

The Difference of the Risk Perception Among the Educated Youth between Hong Kong and China: The Issue of Using Computer

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ABSTRACT

*Society is now in the shadow of technology, especially on computer. On the one hand, computer is beneficial to the world and society. On the other hand, the use of computer is also a risk to the society. There may be many risks in a society. Yet, according to Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (1970), society will emphasize aspects considered risky for them based on whether these aspects can reinforce or relate to the moral, political or religious order.*

In view of the above, the author employed the typology of grid and group to classify the culture of Hong Kong and China. Collecting data from the students in at universities in Hong Kong and China, the author would like to address on the following. In the wake of the network society, how the educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing perceive and communicate computer risk? Is there any different view towards risk from experts and laymen? Is there any difference of the computer risk perception among the educated youth in Hong Kong and China? If so, how does the differences can be explained by the Cultural Theory as suggested by Douglas? What are the implications of the computer risk perception to a society?

INTRODUCTION

Suggested by Castells (1996), as the interaction among countries increase, information will become an asset for a better economy. He labeled it as 'informational economy'. With a view of accessing for more information, society begins to launch revolution of information technology (IT) in order to have a faster and almost endless access to the updated information. Society begins to operate in timeless and become the so called "information society". All these bring to the occurrence of the network society. Meanwhile, computer takes an important and vital role in today technology. Computer is beneficial to the world and society. However, the use of computer is also a risk to the society. "Risk" can be defined as the possibility of danger, either in physical or in term of security.¹ People have to develop the high risk perception so as to avoid the failure of the computer. Without the high computer risk perception, the society is place itself in a risky situation.

Cultural theory is one of the approaches that try to look into the different risk perception in two places. It suggests that the styles and the forms of the social organization in a society will determine the risk perception of people towards a thing. Also, it suggests that the risk perception of people also affect the risk communication among people. (Rayner, 1992: 84-86) Yet, the theory is rarely be used in the field of risk perception that related to IT and, especially, in the use of computer. Therefore, I would like to fill this gap.

In this study, I will try to limit my effort to discuss the use of computer to the safety aspects of the failure of computer that will occur at any times. The failure of computer may come from the break down of the computer (software or hardware); the data loss resulted from the attack of the computer virus and the like. Thus, what I mean to the safety use of computer is that whether the computer users have the risk

¹ The definition of the term "risk" is a controversial issue. For details, please refer to Fischhoff et al.

perception that the failure of computer may happen at any time by any reasons? Moreover, whether the computer users have some kinds of the contingent plan to cope with the possible risk?

The low risk perception of safety use of computer and the result can be either personal or collective.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RISK

With regard to the issue of risk, psychological research mainly focused on two aspects, namely the individual difference in risk taking behaviour and how people perceive risk. (Brehmer, 1987: 25) There are many ways that laymen perceive risk, namely availability heuristic, personal experience, mass media, and group pressure.²

Availability heuristic is a way people used in perceiving risk. The main criterion of the method is based on the likelihood of an event or the frequency of occurring of that event. If an event occurs frequently, then people will find it easy to recall it from the memory and that people will consider the event as risky to them. (Tversky and Kahneman, 1973: 209)

Personal experience is another way that affects people in perceiving risk. However, it is not the only factors that help in forming the risk perception. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) suggested that risk perception is mediated by risk propensity that in turn is affected by inertia and risk preferences of the person.³ (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992: 16-19)

Mass media is another way that affects people in perceiving risk. Sawyer et al.

1984. "Defining Risk." *Policy Sciences* 17: 123-139.

