Stereotypes

A stereotype is a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people. These classifications can be positive or negative, such as when various nationalities are stereotyped as friendly or unfriendly. The purpose of using stereotypes is to simplify our social world; since they reduce the amount of thinking we have to do when we meet a new person. By stereotyping we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have. Stereotypes lead to social categorization, which is one of the reasons for prejudice attitudes (i.e. "them" and "us" mentality) which leads to in-groups and out-groups.

Researchers have found that stereotypes exist of different races, cultures or ethnic groups. Not surprisingly, racial stereotypes always seem to favor the race of the holder and belittle other races. It is probably true to say that every ethnic group has racial stereotypes of other groups.

Some psychologists argue that it is a "natural" aspect of human behavior, which can be seen to benefit each group because it helps in the long-run to identify with one's own ethnic group and so find protection and promote the safety and success of the group. There is no evidence for this view, however, and many writers argue that it is merely a way of justifying racist attitudes and behaviors.

I. COMPREHENSION:

A. CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER FROM THE LISTS GIVEN.

1. **A stereotype is used to**
    a. have an accurate understanding of a specific group.
    b. make generalization about a specific group

2. **If you use stereotypes, you will probably**
    a. behave in a discriminatory way
    b. have an exact judgment of people's worth.

B. ARE THESE STATEMENTS TRUE OR FALSE? JUSTIFY

1. Stereotypes are always negative.
2. Stereotypes exist in just few cultures.
3. All psychologists think that people use stereotypes to find protection, safety and success within their group.

C. ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS.

1. Why do people use stereotypes?
2. What do stereotypes lead to?
3. How does stereotype benefit the stereotyping group?