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The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Chinese Immigrant Students

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Abstract

Racial microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, and indirect forms of discrimination or insult directed at people based on their race or ethnicity. They can manifest as comments, behaviors, or environmental factors that convey negative stereotypes or biases. Asian Americans (AA) represent the fastest-growing population in the United States, with their numbers expected to continue increasing rapidly. However, the diversity within AA groups is often overlooked or inadequately described due to the pervasive model minority stereotype. The purpose of this study is to examine the racial microaggressions experienced by college students of Chinese descent. The outcomes of this research could help in understanding the social environment in which young Chinese immigrants live and could contribute to improving the environment to enhance their personal growth. This study has two research questions: 1) Does the perception of microaggressions among Chinese immigrants increase or decrease the longer they live in the U.S.? 2) Do women experience more microaggressions than men?

Keywords: Racial Microaggressions, Chinese Immigrants, Students

1. Introduction

Racial microaggressions can be categorized into three main types: microinsult, microassault, and microinvalidation. Sue and colleagues (2007) identified nine categories of microaggressions with distinct themes: stranger in your own land, intelligence attribution, color blindness, criminality/assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class status, and environmental invalidation. Figure 1 visually depicts the three broad classes of microaggressions, the classification of issues under each category, and their relationship to each other (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 278, Figure 1).