² The following account is mainly for the laymen and focus on how they perceive risk. For the experts, it is supposed that they have different kinds of way to perceive risk as comparing with the ways of the laymen. For the experts, when they make a comment on the level of risk of a certain events, they will base on their judgment on certain statistics or evidence in order to support their saying. (Slovic, et al. 1981: 17)

³ Although Sitkin and Pablo ideas on the risk propensity and risk perception is from the perspective of organizational management, their idea can still apply in understanding the way of formation of risk perception among the laymen. Such idea can help us to understand the reason, for instance, the reason why some people still perform risky behaviour even though they already perceived the event as "high

Used the instance of the computer virus – Michelangelo, to illustrate how the mass media affect American in perceiving risk. (Sawyer et al. 1999: 24)

Group behaviour also affects people in perceiving risk. Group is very close to an individual as it surrounds him almost daily. The group may simply be the friends or the persons that the individual always encounters of. Therefore, the ability of the group in influencing the risk perception of the individual is high.

Social impact theory is proposed to explain the ways that group behaviours can affect an individual's behaviours and performance. It suggested that an individual is passive in responding to the existence of a group. The group that surrounds the individual influences and impacts the individual and not the other way round. Yet, the theory focuses on the social stimulation on an individual. As suggested by Stevens (1957), the more the groups around the individual and the more close relationship between them, the individual will be affected by the group more. (Goethals, 1987: 211)

THE CULTURAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

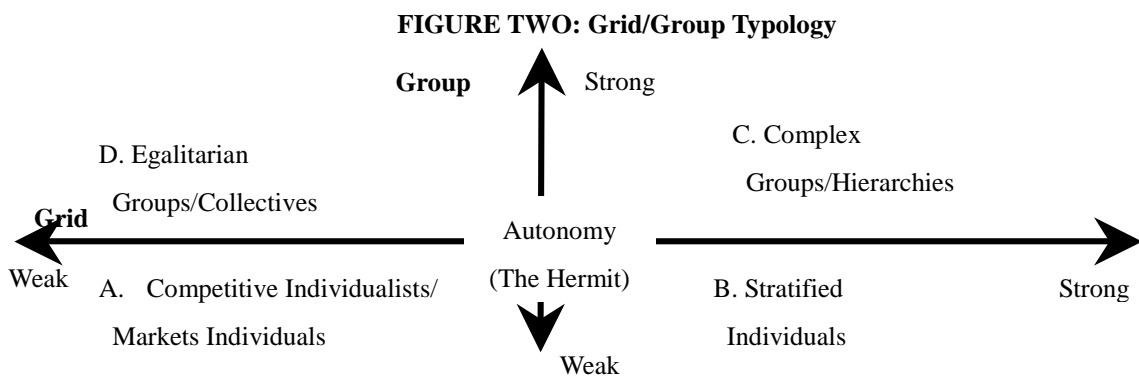
Social psychological research ignored the influence of the culture on the society in the aspect of the formation of the risk perception. As suggested by Douglas (1970), society will emphasize aspects considered risky for them according to whether these aspects can reinforce or relate to the moral, political or religious order. The role of the culture played an important part in affecting the risk perception of the society in regarding the risk of an event.

Review on Cultural Theory

In 1970, Douglas clarified her idea related to the social structure and views of nature by introducing the concepts of grid and group. Grid and group are the two concepts that are used to describe the human activities and social life in a society.

probability, high consequence” event.

(Thompson, et al. 1990: 5) Group refers to the level of the social incorporation among the individual in a social unit. Social unit can be either group or an individual. (Wynne, 1983: 852) Grid is defined as some constraints in a society that classify and even restrict the individual freedom. Such classification or restrictions are functions of hierarchy, kinship, race, gender, age, religion and the like. Grid is describing the nature of the interaction. (Rayner, 1992: 87-88)



Source: Rayner, (1992): 89; Thompson, et al. (1990): 8.

HYPOTHESES

Personal experience and availability heuristic are two of the factors that affect people in perceiving risk. Also, personal experience is supposed to be related to the availability heuristic. Thus, my first hypothesis is:

H1: The more student expose to the safety of computer risk, the higher will be the computer risk perception.

The personal experience of the computer virus, I propose, will bring the availability heuristic appear on the respondents. As a result, the safety of computer risk perception among the respondents will be high.

