

Commentary:

Is Stereotyping a Global Phenomenon and Does It Affect the General Globalization Process Adversely?

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In order to come up with a satisfactory answer to this vexing question one has to start this inquiry as close to one's own home and environment as possible.

Stereotyping is essentially a labeling phenomenon, in that the person (let it be Angus, a nom de plume for a typical labeler) who undertakes the original typing, may be doing it with two objectives in mind: first of all, affectionately out of love and admiration, or out of playful spite; and in the second place, out of hate and rejection of the labeled ones. It then onwards serves on the bright side as a respectful way and means of strengthening family or friendship relationships; or on the downside it establishes a firm and constant attitude towards a person or persons hated, despised, or rejected for one or other reason that may perhaps threaten to destroy the labeler's and/or his/her family's integrity, security, lifestyle, lives, limbs, and/or honor, for factual or fictitious reasons. Most importantly it serves as a method which may help to ultimately grapple the trusted friend or family member to one's heart; or to keep the declared foe, opponent, or enemy effectively at bay.

It is important to bear in mind that 'foes' can be everywhere – even among our dearest friends or trusted family members.

This, at least, is the definition of the situation which Angus entertains on the downside: a) on the one hand to be repeated so often as to get sunk in as a label that describes those he wants to shun habitually, establishing by means of conditioning a typical familial attitude towards identified 'enemies'; and b) on the other hand, drawing a sharp line of distinction between his own ethnicity and culture and those of the stereotypes in question.

What astounds the investigator of this phenomenon, is the fact that any label or stereotype, no matter how unfair or inaccurate at its inception, has the potential of getting accepted in a national and sometimes also in an international setting, sparking blind support, use, misuse, and abuse alike.

This inexplicable phenomenon tends one to believe that repetition, no matter how insipid the label sounds, may eventually be gathered up by those within hearing distance and be aped, sometimes just to add the concept to their vocabulary, and other times to accept a shortcut utterance that by popular use or demand reflects the attitude of the user towards the identified 'enemy'.

The spread or disbursement of the label follows a natural pattern in that it unfolds in circular interval waves that take a centrifugal path from the point of origin outwards.

Thus the label tends to come up alive in other countries and to gather no moss in spreading further ahead.

It is also important to keep two other issues in mind to improve our grasp and understanding of this phenomenon.

The first thing to remember is that the label is an effect that occurs with no help or support of any proof of factual cause. It just happens, emerging like a natural event – a streak of lightning or a clap of thunder.

The second thing to remember is that all stereotypes and labels can be relegated to a theoretical frame of reference such as the ones which are used to describe and explain the construction of crime prevention and/or crime reduction theories. Here it seems as if the labeler enters and completes a labeling process, knowingly or unknowingly within an established frame of reference. The following explanatory text highlights the essence of the instrument.

These very important perspectives are revisited further down before the discussion is terminated.

First we start off by defining the concepts labeling / stereotyping.

1.0 Defining the concept *stereotyping / labeling*

1.1 Different types of stereotypes

For the sake of clarity it would be feasible to differentiate between the different types of stereotypes or labels that one may come across.

$$S_L = I \rightarrow F \rightarrow E \rightarrow C \rightarrow S \rightarrow A \rightarrow \dots$$

Where S_L = The stereotyping or labeling process

I = Individual
➔ = Spread of process
F = Family
E = Environment
C = Community
S = Society
A = Countries abroad

If one starts off with the smallest element in the equation (I) it means that stereotyping or labeling always originates with a person, a person that belongs to a family, within a certain environment, community, and society. In order to be accepted by those around the labeler, the label must stick and be used (perhaps extensively) to find new users and homes elsewhere. Once it has qualified as folklore (as traditional belief) it may easily succeed in making a facile entry in other countries or groups away from its roots.

1.2 Defining the concepts *stereotype* and *label*

A *stereotype* can be defined as a person or thing that conforms to an unjustifiably fixed, (usually) standardized mental picture; or to such an impression or attitude. In another sense a stereotype may be viewed as a benign act of labeling someone dear and close to one, such as a family member or a friend.

