

# The Stereotypes and Discrimination Against Chinese People

**Abstract:**

This paper discusses stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against Chinese. This is a significant topic to think over because stereotypes and discrimination affects people's daily life and their mental well-being. The paper examines research from reliable academic articles and journals. The purpose of this research is to state the impacts of this problem so that people will know about the seriousness of this issue. This paper will first analyze what is prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, and what are the relationships among them. Secondly, it will be discussed the reasons why there are these stereotypes, importantly, and the influence. Thirdly, it will analyze the discrimination that are caused by stereotypes, and it will list some discrimination about Chinese and Chinese immigrants in the United States. Fourthly, it will discuss the influences and effects of discrimination. Finally, the paper will outline the possible solutions to reduce the stereotypes and discrimination.

## **Introduction**

Stereotypes and discrimination are based on misunderstandings and the unfamiliar. Most people have stereotypes about other ethnicities because they do not have experience with that culture. When they hear something about that group, they may think it really happened. Even though people may have their own experiences with someone from that group, they still cannot judge the group based on the person they meet because one does not represent all. Every race and ethnic group faces stereotype and prejudice. Especially in the United States because the United States is a multicultural country of immigrants. There are so many people impacted by stereotypes and discrimination. The stereotypes and prejudices have a great impact on discrimination in education and the workplace, which can lead to unfair treatment and lower people's self-esteem, so it's a serious problem to investigate, especially for Chinese and Chinese-Americans in the U.S. According to Pew Research, the Chinese population in the U.S. has been growing fast since 2000, and there were almost five million people who is identified as ethnic Chinese in 2015 (Pew Research Center).

## ***Definition***

According to "Sociology in Our Times":

**Prejudice** is a negative attitude based on faulty generalizations about members of specific racial, ethnic, or other groups.

**A stereotype** is overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of members of particular categories. It can be either positive and negative.

**Discrimination** involves actions or practices of dominant-group members that have a harmful effect on members of a subordinate group (Kendall 270).

Interestingly, the author states that, Prejudice and stereotypes are attitudes, but discrimination is action. Discrimination is based on prejudice and stereotype. Some may cause discrimination and some may not (274).

Author Kendall presents Robert King Merton's prejudice and discrimination typology in her book. Merton is a great American sociologist, and he raises a typology to illuminate the relationship between prejudice and discrimination.

### ***Merton's Typology of Prejudice and Discrimination***

- Unprejudiced non-discriminators are not personally prejudiced and do not discriminate against others.
- Unprejudiced discriminators may have no personal prejudice but still engage in discriminatory behavior because of peer-group pressure or economic, political, or social interests.

- Prejudiced non-discriminators hold personal prejudices but do not discriminate because of peer pressure, legal demands, or a desire for profits.
- Prejudiced discriminators hold personal prejudices and actively discriminate against others (Kendall 274).

### **Example of Stereotypes:**

Stereotype can happen in any group based on Ethnic, Gender, Sexual orientation, Class, Major and so on. According to author Kendall, there are many stereotypes about different ethnic groups such as “Mexican people are lazy; Irish were stereotyped as ape-like, filthy, bad-tempered, and heavy drinkers; Italians were depicted as lawless, knife-wielding thugs looking for a fight” (287). Chinese Americans have been subjected to extreme prejudice and stereotyped as “coolies”, “heathens”, and “Chinks”, and the most common stereotype about Chinese students is that they only can learn by rote. Although some stereotypes are old, they still affect many people today.

### *Stereotypes about Chinese International Students:*

According to article “In Pursuit of Western-Based Business Education Away from Mainland China”, author Kumaran Rajaram writes that,

Traditional views of Chinese education suggest that mainland Chinese students place high emphasis on examination results and usually perform well in answering straightforward examination questions that require memorization. This creates pedagogic challenges, especially when mainland Chinese students pursue a Western-based education in Western universities as offered in Singapore institutions.....For many years, this caused the learning styles of mainland Chinese students to be misinterpreted as rote when in fact they were repetitive learning (370).

Because of Chinese teaching style, Chinese students are viewed as rote learner who can only learn by memorization. However, this actually is not the truth.

*The Truth of the stereotypes:*

In article “Challenging the Western stereotype: do Chinese international foundation students learn by rote?” author claim that,

“Chinese students learn with the intention of understanding, they use memorisation only when they fail to understand or have examination pressure. Consequently, Chinese students adjust well to Western teaching styles. Some difficulties they experienced in classrooms are due to language problems and a lack of understanding of Western cultural backgrounds and expectations” (Mathias et al. 1).

This article shows that Chinese international students also can learn by understanding. Chinese students can adjust to different education teaching styles and methods as well.

