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2.Yoshihisa KASHIMA, Klaus FIEDLER, Peter FREYTAG.
*Stereotype dynamics – Language-Based Approaches to the
Formation, Maintenance and Transformation of Stereotypes*,
2008, New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 406 pp.

by Robert Daniel SIMION

The book at hand aims to bring a new understanding on the nature of social stereotypes as well as on the way the mind limits cognitive functions in order to promote a strict set of premade social reactions. Therefore it has an agenda of improving everyday decision making by providing a better knowledge on how the human brain functions regarding actions on which we do not rely on direct information but rather on stereotype dynamics.

The authors do not steer away from a rather frank language use in order to achieve their scientific goal. Words like ‘nigger’ or ‘gay’ appear casually in the text. In this regard Yoshihisa et al. seem to have an uncompromised thought process, an undaunted regard of historical context so they do not in any way deter the purpose of the book. Yet, it is of importance to note that the book represents a timely appearance because it refocuses social psychology on human interaction in an era dominated by the change brought by globalization. This work consists of four parts that are further split into nine chapters preceded by a preface. This is structured as follows.

Chapter one, “Stereotype dynamics: An Introduction and Overview”, provides a description of the discussed subject and outlines the boundaries within stereotypes function. It also introduces the concept of the social mind (pp. 2-7) and how it exist solely in clear connection with others alike. It also takes note on the historical context (pp. 1-2) with an emphasis on how globalization affects the course stereotypes take in society and how they sometimes transform because of it.

First part of the book “STEREOTYPE DYNAMICS”, chapter two, “Stereotypes in the wild”, focuses further on the conceptual framework of stereotypes and explains how socially situated cognition

functions. It moves on to establish language as a way of cognition implementation.

Chapter three, "Stereotype Change in the Social Context", shows more on how stereotypes change and transform. An argumentation of their susceptibility to social context is also offered by challenging the idea of normality and consensus. Further in, there is a study on how the social mind reacts when a member breaks the rules of the stereotype and so, the concept of subtyping is introduced.

In chapter four, "Cultural Dynamics of Stereotypes: Social Network Processes and the Perpetuation of Stereotypes" a cultural point of view is assumed (pp. 59-61) in order to achieve a better understanding of communication as a device of stereotype activity. Starting at page 63, a more in-depth analysis on relational processes is provided.

Moving on to part two "Symbolic Meditation And Stereotyping", chapter five, "A Semiotic Approach to Understanding the Role of Communication in Stereotyping" provides us with a detailed look at the triggers that make the subconscious mind generalize and explains the way it is a source of psychological assumptions. It does this by forming a method of study (pp. 96-99) based on the concepts introduced in previous chapters.

Chapter six, "Derogatory Language in Intergroup Context: Are "Gay" and "Fag" Synonymous?" looks into the differences in emotional perception of words that appear to have exactly the same meaning. These words are perceived differently depending on who is the transmitter and expectancies on the content of the phrase. These differences are studied throughout the Andrea Carnaghi's and Anne Maass' essay.

Chapter seven, "Dynamics of Sex-Role Stereotypes", explains the differences of how stereotypes vary and interact with expectations because of sex differences. There is also a study on the stability of gender-specific stereotypes (pp. 137-138) throughout history.

Part three, "STEREOTYPE AND LANGUAGE USE", chapter eight, "A Model of biased Language Use", makes full use of previous core concepts, with an emphasis on Linguistic Intergroup Bias and the Linguistic Expectancy Linguistic Bias, to exemplify problematic language. It then uses this model to measure (pp. 168-169) its impact on social frameworks. Later it links biased language

use with certain memorization techniques (pp. 173-177) our subconscious uses.

In chapter nine, “Strategic Language Use in Interpersonal and Intergroup Communication”, a number of researches is presented regarding whether an a priori goal of communication (so the transmitter consciously achieves a certain effect) interferes with stereotype laws and boundaries.

