

## MML Concepts & Understandings

Students of media literacy are taught the critical thinking skills and tools of critical inquiry necessary to make sense of a variety of media. In addition to analysis, students of critical media literacy may also participate in the process of production, which includes active, hands-on learning through the creation of their own media texts. Young people who learn critical media literacy through MML's curriculum participate in learning through the following four concepts:

### Construction and Deconstruction

Media are constructions; they are created by people/corporations in order to share a message

Media messages construct reality; our reality is shaped, in part, by media

Media messages construct culture; culture is shaped, in part by media

The content of media influence social and cultural beliefs

Media are constructed locally, nationally and globally and each possess unique qualities

A breadth of interpretations can be made by individual agents drawn from their social experiences

Media use persuasive techniques to convince audiences to value the message; each medium uses tools of persuasion unique to its motivating intention

Mass media encourage audiences to solve problems through consumption

Media can be deconstructed by asking the following questions:

Who produced the media and for what purpose?

Who is targeted and who is left out ?

What are the explicit and implicit messages?

What tools of persuasion are used?

What perspectives/issues are included/left out?

What do the implicit/explicit messages teach?

### Audience

Media are made for audiences; actual audiences are unknown

We can make sense of the audience through the following questions:

Who is the intended audience? How is this known?

According to the dominant message, what is the "correct" response to this text?

How should the audience behave?

What other response might be available?

Audiences can be fans of media and find pleasure in media and do interpret media in a variety of ways

Audiences are historical, local, national, global and come with unique biographies

By studying the media of other eras, audiences learn about the culture of other historical time periods

By analyzing their reactions to media messages, audiences learn about their own values, prejudices, hopes and dreams

By studying the media of other countries, audiences learn about the culture of other countries

The brain processes different media and technologies in different ways; children may be especially affected by media because of their developing brains

The amount (quantity) and intensity (quality) of exposure may contribute to media effect

### Industry and Context

Media are powerful

Production, ownership and distribution of mass media are controlled by a small number of multinational corporations with commercial interests; the corporate media's main goal is profit

Stories both shape and frame our understanding of the world

Media present value statements and mass media perpetuate dominant ideology

Mass media messages and production can be approached through the following categories:

*Gender:*

Gender is socially constructed

Cultural ideals of gender are constructed

Physical appearance is often valued more than development of self

Girls/women often exist for male pleasure and her often sexualized  
Male dominance is normalized; boys/men are often hyper-masculine and seek feminine adoration

*Race/ethnicity:*

Bodies of color are often negated  
Light-skinned bodies of color are more prevalent and are normalized as better than dark skinned bodies of color  
'Ethnic' actors are often expected to play roles that do not match their race/ethnicity  
White, 'non-ethnic' bodies possess unearned privilege

*Socioeconomic class:*

Lower- and working-class bodies are often negated  
The quantity and ratio of lower-, working-, middle- and upper class bodies are often misrepresented  
The middle- and upper-classes are regularly rewarded  
Wealth is glorified in mass media

*Sexuality/sexual identities:*

Representation and production reinforce heteronormativity  
LGBTQ bodies and concerns are often negated or ignored  
LGBTQ bodies and concerns are often criminalized or victimized  
Discussions of sexual orientation are mostly absent

*Physical ability and mental health:*

Physical, mental and emotional abilities are represented in ways that silence those who do not abide by or fit into 'normal' categories  
The quantity and ratio of mental health and ability are often misrepresented  
Mass media encourage violence as a means to solve problems:  
Good and evil are often presented as absolutes without complexities  
Violence is often sanitized and without consequence in the mass media

*Nationalism/American dominance*

Representation and production contribution to our thinking of "the other"  
Globalization and transnational communication are represented and produced in ways that reinforce American hegemony

**Distribution and Production**

The multinational corporations that own and control most media production and distribution have power in constructing our reality and culture

As traditional media add digital distribution models, there are new, unexplored consequences

There is an environmental impact to technology production, distribution, and use

Access to technology influences media production

Media producers use production techniques that strive to create an emotional response; media have a strong impact when they foster an emotional response

Media literacy students produce their own media to apply practical, hands-on skills that complement and enhance theoretical and analytical learning

Audiences can be inspired to create their own media by deconstructing existing media