Stereotypes & Agency
Agency

The term refers to:
the capacity of social agents to make choices and act within the system constraints.

The term is used as:
an alternative to ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty’ which imply that social subjects can escape power structures and dominant ideologies.
Psychology & Cognitive sciences

Broad definition: Pictures in our head that condense, schematize and simplify our conception of the world. (Lippmann, 1922)

Narrow definition: Conventional ideas of people who belong to certain groups (race, nation, profession, class, gender, etc.). (Schweinitz, 2011 and Perkins, 1979)
Media Stereotypes

Film studies, litterature & art

**Broad definition:** Recurrent patterns of narration, plot structure, acting, visual style, music, etc. (Schweinitz, 2011)

**Narrow definition:** Types of characters that are defined by a limited set of characteristics and do not evolve throughout the story (Dyer, 1993)
Stereotypes

**PROS**

• Facilitate cognition and communication (cognitive relief)
• Reduce the buzzing confusion of the world (simplification)
• Build consensus among communities
• Create and maintain the group identities

**CONS**

• Standardize our perceptions of groups and people
• Stabilize what is changing
• Erase nuances and differences
• Lead to judgements and intolerance
• Replace critical thinking
• Align our beliefs with dominant ideologies
Media Stereotypes

**PROS**

- Help the audience to make sense of media content and understand the story
- Increase chances to make profit with a production

**CONS**

- Standardize productions into ready-made formulae
- Homogenize culture
- Make viewers more intolerant towards innovation
Naturalization of stereotypes

Repetition

Conservation zone
(potential of denaturalization)

Equilibrium zone
(potential of naturalization)

Innovation zone
(potential of denaturalization)

Difference

Ref. Trépanier-Jobin, 2013
Denaturalization of stereotypes strategy #1

- Repetition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation zone</th>
<th>Equilibrium zone</th>
<th>Innovation zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(potential of denaturalization)</td>
<td>(potential of naturalization)</td>
<td>(potential of denaturalization)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref. Trépanier-Jobin, 2013
Denaturalization of stereotypes strategy #2

- Repetition
  - Conservation zone (potential of denaturalization)
- Difference
  - Equilibrium zone (potential of naturalization)
  - Innovation zone (potential of denaturalization)

Ref. Trépanier-Jobin, 2013
Denaturalization of stereotypes strategy #3

- Repetition
- Conservation zone (potential of denaturalization)
- Equilibrium zone (potential of naturalization)
- Innovation zone (potential of denaturalization)

Ref. Trépanier-Jobin, 2013


