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<div align="center">The Ethics of Telepresence</div>

Telepresence is a broad term that refers to the implementation of man-made technology in order to mediate a user's experience, occurring when the user is so immersed in the content that they aren't aware of the technology itself. If that sounds like a complex concept, it's because it is. And one of the ways viewing this idea becomes more complex is through the lens of ethics. Telepresence can be applied to all different types of media, affecting many different aspects of our daily lives. These subsets include entertainment, education, business, relationships, and health. The most prevalent ethical dilemma fabricates when we consider both the promise and the perils of this byproduct of modern technology. In an extremely basic sense, the promise of telepresence is to improve every aspect of our lives (Lombard, M., 2009.) Through the examination of each different category, the perils can be seen wherever this promise is not fulfilled.

Of the five facets of technology that telepresence affects, entertainment reigns supreme as the most commonly applied purpose. Through the use of high and ultra high definition television, high definition projection, holographic projection, and virtual and augmented reality, people are now able to immerse themselves in the media they choose to consume in ways never previously imagined. The downfall of entertainment telepresence includes factors such as it's price, addictive attributes, and the view of the medium as literal mind control (Lombard, M., 2009.) This is because it can be hard for the subject of telepresence to determine what is real and what is fake, and in some cases, this can be determined by external factors.

Whereas telepresence has its perils there are also many situations where new technology holds great promises. Telepresence is developing and becoming more prevalent in various sectors of our mediated world. The way we entertain ourselves is evolving in many ways through CGI, HDTV, video games and AR. Images are clearer, sound is crisper and experiences are more immersive. Business is being done differently as well with virtual meetings, being able to visit locations without even getting on a plane and simulating entities that will one day become real buildings and homes.

With the marriage of telepresence and education students can further perfect their craft without risk of the outside world. Simulators allow those with dangerous jobs such as firefighters, miners, police, surgeons and pilots to practice their skills safely. Probably the most meaningful aspect in human life is connections we make with other people, this is evident in the fact society has invented things like mail, telephones and airplanes. These inventions allow people to connect and become closer, now with video chat we can further build upon those connections. Another way telepresence has helped society is in healthcare. There's telerobotic technology that allows surgeons to perform a procedure that they may be specialized in anywhere in the world. Telepresence technology is a route to potentially make our lives easier and more enjoyable.

Even though telepresence has its various benefits there's many ethical implications that arise when we think about how people will utilize this technology. For example, people can take this technology and use it for problematic purpose. Things like seemerot.com and hunting websites use cameras to negatively exploit the subjects in the frame. Moreover, there's a negative side to these virtual meetings as well in that you lose subtle social cues. These cues are crucial especially in business because they can conceal or deceive to make certain deals. Then in

simulator games that the U.S. military uses takes away from the actual reality of actions. Through playing games in which the "player" kills people can desensitize them when it comes to actual combat.

As for relationships, it's wonderful that we can now "be" with those no matter how far we are from them but the perception of comfort is becoming altered by telepresence technology. The general concerns about telepresence follows the regular dystopian views of information technology which is warranted to an extent. These relationships we potentially develop with artificial technology can stunt the natural flow of human development. Within healthcare it's difficult to argue how this evolving technology could be bad although a large concern is if the telepresence technology goes too far. This is represented in sophisticated prostheses and neuro-theses where the human form could be altered to the point where you get more than the typical human experience. This type of situation could bring about social implications of superiority complexes. With each telepresence technology there is a type of compromise small or large we have to make.

Reference

Lombard, M. (2009). The promise and peril of telepresence. In C. Bracken & P. Skalski (Editors), Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life. New York: Routledge.

Additional reading

Barfield, W., Lauria, R., Mann, S., & Kerr, I. (2005). Special section: Legal, ethical, and policy issues associated with virtual environments and computer mediated reality - Guest editors' introduction. Presence-Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, 14(6), III-V.