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# MEDEA



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**DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY TO DEBUNK GENDER-RELATED MEDIA  
MANIPULATION AND FAKE NEWS**

**PROJECT N. 2024-1-LV01-KA210-ADU-000243248**

***Jelgava, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025***

***Meta-Level Critical Thinking***

***Antonia Castellani***



# GET TO KNOW ME BETTER

## BACKGROUND

- Degree in Ancient Literatures/Archeology

## COMPETENCES

- Relational Skills
- Leadership, Entrepreneurship
- Project/Program Management

## WHAT I DO

- Trainer on Soft Skills
- Consultant for companies
- Program Manager
- Researcher on training methods
- Owner of SKILL UP



**KEEP IN TOUCH!**



**ANTONIA  
CASTELLANI**



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# META-LEVEL CRITICAL THINKING

## LET'S START WITH A QUESTION

Have you ever argued with someone online, felt 100% right...  
and then discovered that the information you used was  
misleading—or even fake?

## WHY DOES THAT HAPPEN?

Today we explore how critical thinking at a **deeper level** can help us stop  
being manipulated and start thinking with more clarity and responsibility



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# CRITICAL THINKING

## WHAT IS IT?

**Critical Thinking** is the ability to analyze and evaluate information objectively. It helps us assess arguments, identify logical fallacies, and question sources.

## EXAMPLE

If you read an article about gender-based violence, critical thinking asks: *Is this source reliable? What's the evidence?*



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# META-LEVEL CRITICAL THINKING ASKS A DIFFERENT QUESTION:

*How am I thinking right now?*

It is the reflection **on our own thinking process**—how we form judgments, what assumptions we carry, and what cognitive biases may influence us.

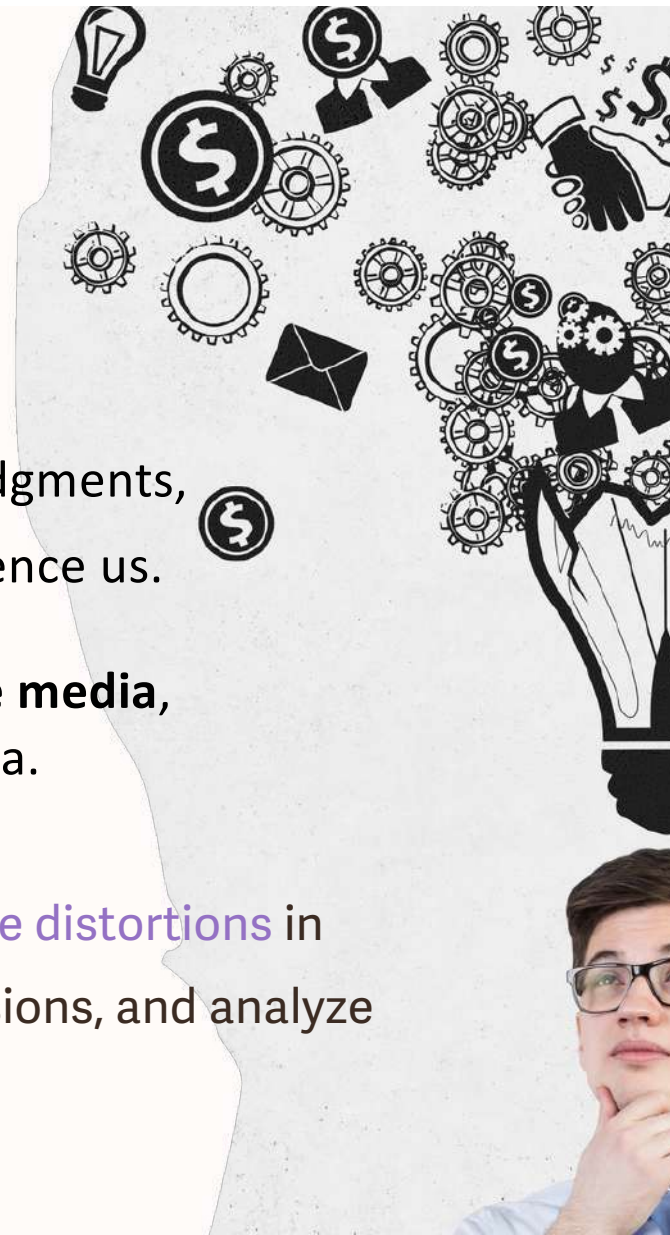
This level of thinking is what enables us not just to **question the media**, but to **question ourselves** while we engage with the media.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

It helps recognize **biases** and **cognitive distortions** in the media, make more informed decisions, and analyze information objectively.



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# CRITICAL THINKING AND MEDIA

## MEDIA LITERACY

### GOAL:

Helps recognize media manipulations, such as disinformation and fake news, often used to perpetuate gender stereotypes.

Teach people to think critically when interacting with media, avoiding being influenced by distorted messages.