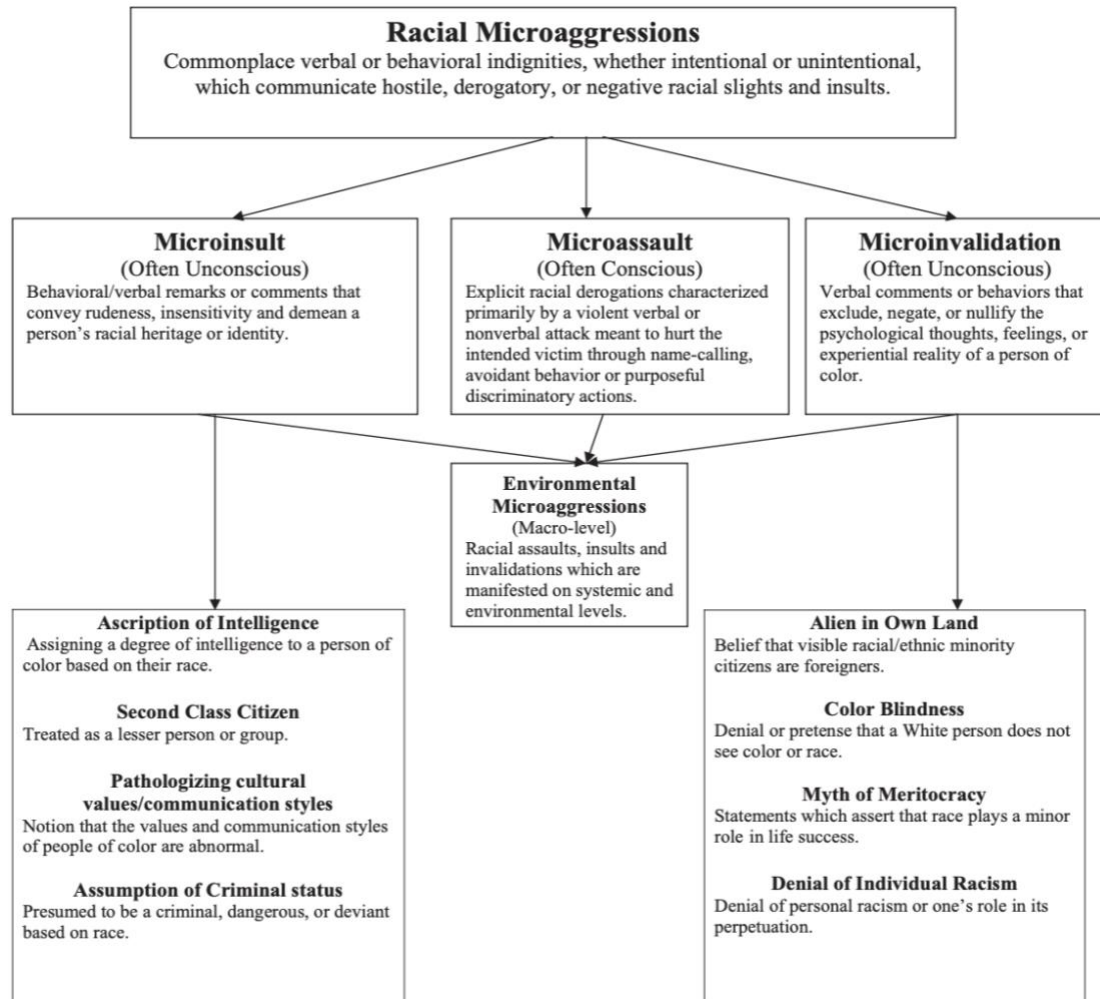


Figure 1: Categories of and Relationships Among Racial Microaggressions

Source: Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 278, Figure 1

The study found that Chinese students perceived more racial microaggressions the longer they stayed in the United States, with female students perceiving more than their male counterparts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural and Identity Factors

2.1.1. Model Minority Stereotype and Foreignness

Microaggressions related to the “model minority” stereotype and perceptions of Asians as foreigners are associated with poorer self-rated health among Asian Americans (Nicholson et al., 2020). Participants often face microinsults when expected to have extensive knowledge about their ancestral cultures or when asked to cook Asian food or provide ethnically specific advice (Endo, 2015). Because most of the participants in this study are Chinese international students or recent immigrants, they do not perceive their portrayal of Chinese culture as a micro-attack on their identity. It is assumed that for the second generation and above, Chinese Americans who are more American in their identity would feel uncomfortable being seen as foreigners.

2.1.2. Intersectionality

The Intersectional Prototypicality Model (IPM) elucidates how the intersection of racial and gender stereotypes influences perceptions and treatment of Asian American men and women. Hypo-prototypicality leads to marginalization, while hyper-prototypicality results in dehumanization and objectification (Wong & McCullough, 2021). This framework highlights experiences such as the exclusion of Asian American women in professional settings and the objectification of Asian women in media.

2.1.3. Gender Differences in Experiences

Gender also plays a crucial role in the experiences of racial discrimination. The different experiences of Filipino American males and females across various regions highlight the importance of considering both geographic and gender factors (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). The Intersectional Prototypicality Model (IPM) further explains how the intersection of racial and gender stereotypes affects the experiences of Asian American men and women, leading to different discriminatory encounters based on hypo-prototypicality and hyper-prototypicality (Wong & McCullough, 2021).

2.1.4. Asian American Women's Experiences

Intersectional discrimination, both explicit and implicit, significantly contributes to adverse mental health outcomes among Asian American women, including body shame, disordered eating, depression, and suicidality. Coping mechanisms include avoidance, shifting, proactive coping, and reliance on support networks (Forbes et al., 2023). Increased gendered racial microaggressions during the COVID-19 pandemic have been linked to higher levels of shifting, which mediates the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and perceived racism (Gamst et al., 2023).

2.2. *Role of Social Support*

Social support is crucial in mitigating the effects of discrimination. Higher levels of discrimination combined with lower social support correlate with more health problems. Conversely, strong social support can buffer the negative effects of discrimination on depressive and physical symptoms (Lee & Waters, 2021). For Korean American youth, strong ethnic identity and social support from peers, adults, and ethnic communities are linked to reduced depression (Kim et al., 2024).

2.2.1. Coping Strategies

Asian American women employ various coping mechanisms in response to gendered racial microaggressions, including shifting their self-presentation to counter perceived racism. This strategy partially mediates the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and perceived racism (Gamst et al., 2023). Strong ethnic identity also serves as a protective factor against depression, with Korean American youth experiencing reduced depressive symptoms through social support (Kim et al., 2024).

2.2.2. Family Influence

Family messages conveying racial mistrust contribute to increased depression and social anxiety among Asian Americans. In contrast, preparation for bias can mitigate negative outcomes by reducing avoidant coping strategies and stress-induced behaviors (Kim & Hogge, 2021). One interviewee shared that his parents' strategies toward microaggressions are "avoidance and indifference," while the interviewee himself "never experienced racial microaggressions." He believes that family messages can help buffer some of the aggression, but do not solve the underlying problem. An interviewee expressed a similar sentiment, sharing that her parents advised her to ignore certain incidents. Even though they offer emotional support, it doesn't fully help her because, as international student, her parents aren't physically present to assist her.

