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Psychological and structural antecedents of intergroup violence

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Psychological and structural antecedents of intergroup violence

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II. Nyilatkozatok

1. A doktori értekezés szerzőjeként[2]

a) hozzájárulok, hogy a doktori fokozat megszerzését követően a doktori értekezésem és a tézisek nyilvánosságra kerüljenek az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárban. Felhatalmazom a ………………………………………. Doktori Iskola hivatalának ügyintézőjét …………………………., hogy az értekezést és a téziseket feltöltse az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárba, és ennek során kitöltse a feltöltéshez szükséges nyilatkozatokat.

b) kérem, hogy a mellékelt kérelemben részletezett szabadalmi, illetőleg oltalmi bejelentés közzétételéig a doktori értekezést ne bocsássák

[1] A kari hivatal ügyintézője tölti ki.
[2] A megfelelő szöveg aláhúzandó.

nyilvánosságra az Egyetemi Könyvtárban és az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárban;[3]
c) kérem, hogy a nemzetbiztonsági okból minősített adatot tartalmazó doktori értekezést a minősítés (………………*dátum*)-ig tartó időtartama alatt ne bocsássák nyilvánosságra az Egyetemi Könyvtárban és az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárban;[4]
d) kérem, hogy a mű kiadására vonatkozó mellékelt kiadó szerződésre tekintettel a doktori értekezést a könyv megjelenéséig ne bocsássák nyilvánosságra az Egyetemi Könyvtárban, és az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárban csak a könyv bibliográfiai adatait tegyék közzé. Ha a könyv a fokozatszerzést követőn egy évig nem jelenik meg, hozzájárulok, hogy a doktori értekezésem és a tézisek nyilvánosságra kerüljenek az Egyetemi Könyvtárban és az ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárban.[5]

2. A doktori értekezés szerzőjeként kijelentem, hogy
a) a ELTE Digitális Intézményi Tudástárba feltöltendő doktori értekezés és a tézisek saját eredeti, önálló szellemi munkám és legjobb tudomásom szerint nem sértem vele senki szerzői jogait;
b) a doktori értekezés és a tézisek nyomtatott változatai és az elektronikus adathordozón benyújtott tartalmak (szöveg és ábrák) mindenben megegyeznek.

3. A doktori értekezés szerzőjeként hozzájárulok a doktori értekezés és a tézisek szövegének plágiumkereső adatbázisba helyezéséhez és plágiumellenőrző vizsgálatok lefuttatásához.

Kelt: Budapest, 2021.03.02.

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a doktori értekezés szerzőjének aláírása

[3] A doktori értekezés benyújtásával egyidejűleg be kell adni a tudományági doktori tanácshoz a szabadalmi, illetőleg oltalmi bejelentést tanúsító okiratot és a nyilvánosságra hozatal elhalasztása iránti kérelmet.
[4] A doktori értekezés benyújtásával egyidejűleg be kell nyújtani a minősített adatra vonatkozó közokiratot.
[5] A doktori értekezés benyújtásával egyidejűleg be kell nyújtani a mű kiadásáról szóló kiadói szerződést.

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Abstract

The goal of my dissertation is to investigate the antecedents of supporting intergroup violence in the context of Hungary. Specifically, I was interested in the effect of group-based injustices and grievances, general attitude orientations (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation), criminalizing legal environment, perceived threat, competitive and dangerous worldview, and partisan motivated processes on the acceptability of intergroup violence in Hungary, and conducted three correlational studies to test these associations. In Study 1 (N = 1000), we explored the role of right-wing authoritarianism and propensity for radical protest in the acceptance of violence against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous outgroups. We found that RWA was a much stronger predictor of the justification of intergroup violence than propensity for radical action, which highlights that RWA can justify politically motivated aggression against different target groups in Hungary, even against those which are high in status and possess resources. In Study 2 (N = 674), the effect of a criminalizing law on the acceptance of violence against homeless people was investigated. Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation positively predicted support for violence against this group, and the acceptance of the criminalizing law served as a justification for violence. We also found that the justification mechanism was influenced by educational level, as the linkage between SDO and violence decreased with lower levels of education. Study 3 consisted of three correlational studies that explored the effect of partisan motivated processes on the acceptance of misinformation (Study 3a, N = 1000, Study 3b, N = 382), news consumption habits, and the acceptance of violence against immigrants (Study 3c, N = 197). We found that partisan motivated reasoning predicts the acceptance of political misinformation. Our study revealed that the consumption of pro-government and extreme right-wing media resulted in heightened perceived threat and the perception of rivalry from refugees, which worked as a justification for violence against them. Implications and practical relevance of these studies are also discussed.

Introduction

Violent street rioting in 2006, a serial murder case and physical offences against the Roma by far-right paramilitary groups, and attacks against gay and lesbian people during several pride marches are just some examples to indicate that politically motivated intergroup violence is an existing problem in Hungary (Mareš, 2018).

Nieburg (1969) defines politically motivated violence as “acts of disruption, destruction, injury whose purpose, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and/or effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behavior of others in a bargaining situation that has consequences for the social system” (Nieburg, 1969, p. 13, as cited in Zimmermann, 2013). Politically motivated violence takes different forms in societies, differing in who initiates aggression, against whom, for what purpose, and in what forms, so it is important to distinguish between its different types. Consequently, Feierabend and colleagues (Feierabend et al., 1973) classified four types of systemic aggression:

1. civil strife or political instability,
2. coerciveness of political regimes,
3. conflict between groups within the political system,
4. external aggression and hostility

The term civil strife or political instability refers to civil violence, which is directed to the leaders and officeholders. Revolt, demonstration, riot, protest, strike, assassination, and sabotage are just a few events in this category. The second cluster, coerciveness of political regimes, includes activities like arrest, imprisonment, confiscation of property, and execution. In this type of systemic aggression, violence comes top-down from those in power. The third type is intergroup violence, e.g., between ethnic groups, or between a majority and minority group within a society. The fourth term encompasses international conflicts, including wars or embargoes among countries (Feierabend et al., 1973). Terrorism is a special form of politically motivated violence. Terrorists use violence and intimidation against noncombatant individuals, who are often civilians, in order to achieve political goals or change in the status quo (Webber et al., 2020). My dissertation focuses on the third category, conflict between groups, from the classification of Feierabend and colleagues (1973), and I aim to investigate the structural and psychological antecedents of supporting intergroup violence.

My research interest lies in investigating the antecedents of supporting intergroup violence in Hungary, a country which can be described with a “democratic backsliding” in the past decades (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018; Krekó & Enyedi, 2018). Support for intergroup violence is fairly high in the country: according to a think tank research representative to the Hungarian population, 25% of the respondents believe that living in a democracy is compatible with politically motivated violence, and 20% thinks that intergroup violence can be justified in some cases (Molnár et al., 2015).

Despite turning into a democracy in 1989 after four decades of state socialism and Soviet influence, changes in the political and economic system and the collapse of state socialism has severely transformed intergroup relations and caused inequalities between social groups in Hungary. As the state’s oppressive power and its “monopoly” in defining the nation’s enemies declined, and gave way to free speech, animosity and hostile speech flourished, as people were free to express their hostility towards social, ethnic, and religious minorities (Bustikova, 2015). Frequent exposure to hate speech leads to increased prejudice towards outgroups though desensitization (Soral et al., 2018), creating a norm that verbal violence is allowed against outgroups (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020). As a result of animosity and hate speech, there was a rise in the verbal and physical attacks against these groups, as some kind of “democratization of hostility” (Bustikova, 2015).

The economic crisis in 2008 further increased the level of general discontent and helped the rise of the extreme right (Kovács, 2013), radical, populist, and ultranationalist right-wing ideologies (Krekó & Juhász, 2018), and hostility towards minorities (Mareš, 2018; Vidra & Fox, 2014). Anti-elitist and penal populist ideologies dominate public discourse. For instance, discourse about “Gypsy-crime” was initiated proposing a collective criminalization of Roma people, an increase in sentencing and public spending on police (Boda et al., 2015). The use of violent language in politics has continued to increase since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015 (Goździak & Márton, 2018). On the local level, some political players could exploit the “scapegoat-based policy making”, in which the ethnic minorities became victims of systemic ethnic discrimination (Kovarek et al., 2017), relatedly, homeless people were criminalized as a group (Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2018). According to data from the fourth round of the ESS survey (2008), the punitive attitudes of the general population were the highest in Hungary compared to other European countries (Boda et al., 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that negative political discourses about minorities and immigrants enjoy wide support (see e.g., Simonovits, 2020).

To sum up, dominant social norms in Hungary create an environment in which intergroup violence can be seen as justified and necessary. In my dissertation, I aim to address why people support violence against immigrants and minority groups, and investigate the structural conditions (e.g., relative deprivation and dissatisfaction, negative portrayal of outgroups in the media, criminalization of outgroups, perceived threat, the presence of fake news and conspiracy theories), and psychological factors (cognitive processes, worldview, and attitudinal orientations) in the acceptance and justification of intergroup violence. In the next section I introduce the antecedents of intergroup violence, and also address my research questions. Despite conducting our research in this specific context, we aim to test general social psychological mechanisms, and claim that the generalizability of our results is not limited to this country. The context of Hungary only expands certain phenomena (e.g., anti-minority rhetoric, distribution of fake news) to a systemic level, which increase the likelihood of intergroup conflicts and violence in general.

Antecedents of intergroup violence

Group-based grievances and inequalities

Intergroup hostility and conflicts can be explained by two classical theories. The first one is realistic conflict theory (Campbell, 1965; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966), which was demonstrated with the classic Robbers' Cave experiment (Sherif et al., 1961). This theory posits that groups compete for scarce material resources, such as land, jobs, or natural resources like water, oil, or diamond. This competition is often zero-sum, which means that only one group can win the rewards, and there is no chance that both groups can win at the same time, or the resources are not enough to satisfy both groups' needs. Group competition for the valued resources increases intergroup hostility and violence (Rapoport & Bornstein, 1987; Sherif et al., 1961). Examples for the realistic conflict theory include the water scarcity in the Middle East and North Africa which resulted in intergroup conflicts (see e.g., report of Kiser, 2000), or the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, involving both maritime boundaries and islands (Bateman & Emmers, 2008).

The second influential theory is social identity theory, which explains intergroup hostility and aggression in cases in which scarce material resources are not present. Groups are not only in competition for material resources, they also compete for symbolic rewards, like positive social identity, group dominance, or respect (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People are motivated to have a positive self-esteem, which can be achieved by belonging to positively rated social groups, resulting in a positive bias for the ingroup (Tajfel et al., 1971). The preference of the ingroup helps increase and maintain a positive self-esteem, but it comes along with the devaluation and dislike of the outgroup (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Nonetheless, if one's identity is threatened, discrimination against the outgroup will be more likely (see e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997). When members of the ingroup perceive that the outgroup poses a serious threat, they can react with extreme hatred and violent intentions (see e.g., Thomsen et al., 2008), and view members of the outgroup as morally inferior and subhuman, which leads to intergroup oppression and genocide (Opotow, 1990).

In practice, the two theories are interrelated in intergroup conflicts: groups compete for scarce material resources and positive social identity, dominance, and respect at the same time. When members of groups have less of these valued resources than other groups, they feel discontent and grievance, which plants the seeds to processes leading to intergroup violence. Two theories address the effect of grievances on support for violence: Horizontal Inequality Theory (Stewart, 2005) and Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970). Horizontal Inequality Theory (Stewart, 2005) focuses on objective, material inequalities, and states that the systemic political, societal, and economic inequalities between groups cause aggressive political participation (Stewart, 2005; 2008). According to the theory, the unprivileged members of the society will feel grievance and therefore are more likely to participate in violent political action, but the more privileged can also commit violence against the disadvantaged, so as to oppose their attempts to gain more resources and power (Østby, 2013). Nevertheless, the predictive power of material forms of grievance is limited: though horizontal inequalities enhance the probability of violent group conflicts (Cederman et al., 2011; Østby, 2013), non-material or psychological grievances (or group-based relative deprivation) proved to be a better determinant of aggressive political participation (see Siroky et al., 2020).

In contrast to horizontal inequalities, relative deprivation focuses on non-material, or psychological forms of grievance. Relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970) occurs when people feel that they are in a disadvantaged position, or their situation improves less than that of other people or groups, which evokes discontent. This theory originally states that grievances felt by the disadvantaged members of society result in political violence (Østby, 2013). Nevertheless, deprivation is a subjective psychological state, and it is independent from objective socio-economic status (King & Taylor, 2011), therefore, even objectively affluent groups can feel deprived (Siroky et al., 2020). Many early studies conceptualized inequality as an inter-individual (vertical) phenomenon and mostly used individual relative deprivation (e.g., income inequality) to define inequality (for a systematic review see Østby, 2013), but it was inconsistently related to support for violence (see e.g., Muller & Jukam, 1983). Nevertheless, other scholars argued that not individual subjective grievances, but systemic frustration should be considered, as it is more associated with political violence (see e.g., Feierabend et al., 1973). Besides individual deprivation, groups can also feel group-based injustice and resentment, this is fraternal relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966). For instance, Lemieux and Asal (2010) experimentally manipulated the extent of group-based grievance with vignettes describing the situation of a weak and historically discriminated-against ethnic group. They found that the bigger the group-based grievance, the more participants favored taking violent forms of political action. People in the high grievance condition also felt that aggression was more justified (Lemieux & Asal, 2010). Furthermore, empirical evidence analyzing longer time frames support that group-level grievances and relative deprivation consistently and strongly increases the probability of participating in aggressive political action (Regan & Norton, 2005; Siroky et al., 2020; Wimmer & Min, 2006).

In addition to perceived injustices, frustration of basic human needs, such as the need for security, positive identity, and feeling of effectiveness can also lead to the loss of well-being – as a result of difficult social conditions, economic problems, and political conflicts (Staub, 1999). The combination of difficult, frustrating societal conditions and intergroup conflicts enhance the probability of violence (Staub, 2000). Nevertheless, not only the existence of group-based grievances and frustration are crucial (Gurr, 1970), but certain structural and psychological conditions are also needed to foster aggressive political action. Violence – for example in the context of protests – can also be the outcome of intergroup situations that are perceived stable and illegitimate (Livingstone et al., 2009; Scheepers et al., 2006; Wright & Tropp, 2002). For instance, in a study examining the Welsh minority in the UK, researchers found that the co-occurrence of the perception of political illegitimacy in the relationship between the minority and the majority groups and identity threat (the threat that Welsh minority cannot use their own language) resulted in intergroup anger, which predicted support for more radical forms of action (Livingstone et al., 2009). Besides emphasizing the role of political illegitimacy, this study also pointed to the role of group identity in fostering violent conflict. According to Gurr (1993), a strong group identity and the existence of group-based grievances jointly contribute to intergroup violence. Nonetheless, despite having a strong group identity and resentment, intergroup aggression does not always occur. Resources, organization, and opportunity are also important factors which mobilize people to take part in aggressive political action (Tilly, 1978), and recent research shows that when group-based relative deprivation (and to a lesser extent, horizontal inequalities) interact with a group's resources for collective action (or mobilization capacity), the probability of intergroup violence will be the highest compared to when the group lacks either grievance or resources (Siroky et al., 2020).

Summarizing, group-based relative deprivation, collective grievances, perceived illegitimacy, accompanying with strong group identity, available resources, and opportunity are the hotbeds of violent political action like radical protest. Furthermore, the lack of efficacy also matters for nonnormative action: if groups have insufficient political power and think that political aggression is acceptable in order to reach important goals, they may choose participation in aggressive political protests as a form of expressing their opinion (Tausch et al., 2011). Therefore, participating in aggressive political action can be considered as a form of collective action (Siroky et al., 2020), which is aimed to change the current intergroup relations, and seems an acceptable mean to abolish the injustices and improve the status and treatment of one's ingroup (Daskin, 2016; Wright & Tropp, 2002). Though participating in violent protest is generally considered nonnormative in terms of general social norms, it can be normative to the ingroup in specific situations. The Social Identity Model of Deindividuation (or SIDE-model, Reicher et al., 1995) claims that immersion in a group increases the cognitive salience of social identity, and therefore enhances conformity to specific group norms. In this context, situation-specific norms are more likely to guide behavior than general social norms, and actions normative to the ingroup are more likely to occur, even if they are antinormative according to general social norms (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher et al., 1995), which explains why violent means are more supported when individuals are immersed in a group.

Groups that are perceived responsible for the injustices can become the targets of violence (Daskin, 2016). Scapegoating, the process of putting the blame on an outgroup for the frustrating conditions, not only targets groups “below” – disadvantaged, less powerful and incompetent groups – but also, groups “above”: competent groups that are perceived to be dangerous (Glick, 2002). The more grievances are blamed on the agents of the political system, the higher the likelihood of violence against them (Gurr, 1970). High-status groups are often accused of conspiring, therefore blaming high-status groups for the grievances is also connected to conspiracy mentality (Bruder et al., 2013; Imhoff & Bruder, 2014). Conspiracy mentality is a relatively stable and general political attitude, and it is related to prejudice toward high-power groups, who are perceived as threatening, omnipotent, and blamed for planning secret plots. Conspiracy mentality serves as a cognitive tool for explaining individuals’ lack of power, as blaming authorities for conspiring is a way to cope with negative social identity (Imhoff & Bruder, 2014).

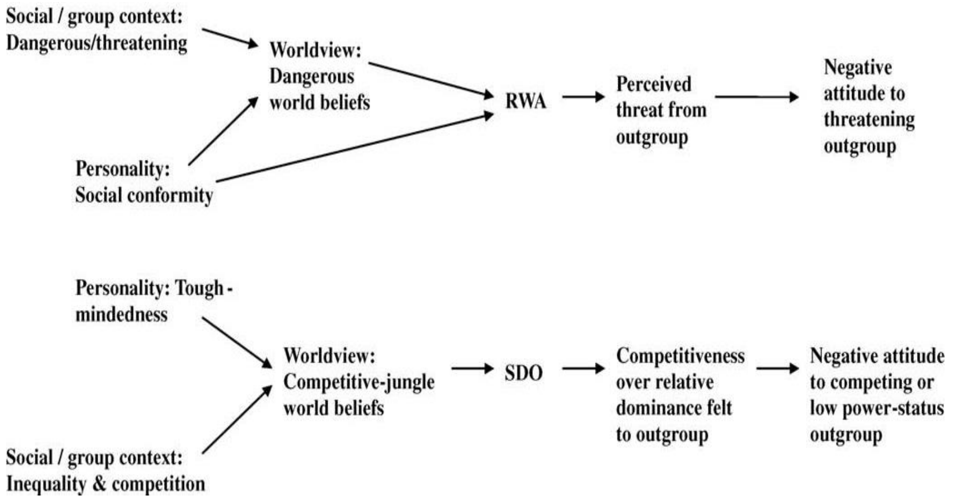
Most forms of violence are perceived as morally unacceptable – therefore, any violence, including political violence needs some form of justification (Daskin, 2016). Ideologically fueled stereotypes that depict out-groups as malicious, harmful and influential can legitimize aggression (Glick, 2002; Staub, 2000). Therefore, violence against these out-groups can potentially be perceived as necessary self-defense, and normative to the ingroup (Glick, 2002). For instance, terrorism can be seen by a moral act, a form of heroism for the supporters of the terrorist groups (Horgan, 2005). Therefore, ideologies of the ingroup can legitimize, or even reward violence.

The Dual-Process Model of Prejudice and the role of attitudinal orientations (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation)

The Dual-Process Model of Prejudice (DPM, Duckitt 2001; Duckitt 2006) states that prejudice and violent intentions against outgroups has different underlying motives. Threatening and dangerous outgroups boost beliefs that the world is dangerous, and these beliefs heighten the perceived threat from dangerous outgroups. On the other hand, competing outgroups increase competitive-jungle world beliefs, increasing negative sentiments toward competing or low-status outgroups. Dangerous and competitive worldview are schemas of the social world as either dangerous (versus safe and secure) or competitive (versus cooperative, Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, 2006; Perry et al., 2013). These schemas can be activated by either a threatening or competitive social situation or by the presence of a particular outgroup, and specific personality traits (like social conformity or tough-mindedness) make individuals susceptible for perceiving the social context as either dangerous or as a competitive, cut-throat jungle. For instance, the manipulation of the extent of danger posed by outgroups (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009), or the presence of threatening versus secure future scenarios (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003) influenced the perception of a dangerous world, while the manipulation of realistic threat caused by outgroups increased the perception of the world as a competitive jungle (Morrison & Ybarra, 2008), but another research did not find this connection (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). Figure 1 summarizes the original model.

The DPM model can also be applied to explain support for war and violence: dangerous and competitive worldview predicted ideological attitudes (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation), which increased support for restrictions on human rights and civil liberties, and also endorsement for the US military invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Crowson, 2009).

Figure 1. The Dual-Process Model of Prejudice (Duckitt, 2006)



The model emphasizes that different outgroups (either socially threatening, dangerous, or competitive) activate beliefs in a dangerous or competitive world and heightens perceived threat from outgroups. The DPM distinguishes between 3 types of groups (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). The first type is called "Dangerous groups." These groups can harm directly, and cause threat to security. Terrorists, violent criminals, drug dealers, drug users, Satanists, and others who are perceived as dangerous to our physical security and disrupt safety belong to this cluster. "Dissident groups" on the other hand reject and violate the accepted norms, and therefore represent a symbolic, and not a physical threat. According to the original study, prostitutes, atheists, feminists, protestors, and groups criticizing authority belong to this category of outgroups as they are perceived to cause disagreement and disunity in society (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). The third group is called "Derogated" in the DPM model (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) because of their disadvantaged situation. Physically unattractive people, mentally handicapped people, Africans, obese people, and psychiatric patients loaded on this factor in the original study. Dangerous, dissident, and derogated groups are corresponding to the distinction between physical, symbolic, and economic threat in the framework of integrated threat theory (Stephan et al., 1999). While cultural variations in the perception of groups exist, dangerous, dissident, and derogated groups could be distinguished in Hungary as well (Hadarics & Kende, 2018). Nevertheless, it has not been investigated yet how people justify aggression against outgroups with different quality of perceived threat (e.g. physical and symbolic) in this context, and my dissertation aims to fill out this niche.

The Dual-Process Model has been later refined as scholars found bidirectional relationship between worldview and ideological attitudes (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation): not only worldview affects ideological attitudes, but they predict change in dangerous and competitive worldview over time (Sibley & Duckitt, 2013; Sibley et al., 2007). So, when it comes to the ideological or attitudinal affinity to embrace ideologies that justify political violence, individual differences also matter. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance orientation (SDO, Pratto et al., 1994) are important factors in explaining support for violence, and previous studies showed that RWA and SDO are the two most powerful predictors of generalized prejudice and other political attitudes (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002).

