

Media influence on stereotypes

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What you see is not always what you get In a society highly influenced by the media, stereotypes are used sometimes in a comedic way. In Harold and Kumar go to White Castle one of the main themes the movie is poking fun at is how stereotypes affect the lives of the two main characters one being of Korean decent and the other Indian. The movie opens introducing the first character Harold. The audience sees that he is an Asian male working in a cubicle for a banking company.

The scene turns to Harold's co-workers who are both white in an office that is nicer and bigger to that of Harold, discussing how they are going to have fun and party for the weekend when one of them has much work to do, so one of them suggests having someone else do it. The scene gives the impression that the two white co-workers are the main characters of the movie as the introductory scene shows primarily the two co-workers and have the most dialogue in the brief intro; however, later the audience will notice that they are not seen again until the end of the movie. What this scene is shown to do is to make humor out of a normalized stereotype of the Asian American group. As this scene will be analyzed, the normalized stereotypes of Asians in society is highly recognizable in Americancultureand media, as it negatively privileges the Asian group while obscuring Americans insecurity of their own part in society. In today's world most people are born with an identity already established for them. Generalized perceptions or a stereotype of a single group has instigated prejudice. With cultural representations already determined by the outside world, many strive to break such representations in order to form their own identity and not what was given to them.

It has increasingly more difficult for one to break such representation due to factors in society normalizing these representations with the use of the media. The media has become a powerful tool in promoting such representation of groups. Stereotypes surround the whole world we live in and are unavoidable. No matter what we do, depending on our personality, attire, or even our hairstyle everyone fits into some sort of stereotype even by a little. The definition of a stereotype is a standardized conception or idea of a group of people (Hurst). Even though most stereotypes aren't true there is a reason why they exist and continue to thrive. Stereotypes have flourished continually as the world has become more and more globalized.

Especially in the United States one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. As stereotypes exist they have consequently affected the way that a particular individual or group lives in society. One particular representation that will be analyzed is the stereotypes of Asians in popular media, the movie Harold and Kumar go to White Castle and along with my own personal experiences being in the group within Asian Stereotypes will be used to assess the topic. Back at the beginning of this paper an introductory scene was described of the film Harold and Kumar go to White Castle. Even though the scene is only about a few minutes many representations can be noted. The scene implements key normalized stereotypes seen in the public eye. The particular stereotype of Asian group has been connected to the term "Model Minority" which applies positive traits as a stereotype.

The traits include qualities such as being hardworking, intelligent, studious, productive, and also inoffensive people. Also known to increase their social status through merit. The biggest opposition to the view is that it

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exaggerates the success of Asians. This false empowerment given by the stereotype covers up true problems that are faced by the Asian community. The belief that Asians are harder workers and thus leading to higher earning jobs has led to a more difficult level of climbing the work ladder into higher wage jobs, otherwise known as the glass ceiling phenomena: The definition "The Glass Ceiling" refers to an invisible barrier that limits the level to which a woman or another member of a demographic minority can advance within the hierarchy in an organization. It often is a barrier that confronts Ethnic Americans in addition to women when trying to reach upper management levels in many companies (Hester, 2007) Corresponding to the glass ceiling phenomena, the model minority stereotype has been believed to be the cause that Asians must acquire more education and work more hours than their white counterparts to earn the same amount of money. We will go back to the same scene mentioned at the beginning and continue.

The scene described before shows Harold the Korean descendent character working tenaciously in his cubicle filling out forms and papers and he is then approached by the two co-workers mentioned earlier that were contemplating how they are going to party over the weekend when they have work to do. Afterwards it shows the two co-workers giving Harold a pile of their papers and folders then persuading Harold to do the work for them with Harold then unenthusiastically accepting the task. Afterwards the scene shows the two co-workers in this short dialogue Co-worker 1: "Wow! That was amazing; I can't believe how easy that was" Co-worker 2: "Dude, how do you think I get all my shit done? Those Asian guys just love crunching numbers. You probably just made his weekend. (Both leave laughing) Then

the camera pans over to Harold as he shouts " Fuck! " The co-workers connect the traits of the stereotype to what they just did and sarcastically believe they did Harold a favor. What can be shown here in relation to the model minority stereotype is that Harold now has to do more work than is required of him for his white counterparts. However doing this extra work will not earn him more money or any merit while his white counterpart will be doing less work and receiving the same credit as Harold is.