2.3. *Asian International Students*

Asian international students at predominantly White institutions frequently encounter negative biases toward other minority groups, influenced by U.S. societal factors such as media portrayals. Asian American students often feel uncomfortable and fearful of being mistaken for international students due to derogatory comments and racial slurs from White domestic students (Yeo et al., 2019). Additionally, they face specific microaggressions in therapy settings that impact their mental health (Kim & Hogge, 2021).

2.4. *Geographic and Demographic Influences*

2.4.1. Regional Differences in Microaggressions

Research indicates that geographic location significantly influences the experiences of racial microaggressions among Asian Americans. For instance, a study found that Filipino American males on the West Coast reported more frequent discrimination than females on the East Coast. Compared to all other groups of men and women, a lower percentage of East Coast female college students say they are expected to experience racism and discrimination (44%). One reason may be the subtle or covert nature of racism and discrimination today, which this group in particular may find it difficult to recognize (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). Conversely, Asian Americans on the West Coast generally experienced fewer microaggressions compared to those in the Northeast and Midwest, likely due to the larger and more established Asian American communities on the West Coast (Nadal, 2011a). This underscores the necessity for more nuanced studies comparing major cities on both coasts, such as New York and San Francisco.

2.5. *Psychological Impact and Coping Mechanisms*

2.5.1. Stress and Self-Esteem

The race of the perpetrator significantly affects the psychological impact of racial microaggressions on Asian Americans. Microaggressions from White perpetrators cause more stress and lower implicit self-esteem compared to those from Asian American perpetrators (Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2017; Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2020). Additionally, racial microaggressions are linked to sleep disturbances, especially for individuals with high stigma consciousness, exacerbating the negative impact on sleep quality and duration (Ong et al., 2017).

2.5.2. Impact on Mental Health

Higher educational attainment among Asian Americans is associated with increased perceptions of microaggressions, possibly due to greater interactions with White individuals and heightened racial awareness (Nadal et al., 2015). In therapeutic settings, Asian international students face specific microaggressions, such as environmental microaggressions and culturally insensitive treatment plans, which hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021). Additionally, daily microaggressions predict increases in somatic symptoms and negative affect (Ong et al., 2013). Cultural mistrust mediates the relationship between racial microaggressions and well-being, with microaggressions leading to increased cultural mistrust and, consequently, negative impacts on well-being (Kim et al., 2017).

2.6. *Educational and Workplace Contexts*

2.6.1. Educational Settings

In academic environments, minimizing or denying racial issues can exacerbate discrimination's impact, leading to feelings of invisibility and increased psychological distress among Asian American students (Ahn & Keum, 2021). Asian international students often experience specific microaggressions in therapy settings, such as culturally insensitive treatment plans, which can hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021).

Asian American medical students often refrain from reporting microaggressions due to fears of retaliation and other obstacles, which negatively impact their mental health (Zhang et al., 2023).

2.6.2. Workplace Experience

Workplace microaggressions, such as being stereotyped for math competency and diligence, lead to negative outcomes like frustration and burnout, despite these stereotypes appearing positive on the surface (Nguyen et al., 2024). Positive attitudes towards Asian Americans can influence perceptions of workplace microaggressions, making blatant microaggressions seem more harmful, while subtler forms often remain underrecognized (Kim, Block, & Yu, 2021; Kim, Block, & Nguyen, 2019). Since the participants were college students, few had

workplace experience. However, no participants in my research reported encountering unfair work distribution in group assignments at NY colleges.

Racial microaggressions against Asians in the U.S. vary based on geographic, demographic, and contextual factors. These subtle forms of discrimination can have significant psychological impacts and are influenced by broader societal stereotypes and cultural assumptions. Understanding and addressing these issues requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges the diversity within Asian American communities and promotes inclusive practices across various domains.

3. Research Methods

With approval from the Eureka Review Board, participants for this study were recruited from both private and public colleges in New York, including NYU, Purdue, Cornell, Baruch, CCNY, and SUNY Albany. The 22 Chinese students were recruited through personal social networks. Table 1 provides details about the participants, including their gender, year of birth, years in college, and countries they have lived in.