Right-wing authoritarianism is a generalized attitudinal orientation, which can be described with the desire to seek for a powerful authority, to whom the authoritarian person can subordinate, authoritarian aggression against unconventional outgroups, and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1981). Conventionalism means that authoritarians are motivated to preserve ingroup norms and traditions (Duriez & van Hiel, 2002; Lippa & Arad, 1999), and they value social conformity rather than individual autonomy (Cohrs et al., 2005a; Duckitt, 2001). In addition to appreciating conventionalism, authoritarian people typically devalue non-conventionalist groups, therefore, RWA is associated with negative intergroup attitudes (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) related to the motivational goals of security, cohesion, group, and societal order, and the perceived symbolic threat that culturally different outgroups represent to this order (Caricati et al., 2017; Hadarics & Kende, 2018). Authoritarians believe that the world is a threatening and dangerous place, as RWA is based on the motivations of social control and security (Cohrs et al., 2005a; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, 2006).

When outgroups are perceived threatening, people with high RWA are more likely to turn to aggression to defend their group. Right-wing authoritarianism is directly associated with the ideological justification of intergroup violence (Faragó et al., 2019). Authoritarian aggression and prejudice are due to submission to authorities and their norms, and the uncritical acceptance of the leader's statements that devalue the norm breaker groups (Lippa & Arad, 1999). People high on RWA may feel morally superior to norm breakers, leading to hostile attitudes and violence toward them (Altemeyer, 2006). Willingness to kill, torture, and hunt down immigrants is connected to a perception of immigrants as violating ingroup norms (Thomsen et al., 2008). Previous research suggests that RWA predicts antidemocratic and militaristic attitudes (Cohrs et al., 2005b), such as militaristic aggression (Crowson, 2009), attitudes toward war, corporal punishment, and penal code violence (Benjamin, 2006), and the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs et al., 2005; Crowson, 2009). RWA also predicted abusive and torture-like behavior (Benjamin, 2016; Dambrun & Vatiné, 2010; Larsson et al., 2012).

According to the Dual-Process Model of Prejudice (DPM, Duckitt 2001; 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007), RWA-based prejudice is directed either towards groups that are physically dangerous, or towards groups that threaten the existing conventions and stability of society. Although RWA predicts prejudice against both physically dangerous and symbolically threatening groups (Asbrock et al., 2010), violence against physically dangerous groups can be justified as self-defense, and therefore aggression is more acceptable against these groups than against other types of outgroups. However, violence against symbolically threatening groups needs further justification than self-defense, as the harm they represent to the ingroup is less tangible. Threat to social cohesion, stability, and order are common reasons against norm breaker groups (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007), and authoritarians are highly sensitive to these threats.

In Hungary, right-wing authoritarianism is an important predictor of anti-minority attitudes (Csepeli et al., 2011; Kende et al., 2018), but this is not the only motive of people for supporting intergroup aggression. As mentioned previously, the system change in Hungary caused high unemployment rate, intolerance for inequality, the demand for redistribution (Bunce & Csanádi, 1993; Tóth, 2008), and the discontent of citizens was further increased by the economic crisis in 2008. Since 2010, the government endorsed populist and ultranationalist right-wing ideologies, while emphasizing the collective victimhood of Hungarians, and blaming minority and high-status groups (like the politicians in the European Union) for the discontent of Hungarians (Krekó & Juhász, 2018). Dissatisfaction, relative deprivation, and group-based grievances can increase participation in radical, aggressive protest (see e.g., Lemieux & Asal, 2010; Østby, 2013; Stewart, 2005; 2008) in order to retaliate for the perceived injustices. Social groups perceived to be responsible for the ingroup's ill fate and frustration can become targets of violence (Glick, 2002; Gurr, 1970; Staub, 1999; 2000). These groups differ in the type of threat they pose: they either threaten the physical integrity of the ingroup, their economic prosperity, or their accepted norms and values (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Stephan et al., 1999). Nevertheless, it has not been examined previously if the presence of political discontent and grievance justify hatred and intergroup violence, or the acceptance and justification lie rather in individual differences (e.g., in right-wing authoritarianism). Furthermore, it has been unanswered how blaming and violent intentions against, high-status groups (e.g., bureaucrats in the European Union) is justified.

In contrast to right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation (SDO) is a general attitudinal orientation which predicts people's desire to create and maintain hierarchical relations among social groups, and support for group-based dominance and oppression of low-status outgroups (Pratto et al., 1994). Any group-based oppression, either racism or sexism, stems from the same global motivation, which is the maintenance of hierarchical group relations, therefore SDO is an important predictor of negative intergroup attitudes (Faragó & Kende, 2017; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 2004). People high on SDO apply hierarchy-enhancing ideologies to justify the low status of outgroups and the unequal distribution of resources among social groups (Sidanius et al., 1991). Social dominance orientation is associated with tough-mindedness, and the perception of the world as a ruthless competitive jungle, where people compete for scarce resources (Duckitt, 2006; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). People high on SDO support the restriction of human rights and civil liberties (Crowson, 2009) and oppose the creation of social welfare programs for the disadvantaged. They also lack community feeling, altruism, empathy, and tolerance (Pratto et al., 1994).

There are two types of social dominance orientation: opposition to equality (SDO-E) and group-based dominance (SDO-D) (Jost & Thompson, 2000), which are qualitatively different domains of social dominance. Important differences between the two types of SDO are that groups-based dominance is related to the perception of intergroup competition as a zero-sum game (Ho et al., 2012), sensitivity to group-based threat (Kugler et al., 2010), the desire to oppress outgroups and immigrants, support for war (Ho et al., 2012), old-fashioned racism (Ho et al., 2012; 2015), and blatant dehumanization (Leyens et al., 2000) while SDO-E is not related to these phenomena. Opposition to equality and group-based dominance can be distinguished in Hungary as well (Faragó & Kende, 2017). Social dominance orientation explains support for intergroup violence (Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Henry et al., 2005; Larsson et al., 2012; Lindén et al., 2016; Thomsen et al., 2008), and social dominators see aggression as a mean of maintaining intergroup hierarchy and dominance (Henry et al., 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

According to the Dual-Process Model (DPM, Duckitt 2001; 2006), SDO predicts prejudice against groups with low status like housewives, unemployed, or poor people. SDO-based prejudice and violence are also directed against those groups that actively compete for scarce resources and therefore pose an economic threat to the ingroup (Asbrock et al., 2010; Caricati et al., 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Matthews et al., 2009;

Morrison & Ybarra, 2008; Thomsen et al., 2008). When an imaginary outgroup posed threat to the values and norms of the ingroup, people high on RWA opposed the migration of this group. However, when this group was described as disadvantageous and low status, SDO predicted its refusal (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). While high RWA is associated with aggression against immigrant groups because they violate ingroup norms with the refusal of assimilation, people high on SDO support violence because immigrants are willing to assimilate into the dominant culture, as this blurs existing status boundaries between groups (Thomsen et al., 2008).

Since the use of violence is morally unacceptable, supporters of violence need justification to make their actions socially acceptable to themselves and their environment. The greater the extent of violence, the more it is necessary to justify it and the greater the efforts are (Daskin, 2016). Consequently, those with high right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation must justify their support for violence. In a recent study, both right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation predicted moral exclusion of Roma people, Jews, and Muslims, and negative stereotypes about these groups' misbehavior served as a justification in this process (Hadarics & Kende, 2019). Although this justification applied both for SDO and RWA, it was more important for the latter, and previous studies supported that concerns for morality and justice are more important for authoritarians than for social dominators (Federico et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2019; Kugler et al., 2014; Milojev et al., 2014).

Stating that certain groups are criminals can help legitimizing violence against them. The legal criminalization of outgroups and "scapegoat-based policy making" is not unusual in Hungary (Kovarek et al., 2017). Laws are moral norms (Posner, 1997) that prescribe the appropriate and desirable behavior for individuals. They set the status quo due to the assumption of goodness because of their mere existence, and people will be more likely to adhere to them as they are motivated to preserve the status quo (Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). Therefore, if a law criminalizes a certain outgroup, it might even legitimize violence against this group (see e.g., Rajah, 2011). The politicization and criminalization of outgroups legitimizes prejudice (Bence & Udvarhelyi, 2013; Krekó et al., 2015; Langegger & Koester, 2016; Udvarhelyi, 2014), which can increase ideology-based rejection, and gives legitimacy to exclusionary ideologies and violence against the criminalized outgroups. As both right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation are related to punitive responses to crime and lack of support for minorities and disadvantaged groups (Gerber & Jackson, 2013; 2016; Ho et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 1993), it is likely that those individuals who think that the criminalizing law is acceptable, also use it as a justification for supporting violence against the outgroups. Nevertheless, it has not been examined previously if the acceptance of such criminalizing law justifies violence against the criminalized outgroup. Furthermore, it is unclear whether those high in right-wing authoritarianism or high in social dominance orientation use the law as a justification for supporting intergroup violence.

The role of perceived threat in intergroup violence

Outgroups do not have to pose real threat to the ingroup, only the perception of threat is enough to evoke negative intergroup attitudes and aggression. In line with the Dual-Process Model of Prejudice (Duckitt 2001; Duckitt 2006), Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al., 1999) differentiates between 3 types of threat: economic, physical, and symbolic. Economic threat refers to the economic insecurity of the ingroup, which is posed by outgroups competing for scarce resources like land or jobs. Physical threat involves threats to the existence and physical welfare of the ingroup, and threatening outgroups are seen as dangerous and violent. The third type, symbolic threat can be defined as a threat to the worldview of the ingroup: the moral rightness of values, beliefs, and attitudes (Stephan et al., 1999). When politicians or the media emphasize the threatening nature of outgroups, the perceived threat worsens intergroup relations, leading to violent intentions against these outgroups (Lewandowsky et al., 2013).

The perceived threat evoked by outgroups is often caused by the media portrayal of these groups. The media are largely responsible for shaping the perceived reality of individuals, as they often broadcast threatening images and topics regarding outgroups, evoking threat in the perceiver (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Hoffner & Cohen, 2013; Van Dijk, 1993). For instance, since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, Hungarian pro-government news outlets have been depicting immigrants from Muslim countries as threatening the security of Hungarians, competing for scarce resources like jobs, and having traditions and customs which are completely incompatible with the Hungarian culture (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016). Although the proportion of immigrants was quite low in Hungary, xenophobia and mass-migration related fear were at their peak in the country (Simonovits, 2016). In the Iraq war, the U.S. media constantly stressed that Muslims are terrorists and barbarians, and their "war against terrorism" narrative served as a justification for the Iraq war and Americans' violent intentions against Muslims (Esch, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2013). Other studies found that the more news people consumed, the more Latino and Black criminality they perceived in the US (Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Mastro et al., 2007).

Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976) posits that the media influence how the audience perceive reality, and people who consume much media see the world as a more dangerous and threatening place. The theory claims that long-term and heavy exposure to media violence results in heightened anxiety and threat, and the perception that the person has a higher chance of becoming a victim in a crime (Gerbner et al., 1980). Although cultivation theory originally examined the cumulative effect of television, it was able to adapt to the changing media environment (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Mosharafa, 2015): cultivation effects were examined for video games (Van Mierlo & Van den Bulck, 2004), for newspapers (Vergeer et al., 2000), and for the online media (Dietrich & Haußecker, 2017; Lau, 2015). According to a recent correlational study, duration of Facebook news reception increased economy-based threat and negative worldview in the perceiver (Dietrich

& Haußecker, 2017). Nevertheless, longitudinal data is needed to explore the cumulative effect of news consumption on online media platforms.

Based on cultivation theory, we can assume that the more individuals are exposed to fearmongering news about outgroups, the more intergroup threat they perceive. If an outgroup is portrayed in the media as posing either physical, economic, or symbolic threat (or all three) to the ingroup, the negative depiction increases intergroup anxiety (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016; Mastro & Robinson, 2000). Meeus and colleagues found that if the person's ingroup is under threat, it results in negative outgroup attitudes irrespective of individual characteristics (Meeus et al., 2009). Besides emphasizing threat, these narratives often dehumanize members of the outgroup, portraying them as inferior, which increases hatred and the potential for intergroup aggression (see e.g., Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). When an outgroup is dehumanized, ingroup members are more likely to exclude this group from the scope of moral principles, leading to intergroup oppression and violence (Opotow, 1990). Therefore, threatening portrayal of outgroups increase intergroup tensions, which can be manifested in intergroup violence as well (Lewandowsky et al., 2013).

Partisan motivated processes and the presence of misinformation

Not only news consumption exerts effect on how people see the world, but worldview and pre-existing attitudes also influence the type of information people consume, which have consequences for attitude polarization and intergroup relations. The terms motivated social cognition (see Kruglanski, 1996) and motivated reasoning (Kahan, 2013; Kunda, 1990) mean that individuals' belief systems and ideologies reflect their basic psychological needs (Jost et al., 2003). For instance, political ideology (e.g., being conservative) is related to permanently and temporarily activated needs to reduce ambiguity, uncertainty, threat, and disgust (Jost & Amodio, 2012; Jost et al., 2003; Matthews et al., 2009).

In line with motivated reasoning, people are motivated to accept or reject new information in accordance with their pre-existing beliefs and worldview, as it fulfills their basic needs (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Hart et al., 2009; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015), creating a confirmation bias in information processing (Wason, 1960). The term partisan motivated reasoning refers to the greater likelihood of acceptance of information that is consistent with people's attitudes and ideologies as strong and convincing, and the higher probability of rejection of inconsistent information because of its perceived weakness and invalidity (Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Lord et al., 1979; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015; Peterson & Iyengar, 2009; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Washburn & Skitka, 2017). In a classic study, undergraduates either supporting or opposing capital punishment read articles confirming or refuting the deterrent effect of death penalty. The students rated the attitude-consistent article more convincing, and their attitudes were even more polarized, e.g., those who supported death penalty believed that it is indeed an effective method to decrease crime (Lord et al., 1979). What is more, people are biased information-seekers as they not just passively accept, but actively search for information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and deny attitude-inconsistent ones (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Hart et al., 2009; Peterson & Iyengar, 2019). Even scientific facts are no exception: in a recent study liberals and conservatives were similarly motivated to deny scientific results that were inconsistent with their previous attitudes, therefore, political ideology exerted an effect on the motivated rejection of scientific facts (Washburn & Skitka, 2017). A behavioral experiment with EEG data also found evidence for confirmation bias: participants were more likely to believe in politically aligned fake news headlines, but they paid little cognitive attention to the inconsistent headlines, which were ignored and were rejected (Moravec et al., 2018). Partisan motivated reasoning and the algorithms of social media sites like Facebook or Twitter jointly create "echo chambers", that is, when people tend to follow like-minded others, resulting in closed, ideologically biased, cohesive social networks (Lazer et al., 2017).

Echo chambers created by partisan motivated reasoning are often formed along psychological, opinion-based group memberships. Opinion-based group membership involves a social identity based on shared opinion, which predicts emotions and political behavioral intentions better than any other sociological group memberships (Bliuc et al., 2007). In previous studies, partisanship (the stance of supporting or opposing a certain political party) was the most commonly measured opinion-based group membership (e.g., Nyhan & Reifler, 2010, Pasek et al., 2015; Peterson & Iyengar, 2019; Washburn & Skitka, 2017). In the U.S. the Democrat-Republican, or liberal-conservative dichotomy creates influential opinion-based group memberships, which shapes the way individuals interpret partisan information.

Partisan motivated reasoning also shapes what group members (e.g., supporters of a certain political party) consider trustworthy, or what they reject because of its perceived biased nature. Perception of trustworthiness depends largely on the match between the perceived ideology of the source of news and the person's own ideology (Hayes et al., 2018). When the source is considered as trustworthy, the information is more likely evaluated as credible, but it is rejected with higher probability when the source is perceived as unreliable (Greer, 2003). For instance, both Republicans and Democrats were more likely to evaluate information as credible when it came from their favored politician (Housholder & LaMarre, 2014). In another study, the intention to vote for Donald Trump predicted perceptions of him as a credible source of information (Swire et al., 2017). Not only the perceived ideology of the source predicts the credibility of information, but emotions such as anger and anxiety also play a role in partisan motivated information processing. When individuals read political news, anger enhances ideological partisanship and the attitude-consistent interpretation of news, thereby reinforcing people's own political stance. By contrast, anxiety reduces ideological bias in interpreting political information and leads to beliefs that are consistent with the information in the message (Weeks, 2015).

Partisan motivated information processing can also easily lead to belief in attitude-consistent misinformation. Misinformation has two broader categories, namely fake news and conspiracy theories. Fake news can be defined as fabricated "information", which is deliberately created to misinform readers (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), and in its appearance, it often mimics news media content (Lazer et al., 2018). While fake news, by definition, is fake, conspiracy theories are not necessarily false, and they can be defined as explanations for significant events which were caused by powerful agents acting in secret to achieve a hidden goal (Keeley, 1999). Fake news and conspiracy theories are often treated as interchangeable concepts, especially in mainstream media, but sometimes in academic texts as well (e.g., Tandoc et al., 2018). Belief in fake news and conspiracy theories both fulfill ideological and psychological needs in line with motivated social cognition (see Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Douglas et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). Fake news breed on the fertile ground of endemic mistrust in the mainstream media. However, fake news and conspiracy theories are not equivalent. Unlike fake news, conspiracy theories are not necessarily false, and not all fake news contains a conspiracy narrative. According to Knapp's (1944) categorization of rumors, "Pipedream" fake news that fulfills the hopes and wishes of individuals does not have any inherent conspiratorial narrative. In contrast, other forms of rumors contain a conspiratorial component. "Bogeyman" news represents fears and anxieties, while "wedge-driving" or aggressive news has the essential motivation to evoke aggression and hatred.

There are three dominant explanations of the relationship between belief in fake information and ideological-political position. According to the first set of explanations, conservative people are more likely to accept misinformation than liberals (see e.g., Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016), because of different cognitive processes among conservatives and liberals (Deppe et al., 2015; Jost, 2017; Pfattheicher & Schindler, 2016). Conservatives accept fake news more because they are more sensitive to menaces and uncertainty and perceive the world as a more complex and more threatening place (Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). According to a pollster, 66% of the conservative Hungarian pro-government voters believed that the “Soros plan” exists, nearly four times more than supporters of the liberal opposition (Pivarnyik, 2017).

Another set of explanations suggests an asymmetry according to positions of power. Fake news (mainly with a conspiracy narrative) can be particularly attractive for political “losers” (i.e,, members and supporters of the opposition) and less appealing to the “winners” (i.e.. members and supporters of the government, e.g., Uscinski & Parent, 2014). The psychological explanation for this asymmetry is that supporters of the government trust and therefore believe the official media and traditional news sources more (Bennett et al., 1999). The acceptance of fake news by supporters or the opposition of the government is dependent on the content of fake news as well. Supporters of the government perceive the performance of the government more positively (Little, 2017), making pro-government fake news consistent with their worldviews due to partisan motivated reasoning. When people perceive economic prosperity and feel optimistic about the future, they are also more satisfied with those in power (i.e., their president, Treisman, 2011). Therefore, satisfaction (as a governmental performance indicator) could increase the acceptance of pro-governmental fake news. In contrast, those who oppose the government are more likely to accept fake news that is critical of the government. Krekó (2015) found that anti-governmental conspiracy beliefs were stronger among people who had a more negative assessment of their own, and of their country’s economic situation in Hungary.

The third set of explanations suggests symmetry. It assumes that partisanship (supporting or opposing the government) predicts not just satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the economic situation of people’s own household or that of their country, but also the acceptance (or rejection) of pro-government fake news (Swire et al., 2017). People are more likely to accept fake information that is consistent with their beliefs, worldview, or preferred political party, based on partisan motivated processing both on the left and on the right (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015; Weeks, 2015). Republicans, for example, were more likely to believe that Barack Obama was born outside the United States than Democrats, as this information was aligned with their beliefs and worldview (Pasek et al., 2015). Democrats, on the other hand, were much more likely to believe that 9/11 was an inside job (Oliver & Wood, 2014). In Hungary, it has not been investigated previously if fake news acceptance is symmetrical based on partisanship, or some groups (e.g., conservatives, liberals, government supporters, or voters of the opposition) are more likely to fall prey for fake news.

Partisan motivated processes and the presence of misinformation can jointly lead to radicalization and intergroup violence. If group members are constantly misinformed, the chances to make good societal decisions are not optimal, which might have detrimental consequences for intergroup relations (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). If the ideologically consistent information depicts a certain outgroup negatively, which allegedly poses threat to the ingroup and behaves dangerously or competitively, members of the ingroup will more likely find this information credible, leading to intergroup tensions and aggression (Lewandowsky et al., 2013). Lippmann (1933) already predicted it eighty-five years ago that stereotypes will be spread by misinformation in the media, building a non-existent “reality” about the nature of ethnic groups. But the novelty of the situation is that social media provides more efficient tools for spreading fake news than ever (Lazer et al., 2017). According to the report of Pew Research Center (2017), 66% of Hungarians think that the influx of immigrants is the top threat for Hungary, and this is the result of the systematic disinformation and migration related fake news spread by the Hungarian government (Barlai, & Sik, 2017; think tank report of Juhász & Szicherle, 2017). Another example is that American conservatives were more likely to believe that Iraq had WMD (Weapon of Mass Destruction) in the Iraq war in 2003 than liberal voters, and the Bush administration was largely responsible for spreading this misinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2013).

Partisan motivated reasoning predicts belief in attitude-consistent (mis)information, though not every fake news contains elements of threat or conspiracies (Knapp, 1944). Despite seeming harmless, the adoption of mutually supportive wish-fulfilling and hostile fake news can further strengthen the existence of groups in a separate information universe, and the consequent attitude polarization can increase support for violent solutions (see e.g., Krekó, 2020). What is more, fake news (even pipedream) is hard to discredit: as the worldview-inconsistent correction can even strengthen the original belief, leading to a worldview backfire effect (Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Furthermore, previous studies demonstrated that a piece of misinformation can knock out the effect of real facts (Raab et al., 2013; van der Linden et al., 2017). Therefore, such misinformation is hard to discredit, but builds a false reality about the nature of other groups.

