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[Link with subtitle: <https://youtu.be/ywWg8WLaS9U>]

Abstract

This project combines the discipline of social science and art. By doing social experiment in Lan Kwai Fong and Festival Walk with two dressing styles, we would like to deliberate how appearance and representation matter. Our group admonished “don’t judge a book by its cover”, be our own self, in fact we defy one’s style as others did due to *representation*. The society of spectacle has been developed for a long time, which it has become the basis of all human daily life. Representations produce models that we imitate, by mimicking the generalized style, we aim to fit in the society. By then we have become the slave of the society unconsciously, as we keep copying the general and lose the chance in creating self-production. Why representation has greatly influence on judging people? Is that possible for us to create self-production by not mimicking the general? Here we would discuss the influences exerted by representation and mimicry on people’s judgement according to the experiment’s result.

Effects of Representation and Mimicry

As representation produce models that we imitate, we follow the social trend normally, and aims to fit in the society. Our sense of reality and “normal” is based on mass media. Things out of social trend are being classified as “abnormal” or weird. Celebrities figure various styles of life and various views of society which anyone is supposedly free to embrace and pursue in a global manner. Themselves incarnations of the inaccessible results of social labor, they mimic byproducts of that labor, and project these above labor so that they appear as its goal. (The Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord, 1967) Media star are spectacular representing the living of human beings. People tends to follow media star to create their “self-image”.

As representation has produce certain impressions, people has been deeply influenced by those sets of impression, and tends to fit in in the society by following what representation has told them to.

Under the effect of representation, people lost their own creation of self-image and decision making. Mirroring has been greatly influencing our life, which people keep learning and copying from others. They do not have the chance to be their own self, even if they were given a chance to be their own, surrounded people will treat him as weird, as he/she wasn’t following the majority of this society.

Proposal

This social experiment aims to discover how representation affect one's judgement. We would examine the relationship between appearance and the venue. As people has assumed what they should wear in particular occasion. By creating the contrast, we would like to see how people react on strangers (with weird appearance) and the relationship among society.

§ Plan A

Lan Kwai Fong (LKF) is the most popular nightlife hot spots in Hong Kong, where people will dress up to grab drink in those bars. People who go to bars will dress more fancy or luxurious and make themselves look stylish. In this case, we detour the atmosphere by wearing as an otaku or anime fans. Otaku is also known as homebody, who are antisocial and stay at home most of the time. While anime fans are always shaped as those who seldom communicate with others. The attractiveness of their appearance is relatively low, as they won't do make up meticulously.

The first instance of "nightlife" would be related to alcohol and clubbing. We were being educated that nightlife in LKF means going to bars and grab wine. Media has been deeply influencing the representation of a particular thing, as stated our sense of reality is based on the reproduction by 喜愛夜蒲 communication. For example, the movie "*Lan Kwai Fong*()", it was filmed in LKF with plot such as clubbing and enjoying nightlife there. The media given the impression of that particular place to audience, which people believed LKF is place for people to drink alcohol. Apart from destroying the ordinary outlook appearance of people who visit LKF, we changed from drinking alcohol to Yakult. Yakult was presented as a kids drinking.

By creating such contrast, we would like to see how people react on those "changes". Imagine yourself seeing a person come to you in LKF, with a pack of Yakult and dress like an Otaku/ anime fans. What will you do? How will you react?

§ Plan B

Gangster is represented as people who are danger to the society. People will avoid contacting them, as their look are more likely the same as evil. We used the same approach as Plan A, going to place that could create contrast between the outlook and the place. To examine how appearance and occasion are correlated.

Our group first planned to hipster coffee shop, as it could create a contrast between a quiet place and crude person. In fact, coffee shop isn't as crowded as street or shopping mall, but we would like to involve more participants in such social experiment. Therefore, we finalized our experiment venue at Festival Walk, where one of the famous shopping mall in Hong Kong.

§ Plan C

Being ordinary. Going to the same place again, and do the same thing as Plan A and B stated. This plan aims to discover will people react to ordinary people and inharmonious style differently or the same. And examine the neighborhood relationship among society.

