AN EVALUATION ON VIRTUAL ETHNICITY AND ESSENTIAL POLITICAL VIEWS

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Abstract:
You come around up to the noise of your mobile phone. The alarm was triggered by a calendared reminder. The note is from your boss telling you to email your report that is badly needed for the monthly corporate meeting. You’re in New York and Manila is thousands of miles away. But then you do not trouble because the hotel you are staying in is has WiFi connectivity. And despite the distance, you will see your boss smile at what a good job you have done. This picture is most likely one of the best examples at assessing how ‘wired’ the world has become, redefining even the simplest means of how we communicate with each other. The advent of technologies that enhance the management of information and communication systems has created a big impact in people’s lives. The mechanisms employed through the use of these technologies have become a lifestyle. With the introduction of basic email, what we call the ‘snail mail’ has suddenly become prehistoric. We can immediately send letters at the mere touch of keys. Thus, mail servers such as Yahoo Mail, Hotmail, and Google Mail have become household names. With this closeness, transactions of all kinds have also been drastically changed. Dynamic interactions have also all the time more grown online. Individuals from different timezones can talk as a group on a particular ‘thread’ or topic. Even electronic dating and online gaming is made possible.

Keywords: Virtual Ethnicity, Virtual Space, Virtual Authority, Inversion of Correlation, Virtual Political Views

Introduction of Virtual Ethnicity:
The advent of blogs or online journals has paved way for individuals to create and re-create online identities. These portals also allow for people of common interests and disciplines to come together and pave way for the creation online groups where information is shared and distributed. These are just some of the ‘by-products’ of Virtual Ethnicity.

The study of virtual ethnicity flourished throughout the last half of the 1990s (Silver 2000). The study was transformed in a lot of ways and new topics and theories were constantly added. Before delving into the broadness of virtual ethnicity, let us first discuss the context in which virtual ethnicity studies originated. Thus it is important to look into concepts such as Internet and virtual space.

The Internet:
The term Internet came into view during the 60s where it was constructed as a global, computer-based ‘network of networks’ by the Department of Defense of the
In America, the evolution of the Internet is shown in the introduction of Web, or more popularly known as the World Wide Web (www) which introduces a simple and user-friendly interface with file transfer protocols that are much too common nowadays. Everybody has surely encountered the likes of dot.com, and dot.org. This technological breakthrough has made simple navigation around the Net. Popular breakthroughs also included the birth of Internet service providers such as America Online (AOL) and CompuServe.

**Virtual Space:**

One cannot mention Internet without the word virtual space flashing through one’s mind. Though the former’s inception came early with the introduction of the concept of virtual space, nowadays, one can hardly tell the difference between both when speaking about network, connection and information. For in fact, these facets are present in both two. The word virtual space was first coined in William Gibson’s 1984 ground-breaking novel Necromancer.

**Virtual Ethnicity:**

Before going any further, the paper reiterates that it does not aim to define Virtual Ethnicity because of its nature. According to David Silver, Virtual Ethnicity is hard to define and that it must be understood as “broad, deep, and in constant state of flux.” He also added in his article that “it is much easier to put forth a number of dimensions of Virtual Ethnicity than single interactions of individuals online. The many types of social interactions that occur includes basic email, newsgroups, and as what were mentioned in the introduction, multi-user domains or MUDs and electronic chat rooms, even the vast websites that can be found in the World Wide Web also allow for online interactions to take place.

Virtual Ethnicity also takes its roots from the idea of information Ethnicity, where the prefix ‘Virtual’ means information. In his essay, Hawks posits that information is an important commodity in Virtual Ethnicity, and was seen in the prominence of CNN and MTV in our society. Moreover, his essay also probes on the science-fiction movement called ‘Virtual punk’ where in the concept of virtual ethnicity grew out. Virtual punks or more popularly known now as hackers, from two words “Virtual” and “punk”, roughly translate to “people using technology and information in ways that deviate from the expected norms and laws of society”.

**Virtual Ethnicity: Future Ethnicity**

The ideas that I have related to you so far are element in which Virtual Ethnicity can be described, thus, you been reintroduced to the Internet the virtual space, as well as the concepts of virtual communities and online identity. Also, through these facets, the premise that ethnicity is broad, deep and in constant state of instability is all the more emphasized.