Conspiracy theories and fear-mongering fake news often justify hatred, discrimination, and violent behavior against the other group (see e.g., Bouvier & Smith, 2006; Gray, 2010; Kofta & Sedek, 2005). If these narratives emphasize the dangerous or competitive nature of the outgroups, members of the ingroup will feel existential threat, and the fearmongering portrayal will become a justification for intergroup violence in itself (Lewandowsky et al., 2013). Acting against this threatening outgroup will not be considered violence but legitimate self-defense (Kofta & Sedek, 2005), and misinformation strengthens the belief that violence is the only remaining option (think tank report of Bartlett & Miller, 2010). In this sense, misinformation works as a “radicalizing multiplier” (think tank report of Bartlett & Miller, 2010), polarizing the groups’ attitudes and behavior and thus increases support for violent acts. Furthermore, a recent research revealed that conspiracy theories partially channel individuals' aggression towards political targets (Vegetti & Littvay, 2020). There are several instances in history when conspiracy theories lead to the acceptance of violence. For instance, those Americans who believed in the misinformation that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction were more likely to support war against them (Kull et al., 2003). The worldwide and all-encompassing conspiracy of America and Israel often appears as an ideological justification for assassinations by Muslim terrorists (Gray, 2010). The massacres between 1996 and 2001 in Central Kalimantan between Dayak and Madurese groups can be traced back to belief in conspiracy theories about the other group's bad intentions (Bouvier & Smith, 2006). These studies show that partisan motivated reasoning exerts effect on biased information processing (Lewandowsky et al., 2013), which makes people more susceptible to attitude-consistent misinformation, deepening intergroup tensions and leading to the justification of group-based violence. Nevertheless, it has not been examined in one complex model how partisan motivated reasoning and identification with an opinion-based group affect information processing and the acceptance of fake news and their effect on supporting intergroup violence.

Research questions and overview of the studies

My empirical work aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do people justify aggression against outgroups with different quality of perceived threat? Can the presence of political discontent and grievance justify hatred and intergroup violence, or the acceptance and justification lie rather in individual differences (e.g., in right-wing authoritarianism)? How can blaming and violent intentions against powerful, high-status groups (e.g., bureaucrats in the European Union) be justified?

In Study 1 (Faragó et al., 2019), we explored the acceptability of violence against groups that are perceived as harmful to the physical integrity of the ingroup *(physically threatening groups)*, and against groups that are perceived as breaking the accepted norms and values of the society *(symbolically threatening groups)*. We were interested in whether propensity for radical protest or right-wing authoritarianism explain the justification of political violence against different target groups more.

2. How do legal changes associate with the acceptability of violence towards a criminalized group? Is the acceptance of a criminalizing law serves as a justification for violence against a criminalized outgroup? If yes, whether those high in right-wing authoritarianism or high in social dominance orientation use the law as a justification for supporting intergroup violence?

In Study 2 (Faragó et al., 2021), we investigated whether the legal criminalization of a marginalized and low-status social group (homeless people) could work as a justification for violence against this group, and what role right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation play in this process. We also tested if the justification mechanisms are universal, or they only apply to people with specific educational levels.

3. How do partisan motivated reasoning and identification with an opinion-based group affect fake news acceptance, and how partisan motivated reasoning is associated with support for intergroup violence?

In Study 3 (Faragó et al., 2020), we examined the complex relationship between partisan motivated reasoning, news consumption, and support for intergroup violence. Study 3 consists of three studies: in Study 3a and Study 3b, we investigated the effect of partisan motivated reasoning on the acceptance of political misinformation. We deliberately used wish-fulfilling political fake news so as to exclude the confounding role of threat, and to test the symmetry of the mechanism along partisan lines. We conducted these two studies to address the effect of partisan motivated reasoning on the acceptance of political news, as it further strengthens opinion polarization and consequently worsens intergroup relations, planting the seeds for supporting intergroup violence. To test these associations, we explored the influence of partisan motivated reasoning on the justification of intergroup violence in Study 3c: specifically, we were interested in the role of fearmongering anti-refugee news consumption on perceived threat, competitive and dangerous worldview, and support for violence against Muslim refugees.

Study 1 - The effect of propensity for radical protest and right-wing authoritarianism on the acceptance of violence toward physically dangerous and symbolically threatening groups

The aim of Study 1

In Study 1 (Faragó et al., 2019), we explored whether aggression can be justified against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups in the contemporary Hungarian context. Also, we investigated which groups have a higher chance of becoming victims of violence and what the social psychological mechanisms are that justify intergroup violence. Specifically, we were interested in the role of propensity for radical protest and right-wing authoritarianism in triggering political violence against different target groups.

Although we assumed that both propensity for radical protest and right-wing authoritarianism would explain the justification of intergroup violence, we hypothesized that RWA would predict it more strongly than general propensity for radical protest (H1). As RWA ensures the ideological, value-based legitimation that helps to let aggression be seen justified (Gerber & Jackson, 2017), we can expect that RWA has a more important role in explaining the justification of violence against symbolically threatening groups than propensity for radical protest, which lacks such ideological component. We also presumed that those who justify violence against symbolically threatening groups would be higher in right-wing authoritarianism (H2), because RWA gives an ideological basis for the justification of violence as a tool also against symbolically threatening groups.

Participants and Procedure

We relied on a dataset of a nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos, a public opinion research company. The questionnaire was put together by the Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting

Institute that provided us with the dataset for secondary analysis. Pollsters of Ipsos contacted those respondents who agreed to participate and fit into the quota set which was based on the recent national census (Population Census 2011). Non-response rate was not provided by Ipsos. Pollsters asked respondents using computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI), and the interviews took place in the homes of the respondents. It was an omnibus survey that measured several other constructs not mentioned in this study. Because the survey was long and served multiple purposes, we could only use shortened scales to measure the variables for our current study.

One thousand individuals participated in the research. The sample of the omnibus survey was matched to the recent national census (Population Census 2011), and was representative in terms of gender, age, education, and settlement type for the Hungarian adult population (over the age of 18 years). For instance, 17.4% of the resident population lives in Budapest, 52.1% in other towns, and 30.5% in villages according to the national census, and in our sample the proportions were 18.1% for Budapest, 52.9% for towns, and 29% for villages.

Measures

Propensity for radical protest. We measured whether people intended to participate in illegal strikes and demonstrations or engaged in violent and harmful protests in order to preserve values that were important for them, by listing different situations. If they had never participated in any of the listed situations, they could indicate their willingness to participate. Although willingness and real participation are not the same things, we measured both as intention is a reliable precursor of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). We measured propensity for radical protest with these items. Respondents rated these statements on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 meant “would never do”, 2 stood for ”might do” and 3 meant “have already done”. The items are presented in Table 1.

We analyzed the factor structure of these items, assuming that they would constitute one factor. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .88, and only one factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 4.57. This factor explained 57.10% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from .69 to .80. We created a mean-based index instead of factor scores, to ensure that all situations are included with the same weight. The internal consistency of this index proved to be excellent (Cronbach α = .91).

Table 1. The items of propensity for radical protest scale

1. Participate in violent action if your livelihood was in danger
2. Defame an immoral politician, even in his presence
3. Join an illegal strike
4. Join an illegal demonstration
5. Fight the police if your livelihood was in danger
6. Participate in violent act to defend your opinion or values
7. Would you hit or throw something at an immoral politician if she or he was near you?
8. Fight the police to protect your opinion and values

Note. **S**tatements are rated on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 meant "would never do", 2 stood for "might do" and 3 meant "have already done".

Justification of violence against outgroups. Groups were selected to represent heterogeneous categories that often appear in Hungarian public discourse, such as the Roma, criminals, terrorists, politicians, banks, Jews, multinational companies, lesbian and gay people, and authoritarian leaders undermining democracy. Criminals were chosen to represent tangible deviance. Politicians, authoritarian leaders undermining democracy, banks, and multinational companies were included because they are perceived as influential, powerful, and they possess control over resources.

Respondents had to evaluate whether the use of violence could be justified against these groups. They responded on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, from 1=completely unjustifiable and 5=completely justifiable. They had to rate the groups separately. We analyzed the factor structure of these groups and assumed a two-factor solution. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring with promax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .90. Two factors emerged: the first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.20, and the second factor with an eigenvalue of 1.24. These two explained 71.53% of the total variance. Using Kaiser's criterion, we selected these two factors as their eigenvalue was larger than 1. The two-factor solution was also supported by confirmatory factor analysis: this model ($\chi 2$ (24) = 149.01, p < .000, RMSEA=.074, TLI=.946, CFI=.964, SRMR = .030) fitted the data much better than a model with one factor, which had unacceptable model fit ($\chi 2$ (27) = 701.52, p < .000, RMSEA=.163, TLI=.740, CFI=.805, SRMR = .101). The correlation between the factors was r = .47, p < .001. The pattern matrix of the explorative factor analysis with the factor loadings are seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Pattern matrix of groups with factor loadings

	Factor	
	1	2
Multinational companies	.93	
Jews	.93	
Banks	.86	
Politicians	.84	
Lesbian and gay people	.77	
Authoritarian leaders undermining democracy	.67	
Roma	.65	
Terrorists		.94
Criminals		.86

The first factor comprised multinational companies, Jews, banks, politicians, lesbian and gay people, authoritarian leaders undermining democracy, and Roma people. Influential groups and minority groups belonged to this factor. Terrorists and criminals loaded on the second factor. We created two indices from the two factors that we used in subsequent analyses. We again computed a mean-based index instead of factor scores. We named the first factor „symbolically threatening groups", and the second „physically dangerous groups". The internal consistency proved to be excellent for symbolically threatening groups (Cronbach α = .93), and the correlation between physically dangerous groups was high as well (r = .79, p < .001).

Right-wing authoritarianism. We measured right-wing authoritarianism using 4 items from the RWA scale (Altemeyer 1981; translated and adapted by Enyedi, 1996), with items such as *"All true patriots are obliged to take measures against those condemned by the leaders of the country"*. Respondents rated these items on a Likert scale of 1=disagree strongly to 5=strongly agree. We created a mean-based index that we used in subsequent analyses. The internal consistency of this shortened scale is acceptable (Cronbach α = .74).

Results

Descriptive statistics. Regarding the justification of violence against different outgroups, the number of valid responses, the means and standard deviations are seen in Table 3.

Respondents thought that violence can be justified mostly against terrorists (M = 3.91, SD = 1.34), and least against lesbian and gay people (M = 2.23, SD = 1.25). To check whether aggression against one kind of group was more accepted than against other groups, we conducted a paired-samples t-test. It showed that respondents accepted more aggression against physically dangerous groups than against symbolically threatening groups (t(933) = -29.22, p < .001, d = 1.03).

Table 3. Justification of violence against the outgroups. Number of valid responses, means, and standard deviations of the groups

	N	M(SD)
Terrorists	963	3.91 (1.34)
Criminals	942	3.67 (1.35)
Roma	922	2.85 (1.34)
Authoritarian leaders undermining democracy	914	2.79 (1.30)
Banks	907	2.61 (1.37)
Politicians	906	2.60 (1.34)
Multinational companies	905	2.43 (1.29)
Jews	895	2.31 (1.26)
Lesbian and gay people	915	2.23 (1.25)

Note. Bigger means indicate more justified violence. Attitudes were measured on a 5-point scale.

The Pearson correlations between propensity for radical protest, right-wing authoritarianism, and the justification of violence against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups are presented in Table 4. Propensity for radical protest and right-wing authoritarianism did not correlate with each other significantly, indicating that we measured different constructs.

Table 4. Pearson correlations between main measures, means, and standard deviations of Study 1

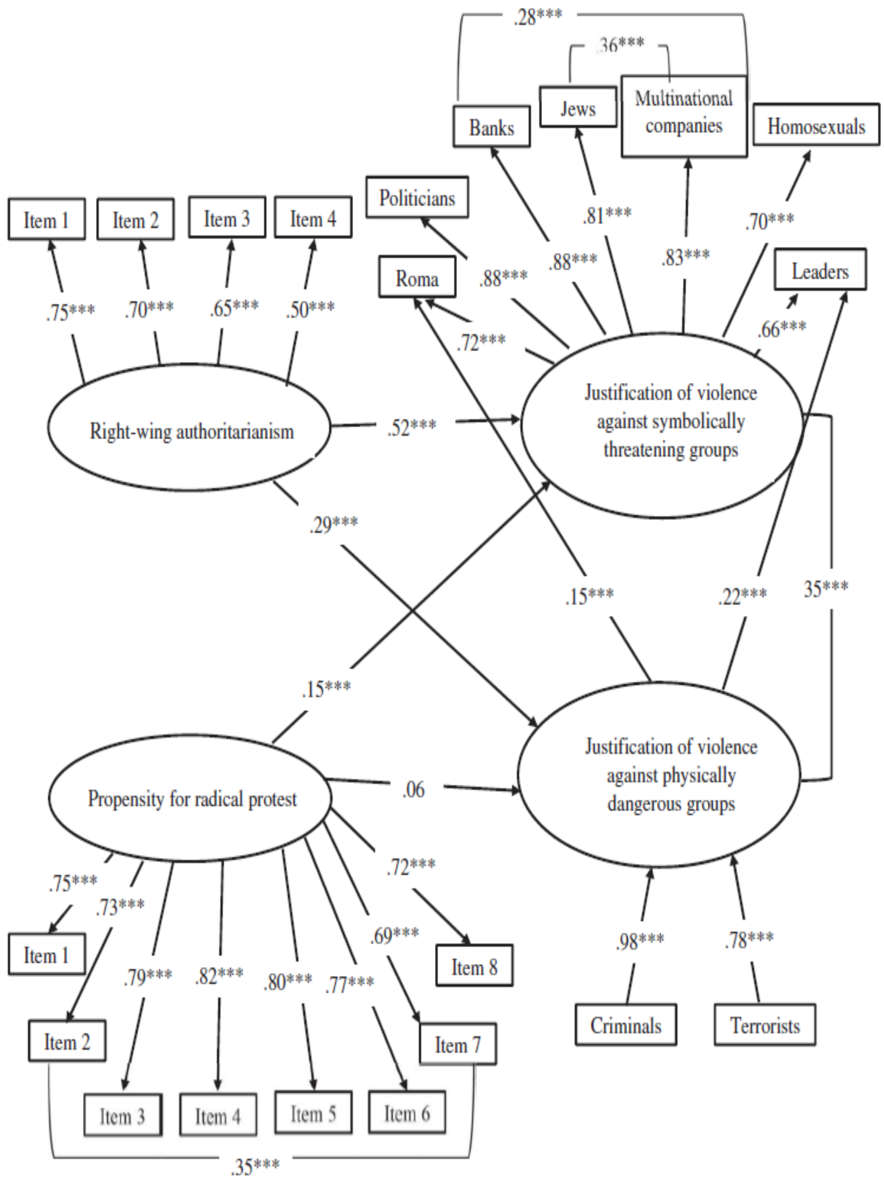
	1	2	3	4	M (SD)
1. Propensity for radical protest	1				1.11 (.27)
2. Right-wing authoritarianism	*.02*	1			2.62 (.71)
3. The justification of violence against symbolically threatening groups	.21**	.31**	1		2.56 (1.11)
4. The justification of violence against physically dangerous groups	.11**	.13**	.43**	1	3.79 (1.27)

Note. Statistical significance is indicated at the following level: ** p < 0.01.

Hypothesis testing using Structural Equation Modelling. To check the connection between right-wing authoritarianism, propensity for radical protest, and the justification of violence against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups, we conducted Structural Equation Modelling. We used bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). The SEM model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Interestingly, confirmatory factor analysis revealed that Roma people and authoritarian leaders undermining democracy loaded on the dangerous factor as well, but these factor loadings were quite low (Roma people: r = .15, p < .001; authoritarian leaders undermining democracy: r = .22, p < .001). Nonetheless, allowing these two groups to load also on the physically dangerous factor enhanced the model fit. We also allowed three correlated errors in our model (see Figure 2.), which were theoretically plausible, and improved the model fit. Our model showed acceptable fit: $\chi^2(180) = 940.41$, $p < .001$, RMSEA=.076, CFI= .922, TLI=.909, NFI=.905.

Figure 2. The relationship between right-wing authoritarianism, propensity for radical protest, and the justification of violence against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups



Note. Standardized regression coefficients and correlations are displayed with probability values.

***p < 0.001.

As we assumed, right-wing authoritarianism was a stronger predictor of justification of violence against symbolically threatening groups (β = .52, *p* < .001, *CI:* .45, .60) than propensity for radical protest (β = .15, *p* < .001, *CI:* .07, .22), and the difference between the two predictors is highly significant, as there was no overlap between the 95% confidence intervals. Right-wing authoritarianism also significantly explained the justification of violence against physically dangerous groups (β = .29, *p* < .001, *CI:* .21, .37), but propensity for radical protest did not predict it significantly (β = .06, *p* < .136, *CI:* -.02, .12), in line with our hypothesis.

Discussion of Study 1

In Study 1, we investigated whether violence can be justified against symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups in the context of contemporary Hungarian society. In order to demonstrate the distinction between physically dangerous and symbolically threatening groups, groups were selected that often appear in Hungarian public discourse. We presumed that right-wing authoritarianism has a more important role in explaining the justification of intergroup aggression than propensity for radical protest, and that those who justify violence against symbolically threatening groups are higher in right-wing authoritarianism. Both of our assumptions were supported. This result is not surprising as RWA ensures the ideological, value-based legitimation that helps to let aggression be seen justified (Gerber & Jackson, 2017), but propensity for radical protest does not give such ideological legitimation. According to a recent study, negative stereotypes about different outgroups' norm-violating misbehavior justified their moral exclusion for those high in RWA (Hadarics & Kende, 2019), which is also parallel with our findings. Authoritarians are highly sensitive to threats related to stability, order, social cohesion, and the physical integrity of the ingroup, which are common reasons against norm breaker and dangerous groups (Cohrs et al., 2005a; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007).

Interestingly, right-wing authoritarianism was a much stronger predictor of the justification of violence against symbolically threatening groups than against physically dangerous groups, contrary to empirical research which states that RWA predicts hostility towards both type of groups equally (Asbrock et al., 2010). One possible explanation might be that although those high in right-wing authoritarianism are more susceptible to threats related to the physical integrity of the ingroup, safety is a basic human need for all (Maslow, 1943), but adherence to norms and tradition is not. Consequently, the variance of justification of violence against physically dangerous groups explained by right-wing authoritarianism was much smaller, but still strong.[6]

People high in propensity for radical protest are not susceptible to threats related to security, social cohesion, and norm violation, so we did not assume that it would strongly predict support for violence against threatening outgroups. Propensity for radical protest stem from group-based grievances and inequalities (Lemieux & Asal, 2010; Østby, 2013; Stewart, 2005; 2008), and in line with this we found that it predicted the justification of violence against symbolically threatening groups, which can be blamed and scapegoated for the frustrations and grievances (Glick, 2002; Staub, 2000). Nevertheless, propensity for radical protest was a 3.5

[6] Another possible explanation can be that physical threat by terrorists is not very common in Hungary, and the level of criminality measured by crime rate is also relatively low (Kerezsi, 2020), which might have influenced the perception of criminals and terrorists as physical threat. Though objective crime rates can indeed shape the perception of threat, we claim that it has a minor effect, as the perceived threat from terrorists and criminals is rather shaped by the social context, communication, the media, and political discourses according to the approach of social cognition (see e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 2013). For instance, the report of Pew Research Center (2016) pointed out that 76% of the respondents of Hungary agreed with the statement that "*refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism in the country*", despite not having terrorist attacks in Hungary. This can be the result of the massive anti-immigration campaigns since 2015 (Barlai, & Sik, 2017). As a contrast, only 46% of French participants agreed, despite the many terrorist attacks took place in France.

times weaker predictor of support for violence against symbolically threatening groups than RWA, and it was not associated with the justification of violence against physically dangerous groups at all. These results show that the presence of political discontent and grievance can also justify intergroup violence (at least against symbolically threatening groups), but the justification lie rather in individual differences.

The acceptance of violence towards these groups differed significantly: respondents thought that aggressive behavior against physically dangerous groups is more justified than against symbolically threatening groups. Aggression was the most acceptable against terrorists and criminals which makes sense as they pose direct threat to individuals, so the reason for self-defense might be sufficient to legitimize violence against them. Nonetheless, symbolically threatening groups threaten the existing moral norms and conventions of the society, so their harm is less tangible (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). This category included Roma people, Jews, lesbian and gay people, politicians, banks, multinational companies, and authoritarian leaders undermining democracy. As an alternative interpretation, these groups can be regarded as “distrusted” because besides violating the moral norms and conventions of the majority, they might elicit distrust in the perceiver. Participants may have perceived these groups differently: for instance, the term “authoritarian leaders undermining democracy” has two meanings [7]in the highly polarized Hungarian politics. For supporters of the opposition parties, the authoritarian leader is Viktor Orbán, who poses real threat to Hungary’s EU-membership because of creating an illiberal democracy. Nonetheless, his supporters perceive the situation in the opposite direction: in their eyes, the European Union and George Soros are the enemies. According to

[7] Unfortunately, we were not able to measure respondents’ associations about the term “authoritarian leaders undermining democracy”. To measure its exact meaning, it would have required an open-ended question. Nonetheless, we presume that other groups (like banks or multinational companies) do not have ambivalence in their meaning, and people think about the same concept regardless of their political orientation.

Viktor Orbán's rhetoric, George Soros pulls the strings, and he also controls the EU and poses danger to Hungarian democracy via spreading dangerous liberalism in Hungary (Krekó & Enyedi, 2018). Consequently, this term has two meanings depending on one's partisanship (supporting or opposing the government, see Study 3a, 3b, and 3c). According to confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling, authoritarian leaders undermining democracy and Roma people were weakly related to physically dangerous groups as well. This makes sense as authoritarian leaders undermining democracy can also pose a threat to the physical integrity of individuals, and criminality often appears in anti-Roma stereotypes in Hungary (see e.g., Kende et al., 2017).

Though support for violence against high-status, influential groups like politicians, authoritarian leaders undermining democracy, banks, and multinational companies were not expected to correlate with RWA according to previous literature (see e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2007), our results show that violence against these groups can be justified by right-wing authoritarianism and to a smaller extent by propensity for radical protest. Powerful groups loaded on the same factor as other symbolically threatening groups, meaning that they also pose symbolic threat to the authoritarian person, at least in the Hungarian context. This surprising result can be explained by the Hungarian system change and the recent economic crisis, which heightened people's intolerance for inequality and their demand for redistribution (Tóth, 2008), and authoritarians were presumably threatened existentially by these groups.

Support for violence was the lowest against lesbian and gay people, which might sound controversial as these groups suffer the most from violent incidents (TASZ-report, Jovánovics, 2015). Overall, acceptance of violence against these groups was very high in our sample, as 15.3% of the respondents indicated that violence against lesbian and gay people is justified, though it was still the lowest acceptance as opposed to that of other listed groups. Another possible explanation for this inconsistency might be that although violence against other groups (like multinational companies, politicians, leaders undermining democracy, or Roma people) is more justified than against LGBTQ+ people, but initiating real violence might be costly and disadvantageous (e.g., attacking a politician has more negative consequences for the perpetrator, as the case appears in the media, and the perpetrator more likely gets punishment, or aggression against Roma people might be perceived as more dangerous due to the stereotypes about their aggressivity (Kende et al., 2017)).

