

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN PSYCHOLOGY

Head of Programme: Prof. Dr. Hunyady György MHAS

*Socialization and Social Processes Programme*

Head of Programme: Prof. Dr. Hunyady György MHAS

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PHD DISSERTATION

SUMMARY

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SZABÓ MÓNICA

**THE DYNAMICAL THOUGHT SYSTEMS OF GENDER: IDEOLOGIES AND  
STEREOTYPES, GENDER TYPING AND SOCIAL IDENTITY  
(A SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH)**

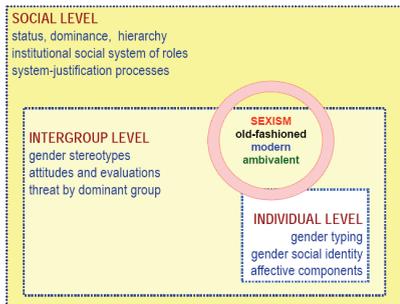
Supervisor: Dr. Nguyen Luu Lan Anh CSc

2008

## 1. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

### 1.1. Conceptual framework

The aim of the dissertation was to explore and explain the current thought systems of gender within their relationships. On the one hand it tried to implant the ideologies of gender roles – the different types of *sexisms* – into the extended systems of attitudes towards gender, and on the other hand to associate them with the system of the self, looking for connections among the self representations, the affective meanings and the thought systems of gender roles.



(FIGURE 1.)

It is important to indicate that our research was basically constructed from a *perspectivist-contextualist* approach (McGuire, 2001). Our other main principal was the *functionalist point of view*, to approach the phenomena from the broadest sense as possible, even on the levels of the individual, the groups and the society.

FIGURE 1.: Examined levels of the research („multilevel” approach)

### 1.2. Objectives of the research

#### ■ Research of dynamic gender stereotypes on Hungarian adult sample

Our primary aim was to examine the attendance of tendencies concerning the changes of gender roles previously described by international researches. We intended to explore the direction and size of the assumed changes in gender stereotypes concerning both genders. We also wanted to draw a picture about the possible consensuality of these patterns, i. e. about the extent of the consensus in the judgements about the direction and size of these changes.

In the analysis, on the level of the individuals we also wanted to examine how self-descriptions and their assumed changes develop along the relevant characteristics of gender roles. So besides the *dynamic gender stereotypes*, we also wanted to examine the *dynamic self-descriptions*.

Furthermore, we looked for a relationship between the two levels, i. e. we examined how the assumed changes related to gender is connected to the assumed changes in self-representations.

#### Hypotheses:

- 1.A: The assumed change is demonstrable, which is, in particular, asymmetric; the change is more significant in the image of women than in men, and more significant in the masculine characteristics than in the feminine ones.
- 1.B: This assumed change can also be found in the gender-typed representations of the self-representations.
- 1.C: The predicted changes in gender stereotypes and in self-descriptions are connected, and the connection is stronger between the two levels in case of the assumed growth of masculine characteristics, mainly of women.

## ■ Research of the relationships among the thought systems of genders (stereotypes, attitudes and ideologies) on Hungarian adult sample

Our primary aim was to implant the *sexist ideologies of genders* (old fashioned, modern, ambivalent) into a complex system of relations, in which even the cognitive and affective explanatory components related to the self and genders are present in the same way. On account of this, we searched for the relationships starting from the descriptions of the content and structure of the *gender stereotypes*. We made an attempt at building up a structural equation model, which explains the backgrounds of the sexist ideologies together with several cognitive and affective components. Besides grabbing the general relationships among the thoughts related to gender, we also wanted to illustrate the differences on the level of individuals (or types), so we aimed to differentiate typical patterns, types based on the variations of the thought systems.

