The American Advertising Awards is proud to partner with the Unstereotype Alliance, a global coalition convened by UN Women with a mission to eliminate harmful stereotypes from advertising and media. The advertising industry is uniquely placed to help shape and reflect the way we see the world and each other. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the presence and representation of people portrayed in advertising is fair, empowering, and representative of our diverse society. 2020 highlighted systemic injustice and inequity across our nation. At the AAF, we are dedicated to driving inclusivity and equality for all. We believe the American Advertising Awards represent an opportunity to action positive social change through creativity. For this reason, we have introduced 'unstereotyped' judging criteria for the 2021 Awards season – a guideline for assessing award entries that serves to showcase, celebrate and drive creative work that is progressive, inclusive and empowering. As esteemed judges of the best and brightest, you have both a role and responsibility to guide and motivate content creation that is inclusive, empowering and a force for good. When we represent people in all their diversity, we are making a powerful contribution toward a more equal world.

About the Unstereotype Alliance

The Unstereotype Alliance is a thought and action platform that seeks to eradicate harmful stereotypes in media and advertising content. This global alliance of industry leaders seeks to use advertising as a force for good, driving positive change across the world. Convened by UN Women, the United Nations entity for Gender Equality, the Unstereotype Alliance contributes to empowering people in all their diversity - gender, race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, language, education, etc.

Understanding Stereotypes as a Barrier

Stereotypes are a pervasive and powerful barrier that stands between societies and equality. They hold people back, damage society and damage brands. Yet, we continue to see negative stereotypes reflected in content all over the globe. Confronting this in the heart of the creative process is a vital step in fighting inequalities of all kinds. Just as advertising influences buying behavior, it can help to shape social attitudes and beliefs, and therefore offers immense potential to drive positive change.

Though the history of advertising may demonstrate progress in the representation of men and women, there is much to be done.

Implicit biases play out in communications through stereotypes, which are a fixed set of general characteristics that some people believe represent a group of people or a thing (e.g., men are stronger than women, or women are better caregivers).

Examples of common stereotypes found in advertising include:

- Older characters portrayed as fragile, alone, or incompetent with technology
- Characters from ethnic communities represented as 'the studious or submissive Asian', 'the aggressive black woman', 'the 'spicy' Latino'.

- People of color rarely shown as characters who are intelligent, professional or in positions of authority.
- Women appearing most often in domesticated non-speaking roles and men as 'doofus' dads and macho men, or constantly gazing at women in a sexual way.

Unstereotyped judging criteria around the world

Awards shows set a benchmark for the stories told by the global creative community; they inspire the industry to aim higher and define what we know as creative brilliance.

In addition to the American Advertising Awards, The Unstereotype Alliance has successfully worked to implement 'Unstereotyped Judging Criteria in conjunction with other major advertising awards shows across the world including Cannes Lions, Dubai Lynx and Spikes Asia.

Unstereotype Alliance Judging Criteria

The Unstereotype Alliance '3Ps' Framework

This simple framework has been developed by the Unstereotype Alliance to develop and evaluate creative content for progressive portrayals of all people. The questions under each of the P's – Presence, Perspective and Personality - can serve as a checklist of considerations when evaluating entries.

Presence – Focuses on who is being featured in the ad

Many kinds of people tend to not be shown in communications at all; and to see your own image entirely erased in the culture that surrounds you is deeply disempowering.

Checklist:
- Who is portrayed in the communication? Who is the central character?
- Does the communication feature a range of people that are representative of the cultural and ethnic mix in the market? Consider gender, age, race, socio-economic status, body size, sexual orientation, religion, ability etc.
- Do the characters go beyond being a 'mannequin' for the product?
- Has the character been taken into consideration when placed amongst the context of the copy, clothing, positioning, naming etc.? Does the whole piece of work add up to a positive portrayal?

Perspective – Focus is about who is framing the narrative

Who seems to be directing the action? That is, who is the person whose perspective is represented?

Checklist:
- Do we see the personal experience and perspective of the character?
- Who is driving the narrative?
- Is there any objectification or sexualization?

- Is this work challenging outdated perspectives in society about people/ communities/ relationships/ norms?

Personality – Focus centers on the depth and agency of the character

Characters should have 3-dimensional personalities that feel authentic – funny, caring, strong, thoughtful, and respected.

Checklist:
- Do the characters come across as empowered and in control of their lives?
- Do the characters have 3-dimensional personalities? Are they funny, bold, eccentric, authoritative, etc.?
- Is beauty a dimension of personality rather than just about physical appearance and attraction?
- Is there a stereotypical interpretation of beauty? Tall, thin, fair for women, tall, macho and strong for men?

Thank you for assessing entries through an 'unstereotyped' lens. By honoring work not only for creativity, but its representation of the world in all its diversity, there is great potential to drive work that informs, inspires and empowers people all over the globe.