§ Process

Throughout the experiment, we documented human reaction and conducted interview with strangers on the street. Apart from interviewing strangers, we hosted small evaluations after each plan.

§ Findings

When one's appearance could not meet society expectation, people might look down on them. And instantly classified them as weird. People has been deeply influenced by representation. Under herd mentality, people follow certain behaviors and appearance. As if you were not following the trend, you will see yourself as weirdo and inharmonious among the society. According to the experiment we did, we found out people avoid talking to us, especially when we were not having suitable outfit to a particular occasion. i.e. In LKF, girls refused to talk to us. When they saw the model(him), who dressed extraordinary, they immediate want to leave. Because we have been inculcated with the idea which people who dress improperly is weird. Interviewees are confused with his outlook. As they never see a person dress like an otaku and go to LKF. And they certainly discriminate the pack of Yakult that he has been holding.

In Festival Walk, people tends not to have any eye contact with him closely. They looked at him from a far distance and keep a certain distance with him. As his look was scary and gave people a sense of "spirit field". People is not willing to have contact with him. When he asked the same thing as he did in LKF, none of the strangers on the street gave respond to him. We believed that appearance has represented certain meaning which has been brainwashed deeply to the society. Whereas people believed following the majority group, is the way to show himself/ herself as a normal person.

In fact, we learn by mimicking others' behavior and appearance. The society has become a mirror for us to follow. Through reflecting other images, we tend to fulfil the society expectation, so we do the same as the majority did. Hence, we lose our self-production, and becoming the slave of the society. Under the pressure of representation and herd mentality, we lose our own self-image. We care about how others judge on us. As we were afraid to be criticized by others. So we would like to become "ordinary" rather than stand out from the crowd.

Apart from inharmonious among the society has created the sense of weirdness to the model. Attractiveness of a person also affect how people react. "Don't judge a book by its cover", however under today's society, appearance do matters. Attractiveness is the appearance quality that has received the most attention in research on impressions from faces. Dubbed the 'attractiveness halo', people with more attractive faces are judged more positively on a host of dimensions. (Social Psychological Face Perception: Why Appearance Matters, Leslie A. Zebrowitz & Joann M. Montepare, 2008) People will first tend to talk to a person who look more attractive than a person who wear strangely. We aren't discriminating any of the above groups, but, in fact, the society has given us the sense of weirdness to them, as we seldom have contact with them.

According to Leslie a. Zebrowitz's theory in *Reading Faces: Window To The Soul*, she believed that attractiveness and appearance has a strong impact on how people perceive an individual's character traits and in the society. It is true that, appearance has created a strong effect on how people judge on people.

Moreover, the relationship among society nowadays is far more different than years ago in Hong Kong. The sense of humanity in the olden days are stronger than now. People nowadays feel insecure and have less contact with surrounding people. Public Opinion Programme from The University of Hong Kong has been doing research on the closeness among neighborhood in Hong Kong. A conclusion could be made which Hong Kong resident has rated only average or even lower on this section. (https://www.hkpop.hku.hk/chinese/report/RTHK_Neighbor/finding.html) Comparatively speaking, it is normal to have result which people ignore our interview or approach. As people is not willing to talk to strangers. The society has been become cold and detached towards each other.

Reflection

As asked previously, *is that possible for us to create self-production by not mimicking the general?* In fact, it is very difficult for us not to mimic and to maintain our own style. Since we are afraid to be judged by other. Human always lack of confidence to be his own, and this is why herd mentality has been deeply influence human livelihood. We care about how others look on us. When we were not matching with the society and its expectation, you might feel yourself being excluded.

The influence of representation has been deeply affect our life, we aren't brave enough to break through all those laws in the society, we are not willing to be our own, and create a self-production. When you "standout" from the crowd, you will be classified as weirdo, unless you are famous with standout appearance or with high self-confidence, else you aren't able to do something to represent yourself, we will keep mimicking other to treat ourselves as normal.

Furthermore, it is very difficult for us to influence other by your personal-production. We are nobody, it is hard to create a way for ourselves to express our own self-image. Yet, a small proportion of the society will support you. If you are planning to act as an influential person, the way is far more than what we can do, because you need a lots of courage to create your own self.

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