

# High-Educated Women and Stereotypes -- A Study of Gender Norms

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**Abstract:** This study uses the research framework of BIAS map: the behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes to study the discrimination of Chinese female doctoral students. According to previous research, warm stereotypes lead to an active or passive propensity for positive behavior, Competitive stereotypes can lead to negative behavioral tendencies and reduce altruistic helping behaviors. Groups divided by these two quadrants also lead to different behavioral tendencies. This study used this theory to measure the stereotypes and behavioral tendencies of different student groups, and to illustrate the awkward situation of Chinese female doctoral students. On the basis of questionnaire survey, focus group interview is used to make up the deficiency. The origin and formation mechanism of the stereotype of Chinese female doctors are studied experimentally. The future needs to be compared with other areas.

**Keywords:** Stereotype; Emotion; Gender Studies; Contempt

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## Introduction

The female employment rate in China was already at the forefront of the world during the Mao era, reaching over 70% in the 1980s and 1990s. The level of gender wage differences is significantly smaller by international standards (Maurer Fazio, Hughes,&Zhang, 2007; Cook&Dong, 2011). From the perspective of work, women in Chinese Mainland seem to have equal status. In the 1980s, China implemented the only child policy, and only daughters enjoyed more social resources and parental care. According to the data released by the Ministry of Education, in 2013, the number of college students in Chinese Mainland reached 24680726, of which 51.74% were women. It has become a trend for mainland women to receive better and better education.

However, in movies, TV shows, news, and even forums, female doctoral students are often labeled with many negative “labels” (such as “third sex”, “extinction teacher”, “UFO (ugly, fat, old)”, etc.). Although female doctoral students are a small group, the stereotype and discriminatory behavior towards female intellectuals in China are not insignificant issues. It is related to the actual status, educational rights, and social equity of Chinese women. Using this as a prism, researchers can glimpse the role and influence of media in building gender cultural consensus and forming stereotypes.

## The Bottom of the “Chinese Style Dating Disdain Chain” - Female PhD

In July 2017, the post “Chinese style blind date disdain chain” was widely forwarded online. In Beijing, ‘Beijing residents’, ‘central urban and educational highland properties’, ‘male returnees’, ‘male doctoral students’, and ‘female undergraduate students’ are considered the most competitive indicators in the dating market.

In this post, marriage and family are clearly priced, and in addition to material conditions such as house and household registration, those belonging to the sheep are discriminated against on superstitious grounds. Returned male PhD, returned female PhD, and female PhD are located at the top and bottom of female and male mate selection goals, respectively.

## Stereotype and female higher-education in China

In 2008, Li Tingru from the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China analyzed the gender specificity of “female doctors” from a philosophical perspective, providing an excellent analysis of the status of Chinese women who have always been seen, spoken of, and judged since ancient times. This is the result of a cultural norm that has lasted for thousands of years in the patriarchal clan. But categorizing ‘female doctoral students’ as the ‘rising third category of women’, regards higher education as a part of women’s independence. The author

has sorted out the concept of third sex - "third sex" is an "alternative" group that is split from the first and second sex, and is neither recognized by men nor accepted by women. The term 'third sex' was first popular in countries such as India and Thailand, referring to people who have been castrated, including both genders and those who have undergone sex reassignment surgery. It is known as 'Hygiras' or 'human demons' and refers to people who have been discriminated against and reviled by society. From the perspective of historical periods, women are divided into three categories: the first type is discriminated against women, who are seductive, ignorant, jealous, dangerous and corrupt; The second category refers to the praised women, who are the educators of customs, admirers of men, and initiators of children. As goddesses of the family, they have received unprecedented praise and praise; The third category is unrestricted women who have equal opportunities and rights to work and study as men, and are ubiquitous in all aspects of human life just like men.

Generally speaking, there is relatively little research on the construction of stereotypes in female doctoral studies in China, and there are not many insights; And in recent years, this phenomenon has not weakened, and the analysis combining quantitative and qualitative research is rare. At present, there is a gap in the study of stereotypes, emotions, and behavioral directionality among Chinese female doctoral students. Although female doctoral students are a small group, the stereotype and discriminatory behavior towards senior female intellectuals in China are not insignificant issues. It is related to the actual status, educational rights, and social equity of Chinese women. As a socialist country committed to gender equality, China should not ignore women's right to higher education and not be discriminated against or prejudiced by society.

## Map of group emotions and stereotypes

This article draws on the research framework of the BIAS map: the behaviors from intergroup effects and stereotypes.