Limitations of Study 1

Study 1 has some limitations. First, we used a shortened version of the right-wing authoritarianism scale due to the length of the survey. This scale has also been criticized by scholars because it measures RWA as a unidimensional concept and because of the psychometric difficulties related to double-barreled questions (see e.g., Duckitt et al., 2010; Funke, 2005). Nonetheless, there is no reliable test for measuring the multi-dimensional right-wing authoritarianism in the Hungarian language, which is an important problem Hungarian scholars should address in the near future. The scale of Enyedi (1996) is the most commonly used scale for measuring RWA in Hungary, and was created from Altemeyer's instrument, therefore we used it in our research. The shortened scale was reliable, so we could successfully grasp the construct of RWA. On the other hand, we did not have any hypothesis regarding the differential discriminant validity of the 3 social attitude dimensions of RWA. As Altemeyer's RWA scale correlated highly with the refined scale of Duckitt et al. (2010), which indicates that they measured the same construct (Duckitt et al., 2010), we opted for using the old scale in our research. Second, we selected only two groups to represent physically dangerous groups. We thought that groups that often appear in Hungarian public discourse were mostly symbolically threatening, but not physically harmful, and that is why we could list more symbolically threatening groups. Thirdly, we could have included more predictors in our study, including social dominance orientation, relative deprivation, political alienation, or low political power. Nonetheless, in spite of its role in explaining various intergroup phenomena (Ho et al., 2015; Pratto et al., 1994), high social dominance orientation is not so prevalent in Hungary, as SDO scores usually tend to be lower than that of RWA (see e.g., Kende et al., 2018). A recent meta-analysis assessed research related to antisemitism and antigypsyism between 2005-2017 in Hungary revealed that right-wing authoritarianism is more important predictor of anti-minority attitudes than social dominance orientation (Kende et al., 2018). In spite of this, we included social dominance orientation in Study 2 to measure its effect on intergroup violence. We did not include relative deprivation, political alienation, and low political power, as they are all antecedents of radical protest (see e.g., Daskin, 2016; Lemieux & Asal, 2010; Østby, 2013; Staub, 1999; 2000). We only measured the propensity for radical protest, as it is an expression of strong political discontent and dissatisfaction, but it would be useful in future studies to investigate its antecedents also as separate predictors of intergroup violence. Finally, as our results were correlational, we cannot establish whether right-wing authoritarianism and propensity for radical protest were the causes of the justification of violence, or they co-occurred based on other factors. Experimental evidence in future research should establish the causality in the established connection.

Study 2 – Criminalization as a justification for intergroup violence

In Study 2 (Faragó et al., 2021), we investigate the mechanism of supporting violence against homeless people, who are low in status and perceived as a both symbolically and physically threatening group (Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Lee et al., 1990; Snow et al., 1989). There are more than 10,000 homeless people in Hungary, from which 33% live in public spaces (according to the report of Feantsa, 2017). However, this number includes only those who have contact with volunteers or shelters, so homelessness can actually affect more people. Although homeless people evoke empathy and compassion from the majority society because of their poor living conditions (Krekó et al., 2015), their judgment is twofold. Homeless people are perceived as extremely low in competence and warmth according to the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2007), leading to negative stereotypes about homelessness, and indifference to their situation (Cuddy et al., 2007). Stereotypes suggest that homeless people are avoidant of work, are alcoholics and mentally ill (Lee et al., 1990), and pose a threat to public security (Snow et al., 1989). According to previous research, homeless people are considered threatening both because of their perceived physical dangerousness and low status (Donley, 2008; Hadarics & Kende, 2018). Furthermore, citizens and politicians often perceive homeless people as criminals (Foscarinis, 1996; Foscarinis et al., 1999; Udvarhelyi, 2014). It is widely though that criminality must be punished, therefore, homeless people are at risk of moral harassment, atrocities, aggression, and crimes committed against them (Alder, 1991; Cuddy et al., 2007; Levin, 2015; North et al., 1994).

General difficulties of the homeless are increased by the fact that they are often blamed for their situation (Belcher, & DeForge, 2012; Feagin, 1975; Phelan et al., 1997). When people evaluate the possible factors which contribute to poverty and homelessness, they are more likely to emphasize internal causes like the lack of effort, ability, and proper money management, than external ones, including economic and social circumstances (Feagin, 1975; Hopper, 2003). Internal attributions emphasize homeless people’s responsibility and control over their situation and undermines effective helping behavior as a consequence (Kogut, 2011). Furthermore, blaming undermines the effects of positive policies aimed at abolishing homelessness and legitimizes the punishment of homeless people (Misetics, 2010).

On 15 October 2018, the 7th amendment of Fundamental Law of Hungary was passed prohibiting the use of public places for living (Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2018). Earlier regulations also limited homelessness but prohibited it under a maximum infringement procedure. Now homeless people can be forced to leave public premises, kept in custody, and their belongings can be destroyed as authorized by the new law.

The aim of Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed to explore whether a criminalizing law and the criminalization of homelessness could be used as a justification for intergroup violence, and what role attitudinal orientations, namely right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, play in this justification process. Based on the review of the literature presented in the theoretical background, we assumed that both right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation would predict the acceptance of violence towards homeless people (H1). We also hypothesized that the amendment of Fundamental Law would serve as a justification in this process, and the linkage between RWA, SDO, and violence would be mediated by support for the new law (H2).

Pilot study

Participants and Procedure

Using an online questionnaire, we recruited participants via social media. We used convenience sampling, and our sample consisted of 196 participants. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University. The language of the questionnaire was Hungarian. The questionnaire and the data file of the pilot study can be found at Open

Science Framework: https://osf.io/kz6bj/ (identifier: DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/KZ6BJ).

One hundred and forty respondents were women (71.4%), 48 were men (24.5%), 2 indicated other or did not wish to answer (1%), and 6 did not mark their gender (3.1%). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 76 years (M = 44.71 years, SD = 14.39). 23% completed secondary school, 5.6% were college or university students, and 67.9% graduated from higher education (3.1% were missing). Therefore, the sample consisted of more highly educated respondents than the average Hungarian population.

Measures

Right-wing authoritarianism. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) was measured using the shortened, six-item version of the RWA scale (Altemeyer, 1981; translated and adapted to the Hungarian context by Enyedi, 1996), with items such as *"All true patriots are obliged to take measures against those condemned by the leaders of the country"; "Nowadays in our country most of the damage is done by those who do not respect our leaders and the order of the society".* Participants rated the items on a scale of 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 7 *(strongly agree).* The mean-based index was created and used in subsequent analyses.

Social dominance orientation. We measured social dominance orientation (SDO) using the shortened SDO7 scale (Ho et al., 2015; translated and adapted by Faragó & Kende, 2017), with eight items such as *"Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups"; "We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed".* Items were rated on a scale from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 7 *(strongly agree).* We used the mean of the items in further analyses.

Support for the new law. We first presented participants with a short description of the seventh amendment of the Fundamental Law in a way that is ideologically non-biased (e.g., we did not use expressions like criminalization) and easy to understand:

"On October 15, 2018, the seventh amendment of the Fundamental Law of Hungary came into force, according to which the police can charge a person who has been warned three times about infringing the rules of residing on public premises for habitation. If someone littered, urinated, or consumed alcohol in public areas, it was already possible to initiate proceedings under the previous regulations. The current change is a novelty that in itself penalizes someone just for sleeping and living in public areas."

We asked participants to indicate if they support this amendment using four questions: *"Do you think that the amendment of the Fundamental Law is acceptable?"; "Do you think that the amendment of the Fundamental Law is effective in solving the social problem of homelessness?"; "Do you think that the amendment of the Fundamental Law protects homeless people?"; "Do you think that the amendment of the Fundamental Law protects the interests of non-homeless people?"* Respondents rated their agreement with a scale of 1 *(not at all)* to 7 *(completely)*. We ran an explorative factor analysis (principal axis factoring due to non-normal distribution of the items), and the items constituted one factor (with an eigenvalue of 2.97), which explained 74.24% of the variance with factor loadings between .75-.94 (KMO = .83). We calculated the mean of the four items and used it in subsequent analyses.

Acceptance of police violence against homeless people. We asked participants to rate how acceptable certain behaviors against homeless people were when initiated by a police officer with the following four items: *"Do you find it acceptable if a police officer warns a homeless person to leave the public area?"; "Do you find it acceptable if a police officer destroys the homeless person's personal belongings?"; "Do you find it acceptable if a police officer applies physical violence to a homeless person who has not left the public area after a request?"; "Do you find it acceptable if a police officer applies physical violence to a homeless* *person who has left the public area after a request?"* using a scale from 1 *(it is unacceptable in all cases)* to 7 *(it is acceptable in some cases)*. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted (principal axis factoring due to non-normal distribution of the items), and the items constituted one factor (with an eigenvalue of 2.25) with an explained variance of 56.33%, and the factor loadings ranged between .67-.80 (KMO = .73). The mean of the four items was used in further analyses.

Party preference. We measured party preference to show that the relationships between the main variables were not due to general support of or opposition to the government. Participants could choose from a list of all political parties in contemporary Hungarian politics and indicate whether they would vote for them if elections were held the upcoming Sunday. We created a dummy variable for those who intended to vote for the government party (n = 18; Fidesz-dummy), as this party initiated and supported the new Law, and we used this as a control variable in the analysis. Eighteen people (9.2%) would vote for the government party.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The correlations between the main measures, means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies are presented in Table 5. Descriptive statistics indicate that most respondents did not support the new law and did not think that violence towards homeless people is justified. Table 5 shows that right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, support for the new law, and acceptance of violence correlated positively with each other.

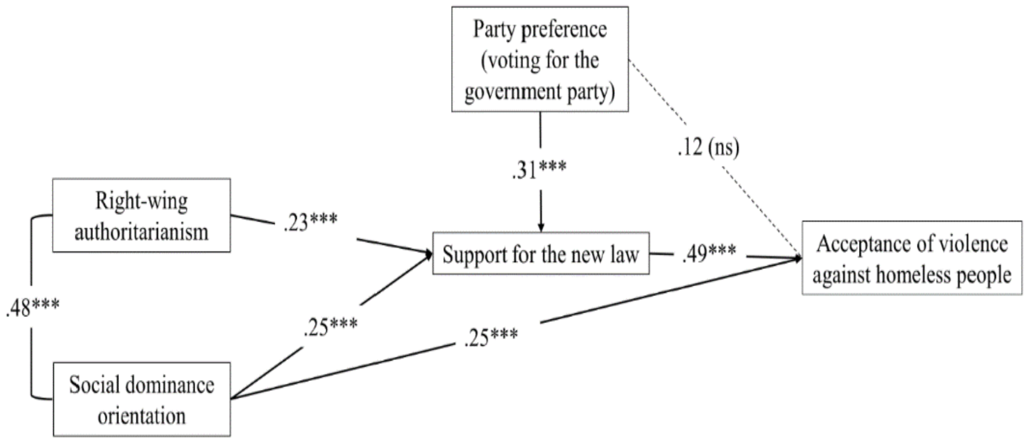
Table 5. Pearson correlations between main measures, means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies (Study 2, pilot study)

	M (SD)	α	1	2	3	4
1. RWA	1.95 (1.02)	.72	-			
2. SDO	2.34 (1.08)	.77	.47***	-		
3. Support for the new law	1.75 (1.33)	.91	.49***	.45***	-	
4. Acceptance of violence	1.55 (.91)	.80	.38***	.51***	.66***	-

Note. Statistical significance is indicated at the following level: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis testing. We ran path analysis to test our hypotheses, using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). We applied a model building – model trimming technique (for the model building-model trimming technique see e.g., Kugler et al., 2014), and created a saturated model first, which had perfect fit indices ($\chi2$ and RMSEA values of 0 and a CFI and TLI value of 1). Then we removed the non-significant paths from the final model. Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation were entered in the model as observed exogenous variables, and the acceptance of violence was selected as the outcome variable. Support for the new law was the mediator in the model between the exogenous variables and the acceptance of violence. We also controlled for party preference (voting for the government party). The path model with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 3. The direct path from right-wing authoritarianism to the acceptance of violence was not significant, therefore it was removed. The model ($\chi2$ (1) = .721, p < .396) had very good model fit (RMSEA=.000, PCLOSE=.501, TLI=1.009, CFI=1.000). The indirect positive effect of right-wing authoritarianism on the acceptance of violence mediated by support for the new law was significant (β = .11, p < .011, *CI*: .03, .23), and also the positive indirect effect of social dominance orientation on the acceptance of violence (β = .12, p < .001, *CI*: .04, .25). Nonetheless, the positive direct effect of social dominance orientation on violence remained significant after the mediation. These results suggest that right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation predict support for the new law, and correlates positively with the acceptance of violence against the homeless. Support for the new law fully mediated the positive effect of RWA on the acceptance of violence, and partially mediated the positive effect of SDO on violence when party preference was controlled.

Figure 3. The path model of acceptance of violence against homeless people (pilot study)



Discussion of the pilot study

This pilot study allowed us to test our theoretical model and check whether the scale that we created to measure political violence is suitable for testing our hypotheses. We found a general support for our hypotheses, namely, that people high in right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation accept violence against the homeless, and support for the new law serves as a justification in this process, as it mediates the relationship between the ideological attitudes and violence. However, the low means of acceptance of political violence indicated either that using a sample consisting of mainly highly educated women (for the connection between education, gender, and attitude levels see Carvacho et al., 2013; Ekehammar & Sidanius, 1982; Sidanius et al., 1994) may have affected our results or the wording of the items, where violence against the homeless was initiated by a police officer. Therefore, participants might have rejected police violence, and not violence in itself. To avoid this confound, we created a new questionnaire to measure support for violence in the main study, violence was no longer applied by a police officer, and listed different situations instead. To increase the generalizability of our findings and overcome the effect of education and gender in the pilot study, in our main study, we relied on a sample that is representative to the population of Budapest in terms of gender, age, and level of education. Homelessness is the most prevalent issue in the capital of the country, Budapest (Bence & Udvarhelyi, 2013). Residents of Budapest have first-hand experiences with homeless people, therefore their attitudes about homelessness is expected to be more salient than attitudes of those who do not have daily reminders of this problem.

Main study

Participants and Procedure

Our sample was recruited using computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) by Medián Ltd., a Hungarian opinion and market research company. We chose this method as we wanted to reach those respondents who do not have Internet connection due to financial or any other reasons but are available on mobile phone. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University. The questionnaire and the data file of the main study can be found at Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/kz6bj/ (identifier: DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/KZ6BJ).

The sample was representative to the population of Budapest in terms of age and gender. No weights were applied in the analyses since weights are used less frequently in psychological research. Highly educated people were slightly overrepresented compared to the population of Budapest, the sample is thus close to representative in terms of education level. We aimed to collect at least 601 responses based on power analysis considering 4% margin of error at 95% confidence level and decided to include the extra responses. The sample consisted of 674 participants, and all of them were residents of Budapest. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 92 years (M = 50.19, SD = 17.28), 7% completed primary school, 16.8% vocational school, 28.5% graduated from secondary school, and 47.5% graduated from higher education (.3% were missing); 51.2% of participants were women (n = 345) and 48.8% were men (n = 329). Almost one-fifth of the participants (19.4%) would vote for the government party (Fidesz).

Measures

The same measures were used for Right-wing authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, and party preference as in the pilot study. However, we shortened Support for the new Law and used only one item (*"Do you think that the amendment of the Fundamental Law is acceptable?"*) instead of the whole scale. The reason for shortening is that we wanted to avoid that a longer questionnaire would yield invalid results in the computer assisted telephone interviewing due to the loss of motivation, so we tried to measure the acceptance of the law as concise as possible. Another justification is that in the pilot study, this item correlated highly with the whole scale (r = .91, p = .000), so we thought that this question appropriately represents approval or disapproval of the criminalizing law.

We also changed the measure of Acceptance of violence against homeless people. Considering that violence in general is highly counter-normative and therefore subject to social desirability effect, we worded the items in a way that offers justification for violence to avoid a floor effect. Furthermore, we did not specify if we were thinking of physical or verbal violence so as to avoid social desirability bias evoked by explicitly mentioning the acceptance of physical abuse. We asked participants the following questions: *"Do you think that there is a situation in which it is* *acceptable for someone to use violence against a homeless person living in public spaces if he/she…(a) hampers others with his/her presence?; (b) presumably poses a risk of infection?; (c) disturbs other people with noise?"* Participants answered with a scale from 1 *(never, under no circumstances can violence be used)* to 7 *(violence must always be used)*. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (maximum likelihood due to normal distribution of the items), and the items constituted one factor (with an eigenvalue of 1.49) with an explained variance of 49.64% with factor loadings between .68-.75 (KMO = .69). We used the mean of the 3 items in further analyses.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The correlations between the measures of the main study, means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies are presented in Table 6. Using a representative sample and a new measure of acceptance of violence, we could identify different degrees of support for the law and violence against homeless people without a floor effect. All measures correlated highly and positively with each other.

Table 6. Pearson correlations between main measures, means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies (Study 2, main study)

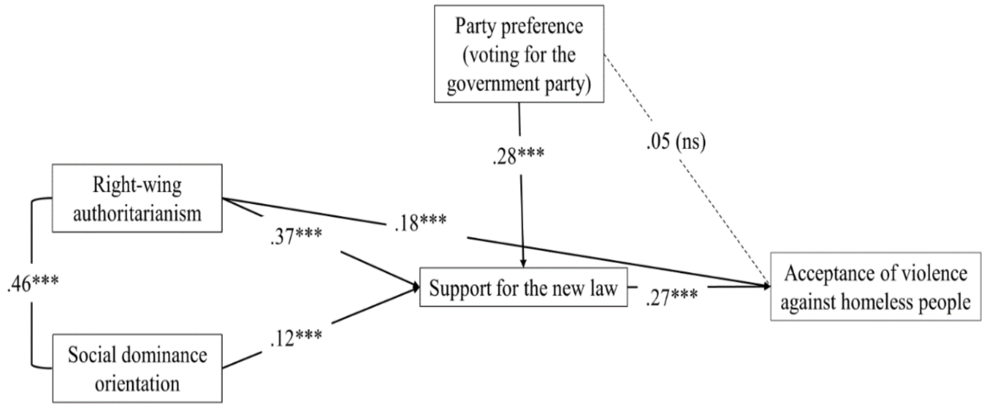
	M (SD)	α	1	2	3	4
1. RWA	2.91 (1.27)	.71	-			
2. SDO	2.71 (.97)	.63	.46***	-		
3. Support for the new law	3.12 (2.27)	-	.56***	.39***	-	
4. Acceptance of violence	3.9 (1.61)	.74	.35***	.23***	.40***	-

Note. Statistical significance is indicated at the following level: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis testing. We created a path model similar to the pilot study using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). We applied the previous model building – model trimming technique (see e.g., Kugler et al., 2014). RWA and SDO were the observed exogenous variables in the model, support for the new law was entered as the mediator, and the acceptance of violence was the outcome variable. We controlled party preference in the model. The path model with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 4.

We removed the direct path from social dominance orientation to the acceptance of violence as it was not significant. The final model ($\chi 2$ (2) = .851, p < .356) had very good model fit (RMSEA=.000, PCLOSE=.659, TLI=1.002, CFI=1.000). The positive indirect effect of right-wing authoritarianism on the acceptance of violence mediated by support for the new law was significant (β = .10, p < .001, *CI:* .06, .15), and also the positive indirect effect of social dominance orientation on the acceptance of violence (β = .03, p < .002, *CI:* .013, .06). Support for the new law fully mediated the effect of social dominance orientation on the acceptance of violence, but only partially mediated the path between right-wing authoritarianism and violence, as the direct path between RWA and violence remained significant.

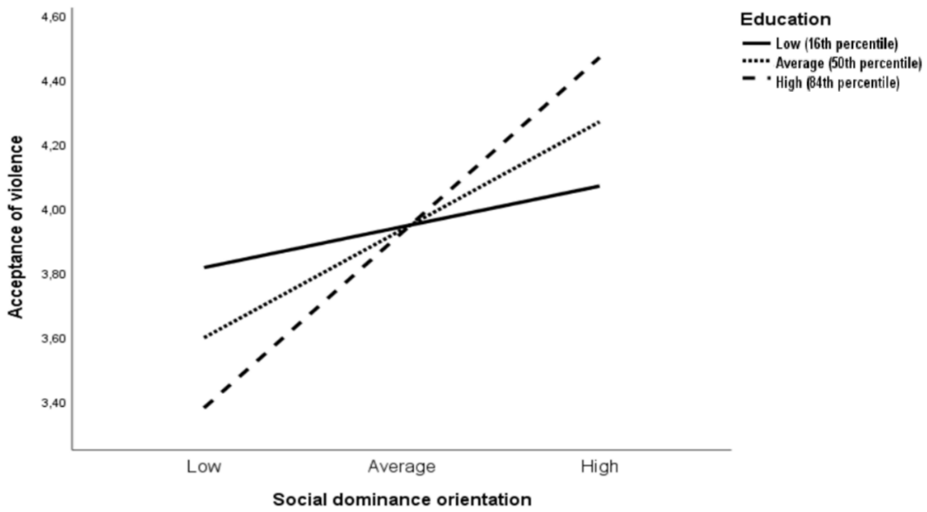
Figure 4. The path model of acceptance of violence against homeless people (main study)



These results are somewhat different from those of the pilot study, where support for the new law fully mediated the positive effect of RWA on support for violence, and partially mediated the positive relationship between SDO and violence. As the pilot study consisted mainly of highly educated people, we presumed that higher educational attainment might influence the justification mechanism. Were-analyzed the dataset of the main study and selected participants with the highest level of education so as to compare the results with those of obtained in the university sample. Surprisingly, we got similar results as in the university sample of the pilot study. The positive direct effect of RWA on the acceptance of violence disappeared, and only the indirect effect was significant ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$, *CI:* .11, .25), so support for the new law fully mediated the relationship between RWA and acceptance of violence just like in the pilot study. Furthermore, support for the new law partially mediated between SDO and acceptance of violence ($\beta = .09$, $p < .001$, *CI:* .03, .15), and the positive direct path from SDO remained significant ($\beta = .13$, $p < .027$, *CI:* .01, .26).

