

PERCEPTIONS**A. Stereotypes**

Definition of Stereotype: “A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing” (Oxford Dictionary Online).

B. Characteristics of Stereotypes

1. Allows justification or rationalization of behavior, self-deception, acceptance/rejection of groups, and to selectively maintain our perception and thinking about a group (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002).
2. Stereotypes have been said to be factually incorrect, illogical, and they are irrationally resistant to new information about the stereotyped group.
3. They are fixed, rigid ideas. The charge that stereotypes are fixed, rigid ideas means that people’s perceptions of groups are difficult to change once they form that perception.
4. They are either overgeneralizations or oversimplifications. Stereotypes are said to be exaggerations of real group differences, either through overgeneralizations or oversimplifications.
5. They are not supported by reasonable evidence. It is often suggested that stereotypes are based on illogical or irrational foundations because they are not supported by reasonable evidence.
6. They are driven by motives such as fear, rationalization, and prejudice.
7. They have an adverse impact on our behavior regardless of whether the implications are positive or negative.

Stereotypes (Good or Bad)

1. Is it bad to have a stereotype?

Generally speaking, a stereotype is just an empirical generalization. After all, we lean on stereotypes in a multitude of ways every day to influence our behavior. Whether you know it or not, you use them regularly to make calculated assumptions about the people you interact with every day. You use stereotypes to help gauge what you should say and how you should say it and you rely on them frequently to help you connect with people you don’t personally know.

Stereotypes are bad if they lead to discrimination of protected categories.