

Ideological Roots of Resistance Toward Gender-Inclusive Policies: Distinguishing Between Multi-Gender and De-Gender Policies

Amanda REMSÖ*^{1,2} & Emma A. RENSTRÖM^{1,2}

¹Department of Psychology, Kristianstad University, Sweden

²Department of Psychology, Gothenburg University, Sweden

*Amanda is the presenting author.

Abstract

Gender-inclusive policies aim to recognize all genders and prevent gender-based bias and stereotypes in society. One example is the implementation of gender-inclusive language in official documents. Such policies can be divided into having two functions, which are reflected in how they are formulated: either to remove the salience of gender (de-gendering) or to make nonbinary individuals visible (multi-gendering). However, gender-inclusive policies face resistance, and research shows that the ideological convictions driving this resistance vary for the specific formulation of the policy. In this research, we aim to replicate and expand on this line of research. Study 1 ($N = 2219$) was a large-scale survey in Sweden showing that the traditionalism subdimension of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) predicted resistance to both the multi-gendering and de-gendering uses of the Swedish gender-inclusive pronoun *hen*. In contrast, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) predicted resistance only to the de-gendering use of *hen*. Study 2 ($N = 411$) was a pilot experiment in Sweden, where participants were presented with different types of (fictive) de-gendering and multi-gendering policies. For example, "Gendered pronouns removed from learning materials when referring to no specific individual" (de-gendering policy) or "The gender-inclusive pronoun *hen* is added to learning materials to refer to nonbinary individuals" (multi-gendering

policy). The results largely mirrored those of Study 1, such that traditionalism within RWA predicted resistance to multi-gendering policies but not the de-gendering ones, while SDO predicted resistance to the de-gendering but not to multi-gendering policies. In sum, resistance to multi-gendering policies seems to stem mainly from a desire to preserve cultural norms, while resistance to de-gendering is sometimes also based on the same desire but is more often driven by the motivation to maintain existing social hierarchies and the gender categories that support them. Hence, combating resistance to gender-inclusive policies and language requires different approaches depending on formulation.

Relevant references

Morgenroth, T., Sendén, M. G., Lindqvist, A., Renström, E. A., Ryan, M. K., & Morton, T.

A. (2021). Defending the sex/gender binary: The role of gender identification and need for closure. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *12*(5), 731-740.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620937188>

Renström, E. A., Lindqvist, A., & Sendén, M. G. (2022). The multiple meanings of the gender-inclusive pronoun hen: Predicting attitudes and use. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *52*(1), 71-90. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2816>

Renström, E. A., & Klysing, A. (2024). Ideological origins of resistance against gender-inclusive language reforms: Singular they as a de-gendering or multi-gendering strategy. *Political Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.13058>

Biography

Amanda Remsö is a PhD student in psychology at Kristianstad University and the University of Gothenburg. Her dissertation focuses on the political polarization of gender, including gender-inclusive language and pronouns.

Emma A. Renström is a professor of psychology at Kristianstad University and affiliated with the University of Gothenburg. She has studied gender-inclusive pronouns for over 10 years, including how such pronouns influence gender conceptualization.