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Stereotypes and Violence

Edited by Frank Jacob

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Editorial

Our lives are determined by stereotypes, no matter if we want it or not, no matter if we try to resist them or not. The famous American writer Walter Lippmann (1889–1974) understood this dilemma and emphasized it in his famous book *Public Opinion* (1922). He said that "symbolic pictures" would determine the human interrelations especially in times of war or crisis, when people developed a particular fear that was capable of exploiting the otherwise harmless symbols:

> In a more normal public life, symbolic pictures are no less governant of behavior, but each symbol is far less inclusive because there are so many competing ones. Not only is each symbol charged with less feeling because at most it represents only a part of the population, but even within that part there is infinitely less suppression of individual difference. The symbols of public opinion, in times of moderate security, are subject to check and comparison and argument. They come and go, coalesce and are forgotten, never organizing perfectly the emotion of the whole group. There is, after all, just one human activity left in which whole populations accomplish the union sacrée. It occurs in those middle phases of a war when fear, pugnacity, and hatred have secured complete dominion of the spirit, either to crush every other instinct or to enlist it, and before weariness is felt.[1]

These "symbolic pictures", however, were not only extremely dangerous in a period that was mainly characterized by fear or anger. They also helped to understand a world "out of reach" for the understanding of the individual, why they had consequently to be described as steady determinants of the course of human history. Lippmann explained, that

> [t]he world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined. Man is no Aristotelian god contemplating all existence at one glance. He is the creature of an evolution who can just about span a sufficient portion of reality to manage his survival, and snatch what on the scale of time are but a few moments of insight and happiness. Yet this same creature has invented ways of seeing what no naked eye could see, of hearing what no ear could hear, of weighing immense masses and infinitesimal ones, of counting and separating more items than he can individually remember. He is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach.

While human beings consider themselves to be independent, not controlled by external influences but internal reasoning, stereotypes are important for the daily life interactions of every human being. The ways we chose friends or more

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1 Walter Lippmann: Public Opinion. University of Virginia American Studies Program 2002–2003. http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper2/CDFinal/Lippman/ch01.html (accessed 19.10.2016).

general, people we link to, is highly influenced by such stereotypes, even if we, especially as a consequence of political correctness, claim that they don't. Robert Cantwell argued for the inevitability of stereotypes as an essential part of human interactions, because the

> [s]tereotype belongs to the world of appearances, and like other illusions wrought out of appearances [...] it places the subject at the center of the social cosmos, secure in the capacity of his or her own mind to know and hence to master the world. Indeed it is difficult to imagine any representation of the human character without recourse to stereotype, in which the process of recognition seems to begin.[2]

Stereotypes often serve as a tool that helps people to explain particular group related phenomena by dividing the groups themselves into so called in- and out-groups.[3] This differentiation is needed to homogenize the out-group and use them as an 'abstract' other to strengthen the identity of the members of the imagined in-group by contrasting themselves towards the other group.[4] The behavior of in-group members is therefore very often impacted by existent stereotypes that had been formulated within this group.[5] To study so-called ethnic attitudes and political, racial, or social prejudices stereotypes were often analyzed in the past to explain the existent interrelationships between the different factors.[6] The sociologist James W. Rinehart defined the difference between prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination very early, but regardless of his definition emphasized the relation between these important sociological parameters: "Prejudice is customarily defined as a feeling of hostility toward the members of racial, nationality, and ethnic groups; stereotypes, as the beliefs people have about such

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2 Robert Cantwell: On Stereotype. In: *New England Review* 13,2 (1990), pp. 53–78, here p. 74.

3 For a discussion of such explanatory models, see Craig McCarthy / Vincent Y. Yzerbyt / Russel Spears (eds): *Stereotypes as Explanations. The Formation of Meaningful Beliefs about Social Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2002. See also Gordon W. Allport: *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Basic 1979.

4 On out-group homogeneity, see Charles M. Judd / Bernadette Park: Out-Group Homogeneity. Judgements of Variability at the Individual and Group Levels. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54,5 (1988), pp. 778–788. For a survey on possible in- and out-group dynamics, see Michael A. Hogg / Dominic Abrams (eds): *Intergroup Relations. Essential Readings*. Philadelphia: Psychology 2001, pp. 129–266.

5 For the so-called common sense explanation that is related to the establishment of a stereotype in such a described scenario, see Miles Hewstone: Attribution Theory and Common Sense Explanations. An Introductory Overview. In: Miles Hewstone (ed.): *Attribution Theory. Social and Functional Extensions*. Oxford: Blackwell 1983, pp. 1–26.

