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# Preventing stigma and dehumanization towards persons with alcoholic use disorder: A multicategorization proposition

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## INTRODUCTION

Persons affected by **Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)** are heavily **stigmatized** notably because they have to deal with **negative stereotypes** (e.g., unpredictably), especially when compared to other mental disorders<sup>1</sup>.

Recent models suggest that AUD patients could also be the victims of a **dehumanization** process<sup>2</sup>. Dehumanization occurs when people are viewed as having less **uniquely human traits (UH; e.g., intelligence)** or **human nature traits (HN; e.g., sensibility)**. This process can also be expressed through dementalization when people are seen as less able to be **agentic** (i.e., the capacity to do) or to **experience** life (i.e., the capacity to feel and sense)<sup>3</sup>.

Two strategies will be tested to prevent negative stereotypes and dehumanization: **multiple categorization** (i.e., emphasizing multiple group membership; e.g., through nationality, occupation) and **individuation** (i.e., emphasizing the individuating information; e.g., what a person enjoys doing)<sup>4</sup>.

## AIMS

1. Specifying **dimensions of both stereotypes and dehumanization** involved in stigma towards AUD patients
2. Testing **strategies** to prevent both processes

## METHOD AND MATERIAL

132 participants ( $M = 18.94$  yrs,  $SD = 1.14$ )

Paper-and-pencil survey:

- Attribution of stereotypic traits
- Attribution of uniquely human (UH) and human nature (HN) traits
- Attribution of agentism and experience

## RESULTS - Stereotypes and dehumanization of individuals with AUD

Individuals with AUD are:

**Negatively stereotyped**  $t(45) = 4.14, p < .001$

→ having low competence

**Dehumanized**  $t_s > 3.92, p_s < .001$

→ having low UH and HN traits

→ not very able to be agentic

No stereotype regarding warmth and experience has been demonstrated.

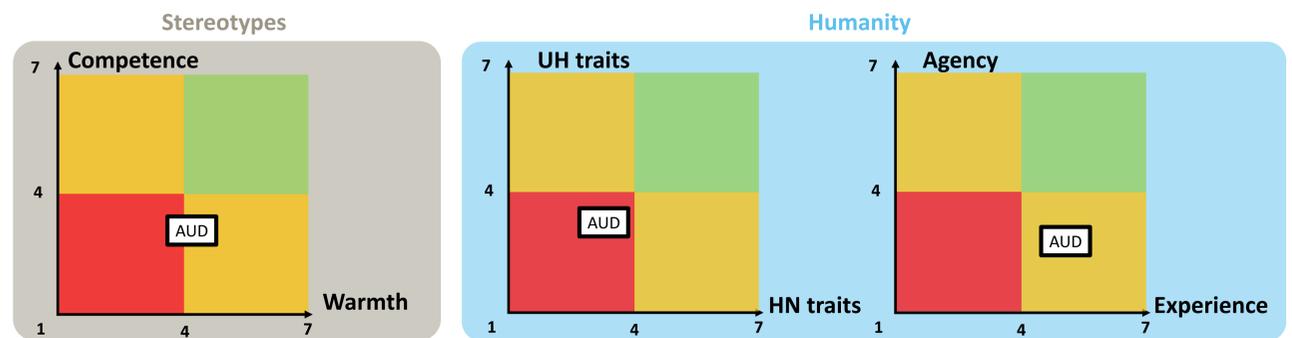


Figure 1. Schematic representation of AUD perception on each dimension

## RESULTS - Prevention

Multiple categorization improves the perception of AUD targets by:

- Increasing the perception of both their competence and their warmth ( $F(2,129) = 56.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .31$ )
- Increasing the perception of both their UH and HN traits ( $F(2,129) = 12.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$ )
- But neither on their experience nor their agentism ( $F_s < 1$ )

No improvement due to the adding of individuated information has been evidenced.

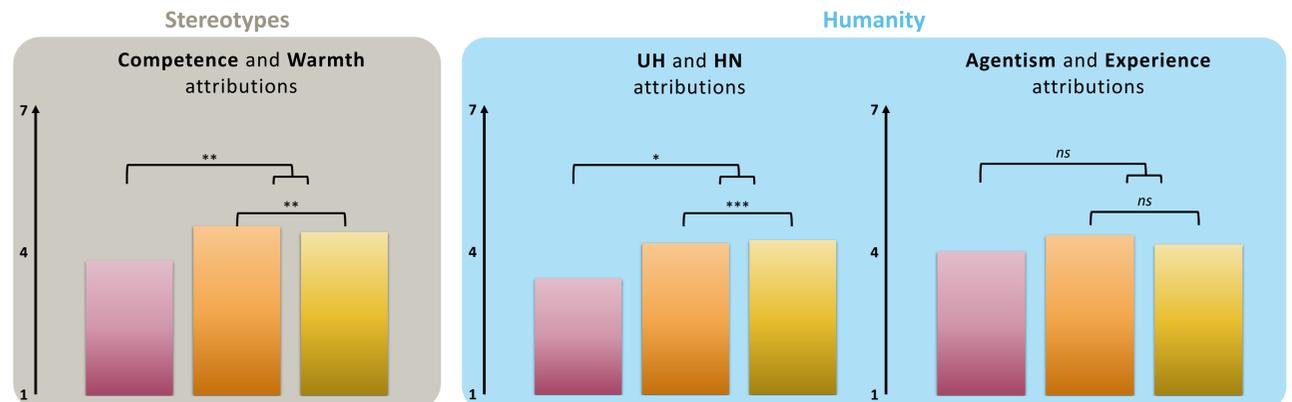


Figure 2. Computed means of each dimension attribution depending on the experimental condition

3 experimental conditions (between subjects) based on the presentation of the AUD target  
 SC: Stigmatising category only  
 MC: Stigmatising category + Multiple categorization  
 MCI: Stigmatising category + Multiple categorization + Individuating information

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  specifying significant Helmert contrasts

## CONCLUSION

Even among a **population aware** of the difficulties they face such as psychology students, AUD persons are **stigmatized**, especially on their competence. They are also **dehumanized** on the basis of their UH and HN traits and on agentism.

**Multiple categorization** is an effective strategy to **prevent dehumanization** and **negative stereotypes** in situations of **impression formation** and could be useful to implement in **teaching** and **clinical practice**. The added value of the individuating information needs further investigation.

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