

VARIABILITY OF SOCIOCULTURAL STEREOTYPES IN AMERICAN MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *The paper presents the conception of dynamics of media stereotyping that comprises emergence, functioning, disappearance or return of sociocultural stereotypes in American media discourse. Dynamics of media stereotyping is a cognitive and linguistic process, stimulated by social, cultural and media factors. A sociocultural stereotype is defined in our work as a verbalized cognitive structure that represents simplified and conventional image of an individual, a group or a phenomenon of a particular social environment. Sociocultural stereotypes are formed in the process of evaluative categorization, which is a mental process of dividing social phenomena, groups, and individuals into categories in compliance with national ideals, cultural values and social standards. Media discourse is the domain in which sociocultural stereotypes are formed and changed. Linguistic representations of sociocultural stereotypes reflect their changes that comprise evaluative variation, content modification, activation or inactivation due to lack of new information about the referents of stereotypes in media discourse. Inactivation leads to disappearance or reinterpretation of sociocultural stereotypes of American media discourse. Reappearance of a vanished sociocultural stereotype is defined in the paper as iteration. The conception of media stereotyping contributes to the development of cognitive-linguistic approach to mass communication study.*

Keywords: *sociocultural stereotype; nomen of sociocultural stereotype; media discourse; stereotyping; dynamics of media stereotyping.*

Introduction

Functioning as tools for fast processing information, sociocultural stereotypes influence greatly emotional reactions and behavioural

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intentions directed towards groups and individuals¹. Circulating in the society as shared background knowledge, stereotypes present certain unquestionable beliefs, expectancies and norms that are recognized highly resistant to modification or change¹. This is taken for the proof of unchangeability of sociocultural stereotypes.

Introduced in 1922 by Walter Lippmann term “stereotype” originated from the Greek στερεός "solid, sturdy"². The term conveys immutability of societal convictions. However, stability of stereotypes is significantly overestimated³. Experimental data suggest that stereotypes change under certain conditions⁴. The degree of their variability depends on different factors: the context of their emergence and functioning, their significance for the national culture, their pragmatic potential, etc.

Potential for changing under the influence of outward power was marked by the Greek word δυναμικός⁵. Greek philosophers used the concept of dynamics to explain the emergence of the universe initiated by an elementary force⁶. The terms "dynamic" and "dynamics" are used in various fields of science that study the development or change in processes, systems and phenomena under the influence of different factors. For example, dynamic psychology emphasizes causation and motivation in relation to human mind and behavior. Dynamic logic, in addition to the usual category of formulas interpreted as propositions, employs a category of expressions interpreted as actions⁷. In cognitive linguistics, which studies the mechanisms and structures of human consciousness through linguistic phenomena, concept of "force dynamics", introduced by L. Talmy, is used to explain the linguistic reflection of the interaction of objects in terms of real power processes. Different choices of verbs, or different voice forms, or different argument linking constructions, express different

¹ M. J. Brandt, Ch. Reyna, Stereotypes as attributions. In Eleanor L. Simon (ed.), *Psychology of Stereotypes*, Nova Science Publishers, 2010. pp.1–32.

¹ N. C. Macrae, G.V. Bodenhausen, Social Cognition: Thinking Categorically about Others. *Annual Review of Psychology*, (51)1, 2000 p.93–120.

² H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, A Greek–English Lexicon: Based on the German Work of Francis Passow. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853, p. 1382.

³ V. Yzerbyt, O. Corneille, Cognitive process: Reality constraints and integrity concerns in social perception. In John F. Dovidio, Peter Glick & Laurie A. Rudman (eds), *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p.181.

⁴ D.Kranz, N. Thomas, J. Hofer, Changes in Age Stereotypes in Adolescent and Older Participants of an Intergenerational Encounter Program. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2021.

⁵ H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, op.cit., p. 452.

⁶ P. Ageles, The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy. 2d ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, p. 247.

⁷ R. Audi, The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. 2d ed. Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 250.

conceptualizations of the force-dynamic structure of the event⁸. In our study, the term "dynamism" defines the linguistic and cognitive processes of changes in verbalized sociocultural stereotypes.

Dynamism of media stereotyping is determined by the driving forces, which are social, cultural, and media factors. Social factors that guide attitudes and evaluations of social phenomena, groups, and individuals are basic values, ethical, aesthetic and behavioural standards. Cultural factors include archetypes that function as cognitive models for creating media images and cultural dominants that direct interpretation of social. Media factors are the influence of mass media, which interpret sociocultural stereotypes in accordance with a dominant ideology of the society, and activity of leaders of social networks that draw public attention to trends and events of the community life.