The dialogue shows that the co-workers jokingly believe they are doing Harold a favor due to his traits which allows him to do such tasks; however, the ending of the scene shows Harold shouting " Fuck! " which can be seen as epitomizing reaction of Asians frustrations towards how this stereotype has affected them. The scene shows rebellion towards the label of the model minority. This shows that even though the model minority label credits Asians with strong qualities in the end negatively affects them. What does the scene show about the white co-workers? The scene shows the co-workers of Harold irresponsibly passing off their work for someone else to do. This characteristic shows laziness in the white co-workers. This part of the scene was a way to laugh at both Harold and also the two white co-workers. Why was this funny? The thing is that it's sometimes true that these kinds of situations occur that is where the audience connects the humor in the situation.

The scene reveals an abnormal of how Americans are usually viewed. Americans have been known to be hard workers through fighting for freedom through the revolution to rising to one of the most powerful countries of the 20th century. Time goes on being on top, strong qualities can be seen to be

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fading away. The polarity is seen as Harold the Korean is hard working while the white co-workers are not. In the scene the white co-workers are laughing away semi-sadistically as they leave the building after taking advantage of their Asian co-worker. The significance of this is that the laughing disguises the white co-workers insecurity of their own work ethic is not as strong. Using the model minority stereotype has in a way been used to exploit as shown in the scene with the white co-workers using the stereotype to use Harold as a work horse.

Even though the two white co-workers can't represent Americans it can represent a whole different stereotype to be uncovered America has had a history in dealing with Asians in the past. Around the 19th century a term known as the "Yellow Peril" developed as a fear to the increasing number of Asians would immigrate to the United States and would fill the country with foreign culture, speech, and even take away jobs from Americans. The fear that the hard working Asians would take away American's position in the working world, a satire to the response of that fear is shown in the scene as it shows Harold has been used as a crutch to hold up the co-workers in power. In Amitava Kumar's *Language*, a violent example is seen when Kumar describes the murder of Vincent Chin who was murdered by two white autoworkers in Detroit. During so he was called a "Jap" and told "It's because of you motherfuckers that we're out of work." (p. 05, *Critical Encounters With Text*).

Chin was murdered due to his ethnic identity which in some correlation was believed to put those auto workers out of work. Chin was murdered because in the view of the autoworkers was that he was somehow associated with the <https://assignbuster.com/media-influence-on-stereotypes/>

ethnic group that had replaced them. It could be that the people who replaced them were more efficient, harder working, or demanded lower wages. Whatever it was, they did not confront the fact that they themselves had anything to do with the fact they were out of work. Which is something that has become a problem in society is that people blame each other and do not choose to confront how they could have caused a certain event. The model minority stereotype has also affected my life personally being of Korean descent. Being part of the model minority stereotypes has caused to build expectations since we are expected to live up to our peers which fall into that category.

In elementary school, I remember asking my teachers for help and noticed some reluctance in doing so. Then I saw my teachers helping other students seeming more inclined to help. This situation made it seem to me that I had to work a little harder than my peers in school. In high school, some teachers took personal offence if it seemed as I underperformed on an assignment believing I wasn't trying or was being lazy. Even though if I tried hard and didn't do well it was disappointing to see teachers lose faith due to a misinterpretation. All of these things were built upon the general assumptions brought on by the model minority stereotype, has made it so it was abnormal to not follow the trend of such a view. Assumptions are natural impulses that most cannot avoid to do.

As human beings no matter what we see, there is some sort of impression that most of us come towards even without knowing the person. Some of these assumptions are guided from varying reasons including friends, family, face, hair, ethnicity, attire, gender, and the media. We analyzed how a <https://assignbuster.com/media-influence-on-stereotypes/>

particular scene in the film Harold and Kumar go to White Castle exemplifies a generalized assumption. Also a brief personal account on how the stereotype has affected me. Stereotypes create unfairness as it classifies groups based on assumptions. Awareness of the consequences of stereotypes will help the problems associated with it. Stereotypes will continue to die down as long as the world is becoming more and more globalized.

So therefore groups and cultures in America will become more connected with each other as time goes on causing familiarity, bringing down assumptions on a group and with this the concept, true equal opportunity will continue to become stronger. Works Cited Jon Hurwitz, Danny Leiner, Hayden Schlossberg . Harold and Kumar go to White Castle. (2001) • Amitava Kumar. " Language," by, reprinted from Passport Photos by permission of University of California Press. (2000) • Hurst, Charles E. Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences.

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