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The Impact of Sexual Orientation and Non-Traditional Identity Content on the Adoption of Gender-Specific Attitudes

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation Summary

Doctoral School of Psychology

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The doctoral candidate's list of publications

Publications cited in the doctoral dissertation:

Kántás, É. M. (2022). Összezárva vagy együttműködve? A COVID-19 krízis hatása az együtt élő, heteroszexuális párok munkamegosztására. In Kengyel, G. (Ed.), *NEM egyenlő—Nemi alapú egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon*. Oriold és társai. (pp. 349-372)

Kántás, É. M. & Kovacs, M. (2022). The role of sexual orientation and the perceived threat posed by men in the acceptance of sexism. Acta Psychologica, 230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103749

Kántás, É. M., Faragó, L., & Kovacs, M. (2022). If you can dream it, you can do it!—The role of sexual orientation in preferences toward boys' and girls' career orientation and gendered behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 52*(2), 305-325. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2789

Kántás, É. M. (2022). A nők tekintélyszerepeihez való viszonyulás a szexuális orientáció és a szexista hiedelmek tükrében. *Alkalmazott Pszichológia, 22*(3), 35-56. https://doi.org/10.17627/ALKPSZICH.2022.3.35

Other publications:

Kántás, É. M., Faragó, L., & Kovacs, M. (2022). Ha meg tudod álmodni, meg tudod csinálni! In Kengyel, G. (Ed.), *NEM egyenlő - Nemi alapú egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon.* Oriold és társai. (pp. 59–104)

1. Theoretical background

The goal of my dissertation was to examine the role of sexual orientation and non-traditional identity content in relation to gender-specific attitudes. Specifically, I wanted to investigate the impact of sexual orientation and non-traditional identity content on the level of perceived threat, fear of social backlash, acceptance of different gender ideologies (i.e., ambivalent sexism, ambivalence towards men, modern sexism, and neosexism) and attitudes (i.e., social role attitudes and liberal feminist attitudes), as well as on the acceptance of women's authority roles and engagement with collective action for gender equality, while taking into account the influence of the social atmosphere and the perceived stability of the gender hierarchy. I conducted most of my studies in Hungary, where support for traditional gender roles is high (Scharle, 2015), the level of gender equality still lags far behind that of Western European countries (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2022), and sexual minorities suffer severe disadvantages (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association [ILGA], 2020). Even though most studies were conducted in a Hungarian context, my aim was to assess general social-psychological dynamics that can be generalised over the border of Hungary.

The antecedents of gender inequalities

Gender roles, stereotypes, and expectations

Understanding the complexity of gender inequalities requires a deep dive into the underlying attitudes and ideologies perpetuating these imbalances. Central to this is the concept of gender essentialism, which posits that gender is biologically determined, and thus, gender characteristics are unchangeable (Gelman, 2003; Smiler & Gelman, 2008). However, contemporary research challenges these essentialist views, suggesting that they often serve to justify societal inequalities rather than merely describe gender differences (Fine, 2010; Joel, 2012; Hyde, 2014). That is why, to highlight the socially constructed aspects of male and female roles and challenge the notion of inherent male-female differences, the 1970s feminist movement popularised the term 'gender' (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). This has led to a shift in understanding gender disparities, since while gender essentialism emphasises biological differences, gender role theory suggests that gender inequalities are the result of the interaction of social structures and biological differences (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Diekman, 2003). For instance, societal expectations of motherhood can hinder women's career progress,

as society still views them as primary caregivers, leading to disadvantageous assumptions about their commitment to work.

Gender stereotypes further compound these issues. These cultural beliefs consider different behaviours appropriate for women and men (Ellemers, 2018). Stereotypes can be descriptive (characterising typical behaviours), prescriptive (dictating how people of different genders should behave), or proscriptive (indicating how they shouldn't behave). Violations of these stereotypes can result in backlash (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006; Rudman et al., 2012). In addition, gender stereotypes influence the perception of the competencies of women and men in relation to different occupations; for example, due to a perceived lack of aptitude (Carli et al., 2016; Diekman et al., 2017), women are often excluded from fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Furthermore, the gender norms that we acquire during early socialisation play a key role in maintaining gender inequalities (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). These norms, reflecting broader societal power imbalances, are reinforced by institutions and social interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Liberal feminism, therefore, posits that changing these norms is key to achieving gender equality.