The second approach to study the risk perception is from the perspective of the Cultural Theory as suggested by Douglas. The theory focused on the reasons why people perceive certain event as risky to the society. The theory brings some approaches to the study of the risk perception, like the typology of grid and group.

The computer risk perception is related to the grid/group characteristic of a

society. If a society is having a strong grid and group characteristic, the effect of hierarchy towards an individual is maximized and that an individual has less of his freedom. He needs to obey a lot of the order and instruction from the hierarchy and thus he cannot have a more room to act according to his will. By doing so, the individual is less willing to take risky behaviours. It leads to my second hypothesis:

H2: The stronger the grid and the group characteristic of the society, the higher will be the computer risk perception.

METHODOLOGY

Literature reviews was a part of the methodology for my study. Besides, I tried to get valuable data on computer risk perception among the educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing by mean of questionnaires.⁴ I have employed the statistical method known as *t* test of mean differences when comparing the findings between Hong Kong and Beijing.

With a view of probing the computer risk perception among the educated youth in Hong Kong and China, a set of questionnaires had been sent at the end of September 2001. A total of 734 questionnaires were sent to the targeted respondents from 4th October 2001 to 19th November 2001 by means of direct distribution. Of which, 484 questionnaires were distributed at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the remaining 250 were distributed at the Peking University in Beijing. The response rate for Hong Kong and Beijing are 60.1% and 80.8% respectively.

Findings

First, I will show the level of grid and group in Hong Kong and Beijing. Second, I will measure the safety aspect of computer risk perception among the respondents. Then, I will discuss the degree of the factors that affect the respondents in perceiving

⁴ The educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing refer to those of the universities' students, either undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate (PG), who study in Hong Kong and Beijing respectively.

computer risk before drawing a conclusion.

Grid and Group

Hong Kong has a tendency to be a weak grid and weak group society whilst Beijing has a tendency to be a strong grid and strong group society.

TABLE ONE: Individual Freedom in Performing Activities in Society

Items of the activities	Number of respondents choosing "YES"	
	Hong Kong	Beijing
A) Saying what I believe in public	200 (69.9%)	137 (69.9%)
B) Choosing my religion	243 (85.0%) >***	122 (62.9%)
C) Choosing the place to live	239 (83.6%) >***	162 (82.2%)
D) Choosing the place to travel	252 (88.1%)	173 (87.8%)
E) Choosing my job	227 (79.6%)	164 (84.1%) >***
F) Meeting other respondents at my own will	231 (81.3%) >***	150 (76.1%)
G) Transfer or exchanging money freely	233 (81.5%) >***	124 (62.9%)
H) Receiving correct news and information	213 (74.5%)	148 (75.5%) >***
I) Buying the books/magazines that I like	252 (88.1%)	178 (90.4%) >***
J) Using the Internet freely	240 (83.9%) >***	156 (79.2%)
K) Choosing the respondents that I like to be my representative	198 (69.2%) >***	121 (61.4%)

Note: 1. The numbers without brackets are the amount of respondents in that items while the number in brackets are the percentage of the respondents for the items. 2. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentage in some of the items is not equal to 100%. 3. Significant differences of the means are noted by ">" for significantly higher than the corresponding items (one tailed test at the p<.05 level). 4. **p<.01; ***p<.0005 (one tailed test). The same criteria applied to the following tables.

From the Table One, Hong Kong's respondents had individual freedom in performing six out of eleven mentioned activities in their society.

TABLE TWO: Agreement on the Control of the Activities in Society

Items of the activities	Number of respondents choosing "NO"	
	Hong Kong	Beijing
A) Saying what I believe in public	175 (62.1%) >***	118 (59.9%)
B) Choosing my religion	211 (74.6%) >***	117 (60.3%)
C) Choosing the place to live	210 (74.2%) >***	124 (63.6%)
D) Choosing the place to travel	209 (73.9%) >***	125 (64.4%)
E) Choosing my job	209 (74.1%) >***	129 (66.5%)
F) Meeting other respondents at my own will	203 (72.0%) >***	126 (64.9%)
G) Transfer or exchanging money freely	173 (61.3%)	124 (63.9%) >***
H) Receiving correct news and information	185 (65.4%)	131 (67.9%) >***
I) Buying the books/magazines that I like	195 (98.9%) >***	125 (64.8%)
J) Using the Internet freely	183 (64.7%) >***	119 (61.3%)
K) Choosing the respondents that I like to be my representative	188 (66.9%) >	122 (62.9%)