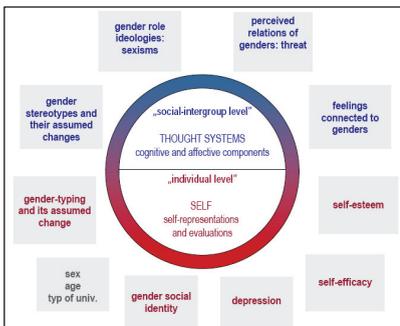
### Hypotheses:

- 2.A: The system-justification ideologies are stemming from the societal-intergroup relationships, and are connecting with the derivations of gender relations, such as the feeling of the threat by dominant group, and the connected (negative) stereotyping.
- 2.B: The differences between the thoughts, attitudes and evaluations of *the* men and women bearing different positions in societal discourses are the same in the representations of genders and the self. These differences are modulated by further positioning factors, such as the effect of the age(group) or the prospective occupational role of the person (type of university).
- 2.C The affective components and the representations of the self appear as mediators on the primary effect of sex, so the gender type, the gender social identity and the feelings connected to the self play important roles in defining the ideologies of genders.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Participants

Primarily we wanted to reach the population of young, adult, university students. The questionnaire was completed by university students from Budapest (from BCE, BME and ELTE), a total of 562 participants (age from 18 to 25, 82,9%). With a smaller, 'older' subsample (age from 26 to 55, 116 participants, 17,1%), our aim was to examine the topic on people different from the 'usual' population (young university students). Therefore the final sample included 677 participants (228 of it, 33,5% were men és 449 of it, 66,5% were women). The data collection was performed on the autumn of 2007/2008, by grouped, anonym individual completion, as a part of a course lesson.



### 2.2. Measures (questionnaire)

We proceeded the research with a questionnaire, in which there were closed-ended questions – scales and checklists – to explore the attitudes (representations, values and feelings) and demographical backgrounds (sex, age, qualification, occupation) of the participants.

The final scales planned to be used and elaborated by statistical analyses (item-analysis, Cronbach-alpha computation and factor analysis) were proved to be reliable.

FIGURE 2.: Constructs examined by the research

The final applied scales and questionnaires were the following ones:

- Measuring the affective meaning of the self:  
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg et al. 1995)  
Schwarzer és Jerusalem Self-Efficacy Scale) (cited by Kopp et al. 1993)  
CDI Depression Scale (Kovacs, 1985; cited by Rózsa et al. 1999)
- Measuring the representation of the self: checklists and social identity  
checklists (2x10 „masculine” and „feminine” adjective, /Kovács 2004, Szabó 2004, 2006/  
rating the self in 2007 and 2027 (present and future)  
Gender Social Identity Scale (Cameron and Lalonde 2001)
- Measuring the representations and affective meaning of the genders:  
checklists (2x10 „masculine” and „feminine” adjective, /Kovács 2004, Szabó 2004, 2006/  
rating men and women in 2007 and 2027 (present and future)  
Threat Scale (by dominant group) (Stephan et al. 2000)  
Sexism scales: Old-fashioned and Modern (Swim et al. 2001)  
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick and Fiske 1996)  
Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI, Glick and Fiske 1999)  
Feelings toward Men and Women (bipolar checklist, Stephan et al. 2000)  
Gender Role Orientation Question (7 point item to explore traditional or modern attitudes)

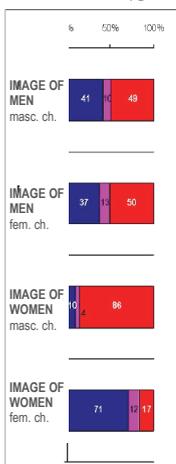
### 3. RESULTS

The complex statistical analysis of the hypotheses-testing with all of the details can be found in the text and appendix of the dissertation. The main theses connected to our hypotheses are quoted below.

#### 3.1. About the dynamic of the changes

The first group of our hypotheses (**1.A., B., C.**) was phased concerning with the assumed changes of gender stereotypes and self-representations. According to them a more significant assumed shift can be found in the representation of women and in connection to this, in the gender-typical self-representations.