Attitudes towards Women and Men

Gender norms and stereotypes shape attitudes towards women and men on the one hand, and strengthen the power imbalance and perpetuate the patriarchal system on the other. Sexism, a primary tool in maintaining these imbalances, encompasses gender stereotypes and attitudes that dictate male-female interactions (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Ridgeway, 2011). While old-fashioned sexism is overt and easily recognisable, newer forms of sexism, such as ambivalent sexism, modern sexism, and neosexism, are more subtle and harder to detect.

Ambivalent sexism includes hostile and benevolent sexism. Although both serve to maintain the patriarchal system, they do so in different ways. Hostile sexism views women as trying to control men, and it 'punishes' women who reject subordinate roles. In contrast, benevolent sexism portrays women as needing protection and cherishing, and it 'rewards' those women who conform to traditional gender role expectations (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). This differs from modern sexism, which denies the existence of discrimination against women and attributes the underrepresentation of women in certain roles to their personal choices or incompetence (Swim et al., 1995). And neosexism, an extreme form of modern sexism, views women's rights as detrimental to men and advocates that women and men compete with each other on an equal basis (Tougas et al., 1995). Ambivalent attitudes towards men, similar to ambivalent sexism, include hostile and benevolent attitudes.

This is based on that although women may resent men because of their dominant status, but due to heterosexual intimacy, they also endow men with apparently positive qualities, such as being perceived as chivalrous (Glick & Fiske, 1999). That is, hostile attitudes towards men result from resentment of male power, while benevolent attitudes result from interdependence between the sexes.

Sexual orientation also plays a role in these dynamics. Gay men and lesbian women, as sexual minorities, face stigmatisation for not conforming to traditional—heteronormative—gender role expectations. Therefore, in order to reclaim the privileges associated with their dominant group membership (male), gay men may also adopt traditionally masculine attitudes, such as hostile sexism, in order to distance themselves from feminine stereotypes of gay men (Murgo et al., 2017). In addition, lesbian women are at a double disadvantage due to their gender and sexual orientation, which can cause them to have significant resentment towards men who embody the patriarchal system.

Social atmosphere

The social atmosphere significantly influences the emergence and persistence of sexist beliefs, and it plays pivotal roles in shaping factors such as the perceived (or, in the case of men, recognised) threat by the dominant group, the fear of social backlash, and the perceived stability of the gender hierarchy. For example, the resentment of women towards the patriarchal system arises from the socioeconomic and political threats posed by the dominant group (that is, men). Realistic threats, based on the realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966), arise from competition for resources considered to be limited, while symbolic threats relate to valuing masculine traits and roles over feminine ones (Stephan et al., 2000). Moreover, sexual minorities, especially in gender-traditional societies like Hungary, face discrimination on a daily basis, which leads gay people to feel threatened (Berán, 2011; Karsay & Virág, 2015). Institutional-level discrimination further exacerbates this problem (Takács & Szalma, 2019). Furthermore, people who defy gender norms face social and economic backlash. For example, women advocating for equality are perceived as less competent (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), and men supporting gender equality are seen as less masculine (Croft et al., 2015). Such fears, rooted in potential ostracisation, impact not only individuals but also concerns for their children (Rudman et al., 2013). Therefore, fear of backlash, too, hinders gender equality progress.

2. Research questions

My empirical work aims to address the following research questions:

1. Do straight men increase their contribution to household chores and childcare tasks in exceptional circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when the burden of non-paid labour increases significantly? Can non-traditional gender attitudes or changes in circumstances (e.g. telecommuting) lead to a fairer distribution of household and childcare tasks and thereby challenge deeply entrenched gender roles?
2. What role does sexual orientation play in the support of ambivalent attitudes towards women and men and in the level of perceived (or, in the case of men: recognised) threat by the dominant group? How does the experience or recognition of the threat posed by the dominant group relate to the ambivalent attitudes of people of different sexual orientations towards women and men?
3. How does sexual orientation shape (prospective) parents' attitudes regarding their children's gendered behaviour and preferences? What role do modern sexism, fear of backlash, and the perceived stability of gender hierarchy play in this interplay?
4. How do various overt and covert forms of sexism (ambivalent and neosexism) shape attitudes towards women in authority roles? How does sexual orientation modify these attitudes, and is there an interaction with the perceived threat by the dominant group?
5. How do factors like sexual orientation and experiences of discrimination influence people's willingness to engage in collective action for gender equality? Which gender-specific attitudes promote or hinder the willingness to collective action in traditional and progressive societies?

I conducted five correlational and one experimental study to answer these research questions.