From the Table Two, Hong Kong's respondents did not agree on the regulation or control of the nine out of eleven mentioned activities in their society. The findings

showed that, generally speaking, Hong Kong had a tendency to be a weak grid society while Beijing had a tendency to be a strong grid society.

Hong Kong also tended to be a weak group society while Beijing tended to be a strong group society.

TABLE THREE: Description of the Society

Description of the society	Hong Kong	Beijing
A) Segmented	25 (8.7%) >***	2 (1.0%)
B) Unequal	27 (9.4%) >***	12 (6.1%)
C) Competitive	58 (20.2%) >***	30 (15.2%)
D) Segmented and competitive	17 (5.9%) >***	2 (1.0%)
E) Unequal and competitive	14 (4.9%) >***	4 (2.0%)
F) Segmented, unequal and competitive	12 (4.2%) >***	1 (0.5%)
G) United	17 (5.9%)	30 (15.2%) >***
H) Equal	33 (11.5%) >***	17 (8.6%)
I) United and competitive	6 (2.1%)	9 (4.6%) >***
J) Equal and competitive	7 (2.4%)	11 (5.6%) >***
K) United, equal and competitive	4 (1.4%)	11 (5.6%) >***

From the Table Three, Hong Kong’s respondents generally described Hong Kong as a weak group-oriented society. On the contrary, Beijing’s respondents generally described Beijing as a strong group-oriented society. The respondents from Hong Kong used the word “segmented” more means that they thought Hong Kong was a divided and not united society. The word “unequal” implies Hong Kong’s respondents did not agree that they could be treated equally Hong Kong. Competition itself is a neutral but more Hong Kong’s respondents than Beijing thought the society was “segmented and competitive” and “unequal and competitive” means that Hong Kong’s respondents believed they were competing each other in an unequal, unfair and even social stratified environment. Beijing’s respondents used the word “united” more mean that they thought Beijing was a group and harmony society. Also, “equal and competitive” means that Beijing’s respondents thought they were competing each other in an equal and fair environment.

Another finding also suggested Hong Kong tended to be a weak group whilst Beijing tended to be a strong group society.

TABLE FOUR: Follow Others Actions

Do you agree that, "If most people do it in this way, I will follow their action?"	Hong Kong	Beijing
A) Strongly agree	5 (1.8%)	10 (5.1%) >***
B) Agree	72 (25.4%)	76 (38.6%) >***
C) Disagree	131 (46.1%) >***	68 (34.5%)
D) Strongly disagree	36 (12.7%) >***	15 (7.6%)
E) No opinion	40 (14.1%)	28 (14.2%)

From the Table Four, most of the Hong Kong's respondents expressed that they either disagree or strongly disagreed with the statement that "If most of people do it in this way, I will follow their action". If a society was belonging to a group society, respondents will follow other actions more easily and without many questions.

Safety Risk Perception

Generally speaking, respondents from Beijing tended to have a higher safety aspect of computer risk perception when comparing with Hong Kong.

TABLE FIVE: Scan Viruses Behaviour

Items of the viruses scanning	Hong Kong	Beijing
	Very often	Very often
A) Downloading files/software from the Internet	88 (30.4%)	81 (42%) >***
B) E-mail attachment that was sent from unknown users	95 (33.2%)	81 (41.5%) >***
C) E-mail attachment that was sent from your friends	47 (16.3%)	44 (23.9%) >***
D) Diskette or CD borrowed from others	39 (13.5%)	56 (29.3%) >***
E) Your own diskette that has been borrowed to others	35 (12.1%)	55 (29.3%) >***
F) Diskette that used in other computes	44 (15.2%)	64 (33.3%) >***
G) Diskette or CD comes from magazines and the likes	31 (10.7%)	43 (22.8%) >***

Beijing's respondents tended to have a higher safety aspect of computer risk perception than Hong Kong's respondents. This is especially so in regarding to the issue of viruses. From the Table Five, when asked the behaviour of scanning viruses under the given seven situations, Beijing's respondents had a higher percentage in expressing that they very often scanned for viruses than Hong Kong's respondents.

