

MASTER'S THESIS

Feelings and the racial other: race, affect, and representation on Hong Kong television

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Feelings and the Racial Other: Race, Affect, and Representation on Hong Kong Television

Abstract

This cultural research explores the relation between racial representation and emotions/affects as part of the struggle for racial minorities' visibility. It is informed by conjunctural theory in cultural studies, with the use of textual narrative and affective analysis. It focuses on Hong Kong's television culture as a site for context configuration, or conjuncture, for constructing the inter- and intra-ethnic relations between the dominant ethnic Chinese and ethnic minorities (EMs), via the production of emotions.

Chapter One introduces a conjunctural understanding of the construction of EMs in Hong Kong through revisiting some of the most prominent theoretical works that explore the transformation of Hong Kong identity, in order to point out an underlying Hong Kong-Chineseness as a cultural center, and to argue that the demand of the present conjuncture is to respond to the necessity of generating an alternative "EM-context" suitable for reimagining Hong Kong identity. Chapter Two attempts to map out this "EM-context" by reviewing the major popular non-Chinese figures on TV, namely Louie Castro, Gregory Rivers (known as "Ho Kwok-wing") and Gill Mohinderpaul Singh (known as "QBoBo") in order to study how their particular cultural visibility can open up ways to rethink the problems surrounding visibility. The narrative affective approach to study racial relations is applied to the reading of *No Good Either Way* (TVB) in Chapter Three and *Rooms To Let* (RTHK) in Chapter Four. Together, these two core chapters

explore the affective configuration of “anxieties” and “shame” in the two TV programmes. It is suggested that these affective landscapes help position EMs as either a “sweetened trouble-maker” (in the work place) or “assimilating neighbor” (in the domestic sphere), both of which fall short of being able to construct a new context/conjuncture for understanding the cultural presence of EMs. This research rejects the study of race/ethnicity through content analysis of stereotype, and opts for an approach that reads affects and narratives in the search not for representational visibility, but for what is termed “conjunctural visibility.”

Ultimately, Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of the dynamics of “soft” and “hard” representations of the ethnic other: the former in the mode of “sugarcoated racism” which involves the figure of EM as the sweetened troublemaker appealing for audience’s sympathy, and the latter in the form of public pedagogy aimed at educating the audience (through shaming) to treat their EM neighbor as the assimilated other. This research study aims at making a small contribution to the understanding of the struggle for conjunctural visibility among EMs in Hong Kong.

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