Table 2: Information on Participants

Gender		Year of Birth		Year(s) in higher education		Countries lived in \geq 1 month	
Female	13	2006	1	1	3	U.S.	22
Male	9	2005	1	2	3	China	18
		2004	2	3	4	France	3
		2003	1	4	8	Canada	1
		2002	2	6	3	England	1
		2001	1	10	1		
		2000	1				
		1999	1				
		1998	1				
		1997	2				
		1995	2				
		1993	2				
		1991	2				

	1990	2		
	1986	1		

The questionnaire incorporates demographics, the *Everyday Discrimination Scale* (short version) (Williams et al., 1997), and the *Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale* (Nadal, K. L., 2011). The first scale encompassed terms such as microinsult, microinvalidation, and microassault, while the second scale categorized these terms into six distinct themes, mirroring those identified by Sue (2007): Assumption of Inferiority, Second-Class Citizenship and Assumptions of Criminality, Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions, and Workplace/School Microaggressions.

Interview participants received compensation in the form of a gift card. Three female students and one male student were selected for recorded interviews from the pool of survey participants who consented. The three women have graduated from four-year colleges in New York, with one having also completed graduate school and attended a boarding high school in the U.S. The male student is currently a junior in college and has been in the U.S. for one year. Each interview lasted 25 minutes and was conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were recorded, manually transcribed, and, where necessary, translated from Chinese to English. Survey participants had the option to choose a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

4. Findings

Questionnaire and survey results provide valuable insights into the cultural, societal, and psychological challenges Chinese international students encounter due to microaggressions.

4.1. General Trends

General trends are found from the *Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale (REMS)* and individual questions from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*. Microaggressions are frequently experienced during freshman year, decrease sharply during sophomore year, continue to decrease slower during junior year, but spike during senior year, surpassing freshman year frequency. Specifically, the type of microaggression from the Everyday Discrimination Scale that shows a similar trend is **microinsults** - subtle demeaning actions that convey rudeness or insensitivity, often reflecting implicit bias.

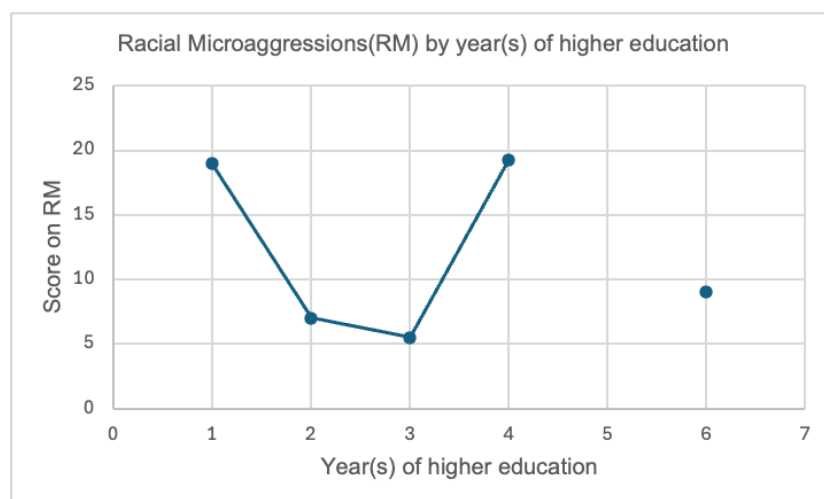


Figure 2: Racial Microaggression(RM) by year(s) higher education

Figure 2 shows the frequency of racial microaggressions from the *Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale (REMS)*; score ranges from 3 to 31.

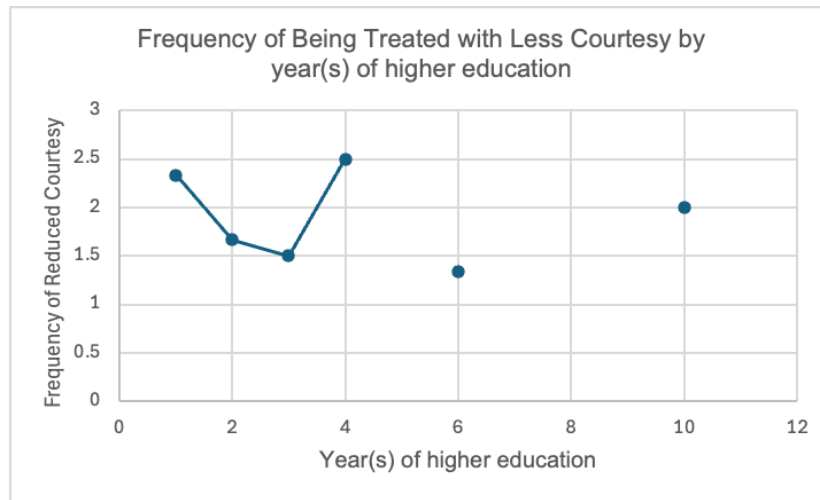


Figure 3: Frequency of being Treated with Less Courtesy by year(s) of higher education

