DECONSTRUCTING THE MEDIA

When audiences "consume" or read media messages, they have no control over the content (text) of the message. Instead, they only control the meaning (subtext) that they make from the message and how they might want to respond to it by making decisions or taking action.

We often use the word "text" to refer to text messaging, or text meaning "written words." In media jargon, "text" has a very different meaning. The text of any piece of media is what you actually see and/or hear. It can include visual images (photo or video), audio (sound, music, or speech) and written language, and even the arrangement or sequence of all these elements. Text can also refer to the result of media production itself like a TV episode, a newspaper, an advertisement, etc.

Subtext is the message underlying the text. It is your interpretation of a piece of media, the meaning you create or attach in the text in your own mind. While media makers (like advertisers or news reporters) often create texts that suggest particular subtexts, each person creates their own subtext (interpretation) based on their previous experiences, knowledge, attitude, and values. Thus, the subtext of a piece of media varies from one person to another.

| **Case Study**
 Magazine Ad: "Belo Men Skin Whitening"

  | The text of this message includes:
 – An image of a man flocked by three women in a bar or club location.
 – Words: "10% lighter, 100% more numbers." The word "lighter" has glow effect.
 – Words: "A little whitening makes a big difference."
 – Small image of Belo Men Whitening products

 Possible subtexts include:
 – Men who have lighter skin tone are more attractive to women.
 – Women easily give their phone numbers to good-looking men.
 – If you use Belo Men products, you will be whiter, thus more handsome.
 – Belo Men products can only lighten your skin tone by only 10%. |

DECONSTRUCTING THE MEDIA LESSON 1
Ang Tunay na Lalaki at Dalagang Pilipina: Exposing Gender Stereotypes

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to:
      Discuss characteristics of male and female stereotypes in our society
      Identify ways in which their own lives have been affected by these stereotypes
      Identify the aspects of these stereotypes that are related to violence

Key Questions:
      How do the media create our perceptions of masculinity and femininity?
      How do we combat gender stereotypes?

Activity 1: Tunay na Lalaki at Dalagang Pilipina
Divide the class between boys and girls. Assign a cartolina paper for each group. Boys write "Ang Tunay na Lalaki ay…" while girls write "Ang Dalagang Pilipina ay…". Ask students what it means to act like a man/woman? What words or expectations come to mind? If answers are slow to come, make specific prompts by asking what does it mean to "act like a man/woman" in sports, business, on a date, in married life, etc.) While doing the activity, play (OPM) songs that reinforce gender stereotypes like "Humanap ka ng Pangit", "Jumbo Hotdog", "Huwag kang Pabebe", "Macho Papa", "Papa Cologne", "Macho Man", "Mr. Suave", "Legs", etc. After listing down, ask the students to box it.

Teacher says: We are going to call this the "Tunay na Lalaki" and "Dalagang Pilipina" stereotype. Inside the box is a list of attitudes and behaviors that boys/girls are expected to adopt in the process of becoming in our society. Men and women are not born this way; these roles are learned.

Processing Questions: Where we learn stereotypes
o Where do we learn these gender roles? (When students respond TV or movies, ask for specific examples to list)
o Who are the other people influencing our learning of gender roles? (Aside from media, let students consider family, friends, school or church)

Processing questions: How stereotypes are reinforced
o What names or put-downs are boys/girls called then they don't fit or if the step out of the box? (Allow students to be blunt with their slang in this educational context.) Let the students write these words outside the box.
o How do these labels and names reinforce the stereotype box?
o How does it feel when we are called these names?
o What do you think the person who is using these put-downs is feeling?

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Processing Questions: Evaluating gender stereotypes
o   How many boys in the class have never cried? Does this mean those of you who didn't put up your hands are wimps or nerds?
o   What about the girls? How many wants to be passive and delicate?

Teacher says: In fact, we are all real people and we can experience the full range of emotions, including happiness and sadness, love and anger. The bottom line is that stereotypes are destructive because they limit our potential. Yet how many guys do we know who try too hard to act like the stereotype without even a second thought? Boys are not born to be violent, or have unhealthy attitudes towards girls. This is not to say that it's wrong for guys to like sports or fix cars or for girls to enjoy cooking.

The problem is that we are told that we must perform these roles in order to fit in. It is important for all of us to make our own decisions about what we do. Belief in stereotypes takes away our personal choices in determining our own interests and skills. It also discourages men from participating in "women's work" (such as flower arranging) and restricts women from choosing roles that are traditionally "male" (such as engineering and football).

Activity 2: KathNiel and AlDub
To further the discussion on gender stereotypes in media, it is best to look into some prominent and familiar case studies. Show video clips of KathNiel and/or Aldub and discuss with the students their ideas about the power of celebrities and of the media to impact lives of media consumers.

| **Case Study 1**
Kathniel (Kathryn Bernardo and Daniel Padilla)

 | One of the most bankable love teams of ABS-CBN
Have starred in multiple TV and movie projects like "Pangako Sa'yo", "Got to Believe in Magic", "She's Dating A Gangster", "La Luna Sangre"
Endorse multiple brands like KFC, Bench, Pepsi, Oishi, Unisilver, Nescafé
Have huge following; fans are called KathNiel
Play traditional couple roles (i.e. rich-poor, bad boy-smart/naïve girl, prince charming-damsel in distress) |

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Case Study 2 AlDub (Alden Richards and Maine "Yaya Dub" Mendoza) 	Breakout loveteam of 2015 Starred in "Kalyeserye" of GMA-7's longest-running noon show "Eat Bulaga" Have huge following; fans are called AlDub Nation "Kalyeserye", or sometimes interchangeably referred as AlDub, depicts traditional courtship and other Filipino values—pointed as the apparent reason behind the show's success

Processing Questions:
- o What other gender stereotypes can you think of when watching these two love teams?
- o How do Kathniel and AlDub help in promoting gender stereotypes?
- o How do you react to the gender stereotypes they embody, whether directly or indirectly?
- o To what extent are celebrities responsible as role models to the youth?