3. Study 1 – Chained together or cooperate? The effect of the COVID-19 crisis on couples' division of labour

In the first study (Kántás, 2022a), I investigated how gender roles and norms exacerbate the disadvantage of women during an extraordinary event such as the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the increased burden due to the closure of childcare and educational facilities (Farré et al., 2020; WEF, 2021). I also examined whether this extraordinary event,

which significantly affected the lives of families, could loosen gender roles. I aimed to explore the dynamics of men's involvement in household and childcare duties during the COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown in Hungary, where gender-traditional attitudes are prevalent (Scharle, 2015). Specifically, I sought to determine if men's contributions to household chores and childcare increased during the lockdown, hypothesising that household contributions might remain static due to deep-rooted gender norms, but there might be a significant uptick in their childcare participation due to evolving spousal expectations (Makay & Spéder, 2018).

I tested my hypotheses using computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI), including 330 straight men and women altogether and assessed the division of household and childcare tasks before and during the COVID-19 lockdown. The proportion of how participants estimated their own and their partner's contributions to specific house chores and childcare duties before the pandemic and during the lockdown and the level at which they endorsed liberal feminist attitudes and traditional gender roles were measured. The study also took into account the changes in participants' and their partners' office working hours.

Women reported performing a larger share of household tasks than their partners both prior to the pandemic and during the COVID-19 lockdown, while men felt they shared these duties equally. However, neither women nor men reported an increase in men's contribution to household chores during the closures. This can be explained by the fact that traditional gender role attitudes dominate in Hungary, which attitudes reinforce the perception that doing household tasks is women's work. A large discrepancy, however, was seen between women's and men's reports related to childcare tasks; while men claimed increased involvement during the lockdown (which was explained by the support of non-traditional gender attitudes and reduced office hours – see Table 1), women did not perceive this change from their partners. Nevertheless, men's reports suggest that the chance for telecommuting and non-traditional gender attitudes might promote a shift towards a more balanced division of labour. This research highlights the deep-rooted gender dynamics in contributing to non-paid labour and highlights a complex interplay of societal norms and personal attitudes that should be considered when developing interventions for gender equality.

Table 1
Results of the hierarchical regression analysis on men's increased childcare contribution during the lockdown

						95% CI	
	B	SE	β	t	p	LL	UL
Constant	75.63	11.56		6.54	<.001	52.53	98.74
Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology	-3.04	2.22	-.15	-1.37	.176	-7.46	1.40
Gender Role Attitudes	-8.01	2.59	-.34	-3.09	.003	-13.20	-2.83
Respondent's office working hours	-.37	.09	-.43	-4.18	<.001	-.55	-.19
Partner's office working hours	.42	.12	.36	3.57	.001	.19	.66

Note, SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. Unstandardised regression coefficients are reported. Level of confidence = 95%. The effects of block 2 of hierarchical multiple regression analysis are reported, ΔR^2first block = 4.49, ΔR^2second block =.13.57.

4. Study 2 – The Role of Sexual Orientation and the Perceived Threat Posed by Men in the Acceptance of Sexism

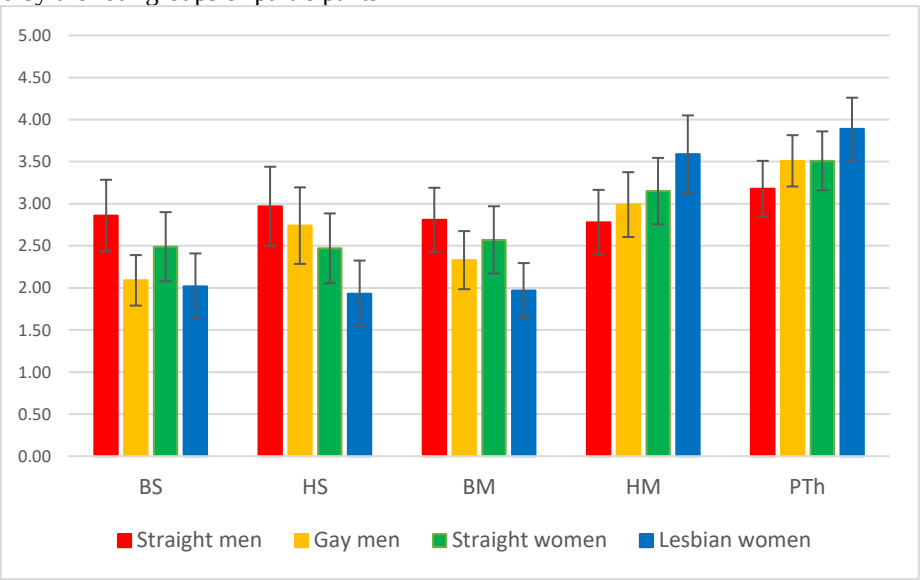
In study 2 (Kántás & Kovacs, 2022), we aimed to expand on previous works that have overlooked gay perspectives when investigating the endorsement of ambivalent sexism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 2011). Therefore, the difference between gay and straight people in endorsing ambivalent sexism was assessed, just like the role of sexual orientation in accepting ambivalent attitudes towards men, and how much people with different sexual orientations perceive (or, in the case of men, recognise) the threat men pose to women. The aim, therefore, was to gain a better understanding of how heterosexual intimacy shapes the way people with different sexual orientations relate to attitudes that either hold a subjectively positive image of women (benevolent sexism) and men (benevolence towards men) who meet with traditional gender role expectations or to attitudes that hold an overtly hostile view of women (hostile sexism) and see men as domineering and aggressive (hostility towards men). Besides, we wanted to oversee how perceiving (or recognising) the threat men pose to women relates to these attitudes.