In addition, Beijing's respondents had a higher percentage in having more than one copy of the important files than that of Hong Kong's respondents.

TABLE SIX: One More Copy of the Important Files

How often do you store more than one copy of your important files?	Hong Kong	Beijing
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A) Very often	102 (35.3%)	100 (49.8%) >***
B) Sometimes	102 (35.3%) >***	54 (26.9%)
C) Never	31 (10.7%) >***	15 (7.5%)

From the Table Six, there were more respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong expressed that they very often store more than one copy of their important files.

TABLE SEVEN: Installation of Anti-virus Software

Respondents	Installed Anti-virus Software
Hong Kong	
A) PG CS	23 (69.7%)
B) PG non-CS	69 (86.3%)
C) UG CS	68 (87.2%)
D) UG non-CS	78 (82.1%)
E) Hong Kong overall	238 (83.2%)
Beijing	
F) PG CS	29 (93.5%) >***
G) PG non-CS	45 (91.8%) >***
H) UG CS	40 (97.6%) >***
I) UG non-CS	45 (93.8%) >***
J) Beijing overall	159 (94.1%) >***

Beijing's respondents tended to have a higher safety aspect of computer risk perception than Hong Kong's respondents. From the Table Seven, more respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong expressed that they had installed anti-virus software in their computers. Also, as pointed out from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), in January 2002, there was 78.0% of the Internet users in China had installed anti-virus software.⁵ (CNNIC's report, January 2002)

Installation of anti-virus software, however, cannot totally protect the computer from virus infection. One of the reasons is that the database of the anti-virus software is out-dated and cannot scan the latest computer viruses.

⁵ The CNNIC is one of the bodies among the five organizations that can provide IP and domain to either end users or the Internet Service Providers in China. In June 1997, the Chinese government further institutionalised the control of the usage of the Internet by setting up the CNNIC with a view of regulating the Internet usage, especially regarding to the IP and domain. Since then, the CNNIC conducted many surveys in regarding the use of the Internet in China. For the roles of the CNNIC, interested readers can refer to <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/about.shtml> for details. The roles and characteristics of the other four organizations are beyond the scope of this study. Interested readers can refer to <http://dgdcb.dgnet.net/tech/ip3.htm> for further reference. Up to February 2002, the CNNIC has conducted totally nine surveys regarding the use of the Internet in China, namely in October 1997, July 1998, January 1999, July 1999, January 2000, July 2000, January 2001, July 2001 and January 2002 respectively.

TABLE EIGHT: Frequency of Updating Anti-virus Software Database

Frequency of updating anti-virus software database	Hong Kong	Beijing
A) Very often	91 (38.2%)	90 (56.6%) >***
B) Sometimes	82 (34.5%) >***	40 (25.2%)
C) Rarely	44 (18.5%) >***	20 (12.6%)
D) Never	21 (8.8%) >***	9 (5.7%)

As illustrated in the Table Eight, more respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong expressed that they very often updated the database of the anti-virus software.

The explanation for the above findings is based on the grid group nature of Beijing and Hong Kong. Beijing tended to be a strong grid and strong group society. Because of the nature of strong group, Beijing's respondents would be much influenced by their friends. The influence from friends to the respondents could through daily communication, contact, and sharing with the respondents. The experience of infecting virus from the friends of respondents could become a kind of reminder and attention to the respondents. The respondents would base on their friends experience of being infected by virus and thus try to pay attention on virus in order not to be infected. Social impact theory therefore applied among Beijing's respondents. The same opposite can be applied on the case of Hong Kong.

