



Stereotyping and the Media

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A stereotype is a trait, characteristic, notion, even belief that one has or believes about a person of a given demographic group which is then generalized to the whole group. Individuals stereotype one another for any number of reasons including ignorance, bias, prejudice, etc. However, many people stereotype because the world in which we live is so large and complex that it is difficult to understand. Therefore, stereotyping provides a means to group and attempt to manage fields of information which are overwhelming.

Similar to individuals, the media also stereotypes. The primary reason that the media stereotypes is because the media (which is big business) does not have enough time or space to tell the whole story about most things. In essence, the media uses stereotyping in an attempt

to get a quick handle on vast amounts of information—thus, the good guy wears white and the bad guy wears black. However, the media can also stereotype for other reasons. For example, those who hold a gatekeeping responsibility within media organization (owners, managers, editors, etc.) may at times inject their own personal stereotypes (based on bias, prejudice, ignorance, etc.) into media messages coming from their respective mediums. We all remember the infamous 2007 case of “Imus” and the Rutgers University women’s basketball team and other similar incidents. As such, we in the media should be extremely diligent when it comes to the creation and presenting (both fiction and non-fiction) of content about our diverse nation and world. Remember the Golden Rule.

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