We hypothesised that lesbian women support both benevolent sexism and hostile sexism less than straight women, while gay men, although less accepting of benevolent sexism, support hostile sexism to a similar extent to straight men. We further hypothesised that lesbian women would highly support hostile attitudes towards men due to the high level of hostile sexism directed towards them, while straight women cannot hold extremely negative views of men because of heterosexual intimacy. It was also posited that gay men,

thanks to their unique perspective arising from their marginalised status, would recognise the threat their own gender group pose to women to a greater extent than straight men. Finally, we hypothesised that a higher level of threat experience (or its recognition) is associated with a higher level of support for hostile attitudes towards men, regardless of sexual orientation. We examined these attitudes using a sample of 695 Hungarian gay and straight adults by means of CAWI. The online recruitment ensured anonymity, given that gay people feel threatened in Hungary (ILGA, 2023).

Figure 1 displays the results. We found that lesbian women and gay men were less inclined to accept benevolent attitudes, probably due to the lack of heterosexual intimacy and because the subjective 'benefits' of meeting the traditional gender roles cannot apply to them. It is noteworthy that those straight women who reported a greater threat experience also supported benevolent sexist attitudes to a greater extent, thereby supporting Fisher's (2006) protection racket hypothesis. That is, hostile sexism (which excuses those attitudes and behaviours of men that make women feel threatened) pushes women to adopt attitudes, in the hope of protection, that perpetuate the gender status quo (Glick et al., 2004). In contrast, while lesbian women showed the least agreement with hostile sexism directed towards them, they showed the most significant agreement with hostile attitudes towards men, indicating a significant level of resentment towards the dominant group. An encouraging result, however, was that men who recognised that women felt threatened by men were less likely to endorse hostile sexism. This suggests that increased gender awareness can lead to more progressive gender attitudes. Overall, these results highlight the complex relationship between sexual orientation, perceived threat, and gender bias.

Figure 1
Means of Benevolent sexism, Hostile sexism, Benevolence towards Men, Hostility towards Men, and Perceived Threat divided by the four groups of participants



Note. 'BS' = Benevolent Sexism; 'HS' = Hostile Sexism. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher acceptance of sexist ideologies. 'BM' = Benevolence towards Men; 'HM' = Hostility towards Men. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher acceptance of ambivalence towards men. 'PTh' = Perceived Threat. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean a higher level of perceived threat posed by men to women. Level of confidence = 95%.

5. Study 3 – If you can dream it, you can do it!—The Role of Sexual Orientation in Preferences Towards Boys' and Girls' Career Orientation and Gendered Behaviour

In Study 3 (Kántás et al., 2022), we focused on the intergenerational transmission of gender ideology and the parental attitudes of LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) and straight people. Previous studies (Bos & Sandfort, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2011) suggest that parents play a pivotal role in shaping children's gendered behaviours. For example, children of same-sex couples show more flexible gender attitudes, possibly due to their parents' more egalitarian views (Bos & Sandfort, 2010; Sutfin et al., 2008). However, in a gender-traditional society like Hungary, such non-conformity can lead to social backlash, even towards children, if their gender role display is not traditional (Rudman et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 2018). In addition, factors such as modern sexism can reinforce traditional gendered parenting preferences.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted two cross-sectional studies, both by CAWI. On the one hand (in Study 3A, N = 448), we examined the mediating effect of modern sexism between sexual orientation and (prospective) parental preferences regarding the children's occupational interests, traits, and activities. We hypothesised that sexual orientation would have an indirect effect on the support of (prospective) children's non-traditional gender role