6 With regard to such studies different approaches toward the stereotype and its manifestations have been chosen. See Margot Heinemann: *Sprachliche und soziale Stereotype*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang 1998; Thomas Petersen: *Visuelle Stereotype*. Köln: von Halem 2009; Martina Thiele: *Medien und Stereotype. Konturen eines Forschungsfeldes*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2015.

members; and discrimination".[7] For Rinehart, "[s]tereotypes are sets of beliefs, usually stated as categorical generalizations, that people hold about members of other groups. These beliefs are ordinarily oversimplified"[8] and are very often based on historical traditions. A stereotype is therefore very often the expression of an intergroup relationship which is expressed through "a mental image which lumps together members of a group and associates them with particular traits."[9] The U. S. law professor Jody Armour therefore also correctly defined stereotypes as "well-learned internal associations about social groups that are governed by automatic cognitive processes."[10]

While in some national environments these internal associations are based on race, which for example "continues to be an American obsession"[11], in others ethnicity, economic standing, gender, sex, language, political values etc. might play a more important role. However, what Earl Smith named "social typing" and what "can best be understood as a manifestation of ethnocentric behavior, by members of the dominant group"[12] (i. e. in-group) is usually expressed to secure its dominant social and economic position within an existing society. Historically seen, as the U. S. historian Eugen Weber emphasized, the explanation for its existence seems to also be very simple.

> The word is modern, the reality it describes is ageless. Equally so the tendency to attribute particular characteristics to places, or to animal groups, including groups of humans. Greeks had stereotyped views about Persians and Egyptians, Romans about Greeks and Gauls. But the national stereotypes we live with began to take shape in the Middle Ages. It is in the eleventh and especially in the twelfth century that we find them formulated, as members of different ethnic groups rub against each other on pilgrimages, on crusades and in the new schools then springing up in cities such as Paris.[13]

In the middle ages the first stereotypes were formulated in written forms and exchanged by the students at the educational centers of the medieval world,

7 James W. Rinehart: The Meaning of Stereotypes. In: *Theory into Practice* 2,3 (1963): Inter-group-Relations Education, pp. 136–143, here pp. 136–137.

8 Ibid., p. 137.

9 Earl Smith: An Analysis of the Social Stereotype with Special Reference to African-Americans. In: *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 8,1 (1980/81), pp. 61–82, here p. 61.

10 Jody Armour: Stereotypes and Prejudice: Helping Legal Decisionmakers Break the Prejudice Habit. In: *California Law Review* 83,3 (1995), pp. 733–772, here p. 733.

11 Ibid., p. 772.

12 Smith: An Analysis, p. 61.

13 Eugen Weber: Of Stereotypes and of the French. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 25,2/3 (1990), pp. 169–203, here p. 169.

from where they would spread to eventually become part of the national culture in later centuries.[14]

The negative stereotypes, history has created and our time still conserves, generally show certain characteristics:

1. The minority group portrayed is not inferior in any absolute sense, but only relative to the standards of the dominant group.
2. The stereotype gives a highly exaggerated picture of importance to a few characteristics – usually negative.
3. Some supposed traits are invented and made to seem reasonable by associating them with other tendencies that may have a kernel of truth.
4. Favorable tendencies are either omitted entirely or insufficiently stressed.
5. The stereotype fails to show how the dominant or other groups share the same tendencies or have unfavorable characteristics of their own.
6. There is little room for change.
7. The assigned traits are thought of as intrinsic or even self-willed.
8. There is no room for individual variation.[15]

These negative images, however, are not universal but rather an expression that is related to a specific space at a specific time. In addition, while not all stereotypes are inherently malicious, negative stereotypes (e.g. about violence) may act as self-fulfilling prophecies and trigger the very behavior they dictate.[16]

The establishment of a stereotype is also stimulated by the idea of injury or loss as it had been tentatively created by another out-group within the society, e.g. immigrants or refugees.[17] We can consequently argue, that the more someone feels to be negatively impacted by another out-group, the higher are the chances for the establishment of a negative stereotype, which is related to this particular

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14 Weber: Of Stereotypes and of the French, p. 169.

15 George Simpson / Milton Yinger: *Racial and Cultural Minorities*. New York: Harper & Row 1965, p. 119, cit. in Smith: An Analysis, p. 62.

16 Jeffrey Levine / Edward G. Carmines / Paul M. Sniderman: The Empirical Dimensionality of Racial Stereotypes. In: *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 63,3 (1999), pp. 371–384, here p. 381.