**A)** According to the results of searching for the assumed change in gender stereotypes the female stereotype shown pronounced increase in masculine characteristics. At the same time the



participants assumed significant – although a relatively smaller – decline in the feminine characteristics. At the same time the perceived change in the representation of men is not considerable.

There were no differences in the size or direction of the changes according to sex, age or type of university, the judgements were consensual in the subsamples based on these characteristics.

Besides the data computed by making of an average we checked the subtler individual differences. We found specific patterns behind the global tendencies. (FIGURE 3.)

Regarding the representation of women there was an agreement in the tendencies mentioned above. An overwhelming majority of cases (71-86%) assumes increase in the masculine and decline in the feminine characteristics. Examining the representation of men we found two groups of the responders instead of a consensual judgements of steadiness.

signs: ■ decrease ■ stagnation ■ increase

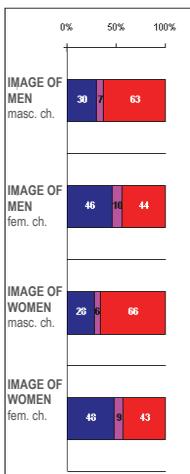
FIGURE 3.: The assumed changes of gender stereotypes in the two groups of adjectives

Approximately half of the responders (41/49%) assumed decline, while the other half of them (37/50%) assumed increase both in masculine and feminine characteristics of men.

Therefore about as far as the assumed changes of gender stereotypes were concerned, our results confirmed our hypothesis 1.A. which stated that the stereotype of women are in more dynamic change. These results also show that there is no such congruent agreement about the prospective representation of men as there is about the representation of women.

**B)** About the assumed changes of self-descriptions on the level of average scores a tendency could be found that *both* sexes assume a statistically significant, but moderate increase in the masculine characteristics, but practically *none of them* assumed significant change in the feminine characteristics. Not the gender-typicality, but the social desirability of the characteristic defined whether the men and women predicted increase or decline about themselves.

There were no differences in the assumed change according to gender, but according to age, the older group expected bigger change in feminine characteristics, while the younger group expected bigger change in masculine characteristics about themselves.



We examined here also the subtler tendencies behind the average scores. It was clear that nearly two-thirds of the responders of both sexes (men 63%, women 66%) expected increase in masculine characteristics, but about feminine characteristics, the picture is not so obvious. Approximately half of the responders (men 46%, women 48%) assumed decline and half of them (men 44%, women 48%) assumed increase in feminine characteristics of both men and women. (FIGURE 4.)

Therefore about the assumed changes of the self, our results proved our hypothesis 1.B., which stated that the assumed change appears in the self-descriptions. These results also shown that the consensus is stronger about masculine characteristics, the direction of it is the same for both men and women, while the tendencies are not so obvious about the changes in feminine characteristics.

Therefore it is important to emphasize that both men and women expect increase mainly in positive masculine characteristics.

signs: ■ decrease ■ stagnation ■ increase

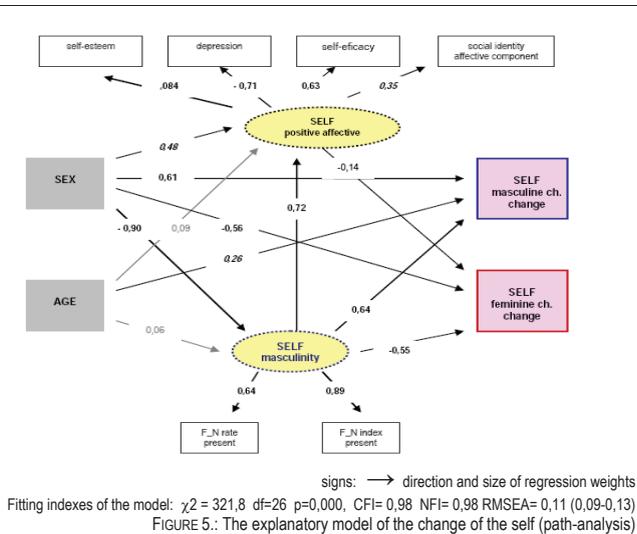
FIGURE 4.: The assumed changes of self-description by sexes in the two groups of adjectives

