



## Combating harmful stereotyping: a cross-disciplinary approach

17-18 June 2027

Université Grenoble Alpes, France

It is well established in research as well as in the social arena that a number of stereotypes are harmful, because they are “preconceived and oversimplified idea[s] of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc” (OED 2025, stereotype), and that they lead to biases in the perception of individuals, who are considered on the basis of their membership in a group rather than their individual qualities. Biases may be explicit (“overtly discriminatory beliefs, actions, or institutional policies”), but also implicit, taking the form of “unconscious tacit attitudes and unintentional actions towards a group” (Rutgers 2026) that are likely to be detrimental to the targeted group and life in a peaceful society.

There are now countless initiatives and discussions on the web and on social networks urging to combat stereotypes, whether from international organisations such as UNESCO, the European Commission, or governments, charities, associations, the press, or initiatives in the workplace. In the 14-billion word iWeb corpus of contemporary English, the verb most frequently associated with “stereotypes” is “challenge” (Davies 2018, query “[any verb]+stereotypes”). The focus in the social arena has primarily been on gender, sexual orientation and race/ethnicity, and to a lesser degree, on disability, social class, profession (such as lawyers, nurses, cleaners, farmers), but harmful stereotypes may concern more generally any social group or human category (tourists, students, young people, neighbours, TV viewers, people who read books and so on), or human-related categories (football and more generally sports, dancing, sewing, etc) but they may also concern animals (for instance, perception of sharks as dangerous).

Yet despite these countless initiatives, research has shown how resistant harmful stereotypes can be, and how complex the issue is, relating as it does to contexts, social norms, communities of practice, self-esteem, group identity, language and discourse. A number of causes and solutions have been put forward in a number of fields and

disciplines, but there is little dialogue between them. The aim of this conference is to bring together specialists of stereotypes and generalizations across disciplines, especially linguistics, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, communication studies, philosophy of language, cognitive psychology, social psychology, organizational behaviour, political sciences, evolutionary psychology, sociology, anthropology.

The aim is to identify first, what are the exact causes of stereotype resistance, and second, what solutions could be implemented (or what attempts are bound to fail) to reduce harmful stereotyping and its deleterious effects on harmonious relations among individuals, groups or countries.

The simple view that an ideal society is one that would be devoid of any preconceived ideas about categories is a utopia, because it runs counter to the basic cognitive function of categorisation. Living beings need categories to make sense of the world: without categories, each situation, each entity, would be unique, which would not allow for planning and quick decision-making. This holds even for the simplest, unicellular organisms: survival requires at least the ability to categorize an entity as edible, harmful or as being of one's own kind (Taylor 2003: 11). Categorization, in turn, inevitably involves simplification: it abstracts recurring features, scripts, frames, perceptions, to form a "schema" (Langacker 2008: 56), a conventional idea, called a "stereotype" by Putnam (1975: 249-50). Such simplification, again, is a cognitive necessity, as emphasized by Lippmann (1922: 11). Then when do these stereotypes that serve as the foundation of communication and learning (Lehmans, in Veyrieras 2019) reach the point of harmfulness and prejudice (Allport 1954, Dovidio et al 2005)? Are they sociological defense mechanisms at the basis of human survival against other members, groups or later nations, inevitably creating dichotomies between good us and bad them (Lahire 2023)? If this is a law of human nature, how can such sociological inclinations be countered?

We welcome talks that focus on reasons for stereotype resistance and/or possible solutions. Questions of particular interest include the following:

- How to best counter the *us versus them* stereotypical categorisation and interrupt what seems to be a natural tendency to build hierarchies between individuals/groups/peoples? How to combat the social divides that feed populist discourse (Wodak 2015)?
- What exactly is the effect of cognitive heuristics, such as the essentialism bias, the outgroup homogeneity bias, the confirmation bias or the negativity bias? How do strategies or methods such as cognitive bias mitigation, unconscious bias training, bias reduction strategies, prejudice habit-breaking intervention (Devine et al. 2012) work, and what is their effectiveness? What is the impact of the Implicit Association Test detecting subconscious associations in people's subsequent action and decision?
- More generally, how can awareness of implicit bias and harmful stereotyping be raised successfully? Diversity programmes in companies often fail (and are even counter-productive) when they are based on diversity training, hiring tests or performance ratings, because these are based on control (Dobbin & Kalev 2016). Repeatedly hearing about the need to fight against stereotypes can also trigger a feeling that all this is political correctness and brainwashing, and encourage

rebellion. Dobbin & Kalev (2016) suggest instead that relying on social accountability and intergroup contact produces better results.

