The millennial generation for which being on social media has become the norm in order to be truly 'social' have come to accept online platforms as the natural and given conditions for

social interaction. For those already there, opting out is not an option: it would mean opting out of sociality altogether, since online activities are completely intertwined with offline social life. The late adopters are forever behind, while the early adopters surge ahead, apparently increasing their lead which implies that the impact on children will be steep as compared to the aged in the household. A lot of studies over the course of time have emphasised on the psychological impacts of social media attributing negative feelings to a variety of causes (Van Dijck, 2016).

There is also a debate whether social media makes people look happier since these platforms may not portray what is 'authentic' and rather be successful in deceiving its users who interact with happy pictures or positive messages posted by their friends and family. Platforms such as Facebook messenger, WhatsApp or other one-to-one communicative sites may carry more information about the user's 'authentic' emotional states, while more public forms of expression like Tweets or Facebook status updates are sites in which individuals are more likely to 'perform' happiness to craft a particular view of their lives for their presumed audience (Miller D. et. Al, 2016).

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Virtually Walking the City

Sneha Alexander

Introduction

The modern city is an amalgamation of myriads of experiences and ways of life. Offering employment to some, education to others, the city has us all competing for space in its orderly chaos. The city itself has many faces and functions for the many people it holds. However, in times of modernity, it is made accessible to us in different forms. From memoirs of experiences to detailed maps, the city is experienced, its experience abstracted and represented in various forms. Standing at the intersection of phenomenology, ethnography and virtual reality, this paper tries to understand the city as a virtually lived experience - How does one walk and experience the city virtually? How is this experience different from physically walking the streets? And finally, what remains when we abstract the experience of walking, away from its physicality?

Phenomenology and the idea of Experience

Despite being a widely influential stream of thought in post-modern times, phenomenology often escapes easy definition due to its internal diversity and emphasis on the subjectivity of experience. Developed by German philosopher Edmund Husserl and later by Alfred Schutz, phenomenology understands all of the physical and social world as a construction. Nothing is real, but only exists in relativity. All that we experience and believe to be real, is a product of the ability of human consciousness to understand and interpret the world. Phenomenology then, studies human experience and structures of consciousness.

"All empirical sciences refer to the world as pre-given; but they and their instruments are themselves elements of this world. Only a philosophical doubt cast upon the implicit presuppositions of all our habitual thinking - scientific or not - can guarantee the 'exactitude' not only of such a philosophical attempt itself but of all the sciences dealing directly or indirectly with our experiences of the world." (Schutz, 1975, p. 54)

This emphasis on the subjectivity of experiences allows us to understand the various meanings encoded in the city and our actions in it.

Walking the City

This subjective construction of own's experiences becomes extremely important an aspect of urbanism, wherein the individual is confronted with a vast variety of stimuli on a daily basis. How each person experiences the city is different based on their way of life. How you commute, where you live, whom you interact with all come together to shape one's idea of the city. These subjective realities of the city dweller, may be irreconcilably different from each other.

One of the many ways of experiencing the city is by walking. One of the first to highlight walking as a means of understanding the city, was German philosopher Walter Benjamin.

He drew from the work of Baudelaire, to talk about 'the flaneur'. The flaneur was a mythical-like character who would roam the streets of Paris, strolling, wandering, observing, personally detached from all that he sees happening in the city, yet keenly interested in the same. The concept of the flaneur soon became a methodological tool; emphasising detached observation and study of the industrial city. Benjamin provides a rather romanticised take on the stroller when he says, "The person who travels a street, it would seem, has no need of any waywise guiding hand. It is not in wandering that man takes to the street, but rather in submitting to the monotonous, fascinating, constantly, unrolling band of asphalt." (Benjamin, 1999, p. 518).

Bourdieu traced a link between manners of walking and one's cultural identity. A way of walking, for him, was not merely an expression of the thoughts and feelings indoctrinated through an education in cultural precepts and properties. It was a way of thinking and feeling such that these cultural precepts and identities are continually being created and re-created. (Bourdieu, 1977, p.87). Lee and Ingold remark that walking has always been intrinsic to ethnographic research insofar as the researcher walks along with the interlocutors in their attempt to study their way of life. While often mentioned in field notes, the process of walking rarely makes it to the final research paper, wherein it is sidelined to make space for the more essential destination. They have also suggested that 'the locomotive aspect of walking allows for an understanding of places being created by routes' (Lee and Ingold, 2006, p. 68).

The differentiation between place and space allows scope for subjective understanding of the city. While place refers to the physicality of a location, space highlights the socio-cultural meanings that the landscape is imbued with. Even while walking, for example, men and women might have starkly different experiences for the cultural ideas of safety and danger are encoded differently for different genders.

Ethnography of the Virtual World

In the 21st century, human lives are increasingly mediated by technology. It is technology that fosters communication, learning and even life experiences. The internet allows for huge amounts of data to be created, stored and consumed by people all over the world. It has also radically transformed the scope of research and opened us up to new horizons. Virtual ethnography is one such field, the rise of which was rather unprecedented. While ethnography has long since been an integral part of social anthropological research, its digital manifestation has now taken root. Ethnography is the in-depth study of a society, wherein the researcher lives with their interlocutors for months and even years to understand, interpret and study their ways of life. O'Reilly understands ethnographic research as iterative-inductive research which draws on a family of methods. It acknowledges the role of theory as well as that of the researcher themself. The interlocutors are then viewed as part object, part subject. (O'Reilly, 2005) Pioneered by the likes of Bronislaw Malinowski and E. E. Evans Pritchard, ethnographic studies in sociology focused on description and comparative analysis.