**C)** About the assumed changes of stereotypes and self-descriptions we can say that the relationships are not linear at the level of global index variables. In spite of this it can be told that the assumed change of self-description in case of women has the same direction as the assumed change of the gender stereotypes. Although their assumed increase of masculine characteristics correlates with the increase of them in the stereotype of women (58,9% of the female responders), at the same time the rate of those who expected decline for themselves and increase for women in general were significant (25,3%). This is not so obvious in the case of feminine characteristics and the stereotype of women. Most of them (36,1%) expected decline for themselves and even for the stereotype. Although at the same time the same rate (31,2%) of the responders assumed decline for women in general and increase for themselves in feminine characteristics.

The picture is more heterogenous in the case of men. Nearly the same rate of the responders expected increase for themselves and also for the stereotype (23,9%) or decline for both (19,5%). One-third of the male sample expected increase for both in masculine characteristics (31,9%) and one-quarter of them expected increase for themselves and decline for the stereotypes (25,0%).

Therefore concerning the assumed changes of the self-description and the gender stereotypes, we partially proved our hypothesis 1.C. which stated that the direction of the assumed changes is the same for the stereotype of women and the self-description of women in masculine characteristics. These results also show that there is no obvious relationship in the predicted changes at the two levels (stereotype and self-description) in the feminine characteristics especially in case of men.

By examining the relations in a complex system we made an attempt to build up a structural equation model to describe the dynamic of the change. (FIGURE 5.)



The strongest predictors of the change in self-description were the sex itself, and the gender-type of the self (masculine schema). We can interpret the relationship as it would start some kind of 'compensational' process; in masculine characteristic it assumes the expectation of greater decline for the self-schema of men, and greater increase for the self-schema of women. This relationship describes a general effect which is modulated by the sex itself, for example in this model as being a very strong predictor of the gender-type of the self. This confirms the evidence that basically the biological sex guides the 'gendering'. The other mediating effect is that the sex itself influences the assumed change by assuming increase in the group of characteristics connected to the gender.

Altogether we can say that the assumed changes stated in the hypotheses were demonstrable both for the gender stereotypes and the self. Our results approved the tendencies described in international researches, but also shown that the analysis of subtler tendencies behind the results of making averages is also important for the deeper exploration of the relationships.

### 3.2. *About the thought systems of gender*

The other group of our hypotheses (**2.A., B., C.**) searched the relationships among the thought systems of gender in a context of gender ideologies. They attempted to explore the system of relations of the different types of sexism, threat and stereotyping through the filters of sex, age, type of university and the further cognitive and affective factors concerning the self.

**A)** The threat by dominant group was in the focus of the hypothesis. We searched for its relationships to the other thought systems of gender.

The women – as the mainly affected group – shown higher scores on the perceived threat, just like the older group who reported a greater perceived threat than the younger one. Although at the same time, a field of force could be outlined with this threat in its centre. According to our results the person, who perceive more (supposed or real) threat denies less the gender discrimination, although at the same time shows hostile sexist opinion about men and benevolent sexist opinion about women, and also shows a more modern representation of gender stereotypes. Their self-representation was more feminine (independently from their biological sex) and their stereotype of men was more negative.

*Therefore our results proved our hypothesis 2.A. which stated that the sexist ideologies are related to both threat and stereotyping.*

**B)** In the next section we summarize the patterns of differences based on the sex, age and type of university which could be found in the thought systems of gender.