- What linguistic modes of expression could be favoured or disfavoured? Maas et al. (1989) have provided evidence of Linguistic Intergroup Bias: desirable behaviours of in-group members and undesirable behaviour of out-group members tend to be described at a higher level of abstraction than stereotype-inconsistent behaviour. Consequently, using more adjectives than nouns, episodic predicates than stative ones, avoiding negations (which presuppose a norm), are ways to help reduce essentialism (Beukeboom & Burgers 2017). Generics are also flagged by McKeever & Sterken (2021), who show how people may draw generic inferences from rather weak evidence, but might then use that same generic belief to warrant strong claims. Since generics reflect our low-level mode of categorization, and as such, are extremely common forms of sentences, avoiding them altogether would not be realistic. But what can be done from these findings?
- Can language and discourse be enough, or are non-linguistic components necessary as well for bias reduction – choice of pictures, work by associations to favour intergroup contact, such as the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which brings together Israeli and Palestinian musicians, or the Boys Do Cry campaign in Australia (2021)?
- What role can counter-evidence play? Studies have shown that generic statements easily accommodate counter-examples, which are treated as negligible exceptions (Leslie 2007, Gardelle 2023). Exposure to counter-evidence also triggers a defense of their social beliefs by perceivers (Moreno & Bodenhausen 1999), while making a stereotype or erroneous idea salient in order to reject it afterwards can even make people more ready to adopt the false belief (McGowan 2009, Lewandowsky et al. 2012, Bosse 2022).
- What exactly is the power of narratives (especially in mainstream media) as discursive vehicles for establishing, solidifying, maintaining, but also deconstructing and hybridising harmful/non-harmful stereotypes? In particular, in our hypermediated world, the bulk of our schematic knowledge is significantly informed by mediations of social groups (whether ingroups or outgroups) (Brylla 2023, Plantiga 2018)
- To what extent does egocentrism come into play in stereotype resistance (need for a positive self-identity, trust in peer beliefs, willingness to abide by descriptive or injunctive norms)? Galinsky & Ku (2004), for instance, suggest the importance of egocentric biases to debias intergroup thought. How much of harmful stereotypes is the result of individual thinking, and how much that of communities of practice/context? As a consequence, how effective can action targeting individuals be, and what are the roles of other actors (such as parents or peers, see UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2022, or Tan et al. 2010).
- What part can egocentrism play in reducing bias and harmful stereotypes? For instance, remarks such as “don’t label me”, “don’t stereotype me” or “don’t cancel me” are not uncommon. In addition, these are all negative (“don’t”); is there any more positive naming of diversity recognition strategies? For example, Merle Vaughn, National Law Firm Diversity Practice Leader and a partner recruiter for Major, Lindsey & Africa, has created a podcast reinterpreting “BS-ing” as meaning “Beyond Stereotypes” chatting (Major, Lindsey & Africa 2025).

- How can interpersonal and group management interfere with, or aid, the fight against harmful stereotypes? In interactions, interrupting stereotypes or prejudice is “socially costly” (Picca and Feagin 2007), as it tends to disrupt the flow of conversations. How can one help resist passive accommodation in interactions and bring individuals to confront stereotypically racist or sexist jokes for instance?
- What is the link between scapegoating and stereotyping and how can they be combatted together?
- Can recent linguistic labelling consisting in attributing a reductive label putting disparate elements in the same ideological box through a “sweep word” (i.e. fake news, woke, Critical Race Theory) be seen as a new form of harmful stereotyping?
- Generative AI is known to convey harmful stereotypes (e.g. Wei et al. 2025). As the general public increasingly uses AI applications, are there effects of this new mode of discourse production? Are solutions of a different type than for naturally occurring discourse?

Even though the talks will be given in English, they may bear on any language(s). They should contain in-depth analyses of naturally occurring examples. They can focus on a wide variety of corpora and media.

**Abstracts** of around 300 words (excluding references) should be addressed before 5 January 2027 to Laure Gardelle and Sandrine Sorlin: [laure.gardelle@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:laure.gardelle@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr); [sandrine.sorlin@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:sandrine.sorlin@univ-montp3.fr)

The conference is sponsored by the Institut Universitaire de France, the research centre EMMA /Université de Montpellier – Paul Valéry, the research centre LIDILEM and Grenoble INP/Université Grenoble Alpes.

### **Schedule**

Deadline for submission: 5 January 2027

Notification of acceptance: 25 January 2027

### **Keynote speakers**

Catalin Brylla, Principal Lecturer in Film and TV, Bournemouth University

John Dovidio, Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Public Health, Yale University

Adam Hahn, Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, University of Bath

Samia Hesni, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Dartmouth College

Kai Sassenberg, Professor of Psychology at the University of Trier and Director of the Leibniz Institute for Psychology

### **Advisory board**

Ruth Amosy, Tel-Aviv University

Camiel Beukeboom, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Béatrice Fracchiolla, Université de Lorraine

Vera Hoorens, KU Leuven

Bernhard Nickel, Harvard University

Denis Ramond, Institut Catholique de Paris

Rachel Sterken, University of Hong-Kong  
Alexis Tan, Washington State University  
Martina Thiele, Universität Tübingen  
Naomi Truan, Leiden Universiteit  
Ruth Wodak, Lancaster University

### Organizing committee

Laure Gardelle, Université Grenoble Alpes, France  
Sandrine Sorlin, Université de Montpellier – Paul Valéry / Institut Universitaire de France, France

