

Coping Mechanisms

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Project Two

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Ruha Benjamin's article 'Racial Fictions, Biological Facts: Expanding the Sociological Imagination through Speculative Methods' skirts the line between academia and fiction. Benjamin posits that necessary social changes require imagination (or novel fictions) so that we can see beyond the shackles of the status quo and design solutions. This 'story' is set at the 50th anniversary of the Ferguson uprising, and reparations are being paid to victims of police brutality in the form of stem cell research. In the story, the young real life Michael Brown, who was shot dead by police in 2014, is being brought back to life for the celebrations. This resurrection, like his death, arrives without consent and begs the question "Who has determination over Black people's bodies and health?"

Coping Mechanisms takes inspiration from Benjamin's piece by juxtaposing images of police brutality with images of social uprisings, I hope to skew truth from reality. The layout is very basic because I tried to focus a lot less on aesthetics this time and more on building the code. This version is one of three drafts written to arrive at the final piece and differs greatly from the others. I think this code is a good resource for future projects because it uses fundamentals like arrays, conditionals, and loops in concrete and effective ways.

In this 'game' the user is encouraged to click Perversion VS Equality buttons which shuffle through these images. You probably expect the equality button to show you images of social resistance, but instead you see a representation of state sanctioned equality. When you click perversions, you see people protesting which I call perverse because within the status quo resistance is routinely framed as being violent and disobedient. This kind of rhetoric makes it acceptable and easy for states to sanction military style submission against disloyal subjects at any economic cost. When you click the buttons they say "same, same but different", a blazy modern day mantra, that continues to flip the story. The user can hear a special secret if the grid becomes filled with images from either the pervert or equality categories.

To learn more about the images you can click each and hear an automated response. These responses tell the user a little bit about the historical context in which each photograph was taken so that it's not just another empty internet style value shock. These are real people, with real life experiences. The cold robotic response coming from generic "UK Male English" gives an anthropological feel to the facts. He represents the ever present overseers who are always observing and theorizing the actions of individuals and collectives, creating boxes and subdividing for someone's benefit, but whose?

Finally, if you're feeling upset about the state of the world, you're invited to click the Raffy Button. This button samples ASMR artist Raffy Taffy softly rubbing his hands together, saying "Excellent, you are doing great.". A gentle whisper we all need to hear as we wade through the dumpster fire that is late stage capitalism vs our post capitalist dreams.