behaviours, activities and occupational interests. Furthermore, since our study was conducted in Hungary, a highly gender-traditional country, we also took into consideration the moderation effect of the perceived stability of the gender hierarchy. Taking this moderating effect into account, we aimed to assess whether perceiving the gender hierarchy as unchangeable intensifies the impact of modern sexism on parental preferences, or whether perceiving the gender hierarchy as changeable leads to more flexibility in parental attitudes. On the other hand (in Study 3B, N = 704), we conducted an experiment in which we compared how the perceived stable or unstable gender hierarchy modifies the endorsement of modern sexism and fear of backlash by peers (which suggests that the respondents' child may face rejection, exclusion, or prejudice from their peers) that we assumed to predict the parental preferences regarding (prospective) children's gendered behaviour in different scenarios (the preferred gendered behaviour of girls and boys at home and in school) among people with different sexual orientations.

In Study 3A, our findings indicated that homosexuality was linked to less gender-stereotypical parental preferences, mediated by lower levels of modern sexism, whereas heterosexuality predicted more traditional gender role preferences for children. This was particularly evident in preferences for boys' high-status occupations, which were influenced by modern sexism regardless of the perceived stability of the gender hierarchy. However, for girls, the perceived stability of the gender hierarchy played a significant role; parental preferences for high-status occupations emerged only when straight parents perceived the gender hierarchy as unstable. Study 3B also confirmed that sexual orientation significantly influenced the preferences of (prospective) parents regarding children's gender-based behaviour and that modern sexism proved to be a more significant predictor for boys than for girls. Modern sexism was a stronger predictor for sons than daughters. In this study, gay parents' preferences were mainly influenced by modern sexism, especially in stable gender hierarchy conditions. Bisexual parents, on the other hand, were influenced by both modern sexism and fear of backlash, particularly in unstable gender hierarchy conditions. Straight parents preferred more traditional gender attitudes, influenced by modern sexism and the parent's gender. In general, our research suggests that gay people are more supportive of their (prospective) children's non-traditional gender role presentation and occupational preference, which is partly explained by the fact that they do not particularly support modern sexist views. These results align with previous studies (Sutfin et al., 2008) indicating that LG parents encourage less gender-stereotyped behaviours in their children. Furthermore,

the study also points to the importance of communicating the successes already achieved in achieving gender equality, because, in many cases, (prospective) parents only dared to support behaviour that challenge the gender status quo if they felt that the current gender hierarchy could be changed.

6. Study 4 – Attitudes towards women's authority roles in the light of sexual orientation and sexist beliefs

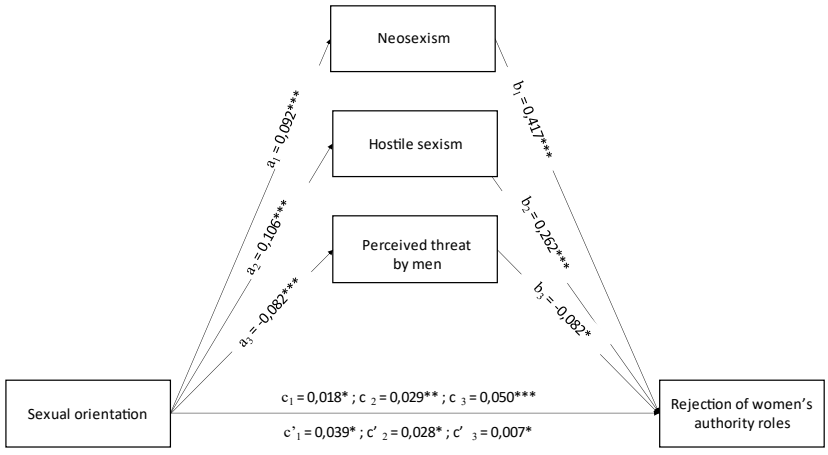
In Study 4 (Kántás, 2022b), I examined attitudes towards women's authority roles among people with different sexual orientations, along with gender-specific attitudes that might influence these associations. Gender stereotypes, as outlined by the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2018), place men and women on opposite poles of competence and warmth. Role incongruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), therefore, suggests that society associates compliance with leadership roles related to competence with masculine traits. This is also indicated by the phenomenon 'think manager - think male' (Schein, 2001; see also Kovacs, 2012), which draws attention to social biases against women in power and which also explains why it is mostly men who hold leading roles even in sectors dominated by women (Blau & DeVaro, 2007). These biases are exacerbated by both hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001), while the latter, in addition, limit women's roles in a subtle, thus, hard-to-detect way. Furthermore, modern forms of sexism, such as neosexism (Gomes et al., 2021; Tougas et al., 1995), further perpetuate these biases by suggesting that gender discrimination is not an issue anymore and that women's underrepresentation in certain fields (e.g., in politics or STEM) is due to their lack of competence or desire to fulfil these roles. Moreover, as previous results have shown (Aksoy et al., 2018), LGB people also suffer similar disadvantages as women when they aspire to occupy high-status positions.