Spread in the process of communication, sociocultural stereotypes reside in media discourse that quickly responds to significant changes in the society and affects public opinion⁹. Due to the development of digital technologies, the US media products, including films, TV series, songs, are distributed around the world, thus making American media discourse a powerful force to propagate stereotypes. This makes American media discourse a subject study of dynamics of stereotyping, reflected in the language.

Theoretical premises of the work

From the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics, a sociocultural stereotype is a verbalized cognitive structure that represents a simplified and reduced image of an individual, a group or a phenomenon of the particular social environment¹⁰. Sociocultural stereotypes are results of evaluative categorization¹¹, which is a mental process of distinguishing salient features of social phenomena, groups or individuals and evaluating them in accordance with national ideals, cultural values and social standards. Evaluation is conditioned by compliance or non-compliance of estimated social phenomena, groups or individuals with value criteria, which are cultural priorities of the nation that determine the worldview¹². As culturally

⁸ W. Croft, A. Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 66.

⁹ T. Ross, Media and Stereotypes. In: Steven Ratuva (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

¹⁰ R. Ashmore, F. Del Boca, Conceptual approaches to stereotypes and stereotyping. In David L. Hamilton (ed.), *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior*, New York: Psychology Press, 2017, pp.1–35.

¹¹ M. Pickering, Stereotyping and Stereotypes. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, 2015.

¹² G. Weaver, *American Cultural Values*. Kokusai Bunka Kenshu (Intercultural Training), 1999, pp.9–15.

determined ideas about the world¹³, sociocultural stereotypes are shaped by ethical, aesthetic, and behavioural standards that motivate human aspirations and actions¹⁴.

From the viewpoint of cognitive and pragmatic theory of R. MacLaury's (Vantage Theory), sociocultural stereotypes appear in the process of establishing similarities and differences of objects of social reality with "analogical equivalents", i.e., "fixed" images¹⁵, which are discrete ideas that serve as prototypes of various types. Established sociocultural stereotypes and cultural archetypes function as mental points of reference in the process of stereotyping. Cultural archetypes are symbolic images that can vary without changing their basic cognitive schemes¹⁶. They preserve the ancestral experience of the nation and serve as value orientations of the ethnic group¹⁷. Each national culture is dominated by its own cultural archetypes, which influence stereotyping.

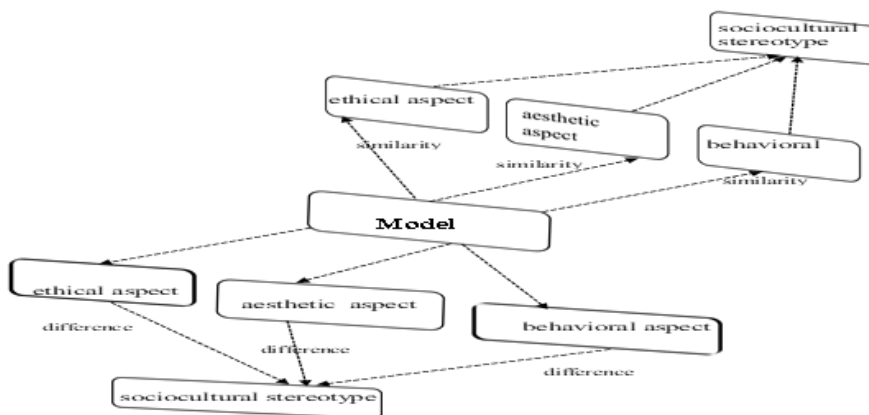


Figure 1. Formation of sociocultural stereotypes

¹³ M. Shutova, Reconstruction of ethnocultural facts from archetypes to stereotypes. *Problems of semantics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics*, 25, 2014, pp.508–521.

¹⁴ S. Lyubymova, Evaluative factor of stereotyping of socio-cultural groups in American linguoculture. *Bulletin of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series "Foreign Philology. Methods of teaching foreign languages"*, 91, 2020, pp. 20–27.

¹⁵ R. MacLaury, Categories of desaturated-complex color: Sensorial, perceptual, and cognitive models. In Robert E. MacLaury, Galina V. Paramei & Don Dedrick (eds), *Anthropology of Color Interdisciplinary Multilevel Modeling*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007, p. 140.

¹⁶ C. Jung, The complications of American psychology. In H. Read, G. Adler, & R. F. C. Hull (Eds.), *The collected works of C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious. Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol.9, Part. 1, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp.174–176.

¹⁷ M. Shutova, 2014, op.cit., p.519.

