Are you being 'typecast'?

For many serious movie and stage actors, one of their greatest fears is that they will only be thought of as being able to perform in one **particular type of role** … such as the bad guy, the comedian, for sex appeal, for only Shakespearean roles … or for just being **the** film star. That is being … typecast.

For others in the acting industry, **the 'film star' typecast** might ensure the success of the movie at the box office … and ensure that they, as individual performers, are financially successful in their chosen occupation.
For example, John Wayne and Elvis Presley were famous for always appearing as their expected heroic public image would suggest, irrespective of their performance roles in the movie storylines.

So, who are you? How do people think about you? How do they form that opinion? What do they expect you to be?
And, indeed, as a private citizen, why should anyone know who you are?

In our present world of social media and international access to a vast array of information, there is now **an Australian law to restrict access to web-based platforms based on age** – using a socially acceptable moral and mental-health logic of protecting the young (under 16) from the dangers of particular influences.[1]
What evidence is used to determine age? Personal disclosure? On public platforms or other sources? Websites visited in the past? Facial image analysis?

Many would remember the Australian government proposal in 1985 to issue everyone with an **Australia Card** – a personal identifier, linking individuals to their many government records, such as their tax file numbers. The proposal was shelved in 1987, not least as an unacceptable intrusion on personal liberties and privacy.

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[1] https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2025/12/05/what-is-australias-under-16-social-media-ban-the-world-first-law-explained.html

In Australia, there is the *Privacy Act 1988* [2] which governs a wide range of individual rights … along with a *Privacy and Other Amendments Act 2024* [3] that, together, enshrine personal privacy in law.

But, beyond that legal protection, people form opinions everyday about others they meet or read about or communicate with … or see, in person or on screens.

Usually, their opinions (positive, negative or undecided) are based on social cues absorbed from their upbringing, their circumstances of the time, their breadth of understanding, their tolerance of other viewpoints or discomfort with difference …).

They can even be based on appearance … clothing (smart, fashionable, disheveled …), manner (assured, confident, cultured tone, accent, multi-lingual …), appearance (looks like us, looks very different to us, untidy, clean, tall, short, slim …).

And so, the social conversations continue as people assess the level of fit (What do you do? Where do you live? Do you travel? What have you read? What TV programs do you like? Married, single …?). The process goes on until some innocuous judgement is made … as to whether or not to continue the interest.

These skills of classifying are so common in life … in science, in history and … in the menus of technology on mobile phones and computers. They are pathways to making a decision in many aspects of life.

But, when the decision is made, how accurate is it? Is the person only in the 'set' that you observed? In a classification 'box', based on occupation, appearance, language skills, cheeriness of manner … as a person who can be trusted … or not? So often, such social classifications carry a value … a sense of worth … or lack of it.

A difference in emotional response can be based on the perception of the classification category.

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[2] https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03712/2025-02-01/2025-02-01/text/original/epub/OEBPS/document_1/document_1.html
[3] Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024

Check your reaction to these different categories. She is a doctor … film star …grandmother … professor … multi-lingual … **and now** …she is homeless, exhausted, using a walker for support … immigrant? refugee? Is she trustworthy … or needing assistance?

Classifications usually tend to give a **main point-in-time** category. Yet, most people have had **many identities over time**. Select from an endless list … child, teenager, mother/father, uncle/aunt … student, apprentice, university graduate, tradesperson, business owner, company director … convicted felon, jailed, drug smuggler, entrepreneur, president … artist, writer, event organiser, movie producer … banker, politician, government minister … public servant, project manager, teacher, director-general, transport driver, cleaner, porter … hospital patient, nurse, medical practitioner, specialist consultant … but which is **main**? At this point-in-time?

So, as an example, when you see a person on crutches or using a mobility aid, **what diagnosis does the lay-person make** … while searching for additional clues like plaster casts, moon-boots, support braces …? Perhaps it was a sporting injury or joint replacement surgery of hip or knee? Physical injuries are fairly easy for amateurs to make a reasonable guess.

Now, what about diagnosing mental damage, without any visible clues such as stroke impact, muscles spasms or hand tremors? Perhaps the only signs might be the slight confusion of ageing or one of the subtle forms of psychological disorder or the many degenerative forms of dementia.

Maybe, you are seeing an older person with limited mobility, declining speech, little facial expression …
No doubt, he or she has a medical diagnosis, in addition to ageing. But, **what is your lay-person automatic observation?** And **is this person MORE than that casual diagnosis – classification?**

Did this person have **other classification identities** in earlier life? **Significant identities, perhaps** … though less observable today. Not just the grey-haired person that you see now, moving slowly along, perhaps without the thinking speed and energy of youth. What were the

interests, the achievement and the overcome challenges to get to this stage in life?

What is, and was, the personality that you can observe today?

And so, **are you typecast by where you are on the continuum of your life's experiences?**
What might observers make of you by using the casual social observation tools that they have absorbed and used from their own life experiences?
Are you content to 'labelled'?
Or might you just say, **'What's it to you who I am?'**

Likewise:
Is it a measure of the maturity of thought not to rush into opinion …
with a knee-jerk reaction to some affront to your understanding? Not to be judge and jury … or engage in social media pile-on … before examining the wider context of what appears to be the facts?
A lynch mob all agree (at least to going along with the flow) but **that doesn't necessarily mean that they are right** … either in principle or in fact.
The mob sense of 'rightness' is only to the extent that people with similar views and life experiences are lamely, yet angrily, responding to someone of perceived 'authority' who is claiming the correctness of the behaviour.

One of the beauties of good law and legal systems is the **taking of time to consider** the surety of evidence, the multiple arguments based on that evidence, the wider issues that could impact decision-making and the consequences of particular decisions in the Constitutional understandings that govern the societies in which we live.

"We can be blind to the obvious and we are also blind to our own blindness. We have very little idea of how little we know. We are not designed to know how little we know."
in *Thinking Fast and Slow, Penguin, 2012.* **Daniel Kahneman** [4] 1934-2024, Nobel laureate 2002, Emeritus Professor in Psychology, Princeton University 1993-2024 … and a dementia sufferer at a point in time.[5]

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[4] https://www.penguin.com.au/books/thinking-fast-and-slow-9780141033570
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Kahneman