Chapter ten, “Sender-Receiver Constellations as a Moderator of Linguistic Abstraction Biases” is a control overview of the study on all the concepts presented by shedding light on the variables. It recaps all the previous information and examines the relations between all of them, offering them as a ‘constellation’.

Going forward, part four of the book, “STEREOTYPE SHAREDNESS AND DISTINCTIVENESS”, chapter eleven, “Retention and Transmission of Socially Shared Beliefs: The Role of Linguistic Abstraction in Stereotypic Communication” serves as an exercise of applicable linguistics, with an emphasis on linguistic abstraction process, to showcase how different conditions affect communication.

The twelfth chapter, “The Consensualization of Stereotypes in Small Groups”, reflects on whether stereotypes are consensual or not. Reaching the positive conclusion, it investigates how this comes to pass and its implications.

Chapter thirteen, “How Communication Practices and Category Norms Lead People to Stereotype Particular People and Groups”, moves forward with practical examples of what defines people to belong to a certain group. These examples are then put against their backgrounds for discovery of particularities of behavior.

The fourteenth chapter, “Kernel of Truth or Motivated Stereotype: Interpreting and Responding to Negative Generalizations About Your Group”, belongs to part five, “IDENTITY, SELF-REGULATION, AND STEREOTYPING”. It is defined by its attempt to bring up the importance of this study regarding decision making by reflecting upon whether generalizations can be viewed as sources of information.

The antepenultimate chapter, “Social Identity and Social Convention in Responses to Criticisms of Groups”, takes a turn to the inner response, when conflicted with social convention, of individuals. It researches the sensitivity of the subjects introducing new concepts

in contrast with the rest of the book which focuses more on the social aspect. It can also be summarized by the questions the scientists ask themselves: “Who is conventionally entitled to criticize groups?” and “Why are they so entitled?”.

The last chapter, number sixteen, “The Interplay of Stereotype Threat and Regulatory Focus”, regards exclusively the negative effect of stereotyping and drawing the reader’s attention to it. It is backed by extensive psychological analysis from a back-to-back perspective against previous attempts at understanding the direct effects of stereotypes upon modern society.

Throughout the book, a pristine job is done on selecting relevant information by all contributing authors so that the text does not become cluttered with irrelevant phrases. Yoshihisa et al. always seem aware of the bigger picture and of the work’s aim which is a tremendous achievement considering the scope of the book.

The only fault that can be brought forward is of overall validity of the argument: regarding the Linguistic Intergroup Bias and the Linguistic Expectancy Bias (two core concepts in the book) studies, they are almost always based on the input the subjects provide, which is then analyzed at linguistic level, the interpretation of the scientists is vital for the argument but is not under suspicion of the same bias the subjects show. The fact that they admit they have expectancies over the result of one test but they do not analyze their own interpretation suggests a logical fallacy this collection of essays chooses to ignore. They also seem susceptible to in-group bias (also frequently with citations, sometimes with deeper implications of colleagues’ works because they support their own) and they proceed without tackling the problem. Furthermore, they go on an attempt to demonstrate that the transmitter is not aware of his own language bias in chapter 9 – Strategic language use. In this regard, more scientific study seems to be required because, as such, the argument appears to defeat itself.

In their defense, they do have the referential system of linguistics, mainly how linguistics categorizes verbs but considering the meaning ambiguity of words that they gain from usage by different groups makes one wonder if such a measure should be used for scientific argumentation. In this state, the only review on the authors thought process seems to fall on the editor’s presentational additions, which, of course, does not suffice when dealing with

assumptions on language usage. As such, the importance and validity of this research still hangs in the balance of knowledge not yet obtained. Of course, this can be said about any cutting-edge study as this one but it would have been more professional to recognize the deficit of this kind of thought process.

To bring this to a conclusion, *Stereotype dynamics – Language-Based Approaches to the Formation, Maintenance and Transformation of Stereotypes* is a book I wholeheartedly recommend not only to those who aim to be well informed on the subject for professional purposes but also to those who want to improve decision making and overall communication. It is a book of quality in an area of research that has all human understanding in its sights.