

What in our society leads to stereotypes and prejudgements



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Our society today is extremely judgemental. If you do not act, speak, look or dress a certain way your are immidiatly labeled. Amy Tan found this out while growing up. Her Mother was treated as a second class citizen because she could not speak proper English.

People perceived her as inadequate. Similarly, in *Ways Of Seeing*, Berger discusses how gender roles and perceptions effect every one in our society. Both these stories demonstrate how judgemental our society can be and also, how perception is so important to status. In " *Mother Tongue*" Tan discusses how different languages and dialects that people use reflect upon them. For instance, she tells us her mother speaks a very broken English.

Because of this broken English, many people treat her with disrespect and they believe she is slow or dull witted. However, what people don't know is that she reads many difficult authors, talks to her stockbroker daily, and listens to Wall Street Week. Although Ms. Tan's mother is obviously quite a capable lady, she is perceived as being inadequate or stupid because she uses a broken form of English instead of proper grammar.

People thought that " because she expressed them imperfectly her thoughts were imperfect." (604)After reading *Mother Tongue* I found myself analyzing my own experiences with language forms. My grandparents, native Italians, have been living in Canada for over 40 years. They live in a city with a massive concentration of Italians. The local stores, restaurants, and offices are Italian. Because of this fact, my Grandparents never mastered the English language.

They speak, as Tan puts it, “broken” English. After reading your essay I started thinking about past experiences watching my Grandparents interact with native English speakers who were not familiar with them. My Grandparents, like your mother, were often treated with disrespect by those who were native speakers. They would be treated like children who could not form coherent ideas. Yet, for me, I have been around my grandparents so much that I can understand their broken English and even speak it.

I also realize that just because they cannot articulate their ideas in perfect English does not mean that their minds are slower. I think we all have had an experience where we are perceived to be something we might not be. For instance *Ways of Seeing*, deals with how the sexes view each other. This essay discusses how we have been taught, through society and media, to view males and females as a role, rather than view individual people. To me, this type cast role that the sexes are issued is exactly like that language barrier and Mrs.

Tan and my Grandparents have in common. The two are perceived as slow because of their language, while men and women are perceived as a tangible, definable item. So what in our society causes all of these misconceptions? Why do we think that men and women must act a certain way to be a man or a woman? Why do we believe that if you do not speak a certain way you are inadequate? The idea of perception in our society is very important. The basis of power is perception.

If someone is perceived to be powerful, then they are powerful. In our society, what other people think of us is one of the most important drivers.

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The houses that we buy, the cars that we drive, the clothes that we wear are all status symbols. And if these status symbols are perceived to be important then the person who owns them is also perceived to be important. So what in our society leads to these stereotypes and prejudgements? Is it television, movies the media, or a combination of both? On any given day you can turn on MTV and watch the wealthiest people in our society show off their possessions and demonstrate how manly they are on Cribs.

You can turn on the E! channel and watch beautiful celebrities walk the red carpet in designer dresses and suits that cost more than some people make in a year. These people that we are exposed to on Television are the people that are idolized. People think that if they can act like a celebrity they will be perceived as a celebrity.