Introduction

The following essay will discuss the topic of stereotyping, and how it affects society when practiced. What is stereotyping, and what are the causes? Is it related to instinct? These questions will be put reason, based on fact. When the facts have been made clear, a valid opinion regarding the topic of stereotyping will be made. Stereotyping is quite common among society, yet it is also quite difficult point out what it really is.

Stereotyping is referred to as any theory or doctrine indicating that that actions of an individual reflect on his or her whole culture, sex, age, race, class, or nationality. It could also be considered as a tool which people use to label others. In practice, one looks at a other, and begins to make generalizations about any physical or intellectual attributes one may possess, and then classes them into a certain category. Adopting stereotype ideas, one assumes that the behavior of one represents everyone of that class. If a young Japanese boy is excelling in math, for example, then a stereotype attitude would be to assume that all Japanese boys are good at math. It is quite obvious that this is not always so. Knowing this, does that mean that stereotyping is "wrong"? When is it considered "correct", if ever? We are provided with prerogative to think however we like, but is it correct in assuming that stereotyping is immoral and unfair? This topic will be more discriptive through the proceeding.

Stereotyping

As it was mentioned in the Introduction, stereotyping is relative to making generalizations towards a whole culture, class, or nation, etc. based on the actions of one or a select few. It is quite obvious that the accuracy rate of observing in such a manner would be quite minimal, yet there are people who practice it and people who have done it before, including myself. I would be telling an absolute lie if were to say that I have never stereotyped anyone. Who is to say why I have, for I am not a prejudiced person as far I can tell.

Yet I have caught myself thinking that all people from Hong Kong are filthy rich, because the majority of the people that I know, originating from there (which is not many) seem to be quite well off financially, with their fancy cars and clothing. Well the truth is, there are people who filthy rich living in Hong Kong, as well as people who are dirt poor. The jealousy towards my acquaintances from Hong Kong, lead me to believe that all people from there are rich. That is a classic example of stereotyping, within my experience. Looking back on that predicament, which was about two years ago, makes me feel feeble-minded, for the assumption was quite ridiculous. I am glad, however, that it had occurred, because it has enlightened me to the point that I will remember not to even think along the lines of something as ridiculous as that.

There are many other various examples of stereotyping regarding nationality, such as: The Irish are considered as uncontrollable alcoholics, the Chinese are portrayed as illusive thieves, Jewish people as being inherently cheap and Natives as being lazy and apathetic. All of which, are very unwarranted judgment, for there is minimal if not any credible evidence backing it up. Yes there may be a few Irish alcoholics, Chinese thieves, cheap Jewish people, and lazy Natives, but that does not mean, however, that they are all like they are said to be.

A person who stereotypes could be considered as a prejudiced person. A prejudiced person does not take the time to understand another as an individual. Instead, they make preconceptions about another, regarding their age, sex, race, nationality, class or culture. In my previous case, I was prejudiced about my acquaintances from Hong Kong's nationality or culture.

The general relationship between a person who is prejudiced and a person who stereotypes is the fact that they are both mean-spirited. That is, they violate the rights of individuals by forming perceptions about people based solely on their

membership in a particular group. Consequently, they fail to judge people based on their merits and individual traits but on generalized notions derived from popular culture. I contend that in many instances that the tendency to prejudge other humans is an act of ignorance more than an intentional behaviour.

Cause and Distinction

Some would think that stereotyping is a subconscious or instinctive action from within, and that may be considered true, only to a certain degree however. There is a fine distinction between innate behaviours opposed to conditioned behaviours. Instinct is an innate behaviour which is part of our natural intuition from the point of which we are born. Stereotyping would not come as an automatic reflex action in any situation, thus it can be said that it is not an instinctive behaviour. It is an action which is learned and conditioned through periods of time, just as racism, sexism, and enthoncentrism, etc.

There are some cases when stereotyping could indirectly act in one's favour, however the amount is quite minimal. If a unpleasant looking black male, for example, were following you in the middle of the night, it would seem unclear whether to foster stereotype ideas and run like mad to get away, for black people have been portrayed solely as gangsters and muggers, or remain walking a normal pace and risk getting attacked. Instinct would likely tell you to run for safety, however the follower being "black" should have nothing to do with a his credibility. It is the fact that he is following you in the middle of the night, which is a perfect time to spring an attack. Technically stereotyping really has nothing to do with this particular situation, however people may say that it does.

Common catalysts for influencing such beliefs like racism, sexism, enthoncentrism, and stereotyping are media, like newspaper articles and headlines, television programs, and radio broadcastings, etc. The media has the power to direct any message, however it may see fit, and affix it to the viewers' thoughts. The media has abused its power to the point of which it has caused actual fatalities. Approximately during the late 1950's, for example, there was a sudden unwarranted broadcast stating that the Martians had landed somewhere in San Fransisco. This broadcast shocked the nation and caused absolute panic within the hearts of the Americans. Fortunately, the broadcast was revealed to be false. Consequently, before that could be revealed, people had already begun to flee from the country and even commit suicide. The initial intention of this broadcast was for pure entertainment. However, I fail to see a sign of anything entertaining. I believe this was a test to see how far people would actually go in favour of what they see or hear. This abusing of power by the media is one of the many fosters of stereotyping.

Another origin of stereotyping, is through the social pipeline. Social stereotypes and generalizations derived from popular culture are what I consider to be "prepackaged labels" we can assign to people. This saves us the time and effort of understanding the complexities of other human beings different from us. In all fairness, it can be said that all cultures participate in this endeavor. No one or group has a monopoly on prejudice and stereotype behaviour.

Closing Statement

I believe that it has been made quite clear that stereotyping is very "wrong", for it deprives a person of the natural right to be recognised as an individual., something which we all want and deserve. Sometimes it's easier to say that this person must be "like this" because his or her people are "all like that" instead of taking time to find out what the person is really like. Labeling people into certain group might make it seem easy to understand people, but the truth is it's not easy, because life isn't easy. There are no shortcuts in understanding the ways people work, for we full of complexities and a uniqueness which cannot be just "wrapped up" in a single unwarranted perception. I appreciate the fact that I can be picked out of a group of people for having distinct differences in

qualities, but not based solely on what I look like, but about who "I am." Being stereotyped robs me of what
I can call myself......an individual. If I were to lose that, then I would have no reason to live.