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# COGNITIVE BIASES

## WHAT ARE COGNITIVE BIASES?

**SYSTEMATIC DISTORTIONS IN HOW WE INTERPRET AND  
PROCESS INFORMATION.**

## WHY ARE THEY DANGEROUS?

Biases make us make wrong decisions based on  
prejudices, not objective data.



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# COMMON TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES

## Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias refers to the tendency to **search for, interpret, and remember information that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs** or theories, while giving less consideration to information that contradicts them.

This cognitive bias often leads to the reinforcement of misconceptions and can hinder objective thinking.



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# CONFIRMATION BIAS

## EXAMPLE

You believe that women often **exaggerate** when reporting abuse. When you see a news story of a false allegation, you share it—ignoring ten other cases of proven violence.

### EFFECT:

It reinforces your belief and dismisses the broader reality of gender-based violence.



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# COMMON TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES

## Anchoring Bias

Anchoring bias occurs when individuals **rely too heavily on the first piece of information they receive** (the "anchor") when making decisions or judgments.

Subsequent judgments are then made in relation to this initial reference point, even if it is irrelevant or incomplete.



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# ANCHORING BIAS

## EXAMPLE

The first line of a news report says “**The woman had a history of mental health issues.**” Even if later the report explains that the violence was severe, your judgment is already anchored on that first impression.

**EFFECT:** It skews your interpretation of the case.



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# COMMON TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES

## Halo effect Bias

The halo effect is a cognitive bias where our **overall impression** of a person, brand, or entity influences our judgments about their specific traits.

For instance, if someone is perceived as **likable or attractive**, we may also assume they possess other positive qualities, even without evidence.



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# HALO EFFECT BIAS

## EXAMPLE

A famous actor is accused of harassment. Because he's charismatic and well-spoken, you assume he must be innocent.

**EFFECT:** You ignore evidence because of your positive impression of the person.



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# COMMON TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES

## Avaibility heuristic

The availability heuristic is a mental shortcut where people **judge the likelihood of an event** based on **how easily examples come to mind**. This bias can lead to overestimating the frequency of events that are more memorable or emotionally charged, such as violent incidents or dramatic news stories, while underestimating less sensational events.



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# AVAILABILITY EURISTIC

## EXAMPLE

You frequently see dramatic reports about women lying or manipulating situations. These cases are rare, but they are memorable.

**EFFECT:** You begin to overestimate how common false accusations are, and underestimate real abuse cases.



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# THE **IMPACT** OF **COGNITIVE BIASES** ON **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

## **MINIMIZATION OF VIOLENCE**

Biases can make us see gender-based violence as less serious or as a “family problem.”

## **VICTIM BLAMING**

Some biases make us see the victim as “provocative” or responsible for the violence.



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# CRITICAL THINKING AND DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA

## DEFINITION

Analyzing and dismantling stereotypical representations of men and women in the media to challenge rigid and unjust norms.

## GOAL

Educate people to recognize stereotypes in media content.



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# GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA

## 1. WOMEN ARE EMOTIONAL AND WEAK

Often, women are portrayed as less credible when reporting violence.

## 2. MEN ARE NATURALLY AGGRESSIVE

Male violent behavior is often justified as "part of their nature."

## 3. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS A PRIVATE ISSUE

Media often treat violence as a family conflict, not a societal crime.



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# HOW TO DECONSTRUCT STEREOTYPES

## WHAT IS DECONSTRUCTION?

- **Recognizing** gender stereotypes in the media (e.g., women as weak, men as aggressive).
- **Analyzing** how these stereotypes influence our perception of reality.
- **Debunking** preconceived notions and promoting more inclusive and balanced views.

## THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING

- Creating **new narratives** that do not confine men and women to rigid roles
- Promoting a **more equitable view** of gender-based violence, treating it with the seriousness it deserves.





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# HALO EFFECT BIAS

## EXAMPLES

A famous actor is accused of harassment. Because he's charismatic and well-spoken, you assume he must be innocent.





# REVERSE-HALO EFFECT BIAS

## EXAMPLES



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Daily Mail

Modifica immagine



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Why can't Meghan Markle keep her hands off her bump? Experts tackle the question | Daily Mail Online

Visita >



HELLO! magaz...

Modifica immagine



All the times Kate Middleton lovingly cradled her baby bump | HELLO!



# AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

**“Men get killed by women too,  
but numbers are not comparable”**

Article published by **Il Sole 24 Ore**, the most relevant financial Italian newspaper, the day after a 16yo girl was killed by her ex boyfriend.



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**Il Sole 24 ORE** ✓

28 giugno 2021 · 🌐

Anche gli uomini vengono uccisi dalle donne ma i numeri non sono confrontabili



ILSOLE24ORE.COM

**Il “maschicidio” in Italia e i suoi numeri**

Anche gli uomini vengono uccisi dalle donne ma i numeri non sono confrontabili







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