The *process of stereotyping* a person or thing is seen as an act of *standardizing* or *formalizing a label* in order to make it stick to the targeted person or thing.

A *label* can be defined as a short classifying phrase or name applied to a person, an animal, bird, or thing, most of the times derogatively.⁽¹⁾ As such, a label is very tightly associated with the act of stereotyping a person or a thing.

1.3 A very vivid example of labeling a juvenile offender

This phenomenon may be noticed when one cares to read the various theories being advanced to explain and predict the occurrence of juvenile delinquency.⁽³⁾ It says, that labeling a child who allegedly committed an insignificant breach of law summarily as being a 'criminal', is just as well slapping a bad label on him, one that would be adopted invariably by the youngster and his peers if repeated a few times. Children are time-space sensitively geared when entering the adult theater of life, starting off as it were to taste the various 'goodies' at their disposal and experimenting with making the correct choices that are available to them. On the other hand there are adult vultures watching all their moves unabatedly for signs of deviation, albeit that their deviations may only be defined as 'slightly straying away' from the worn-out, and

sometimes obsolete, law-abiding paths. Fact is that neither leniency nor mercy is shown when adults surmise that their integrity and security are put on the line. On the other hand there are adult drug lords and kingpins in highly-organized crime syndicates that would not hesitate to put juveniles in hot spots where the police would be able to nab them for petty crimes and start labeling them as criminal elements to be kept under surveillance at all times. In this manner the juvenile is forced into a criminal career by the law enforcer itself and swiftly pushed onto a path of no return where he or she would now be known as a 'juvenile offender'.

1.0 Well-known stereotypes / labels

Now we are in a position to say that two main groups of stereotypes can be identified for analysis: a) benign stereotypes such as those being dished out in family and colleague circles, as well as in community and societal factions and tribes; and (b) malignant stereotypes such as those thought up by angry people who aims at downgrading their so-called 'enemies'.

Well-known benign stereotypes include ☺ he's our hero ☺ she is an undisputed leader of people in destitute living conditions ☺ a great philosopher ☺ the land of milk and honey ☺ he's a sucker for clean administration ☺ this is the only place where you can look through God's window ☺ our leader is warm-hearted, compassionate, and caring ☺ blood is thicker than water ☺ the Golden State (California, USA) ☺ Billy (pet-form of the name William) ☺ Scotty (a Scotch terrier) ☺ a bull (a person who buys shares at a Stock Exchange, hoping to sell them at a profit at a later stage) ☺ a bear (a person who sells his shares at the Stock Exchange hoping to buy them back later at a lower price) ☺ *annus mirabilis* (a remarkable, auspicious, wonderful year) ☺

Well-known malignant stereotypes / labels occur when one tends to give a dog a bad name and live up to establish the definition of the situation, leaving the dog no scope for improvement or chance to repair the real or imaginary damage he has been accused of by his master. These include ☹ a gaga character (a person who is considered to be senile, slightly crazy) ☹ grafter (a person who is guilty of graft: bribery, corruption, fraud, extortion) ☹ he's a real good-for-nothing ☹ jerk (a fool, a stupid or contemptible person) ☹ jingo (blustering patriot, favoring war) ☹ jinx (a thing that seems to cause bad luck) ☹ vagabond (drifter, nomad, tramp) ☹ yokel (a rustic, a country bumpkin) ☹ zombie (a dull person) ☹ drug lord (a person who organize the production, manufacturing, distribution, buying, selling, and hooking (ensnaring, entrapping of persons to become drug addicts) ☹ warmonger (a person who seeks to bring about or wants to promote a war) ☹ crime of passion (a murder committed in a fit of sexual jealousy) ☹ racist (a malignant stereotype one comes across in the majority countries of the world) ☹ haves and have not (stereotypes

4.0 Testing one's sense of humor / establishing a sense of balance / making one aware of contrasts / getting to know other definitions of situations

4.1 Paraphrasing Frederick Langbridge⁽¹⁰⁾

Looking through the bars, /
do you see the mud? /
or do you see the stars?

