

TOK script

Good morning, I am Elizabeth Koh and my partner for this TOK presentation is QiZhao. Today our real life situation stems from a famous quote “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, but is beauty truly in the eye of the beholder?

Explaining the real life situation

In 2014, a journalist named Esther Honig conducted an experiment regarding beauty

She sent out an image of her bare face without any makeup to Photoshop artists around the world and told them to simply make her look beautiful. As the photo-shopped photos came in, the results were vastly different. *Show about 2 examples.*

The photo-shop artists here have clearly shown that their perception of beauty is largely been influenced by the cultural context that they have been brought up in. If the cultural influences of the perception of beauty is considered as shared knowledge in a society and personal knowledge is interpreted using the artist’s own interpretation of beauty. This leads us to think about the influences of shared and personal knowledge on each other.

Hence, our knowledge question is...

When does shared and personal knowledge influence each other in the Arts?

Presentation flow:

Today we will start off our presentation by defining the terms personal and shared knowledge in the Arts, then moving on to our 3 main claims, thereafter linking back the claims to the our real life situation and a new real life situation, then we will end off with the conclusions and implications for our knowledge question.

Personal knowledge in the Arts:

Personal knowledge in the Arts have 3 main types: conceptual or propositional, procedural knowledge, and experiential knowledge.

Conceptual knowledge deals with concepts such as “what is beauty?” and is applicable to every knower in the knowledge framework.

Procedural knowledge is acquired by the artist such as painting and playing an instrument. It refers to skills that is used to produce a piece of artwork. For example, a musician would have acquired skills of observation and critical listening through playing with other musicians, as well as the skills of composition and the ability to ideate. These are essential in being a good musician and artist.

Experiential knowledge is again applicable to the whole art community where the critiques and public experience the artwork with their 5 senses

Shared knowledge in the Arts:

Shared conceptual knowledge in the arts is defined as an opinion that is largely agreed upon within the art community.

Shared procedural knowledge is the collective pool of knowledge within the art community, such as the way the play to play a musical instrument.

Thesis:

Our thesis is, shared knowledge and personal knowledge influence each other depending on the context of the external environments, which include social environment, political climate and cultural influences

Claim 1: shared knowledge influences personal knowledge when there is pressure to conform to a societal standard

Shared knowledge influences knowledge when there is pressure from the external environment to conform to a certain societal standard. In the next few slides, we will be elaborating more on the different types of pressures that makes shared knowledge more influential on an individual's personal knowledge.

Societal standards:

Societal standards here refer to a societal code or standard that is socially expected of, with regards to the. Artists may knowingly or unknowingly conform to these societal standards, for example in the west, the societal standard for women is to shave their underarms, so when an artist such as Frida Kahlo, makes a piece of artwork that portrays a woman with underarm hair, many would feel disgusted or in shock when they see this picture.

Cultural influences:

Cultural influences refer to historical geographical, and familial factors which affect assessment. These cultural influences influence an individual's personal knowledge during their upbringing

Peer pressure:

Peer pressure rests on the fact that most humans fear rejection and have a need for approval by peers. Humans have natural conformity tendencies that have been proven by Asch's conformity studies that will be further explained in the next slide.

These pressures from society are applicable to both the artist and the audience and influences them in varying levels, depending on an individuals' personality.

Asch's conformity study

Solomon Asch (1951) conducted an experiment to investigate the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could affect a person to conform.

About 75% of participants conformed at least once, and 25% of participant never conformed

Experiment:

Asch used a lab experiment to study conformity, whereby 50 male students from Swarthmore College in the USA participated in a 'vision test'. Using a line judgment task, Asch put a naive participant in a room with seven confederates.

The confederates had agreed in advance what their responses would be when presented with the line task. The real participant did not know this and was led to believe that the other seven participants were also real participants like themselves.

Each person in the room had to state aloud which comparison line (A, B or C) was most like the target line. The answer was always obvious. The real participant sat at the end of the row and gave his or her answer last.