Comparison between Hong Kong and Beijing

Grid and group able to explain the general condition of risk perception between Hong Kong and Beijing. Yet, it is useful to look closely on some of the aspects related to social psychology of risk, namely personal experience, availability heuristics, mass media and group pressure.

Personal Experience and Availability Heuristics

Beijing's UG CS respondents tended to have a little bit more experience in virus infection than their counterparts in Hong Kong. The experience increased their safety aspect of computer risk perception. Availability heuristics seems explain the way of Beijing's UG respondents react to the safety aspect of using computer.

TABLE NINE: Personal Experience on Infecting Viruses

Personal experience on getting viruses	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No Idea
Hong Kong					
A) PG CS	1 (2.9%) >***	9 (26.5%) >***	22 (64.7%)	2 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)
B) PG non-CS	3 (3.6%) >***	23 (27.7%) >***	50 (60.2%)	7 (8.4%) >***	0 (0.0%)
C) UG CS	3 (3.8%)	15 (19.2%)	48 (61.5%)	11 (14.1%) >***	1 (1.3%)
D) UG non-CS	0 (0.0%)	19 (20.0%)	56 (58.9%)	15 (15.8%) >***	5 (5.3%)
E) Hong Kong overall	7 (2.4%) >***	66 (22.7%) >***	176 (60.8%)	35 (12%) >***	6 (2.1%)
Beijing					
F) PG CS	0 (0.0%)	6 (18.2%)	23 (69.7%) >**	4 (12.1%) >***	0 (0.0%)
G) PG non-CS	1 (1.8%)	13 (22.8%)	37 (64.9%) >***	1 (1.8%)	5 (8.8%)
H) UG CS	2 (4.3%)	9 (19.6%)	32 (69.6%) >***	1 (2.2%)	2 (4.3%)
I) UG non-CS	1 (1.5%) >***	14 (21.5%) >	39 (60.0%)	10 (15.4%)	1 (1.5%)
J) Beijing overall	4 (2.0%)	42 (20.9%)	131 (65.2%) >***	16 (8.0%)	8 (4.0%)

More PG respondents from Hong Kong than Beijing tended to have more experience in viruses infection. From the Table Nine, more PG respondents from Hong Kong than Beijing expressed that they very often experience virus. Yet, most of the Beijing's respondents had rarely infecting virus.

TABLE TEN: Self Description on the Influence on Infecting Viruses

Self description on the influence on infecting viruses	Very serious	Serious	Moderate	Minor	None
Hong Kong					
A) PG CS	5 (15.6%) >***	9 (28.1%)	4 (12.5%)	12 (37.5%) >***	2 (6.3%) >**
B) PG non-CS	11 (14.5%) >***	22 (28.9%)	21 (27.6%)	18 (23.7%) >***	4 (5.3%) >***
C) UG CS	6 (9.1%) >***	14 (21.2%)	16 (24.2%)	22 (33.3%) >***	8 (12.1%) >***
D) UG non-CS	6 (8.0%) >***	23 (30.7%) >***	20 (26.7%)	24 (32.0%) >***	2 (2.7%) >***
E) Hong Kong overall	28 (11.2%) >***	68 (27.3%)	61 (24.5%)	76 (30.5%) >***	16 (6.4%) >***
Beijing					
F) PG CS	1 (3.4%)	12 (41.4%) >***	9 (31.0%) >***	6 (20.7%)	1 (3.4%)
G) PG non-CS	4 (7.8%)	18 (35.3%) >***	21 (41.2%) >***	7 (13.7%)	1 (2.0%)

H) UG CS	2 (4.5%)	13 (29.5%)	19 (43.2%)	10 (22.7%)	0 (0%)
		>***	>***		
I) UG non-CS	2 (3.8%)	13 (24.5%)	23 (43.4%)	9 (17.0%)	6 (11.3%)
			>***		>***
J) Beijing overall	9 (5.1%)	56 (31.6%)	72 (40.7%)	32 (18.1%)	8 (4.5%)
		>***	>***		

Furthermore, as shown in the Table Ten, as a whole, there were more respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong regarded the seriousness of the influence to them as serious or moderate if their computers were infected by viruses. It was Hong Kong's respondents, at least for the group of PG students, experience more on infecting virus than Beijing's respondents. Nonetheless, availability heuristics does not explain the way of Hong Kong's respondents react the safety aspect of using computer.