4.2 Stephen Leacock⁽¹¹⁾

'A,' whispered C, 'I think I'm going fast.'
'How fast do you think you'll go, old man?'
murmured A.
'I don't know,' said C, 'but I'm going at any rate.'

4.3 Rudyard Kipling⁽¹²⁾

'If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue;
or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch.'

4.4 Edward Bulwer-Lytton⁽¹³⁾

'Beneath the rule of men entirely great;
The pen is mightier than the sword.'

4.5 W. Somerset Maugham⁽¹⁴⁾

'The degree of a nation's civilization is marked by
its disregard for the necessities of its existence.'

4.6 Hughes Mearns⁽¹⁵⁾

'As I was going up the stair I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today. I wish, I wish he'd go away.'

5.0 Causality rationale

5.1 First step: Fact or fiction?

The very first step is to verify whether the inception of the label was based on fact or fiction.

- a) If based on fact, how many cases were observed and typed/labeled?
Rarely more than one to five factual cases are reported to have served as a basis for stereotyping.
- b) The majority cases of stereotyping are based on fiction or imaginary beliefs that someone is plotting to harm or getting the better of the labeler or his/her group of friends or family. Sometimes the rationale for labeling is so farfetched, abstract, and muddled that it cannot be defined properly.
- c) The easy way out for the labeler is to make use of concepts.
Here the cause of the labeler's misery is couched in abstract ideas and general notions, which are not based on real factual (verifiable) events.

5.2 Second step: Generalizations (inferences from limited and inadequate cases)

The next step is to consolidate and strengthen the original ideas in such a manner that the stereotype or label assumes respectability and status. Although it is not openly propagated, the labeler now establishes his/her stereotype by rapid repetition and conditioning those he/she comes across.

In theoretical terms the labeler has now succeeded in building a theory of the middle range, although he/she has made use of limited and inadequate information to do so.

5.3 Third step: inferring a universal conclusion or a law

The labeler now enters the ambit of a universal conclusion that is akin to a law.

However, in scientific terms these types of universal conclusions do not qualify as 'laws' because they have been based on inadequate or fictional evidence – this despite the fact that they have towed the theoretical line doggedly.

In fact, we cannot bless them with a causality rationale, despite their claims to the contrary.

6.0 A global view of stereotyping

6.1 First step: Fact or fiction?

The very first step would be to look at the surrounding conditions, circumstances, and meaning of the actions and reactions of the monger of the stereotype, in order to establish whether there is any truth in the allegation that he/she/the group they belong

to is/was actively and with malice aforethought engaged in rejecting, derogating, slandering, or relegating the alleged receivers of a malignant label or stereotype to an inferior or morally deficient place in society.

Once this has been established as a matter of fact, we then proceed to the next step in formulating a sound equation of the alleged label.

6.2 Second step: Factual persistence

This step is necessary in order to attach some form of ongoing derogation to the identified label and to gauge its future shelf-life and persistent use, misuse, or abuse by labelers at the country of origin and further abroad. Note must now be taken of the fact that the use, misuse, and abuse of the label in other countries than its origin are not to be blamed on the country of its birth. That would be a big mistake – one that would represent displacement of guilt and reprehension. It would be tantamount of blaming Adam and Eve for all subsequent sins and crimes committed by them their offspring, and all the people after them, from the day they were thrown out of Paradise.

History of persistent use or retaliatory use at country of origin

Back home the researcher will have to establish carefully whether the label in question has had an indisputable history of ongoing use, misuse, and abuse by the labelers or their descendants; and also whether the labeler's response or reaction to the label mongers or their children has been or is free from any anti-labeling or perhaps from using and abusing the very same label in retaliation.