Altogether the effect of sex and age is significant, but only moderate one by size; the younger male group had more extreme, more negative picture about the gender relations, among women, the older group had a similar point of view. Men scored higher in prejudices towards women (old-fashioned, modern and ambivalent sexism), while women scored higher in ambivalent prejudices towards men. However, younger men and older women scored higher in old-fashioned sexism at the same time.

In our research besides the age, the type of university was also an important factor. There were more pronounced differences in thought systems. It was salient that compared with other subgroups the 'Technology' students (BME University) consequently reached higher scores in old-fashioned and modern sexism. In concordance with this they perceive the least threat, although at the same time they have the least positive picture about men. Therefore this subgroup – which we classified to the first place according to the prestige of the profession – seems to differ strongly from the others (teacher, law, economics, psychology). Although it has to be underlined that in case of sexism and stereotyping the type of university and sex are in interaction: men and women think differently at the same type of university. For example men from economics and law had the highest scores on old-fashioned sexism, while women especially from these subgroups are the least sexist.

*Therefore the gathered data approved our hypothesis 2.B. which stated that there are special patterns of differences among the subgroups based on sex, age and type of university.*

**C)** Approaching from the self (the gender-type of it and the affective factors) we also examined the demonstrable relationships between the different characteristics of the self and the thought systems of gender.

For the complex measuring of the gender-type we used the type-distinction of Bem (Bem, 1974) for making four groups (undifferentiated, masculine, feminine, androgyn) based on the scores of the present masculinity and femininity scales of self-description.

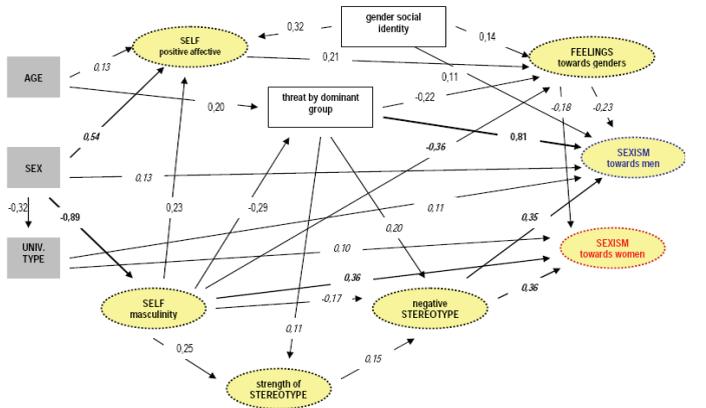
According to our results the four groups could be easily outlined with different self-representations and thought systems. The presence of the male and/or female schema had an influence resulting in more negative opinions about the other gender (higher sexism-scores, less positive feelings, more negative stereotype).

Furthermore our result called attention to the fact that over the effect of sex the gender-type (presence of gender schemas) *itself* has also an influence on thought systems. There were variables which did not show any sex differences (those were: depression and self-efficacy of the affective components of the self, as well as the gender social identity and the benevolent sexism), but gender-typing did have.

Besides the self-representations we also examined how the feelings connected to men and women and their interaction influence certain views of the self and genders. Our results shown that the more positive view of gender correlates with stronger social identity on the one hand, but with a rather feminine self-schema, and with lower depression on the other hand. On the level of gender, it correlates with lower sexism.

*Therefore the empirical data approve our hypothesis 2.C. which stated that the self-representations and the affective components are related to thought systems.*

We also made an attempt to build up a structural equation model to describe these relationships in a system. Our integrative model showed the self and the thought systems of genders in one space of the system of their relationships. Comprehensively we can state about this model that it provides data about the validity of the second group of our hypotheses. (FIGURE 6.)



signs: → direction and size of regression weights

Fitting indexes of the model:  $\chi^2 = 1432$   $df = 191$   $p = 0,000$ ,  $CFI = 0,97$   $NFI = 0,96$   $RMSEA = 0,09$  (0,09-0,10)

FIGURE 6.: Explanatory model of the ideologies connected to gender (path-analysis)

As expected, the perceived threat by dominant group has significant role in the model. It has a direct effect on the sexism concerning men, but it also has an effect on the ideologies concerning women through the negative stereotyping.