Indispensable to human mental activity, stereotypes are the integral part of natural language. They are maintained and changed through language and communication. Representing the image of a group in its verbal form, a stereotype forms the centre of semantic and cognitive associations¹⁸. Linguistic manifestation of stereotypes is found in lexical units¹⁹, connotations and pragmatic presuppositions²⁰, derivational paradigms²¹, propositional structures²², rhetorical and stylistic devices²³, phraseological units and proverbs²⁴, communicative styles²⁵, speech etiquette²⁶ and media genre²⁷. In our work we consider two types of verbalizing sociocultural stereotypes in American media discourse: a lexical item, i.e., a word or a word combination, defined as a nomen (from Latin “name”), for example, “Karen”, “Trophy husband”, “WASP”²⁸, or a syntactic unit, i.e., conventionalized and regularly reproduced in the language usage phrases²⁹, for example, *Asian-Americans are among the most prosperous, well-educated, and successful ethnic groups in America*.

Acknowledged as verbalized mental structures, sociocultural stereotypes can be detected and described mostly by linguistic methods and

¹⁸ F. Coulmas, *Conversational Routine Exploration in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech*, The Hague: Mouton, 1981.

¹⁹ J. Bartmiński, What Does It Mean for Stereotypes to “Reside in Language”? In Ann Dąbrowska, Walery Pisarek & Gerhard Stickel (eds), *Stereotypes and Linguistic Prejudices in Europe*, Research Institute for Linguistics Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2017, pp. 115–137.

²⁰ L. Lawton, Reconsidering the Use of Gender Stereotypes in Medieval Romance: Figures of Vulnerability and of Power, *Miranda*, 12, Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, 2016.

²¹ J. Bartmiński, Basic stereotypes and their profiling. In Lyudmila L. Fedorova (ed.), *Stereotypes in language, communication and culture*, 2009, pp. 11–21.

²² U. Quasthoff, The uses of stereotype in everyday argument: Theoretical and empirical aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2(1), 1978, pp.1–48.

²³ T. van Dijk, *Discourse, Racism and Ideology*, La Laguna: RCEI, 1996.

²⁴ M. Shutova, Methodological guidelines in the study of ethnostereotypes and methods of their complex reconstruction, *Bulletin of the Kyiv National Linguistic University. Series: Philology*, 18, (1), 2015, 173–182.

²⁵ M. Deutschmann, A. Steinvall, Combatting Linguistic Stereotyping and Prejudice by Evoking Stereotypes, *Open Linguistics*, 6 (1), 2020, pp. 651–671.

²⁶ M. Shutova, Stereotypes of Behaviour as a Linguistic Phenomenon, *Moderní Aspekty Vědy*, Svazek XIII mezinárodní kolektivní monografie, Česká republika: Mezinárodní Ekonomický Institut s.r.o., 2021, pp. 258–281.

²⁷ S. Lyubymova, Sociocultural stereotypes in different genres of American media discourse in the middle of the 19th century. *Messenger of Kyiv National Linguistic University, Series Philology*, 1(24), 2021, pp.96–106.

²⁸ S. Lyubymova, Nomen Est Omen Socialis. Designation as Means of Stereotyping. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 14, 2, 2022, p.120.

²⁹ M. Shutova, 2014, op.cit., p.518.

techniques, although they are not purely linguistic concepts³⁰. Sociocultural stereotypes are represented in media discourse by regularly reproduced words and phrases, any transformation of which reflect changes in stereotypes.

Methodology

The research methodology rests on the premise that stereotypes are results of sociocultural reality interpretation that takes place within the scope of cognitive models represented by means of linguistic signs³¹. Complex research methodology is based on the anthropocentric approach, principles of cultural determinism, historicism and ethnocentrism.

The research design is a complex of procedures, the first step of which is media monitoring that involves observation and fixation of language material for further linguistic processing³². Used in communication studies, media monitoring has been adopted for the analysis of verbalized stereotypes: the search of material for study is restricted to lexical and syntactical units that verbalize stereotypes in the English language, the country domain relevant for the study, which is the USA, and the period of time – from the end of the 19th century to the present. Material for analysis was retrieved from different sources of web-based digital media.

According to the prevalence of verbal code in stereotyping, media sources have been divided into three types. A graphic media discourse, in which linguistic means play the major role in stereotyping, is made up of "quality" periodicals, popular entertaining magazines and blogs. In an audio (songs and radio programs) and audiovisual (movies, commercials and memes) media discourse, non-linguistic means guide interpretation of sociocultural stereotypes. The total number of analysed sources comprises 600 fragments of American media discourse.

A "usage event" of a stereotype can be of any length: from a phrase to a whole text³³. A fragment of media discourse is a media text, which is considered in our study any kind of media product that represents

³⁰ M. Shutova, Concept of Engl. Courage / Ukr. Хоробрість as stereotype of ethnocultural mentality of Ukrainians and English. In Roman Vasko (ed.), *Language. Culture. Discourse*, Kharkiv, PC Technology Center, 2022, pp.79–94.