Therefore, taking into account the disadvantage that LGB people suffer similarly to women when they strive to fill authority roles (Aksoy et al., 2018), and based on the results of previous studies (Kántás & Kovacs, 2022; Kántás et al., 2022), according to which gay and bisexual people are less accepting of sexist views towards women than their straight counterparts, I hypothesised that LGB people are more accepting of women in authority roles than straight people. Moreover, I expected that, regardless of sexual orientation, perceiving (or, in the case of men, recognising) the threat men pose to women would influence the acceptance or rejection of women's authority roles. To test my hypotheses, I assessed the answers (collected via CAWI) of 471 respondents and evaluated their endorsement of

benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and neosexism. I also measured respondents' attitudes towards women's authority roles and the level of threat men pose to women.

Results revealed that LGB people, especially gay men and lesbian women, were more accepting of women in authority roles than straight people. This tendency among LGB people could be attributed to shared experiences of discrimination with women, as both groups face challenges in a heteronormative society when fulfilling authority roles. Notably, although support of sexist ideologies was less prevalent among LGB respondents, neosexism—a covert form of sexism denying gender discrimination—was a significant predictor for rejecting women in authority roles, even among LGB people. Thus, this association appeared regardless of sexual orientation. On the one hand, this points to the deep cultural embeddedness of sexism and, on the other hand, to the fact that hidden forms of sexism significantly hinder the achievement of gender equality. Nevertheless, perceiving to be threatened (or recognising this threat) by the dominant group (i.e., men), especially among gay people, was associated with accepting women in authority roles (see Figure 2), highlighting the importance of increasing empathy as essential in the struggle to achieve gender equality.

Figure 2
The mediating effect of sexist attitudes and perceived threat between sexual orientation and attitudes towards women's authority roles.



Note. Sexual orientation is coded as follows: 0 = gay people, 1 = bisexual people, 2 = straight people.

Study 5 – The power of liberal feminist identification and the importance of gender awareness in the fight for gender equality

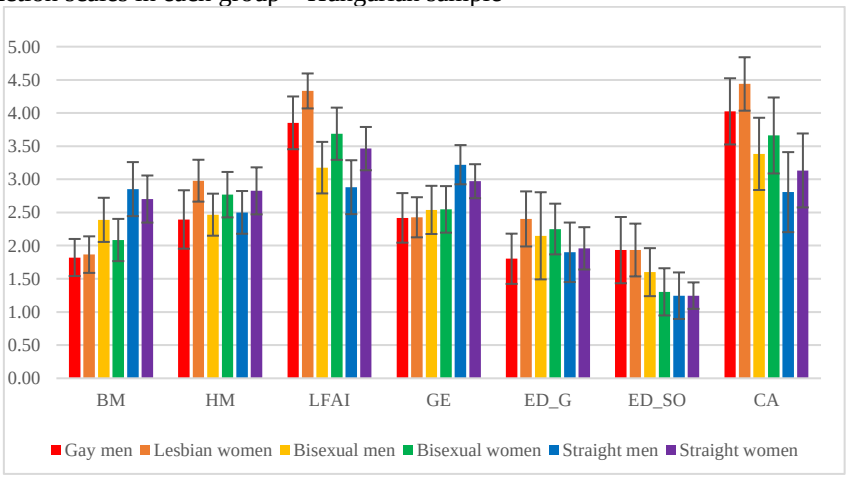
In the fifth study, I sought to understand how sexual orientation and the experience of everyday discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation relate to collective action; furthermore, which gender-specific attitudes motivate (e.g., liberal feminist attitudes) or hinder (e.g., ambivalent attitudes towards men, gender essentialism) the participation of Hungarian and English people in collective action aimed at achieving gender equality. As prior research showed, gender-based discriminatory experiences can facilitate engagement with collective action in case someone strongly identifies with their gender group (Nelson et al., 2008) and with liberal feminist attitudes (Heger & Hoffmann, 2022; Yoder et al., 2011). Similarly, strong group identity and group consciousness are positively related to collective action for sexual minority rights (Montagno & Garrett-Walker, 2022). However, gender essentialism and hostile attitudes towards men, suggesting that men are innately dominant and aggressive—which reinforces the perceived stability of gender hierarchy—can discourage people from taking collective action for gender equality (Glick & Whitehead, 2010; Radke et al., 2016). Moreover, the political and social climate—the impact of which I assessed by comparing the answers of Hungarian and English respondents—can significantly influence the commitment to collective action (Kováts, 2019; Millns & Skeet, 2013). Regarding the complexity of the topic and in order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of commitment to collective action aimed at achieving gender equality, I also examined the variables by embedding them in the integrated approach of the social identity model of collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008) as well.