17 These stereotypes very often lead to a political exploitation of fear from immigrants or refugees as has been obvious during the U.S. presidential election campaign of the Republican Party or the reaction of the German AfD party during the 'refugee crisis' of the last two years. For these positions, see Ann Coulter: ¡Adios, America! The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hellhole. Washington, DC: Regnery 2015; Alexander Gauland: Alternative für Deutschland fordert vorübergehenden Aufnahmestopp für Flüchtlinge, 29.09.2015. https://www.alternativefuer.de/alternative-fuer-deutschland-fordert-voruebergehenden-aufnahmestopp-fuer-fluechtlinge-gauland-auch-um-der-fluechtlinge-willen-muss-deutschland-jetzt-die-notbremse-ziehen/ (accessed 19.10.2016).

group. Similar stereotypes had been created with regard to Asian immigration during the 19th century, when Chinese or Japanese workers were depicted as a competition for work and jobs within the borders of the United States.[18] Anti-Chinese stereotypes were made popular by missionaries or politicians.[19] Such stereotypes were later transported by Hollywood movies and television series alike, which seem to have the ability to conserve such popular assumptions and hand them over from generation to generation of audiences.[20]

This conservation of stereotypes is responsible for the still existing impact of such beliefs in many societies of our modern world. While some groups develop stronger stereotype based antagonisms towards out-groups than others,[21] the existence of stereotypes per se is a problem that is endangering a peaceful together in modern societies. Obviously, "racial negativity remains a primary determinant of white Americans' attitudes toward a range of race-related poli-cies, including affirmative action, welfare providing the foundation for political preferences for some spending, and capital punishment"[22], and the stimulation of fear in the United States and Europe alike is still a useful tool to secure political influence for right wing oriented politicians that claim to save jobs or Western culture from foreign competition and infiltration. Racial or ethnic presettings of the homogenous in-group are consequently reacting against an imagined and solely imagined threat from outside of the group, almost natu-rally leading to a conflict between the two groups, expressed, to name just one

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18 On Chinese immigration in the US, see Gunter Barth: *Bitter Strenght. A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850–1870*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1964; Ronald Takaki: *Strangers from a Different Shore. A History of Asian Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown 1989.

19 For missionary perspectives, cf. Justus Doolittle: *Social Life of the Chinese*, vol. 2. New York: Harper 1895. On politicians and anti-Chinese stereotypes, see Thomas F. Gossett: *Race. The His-tory of an Idea in America.* Dallas: Southern Methodist UP 1963, pp. 289–291. Anti-Asian feel-ings became globally popular and were subsumed by the term "yellow peril". On the idea of a "yellow peril", see Heinz Gollwitzer: *Die gelbe Gefahr. Geschichte eines Schlagworts, Studien zum imperialistischen Denken*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1962.

20 Albert H. Yee: Asians as Stereotypes and Students. Misperceptions That Persist. In: *Educa-tional Psychology Review* 4,1 (1992), pp. 95–132, here p. 98. Lynn S. Neal: "They're Freaks!" The Cult Stereotype in Fictional Television Shows, 1958–2008. In: *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alter-native and Emergent Religions* 14,3 (2011), pp. 81–107, analyzed the stereotype of cult within 50 years of television series and was able to emphasizes the power of conservation which television had on popular stereotypes of the 1950s that were still present in television shows of the 2000s.

21 Shayla C. Nunnally: Racial Homogenization and Stereotypes. Black American College Stu-dents' Stereotypes about Racial Groups. In: *Journal of Black Studies* 40,2 (2009), pp. 252–265, here p. 252.

22 Ibid., p. 263.

example, by a resistance to blend neighborhoods with people who are not part of the in-group.[23] Regardless of the fact that some of the out-groups will be able to integrate and become part of the society, racial or ethnic stereotypes might not fully disappear and remain strong in determining the perception of this particular group.[24]

What is particularly worrying with regard to such stereotypes is the obviously decreasing resistance to use violence towards members of the out-groups, may it be racial violence or hate crimes in the United States or violence against refugees in Europe.[25] The latter increase of violence is also related to the change of the image of a refugee. While refugees were seen as heroes, who for political reasons had to escape from home during the Cold War,[26] they are now solely considered as economically motivated refugees, who, as stated in many right wing commentaries, like 'parasites' or 'natural catastrophes' 'invade' Europe to gain from the exploitation of the hard working European. The trauma of war, suffering, and loss that many of the refugees experienced seems to play a minor role for those who want to stop the European support. Very often, this depiction as a burden for the society is predominant. However, in reality, refugees should be considered as an economic chance for the nation state that acts as a host.[27] To prevent