³¹ S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, Stereotypes and values in the linguistic world view. In GŁaz, Adam, David S. Danaher, Przemysław Łozowski (eds.), *The Linguistic Worldview: Ethnolinguistics, Cognition, and Culture*, London, Versita, 2013, pp.199–214.

³² G. Graffigna, G. Riva, Social media monitoring and understanding: An integrated mixed methods approach for the analysis of social media, *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 11, 2015, pp. 57–72.

³³ R. Langacker, Interactive Cognition: Toward a Unified Account of Structure, Processing, and Discourse, *International Journal of Cognitive Linguistics*, 3, (2), 2012, p. 96.

sociocultural stereotypes on different levels of the language. Thematic and pragmatic focus of a text on a sociocultural stereotype determines its function as a communicative unit that represents a stereotype in media discourse. Hermeneutic procedure of a media text interpretation involves knowledge of the communicative background, i.e., the historical, cultural and ideological context, as well as the information transmission channel³⁴.

Verbalized sociocultural stereotypes are distinguished by semantic and grammatical indicators of typicality. They are the plural form of nouns, e.g., *Karens*, or an indefinite article, e.g., *a WASP*; compatibility with characterising adjectives, e.g., *the typical yuppie*, *a genuine flapper*, or quantifiers that indicate typicality of a social group, e.g., *most rednecks*; evaluative predicates, e.g., *White Trash is an angry, lazy, dirty... sunburned, stupid racist*³⁵. In audio and audiovisual media discourse, sociocultural stereotypes are traced in recurring narratives, visual images of identity, speech behaviour.

The fundamental step in the study is cognitive analysis³⁶, which is a procedure largely based on introspection³⁷ that focuses on contextually construed meaning³⁸ and motivation, concealed behind linguistic structure. Semantic and motivational analysis contributes to the discovery of all possible meanings³⁹. The analysis combines various kinds of techniques that involve knowledge of the concepts of a social world and their impact on verbalization of sociocultural stereotypes.

In-depth interpretation of verbal forms of sociocultural stereotypes refer to lexical items and units of syntax-semantics interface, i.e., phrases and sentences that are studied in synchrony and diachrony. Synchronic aspect concerns motivation of naming a sociocultural stereotype from the perspective of conceptual metonymy and metaphor. Component analysis was used to explicit the mechanism of stereotyping. The distributive analysis served to detect the combining potentials of nomina that represent stereotypes in media discourse.

³⁴ S. Lyubymova, Empiric Study of Verbalized Sociocultural Stereotypes, *Philological Treatises*, 11(3-4), 2019, p. 79-80.

³⁵ S. Lyubymova, 2022, op.cit., p.119.

³⁶ I.Góralczyk, J. Paszenda, An introduction to a cognitivelinguistic analysis of novel name-based derivatives in the current political discourse in Poland, *Prace Językoznawcze*, 22(3), 2020, pp. 91-113.

³⁷ L.Talmy, Foreword. In Monica Gonzalez-Marquez, Seana Coulson, Michael J. Spivey & Irene Mittelberg (eds), *Methods in Cognitive Linguistics* (Human Cognitive Methods in Cognitive Linguistics by Processing), John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007, pp. xi-xxii.

³⁸ W. Croft, A. Cruse, 2004, op.cit., p.97.

³⁹ M. Shutova, 2022, op.cit., p.81

Explication involves elements of linguistic and cultural analysis, in which special attention is paid to national and cultural specificity⁴⁰. Implemented in the study morpho-semantic analysis of derivational patterns is directed by the task to verify changes in semantics of nomina of sociocultural stereotypes.

Synchronic aspect of discursive representation of sociocultural stereotypes concerns identification of evaluative features and implications in propositional analysis. Analysis of stylistic means assists in detecting features that motivate stereotyping, e.g., the sentence *We're worker-bees who get the job done*⁴¹ presents a zoomorphic metaphor (*worker-bees*) that expresses the assessment of a social group as hardworking and necessary, but its representatives are perceived as small and secondary members of society.

The analysis in diachronic aspect is based on interpretation of changes in verbal representation of sociocultural stereotypes, which have been stated in synchrony.

Dynamics of media stereotyping

Media stereotyping is a cognitive and linguistic process that comprises stages of formation, functioning and changing of verbalized sociocultural stereotypes.

1. Formation of sociocultural stereotypes

Formation of sociocultural stereotypes is a contextually conditioned and a subjective process, which is entirely dependable on “a personal view point” or “vantage”⁴². A speaker names not an object or a phenomenon of his social environment, but “his vantage”⁴³. That is why a sociocultural stereotype receives as many names as the perspectives are involved in creating the image of a group.