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of “You are treated with less courtesy than other people” on the *Everyday Discrimination Scale* of 0-never, 1-less than once a year, 2-a few times a year, 3-a few times a month, 4-at least once a week, 5-almost every day.¹

The trends in **preventive strategies** against racial microaggressions differ from those concerning microinsults: both avoidance behavior and anticipation of potential microaggressions decrease from freshman to sophomore year, spike in junior year, and then slow again in senior year. Despite this pattern, seniors report greater social restrictions and mental burdens than freshmen. Notably, the average frequency of responses to both “trying to avoid certain social situations and places” and “thinking in advance about potential problems” remains consistent across all college years.

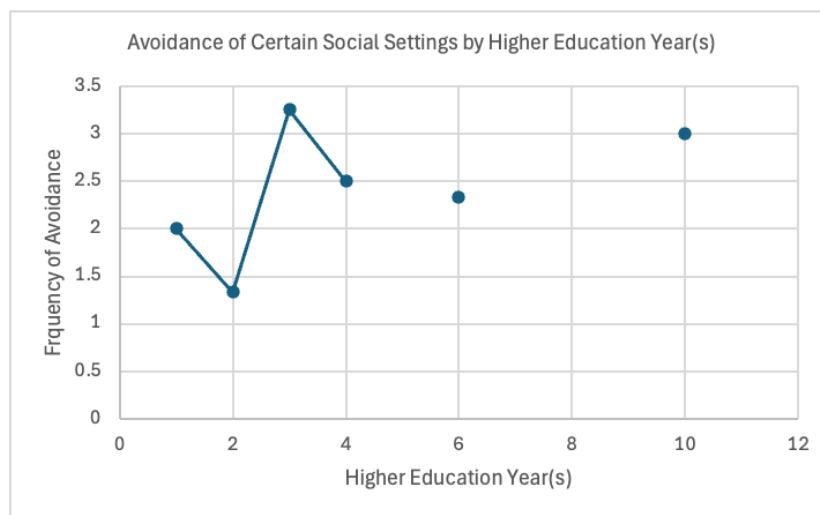


Figure 4: Avoidance of Certain Social Settings by Higher Education Year(s)

Figure 4 shows the frequency of “trying to avoid certain social situations and places” from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*.

¹ 10 years of college in the graph means 6th year of doctorate.

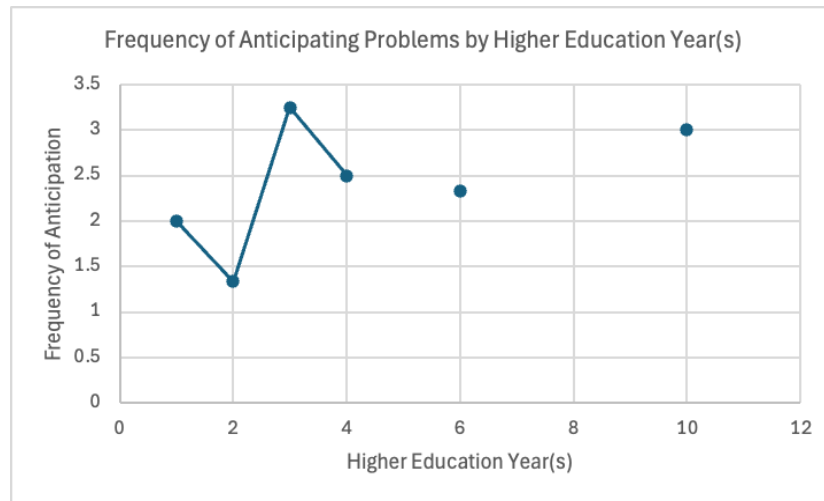


Figure 5: Frequency of Anticipating Problems by Higher Education Year(s)

Figure 5 shows the frequency of “think in advance about the kinds of problems you are likely to experience” from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*.