23 Reynolds Farley / Charlotte Steeh / Maria Krysan / Tara Jackson / Keith Reeves: Stereotypes and Segregation. Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 100,3 (1994), pp. 750–780, here p. 750; Jon Hurwitz / Mark Peffley: Public Perceptions of Race and Crime. The Role of Racial Stereotypes. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 41,2 (1997), pp. 375–401, here p. 376. One example could be the resistance by German communities to accept refugee camps in their villages or cities. Frank Drieschner: Flüchtlingsunterkünfte. Wer protestiert warum? In: *Die Zeit*, 14.04.2016. http://www.zeit.de/2016/17/fluechtlingsunterkuenfte-hamburg-proteste-blankenese-oberschicht (accessed 19.10.2016).

24 Yee: Asians as Stereotypes, pp. 95–96. Especially adolescents seem to react stronger to stereotypes and if they internalize them, will also react, following them, in their adulthood. See Owen Gill: Urban Stereotypes and Delinquent Incidents. In: *The British Journal of Criminology* 16,4 (1976), pp. 321–336; Ronald O. Pitner / Ron Avi Astor / Rami Benbenishty / Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia / Anat Zeira: The Effects of Group Stereotypes on Adolescents' Reasoning about Peer Retribution. In: *Child Development* 74,2 (2003), pp. 413–425.

25 Paul Blickle et al.: Gewalt gegen Flüchtlinge. Es brennt in Deutschland. In: *Zeit Online*, 03.12.2015. http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-11/rechtsextremismus-fluechtlings unterkuenfte-gewalt-gegen-fluechtlinge-justiz-taeter-urteile (accessed 19.10.2016); Heinrich Schmitz: Rechte Hassbürger und Meinungsfreiheit. Eine Kapitulationserklärung. In: *Tagesspiegel*, 10.08.2015. http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/rechte-hassbuerger-und-meinungsfreiheit-eine-kapitulationserklaerung/12167486.html (accessed 19.10.2016).

26 Vanessa Pupavac: Refugees in the 'Sick Role'. Stereotyping Refugees and Eroding Refugee Rights. In: *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Research Paper No. 128. UN Refugee Agency, August 2006, p. 1.

27 Alexander Betts / Louise Bloom / Josiah Kaplan / Naohiko Omata: *Refugee Economics. Rethinking Popular Assumptions*. Oxford: Humanitarian Innovation Project 2014, pp. 16–20.

violence against the members of an out-group, it is important to understand and explain how stereotypes work and in how far they stimulate the increase of violence.

The present issue of *Global Humanities* will therefore analyze this special relationship from different angles. Oliver Betts starts with an analysis of the history of "wandering workers" in the Anglophone world to show how stereotypes were created by a fear for competition against foreign workers and a preassumed loss that would have been related to it. Barbara Manthe continues by discussing the interrelationship of racist stereotypes and violence in Germany since 1980 to further identify the reasons for stereotypes and their violent impact on society. That many of these stereotypes are also religion-related is emphasized by Benjamin Nickl, whose contribution deals with German anxieties and their creation by clichéd fears of Muslim otherness.

The second section analyzes gender related stereotypes. Sylvia Sadzinski is dissecting the relationship between stereotypes and rape myths in relation to the race of the stigmatized "men of color", who are regularly depicted as perpetrators of sexual violence against women. Bojan Perovic continues the section when he explores the gender based violence in Serbia and discusses the role of stereotypes and entertainment for such crimes. Andrew Fuyarchuk eventually highlights a gendered epistemology and harrassment in a recent case of science scandal, due to which Dr. Nancy Olivieri was harrassed for the doubts she expressed towards a new experimental drug and for which she was confronted with the political violence of the pharma industry.

The final section deals with one particular group of victims of stereotypes and violence: the Roma. Victoria Shmidt highlights the contemporary situation of Roma in the Czech Republic, while Biba Hadziavdic and Hilde Hoffmann discuss the persistence of Roma related stereotypes and their impact on the current European film.

The broad perspective of the volume shows that the danger of stereotypes and its interrelationship to a continuingly growing potential for a violent eruption is evident. The only way to decrease the danger is to embrace the unknown, to mediate between in- and out-groups, to cross imagined distances and to remember that those in supposed out-groups are also human. Only then, society can be equalized, violence diminished and internal as well as external peace be secured.

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