

Prejudice, Stereotyping, Racism and Discrimination

Prejudice

Negative prejudgements, feelings or attitude towards a person or group. The human brain tries to simplify the information it constantly receives, so it offers preconceived ideas for new people or groups we meet. This "inner" process might seem innocent or harmless enough, but prejudice can become a foundation for more harmful "outward" actions towards others.

Stereotyping

Applying the same characteristics to all members of a group and ignoring individual uniqueness. This is usually negative and based on false generalizations. One example of stereotyping that affects Chinese communities is the "model minority" concept.

A Model Minority Story

Gordon Pon (2000) writes about his experience being stereotyped as a "model minority" in high school. With his strongest subject being English and weakest subject being math, he diverted from what was seen as typical for a Chinese-Canadian student. What resulted were English teachers often questioning whether he wrote his own essays and always receiving grades in the B to A minus range, never higher.



"Stereotyping particular groups such as the Chinese places limits on what is expected of them and inhibits an understanding of the complex differences among the members of that group"

(Pon, 2000, p. 224)

Racism

Simply put, racism is the belief that the concept of race, although a social construct, is what determines inherent superiority. Racism can exist in many levels: individual, institutional and systemic.

Individual

Seen in everyday behaviour and sometimes it can be obvious (name-calling) or more hidden (being asked "where did you really come from?")

Institutional

Policies and practices of institutions that benefit some but not others based on race. Effects of this can be seen in a racial wage gap, like one study (2010) that found foreign-born racialized people earned 78 cents for every dollar earned by foreign-born non-racialized people.

Systemic

Similar to institutional racism, but includes norms in society that disadvantage based on race. This can look like racialized people not being able to access the same services as others. Another example of systemic racism is found in media representation where racialized people either have negative representation in media or no representation in media.

"Racism is a form of discrimination. It is prejudice, plus the backup of institutional power, used to the advantage of one group and the disadvantage of another group"

(Alberta Community Development as cited in City of Calgary, 2018)

Discrimination

Unfair action towards or treatment of a group based on factors like age, gender, religion, race. Like racism, discrimination can range from individual to systemic levels too. A historical example of systemic discrimination in Canada is found in the head tax imposed on Chinese immigration between 1885 and 1923. Individual acts of discrimination can take various forms as well, from obvious acts like hate crimes, all the way to everyday, frequent experiences that can be more subtle (also called "microaggressions").

In a 2018 study, **23%** of Canadians report having experienced at least one form of everyday discrimination. The most common types being racial discrimination, followed by gender discrimination and then age discrimination (Godley, 2018).

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