Stereotyping of sociocultural phenomena is conditioned by apperception, i.e., a mental act that includes selecting, assimilating or reorganizing ideas⁴⁴. Apperception is a human ability to correlate sociocultural phenomena with existing ideas. For example, apprehending the idea of a well-being, which is obtained through realization of the

⁴⁰ M. Shutova, 2015, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁴¹ L. Kim, ‘When Society Takes Your Personality Test’, *The New York Times*, 2019, June 23.

⁴² J. Hill, R. MacLaury, The terror of Montezuma: Aztec history, vantage theory, and the category of “person”. In John R. Taylor & Robert E. MacLaury (eds), *Language and the Cognitive Construal of the World*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1995, p. 279.

⁴³ R. MacLaury, 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁴ P. Ageles 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 18–19.

principles "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" has led to formation of a national stereotype of happiness *American dream*.

Stereotyping of groups and individuals begins with perception of the objects of a social environment that physically stimulate human senses⁴⁵. We focus our attention on the properties of objects and organize our direct impressions of them noticing and emphasizing the details, which are not necessarily important, for example, clothing style or place of living. Focusing on the main, objectively existing features of referents of a stereotype determines appearance of the nomen that we define as logical, for example, *yuppie*, *biker*.

Focusing on less important features lead to the emergence of figurative designation, for example, *Oreo*, *Yellow Peril*. Metaphorical nomina are motivated by visual or sensitive impressions of a sociocultural group, image of which arises in the interaction of a target and a source domain, for example, in the the nomen *trophy wife*, a concrete thing – a trophy, won in a competition, is a figurative expression of the wife's subordination to a successful husband.

Metonymic nomina arise on the basis of conceptual metonymy, which establishes the contiguity of the image of a social group and its nomen, for example, *redneck* is formed in metonymic association, focusing on the prominent visual feature of a sociocultural group – a reddened by sun and wind neck of a person, who works in the open air.

Eponymous nomina appears in relation between the characteristics of a person, who bears the name and the image of a sociocultural group, for example, *Karen* is a nomen of a sociocultural stereotype of a white middle-class fastidious and aggressive woman.

Allusive nomina appears in association of a sociocultural group or an individual with a name of a noted figure, for example, *Jezebel* is a nomen of a sociocultural stereotype of an impudent African-American woman. The Biblical name is applied to a sociocultural group on the ground of a negative evaluation of behaviour associated with the Phoenician princess⁴⁶.

Onomatopoeic, i.e., phonetically motivated, nomina appear in a direct relation between acoustic features ascribed to a social group and its image. For example, the nomen *chink* of the stereotype of Asian Americans was motivated by a strange sounding of the Chinese language for Anglophones⁴⁷.

The process of morphological derivation is constrained by the available in the language tools and patterns such as suffixation (*greaser*, *hipster*), compounding (*tacobender*, *bean-eater*), blending (*wigger*), and acronyms (*WASP*, *yuppie*).

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 222.

⁴⁶ Lyubymova 2022, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–126.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 121.

Multiple vantages on a stereotype lead to appearance of different nomina, for example, a positive perception of a sociocultural stereotype of Asian Americans is expressed in the nomen *modal minority*, while a negative perception causes the appearance of such nomina as *yellow peril* or *Chinese virus*.

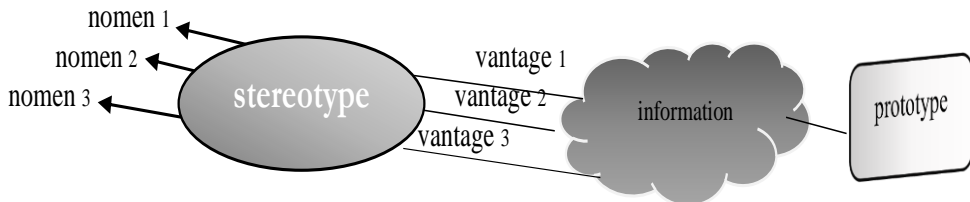


Figure 2. Naming of sociocultural stereotypes

Propositional structures that represent sociocultural stereotypes demonstrate subjective views on descriptive and evaluative features of social groups and individuals, for example, *he is a loyal and loving helpmate, standing behind the great woman*⁴⁸. Evaluative adjectives *loyal and loving* express author's individual perception of the stereotype of a less successful spouse of a powerful wife, named *trophy husband*.

2. Functioning of sociocultural stereotypes

Functioning of sociocultural stereotypes is their application in media discourse according to argumentative or suggestive communicative intentions of a speaker. For example, *Swing voters have always been elusive creatures, changing shape from election to election. This axiom is proving true again with that most-talked-about slice of American political demography: the Soccer Mom*⁴⁹. Nomen *Soccer Mom* of the sociocultural stereotype of a housewife is used to substantiate the group of uncertain voters that can influence the outcome of elections. A suburban mother, whose interests are limited to caring for her children, is not reliable voter.