My explanation for the above findings is from Sitkin and Pablo (1992). Sawyer et al. (1999) found those who have experienced of the virus infection does not have the highest risk perception before the trigger date of the virus, Michelangelo. Sitkin and Pablo suggested that personal experience could not totally explain the risk perception of a person. They expressed that risk perception can be mediated by risk propensity and that can also be influenced by inertia and risk preference of that person. (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992: 16-19)

Another explanation is that Hong Kong tended to be a society of gambling and luck. (Wei and Li, 1995: 156) The citizens in Hong Kong, in general, are so prone to gambling that almost everything can be used as a tool for gambling. What is more, in Hong Kong, gambling is always associated with luck. Waters (1995) described in this way:

“Won so far. See if luck follows through,” an elderly man exclaimed as he threw down a wad of ten-pound notes, dreaming of sudden wealth. (Waters, 1995: 53)

From the above, we can understand that most of the gambler always believes that the reason for their loss is bad luck and that will not happen on them every time. The same attitude can be applied on the computer risk perception. After virus infection, Hong

Kong's respondents may associate their experience with bad luck. They think that they may not infect viruses next time as bad luck will not always happen on them. Therefore, they were willing to gamble by not installing so many anti-virus software.

Group Pressure

The findings showed that group pressure, including mass media and friends, had a tendency to increase the safety aspect of computer risk perception more among the respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong. It also confirms the explanatory value of the social impact theory more on the respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong.

TABLE ELEVEN: Awareness of Viruses by Mass Media

After reading the information about certain virus from government propaganda, magazines and the like

Awareness of viruses by mass media	A lot	A little	Perhaps	Not at all
Hong Kong				
A) PG CS	1 (3.0%)	14 (42.4%)	12 (36.4%)	6 (18.2%)
B) PG non-CS	11 (13.8%)	28 (35.0%)	27 (33.8%)	14 (17.5%)
C) UG CS	13 (16.7%)	21 (26.9%)	25 (32.1%)	19 (24.4%)
D) UG non-CS	14 (14.7%)	35 (36.8%)	33 (34.7%)	13 (13.7%)
E) Hong Kong overall	39 (13.6%)	98 (34.3%)	97 (33.9%)	52 (18.2%)
Beijing				
F) PG CS	16 (50.0%)	4 (12.5%)	11 (34.4%)	1 (3.1%)
G) PG non-CS	19 (35.2%)	12 (22.2%)	19 (35.2%)	4 (7.4%)
H) UG CS	17 (36.2%)	13 (27.7%)	14 (29.8%)	3 (6.4%)
I) UG non-CS	26 (41.9%)	8 (12.9%)	18 (29.0%)	10 (16.1%)
J) Beijing overall	78 (40.0%)	37 (19.0%)	62 (31.8%)	18 (9.2%)

As shown in the Table Eleven, there were more respondents from Beijing than Hong Kong expressed that their awareness of virus would increase a lot after reading the information about virus.