Based on previous results (Kántás & Kovacs, 2022), I assumed that LGB people endorse gender essentialism and benevolent attitudes towards men less, but they support hostile attitudes towards men and liberal feminist views more than straight people do. Moreover, I hypothesised that gender-prejudiced attitudes (such as ambivalent attitudes towards men), gender essentialism, and—due to heterosexual intimacy—gender-based discrimination would deter people from taking collective action, while sexual orientation-based discrimination and liberal feminist attitudes would encourage people to take collective action for gender equality. To test my hypotheses, I compared the answers of 469 Hungarian and 538 English, LGB and straight participants. Using CAWI, participants reported on the discrimination they experienced based on gender and sexual orientation, their views on

gender essentialism, their ambivalent attitudes towards men, their level of agreement with liberal feminist ideology, and their willingness to take collective action for gender equality.

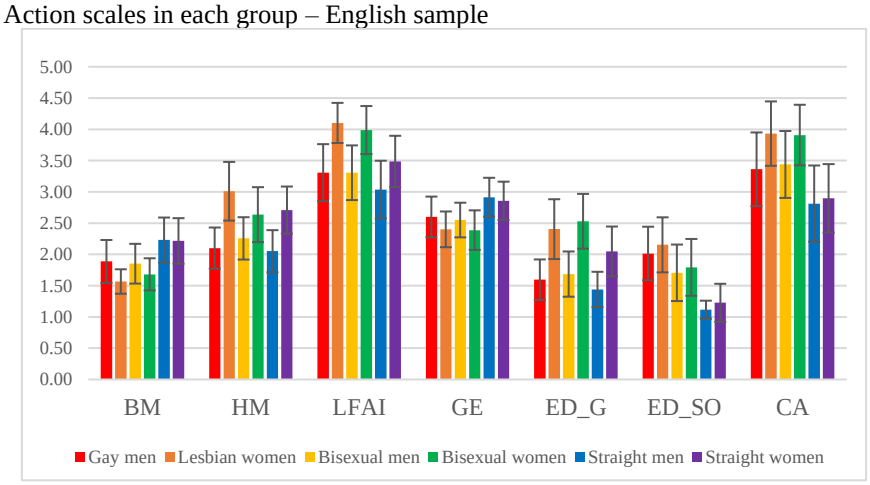
I found that in accordance with previous results (Kántás, 2022b; Kántás & Kovacs, 2022; Kántás et al., 2022), sexual orientation—in both countries—significantly influenced gender attitudes (see Figures 3 and 4); that is, LGB people were less supportive of gender-prejudiced attitudes but more supportive of liberal feminist attitudes than their straight counterparts. I also found that in the case of the Hungarian participants, who live in a strongly gender-traditional society, there was a close correlation between benevolent attitudes towards men and a lower level of willingness to take collective action. Meanwhile, in the case of the English participants, hostile attitudes towards men—which represent resentment towards the patriarchy—hindered the commitment to collective action. Gender essentialism, on the other hand, predicted a lower level of willingness for collective action, regardless of country. The social atmosphere influenced the drivers of collective action as well: though sexual orientation-based discrimination promoted collective action, this was only true for English respondents. Nonetheless, liberal feminist identity consistently predicted a willingness for collective action in both countries. These results highlight the role of the social atmosphere in relation to pro-gender equality attitudes and collective action and suggest that in order to achieve equality, interventions are needed that not only challenge traditional gender norms but are also adapted to the given social context.

Figure 3
Means of Benevolence towards Men, Hostility towards Men, Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology, Gender Essentialism, Everyday Discrimination based on Gender, Everyday Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation, and Collective Action scales in each group – Hungarian sample



Note. 'BM' = Benevolence towards Men; 'HM' = Hostility towards Men. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher acceptance of ambivalence towards men. 'LFAI' = Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher agreement with liberal feminist attitudes and ideology. 'GE' = Gender Essentialism. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher agreement with gender essentialist views. 'ED_G' = Everyday Discrimination based on Gender. 'ED_SO' = Everyday Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean more discriminatory experiences. 'CA' = Collective Action. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean stronger willingness to take collective action for gender equality. Level of confidence = 95%.

