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16 April 2017

Assimilation of the Masses

As human beings, there is this psychological need of wanting to be accepted, loved, and feel a sense of belonging; this is the result of humans being one of the most social creature on the planet. These psychological wants are what drives individuals to behave in a manner that dilutes their own individual identity, as a mean to fit into the constructs of society, otherwise known as the masses. If for some reason an individual is excluded from the masses and feels disconnected, then this leads to the need, and or want, of assimilation of that individual to better fit into society. Assimilation can be represented by the phrase “go along to get along,” and what this means is that if a person want to thrive and be accepted in society then they need to conform and relinquish some personal traits, and adapt to their surrounding environment. While assimilation might occur intentionally or without a person realizing it, it still happens to everyone to a certain degree and affects their individual identity. Assimilation infringes on one’s identity because it causes internal conflict within ourselves, which can lead to both mental and physical damage to occur, some being temporary and others permanent.

Ideally, an individual should have some sort balance between self-actualization, in which they feel content with who they are as an individual, and assimilation, to prevent from one’s identity from being infringed. The idea is further solidified by the terms, True Self and False Self as stated by Kenji Yoshino, in his article “The New Civil Rights”, in which he clarifies the relationship between True Self and False Self. Our True Self can be associated with an individual’s authentic identity, while the False Self is associated with presenting a front for others to see. Yoshino discusses that the True Self can only assure its own survival with the aid

from the False Self as stated with, “My gay self, True Self, was hidden behind an ostensibly straight False Self,” (Yoshino 542) showing how this False Self is a defense mechanism to protect the wellbeing of the individual. An analogy for this relationship could be that of siblings, where the True Self is younger one of the two, and the False Self is the eldest who needs to look after the fragile one. So, the difference between assimilation and True and False Self is that assimilation deals with having to conform to strive in society, while True and False Self is the idea of self-preservation.

Individual’s identities are not damaged when it involves the True and False Self, but in regards to assimilation, this is when a person must not only adjust their personality, but also their ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious belief, language, and so forth just to find some sort of acceptance in society. This harms the person’s identity because they feel the need to change who they are entirely just to feel included in the masses. Assimilation and the issues that come along with this ideology of “go along to get along,” are shown in Wesley Yang’s article “Paper Tigers”, which deals with how Asian Americans have a binding stereotype of having to be proficient in the field of education but not be expected to be in the executive positions that are often exclusively for white males. Yang’s use of Asian-Americans is a place holder that is meant to be interchangeable for any individual, because expectations are placed on anyone and everyone in our society. And if expectations can not be met, then this leads to internal conflict that will cause an individual to question if they are good enough to be accepted. Leading to assimilation.

An example that is from the article “Paper Tigers”, is the individual know as Eddie Huang, but in this case, the person goes against the social norms of having to assimilate, in a manner that goes like this, “America is about money, and if you can make your culture

commodifiable, then you're relevant" (Yang 532). Since American culture is heavily based on the all mighty dollar, Eddie Huang gives up the idea of having to alter his own identity to that of the stereotypical Asian-American to make headway in the nation. Because if his culture can be used to turn a profit, then what is the point of him alter his True Self. The openness of Eddie stands from his idea that social assimilation can go to hell, because if he finds self-happiness in his life style, then what difference does it make how others view him, "you're going to like me or otherwise I am kicking your ass till you do" (532). His way of life allows for him to have something very few have, freedom to behave in a manner that is no one else's but his. This personality is very aggressive and in your face, something that would not typically be expected from an Asian seeing as how even Yang claims that the Asian men are quiet and docile.

There is nothing wrong with these docile men who are taking classes on how to hit on women, other than they are the average shy type of guys who struggle with the ladies, but this need for change causes them to assimilate to the idea of male masculinity. This idea comes from people thinking that to get the attention of women, the best course of action is to change into a winner, who emanates confidence and has just a bit of arrogance. As unproblematic as this might seem, once the men change their behavior they no longer present their True Self, but a False Self instead; an individual who is no longer an accurate representation of themselves, but instead a representation of what society expects. They lost their own identity as a mean to get the ladies and if that was good or not was entirely up to them, because at the end of the day, it is up to the individual to make the judgment if assimilating is worth the coast of dishonesty to one's individuality.

While none of these previous examples may seem harmful, there is a danger to the young men and women of the nation when it comes to assimilating to the popular idea of beauty. Every

man must have the body of a Roman God while women should be the living embodiment of slender waist and large breast. If a person becomes infatuated with this notion of beauty standards, then they run the risk of causing harm to themselves. It is estimated by the NEDA that there are around 20 million cases of eating disorders each year in the United States and this is because North American media portrays an unrealistic standard beauty standard for both men and men, no questions asked. Starving yourself just to obtain the 'perfect' body is not something a person should do, because everyone's body is different thanks to their DNA, and no amount of starvation is going to change that. This is not helped with how media portrays both sexes and how celebrities promote the idea of what it means to be beautiful. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder than people should not worry themselves to death about this issue.

If a person is unsatisfied with how they behave then this is because their own identity's have been change to fit the mold that society expects from every one of us and it is these ideas of having to assimilate to be wanted is what causes harm to the body and mind. Having a False Self is fine if you keep in mind the wellbeing of yourself and others, but what is not okay is when a person completely alters who they were just to make others happy because at the end of the day you are responsible for your own happiness, and no one else.

Work Cited

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