4.2. Geographic Factors

Given that survey and interview respondents are primarily college students in New York, many lack firsthand experience living on the West Coast. Even an interviewee who studied at UCLA before moving to New York mentioned that she couldn’t provide a concrete comparison. She noted, “There are more Asians on the West Coast, but there are also racial microaggressions within the Asian community, such as Chinese Americans toward Chinese international students.” Another interviewee echoed this sentiment, stating, “Many American-born Chinese look down on international students.” This perspective challenges Nadal’s 2011 research, which suggested that racial microaggressions can exist even within more established communities.

On the West Coast, racial microaggressions towards Asians are generally less common due to a more diverse Asian population. However, microaggressions can still occur within the Asian community among American-born Chinese (ABC), older immigrants, new immigrants, and international students, potentially diminishing the protective effect of a strong ethnic identity. This sentiment is also shared with African international students and their social interactions with African Americans (Constantine, M. G., Anderson, G. M., Berkel, L. A., Caldwell, L. D., & Utsey, S. O., 2005).

In my study, using the Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale, the top three themes of racial aggression experienced by females were Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, microinvalidations, and assumptions of inferiority, with an average score of 14.79. For males, the primary themes were Environmental Microaggressions and Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, with an average score of 9.20. This suggests that female college students in New York face approximately 1.6 times more racial microaggressions than their male counterparts. This finding contrasts with Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s study, which reported that, compared to other groups of men and women, a lower percentage of East Coast female college students (44%) expected to experience racism and discrimination. In my study, this percentage would be approximately 70.84%, indicating a significant increase.

One interviewee shared that during a month-long visit to the West Coast, she found people there to be friendlier, more inclusive, and better-mannered than those in New York. She also observed that the Asian population on the West Coast was much more diverse than on the East Coast. This observation contrasts with Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s explanation that the West Coast is less friendly to the Asian population compared to the East Coast. This discrepancy may be attributed to the unique political history of Filipino Americans, the focus of Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s study, on the West Coast, where segregation was prevalent before 1965. In contrast, on the East Coast, Filipino Americans, particularly professionals, were less affected by racism due to their financial resources

and a more positive public image (Cordova, 1983; Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). This contrast highlights differences within the Asian population; although the Chinese population on the West Coast has also faced a long history of discrimination since the Chinese Exclusion Act, they have generally experienced better treatment than Filipino immigrants.

Another reason for this discrepancy could be the timing of the studies: Bergano & Bergano-Kinney's research was conducted in 1997, while my research was conducted in 2024. The Filipino population on the West Coast may not have been as established and thriving in 1997 as it is in 2024. From 1990 to 2024, the Filipino population in California increased by 93%, from 61.6 million to 119.1 million (Macrotrends, 2024).

4.3. Gender

Supporting Wong & McCullough's finding on how hyper-prototypicality leads to dehumanization and objectification, several female interviewees in my study expressed feelings of being perceived as stereotypically sexualized Asian women, which aligns with the concept of hyper-prototypicality (Wong & McCullough, 2021).

One interviewee described herself as "a petite Asian woman who fits into the stereotypical submissive yellow fever fetish." She noted that she is almost "constantly aware of the male gaze and objectification." Her experience underscores the hyper-prototypical portrayal of Asian women, who are often objectified as hypersexual partners. Another interviewee mentioned that women are significantly more likely to be "catcalled" on the streets. The stereotype of Asian women as "easy" partners for white men, combined with the fetishization and biased perceptions that some white men may hold, has made her reluctant to consider dating a white partner. Unlike some Asian women who may prefer white male partners, she stated, "My principle is to avoid dating white men." These biased perspectives not only create discomfort but also contribute to a deeper sense of physical unease.

4.4. Social Support

Unlike Kim's study (2024), which reports that Korean American youths feel supported by a strong sense of ethnic identity and community approval, my research presents a different perspective. One interviewee noted that, although her social network mainly consists of Chinese and Asians with similar backgrounds, their conversations about current social news on racial microaggressions tend to increase feelings of hopelessness about the broader environment, rather than making a positive impact within the community. Furthermore, racial microaggressions can also occur within the Asian community itself, such as between American-born Chinese (ABC) students and international students or between long-time immigrants and newer immigrants. This suggests that a strong ethnic identity might not necessarily shield Chinese college students from experiencing racial injustices.