Figure 4
Means of Benevolence towards Men, Hostility towards Men, Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology, Gender Essentialism, Everyday Discrimination based on Gender, Everyday Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation, and Collective Action scales in each group – English sample



Note. 'BM' = Benevolence towards Men; 'HM' = Hostility towards Men. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher acceptance of ambivalence towards men. 'LFAI' = Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher agreement with liberal feminist attitudes and ideology. 'GE' = Gender Essentialism. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean higher agreement with gender essentialist views. 'ED_G' = Everyday Discrimination based on Gender. 'ED_SO' = Everyday Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean more discriminatory experiences. 'CA' = Collective Action. 5-point Likert scale was used: higher scores mean stronger willingness to take collective action for gender equality. Level of confidence = 95%.

7. Discussion

In my doctoral dissertation, I examined the role of sexual orientation and non-traditional identity content in relation to gender-specific attitudes. The results revealed a complex picture of the subject. For example, starting with the fact that although the distribution of unpaid work, which is a major contributor to gender inequality, was significantly unbalanced, even in extreme circumstances when the amount of household work and childcare responsibilities have skyrocketed (such as during the COVID-19 pandemic), non-traditional gender role attitudes predicted some positive changes in some cases. However, my research highlighted that there is only a chance to achieve a significant change if men do not consider the responsibilities related to the household and childcare as women's tasks but as a joint responsibility.

Studies 2, 3 and 4 showed that LGB people were not only significantly less supportive of sexism than their straight counterparts but were more supportive of women's authority roles. This may be explained by the fact that higher awareness of gender inequality issues is associated with a weaker endorsement of sexism. The importance of this awareness was also drawn to the fact that, although LGB people supported sexist attitudes less than their straight counterparts, the acceptance of neosexist attitudes—which embody a little-known form of sexism—was able to predict the rejection of women's authority roles regardless of sexual orientation. This is particularly crucial in that—unlike straight people—LGB people were not deterred by hostile sexism from accepting women in positions of authority. However, the studies also drew attention to the fact that LGB people, especially women, may tend to show a greater level of resentment (that is, hostile attitudes) towards men because men embody the patriarchal system and, as our previous study also showed (Kántás & Kovacs, 2022), their resentment was related to feeling strongly threatened by the dominant group. Nevertheless, as Study 5 showed, hostility towards men deters people from engaging in collective action for gender equality rather than motivating them to do it. The most likely reason for this is that the source of resentment stems from the ideology that men will always strive for dominance and power over women; therefore, the gender hierarchy is unchangeable. In contrast, liberal feminist attitudes were able to predict commitment to collective action regardless of country. It is, therefore, crucial to realise that instead of resenting men, the strengthening of liberal feminist attitudes holds the possibility of change since liberal feminism can not only provide a meaningful social identity but also makes available the view that the gender hierarchy can be changed and the path to achieving gender equality is through collective action.

It is also worth noting that sometimes there was at least as much difference between the answers of gay and bisexual people as between LGB people and straight people's responses. In Study 3, for example, fear of social backlash was a more critical factor for bisexual people than for gay people, and the social atmosphere had a greater impact on bisexual parents' parenting attitudes than those of gay parents. This may be due to the fact that bisexual people experience exclusionary attitudes not only from straight people, but also from gay people, so it is conceivable that—similar to gay men, who may try to strengthen their privileged (gender) group membership by supporting hostile sexist attitudes—they, too, try to compensate for their 'disadvantaged' group membership by supporting traditional gender role attitudes. Regardless, in the studies, it was consistently straight people who identified most with traditional gender role attitudes. This means that, compared to LGB people, they supported sexist attitudes the most, preferred traditional gender role display for their children the most, and were the least accepting of women in authority roles. However, it is important to emphasise that there were significant differences even between the sexes; women accepted sexist attitudes to a significantly lesser extent than men, even though in Study 3, they were the ones who preferred traditional gender role display for their (prospective) daughters. It is also important to note that, in the case of men, recognising the threat their gender group poses to women was associated with them showing less acceptance of sexist ideologies. Overall, my dissertation provides a comprehensive picture of the complex relationship between sexual orientation and gender-specific attitudes.

8. References

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