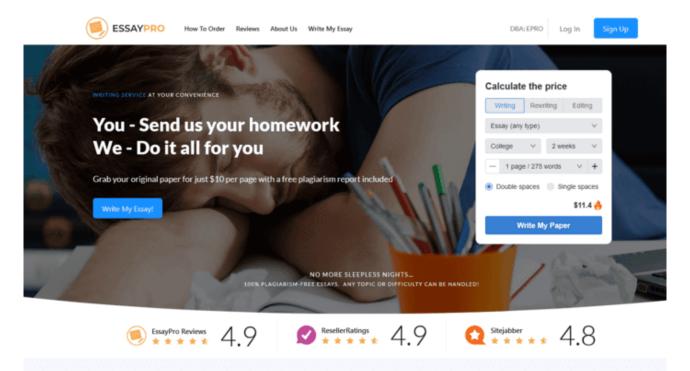
## **Stereotyping**



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StereotypingStereotyping is a form of pre judgement that is as prevalent in today's society as it was 2000 years ago. It is a social attitude that has stood the test of time and received much attention by social psychologists and philosophers alike. Many approaches to, or theories of stereotyping have thus been raised. This essay evaluates the cognitive approach that categorisation is an essential cognitive process that inevitably leads to stereotyping. Hamilton (1979) calls this a 'depressing dilemma'. Brown's (1995) definition of stereotyping through prejudice is the 'holding of derogatory social attitudes or cognitive beliefs, the expression of negative affect, or the display of hostile or discriminatory behaviour towards members of a group on account of their membership to that group'. This definition implies that stereotyping is primarily a group process, through the individuals psyche's within that group. A further idea of stereotyping, defined by Allport (1954) as 'thinking ill of others without warrant', is that people 'make their mind up' without any personal experience. This pre judgement about a whole group is then transferred to the stigmatisation of any individuals in that group. It is these ideas that the essay aims to evaluate, through the cognitive process of categorisation and the above definitions that bring about three distinct features of stereotyping, that our cognition can be demonstrated through. The first characteristic of stereotyping is over-generalisation. A number of studies conducted found that different combinations of traits were associated with groups of

different ethnic and national origin (Katz and Braly, 1933). However, stereotyping does not imply that all members of a group are judged in these ways, just that a typical member of a group can be categorised in such judgements, that they possess the characteristics of the group. Still, when we talk of a group, we do so by imagining a member of that group. The second feature and characteristic of stereotyping is the exaggeration of the difference between ones own group (the in-group) and the 'other' group (the out-group). This can be traced back to the work of Tajfel during the 1950's - 'the accentuation principle' (Tajfel, 1981). Tajfel's work was specifically on physical stimuli, and concluded that judgements on such stimuli are not made in isolation, but in the context of other factors. Applied socially - a judgement about an out-group relies upon other factors surrounding the judgement in question, as well as making a statement about the in-group and the relationship between the two groups.

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