Inner-ethnicity racial microaggressions are also observed among Black international students and Black Americans. In a study by Constantine and colleagues, a Kenyan male student reported that a Black woman he asked out told him he was "too Black" for her. Chrystal A. George Mwangi conducted research on African and Caribbean international students at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) in the Mid-Atlantic region. Her findings indicated that some Black international students arrive in the U.S. with preconceived notions—both negative and positive—about Black Americans. These perceptions are often shaped by media portrayals, particularly the negative stereotypes about the high rates of Black Americans in prison and on government assistance. Similarly, the complex U.S.-China relationship may contribute to Chinese and Asian Americans forming preconceived notions about Chinese international students. Such notions could lead to alienation within the Chinese community in America, pushing Chinese international students to have no alliance with either the white-dominated school community or their Chinese community. This could be detrimental, as instead of fostering genuine diversity, colleges and universities, by incorporating international students, may inadvertently increase the risk of tokenism and implicit bias towards various communities and individuals.

Kim & Hogge's 2021 study posits that family messages preparing individuals for racial bias can mitigate the stress caused by racial discrimination. However, this concept was not fully tested in my research, as most Chinese students reported their parents' indifference to these issues. One interviewee described his parents' approach to

microaggressions as “avoidance and indifference,” noting that while he personally “never experienced racial microaggressions,” he felt that family messages might provide some buffer but do not address the root of the problem. Similarly, another interviewee shared that her parents advised her to ignore certain incidents. Although her parents offer emotional support, it does not fully address the impact of these experiences, particularly because, as international students, they are not physically present to assist her.

4.5. Ethnicity and Culture

A respondent at Cornell University noted, “At Cornell, the student body is quite diverse, so I haven’t encountered many racial issues. However, there is a noticeable distinction among Chinese immigrants. Some try to downplay their heritage to fit in, while others proudly share their ‘motherland’ culture, even if they were born in America.” This perspective aligns with Yeo’s study, suggesting that some Chinese students may distance themselves from international students to assimilate. However, it also slightly contrasts with Yeo’s findings (Yeo et al., 2019), as some Chinese Americans at Cornell appear to embrace their heritage, potentially due to the university’s diverse environment. An interviewee suggests that microaggressions in the Chinese community may be caused by historical reasons, such as the injustices and inequalities experienced by Chinese American elders.

One survey respondent also shared her experience of micro-invalidations as an international student: “When I go to the grocery store with my White roommate, even if I ask a question, the sales associates will answer my White roommate, not me, the person who asked the question.” Although not overtly racist, this microinvalidation is both harmful and problematic. When asked if she believes this behavior is intentional, the respondent replied, “I think the sales associate assumes I don’t understand, rather than intending to insult me.” She feels the sales associate is undereducated on this issue and did not recognize this invalidation as a form of racial microaggression at the time. If it occurred again, she says she “might make fun of the sales associate for talking to the wrong person.” Her response indicates an indirect approach to addressing microaggressions.

Reinforcing Nadal’s finding (2015) that higher education attainment is positively correlated with greater perception of racial microaggression, an interviewee expressed that she “didn’t learn about this concept until [she] was in college, and [her] college friends are also very aware of the microaggressions [she] experienced.” This perspective was shared by an interviewee who moved to America from high school through to graduate school: “Initially, I wasn’t aware of racial microaggressions. It was only after spending more time here and learning about various incidents that I began to notice them. In school, racial microaggressions were rarely discussed, with the focus in high school primarily on Black and Latino communities, and little mention of Asians. In college, there weren’t specific courses on the topic; most of my understanding came from conversations with friends or following the news.”

Similarly, individual questions on the Daily Discrimination Scale and the REMS scale show that older Chinese international students at New York colleges report experiencing more racial microaggressions. This may be due to their increasing awareness of race and ethnicity in America, concepts that are less prominent in social conversations in China. There is a positive correlation between the length of time spent in the U.S. and the level of microaggressions experienced: as Asian international students remain in the U.S. longer, they become more attuned to microaggressions. This lack of awareness when initially migrating to America is shared with African and Caribbean students (Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, and Peralta, 2014).

This suggests that in Asian countries where discussions about race and ethnicity are less common or entirely absent, Asian immigrant students may be less aware of the racial microaggressions they encounter in America.