DECONSTRUCTING THE MEDIA LESSON 2
The Language of Persuasion: Examining Ads

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to:
> Understand how media messages create meaning
> Recognize and name the "tools of persuasion" used in advertisements
> Evaluate media messages based on their own experiences, beliefs and values

Key Questions:
> How do the media create our perceptions of masculinity and femininity?
> How do we combat gender stereotypes?

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Activity 1: Learning the Basic Persuasion Techniques
The goal of most media messages is to persuade the audience to believe or do
something. They employ a variety of techniques to grab our attention, to establish
credibility and trust, to stimulate desire, and to motivate us to act (buy, vote, give
money, etc.) Learning the language of persuasion is an important media literacy skill as
it will help you make your own decisions instead of blind obedience.

15 Common Persuasion Techniques used in Advertising

Distribute advertisements cut from newspapers and magazines, and ask students to list
the products in order, according to the appeal of the ads. Afterwards create a chart
showing how students rated each product.

Discuss with the class each of the following persuasion techniques.

Processing Questions:
o   Which techniques were most effective? Which were least effective?
o   What factors such as gender, geographic location, age, or educational attainment,
    might have influenced the effectiveness of each technique?

Technique	Description	Example
1. Association	Link the product, service, or idea with something already liked or desired by the target audience, such as fun, pleasure, beauty, success, wealth, etc.	
2. Bandwagon	Show lots of people using the product, implying that "everyone is doing it"; and since no one likes being left out or left behind, expect the targets to "jump the bandwagon"	
3. Beautiful People	Use good-looking models (who may also be celebrities) to attract attention	
4. Bribery	Promise to give something else, like a discount, a rebate, a coupon, or a "free" gift, to persuade them to buy the product	
5. Celebrities	People tend to pay attention to famous people. That's why they're famous! So make them endorse a product—implicitly or explicitly—to grab the audiences' attention	

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6. Expert Opinion	Lending their credibility to the product, service or idea being sold, experts like doctors, professors or chefs give advice about things people don't usually know	
7. Fear	Opposite of Association, it uses something disliked or feared by the intended audience (like bad breath, failure, rejection) to promote a "solution"	
8. Humor	When we laugh, we feel good. Make them laugh and then connect that good feeling to the product	
9. Plain Folks	Opposite of celebrities, this techniques works by using "regular persons" rather than an intellectual or highly-paid celebrity. Often used to sell everyday products like laundry soap	
10. Repetition	Within an ad, repeat words, sounds or images to reinforce the main point	
11. Flattery	People like to be praised and we tend to believe people we like so flatter them by saying things like "You deserve it." "You work hard for a living."	
12. New	People love new things and new ideas; because we tend to believe they're better than old things and old ideas	
13. Nostalgia	Opposite of New, invoke a time when life was simpler and quality was supposedly better. Common with old brands who want to trace their legacy	
14. Simple solution	Life is complicated. People are complex. Problems often have many causes, and they're not easy to solve. Ignore this and propose a simple solution	
15. Timing	Sometimes a media message is persuasive not because of what it says, but because of when it's delivered. Just think of Christmas-themed ads	

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Activity 2: Bimpo Improv Activity

Materials: white towel or *bimpo*, storyboard worksheet (sample on the last page)

Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students. Give each group a storyboard worksheet. Each group will be designing a 30-second TV commercial to sell a white towel or a *bimpo*. They need to come up with a name for their product, decide what characters will be in the commercial (if any), what the background and setting will be like, how the "story" will unfold, what the voiceover will say, what kind of music will be playing, etc. They will fill out all of this on their storyboard worksheet, sketching a rough visual for each "scene."

Explain, however, that each group will be designing their commercial for a different target audience. You should not announce the group's target audience aloud – but instead, either write it on their storyboard form or tell each group quietly what their target audience is. The basic target audiences that work well are:

- infants and toddlers (which could be targeted to parents to buy the product)
- housewives
- lower to middle class working male
- teenagers (which could be separate groups for males and females)
- senior citizens or adults age 55 and up
- elite or the *sosyal* crowd
- other possibilities: athletes, professionals (doctors, veterinarians, car mechanics, etc.)

*For a large group or class, you could assign the same target audience to two different groups to see how similar or different the media constructions are.

Aside from the varying target markets, device a way to ask each group to use different persuasive techniques. Let them defend afterwards why they chose to utilize the particular techniques. Give the students (participants) 10-15 minutes to design their commercials. Have each group start by giving the name of their product, and also the setting of scene (if it is particular).

When the group is finished, ask the other participants to guess the target audience, giving their "evidence" from the commercial. Discuss the effectiveness of the commercial in targeting that specific audience, and if appropriate, ways that it could be improved to better target that audience. If there is time, and if appropriate, discuss some of the stereotypes that showed up in the commercials (gender, age, etc.), and why commercials so often rely on stereotypes to get across their messages in a short amount of time.

Processing Questions:
o   What techniques are used to attract my attention?
o   What conventions of storytelling or symbolism are used in this message?
o   What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message?
o   How is this message similar and different from others with similar content?

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