***Why there are many stereotypes:***

Stereotypes and prejudice is based on unfamiliar with the culture or group. Some stereotypes happened many years ago and have already changed; some may have data support; some may never have happened; People misunderstand or overgeneralize about the group lead to stereotypes and prejudice. Older people are more likely to have stereotypes about other groups because of unfamiliar, and parents have a great influence on children. "Most of us from an emerging sense of self and acquire most of our beliefs and values within the family context" (Kendall 98-99). When parents have a stereotype or prejudice thoughts about others, it will deeply affect us. Mass media also is a agent that causes stereotypes and prejudice. During the development of the internet, almost everybody knows how to use the internet. People will get a lot of information online, but everyone can pose their own opinion online, so the message may not be true. People may not be able to judge the information when they lack experience with the group, so when people get the incorrect information about other culture or group, they may think these real happen.

***Mass media and stereotypes:***

Following the development of the technology, mass media is widely used today. People can know from the mass media about what is going on all over the world. Mass media helps us acquaint more about other countries and other cultures, but it also spreading incomplete information and fake news, which enhances and expands stereotypes.

According to the article “Narratives lost in the box: The trichotomy of Latina student identity transition stages due to mass media and on-campus stereotyping”, author Emily Martinez-Vogt states that,

Mass media outlets often use and abuse the image of Latinas, consequently teaching the audience incorrect, simplified, and harmful stereotypes (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Mass media projects Latinas as a homogeneous group of people from a single race with a fixed socio-economic status and education level and who are capable of limited or broken English language abilities while originating from or being migrants and migrant workers (Guzman, 2011).

Although Latinas represent the largest racial minority in the United States and consist of physicians, lawyers, corporate leaders, and change agents (just to name a few) across all sectors, unfortunately the reality of their varying situations is not always accurately depicted on television (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

With an increasing number of television shows and channels to watch on any given evening, it represent that Latinas consistently remains lagging lags. The portrayal of Latinas continues to be inaccurate, placing them into stereotypical roles and characterizations that compromise their true identities (Mastro &

Behm-Morawitz, 2005). These stereotypes conveyed and reiterated by mass media, label and stereotype Latinas to be those who speak little or no English, work as streetwalkers, do drugs, are teenage mothers, and are disinterested in receiving educations (Martinez-Vogt 32).

Mass media spread inaccurate information about Latinas, which leads to stereotypes and discrimination against Latinas. It causes many negative influences such as assumptions about their knowledge and professional skills, and creates unfavorable images representations about them, which lead to unfair working conditions and operating post.

### ***Family and Stereotypes:***

Family and Friends also have a significant influence on people's mentality, because when Children grow up, parents transmit social values and beliefs to us. Children also learn from their peer groups. Author Tatyana Kleyn includes a quote in her article "Speaking in Colors: A Window into Uncomfortable Conversations about Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Bilingual Classrooms":

Hua found "that the kids do not have the appropriate language to address other groups. I think this is because of their parents who use the wrong phrase to address Black people. So the kids learn it." When students frequently hear a word being used in their home or community, they are likely to use it without question (20).

This quote illustrates how parents affect their children's behavior. Children may talk about the impolite words without knowing it because that's what their parents told them.

***The influences of stereotypes:***

Stereotypes and prejudice will influence people's behavior and decision. Stereotype can lead to positive action but also may lead to discrimination. Stereotypes may affect people to make a wrong decision and have a negative influence on others.

***Discrimination:***

*Discrimination in the United States* : In the article "Using History to Inform the Modern Immigration Debate in the United States", author William David McCorkle states that, "Groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Chinese faced harsh treatment from many native-born Americans who loathed the new immigrants because of the economic concerns, cultural differences, and racial fears" (McCorkle 154). In the United States there are many stereotypes and discrimination about other racial or ethnic groups because the United States is a multicultural country. Everyone in the United States is from other countries and have different cultures. When people do not know about other cultures, sometimes it leads to conflict, and people need time to understand and accept different cultures. When people take a step closer to communicate with each other, they will understanding each other better. As time goes on, stereotypes and discrimination keep changing.

***Discrimination against Chinese :***

Stereotypes and prejudice often lead to discrimination, and Hughes et al. describe some types of discrimination against Chinese ethnic group in the United States. Stereotypes

and discrimination have a significant influence on people, especially in education and many occupations.

**Discrimination about Chinese American Adolescents:**

According to article “Trajectories of Discrimination Across Adolescence: Associations With Academic, Psychological, and Behavioral Outcomes”, Chinese adolescents are more likely to experience peer overt discrimination compared to their White and Latino counterparts (Hughes et al. 1346). Stereotypes and discrimination have a great impact on people, especially for Children because it will affect their confidence and mental health.