6.3 Third step: Concluding

The inquiry is concluded by coming to a definite statement as to the feasibility and viability of the malignant label. This is ascertained by looking at and studying the reactions of the two factions in question – the persistent labelers and victims who is bearing the brunt of the labeling. Alternatively one has to look at the erstwhile, originally-labeled victims and their current reaction or newly-instituted action to come to terms with their labelers or to gain some help and support for their latest agendas and efforts to win support for their campaigns.

6.0 Research question: Is stereotyping of people a global phenomenon and does it affect the general globalization process adversely?

6.1 Global phenomenon status

In our attempt to answer this research question satisfactorily, we shall consider two well-known, vexing malignant stereotypes that are freely bandied about of late and which are causing untold harm to international relations and global interaction.

These labels are a) racist / racism; and b) haves and haves-not.

TV watchers are familiar with the views of a Reverent who blames the Whites of furthering racism, dragging an apparently innocent democratic candidate along with him to strengthen his case.

The other label which highlights the ever-widening inequality between the people in the well-to-do classes and those in the ranks of the poor and the poorest of the poor, features in all the newspapers of the world at large and does not need factual proof of its deadly presence in all countries on every continent and island.

6.2 Global phenomenon effect

The overall global effect of these two labels has not as yet been tested, verified, or falsified for their truth values.

Fortunately, these labels reflect a typical space-time phenomenon. As such it would be easy to evaluate on face value. All we have to do is to ride it out, so to speak, and to allow the time and place to tell us whether they qualify as durable labels or conveniently-defined labels that would serve a temporary function before being relegated to oblivion.

7.0 Taxing one's tolerance and goodwill

Whatever the outcome of the present dilemma we're in, it is feasible to keep in mind that our tolerance and goodwill are being tested here. No matter how tight the screws of intolerance and hate are collectively applied by some members of our society to strike back, we must know now and for posterity that nothing or very little can ever be gained to fight fire with fire. That is a given. Stand fast!

8.0 Do not play spitefully with the lion's private parts

At each side of the drawn battle lines the idea must be propagated that intolerance breeds intolerance, no matter what the original intention or aim has been.

The practice of playing spitefully with the lion's private parts is always a no-no.

This game could have been played without serious consequences ages ago. But nowadays it smacks of fatal retaliation and persistent animosity. Not that it is

recommended where the player is in charge of the situation. No, nowadays everything has changed for the better and it's our duty to walk the path of no confrontation and of spiteful provocation.

9.0 How to live with inequality and innate differences

It is hardly necessary to repeat the gist of the song that says 'its hard to be humble'. Likewise 'it's hard to be the underdog'.

Apparently we are confronted here with an insoluble conundrum. Being unable and unwilling to exchange places or to come to some workable terms with the problem, we are horn locked with our opponents and adversaries for ever.

10.0 How not to resolve one's problems with one's neighbor

If your neighbor accidentally flicks his dead cigarette stub over his fence and it lands on your porch and you retaliate by dumping an ashtray full of stubs on his lawn, a contract has been signed for a protracted never-ending war.

If you are prepared to go to any lengths to 'win' the war, take note that you are going to lose many a battle to come, even to the extent that you will have to spend some money on phone calls, music players, CD's, and trucks needed to cart off full loads of ash that had been dumped in front of your gate; vet expenses to have your poisoned dog fetched and buried; getting up in the small hours of the morning to answer a 'dead' phone or to put out a fire that had mysteriously been started in your garden tool shed; and much, much more.

11.0 Dark side stereotyping needs a low profile and a permanent cover

The tit-for-tat mechanism in human affairs is always alive and well. Proof of this is seen in warfare that is meant, calculated, and resolved to be a resounding success and triumph for the aggressor, but turned out to be a dismal disaster, financially and mortality speaking. No, it was not for nothing that the Chinese made the statement that if you planned to kill your neighbor, you are strongly advised to dig two graves, one for him, and one for you.

This, my friend, is life and living to savor and to respect at all times and at all places.

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