In the main study, the positive direct effect of social dominance orientation on the acceptance of violence disappeared. We conducted a post-hoc test to see if educational attainment moderates the effect of SDO on support for violence. The interaction of SDO and level of education slightly, but significantly predicted the acceptance of violence ($F(3, 668) = 15.51$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .07$; $b = .21$, $se = .08$, $t(668) = 2.72$, $p < .001$), meaning that the predictive power of SDO on the acceptance of violence positively depends on education level. When education level was low (at the 16th percentile), social dominance orientation did not correlate with the acceptance of violence ($b = .13$, $se = .12$, $t(668) = 1.10$, $p < .271$). Nonetheless, SDO significantly predicted violence when education level was medium (at 50th percentile, $b = .34$, $se = .07$, $t(668) = 5.10$, $p < .001$), and at high level of education (84th percentile) this correlation became even stronger ($b = .55$, $se = .09$, $t(668) = 6.41$, $p < .001$). To show the association between education level, SDO, and acceptance of violence, we created a simple slope in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The effect of social dominance orientation and level of education on the acceptance of violence against homeless people – simple slope[8]



[8] We chose to investigate the interaction effect of educational attainment and SDO instead of that of RWA. RWA and SDO are both system-legitimizing attitude orientations (Jost & Hunyady, 2005), but their relationship with violence serves different purposes. For those high in RWA, violence is a tool for preserving social order and punishing deviance, while SDO-based violence helps to maintain the hierarchical relations and inequalities between social groups. Though RWA and SDO are both negatively related to level of education (in our representative sample: RWA – education: $r = -.21$; $p < .001$; SDO – education: $r = -.13$; $p < .001$; see also Carvacho et al., 2013), we claim that the purpose of RWA-related violence has nothing to do with educational attainment. For instance, preserving traditions and punishing norm-violating behavior with violence can be important both for people with lower and higher levels of education, so we did not expect that the correlation between RWA and support for violence would be moderated by educational attainment. In contrast to RWA-related violence, we presumed that those with lower levels of education has lower status as well, meaning that preserving social hierarchy with violence would not be beneficial for them. On the contrary, those with higher levels of education have nothing to lose and might support SDO-related violence more to maintain hierarchy and inequalities.

Discussion of Study 2

We conducted a study relying on a sample representative to the capital city of Budapest to investigate whether the criminalization of homeless people is associated with accepting violence against them. The results supported our assumption that those high in right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation accept the new law and violence against the homeless. Support for the new law was related to violence against homeless people, and it significantly mediated the relationship between ideological attitudes and support for violence. Our results are in line with previous research showing that right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation are related to punitive attitudes and lack of support for disadvantaged groups (Gerber & Jackson, 2013; 2016; Ho et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 1993), and also support for violence (Benjamin, 2006; 2016; Dambrun & Vatiné, 2010; Faragó et al., 2019; Gerber & Jackson, 2017; Henry et al., 2005; Larsson et al., 2012; Lindén et al., 2016; Thomsen et al., 2008). As voters of the Hungarian government party (Fidesz) supported the implementation of amendment of Fundamental Law, we controlled for the effect of party preference in our model and revealed that although government supporters accepted the new law, the main psychological mechanisms described above were independent from identification with a political party.

In the pilot study, the acceptance of amendment fully mediated the relationship between RWA and support for violence, and only partly between SDO and violence, and this result is in line with previous research showing that negative stereotypes about misbehaving outgroups completely served as a justification for moral exclusion for those high in RWA, but only partly for people high in SDO (Hadarics & Kende, 2019). Another explanation is that those high in SDO are less sensitive to the need for rationalization of violence contrary to authoritarians (Federico et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Hadarics & Kende, 2019; Kugler et al., 2014; Milojev et al., 2014), which explains why justifications play smaller role for them. Nonetheless, the asymmetrical justification mechanism for people high in RWA and SDO applied only for participants with higher education level (see the pilot study, the re-analyzed main study, and Hadarics & Kende, 2019). In the main study, we tested our model using a representative sample, which allowed us to recruit participants with lower educational background. Again, those with higher levels of education and RWA completely justified the acceptance of violence with support for the amendment, meaning that they have a higher need to rationalize violent intentions, and the legal criminalization of homeless people is an eligible excuse for them to support violence. Nevertheless, for those with lower levels of education, the direct influence of RWA remained significant, meaning that low-educated people presumably have lower need for the rationalization of violence contrary to the higher-educated.

We revealed that education level modified the relationship between SDO and support for violence: SDO and acceptance of violence were independent from each other if we considered those respondents who are less well-educated. Nevertheless, at higher levels of education SDO strongly predicted support for violence. This result fits in previous literature about intellectual sophistication and attitude coherence: according to Converse (1964), higher educated people have more constrained and enriched set of political attitudes, and better understand the relationship between sociopolitical beliefs and power relations among social groups than the less educated, which accounts for the higher correlations (see also Sidanius et al., 1996). This strong correlation means that violence against homeless people is accepted or rejected on an ideological basis by higher educated people, because they have a better understanding that supporting or opposing beliefs that enhance hierarchy can lead to violence or lack thereof. However, support for violence is independent from dominance-based ideologies for the less well-educated, which explains our results.

Limitations of Study 2

There are some important limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, we encountered difficulties with the adequate measurement of violent intentions against homeless people. In the pilot study, we measured support for violence initiated by a police officer, but we obtained low acceptance for this kind of violence. We created another scale, and listed different situations instead, which worked much better than the previous scale, and managed to measure the acceptance of violence. Therefore, the creation of a well-functioning scale to measure the construct of violence was a difficulty in our research. Secondly, we did not check if participants had previous contacts with homeless people and whether these where positive or negative experiences. It would be interesting for future research to test the effect of living in a place where there is a high concentration of homeless. Thirdly, as our results were correlational, we cannot establish whether support for the new law was the cause of supporting violence against the homeless, or they co-occurred because of other, noninvestigated factors. Longitudinal or experimental evidence is needed in the future to ascertain the direction of the causality. Last, but not least, we presented participants with the description of amendment of Fundamental Law and asked respondents if they found it acceptable. Although we presented the new law in a way that is ideologically non-biased, and did not use expressions like criminalization, we may have primed respondents that homeless people were criminals, which evoked punitive responses from people high in RWA and SDO. Future studies could test if participants mention the new law spontaneously as a justification for violent intentions against the homeless. Another possible avenue for future research is to test other types of justifications apart from negative stereotypes (Hadarics & Kende, 2019) and criminalization.

Study 3 – The effect of partisan motivated reasoning on news consumption and support for intergroup violence

In Study 3, we aimed to examine the complex relationship between partisan motivated reasoning, news consumption, and support for intergroup violence. Study 3 comprises 3 sub-studies: in Study 3a, we investigated the effect of partisanship (supporting or opposing the government) on wishful political fake news acceptance using a representative Hungarian sample. In Study 3b, we replicated the findings of Study 3a with more headlines to make our results more generalizable. In Study 3c, we explored the connection between partisanship, bogeyman news consumption, and support for violence against immigrant groups.

The aim of Study 3a and Study 3b

Partisan motivated processes and the presence of misinformation can jointly lead to radicalization and intergroup violence (think tank report of Bartlett & Miller, 2010; Bouvier & Smith, 2006; Gray, 2010; Kofta & Sedek, 2005; Kull et al., 2003; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; 2017). Nonetheless, is still a debate in political psychology which groups are sensitive to misinformation: whether conservatives (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016), voters of the opposition (Bennett el al., 1999; Uscinski & Parent, 2014), or everyone is susceptible to believe in misinformation (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015; Weeks, 2015). In Study 3a and Study 3b (Faragó et al., 2020) we aimed to investigate the process of fake news acceptance in Hungary. Rather than using the left-right or the liberal-conservative dichotomy, the stance of supporting or opposing the government is more meaningful in the Hungarian context, considering that the opposition consists of both right- and left-wing parties.

Using Knapp’s (1944) terminology, we selected political pipedream fake news because it fulfills the hopes and wishes of people with a particular party preference. We deliberately used pipedream political fake news unrelated to threat and anxiety, as it was important to measure acceptance and not conservatives' responsiveness to negative information and threat (Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). The choice of pipedream fake news also allowed us to conceptually and operationally separate fake news from conspiracy theories, as pipedream fake news does not necessarily contain an element of conspiracy in contrast to bogeyman fake news, or wedge-driving fake news. We also measured conspiracy mentality, a general propensity to believe in conspiracy theories (Imhoff & Bruder, 2014) to investigate its effect on fake news acceptance.

There has been very little research dedicated to the acceptance of wishful political fake news, as most studies focused on negative or frightening news content. However, we argue that understanding the psychological predictors of pipedream fake news acceptance is both important and timely, as this becomes a growing phenomenon in the context of growing populism. For example, fake news spread by pro-Kremlin propaganda outlets and pro-governmental news outlets are becoming highly prevalent in Hungary (think tank report of Juhász & Szicherle, 2017). Nationalist populist discourse has dominated Hungarian politics in the last few years (Enyedi, 2016). In this context, fake news serves as a tool to reshape the political system and to transform democracy into a hybrid regime (think tank report of Juhász & Szicherle, 2017). At the same time, in the increasingly polarized political environment, the government is also target of some fake news.

Study 3a – The effect of partisanship on the acceptance of pipedream political fake news

Partisanship is an opinion-based group membership, which activates partisan motivated reasoning. Therefore, we predicted that the acceptance of both pro-government and anti-government pipedream political fake news would be more strongly predicted by partisanship (supporting or opposing the government) than by political orientation (being either liberal or conservative, or leftist or rightist) (H1). We also hypothesized that partisanship would predict the acceptance of pro-government and anti-government pipedream political fake news, but conspiracy mentality would be unrelated to them (H2). We expected that neither partisanship nor conspiracy mentality would predict the acceptance of non-political pipedream fake news (H3). We hypothesized that the association between partisanship and fake news acceptance would be mediated by economic sentiment (or the lack thereof) as the perception of good economic performance is associated with positive attitudes towards the government (H4). Furthermore, the association between partisanship and fake news acceptance would be mediated by the perceived independence of source (i.e., written by an independent journalist rather than coming from a politician) (H5).

Participants and Procedure

We used an online questionnaire with 1012 participants. Respondents were selected randomly from an Internet-enabled panel of 20,000 members by Solid Data Ltd in June 2017, using a multiple-step, proportionally stratified, probabilistic sampling method. We did not conduct power analysis to determine the sample size, but aimed at N = 1000, that is generally used in pollster surveys relying on representative samples of Hungarian society. The measures presented in the current study were administered as part of an omnibus survey. We report all measures relevant to our research question and all data exclusions. Twelve respondent who failed the attention check questions and were therefore identified to have randomly answered the questions, were excluded. Our final sample consisted of 1000 participants. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University.

Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 77 years (M = 45.99, SD = 14.56); 20.4% completed primary school, 23.9% secondary school, and 46.1% graduated from higher education; 51.1% of respondents were men.

Measures

Fake news. We presented fake news headlines on topics that appeared in social media the previous month. We wanted to make sure that familiarity of the headlines would not influence our results, and therefore created headlines that were not identical to those that appeared in the media, but they would continue to reflect actual discourses about the government. Headlines were used because they are the most influential part of the news as they create the first impression of the article (Ecker et al., 2014). According to one study, 59% of the articles that people share on Twitter are not even read by the person who shares them, and their sharing appears to be based solely on the catchy headline (Gabielkov et al., 2016). We presented participants with political, and non-political fake news. We pilot tested the news headlines and selected those that were rated as most credible in the pilot test, but their credibility was different across the political spectrum: pro-government fake news was more plausible for right-wing people, while anti-government fake news was more credible for left-wing supporters. We asked participants to evaluate how probably it was that the headlines' content was true using a scale from 1 *(absolutely not probable)* to 7 *(very probable)*. We used a pro-government pipedream news headline, *"The College of Cardinals of Vatican awarded Viktor Orbán [the prime minister of Hungary] for his services to save Christian Europe"*, an anti-government pipedream news headline *"Viktor Orbán was sent to medical treatment due to his increasing psychiatric disease",* and a non-political pipedream news headline *"According to a Mexican healer, people can rejuvenate their cells and thereby themselves".* We also included a relatively widely known real news headline as a diversion *("Mountain climber Dávid Klein could not get to the peak of Mount Everest without oxygen bottle again this year").*

Perceived independence of source. In connection with each headline we asked participants to rate the probability of whether the news was written by an independent journalist, or it came from a politician (i.e., it was political propaganda), using a bipolar scale from 1 *(It was most certainly written by an independent journalist)* to 7 *(It most certainly came from a politician).*

Political orientation and partisanship. Political orientation was measured by self-placement on a scale from left to right, 1 *(very leftist)* to 9 *(very rightist),* and from liberal to conservative, 1 (*very liberal)* and 9 (*very conservative)*. We also asked respondents to choose a political party that they would vote for if the elections were held the following Sunday. They could select from Fidesz (the governing populist right-wing political party), Jobbik (formerly an extreme right-wing party that currently positions itself as a right-wing centrist party), and other parties in and outside the parliament, most of which can be described as left-wing, centrist, or liberal (MSZP, DK, LMP, Együtt, Liberálisok, MKKP, Momentum).

Economic sentiment. Respondents indicated whether they perceived the general and their personal economic situation favorable or not (using the items from the Eurobarometer Data Service, 2016): *How do you think the economic situation in this country / in your household has changed over the last 12 months?"*; *"Over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in this country / in your household will be?"* Participants responded with a scale ranging from 1 *(got/get a lot worse)* to 7 *(got/get a lot better)*. We included a question regarding the general situation in the country (Eurobarometer Data Service, 2016): *"Generally speaking, do you think that things are going in the right or in the wrong direction in Hungary?".* Answers to this question ranged between 1 *(very bad)* and 7 *(very good).* The reliability of the 5-item index was very good (α = .91). We conducted an exploratory factor analysis, and the items constituted one factor with an explained variance of 66.94% with factor loadings between .69-.91 (*KMO* = .79).

Conspiracy mentality. We measured conspiracy mentality using the Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al., 2013) with five items. Respondents rated their agreement with the statements using percentages ranging from 0% (coded as 1) to 100% with steps of 10% (coded as 11). The reliability of the scale was good (α = .72).

Results

Descriptive statistics. The distribution of party preferences was the following: 22.4% would vote for Fidesz, 11.7% for Jobbik, and 38.5% for other left-wing or liberal parties in and outside the parliament and 27.4% chose neither of the listed parties. As Fidesz is currently the governing political party, we merged the remaining political parties to represent the anti-government, as this dichotomy fits better to our hypotheses. We created a dummy variable: government voters were coded as 1 (*n* = 224), and the anti-government is coded as 0 (*n* = 776). We used this dummy variable (government supporters versus supporters of the anti-government) to indicate partisanship in subsequent analyses.

The means and standard deviations of the main measures are presented in Table 7. Descriptive statistics indicate that real news was the most credible for the respondents, and the source was the most independent (i.e., written by an independent journalist). Non-political fake news followed real news in credibility and in the independence of the source. Anti-government fake news was rated as less plausible, and pro-government fake news was the least believable of all.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations of main measures of Study 3a

	Aggregate N = 1000		Government supporters n = 224		Anti-government n = 776	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Acceptance of pro-government fake news	1.89	1.64	2.36	2.02	1.75	1.49
Acceptance of anti-government fake news	2.26	2.02	1.39	1.07	2.51	2.15
Acceptance of non-political fake news	3.24	1.88	2.94	1.76	3.33	1.90
Acceptance of real news	5.71	1.99	5.43	2.17	5.79	1.92
Perceived independence of source (pro-government)	4.93	2.23	4.14	2.30	5.16	2.16
Perceived independence of source (anti-government)	4.48	2.40	5.36	2.37	4.23	2.35
Perceived independence of source (non-political)	2.48	1.64	2.22	1.52	2.56	1.66

	Aggregate N = 1000		Government supporters n = 224		Anti-government n = 776	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perceived independence of source (real news)	1.84	1.46	1.67	1.17	1.89	1.52
Left-right dimension	5.10	1.86	6.79	1.51	4.61	1.66
Liberal-conservative dimension	4.83	2.00	6.40	2.13	4.38	1.71
Economic sentiment	3.36	1.47	5.17	1.07	2.84	1.11
Conspiracy mentality	8.02	1.82	7.68	1.63	8.11	1.87

Note: The acceptance of fake and real news was measured with a scale from 1 (absolutely not probable that the headline is true) to 7 (very probable that the headline is true). The perceived independence of source was also measured with a scale ranging from 1 (it is sure that it was written by an independent journalist) to 7 (it is sure that it came from a politician). The two dimensions of political orientation were measured with a 9-point scale: response options ranged from 1 (very leftist; very liberal) to 9 (very rightist; very conservative). The economic sentiment scale ranged from 1 (low economic sentiment) to 7 (high economic sentiment). Conspiracy mentality was measured with a scale from 1 (low conspiracy mentality) to 11 (high conspiracy mentality).

We investigated the Pearson correlations between the main measures (see Table 8). Conspiracy mentality correlated only with the anti-government fake news significantly. The acceptance of political fake news related negatively to the perceived independence of source: the more credible the news is, the more likely that it was written by an independent journalist. Correlation coefficients between the dimensions of political orientation and the perceived credibility of fake news were low, suggesting that political orientation was only loosely associated with accepting this fake news as opposed to partisanship.

Table 8. Pearson correlations between main measures of Study 3a

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Partisanship										
2. Left-right dimension	.49 ***									
3. Liberal-conservative dimension	.42 ***	.56 ***								
4. Conspiracy mentality	-.10 **	.06 *	.13 ***							
5. Acceptance of pro-government fake news	.15 ***	.09 **	.06	-.00						
6. Acceptance of anti-government fake news	-.23 ***	-.18 ***	-.14 ***	.14 ***	-.02					
7. Acceptance of non-political fake news	-.09 **	-.05	-.02	.05	.07 *	.09 **				
8. Economic sentiment	.66 ***	.48 ***	.41 ***	-.19 ***	.16* **	-.32 ***	-.01			
9. Perceived independence of source (pro-government)	-.19 ***	-.12 ***	-.10 ***	.06	-.13 ***	.11 ***	.02	-.14 ***		
10. Perceived independence of source (anti-government)	.20 ***	.15 ***	14 ***	-.07 *	.05	-.22 ***	.06*	.19 ***	.29 ***	
11. Perceived independence of source (non-political)	-.09 **	-.10 **	-.09 **	-.15 ***	-.02	.10 **	-.07 *	-.10 **	.13 ***	-.00

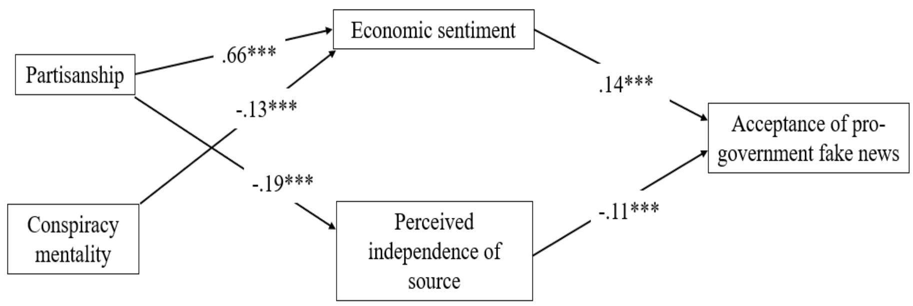
Note: statistical significance is indicated at the following levels: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Hypothesis testing. We found a statistically significant difference in fake news acceptance based on partisanship, $F(3, 996) = 29.76$, $p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .918$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .082$. Supporters of the government were more likely to believe that the pro-government fake news was real (M = 2.36, SD = 2.02) than supporters of the anti-government (M = 1.75, SD =

1.49, $F(1, 998) = 24.37$; $p < .000$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .024$). In contrast, supporters of the anti-government were more likely to believe that the anti-government fake news was real ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 2.15$) than supporters of the government ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 1.07$, $F(1, 998) = 56.52$; $p < .001$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .054$). Interestingly, non-political fake news was accepted more by supporters of the anti-government ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.90$) than by the government ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.76$, $F(1, 998) = 7.49$; $p < .006$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .007$).

To test our hypotheses we conducted mediation analyses, using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). We used a model building – model trimming technique as in Study 2 (for this technique see e.g., Kugler et al., 2014), and we built saturated models in all mediation analyses. These saturated models indicated perfect fit indices (χ^2 and RMSEA values of 0 and a CFI and TLI value of 1). Then we removed those paths that were non-significant. We used the phantom model approach (Macho & Ledermann, 2011) and built separate models from latent variables so as to estimate the specific indirect effects. Partisanship, the dimensions of political orientation, and conspiracy mentality were entered in the model as observed exogenous variables in all analyses, economic sentiment and the perceived independence of source as mediators, and pro-government fake news as the outcome variable. The path model with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The path model of pro-government fake news acceptance (Study 3a)



The paths from conspiracy mentality to the perceived independence of source, and from conspiracy mentality to pro-government fake news acceptance were not significant, therefore we removed them from the model. We also removed the paths from the dimensions of political orientation to the perceived independence of source, and from the dimensions of political orientation to pro-government fake news acceptance for the same reason. This model (χ^2 (12) = 358.78, p < .000) had a very poor fit (RMSEA=.170, PCLOSE=.000, TLI=.596, CFI=.769). We compared the total effect of partisanship on pro-government fake news acceptance (β = .37, p < .001, *CI:* .23, .53) to that of the dimensions of political orientation (for the left-right dimension: β = .02, p < .001, *CI:* .01, .04), and for the liberal-conservative dimension: β = .01, p < .001, *CI:* .005, .03). The comparison indicated that partisanship was a stronger predictor of acceptance than the dimensions of political orientation.