Hine writes of virtual ethnography thus, "Ethnographic studies of online settings made a major contribution to the establishment of a view of the Internet as a culture where the uses people make of the technology available to them could be studied. These approaches established cyberspace as a plausible ethnographic field site" (Hine, 2000, p. 9).

She understands the internet both, as a culture and also as a cultural artefact. In understanding the internet as a culture, we see how it provides a context and creates a culture, within whose precepts the people interacting in its context operate. As a cultural artefact however, the internet becomes a product of a cultural context larger than itself, such that "what it is and does are the product of culturally produced understandings that can vary" (Hine, 2000, p. 9).

One's experience of the city is also increasingly mediated by the use of technology. Navigating the city no longer requires memory or familiarity due to the advent of maps and furthered by the digitization of these maps. Google Maps as a means of navigating the city has become rather common. This radically transforms one's experience of the city in so far as it allows one to explore new places virtually before stepping foot there. Urban spaces are not mere geographical locations, but are created and recreated by the meaning and cultural precepts encoded in them by our everyday activities. "We do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We live in a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault, 1986).

Technological advancement has not only impacted our daily lives, but also how research takes place. In utilising various advancements in technology, sociological research has formulated intriguing and rather unconventional methods of research. A rather interesting study was conducted by researchers at University of Oulu, Finland. They made use of Google Street View that allows one to virtually walk the streets of any place by merely navigating certain computer controls. This was further enhanced by the use of a VR Headset which made the experience of walking feel extremely real. "The goal is not to learn about the object or the place but instead to learn about the informant through the object or the place" (Leon and Cohen, 2005) A limited sample size of 6 people were called in to test this unique methodological experiment. Each of them were taken along a pre-decided specific route in the University campus and asked of the changes they observed along the route, whether they were familiar with the places they saw and whether they had any specific memories related to that place. It provides intriguing insights into how subjective meanings are encoded into our understanding of space. "Our observations highlight how cultural influences, familiarity with the site, seasonal and other temporal changes inform the contextual perspective of participants when visiting heterotopic spaces." (Kostakos et. al., 2019, p.5) This method allows for complete immersion in a virtual replica of the real world, thus opening the scope of virtual ethnography to far-off places without the researcher or interlocutor being physically present there.

Cheryl Gilge, in her paper, 'Google street view and the image as experience', deconstructs Google maps' street view (GSV) and evaluates what constitutes the experience of exploring the city virtually. "As a spatial representation, it (Google street

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view) brings together two distinct ways of knowing the world through empirical documentation: mapping and photography. Whereas maps offer visual diagrams of spatial information, photographs offer documents with spatio-temporal specificity" (Gilge, 2006, p.2).

Google maps, created in 2004, expanded to offer a third representational mode of the street view in 2007. Capturing images on cars, bike and cycles, it allows the user to obtain a 360 degrees view of where they stand and move along the roads using the arrows on their device. There have been numerous instances of people finding their deceased relatives on an old frozen frame in GSV (Heilweil, 2021). In walking the city through the images of GSV, one is able to embody the spirit of the flaneur; observing unobserved. "If we accept that to walk, fundamentally is to lack a place, it implies a condition of non-belonging" (Haaland, 2013, p.606).

However, it is important to highlight that virtual replicas of space are fundamentally different from the real space in many ways. In capturing spaces in a single frame, GSV freezes a place in a moment of time and denies spaces their intrinsically dynamic nature. Sri Venkateswara College on the map will be as it was seen on a hot afternoon in May 2022. That is, until the next data update on the software. It also reduces the three dimensionality of a place into the two-dimensionality of an image which may present the world to the viewer in an alienated, detached and desensitised manner.

In a very intriguing paper titled, 'The Corporeal Body in Virtual Reality', Murray and Sixsmith discuss how the physical body is embodied and disembodied in one's experience of the virtual world. Virtual reality based technologies, in the history of their development, have often focused on the development of visual technology, being primarily optical in nature. They input first the eyes, then the hands, sidelining or ignoring the sensorium of the rest of the body. For one to then feel completely embodied and immersed in a virtual world, it is important to block all sensory impressions from the physical world. In this attempt however, virtual reality set-ups tend to cater to the visual needs of the human body. For example, the point of projection in VR is at standing height, so the perspective offered to viewers mimics their real-world experiences. Another interesting observation they present is that people tend to carry their real-world cultural ideas, social understandings and real-world experiences into how they behave in the virtual space. Thus there is not an absolute disconnect from one to the next. Murray and Bowers' study on how people navigate through a virtual cityscape, in which the computer allowed them to progress anywhere, found that people tended to walk on the ground and the roads, avoiding the buildings and trees. Thus we see the same socio-cultural patterns being followed. Finally, feminist scholars have often critiqued the common utilisation of white, male bodies wherever physical characters are represented. This lack of diversity in the embodiment process can make it all the more alienating and difficult to relate to.

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