We partially managed to show the legitimating role of gender stereotypes, the negative evaluations predict sexism. However the strength of stereotyping has only a very small and indirect effect, and the assumed changes of stereotypes could not be adjusted into the model as an explanatory component.

Altogether we can say that the influences of sex, age and type of university can be noticed, even if not directly but through the components of the self.

The majority of the effects on the ideologies can be traced through the components of the self, so we could confirm the 'filtering-hypothesis'. The gender-type (masculinity of the self) and the affective components have influence on sexism also by strengthening each other, on the

one hand directly in case of women, and on the other hand through the threat in case of men. In contradistinction to our expectations we could confirm only a slight effect of the social identity in this system of relations.

**Altogether we can say that the assumed relationships in the thought systems of gender stated in the hypotheses were demonstrable. The individual thought systems were defined strongly by categories of the social identities (sex, age, occupational role) and these components – through the self as a (cognitive and affective) filter – have influence on the relationships of thought systems.**

## **4. DISCUSSION AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### *4.1. About the results – in the mirror of societal change*

Altogether we can say that most of the explored results proved our expectations, although at the same time the deeper interpretations of the relationships called attention to several core questions.

The social gender roles are undoubtedly changing and these changes are connecting the changes in social thought systems.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that both men and women expect increase mainly in positive masculine characteristics in their self-description. This phenomenon can show the current social orientation, which assumes the success and the individual progress through competition in the first place (e.g. Fülöp, 2007; Orosz and Fülöp, 2007). And masculine characteristics are consistent with these attitudes.

At the same time it is also worth paying attention to the fact that according to the prospective image of men – either we talk about the self-image or the general image of men – the representations are not so consensual, the image is much more heterogenous, so uncertain in this way.

Based on analysing the content of thoughts concerning gender, we can say that although the ideologies (sexisms) changed a lot in the sense of their content and complexity, in the sense of 'quantity' the change is much less significant, the relations between genders are still unequal in general. Both men and women share the system-justifying ideologies of genders, as Kinnard (quoted by Schmitt et al., 2002) spiritfully states: half of the antifeminist literature uncovering the rights of women were written by women.

At the same time, an important precondition of the societal change is – as our result proved – to perceive the discrimination and inequalities. But this can only be a motivational basis to change for women, for men it can be a threat against their privileged status – and so their social identity (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). The typical reaction to this is the phenomenon of the '*reverse discrimination*' which appears in societal discourses like for example 'men are the second gender of today'.

### *4.2. Possible extensions and practice*

#### **■ The possible directions of the expansion of the research**

For further researches, new directions can be outlined. First of all it is important to emphasize that we regard this research a first step in order to put the ideologies into context which wanted to describe the general patterns. At the same time it is obvious that for a research of the deeper relations, a more complex investigation of relations between genders is needed. It would be worth examining the opinions of men and women separately while drawing the general relations in the structural equation model. In certain lines the gender differences of the relations could tell a lot about the operational style of the phenomena.

It can be an important expansion of the analysis to explore the threat by 'minority' group more deeply, i.e. to examine the assumed or real threat by women.

From a wider perspective we aim to examine more thoroughly the system of relations of the threat and the social identity. The first factor was proved to be determinating on gender ideologies, and the latter has a close relationship with how the experience of threat appears at the level of the individual.

Therefore we would like to research further these three factors – *threat – social identity – identity threat* – besides the method of questionnaires even with qualitative – for example with focusgroups – methodologies. We hope that the results from these researches can be used in trainings about prejudices and gender roles.

Over our research, it is obvious that there are approaches which can be effective in the research of the thought systems of gender by including new aspects and constructions.