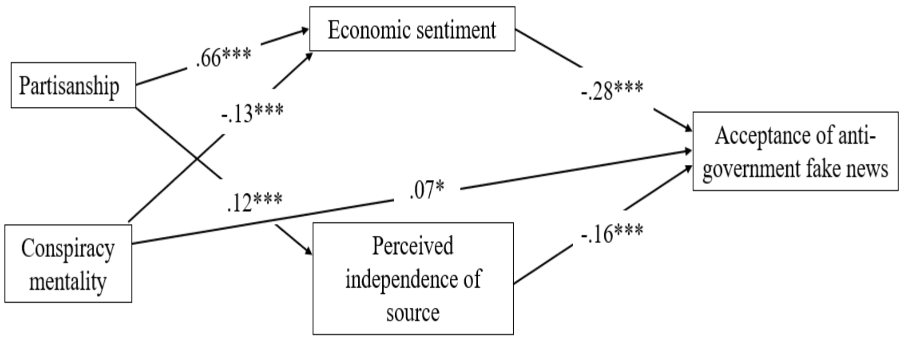
In order to improve the model fit, we omitted the dimensions of political orientation, and this final model (χ^2 (4) = 5.52, p < .238) had very good fit (RMSEA=.020, PCLOSE=.915, TLI=.994, CFI=.998). The indirect effect of partisanship on the acceptance of pro-government fake news mediated by economic sentiment was significant (B = .37, p < .001, *CI*: .20, .54). The perceived independence of source was also a significant mediator (B = .08, p < .001, *CI*: .03, .16).[9] We reran the analysis after removing the extreme right-wing party (Jobbik) from the non-government supporter group, including only supporters of left-wing parties. We found that partisanship significantly predicted fake news acceptance, and the same variables mediated the effect: economic sentiment (B = .38, p < .001,

[9] We included those who would not vote for any of the listed parties (27.4%) in the supporters of the anti-government group. If we exclude them from the model, it did not change the results, as economic sentiment mediated the effect of partisanship on the acceptance of pro-government fake news (B = .45, p < .001, *CI*: .25, .65), and so did the perceived independence of source (B = .15, p < .001, *CI*: .08, .25). These results show that participants without party affiliation are also dissatisfied with the government, and their responses are similar to those of opposition voters in spite of the fact that they would not vote for any of the opposition parties. Consequently, we included them as part of the anti-government group in all analyses.

CI: .21, .57), and the perceived independence of source (*B* = .07, $p < .001$, *CI*: .02, .14). The results were similar when Jobbik was included, showing that merging supporters of all non-government parties did not affect the results. This also suggests that supporting the government or not is a more important divide than political orientation.

We ran an identical analysis for the anti-government fake news. The path model with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. The path model of anti-government fake news acceptance (Study 3a)



The path from conspiracy mentality to the perceived independence of source of anti-government fake news was not significant, therefore we removed it from the model. We also removed the paths from the dimensions of political orientation to the perceived independence of source, and from the dimensions of political orientation to anti-government fake news acceptance for the same reason. This model (χ^2 (10) = 361.71, $p < .000$) indicated a very poor fit (RMSEA=.188, PCLOSE=.000, TLI=.543, CFI=.782). We compared the total effect of partisanship on anti-government fake news acceptance (β = -.84, $p < .001$, *CI:* -1.03, -.68) to that of the dimensions of political orientation (for the left-right dimension: β = -.05, $p < .001$, *CI:* -.08, -.03), and for the liberal-conservative dimension: β = -.03, $p < .001$, *CI:* -.05, -.02). This result reinforced that partisanship was a much stronger predictor of acceptance than the dimensions of political orientation. We omitted the dimensions of political orientation to improve the fit indices, and our final model (χ^2 (2) = 3.01, $p < .222$) had a very good fit (RMSEA=.023, PCLOSE=.778, TLI=.994, CFI=.999). Economic sentiment significantly mediated the path between partisanship and the acceptance of anti-government fake news ($B = -.87$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -1.07 -.69), and the perceived independence of source also mediated this relationship ($B = -.15$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -.23, -.08). The indirect effect of conspiracy mentality on the acceptance of anti-government fake news mediated by economic sentiment was also significant ($B = .04$, $p < .001$, *CI:* .02, .06), though the mediating effect of economic sentiment was much smaller here in line with our first hypothesis.[10] We also reran the analysis after removing Jobbik from the non-government supporter group. Economic sentiment was a significant mediator between partisanship and anti-government fake news acceptance ($B = -.91$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -1.10, -.71), and also the perceived independence of source ($B = -.17$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -.27, -.09). These results also indicate that supporting or not supporting the government is a more important aspect of accepting fake news than political orientation.

We ran an identical analysis for the non-political fake news. Partisanship and conspiracy mentality did not significantly predict the acceptance of fake news, and economic sentiment was not a significant mediator either between partisanship and non-political fake news acceptance. However, the perceived independence of source slightly, but significantly predicted the acceptance of non-political fake news ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .042$, *CI:* -.16, -.004). Conspiracy mentality and partisanship were independent from non-political fake news acceptance, in line with our expectations.

[10] We reran the analysis after removing those without party affiliation. Again, partisanship significantly predicted the acceptance of anti-government fake news through economic sentiment ($B = -.99$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -1.20, -.77) and through the perceived independence of source ($B = -.15$, $p < .001$, *CI*: -.25, -.07). This reinforces that including or excluding those who would not vote for any of the listed parties did not change the results of the analyses.

Discussion of Study 3a

In Study 3a, we revealed that partisanship (support for the government vs. the opposition), as an opinion-based group membership was a more important predictor of pro- and anti-government fake news than dimensions of political orientation and conspiracy mentality. Both supporters of the government and the anti-government perceived political fake news through the lenses of their own party identification. The prime minister, Viktor Orbán is a divisive person in Hungarian society. Fake news favoring him was more credible for his supporters, who also believed that the news was written by an unbiased, independent journalist. In contrast, the opposition did not believe in this news, and thought that the news was product of political propaganda. The pattern was the opposite for news revealing that Viktor Orbán was mentally ill, as the opposition found it credible and thought that the news was published by an independent journalist, but his supporters did not believe in it and thought that it came from another politician to discredit Viktor Orbán. However, both pieces of news were fake. Partisanship symmetrically influenced the way people perceived the independence of source and also the credibility of the news. Conspiracy mentality was a weak but significant predictor of anti-government fake news only.

The acceptance of non-political fake news was independent from both partisanship and conspiracy mentality, and it was only predicted by the perceived independence of source: those who believed that the non-political fake news was written by an independent journalist also accepted the news as real.

Although we tested our predictions using a representative Hungarian sample which allowed us to make generalizations in terms of the population, our findings are limited by the use of one headline in each category. Therefore, we conducted a second study (Study 3b) to replicate the findings of Study 3a with more pro-government and anti-government headlines, covering a broader range of political situations. Another limitation of Study 3a is that we did not investigate the role of political knowledge, which might be a possible alternative explanation for believing in fake information (see e.g., Miller et al., 2016). In Study 3b we maintained our original hypotheses (except for H3, which is about non-political fake news), but additionally, we predicted that the acceptance of political fake news is independent from political knowledge (H6).

Study 3b – The effect of partisanship on the acceptance of pipedream political fake news (replication study)

Participants and Procedure

We preregistered Study 3b (our questionnaire and dataset are available on the Open Science Framework, https://osf.io/26q74/). The online questionnaire was completed by university students who received course credits for their participation. We conducted a priori power analysis using GPower, and our goal was to obtain .95 power to detect an effect size of .076 (Pillai V) at the standard .05 alpha error probability based on the effect size of Study 3a. We aimed to recruit 208 participants, but we included the extra responses as we predetermined in the preregistration. After excluding eleven respondents who failed the attention check question, the final sample consisted of 382 participants. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 63 years (M = 22.10, SD = 4.74, 92.7% of them ranged between 18-25 years); 74.6% of them were women, 24.3% were men, and 1% indicated other or did not wish to answer. 56.8% lived in Budapest, 11.3% in a county town or city with county rights, 20.4% in other city, and 11.5% resided in township or village.

Measures

Fake news. We created fake political news headlines which reflect existing discourses about Hungarian politics similarly to Study 3a. In order to make the results more generalizable, we presented 5 pro-government and 5 anti-government headlines. We also used 4 non-political and 3 real news as fillers so as to reduce respondents' suspicion that all news is fake. The pro- and anti-government fake news headlines can be seen in the Appendix. We created mean-based indices from pro-government fake news (α = .41) and anti-government fake news (α = .42). We covered a broad range of political situations, which may explain why the reliability of these scales were lower than the conventional standards. However, this is not necessarily a major impediment. Schmitt (1996) suggests that if the scales have other desirable properties like the meaningful content coverage of some domain, the low reliability is not problematic (for a similar argument for the use of low reliability scales see Shnabel et al., 2016).

Perceived independence of source. We used a similar bipolar scale as in Study 3a, but we extended the instruction about answer scale (see the Appendix). We calculated the mean of independence of source of pro-government news (α = .63) and anti-government news (α = .85) and used them in subsequent analyses.

Political orientation and partisanship. Political orientation and partisanship were measured similarly to Study 3a, but we used 7-point Likert scales to measure the left-right and the liberal-conservative dimensions *(1 – very leftist/liberal; 7 – very rightist/conservative).*

Political knowledge. As there is no reliable test for measuring political knowledge in the Hungarian context, we generated a single-item measure reflecting self-reported political knowledge: *"How much do you know about domestic and foreign affairs?"* Response scale ranged from 1 *(not at all)* to 7 *(completely).*

Economic sentiment. We measured economic sentiment with the same 5-item index (Eurobarometer Data Service, 2016) as in Study 3a (α = .86).

Conspiracy mentality. We used the five-item Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al., 2013) as in Study 3a (α = .68).

Results

Descriptive statistics. The distribution of party preferences was the following: 12.8% would vote for Fidesz, 8.1% for Jobbik, and 56.3% for other left-wing or liberal parties, and 22.8% chose neither of the listed parties. We created a dummy variable from party preference as in Study 3a: government voters were coded as 1 (n = 49), and the anti-government is coded as 0 (n = 333). We included those who would not vote for any of the listed parties as part of the anti-government group based on the results of Study 3a. The dummy variable (government supporters versus supporters of the anti-government) indicated partisanship in further analyses.

The means and standard deviations of the main measures are presented in Table 9, and the correlations in Table 10.

Table 9. Means and standard deviations of main measures of Study 3b

	Aggregate N = 382		Government supporters n = 49		Anti-government n = 333	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Acceptance of pro-government fake news	2.68	.78	2.95	.81	2.64	.77
Acceptance of anti-government fake news	3.20	.93	2.59	.84	3.28	.91
Perceived independence of source (pro-government)	5.87	.93	5.32	1.21	5.96	.86
Perceived independence of source (anti-government)	3.86	1.72	4.56	1.63	3.76	1.71
Left-right dimension	3.79	1.46	4.88	1.40	3.63	1.40
Liberal-conservative dimension	3.26	1.56	4.86	1.29	3.03	1.45
Economic sentiment	3.35	1.09	4.85	1.02	3.13	.91
Conspiracy mentality	7.98	1.41	8.1	1.53	7.97	1.39
Political knowledge	3.33	1.57	3.06	1.41	3.37	1.60

Note: The acceptance of fake news was measured with a scale from 1 (very unlikely that it is true) to 7 (very likely that it is true). The perceived independence of source was also measured with a scale ranging from 1 (it was certainly written by an independent journalist) to 7 (it certainly came from a politician). The two dimensions of political orientation were measured with a 7-point scale: response options ranged from 1 (very leftist; very liberal) to 7 (very rightist; very conservative). The economic sentiment scale ranged from 1 (low economic sentiment) to 7 (high economic sentiment). Conspiracy mentality was measured with a scale from 1 (low conspiracy mentality) to 11 (high conspiracy mentality). Response scale of political knowledge ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely).

Table 10. Pearson correlations between main measures of Study 3b

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Partisanship									
2. Left-right dimension	.29 ***								
3. Liberal-conservative dimension	.39 ***	.50 ***							
4. Conspiracy mentality	.03	.00	.06						
5. Economic sentiment	.53 ***	30 ***	.39 ***	-.11 *					
6. Acceptance of pro-government fake news	.14 **	.10 *	.11 *	.05	.15 **				
7. Acceptance of anti-government fake news	-.25 ***	-.12 *	-.15 **	.14 **	-.27 ***	.22 ***			
8. Perceived independence of source (pro-government)	-.23 ***	-.16 **	-.13 *	.14 **	-.13 *	-.14 **	.23 ***		
9. Perceived independence of source (anti-government)	.16 **	.14 **	15 **	-.03	.24 ***	.04	-.26 ***	.00	
10. Political knowledge	-.07	-.14 **	-.08	-.07	-.05	-.10	.09	.28 ***	-.19 ***

*Note: s*tatistical significance is indicated at the following levels: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

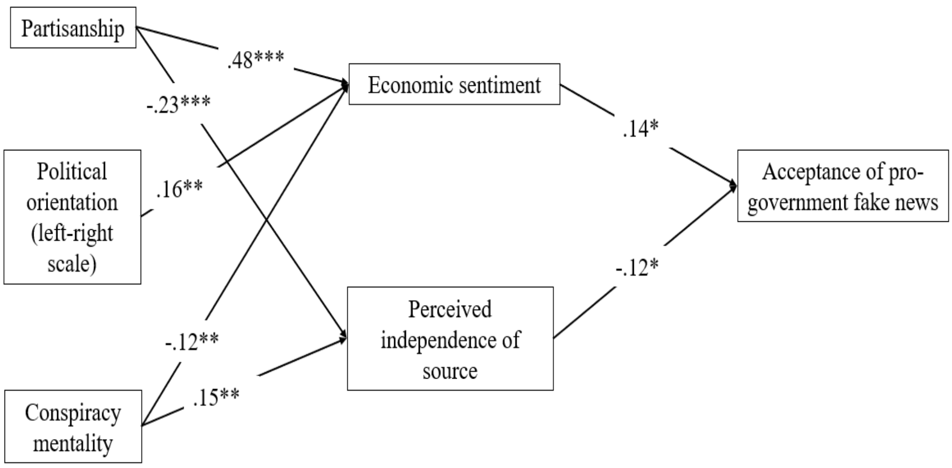
Our results suggest that anti-government fake news was more believable for respondents than pro-government fake news, and the latter was perceived as more biased. Similarly to Study 3a, the acceptance of political fake news associated negatively with the perceived independence of source: the more credible the news was, the more likely that it was perceived to be written by an independent journalist. Conspiracy mentality correlated only with the acceptance of anti-government fake news.

Hypothesis testing. Using MANOVA, we detected a statistically significant difference in fake news acceptance based on partisanship, $F(2, 397) = 21.13$, $p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .900$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .100$. Supporters of the government were more likely to believe that the pro-government fake news was real ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .81$) than supporters of the anti-government ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .77$, $F(1, 380) = 7.08$; $p < .008$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .018$). In contrast, supporters of the anti-government were more likely to believe that the anti-government fake news was real ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .91$) than supporters of the government ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .84$, $F(1, 380) = 25.37$; $p < .000$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .063$).

We conducted mediation analyses in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013), using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples. A model building – model trimming technique was used (see e.g., Kugler et al., 2014) as in Study 3a, and we built the saturated models as a first step with perfect fit indices, and then removed the non-significant paths. We built the same path models as in Study 3a.

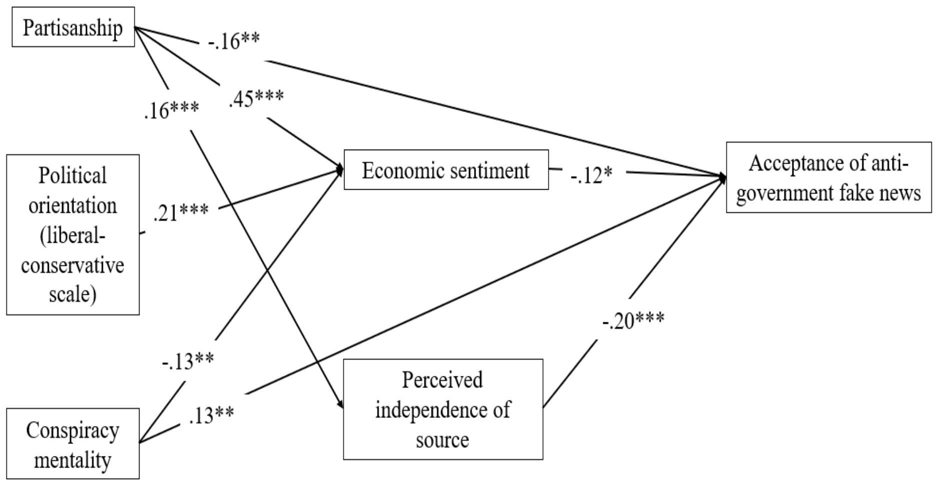
In the path model of acceptance of pro-government fake news (Figure 8), the paths from partisanship to the acceptance of pro-government fake news, from the left-right scale to the perceived independence of source, and from conspiracy mentality to the acceptance of pro-government fake news were not significant and were therefore removed from the model. We also dropped out the liberal-conservative dimension of political orientation because of the lack of significance. The final model (χ^2 (7) = 8.00, $p < .333$) had very good fit (RMSEA=.019, PCLOSE=.810, TLI=.990, CFI=.995). Again, to estimate indirect effects we used the phantom model approach of Macho & Ledermann (2011). The indirect effect of partisanship on the acceptance of pro-government fake news mediated by economic sentiment was significant ($B = .16$, $p < .001$, *CI*: .04, .28). Economic sentiment also mediated between the left-right dimension of political orientation and the acceptance of pro-government fake news, but it was a much smaller effect ($B = .01$, $p < .006$, *CI*: .003, .03). The perceived independence of source was also a significant mediator between partisanship and the acceptance of pro-government fake news ($B = .07$, $p < .020$, *CI*: .01, .14). When we included political knowledge in our model, it did not change the associations between the variables, as it did not predict the acceptance of pro-government fake news significantly (*r* = -.06, *p* < .299).

Figure 8. The path model of pro-government fake news acceptance (Study 3b)



We ran an identical analysis for the anti-government fake news (see Figure 9). The left-right dimension of political orientation was dropped out from the model, and also the paths from the liberal-conservative scale to the perceived independence of source, from the liberal-conservative scale to the acceptance of anti-government fake news, and from conspiracy mentality to the perceived independence of source. The final model (χ^2 (5) = 5.53, *p* < .355) had a very good fit (RMSEA=.017, PCLOSE=.770, TLI=.995, CFI=.998). Economic sentiment significantly mediated the path between partisanship and the acceptance of anti-government fake news (*B* = -.15, *p* < .037, *CI*: -.31 -.01), and between the liberal-conservative scale and the acceptance of anti-government fake news (*B* = -.02, *p* < .021, *CI*: -.04 -.002), and also between conspiracy mentality and the acceptance of anti-government fake news (*B* = .01, *p* < .018, *CI*: .001 .03), but the latter two were much weaker mediations. The perceived independence of source also mediated the relationship between partisanship and the acceptance of anti-government fake news significantly (*B* = -.09, *p* < .001, *CI*: -.18, -.03). When we put political knowledge in our model, it did not alter the results, as it was unrelated to the acceptance of anti-government fake news ($r = .04$, $p < .414$).

Figure 9. The path model of anti-government fake news acceptance (Study 3b)



Discussion of Study 3b

In Study 3b we replicated the main findings of Study 3a relying on more political fake news headlines that cover a broader range of political situation. Partisanship proved to be the most important factor in the acceptance of pipedream political fake news. Although political orientation remained significant in the models, its effect was negligible compared to that of partisanship. Conspiracy mentality was a weak, but significant predictor of the acceptance of anti-government fake news in line with the results of Study 3a. We also controlled the effect of political knowledge in the models and revealed that knowledge about domestic and foreign affairs did not play a role in the acceptance or rejection of political fake news.

If people are generally satisfied with the economic situation and hopeful about their future, they support the governing politicians, and they can turn against them when they are dissatisfied with the results and have low expectations for the future (Treisman, 2011). Economic sentiment amplified the effect of partisanship on fake news acceptance, indicating that the subjective evaluation of economic performance (as a governmental performance indicator) is an important factor when considering the credibility of fake news. The perceived independence of source also proved to be a relevant determinant of fake news acceptance, which reinforces that trustworthiness depends largely on the perceived ideology of the source (Hayes et al., 2018), so whether the news is attributed to a favored or an unbeloved politician (Housholder & LaMarre, 2014; Swire et al., 2017).

Our findings therefore suggest that those who supported the governing party also thought that things were generally going in the right direction and were more likely to believe that the pro-government fake news was real. They also assumed that pro-government news was written by an independent journalist and did not question its credibility. However, supporters of anti-government were suspicious about pro-government fake news. They perceived that things are generally going badly, and they were also more likely to think that the pro-government news was part of political propaganda and rejected it. In contrast, supporters of the anti-government were more likely to accept anti-government fake news while the patterns remained the same, they believed that things were going badly and accepted anti-government fake news, while also believing that the source was more likely an independent journalist. In this case, government supporters were more suspicious.

We deliberately used pipedream political fake news unrelated to threat and anxiety, as it was important to measure acceptance and not conservatives' responsiveness to negative information and threat (Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). Our assumption would be that "wedge-driver" and "bogeyman" fake news show more connection to conspiracy theories, but further research is needed to test this prediction. Nevertheless, conspiracy mentality was a weak but significant predictor of anti-government fake news in both Study 3a and 3b. This finding is in line with previous research suggesting that the loss of political power results in the endorsement of fake information and enhanced beliefs in conspiracies (Uscinski & Parent, 2014)[11].

Generally, our results suggest that the same mechanisms explain the processing of pipedream political fake news as the processing of any other information. Acceptance of this type of fake news need not necessarily be explained by a separate social cognition mechanism as beliefs in conspiracy theories may need to be. This is important, given that the literature often puts fake news and conspiracy theories in the same basket (e.g., Tandoc et al., 2018). Therefore, the story behind fake news acceptance seems to be simpler while also pointing it out that we need to differentiate between the psychological mechanisms of accepting different kinds of fake news.

Limitations of Study 3a and Study 3b

Study 3a and Study 3b has some limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, the majority of respondents did not believe that the fake news headlines were true, suggesting that using these selections of fake news, most people were able to distinguish fake news from real news. However, differences in the level of acceptance demonstrated the partisan motivated processes that we aimed to describe in the dissertation. Another

[11] The finding of Uscinski & Parent (2014) suggests that voters of the opposition are more likely to conspire because of the lack of trust in the mainstream media and the loss of political power. Nevertheless, in populist, autocratic regimes the government also apply conspiracy theories to establish and maintain the political power (see e.g., Cohn, 1967/1993). As Hungary can be considered a populist and illiberal regime (Körösényi & Patkós, 2015), we presume that the two processes can take place in parallel, namely that opposition voters do not believe in the pro-governmental narrative and therefore believe in alternative conspiracy theories, while pro-government voters believe in mainstream conspiracies as they come from the official media. We presume that the lack of connection between conspiracy mentality and the acceptance of pro-government fake news is due to the lack of threatening, conspiratorial content in the pro-government fake headlines.

limitation to generalizing based on our findings is related to the specific context of Hungary. Although we grouped respondents into pro- and anti-government groups as it made sense from the perspective of power relations, the opposition consisted of supporters of politically diverse parties. Supporters of Jobbik, an extreme right-wing party, did not criticize the government from the opposite side of the political spectrum. This may explain the weak connection between political orientation and fake news acceptance, suggesting that in a different political context in which opposition and support of the government is more directly aligned with political orientation, the two may have a similar effect. However, our findings revealed that it is not always the case. Finally, as our results were correlational, we cannot establish whether support for the government or for the anti-government were the causes of believing fake news, or they co-occurred because of other factors. Nonetheless, within the scope of our studies we were unable to collect data using different designs. Experimental evidence in future research could support the causality in the established connections.