TABLE TWELVE: Awareness of Viruses by Friends

After your friends' computer or file just infected by virus

Awareness of viruses by friends	A lot	A little	Perhaps	Not at all
Hong Kong				

A) PG CS	6 (18.2%)	15 (45.5%)	11 (33.3%)	1 (3.0%)
B) PG non-CS	17 (21.5%)	35 (44.3%)	25 (31.6%)	2 (2.5%)
C) UG CS	5 (6.5%)	37 (48.1%)	24 (31.2%)	11 (14.3%)
D) UG non-CS	15 (15.8%)	43 (45.3%)	25 (26.3%)	12 (12.6%)
E) Hong Kong overall	43 (15.1%)	130 (45.8%)	85 (29.9%)	26 (9.2%)
		>***	>***	>***
		>***	>***	>***
		Beijing		
F) PG CS	18 (58.1%)	9 (29.0%)	3 (9.7%)	1 (3.2%)
G) PG non-CS	19 (34.5%)	16 (29.1%)	18 (32.7%)	2 (3.6%)
H) UG CS	18 (38.3%)	11 (23.4%)	16 (34.0%)	2 (4.3%)
I) UG non-CS	24 (38.7%)	14 (22.6%)	19 (30.6%)	5 (8.1%)
J) Beijing overall	79 (40.5%)	50 (25.6%)	56 (28.7%)	10 (5.1%)
		>***	>***	>***

As illustrated in the Table Twelve, more respondents from Hong Kong than Beijing expressed their awareness of virus would increase only a little after their friends' computer or file infected by virus. To those Hong Kong's UG students, their awareness remain unchanged after their friends' computer or file infected by virus.

The above findings confirm the explanatory value of the social impact theory on Beijing's respondents towards the safety aspect of risk perception. Mass media and friends tended to increase the safety aspect of computer risk perception among Beijing's respondents more than Hong Kong's respondents. With respect to the safety aspect of risk perception, the explanatory value of the social impact theory confirmed more on Beijing's respondents.

Conclusion

To wind up, the findings showed that my second hypothesis is valid whilst my first hypothesis is invalid. The findings have several implications. First, availability heuristic seems not to be as good as social impact theory in explaining the computer risk perception. Second, the typology of grid/group seems to be a good explanation for studying computer risk perception.

I propose that the computer risk perception among Hong Kong's respondents

leave much to be desired. They simply have low understanding on the issue, lack of the sense of preoccupation with the failure and develop their contingency plan.

The development of risk perception on using computer, however, is related to the issue of so called “acceptable risk”, the risk that people can take or bear after minimizing the loss. According to Morgan (1981a), risk abatement involves times and resources. Usually, we are difficult to wipe out risk completely even though we are willing to pay a high cost as we are difficult to define problem, assess the facts and the values and so on. (Fischhoff, et al. 1981: 9-46) Thus, it is the common practice of people to pursue the acceptable risk. (Mogan, 1981a: 56) Derby and Keeney (1981) use the idea of “how safe is safe enough” to show this situation. They suggest that a person need to go through an evaluation process before drawing a conclusion of whether or not an issue is an “acceptable risk” to him/her. The evaluation include, first, define the alternatives; second, the way to achieve the alternatives; third, the possible consequences of the alternatives; fourth, try to realize the actual consequences, and fifth, select the alternatives. (Derby and Keeney, 1981: 218-19) When the respondents took more actions in preventing the impact and the risk from the safety use of computer, they might have consider what level he could bear the consequence brought from the safety risk of using computer. To some of the Hong Kong’s respondents, their loss would probably be either zero or very little. They could bear the safety risk of using computer after taking actions in preventing the impact. That can partly explained the risk behaviour of using computer between the educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing.

Computer risk perception among the educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing are also subject to the affect of whether the youth have an accurate understanding and appreciation of an issue. Their understanding and appreciation of the issue, in return, is subject to whether the youth have received accurate knowledge or information on

the issue. I believe that the same is true to the knowledge of computer risk and prevention of virus. The ability and the willingness to receive the knowledge or information on the issue, as suggested by Morgan (1981b), are affected by the interaction between human and its environment. Risk perception may not have a causal relationship with risk behaviour. Nevertheless, the more knowledge of the respondents has towards the computer, the more options are available to the respondents in order to prevent the risk of using computer. Most of the information comes from education. Thus, with an aim of increasing the risk perception among the educated youth in Hong Kong and Beijing, proper education is very important.

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