Sociocultural stereotypes are powerful tools to influence public opinion. For example, in his speech in support of Kennedy's civil rights bill, Martin Luther King appealed to the sociocultural stereotype *American dream: ...the order carries the whole nation forward to the realization of American dream*⁵⁰. Using the stereotype of social happiness, the speaker aims to instil the idea of necessity of the bill for a national well-being.

⁴⁸ J. Coplan, 'Meet the new trophy husbands', *Fortune*, 2015, February 26.

⁴⁹ K. Tumulty, V. Novak, 'Goodbye, Soccer Mom. Hello, Security Mom'. *Time*, 2003, June 02.

⁵⁰ 'JFK Issues Housing Directive', *Clinton Daily Journal and Public*, 1962, November 21, p.1.

3. Changing of sociocultural stereotypes

Under the influence of social cultural, and media factors, sociocultural stereotypes of American media discourse undergo changes. Activation of stereotypes is caused by the inflow of new information about referents of sociocultural stereotypes. Expanding the boundaries of a stereotyped category because of new information⁵¹ manifests in increasing frequency of occurrence of nomina of stereotypes in media discourse and emergence of their word-formation paradigms, for example, due to activation of a sociocultural stereotype of a middle-class city-dweller, who follows the latest trends and fashions, the derivational paradigm of the nomen *hipster* appeared.

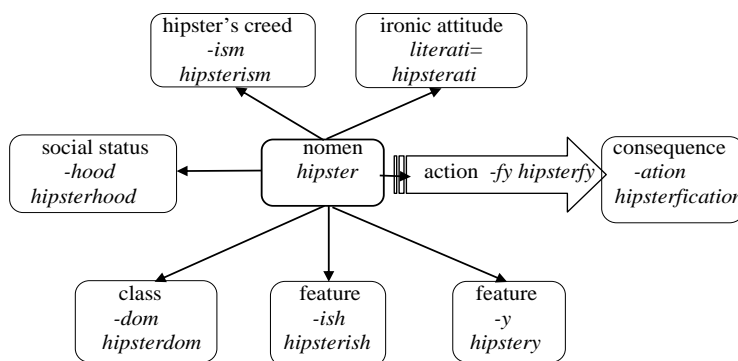


Figure 3. Derivational paradigm of nomen *hipster*

Activation can induce reinterpretation of sociocultural stereotypes. That means a new vantage on a stereotyped category is formed, thus new nomina appear. For example, after abolition of slavery, social changes excited activation of a sociocultural stereotype of African Americans, thus new nomina appeared in media discourse: a well-dressed jester with exaggeratedly polite manners, named *Zip Coon*, conveys similarity with a white American, while a poor petty thief, *Jim Crow*, emphasizes the difference. Activation leads to fortification and propagation of sociocultural stereotypes in media discourse.

Economic and social changes bring about content modification that is alteration in descriptive characteristics of the stereotypes. For example, the original meaning "freedom and equality" of a sociocultural stereotype of happiness has changed to "welfare" since the mid-20th century: *the substance of an American dream is the vision of good pay*⁵². In the 21st century *American Dream* has changed its meaning to "freedom of choice":

⁵¹ R. MacLaury, 2007, *op. cit.*, p.125–130.

⁵² 'The Free-Lancers', *The Time Magazine*, 1955, May 30.

*American dream, from the opportunity for material success and social mobility to the “freedom of choice in how to live”*⁵³.

Content modifications manifest in the formation of new nomina as well. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century a sociocultural stereotype of unified American nation was represented in media discourse by the nomen *melting pot*. In the 21st century media discourse, different vantages taken on the sociocultural phenomenon in the altered social context caused emergence of new nomina: *salad, mosaic, tapestry*, the semantics of which reflect the process of disintegration in American nation, though it is still the whole of diverse elements.

Evaluative modifications reflect alteration in evaluative characteristics of sociocultural stereotypes. These changes manifest in connotations of the nomina. For example, nomen *hoosier* that designates a sociocultural stereotype of Indiana dweller has changed its connotation from insult to that of respect: *Eventually it lost its meaning as an insult and was reclaimed by the people of Indiana as a point of pride*⁵⁴. From the end of the 19th century, the word *hoosier* was used to denote an unsophisticated and gullible person in the USA⁵⁵. At the beginning of the 20th itinerant agricultural workers that were in abundance in Indiana were called *hoosiers*. The word marked their low social status. The advances in economy of the state and local media that draw attention to this fact has changed the attitude toward Indiana dwellers and as the result an evaluative connotation of the word has changed.