There were 18 trials in total and the confederates gave the wrong answer on 12 trials (called the critical trials). Asch was interested to see if the real participant would conform to the majority view. Asch's experiment also had a control condition where there were no confederates, only a "real participant".

Result:

Asch measured the number of times each participant conformed to the majority view. On average, about one third (32%) of the participants who were placed in this situation went along and conformed with the clearly incorrect majority on the critical trials.

Over the 12 critical trials about 75% of participants conformed at least once, and 25% of participants never conformed. In the control group, with no pressure to conform to confederates, less than 1% of participants gave the wrong answer.

This shows the natural conformity tendencies of people when they are placed in an environment where their personal knowledge differs from the shared knowledge and proves the existence of conformity tendencies.

Political climate:

When a higher authority (government) issues a law or order that defines what art can be made or what is considered beautiful, Artists and society will not have the ability to express their personal knowledge that differs from the political standard, it restricts artistic creativity.

Artists may alter their personal knowledge of the arts to suit the political standard. Alternatively, artists may leave the country. Which signifies that personal knowledge cannot be produced in that environment. Propaganda and censorship may be involved and personal knowledge and opinions can be influenced.

For example, during Hitler's reign, he regarded himself knowledgeable in the area of the arts and stated that all good art should be about Nazi Germany and Germans. There were strict rules about what was to be produced and anyone who did not adhere to them faced severe punishments. As a result of this, we see the influence of Nazi ideology on art produced during Hitler's reign, as well as a number of artists leaving Germany as a result of the restriction of their artistic expression. An example of the influence of Nazi ideology on art produced during that time is a painting – "Working Maidens" painted by Leopold Schmutzler, approved Third Reich art. This art piece portrays a few women who seem happy and playing music. This is in line with Hitler's guidelines that artwork should never portray sadness and hence proves that political climate influences what is being produced as art.

On the contrary, the opposite can happen, people who choose to hold on to their artistic creativity and refuse to comply to the societal standard that is set by authorities.

A good example would be Ai Wei Wei. In China, there are many laws that restrict artistic freedom and promote censorship. Ai Wei Wei is a Chinese artist that wants to defend the freedom of

expression and produces his art works to bring awareness the topic. His famous works include “Study of perspective” where he flips his middle finger at many significant buildings, such as the white house and more importantly Tiananmen Square which caused him to be a political prisoner for a while in China. The production of these art pieces under the Chinese government’s rule show that political climate can influence personal knowledge of the artist in a different direction than they intended. Seeing the artwork produced as a response to the authorities, this proves that shared knowledge does shape personal knowledge. However the same case could be argued that personal knowledge is retained and leads us to our second claim that personal knowledge can withstand the influence of shared knowledge.

Claim 2: personal knowledge can withstand the influence of shared knowledge.

Personal knowledge can withstand the influence of shared knowledge because knowledge in the arts is very subjective. A good example would be genres of music that is not widely accepted or labelled as “weird”. To measure what is normal, we are using the billboard top 100 as a standard, these lists are based on number of downloads and hence it shows what is popular and commonly agreed upon as good music and can be considered as shared knowledge. There are music genres such as math core and noise music that have never been on the billboard top 100. This shows that these musicians that produce such music have produced music that is not influenced by what is popular or shared knowledge of what is considered nice to hear.

In fact, when the musicians that produce such music, they are in fact contributing the pool of shared knowledge. The procedural knowledge produced during the production of such music contributes to the shared procedural knowledge of the art community.

In the area of arts, we see this venn diagram as a result of the subjective nature of the arts.

The small cross sectional area shows that there is little in common between shared and personal knowledge. The large total area explains the dynamic nature of the arts because of the way

Keeping this in mind, we are able to further investigate the nature of other AOKs and how the shared and personal knowledge interact within the AOKs

In human sciences, they are more objective compared to arts and would have a larger cross sectional area and smaller total area.

In math, the subject nature is most objective and hence there is close to no difference between shared and personal knowledge, having the largest cross sectional area, and smallest total area. Thus showing that maths is not dynamic compared to the other AOKs.