A specific context is the approach of the *values* originated from the theory of threat; the personal values, for example the relationship with power, or the perceived differences of values between genders (Feather 2005; Hungarian-American comparative research: Nguyen et al., 2003-2004). Also an interesting perspective to include the construct of *respect* approaching from emotions and relationships between genders. Respect can be a factor which can diverge from the stereotype in certain sense (Jackson et al., 2001). The research of Sibley (Sibley et al. 2007) shows another level, the context of the thought systems of the social structure when they examine the relationships among the *right wing authoritarianism*, the social dominance and the sexism. The discovery of those motivational factors which result the expression or covering the personal sexism can take us closer to the understanding of the dynamics (Klonis et al., 2005). There were researches about including the conative components to discover how the acceptance of certain ideologies appears in concrete behaviour or in conative intention (Moya et al., 2007).

### ■ *Practical aspects*

We regard the *conscious forming of thought systems* as an important instrument of social change. Besides its practical nature it is important to carry out these interventions on a scientific basis, otherwise they will be inefficient or harmful in the worst case. The prejudices related to genders have a very deep origin and have such strong ideological function that the efforts taken for the sake of changing them can cause serious counter-reactions. We can only raise the consciousness about the operational methods of the inequalities and the system-justificational processes by established and systematic ways. Otherwise the individuals will be motivated to an aversive avoidance of the anxiety and negative affective components originated from inequalities (or to a learned helplessness in case of other components) rather than conducting the social changes.

It is a cardinal point for the socially disadvantaged groups in social changes when they perceive the collective discrimination, because this can lead to the realisation of the current *illegitimacy of the status-relations* (Cameron 2001). From the other – more advantageous – position the denial of the discrimination of women brings the assumption that the relations between men and women a legitimately organized. Consequently antagonistic interests are connected in the relations of genders. The group of women can react to the identity-threat in different ways like for example the attempt of the modification of social judgements (Tajfel and Turner, quoted by Turner 1999), or the rephrasing of the in-group by social creativity (Smith and Mackie, 2001). The societal change can be made more difficult by that the realisation of discrimination has a negative effect on psychological well-being, so the defending reaction of women is often the neglecting (Schmitt et al., 2002).

For men it makes the advocacy of the sympathy for the changes so difficult that those men who identify themselves as 'non-traditional' do not really have proper alternatives to create positive social identity. Women can achieve positive identity by considering themselves as 'feminists' (rather by the judgement of the in-group than the society) but for men – currently – there are no

such normatively accepted, possibly similar roles (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). Therefore the forming and advocacy of the *pro-feminist attitude* of men is hardly possible in the social discourses of nowadays. Dealing with 'women-topics' goes along with the threat of feminisation which can result anxiety.

The most general but in the same time connected conclusion of our research – in concordance of the data of scientific literature – is that one of the highlighted ways of changing the thought systems is through the self. The traditional masculinity of the self-representation and the positive affective component were proved to be a key factor in defining the ideologies, just like the perceived threat and the positive social identity. During the development of a program, these can be the essential topics around which a systematic learning process can be constructed. Besides the general dynamics it is worth paying attention to the individual differences in thought systems. We regard the appraisal of them to be essential. The realisation and characterisation of them (e.g.: the typing method shown in our research, similar to the '*gender role profile*' of Fisher and Good, 1987) can provide a basis from the possible 'attacking points'. In case of a training aimed to heighten the sensitivity towards the gender inequalities, a woman who experiences the threat, has a different identity-position than those who do not, considering the interactions of further factors, for example sharing the sexist ideologies. In our research, for example, we could define four groups based on the scores of sexism and feelings related to genders: the group of relatively 'unbiased' (14%), 'consequently sexist' (22%), 'ambivalent' (32%) and 'careful' (24%) individuals.

The inequalities of gender, the perception of discrimination and threat can be identity-threats for both men and women, although at the same time it is important to realize that there are two different dynamics.

At the same time the profound knowledge of these processes can help finding those answers which can lead us on the way of creating positive gender social identities for both men and women.

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