Evaluative modifications of sociocultural stereotypes also manifest in predicates that represent stereotypes in media discourse. For example, *...a century ago, Asian-Americans were perceived as illiterate, undesirable, full of “filth and disease”... Asian-Americans is that they are smart, competent and hard-working*⁵⁶. Asian Americans were perceived as *undesirable* members of the society because they were *illiterate* and supposed to bring *disease*. Elevated by media, success of the representatives of Asian-American community has brought about evaluative modifications, represented in characterising predicates, e.g., *Asian Americans are industrious, law-abiding citizens*⁵⁷.

⁵³ J. Engle, ‘Do You Think the American Dream Is Real?’ *The New York Times*, 2019, February 12.

⁵⁴ K. Mettler, ‘Hoosier’ is now the official name for Indiana folk. But what does it even mean?’ *The Washington Post*, 2017, January 13.

⁵⁵ T. Dalzell, V. Terry, *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 2d ed., Routledge, 2013, p. 1178.

⁵⁶ A. Hassan, ‘Confronting Asian-American Stereotypes’, *The New York Times*, 2018, June 23.

⁵⁷ J. Guo, ‘The real reasons the U.S. became less racist toward Asian Americans’, *The Washington Post*, 2016, November 29.

Political rhetoric of public leaders can stimulate evaluative modifications of sociocultural stereotypes, for example, made by the former President Trump accusations of infecting Americans with COVID-19 Disease has changed the attitude to Asian Americans. They are described as not *law-abiding citizens*, but as *foreign threat: Asian American identity during the pandemic has become reduced to that of a foreign threat “carrying the virus that’s destroying our world”*⁵⁸. The phrase *carrying the virus that’s destroying our world* characterises Asian Americans as the world’s destructive force that deserve to be restrained.

Lack of new information about the referents of sociocultural stereotypes results in inactivation that manifests in a reduced occurrence of them in media discourse. For example, besides nomen *flapper*, sociocultural stereotype of a young and daring American woman of the 1920s enjoyed numerous nomina that appeared in accordance with different vantages, for example, *hooker* (a flapper, who despises hard word), *jeweler* (a flapper who collects fraternity pins), *pocket twister* (a flapper with expensive tastes), *weed* (a risk taking flapper), *polly* (an effusive flapper)⁵⁹.

Inactivation promotes disappearance of a sociocultural stereotype from media discourse. Pragmatic status of a nomen of sociocultural stereotype changes to that of a symbol of a certain period in the national history. For example, with the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, reference to the sociocultural stereotype of a young and daring American woman-flapper decreased. Inactivation led to disappearance of the stereotype and nomen *flapper* has become the symbol of the Roaring Twenties, the period of hedonistic morality, prosperity and conspicuous consumption.

The return of a disappeared sociocultural stereotype to media discourse is defined in our work as iteration (from Latin *iteratio* “repetition”⁶⁰). Iteration can be cyclic or partial. A cyclic iteration is the return of a sociocultural stereotype in the unchanged linguistic form of its nomen, for example, the disappeared in the 1990s sociocultural stereotype of a hipster returned to American media discourse in the 2000s.

A partial iteration is renewal of a socio-cultural stereotype with changes in its content or evaluative characteristics that manifest in its verbal representation. Partial iteration is observed in recurrence of nomination patterns. For example, the formation pattern of the recorded in 1927 nomen *preppy* and its doublet *preppie*, which name the sociocultural

⁵⁸ R. Wang, ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses to scapegoat’, *The California Aggie*, 2021, March 5.

⁵⁹ T. Dalzell, *Flappers to Rappers. American Youth Slang*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam Webster, 1996, p. 22.

⁶⁰ S. Handford, M. Herberg, Langenscheidt’s Pocket Latin Dictionary, 1966, p.181.

stereotype of young and affluent students⁶¹, was used for the subculture that rejected conventional values (*hippie*). The recorded in 1938 the nomen *prepster* in the meaning "a student of a private school preparing for university"⁶² disappeared in the the1960s. It returned to media discourse as nomen of the the 21st century stereotype of a subcultural group of preppies, who move to a hipster centred city and adopt certain hipster trends whilst retaining the preppy spirit⁶³.

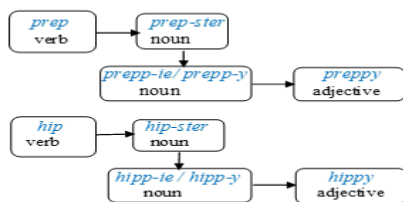


Figure 4. Partial iteration

Repeated nomina-formation patterns produce gender symmetrical pairs of sociocultural stereotypes. For example, metaphorical nomen *bimbo* emphasizes intellectual abilities of a child (*bimbo* in Italian “child”) and characterizes the category of women, who use their beauty for financial gain or career achievements. It recurs in nomen *himbo* to name the stereotype of an attractive man, who lives off a wealthy woman.