***Discrimination about Chinese immigrant in workplace:***

Stereotypes often lead to unfair outcomes or requirements for people. In the article “Career Barriers for Chinese Immigrants in the United States” the author writes that,

“Chinese Americans are often perceived as valuable employees because of their dedication, productivity, and ability to perform well on many different tasks (Xin, 1997). These stereotypes tend to create a set of unfair performance demands for Chinese workers. Furthermore, these characteristics often result in backlash from other coworkers, including other minority workers, who feel intimidated by the extraordinary work ethic and ingenuity of their Chinese American counterparts” ( Leong and Mei 262).

Although this is a positive stereotype about Chinese immigrants' ability to work, it still leads to negative outcomes, and it has significant impacts on Chinese immigrants.

***The influence of discrimination :***

Stereotypes and discrimination make considerable impact on people. According to Diane Hughes et al, these will lead to "lower self-esteem, greater psychological distress, lower life satisfaction, higher depression, more conduct problems, and poorer academic motivation and performance" (Hughes et al.). Therefore, stereotypes and discrimination about racial and ethnic groups is an important topic to engage in.

***possible solution :***

Stereotypes and prejudice is caused by the lack of familiarity and understanding, so knowing about the history about different racial and ethnic groups is essential. Teachers can make a big difference on this field. According to author Tatyana Kleyn, "color-consciousness allows teachers to engage students in open conversations, pose difficult questions and demand reflection. It requires educators to be comfortable as racialized beings as well as to understand the inequality rooted in the racial and ethnic history of the U.S. Regardless of the approach taken, students will receive powerful and authoritative message, whether they be through a teacher's silence or explicit dialogue" (Kleyn 16), so it is important for teachers to have a comprehensive understanding of American history and step outside of their comfort zones to talk more about different

racial and ethnic groups. Looking at the problem of dialectical and have a open mind also is important. One does not represent all, so people should not judge others by small group.

***Conclusion:***

This paper contributes to the causes, influences, and possible solutions of stereotypes and discrimination. Whether knowing or not knowing, stereotypes and discrimination is around everyone. Stereotypes and discrimination have considerable influences on people's mental health and daily life. Those victims who experience stereotypes or discrimination may have lower self-esteem and higher psychological stress, so knowing how to reduce stereotypes and discrimination is significant for building a harmony and mutual developing environment for everyone.

## Works Cited

- “Chinese in the U.S. Fact Sheet.” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, Pew Research Center, 8 Sept. 2017, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/fact-sheet/asian-americans-chinese-in-the-u-s/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/fact-sheet/asian-americans-chinese-in-the-u-s/).
- Hughes, Diane, et al. “Trajectories of Discrimination across Adolescence: Associations with Academic, Psychological, and Behavioral Outcomes.” *Child Development*, vol. 87, no. 5, Jan. 2016, pp. 1337–1351. *EBSCOhost*, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1115347&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1115347&site=ehost-live).
- Kendall, Diana. *Sociology in Our Times*. Eleventh ed., New York, Ny, Cengage Learning, 2016.
- Kleyn, Tatyana. “Speaking in Colors: A Window into Uncomfortable Conversations about Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Bilingual Classrooms.” *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal*, vol. 2, Nov. 2008, pp. 13–23. *EBSCOhost*, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1062619&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1062619&site=ehost-live).
- Leong, Frederick T. L., and Mei Tang. “Career Barriers for Chinese Immigrants in the United States.” *Career Development Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 3, Sept. 2016, pp. 259–271. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1002/cdq.12059.
- Martinez-Vogt, Emily. “Narratives Lost in the Box: The Trichotomy of Latina Student Identity Transition Stages Due to Mass Media and On-Campus Stereotyping.” *Research in Higher Education Journal*, vol. 32, June 2017. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1148944&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1148944&site=ehost-live).

Mathias, Jinhua, et al. "Challenging the Western Stereotype: Do Chinese International Foundation Students Learn by Rote?" *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, vol. 18, no. 3, Jan. 2013, pp. 221–238. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1021646&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1021646&site=ehost-live).

McCorkle, William David. "Using History to Inform the Modern Immigration Debate in the United States." *Journal of International Social Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 149–167. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1173500&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1173500&site=ehost-live).

Rajaram, Kumaran. "Followers of Confucianism or a New Generation? Learning Culture of Mainland Chinese: In Pursuit of Western-Based Business Education Away from Mainland China." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, vol. 25, no. 3, Jan. 2013, pp. 369–377. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1029151&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1029151&site=ehost-live).