### Conference website

<https://combatstereo.sciencesconf.org/>

### References

- Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Asher, Nicholas & Pelletier, Francis Jeffry. 2012. More truths about generic truth. In *Genericity*, ed. A. Mari, C. Beyssade & F. Del Prete, 312-333. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Beukeboom, Camiel & Christian Burgers. 2017. Linguistic Bias. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Intergroup Communication*, ed. H. Giles & J. Harwood. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Bosse, Anne. 2024. Stereotyping and generics. *Inquiry. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 67(10), 3876-3892. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2074879>>
- Boys Do Cry. 2021. <<https://boysdocry.com.au/thecampaign>>
- Brylla, Catalin. 2023. *Documentary and Stereotypes – Reducing Stigma through Factual Media*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Davies, Mark. 2018. The iWeb Corpus. Available online at <<https://www.english-corpora.org/iWeb/>>
- Davies, Kristin, Linda R. Tropp, Arthur Aron, Thomas F. Pettigrew & Stephen C. Wright. 2011. Cross-Group friendships and intergroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(4), 332–351. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311411103>>
- Devine, Patricia G., Patrick Forscher, Anthony J. Austin & William T. L. Cox. 2012) Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(6), 1267–1278. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.06.003>>
- Dobbin, Franck & Alexandra Kalev. 2016. Why diversity programs fail, and what works better. *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2016. <<https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail>>
- Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick and Laurie A Rudman. 2005. *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years After Allport*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Galinsky, Adam D. & Gillian Ku. 2004. The effects of perspective-taking on prejudice: The moderating role of self-evaluation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(5), 594–604. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203262802>>
- Gardelle, Laure. 2023. Lions, flowers and the Romans: exception management with generic and other count plurals. *Reference: from Conventions to Pragmatics*, ed. L. Gardelle, L. Vincent-Durroux & H. Vinckel-Roisin, 71-87. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kim, Steffi. 2025. Intergroup friendship as a means of prejudice reduction. *Critical Debates in Humanities, Science and Global Justice* 5(1): 143-154.
- Lahire, Bernard. 2023. *Les Structures fondamentales de sociétés humaines*. Paris : La Découverte.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leslie, Sarah-Jane. 2007. Generics and the structure of mind. *Philosophical Perspectives* 21: 375-403.
- Lewandowsky, Stephan, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, Colleen M. Seifert, Norbert Schwarz & John Cook. 2012. Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest: A Journal of the American Psychological Society* 13 (3): 106–131.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. The world outside and the pictures in our heads. In W. Lippmann, *Public opinion* (p. 3–32). MacMillan Co. <<https://doi.org/10.1037/14847-001>>
- Major, Lindsey & Africa lawfirm. 2025. B.S.: Beyond Stereotypes Podcasts. 80 episodes. <[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYBzPc\\_G-z1edJam3lKODyKQWCVSJ9Zzh](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYBzPc_G-z1edJam3lKODyKQWCVSJ9Zzh)>

- McGowan, Mary Kate. 2009. Oppressive Speech. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 87 (3): 389-407.
- McKeever, Matthew & Rachel Sterken. 2021. Social and political aspects of generic language and speech. In *The Routledge Handbook of Social and Political Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Khoo & R. Sterken, 259-280. New York: Routledge.
- Moreno, Kristen N. & Galen V. Bodenhausen. 1999. Resisting stereotype change: The role of motivation and attentional capacity in defending social beliefs. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 2(1): 5-16. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/136843029902100>>
- Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). 2025. Entry "stereotype". December 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7045181567>
- Picca, Leslie Houts and Joe R. Feagin. 2007. *Two-Faced Racism. Whites in the Backstage and Frontstage*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. 1997. Generalized intergroup contact effects on prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23(2), 173-185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167297232006>
- Plantiga, Carl. 2018. *Screen Stories: Emotion and the Ethics of Engagement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rutgers, the University of New Jersey. 2026. Implicit bias. < <https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/climate-issues-in-academic-philosophy/implicit-bias>>
- Tan, Alexis, Gerdean Tan, Tatyana Avdeyeva, Heather Crandall, Yutaka Fukushi, Alexis Nyandwi, Hao-Yu Chin & Ching-Guo Wu. 2001. Changing negative racial stereotypes: The influence of normative peer information. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 12(3), 171-180. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/106461701753210448>>
- Taylor, John R. 2003. *Linguistic Categorization*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report. 2022. #HerEducationOurFuture#BreakTheBiasChallenging gender bias and stereotypes in and through education. < <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380827?2=null&queryId=0b05c5d1-1855-4c01-9dbd-824d7b2b83da>>
- Veyrieras, Jean-Baptiste. 2019. The Persistence of Stereotypes, *CNRS News*, 8 December 2019. <<https://news.cnrs.fr/articles/the-persistence-of-stereotypes>>
- Wei, Xiahua, Naveen Kumar & Han Zhang. 2025. Addressing bias in generative AI: Challenges and research opportunities in information management. *Information and Management* 62(2). < >
- Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear. What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Mean*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.