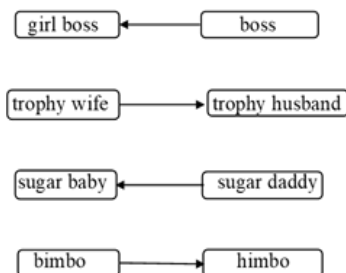


Figure 5. Iteration of nomina-formation patterns

⁶¹ T. Dalzell, V. Terry, 2013, p. 1774.

⁶² "Preppie", Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.

⁶³ "Preppster", Urban Dictionary, n.d.

Partial iteration is observed in changing images of the stereotype of American hero. Strength, courage, self-confidence, dedication, and industriousness make up the unchanging content of a sociocultural stereotype of American hero. First to be recognized as American heroes were settlers: *backwoodsmen, frontiersmen, pioneers*. Social, cultural and media factors have stimulated the appearance of new images of American hero: a hard-working individualist, known as *cowboy*, and mighty military people (*ranger, warrior*, etc.). On the demand of a contemporary American society for an outstanding leader of the present day, a new American hero (*scientist*) appeared in media discourse. All images of American hero coexist in a contemporary media discourse: *Founding Fathers, Pioneers, Frontiersmen and Patriots, regardless of trails and tribulations, have held fast and never lost the spirit of the day*⁶⁴.

Conclusion. The conception of media stereotyping

The objective of our work to detect changes in verbal representation of sociocultural stereotypes in American media discourse resulted in formulation of the conception of media stereotyping. Within the frame of the conception, a sociocultural stereotype is regarded as a verbalized cognitive structure that represents simplified and conventional image of individuals, groups and phenomena of a particular social environment. A word or a word combination that represent a sociocultural stereotype in media discourse is defined in the work as a nomen.

Sociocultural stereotypes are able to vary under the influence of social, cultural and media factors. The degree of stability of stereotypes depends on their significance for American society. Sociocultural stereotypes are structural elements of media discourse, in which they are formed and changed.

Media stereotyping is a dynamic cognitive and linguistic process that comprises the stages of activation, evaluative variation, content modification, inactivation, disappearance and iteration of sociocultural stereotypes. The development of verbalized sociocultural stereotypes of media discourse goes on in three directions:

- 1) activation that fortify sociocultural stereotypes in social consciousness and reflect in increased frequency of verbalized sociocultural stereotypes in American media discourse and appearance of nomina-formation paradigms;
- 2) inactivation, which leads to disappearance of sociocultural stereotypes from media discourse, though their nomina remain to denote a certain period in the history of the USA;

⁶⁴ 'Christmas Winter Frontiersman Coonskin Hat', Dow Chemical, 1941.

3) changing of sociocultural stereotypes that concerns reinterpretation of information about phenomena, groups or individuals of certain social environment manifest in appearance of new nomina or transformations of the existing, as well as in changing evaluative characteristics in predicative constructions.

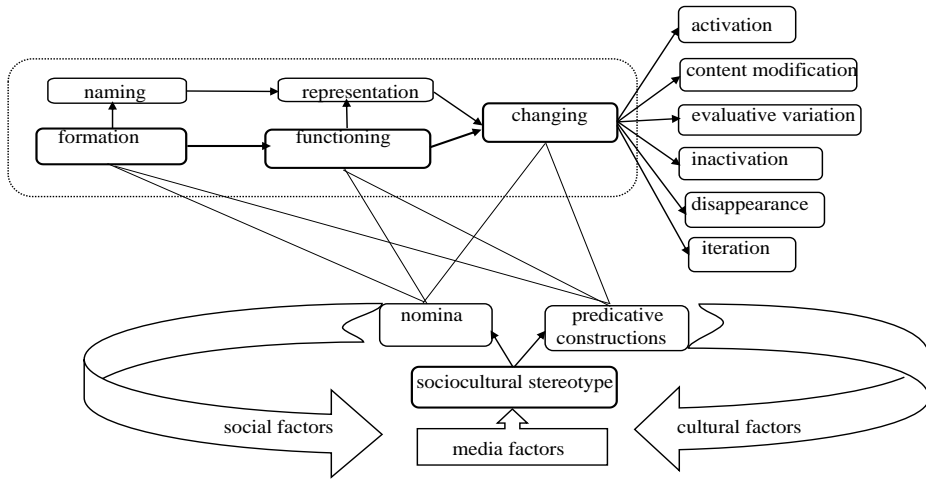


Figure 6. Dynamics of media stereotyping

The conception of media stereotyping contributes to the development of cognitive-linguistic approach to categorization in mass communication studies. The conception of media stereotyping can be applied in the research of trends in manipulative use of sociocultural stereotypes in media discourse and identity construction of political leaders in public speeches, as well as in discourse analysis and media genres studies.

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