Here is a brief illustration of Hawks and how it relates to Virtual Ethnicity. When we were kids, we were fond of blowing bubbles. At the course of their life distance, these bubbles, which are diverse in size and shape, twist, turn and float in the
Virtual Communities and Online Identities:

Previously, we have discussed in brief the Internet and its origins. The subject of the Internet is what composes the popular virtual ethnicity. We have also discussed the technologies such as the World Wide Web which is a part of popular virtual ethnicity. According to professor David Silver, popular Virtual Ethnicity is the first stage of virtual ethnicity and it proceeds to the second stage, Virtual Ethnicity studies, the second generation, which mainly rests on what he refers to as ‘two pillars’: the virtual communities and online identities.

We have learned so far that people meet online and the individuals compose of these online groups are identities that are also created online. Later on, we can dissect this relationship and see how the relationship can be inverted.

In other words, while bringing into focus the positive aspects, Rheingold does not dismiss what critics call as ‘negative utopia’ wherein the Internet can be used as a tool to perpetrate adverse effects of power such as in the recent case, terrorism.

Virtual theorist Stone in defining virtual space talked about individuals who ‘meet’, but the word ‘meet’ here takes on a definition as it is placed in the context of virtual space. The level of interaction among individuals create collective communities, virtual communities, which in the level of offline reality, can be called a neighborhood without the actual geographic space.

Virtual Authority and Virtual Political Views:

We have understood the nature of virtual space and Internet in earlier planning. This paper has also impressed the authority of the Internet as a tool for interaction and personal development while offering a quick look at some of its negative aspects. With information deemed as an important commodity -- in fact the most vital commodity -- it is not hard to imagine the power that is wielded in virtual space.

We have learned that in virtual space the individual and the collective are intertwining aspects. Virtual authority can be understood in these two aspects: the individual and social space. Virtual space can be used by the individual as a ‘playground’ as what Professor Tim Jordan of the University of East London states in his essay virtual authority: The Ethnicity and politics of virtual space. Second, virtual space can also be used by the collective as a ‘social space’, where communities exist, thus a ‘superior sovereignty of action’ is assumed by those who have the control information and technology. But the Internet and virtual space as society or as Jordan puts it, a ‘digital nation’, can also be an aspect or form of virtual authority to understand virtual authority, let us look at one of its root word-power. Authority has been thoroughly discussed in socio-political theories developed by some of the philosophers Weber, Barnes and Foucault. The moral and ethical dimension of power revolves around the notion that power creates social order and power as a form of domination.
Much as authority is hard to define, the power in virtual space assumes the same simplicity but the magnitude of authority in creating social order and domination can be used to describe the power in virtual space.

In its cause to eliminate worldwide poverty, with focus on African countries, the movement is conceivably more popularly known because of its charming TV commercial which features Hollywood actors and actresses, politicians and other famous American figures. But what makes the campaign also successful is the massive campaign in the Internet. By logging and signing on to its interactive website, you will immediately be included in their mailing list.

Inversion of Correlation: Individuals and Collectives:

The external and internal efforts mentioned by Hawks in his article can be assumed to represent the subjects in which the discussion of virtual ethnicity studies revolved: the individuals (online identities) and the collective (virtual communities).

We have also learned in the previous discussion how the individual upon entering into virtual space constructs an online identity and assumes an ‘individual space’. Later, this individual meets other online identities. They share thoughts and later discover other online identities and they begin to constitute a sort of ‘neighborhood’ minus the geographic space, thus virtual communities are created.

This situation is therefore referred to as the inversion of relationship where online identities and virtual communities transforms and interchanges roles. This happening holds true the fact that the study of virtual ethnicity is broad, and the constant flux constitutes a power that is initiate in the alms of virtual space.

Conclusion:

Understanding virtual ethnicity understands the ‘here-and-now’ reality. There could be a plethora of topics that could be discussed under the study of Virtual Ethnicity yet one cannot fathom the immensity of the subject for after all its very nature can only be understood in the previous topics we have discussed.

We live in society where technology rules and information is deemed to be a vital commodity. Our Ethnicity is defined by the by-products of these technologies and the mechanisms that are employed in the management of information and communication systems.

We have learned of the Internet as a tool, not only in accessing information but in changing the face of decision making, changing the way we look at participatory democracy. We took a closer look at we how we engage ourselves in virtual space and the many social interactions that we have become part of. We are part Virtual Ethnicity. We enter into virtual space as individuals and assume online identities, converse with other online identities and eventually create a virtual community.

As we become enmeshed in Virtual Ethnicity, it also continues to transform itself making our understanding of it broad, deep and that it is in constant state of flux, just like the progression sub ethnicities symbolically describe in the bubble story. Part of this transformation is also made possible of the power within virtual space. The inversion of roles and relationships online and electronically mediated interactions that
make way for participatory decision making are concrete examples of how virtual space and the Internet has transformed the way we live.

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