4.6. Mental Health

In therapeutic settings, Asian international students face specific microaggressions, such as environmental microaggressions and culturally insensitive treatment plans, which hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021). An interviewee shared the same sentiment that she felt scared to report racial microaggressions to school authorities, especially during conflicts with other people of color. She believed that school therapy and counseling

might not support her because of her identity, leaving her feeling voiceless in these situations. What stopped her from seeking help from the dorm manager was her fear of being labeled as discriminatory toward Black people, worrying that her concerns might be perceived as racist. Additionally she shared that generally her “school isn’t really interested in helping you; they just want to make sure you don’t end up in a fatal situation like suicide.”

When discussing responses to microaggressions, one interviewee explained, “It depends on the situation and the person involved; I usually choose a response that avoids causing me harm, which could range from a bitch face to a written report.” She noted that, contrary to fears of retaliation, “most complaints end up going nowhere, and the person who raises the issue is often labeled a snitch.” This indicates that reporting microaggressions may lead to further invalidation and alienation from one's social circle.

5. Discussion

Based on responses to questions on the Daily Discrimination Scale and the REMS scale, older Chinese international students at New York colleges in my study reported experiencing more racial microaggressions. This may be due to their increasing awareness of race and ethnicity in America, concepts that are less prominent in social conversations in China. There is a positive correlation between the length of time spent in the U.S. and the level of microaggressions experienced: as Asian international students remain in the U.S. longer, they become more attuned to microaggressions.

For new immigrants and international students, the longer they stay in the United States, the more they encounter racial microaggressions. One reason is their increased awareness. In their home country of China, concepts like race and ethnicity are rarely discussed, so while they may feel uncomfortable at first, they gradually stop noticing microaggressions. However, after about three years, as they become accustomed to the local environment in the U.S., they begin to feel strongly about the presence of racial microaggressions. The microaggressions that show a clear trend are microinsults, such as “being treated with less courtesy” and “being neglected by sales associates.”

According to responses to my survey, Chinese women living in New York experience about 70% more racial microaggressions than men. This is because many sexualized stereotypes about Asian women, such as “docile,” “tame,” and “industrious,” cause many Chinese women to experience a subtle male gaze. Although Asian men also face certain stereotypes, they are less likely to be perceived by Chinese men. Female students feel more targeted due to stereotypes, while male students are less concerned, attributing this to the growing number of policies supporting women’s rights.

Limitations of this survey include a small sample size, a narrow population focus (intended to target Chinese Americans and new immigrants but primarily gathered data from international students), and participant noncompliance with a key instruction. In the demographic section, the question “Please list the countries you have lived in and the years during which you lived in each country for at least a month” was often partially answered, with many participants omitting the years they had lived in the U.S. and other countries. This omission hindered the ability to assess the hypothesis that the longer Chinese immigrants reside in the U.S., the greater their perception of microaggressions. Additionally, three participants consistently selected either “I have experienced this event” or “I have not experienced this event” throughout the REMS scale, indicating a lack of engagement. Their responses for the REMS were excluded from the final analysis.

This study is purposely chosen to concentrate on racial microaggressions, but it is important to acknowledge other types of microaggressions as well. Gender, sexual orientation, and disability microaggressions may have equally powerful and potentially detrimental effects on women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals, and disability groups. Further, racial microaggressions are not limited to White–Black, White–Latino, or White–Person of Color interactions. Interethnic racial microaggressions occur between people of color as well.

6. Conclusion

While racial microaggressions most often occur on an individual level, the increased perception of them increases harm and mistrust on a collective level. For Chinese students in college, cross-cultural adjustment creates cultural conflicts and challenges. This can adversely affect mental health and academic performance.

To address these challenges, policies and practices should focus on implementing comprehensive support systems that promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within college campuses. While students gain diversity through their peers, faculty members should also provide tailored assistance to help minority students better integrate into new environments. Targeted mental health resources should be offered to Asian students, ideally by faculty who share similar experiences. Additionally, schools should provide cultural competence training for both teachers and students and develop programs that foster cross-cultural understanding and integration. This would prevent students from remaining in racially segregated social circles, which can reinforce existing biases. Future research could explore the long-term impact of racial microaggressions on the academic performance, mental health, and subsequent career choices of Chinese students, such as why they choose to remain in the U.S., return to China, or seek employment in other countries. Moreover, investigating the role of peer support networks and their effects on mitigating the negative impacts of microaggressions could provide valuable insights for enhancing student well-being.

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