

Review of: "[Commentary] Is It Real? The Construction of Prejudice Against Nigerian Immigrants in Italy: A Case Study"

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This article presents a judicial case study to illustrate how, in practice, the stigmatization of an entire social group, specifically the Nigerian community in the Italian context, occurs. The work offers a convincing interpretation of how the actors involved contribute to raising the problem, creating indignation, and provoking a reaction. As a consequence, it is evident that the problem is the result of a social construction. It is also suggested that the typification of crime begins from logically incorrect assumptions. However, in the process of moral entrepreneurship, this narrative becomes dominant and depersonalizes the negative actors, allowing their demonization and, at the same time, broadening their attributes to the entire social group to which they belong. In this sense, this work explores how the construction of societal stereotypes can also be activated, starting from dubious cases.

Interestingly, the interpretative key of the author shows that the mechanism is triggered, starting from actors potentially "neutral" to stereotyping, such as NGOs. The case studied here demonstrates that, once activated, the process expands by building its success on pre-existing stereotypes through self-reinforcement. In this process, the intervention of some actors, including politicians, the media, and the police, who are ready to deal with it, finds the perfect environment to start the almost irreversible reaction.

An element that could be further developed is what happens when the case loses legal relevance, that is, when it becomes clear that morally reprehensible behavior cannot be attributed to an entire social group. One wonders, for example, why stigmatization occurs against categories (such as migrants or the Nigerian community) that, in addition to possessing traits that allow easy identification, often do not possess practical tools to defend themselves. This happens because the mechanism is based on psychological elements whereby, in some contexts, individuals base their conclusions on simplified and dichotomized categories. Once the premise of stigmatization has fallen, there is no equal "repair process" on the part of society or the actors who triggered the process. This depends on the psychological tendency to forget one's own mistakes.