The earliest model research on group stereotypes was conducted by Susan T. Fiske and Amy J. C. Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. Researchers explored the use of competitiveness and warmth as horizontal and vertical coordinates, Revealed the difference between paternalistic stereotypes and envious stereotypes - they respectively bring about benign gender discrimination (submissive women are very cute, they have low competitiveness, and high warmth - "women are wonderfully effective") and hostile gender discrimination (do not like competitive women: professional women, athletes, lesbians, etc.). The study expanded the boundaries of gender discrimination and conducted a mixed approach.

On this basis, Amy J. C. Cuddy, Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick proposed the method of group influence and stereotype map BIAS map to measure the emotions and behaviors triggered by stereotypes between groups. The study proposes three hypotheses: 1. Stereotypes influence behavior; 2. Emotions affect behavior; 3. Emotions have a greater impact on behavior. Research has found that anger caused by jealousy can cause substantial harm.

## Method

Many previous studies have found that active, passive, altruistic, and damaging behaviors can serve as measurement dimensions for most inter group behaviors. The behaviors classified as active/passive include aggression (Buss, 1961), intimate relationship behavior (Sinclair&fehr, 2005), and leadership style (EAGLY, Johannesen Schmidt,&van Engen, 2003). Here, behavioral bias is divided into: 1. proactive altruistic behavior (i.e., acting for agency); 2. Proactive harmful behavior (i.e., opposition: language harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, etc.); 3. Passive altruistic behavior (i.e., cooperation, such as choosing to collaborate with groups considered smart); 4. Passive harmful behavior (i.e., acting without, ignoring, etc.) This kind of harm is manifested at the social level as lack of support for the group, at the interpersonal level as showing contempt, avoiding eye contact, and ignoring its existence, etc.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire identified six student groups: male PhD, female PhD, male master's, female master's, male bachelor's, and female bachelor's, using 12 sets of test questions from two projects for measurement. This scale includes perceived social structure, characteristics, emotions, and behavioral tendencies. Among them, social structure (competitiveness and status), stereotypes (competitive and warm) emotions (admiration, contempt, jealousy, regret), and four behavioral tendencies (active harm, passive harm, active altruism, and passive altruism). These measurement items have been validated to be effective through previous research (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick,&Xu, 2002,

Fiske et al., 1999) using a five level scale, and respondents need to answer ‘What do you think most Chinese people think?’ (1=none at all, 5=strongly agree). Previously, this question structure was used to measure perceived social responses and reduce respondents’ influence in order to meet social expectations.

## Results

The first question of the questionnaire used 30 words (ten neutral, ten negative, and ten positive) to ask participants to choose five that were in line with the majority of people’s cognition. The results showed that the most people chose “intelligent”, accounting for 71.43%; The proportion of ‘powerful’ is 45.86%; The proportion of “elegant and dignified” is 39.85%; The proportion of ‘stubborn’ is 34.59%; The proportion of “ambitious” is 32.71%; Proud accounts for 31.58%.

Among them, the positive impression is: “intelligent”, “powerful”, “elegant and dignified”, and “tenacious”; Negative impressions are ‘ambitious’ and ‘proud’. From this perspective, there seems to be no problem, and a more detailed discussion is left for future comparative research.

The survey found that male doctoral students have the highest competitiveness, with an average of 4.47, female doctoral students have a competitiveness of 3.94, female bachelor’s students have the lowest competitiveness, with 2.82, and the highest warmth, with 3.93. In contrast, female doctoral students have the lowest level of warmth, at only 2.97. Female doctoral students are perceived as not friendly and cold.

The questionnaire also measured the scores of appearance and body shape for various student groups. According to the data, the group with the worst appearance and body shape in everyone’s minds is male PhD (appearance 2.64, body 3.27), and female PhD (appearance 3.06, body 3.58), both ranking second to last. The average values of female bachelor’s degree (appearance value 3.9, figure 3.84) and female master’s degree (appearance value 3.6, figure 3.8) rank in the top two. Research has found that blind dates disdain top male doctors who are the least attractive and have the worst physique; At the same time, the appearance and physique of female doctors are considered inferior, therefore they are at the bottom of the dating disdain chain.

Research shows that highly educated women in China are discriminated against and portrayed as negative stereotypes. The discrimination and ridicule against highly educated women in popular culture attempt to use women’s low attractiveness in the marriage market to reduce the attractiveness of high education to women. This has a restrictive effect on the educational development of women in a market economy where social security and welfare are not fully developed. This requires vigilance and correction.

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