Study 3c – The effect of partisanship and news consumption on intergroup violence

The aim of Study 3c

In Study 3c, we investigated the cumulative effect of threatening news consumption related to the immigration crisis on the acceptance of violence against refugees in Hungary. Building on cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976) we presumed that long-term consumption of news that depict Muslim refugees as threatening, dangerous, and competitive would increase perceived threat, dangerous and competitive worldview (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016; Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Hoffner & Cohen, 2013; Mastro et al., 2007), and therefore negative intergroup attitudes and violent intentions (Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Meeus et al., 2009). Mediums differ in the way they portray ethnic minorities and immigration (see e.g., Van Dijk, 1993). Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, the Hungarian government warned people of the dangers of immigration from Muslim countries in extensive political campaigns and in the media. Pro-government news outlets depicted Muslim immigrants as threatening the security of Hungarians and as competitors for scarce resources (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016). The refugee crisis was a hot topic in the opposition media as well, which depicted it as a humanitarian crisis and portrayed refugees in need of help (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016).

Based on previous research related to wishful thinking and partisan motivated reasoning in news consumption habits (see e.g., Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Hart et al., 2009; Van Dijk, 1993; Vergeer et al., 2000), we hypothesized that those who would vote for the government party would consume more pro-government news than opposition news, and those who would support any of the opposition parties would show the opposite pattern (H1). We presumed that the consumption of pro-government news outlets would result in higher perceived threat from Muslim immigrants, heightened dangerous and competitive worldview, and higher acceptance of violence against Muslim immigrants than that of opposition news (H2). We also hypothesized that the association between pro-government news consumption and acceptance of violence against immigrants would be mediated by perceived threat from immigrants, dangerous worldview, and competitive worldview (or the lack thereof) as pro-government news outlets represent immigrants as a threatening and dangerous outgroup, which also competes for scarce resources (H3).

Participants and Procedure

The data collection took place in May 2018 using an online questionnaire, which was completed by university students who received course credits for their participation. Our sample consisted of 197 respondents. The language of the questionnaire was Hungarian. We used the Hungarian translations of the scales where they were available or translated them using the traditional method of translating and backtranslating the items from English. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of Eötvös Loránd University.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 42 years (M = 21.35, SD = 2.5), 94.4% of them ranged between 18-24 years); 72.1% of them were women and 26.9% were men, and 1% indicated other or did not wish to answer. Just over half of the respondents (54.3%) lived in Budapest, 13.7% in a county town or city with county rights, 20.8% in other city, and 11.2% resided in township or village. The majority (84.3%) would vote for any of the opposition parties or neither of them, and only 15.7% would vote for the government party (Fidesz), therefore supporters of the government were underrepresented in our sample compared to the Hungarian population.

Measures

Partisanship. Participants could choose from a list of all political parties in contemporary Hungarian politics and indicate whether they would vote for them if elections were held the upcoming Sunday. We created a dummy variable for those who intended to vote for the government party (n = 31, Fidesz-dummy), and this variable was used as partisanship in further analyses.

News consumption. Thirteen online news sources were presented to participants who rated how frequently they consumed each: *"never"; "monthly or less frequently"; "few times a month"; "weekly"; "several times a week"; "daily".* We measured online news consumption as previous research pointed out that journals and online journals also exert cultivation effects on the consumers (Dietrich & Haußecker, 2017; Vergeer et al., 2000). We listed the most significant online news sources and included both left-wing and right-wing sources, which were the following: HVG, Index, Origo, 444, 888, Kuruc.info, Átlátszó, 24.hu, Tények.hu, Híradó Online, Alfahír, Mérce, 168 óra. We conducted explorative factor analysis (principal axis factoring with promax rotation) and four factors emerged with an explained variance of 57.82% (KMO =.762). Table 11 illustrates the factors with the factor loadings.

Table 11. Factors of news sources with factor loadings (Study 3c)

	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
444	.749			
Index	.726			
HVG	.671			
24.hu	.661			
168 óra		1.015[12]		
Mérce		.629		
Átlátszó		.626		
Tények.hu			.871	
Híradó Online			.670	
Origo			.568	
Kuruc.info				.916
Alfahír				.755
888				.394

[12] As the factors are correlated, the factor loadings are regression coefficients instead of correlations, so they can be larger than 1 (Jöreskog, 1999).

We named the first factor as “liberal opposition news sources”, the second as “extreme liberal opposition news sources”, the third as “pro-government news sources”, and the fourth as “extreme right-wing news sources”. We created the means of these items and used them in subsequent analyses instead of factor scores.

Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants. We measured perceived threat from Muslim immigrants with the following six items: *“Muslim immigrants pose a health risk to Hungarians.”; “Muslim immigrants pose a threat to Hungarians.”; “Whether a neighborhood is safe or not has nothing to do with the number of Muslim immigrants there.”; “The culture of Muslim immigrants is threatening the Hungarian lifestyle with a transformation.”; “The cultural values of Muslim immigrants are in conflict with the Hungarian values.”; “Hungarians could learn valuable things from Muslim immigrants.”.* Answers to these items ranged between 1 *(I totally disagree)* to 7 *(I totally agree)*. These items constituted one factor in explorative factor analysis with an explained variance of 49.29% with factor loadings between .56-.91 (KMO = .83). The mean of the six items was used in further analyses[13].

Dangerous worldview. We used the Hungarian translation of the dangerous worldview scale (Perry et al., 2013) with ten items such as *“There are many dangerous people in our society who will attack someone*

[13] The term “migrant” is often used in pro-governmental news outlets (see e.g., Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016), while these groups are referred to as immigrants or refugees in the liberal opposition media. The term “migrant” is derogatory and alienating (see e.g., Kiss, 2016), and may act as a stigma in the Hungarian society, evoking threat and the perception of danger and competition posed by these groups in the perceiver. As a contrast, the word “refugee” rather reflects that someone is fleeing something dangerous (e.g., war), and this interpretation does not refer to a potential terrorist threat or economic migration, while the term migrant does. The data collection took place in Hungarian, and we used the term “Muslim immigrants” in the questionnaires, precisely to avoid the negative stereotypes and perceived threat associated with the term migrant. Nonetheless, we considered it important to refer to the Muslim culture so as to ensure that the respondents think about immigrants from Middle Eastern countries and not about e.g., foreign guest workers.

out of pure meanness, for no reason at all." Participants could answer with a scale ranging from 1 *(I totally disagree)* to 7 *(I totally agree).*

Competitive worldview. The Hungarian translation of the competitive worldview scale (Perry et al., 2013) was used with ten items, sample item: *"It's a dog-eat-dog world where you have to be ruthless at times."* Respondents indicated their answers on a scale from 1 *(I totally disagree)* to 7 *(I totally agree).*

Acceptance of violence against Muslim immigrants. We gave participants the following instruction:

"People usually condemn physical violence, but there may be situations where violence is acceptable or justifiable. Please indicate to what extent you generally consider physical violence against Muslim immigrants to be justified.". We listed eight categories and respondents indicated the acceptability of violence by that person on a scale ranging from 1 *(under no circumstances can it be justified)* to 7 *(in all cases it can be justified)*. The categories were the following: *"police officers"; "frontier-guards"; "soldiers"; "security guards"; "residents of a settlement where many Muslim immigrants live"; "Residents of a non-Muslim settlement"; "administrators (e.g., who arrange residence permit)"; "teachers"*, and respondents rated each separately. We pilot tested these items previously, and 2 factors emerged in the pilot test, which were named as "acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person" and "acceptance of violence perpetrated by a civilian". In the main study we conducted explorative factor analysis and managed to replicate the two-factor solution explaining 74.4% of the variance (KMO =.884). Items loaded between .74-.96 on the "acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person" factor, and between .60-.94 on the "acceptance of violence perpetrated by a civilian" factor. The means were used in subsequent analyses.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The internal consistencies, means, and standard deviations of main measures are presented in Table 12. Each scale worked well and showed high internal consistency. Low means indicate that individuals rarely read pro-government, extreme right-wing, and extreme liberal opposition news, but the consumption of liberal opposition media was more frequent. This might be due to the selection of the sample, as respondents were highly educated university students supporting mainly opposition parties. Descriptive statistics show that violence against Muslim immigrants perpetrated by an official person was more accepted than violence committed by a civilian.

Table 12. Means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies of the main measures of Study 3c

	M (SD)	α
1. Liberal opposition news consumption	3.17 (1.24)	.80
2. Extreme liberal opposition news consumption	1.19 (.58)	.80
3. Pro-government news consumption	1.87 (.85)	.67
4. Extreme right-wing news consumption	1.25 (.57)	.74
5. Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants	3.91 (1.35)	.85
6. Dangerous worldview	4.15 (.94)	.78
7. Competitive worldview	2.54 (.88)	.80
8. Acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person	3.75 (1.61)	.94
9. Acceptance of violence perpetrated by a civilian	2.31 (1.25)	.89

Correlations between the measures are shown in Table 13. Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants, dangerous and competitive worldview, and the acceptance of violence correlated strongly and positively, and they were positively related to pro-government and extreme right-wing news consumption. However, the consumption of liberal opposition news was unrelated to threat, dangerous and competitive worldview, and support for violence by an official person, but correlated negatively with the acceptance of violence perpetrated by a civilian.

Table 13. Pearson correlations between main measures of Study 3c

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Liberal opposition news consumption								
2. Extreme liberal opposition news consumption	.36***							
3. Pro-government news consumption	.24***	.15*						
4. Extreme right-wing news consumption	.23***	.50***	.30***					
5. Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants	-.14	-.09	.25***	.17*				
6. Dangerous worldview	-.05	-.15*	.19**	.05	.37***			
7. Competitive worldview	.14	.04	.23***	.22**	.30***	.14		
8. Acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person	-.04	-.09	.17*	.20**	.56***	.21**	.27***	
9. Acceptance of violence perpetrated by a civilian	-.17*	-.07	.17**	.18*	.45***	.20**	.47***	.56***

Note: statistical significance is indicated at the following levels: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

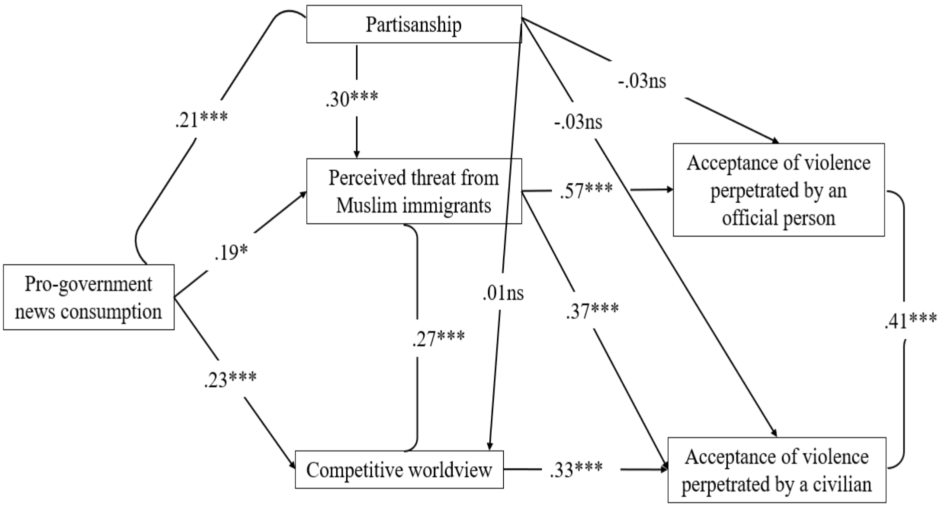
Hypothesis testing. We found a statistically significant difference in news consumption based on partisanship, $F(2, 194) = 12.61$, $p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .885$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .115$. Supporters of the government were more likely to consume pro-government news outlets ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.07$) than supporters of the opposition ($M = 1.79$, $SD = .78$, $F(1, 195) = 9.36$; $p < .003$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .046$). In contrast, supporters of the opposition were more likely to consume anti-government media ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.24$)

than supporters of the government (*M* = 2.58, *SD* = 1.09, $F(1, 195) = 8.49$; $p < .004$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .042$). We also investigated differences between these two groups regarding other important variables ($F(5, 191) = 5.30$, $p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .878$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .122$). Supporters of the government perceived Muslim immigrants significantly more threatening (*M* = 4.97, *SD* = 1.43) than supporters of the opposition (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 1.25, $F(1, 195) = 25.12$; $p < .001$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .114$). Nonetheless, supporters of the government did not perceive the world significantly more dangerous (*M* = 4.27, *SD* = .89) or competitive (*M* = 2.67, *SD* = .90) than the opposition (dangerous worldview: *M* = 4.12, *SD* = .95, $F(1, 195) = .62$; $p < .433$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .003$; competitive worldview: *M* = 2.52, *SD* = .88, $F(1, 195) = .77$; $p < .381$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .004$). Government supporters accepted violence perpetrated by an official person to a greater extent (*M* = 4.35, *SD* = 1.56) than supporters of the opposition (*M* = 3.63, *SD* = 1.6, $F(1, 195) = 5.35$; $p < .022$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .027$), but the difference disappeared for violence committed by a civilian (supporters of the government: *M* = 2.64, *SD* = 1.40, opposition: *M* = 2.25, *SD* = 1.22, $F(1, 195) = 2.57$; $p < .111$; *partial* $\eta^2 = .013$).

We conducted mediation analyses, using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). We used the previous model building – model trimming technique as in Study 2, Study 3a, and Study 3b (for this technique see e.g., Kugler et al., 2014). Saturated models were built as a first step, and then non-significant paths were removed. As there was more than one mediator in each model, we used the phantom model approach (Macho & Ledermann, 2011) which helped to estimate the specific indirect effects separately. News consumption was entered as the observed exogenous variable in each model, and we run separate analyses for pro-government, extreme right-wing, and liberal opposition news consumption (we did not analyze extreme liberal opposition news consumption, as it was independent from support for violence). Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants, dangerous worldview, and competitive worldview were selected as mediators in each model. The outcome variables were the acceptance of violence against Muslim immigrants perpetrated either by an official person or by a civilian. We controlled for partisanship (supporting or opposing the government) in all analyses.

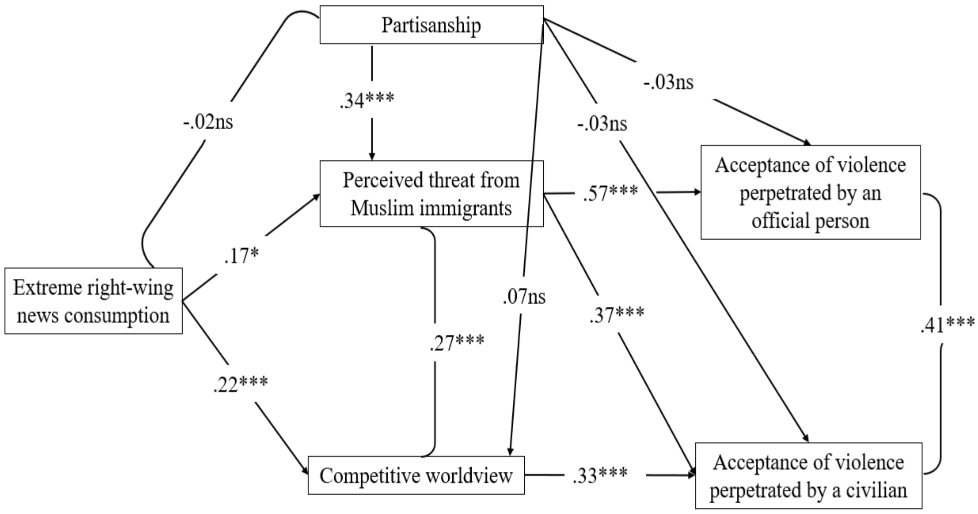
The path model of pro-government news consumption with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 10. The direct paths from pro-government news consumption to the acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person and by a civilian were not significant, therefore we removed them. Dangerous worldview was dropped out from the model, and the path from competitive worldview to the acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person was also deleted. The final model (χ^2 (3) = 3.219, $p < .359$) had very good fit indices (RMSEA = .019, PCLOSE = .556, TLI = .995, CFI = .999). Partisanship did not alter the results, as it was unrelated to competitive worldview ($r = .01$, $p < .869$), violence by an official ($r = -.03$, $p < .649$) and violence by a civilian ($r = -.03$, $p < .712$), but it significantly predicted perceived threat ($r = .30$, $p < .001$). This means that heightened competitive worldview and the acceptance of violence was not due to partisanship, but the result of news consumption. However, perceived threat results from both partisanship and news consumption. When partisanship was controlled, perceived threat from Muslim immigrants significantly mediated the positive paths between pro-government news consumption and violence perpetrated by an official person ($B = .20$, $p < .016$, *CI*: .04, .37), and between news consumption and violence committed by a civilian ($B = .10$, $p < .011$, *CI*: .03, .20). The indirect positive effect of pro-government news consumption on the acceptance of civilian violence mediated by competitive worldview was also significant ($B = .11$, $p < .001$, *CI:* .04, .20).

Figure 10. The path model of pro-government news consumption (Study 3c)



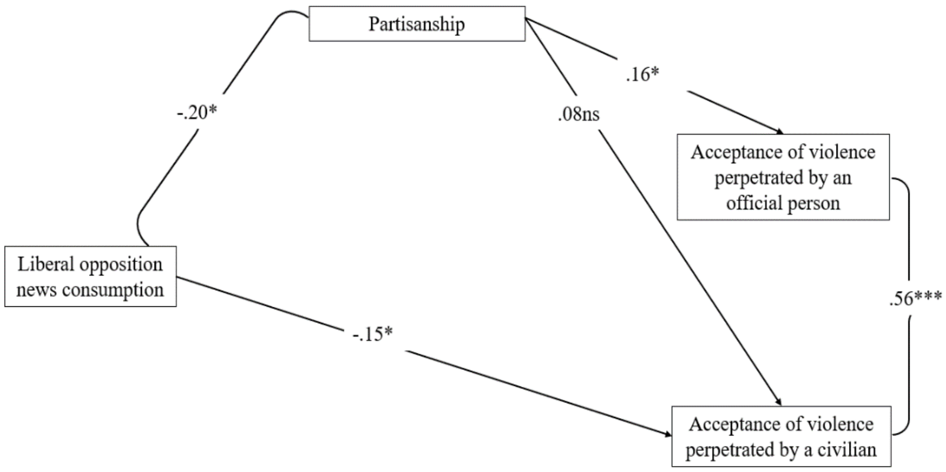
We created another path model for the extreme right-wing news consumption and controlled for partisanship. This model and the standardized direct effects can be seen in Figure 11. We dropped out the same paths as in the previous model due to the lack of significance. Interestingly, dangerous worldview was unrelated to the consumption of extreme right-wing media and support for violence against Muslim immigrants. The model of extreme right-wing news consumption (χ^2 (3) = 5.596, p < .133) had acceptable fit indices (RMSEA = .066, PCLOSE = .293, TLI = .944, CFI = .989). Partisanship was unrelated to competitive worldview (r = .07, p < .323), violence committed by an official (r = -.03, p < .649) and violence perpetrated by a civilian (r = -.03, p < .712), but it significantly predicted perceived threat (r = .34, p < .001) as in Figure 10. Perceived threat from Muslim immigrants significantly mediated the positive paths between news consumption and violence committed by an official person (B = .28, p < .006, *CI*: .10, .47), and between news consumption and violence perpetrated by a civilian (B = .14, p < .005, *CI*: .05, .24). Competitive worldview also significantly mediated the positive connection between news consumption and civilian violence (B = .16, p < .011, *CI:* .04, .32).

Figure 11. The path model of extreme right-wing news consumption (Study 3c)



We also investigated the path model of liberal opposition news consumption. The model with the standardized direct effects is illustrated in Figure 12. This model (χ^2 (1) = .018, p < .893) had very good fit indices (RMSEA = .000, PCLOSE = .916, TLI = 1.066, CFI = 1.000). All mediators were dropped out from the model, and also the path from liberal opposition news consumption to the acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person. The consumption of liberal opposition media negatively predicted the acceptance of civil violence, without the mediating effect of dangerous worldview, competitive worldview, or perceived threat. Partisanship was controlled in the model, and it was weakly related to the acceptance of violence perpetrated by an official person (r = .16, p < .020), but did not predict civilian violence (r = .08, p < .314), meaning that the decrease in the latter is the result of news consumption but not partisanship.

Figure 12. The path model of liberal opposition news consumption (Study 3c)



Discussion of Study 3c

In Study 3c we investigated the relationship between partisanship (supporting or opposing those in power), news consumption, and support for violence against Muslim immigrants. We presumed that that those who would vote for the government party would consume more pro-government news outlets than opposition media, and those who would support any of the opposition parties would show the opposite pattern. The results supported this: voters of the government consumed significantly more pro-government media, while supporters of the opposition read more opposition news. We also hypothesized that the consumption of pro-government news outlets would result in higher perceived threat from Muslim immigrants, heightened dangerous and competitive worldview, and higher acceptance of violence against Muslim immigrants than that of opposition news. Indeed, pro-government news consumption positively predicted perceived threat, dangerous and competitive worldview, and support for violence against Muslim immigrants committed by an official and by a civilian person. This is not surprising as pro-government media often depict asylum seekers in a stereotypical and fearmongering way. Immigrants are often portrayed in larger groups accompanying with police officers, which also suggests that they are criminals and pose security threat (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016; Van Dijk, 1993).

When we tested these connections in a path model, we revealed that pro-government and extreme right-wing news consumption predicted higher support for both kind of intergroup violence, and these connections were mediated by increased threat perception and competitive worldview. While perceived threat was important for both kinds of violence, competitive worldview only predicted civilian violence. As partisanship was controlled in all analyses, our models show that though increased threat is associated with both partisanship and bogeyman news consumption, competitive worldview and violent intentions were the result of news consumption and not partisanship. Interestingly, the path models of pro-government and extreme right-wing news consumption did not differ in terms of standardized regression coefficients and specific paths. The only difference could be observed in relation to party preference: while pro-governmental news consumption was positively associated with voting for the government party, extreme right-wing media consumption was unrelated to partisanship. This similarity in the two models further suggests that the fear-mongering representation of immigrants in pro-governmental and extreme right-wing news outlets counts in predicting heightened threat perception, competitive worldview, and the acceptance of violence against Muslim immigrants, and not the political orientation of the news source in itself.

