Before reading the student essay below, please follow this link to read again Robert Heilbroner's essay, [*Don’t Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgment*](http://ol.scc.spokane.edu/jroth/Courses/Writers'%20Resources/Help%20From%20Me/ESSAY%20ASSIGNMENTS/Summary%20and%20Response/Heilbroner%20Stereotypes%20from%20Web.htm). After doing so, please read the following Student Example.

**STUDENT EXAMPLE:**

In the *Reader’s Digest* “Don’t Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments,” Robert L. Heilbroner proposes multiple strategies to expose this social problem, explain its causes and effects, and offer suggestions for change. Heilbroner, a former Professor of Economics at the New School for Social Research, believes that stereotypes are a type of impoverishing gossip about the world. Heilbroner argues that by stereotyping we try to “define” the world and by doing so we are losing our capacity to be ourselves and in danger of becoming stereotypes ourselves. Heilbroner offers suggestions for change that include becoming aware, suspicious, and learn to challenge our stereotypes. **(<this thesis sentence sets the essay as cause-effect; it tells the reader that these three suggestions--becoming aware, becoming suspicious, and learning to challenge stereotypes--will CAUSE improved thinking and behavior in us.)**

Heilbroner’s first step regarding stereotypes is to become aware of the standardized pictures in our heads. He suggests that, “. . . once we have typecast the world, we tend to see people in terms of our standardized picture” (356). Standardized pictures can be explained as the images that pop into our head when we hear a particular name, ethnicity, or physical feature. While rereading Heilbroner’s article I discovered my own automatic and instinctive reaction to refer to standardized pictures when reading about a particular trait. “Is a girl named Gloria apt to be better-looking than one called Bertha? Are criminals more likely to be dark than blond?” (355), “Does the fact that someone wears glasses imply the he is intelligent” (355). Like many people I was quick to state the obvious answer, no. As I continued to read I found myself associating those words with my prejudgments, this lead me to realize that I had been forming standardized pictures in my head according to each of those treats.

As the second step, Heilbroner urges us to become suspicious of all judgments that we allow exceptions to “prove.” People who has a strict preconceptions of all lawyers as “ruthless” or gothic people as “scary,” does not alter their judgments when they meet a warm-hearted lawyer or a friendly outgoing Goth. Instead, we tend to brush “. . . them aside as ‘exceptions that prove the rule’” (Heilbroner 357). My sophomore year of high school I encountered a very similar experience. First day of the semester, half way through second period I got paired with the notorious mean girl. Broad, built, ethnic, and solid faced are all the judgments I had gathered within seconds of meeting Lauren and they seemed to confirm all of the stories I had heard about her. Currently I am out of high school and she is still the only person I talk to from that class because Lauren is funny and we became good friends. Although Lauren was nice I assume she is an exception and I still tend to shy away from those who fit her similar profile. When proven wrong about our judgments we strongly defend ourselves and clam that it is only an exception to the norm, but “. . . of course if he meets someone true to type, he stands triumphantly vindicated” (357). The lesson to be learned it that no one human is the exact same as any other person alive.

Finally, Heilbroner suggests that we “…prejudge people before we ever lay eyes on them” (356). This leads us to our final step of his process: we must learn to be wary of generalizations about people. As Heilbroner writes,”. . . aside from the injustice which stereotypes do to others, they impoverish ourselves” (357). According to him, when we begin to stereotype others we ultimately lose our capacity to be ourselves, which means we stereotype ourselves. I can relate to this step because as a young child I viewed the world as “…absolutely unique, inimitable and independent fashion…” (357), but with age I allowed my judgments to over shadow my pure look on the world. “As Walter Lippmann has said, ’For the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first, and then we see’” (358). As a child my favorite outfit was my pajamas, I could wear them all day long without any second thought involved, but as an adult I would be mortified to be caught in my once loved attire. The question at hand is why I cannot dress the way that makes me comfortable, is this my own choice or is it the stereotypes I am afraid I will be placed under when I am seen looking different from what is socially acceptable.

Stereotyping is a dangerous social problem and it must be stopped. Although many people are in denial of the causes and effects of stereotypes, the truth is that stereotyping hurts everyone involved. Things don’t have to stay this way and we can all benefit from Heilbroner’s three-step process. By simply becoming aware, suspicious, and learn to be wary of stereotypes we can all play a part in eliminating these prejudges plaguing our society.

**MLA Citation:**

Heilbroner, Rober L. “Don’t Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments.” Reader’s Digest

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