We conclude that the consumption of pro-government and extreme right-wing media resulted in heightened perceived threat from Muslim immigrants, which works as a justification for violence against them (Faragó et al., 2019). These news outlets also emphasize that the world becomes more and more competitive with the influx of the immigrants, who compete for scarce resources like workplaces and social benefits (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016; Van Dijk, 1993). People with increased competitive worldview thought that civilians (like residents, administrators, and teachers) could also be empowered to use violence against the competing Muslim immigrants. Therefore, the perceived rivalry of Muslim immigrants justified civil violence against them. Interestingly, dangerous worldview was dropped out from these models, contrary to our hypothesis. This implies that people who consumed pro-government and far-right news did not think that the world has generally become a more dangerous place, they only felt that Muslim immigrants pose an increased threat.

Nonetheless, the consumption of opposition news was unrelated to threat and worldview, it only predicted the rejection of civil violence against Muslim immigrants. Unlike pro-government media, threatening and competing depictions of Muslim refugees do not appear in liberal opposition news, which explains the lack of mediations between opposition news consumption and support for violence. Opposition news coverage often portray Muslim immigrants as poor, miserable people who have lost their homes and whose lives are in danger. What is more, they have to face brutal ordeals by the Hungarian police, which use excessive force against them (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016). The representation of asylum seekers in liberal opposition media might evoke empathy in the readers, resulting in the rejection of civil violence as well.

Limitations of Study 3c

Although participants could have chosen from a wide variety of online news sources with pro- or anti-immigration stance, there are some limitations that we need to discuss. The most important is the question of causality: as Study 3c is correlational, we cannot ascertain if online news consumption predicts perceived threat, competitive worldview, or support for violence, or those who are more threatened and more likely to support violence read news that is consistent with their worldview. Both directions make sense theoretically, therefore experimental or longitudinal evidence is needed to specify if these relationships are bidirectional. We assumed that the cumulative effect of fearmongering news consumption shapes the worldview of individuals, and increases perceived threat (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016; Dietrich & Haußecker, 2017; Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Gerbner & Gross, 1976, Hoffner & Cohen, 2013; Mastro et al., 2007), which results in violent intentions against the outgroup that poses this threat (Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Meeus et al., 2009).

Another important limitation is related to the student sample. Mainly highly educated women filled out our questionnaire (for the connection between gender, education, and attitude levels see e.g., Carvacho et al., 2013; Ekehammar & Sidanius, 1982; Sidanius et al., 1994), but more problematic is the low number of government supporters (only 15% of the sample), which might have distorted the results. Therefore, a replication with a representative sample is needed to make these results more generalizable. Nonetheless, despite the distorted sample, our results demonstrated the partisan motivated processes and the connection between one-sided news consumption, threat, worldview, and violent intentions.

General Discussion

Hungary is an important place for investigating the acceptance and justification of intergroup violence. The social, economic, and political changes owing to the system change and the economic crisis resulted in the rise of the extreme right (Kovács, 2013), radical, populist, and ultranationalist right-wing ideologies (Krekó & Juhász, 2018), high punitive attitudes of the population (Boda et al., 2015), and hostility towards minorities (Bustikova, 2015; Kovarek et al., 2017; Mareš, 2018; Vidra & Fox, 2014), creating a militant right-wing extremist milieu in Hungary (Mareš, 2018). Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, the fearmongering portrayal of Muslim refugees in the media (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016) and the systematic disinformation and migration related fake news spread by the Hungarian government (Barlai, & Sik, 2017; think tank report of Juhász & Szicherle, 2017) considerably increased xenophobia and mass-migration related fear in the population (Simonovits, 2016; 2020). Hate speech against minority groups and refugees, their oppression and criminalization, and the divisive, polarizing political discourses are the characteristics of a populist, illiberal democracy (Körösényi & Patkós, 2015). These factors are the sources of prejudice and support for verbal and physical violence against outgroups (see e.g., Bilewicz & Soral, 2020; Boda et al., 2015; Bustikova, 2015; Soral et al., 2018). Though the political context of Hungary expands certain phenomena (e.g., anti-minority rhetoric, distribution of fake news) to a systemic level, which increase the likelihood of intergroup conflicts and violence in general, we tested general psychological mechanisms, and claim that the generalizability of our results is not limited to Hungary.

In Hungary, dominant social norms and public discussions in the political arena create an environment where violence can be seen as justified and necessary (see e.g., Mareš, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the intolerance against minority groups and the high support for intergroup violence, Hungary is considered being a low-threat location for crime and intergroup violence in international comparison (see Kerezsi, 2020;

OSAC, 2020). This suggests that not objective crime rates and the number of detected cases of violence had impact on the perception, acceptance, and legitimation of violence, but rather the social context, communication, the media, and political discourses, which points to the important role of social cognition in intergroup relations (see e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 2013). For instance, anti-immigration campaigns since 2015 (Barlai & Sik, 2017) considerably increased perceived threat from terrorism and immigration in Hungary despite the lack of terrorist attacks in the country, while perceived threat was much lower in countries with higher prevalence of terrorist attacks, like in France (according to the report of Pew Research Center, 2016).

In Study 1 we found evidence that people high on right-wing authoritarianism were more likely to feel that violence was justified against certain groups, while people with higher propensity for radical protest justified violence in a lower degree. We revealed that right-wing authoritarianism plays and important role in the ideological justification of violence against those groups that don’t harm directly but violate the accepted norms and values in a society, even if they are influential and have high status. Though aggression is more acceptable against physically harmful groups, our findings help to understand why aggression can be acceptable against symbolically threatening groups, and people’s motivations to harm them too.

In Study 1, the novelty of our contribution in the literature of right-wing authoritarianism is that we widened the categories that represent symbolic threat. Previous studies that aimed to investigate the dual-process model of prejudice used groups that cause disunity and disagreement in society like atheists, feminists, protestors, or groups criticizing authority, and ethnic or sexual minorities that seems to reject and violate the norms and values accepted by the authoritarian person (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Hadarics & Kende, 2018), and RWA predicted prejudice, hostility, and violence towards them (Altemeyer 2006; Thomsen et al., 2008). We also included powerful and influential groups like politicians, authoritarian leaders undermining democracy, banks, and multinational companies, all which possess control over resources, and were not expected to correlate with right-wing authoritarianism. Nonetheless, these groups loaded on the same factor as other symbolically threatening groups, which means that they all pose threat to the authoritarian person. Our research shows that RWA justifies violence also against groups that have high status and seems competent (Fiske et al., 2007) at least in a post-socialist country. The system change and the recent economic crisis heightened people's intolerance for inequality and their demand for redistribution (Tóth, 2008), and perhaps made authoritarians distrust and hate these groups for violating these principles.

Findings of Study 2 suggest that criminalizing a social group and punishing them for their way of life can activate punitive responses for those who are highly sensitive to norm- and safety-based threats, or who devalue low status groups. Acceptance of the new law is associated with support for violence for people high in right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. The authoritarian aggression is directed against groups that present a threat to the values and traditions of the ingroup, or behave dangerously (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Faragó et al., 2020; Lippa & Arad, 1999). Homeless people are perceived as physically threatening (Hadarics & Kende, 2018), but they can also be evaluated as a norm-violating group. The new law could legitimize violence for people high in right-wing authoritarianism, for example because the law gives a legal license to the police to apply physical violence against homeless people. The new amendment was passed by powerful authorities, so it is a perfect way for people high in RWA to justify violence, as it also fulfills their need for obedience. Contrary to right-wing authoritarianism, people high in social dominance orientation use violence as a tool for maintaining hierarchical group relations and dominance over subordinate groups (Henry et al., 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and their aggression is directed toward groups with low status or groups actively competing for higher status and scarce resources (Asbrock et al., 2010; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Thomsen et al., 2008). The low status of homeless people (Hadarics & Kende, 2018) activates punitive attitudes and violent intentions from those high in SDO, and our results suggested that they supported the new law and violence against homeless people.

Results of Study 2 also emphasize the importance of representative sampling[14] rather than relying only on highly educated student samples, which has been warned by many scholars (see e.g., Henry, 2008; Sears, 1986). Using only student samples would not reveal the complex relationship between education, social dominance orientation, and acceptance of violence, and one might mistakenly conclude that social dominance orientation predicts violence universally, but this was only true for highly educated people. For less well-educated people, the desire to create and maintain hierarchical group relations and group-based dominance is not closely related to support for violence.

The main contribution of Study 2 is that the acceptance of the criminalizing law mediated the effect of the general ideological attitudes on support for violence. Previous studies mentioned the role of dehumanizing discourses (Misetics, 2010; Tosi, 2007), and tested the effect of negative stereotypes (Hadarics & Kende, 2019) in the justification of violence, but our results show that the legalization of punitive behavior can also serve as a justification mechanism in itself. Another novelty of

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[14] We used representative samples for Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3a in order to enhance the external validity and the generalizability of the findings. Though collecting representative samples in most studies, we only used demographic variable in Study 2, as the main difference between the pilot and the main study was attributed to respondents' educational level. When we filtered out people with lower levels of education in the main study, we obtained the same path model as in the university sample, indicating that level of education has a significant effect on the justification mechanism. In other studies, education level was not as important as in Study 2, or controlling for other, non-demographic variables was more important (like political knowledge in Study 3b). Nevertheless, a replication is needed for Study 3c, and it is conceivable that demographic variables (like level of education of social status) might play an important role in the justification mechanism. For instance, those with lower socio-economic status are presumably more threatened by immigrants, who allegedly aim to take their jobs and take advantage of social welfare.

Study 2 is that this justification mechanism was influenced by educational level, as the association between SDO and violence increased with higher levels of education, suggesting that especially for highly educated people the criminalizing law legitimizes the use of violence for maintaining the intergroup status quo.

In Study 3, we investigated the effect of partisan motivated reasoning on the acceptance of misinformation, as these two can be the antecedents of radicalization and intergroup violence (think tank report of Bartlett & Miller, 2010; Bouvier & Smith, 2006; Kofta & Sedek, 2005; Kull et al., 2003; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; 2017). Partisanship is a strong opinion-based group membership, which predicts emotions and political behavioral intentions (Bliuc et al., 2007), and both Study 3a and 3b reinforced that partisanship was the most important predictor of believing in pipedream political fake news. Although previous studies mainly investigated political orientation instead of partisanship in the acceptance of misinformation (see e.g., Jost, 2017; Miller et al., 2016), in the context of Hungary the comparison between pro- and anti-government attitudes was more meaningful, considering that the opposition consists of both right- and left-wing parties. Previous research suggested that individuals process political fake information in a partisan motivated manner (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015; Uscinski & Parent, 2014; Weeks, 2015), and our findings confirmed that respondents accepted or rejected political pipedream fake news based on their political views which is in line with previous research about the role of wishful thinking in accepting fake information (Swire et al., 2017; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Despite pipedream fake news doesn't contain elements of conspiracies and threatening information about outgroups, therefore it might be less connected to violent intentions, the adoption of either pipedream or fearmongering fake news increase opinion polarization and echo chambers, which plants the seeds for intergroup conflicts and support for aggression (Krekó, 2020).

In Study 3a and 3b, our main contribution is that the acceptance of wish-fulfilling political fake news is symmetrical. Many of the previous studies concluded that conservatives are more likely to believe in misinformation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). However, threatening and negative stimuli were applied in these studies, and conservatives are more responsive to threat and anxiety than liberals (Fessler et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2016). Therefore, we used wish-fulfilling misinformation to measure pure acceptance and omitted threatening content. Our findings suggest that the phenomenon of believing in fake news may be more symmetrical between people with different political affiliations and preferences than previous research suggested (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Jost, 2017). Identifying the mechanism of fake news acceptance and the susceptible groups is crucial to understand the role it plays in intergroup relations.

In Study 3c we replicated the main result of Study 3a and 3b: partisanship significantly influenced voters' news consumption habits, as supporters of the government were more likely to follow pro-governmental news outlets, while supporters of the opposition mainly read opposition media, in line with partisan motivated reasoning (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Hart et al., 2009; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Pasek et al., 2015; Peterson & Iyengar, 2019; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Washburn & Skitka, 2017). People indeed preferred reading news that is consistent with their political stance, pre-existing worldview, and belief system. Nevertheless, the partisan motivated news consumption was associated with different perception of Muslim immigrants regarding the threat they pose and the acceptability of violence against them. Our findings are consistent with cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976), as the consumption of fearmongering news indeed predicted heightened threat perception from Muslim immigrants (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016; Mastro & Robinson, 2000), the perception of the world as a highly competitive place, and increased support for aggression against them (Lewandowsky et al., 2013) (or the lack of these). The main finding of Study 3c is that partisan motivated news consumption can be an important antecedent of the acceptance of intergroup violence. However, our findings must be interpreted with caution due to the lack of longitudinal or experimental data. We could only rely on correlational data and the literature supporting cultivation theory (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Mosharafa, 2015), integrated threat theory (Stephan et al., 1999), and the longitudinal and experimental evidence of dual-process model of prejudice (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Duckitt 2001; 2006; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Morrison & Ybarra, 2008; Sibley & Duckitt, 2013; Sibley et al., 2007) when we assumed the possible direction of the relationships between the constructs.

In Study 3c, though it was already well-known that perceived threat from outgroups increases intergroup tensions, prejudice, and support for violence (Caricati et al., 2017; Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Duckitt, 2001; 2006; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Meeus et al., 2009; Morrison & Ybarra, 2008; Lewandowsky et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2013; Sibley & Duckitt, 2013; Sibley et al., 2007; Stephan et al., 1999), the novelty is that we measured partisan motivated reasoning, news consumption, perceived threat from Muslim refugees, dangerous and competitive worldview, and support for violence committed by an official and by a civilian against Muslim refugees in one comprehensive model. Furthermore, though previous research analyzed the political discourses and the media representation of Muslim refugees in Hungary (see e.g., Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016; Mendelski, 2019; Vidra, 2017), no research was conducted to investigate the above mentioned processes and the effect of the Hungarian pro-government and opposition media consumption on violent intentions against refugees. Therefore, our research sheds light on how partisan motivated news consumption and the presence of bogeyman news about Muslim refugees increase perceived threat from immigrants, the perception of the world as a competitive place, and support for violence against people who are victims of a humanitarian crisis.

Conclusion

In my PhD dissertation I investigated the structural and psychological antecedents of the justification of intergroup violence in an illiberal democracy. I conducted three studies to test the effect of propensity for radical protest (resulting from group-based injustices and grievances), general attitude orientations (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation), criminalizing law against a low status and marginalized outgroup, partisan motivated processes, perceived threat, and competitive and dangerous worldview in the acceptability of intergroup violence. In the following I will introduce the practical implications of these studies and suggest directions for future research.

Regarding Study 1, as right-wing authoritarianism justifies violence against both symbolically threatening and physically dangerous groups, interventions could target the RWA-based threat to reduce the justification of violence. RWA is better conceptualized as an ideological attitude dimension than a personality trait (Duckitt et al., 2010), which implies that right-wing authoritarianism is a more flexible construct and can be influenced by threat. For instance, higher levels of external threat can enhance RWA, but RWA can also increase perceived threat, so the association is bidirectional (Onraet et al., 2014). Although most studies focus on how threat increases RWA (see e.g., Asbrock, & Fritsche, 2013; Cohrs, & Asbrock, 2009; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Lavine et al., 2005; Onraet et al., 2014), almost no studies exist related to the decrease in authoritarian attitudes. Political discourse depicting outgroups as a threat also matter. For instance, Donald Trump's authoritarian statements about race, sexuality, gender, and foreign affairs were the most favorable among those high in RWA (Choma & Hanoch, 2017), indicating that threat-inducing political discourses also play a role in this process. Consequently, future interventions could target the RWA-based threat to reduce prejudice. Self-affirmation interventions have been successful in reducing both prejudice and identity threat (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Zárate & Garza, 2002). In summary, findings of Study 1 can help decision-makers and non-governmental organizations to design more efficient interventions to reduce violence. Also, they underline the importance of the dominant political discourses in the justification of violence. However, they also showed that interventions should take into account the underlying motivations related to right-wing authoritarianism when tackling intergroup violence, and identify methods based on the specific intergroup contexts.

Regarding Study 2, there have been examples from around the world about how to effectively combat homelessness by positive policies that provide support and deal with housing, income, and health issue (e.g., Kiesler, 1991; Shinn, 2007; Tsemberis et al., 2004). However, many countries also choose a punitive approach to tackle the problem of homelessness alongside offering shelters and other short-term solutions. These policies aim to eliminate the problem of homelessness by punishment, and include bans on panhandling, sleeping or lying down in public, living in vehicles, or offering food for homeless people in public (Clifford & Piston, 2017; Foscarinis et al., 1999). These policies are not effective in tackling homelessness but push the problem under the surface (see e.g., Clifford & Piston, 2017). One example for punitive social policies is the case of Hungary (Bence & Udvarhelyi, 2013; Udvarhelyi, 2014), where the police can arrest a homeless person for residing in public premises. The punishments include the destruction of the person's belongings and imprisonment (Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2018). Study 2 identified that support for the criminalizing law was indeed associated with support for violence against the homeless. Although our research focused on the majority, and especially people who have authoritarian and anti-egalitarian attitudes, it also emphasizes the responsibility of decision-makers and legislatures. Decision-makers have the power to decide whether they choose to blame, dehumanize, and criminalize homeless people, or support positive policies aimed at abolishing homelessness and reintegrating homeless people into society. Decision-makers justify the use of counterproductive measures with public opinion, claiming that they are responsive to the will of people (Frost, 2010). Accordingly, punitive policies are quite popular (Clifford, & Piston, 2017; Frost, 2010; Link, 1995; Phelan et al., 1997). In Hungary, there was no previous survey regarding the acceptance of criminalization of homelessness, but it is important to note that the punitive attitudes of the general Hungarian population are among the highest in Europe (Boda et al., 2015). However, instead of only reacting to the demands of people, politicians can actively shape public sentiment regarding crime and punishment so as to gain political advantage and support a wider political ideology, manipulating the public into believing that the punitive measures are the only appropriate way to solve this social problem (Beckett, 1997). Therefore, the mechanism between punitive policy making and public opinion is reciprocal. Our results point out that if decision-makers criminalize a disadvantaged social group, it presumably evokes punitive responses and hatred from certain people. Although the criminalization of homelessness is more and more prevalent in other European countries like Poland, Belgium, and Spain (Bence & Udvarhelyi, 2013; Jones, 2013 (report of Housing Rights Watch); Udvarhelyi, 2014), we hope that our study can help NGOs and other stakeholders to influence decision-makers about the detrimental effects of this amendment. A more participatory style of policy making would help to drive back harsh and intolerant measures (Johnstone, 2000). Our results can therefore be treated as initial steps toward identifying effective ways to combat violence against the homeless.

Study 3 points to the responsibility of the media and politicians. The pro-government and the extreme right-wing media portrayed Muslim refugees in a completely different and more threatening way than did opposition news outlets (Kenyeres & Szabó, 2016; Kiss, 2016; Van Dijk, 1993). As previously mentioned, media shape the perceived reality of individuals (see e.g., Dixon & Linz, 2000), and the threatening portrayal of outgroups can worsen intergroup relations (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016). Nevertheless, politicians can deliberately gain advantage over the polarized and biased representation of outgroups and intergroup conflicts. For example, the Hungarian governing party used the influx of immigrants to create new enemies, against whom the governing party can save Hungarian people (Vidra, 2017), instead of framing it as a humanitarian crisis. They evaluated the situation as an intergroup conflict and portrayed Muslim immigrants as invaders (see e.g., Mendelski, 2019). In the Iraq war the American mass media framed the war as a conflict between civilization and barbarism, which legitimized the invasion of Iraq (Esch, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2013). The media broadcasted fake images about the Gulf War in 1991, and censored the violence committed by American soldiers, making citizens believe that the war serves good purposes (Luhmann, 2008). Therefore, politicians use media to shape the attitudes of the public regarding these outgroups and conflicts so as to gain political advantage, e.g., to maximize their power and control, or to justify the necessity of a war, and make people believe that punitive measures are necessary and inevitable to solve the problem (see e.g., Beckett, 1997). As global processes like climate change or pandemics (e.g., COVID-19) are increasing xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments (see e.g., Gover et al., 2020; Smith, 2007), it will be even more important in the near future to reduce hate speech and negative portrayal of outgroups, and create interventions aiming at reducing support for intergroup violence.

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Appendix

Fake news headlines used in Study 3b

Pro-government fake news headlines:

- Public opinion researchers say Angela Merkel failed in the eyes of German voters because of her too permissive asylum policy
- The European Public Prosecutor has released the Hungarian government in all current corruption cases
- Calculation of the government by building stadiums came in: last year, 13,000 more children started playing football in one of the clubs
- The College of Cardinals of Vatican awarded Viktor Orbán for his services to save Christian Europe
- According to Donald Trump, the Sargentini report is only good for hurting the Hungarians

Anti-government fake news headlines:

- In an inter-parliamentary election, the opposition candidate overly defeated Fidesz's nominee
- The leaders of the conservative European People's Party (family party of Fidesz in the European Parliament) issued a joint statement that Fidesz will be excluded from their members in the coming months
- 20 Nobel Prize winner scientists wrote an open letter to Viktor Orbán: Do not destroy the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- Viktor Orbán was sent to medical treatment due to his increasing psychiatric disease
- OLAF (European Anti-Fraud Office) called for the resignation of Péter Polt, Chief Prosecutor

Non-political fake news headlines:

- With the method of a Mexican healer and shaman, man can rejuvenate his cells and thus himself

- From 2019, 1 gigabyte of mobile Internet will be free of charge for customers of Vodafone, Telenor and Telekom
- An Austrian businessman would open an amusement park in Budapest and in several rural big cities
- In China, the large-scale production of a compound has just started: it breaks the nylon bag into an easily formable, recyclable material

Non-political real news headlines:

- The xanthohumol enzyme found in beer is effectively fighting against cancer
- Water was found on a planet outside the solar system
- Stroke predictive medical device has been developed by Hungarian researchers

Extended instruction of the perceived independence of source (Study 3b)

Please estimate how likely it is that the news item was written by an independent journalist, or how likely it is that it came from a politician, that is, it is part of political propaganda. Use the following scale points to express your opinion:

1, if you're absolutely sure the news was written by an independent journalist

2, if you think that it is likely that the news was written by an independent journalist

3, if you suspect that the news comes from an independent journalist, but you are a little uncertain

4, if you cannot decide where the news comes from, but please mark option 4 as rare as possible and try one of the directions instead.

5, if you suspect that news comes from a politician, but you are a little uncertain

6, if you think that it is likely that the news comes from a politician

7, if you're absolutely sure that it comes from a politician