



**QUEEN'S
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BELFAST**

SCHOOL OF
PSYCHOLOGY

INTEGRATING INTERGROUP THREAT AND ATTITUDE INOCULATION THEORIES TO PROTECT AGAINST MISINFORMATION ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY

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SHAPING A
BETTER
WORLD
SINCE 1845

MISINFORMATION & CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- **Misinformation:** any information that is false or misleading ^[1]
- **Disinformation:** false/misleading and intentionally spread ^[1]
- **Conspiracy theories:** attempts to explain events/phenomena using accusations of hidden manipulation by a malevolent outgroup ^[2]
- Linked to behavioural intentions and outcomes ^[3]:
 - Health behaviours, e.g. vaccine uptake
 - Environmental behaviours, e.g. recycling
 - Political behaviours, e.g. voting

Could this translate into support for gender equality?

GENDER EQUALITY MISINFO. & CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Existing sociological work focuses on the “anti-gender” movement ^[4] and accusations of Cultural Marxism ^[5]
 - Accuse feminists, leftists, etc. of pushing a political agenda, e.g. “destroying the family”
- Media reports: influencers ^[6]
- May be a form of **backlash** against gender equality ^[7]



Photo credit



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INTERGROUP THREAT THEORY

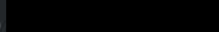
- **Realistic threat:** power, resources, safety
- **Symbolic threat:** worldview, culture [8]
- Has been applied to gender equality:
Realistic threat (but not symbolic)
predicted negative attitudes towards
gender equality initiatives [9]
- Potentially linked with **zero-sum beliefs**
about gender equality (women's gains =
men's losses) [10] and (unstable) ingroup
identification/**collective narcissism** [11]



STUDY 1

- Exploratory and correlational online survey; US resident STEM workers recruited via MTurk ($n = 249$)
- Conspiracy beliefs about GEIs recorded using new 15-item measure; items developed using posts on social media, imageboards, blogs; based on existing measures of conspiracy theory beliefs
- Exploratory factor analysis: **two factors** - conspiracy theories **opposing gender equality initiatives** (13 items, 58.84% of scale variance) and conspiracy theories about **trans inclusion** in gender equality initiatives (2 items, 5.67% of scale variance)

A call to academics and students

🕒 OCTOBER 22, 2014 BY  3 COMMENTS

We're calling for academics and students to stand up and fight the corruption of academia by feminists working in academia itself, in funding bodies, in the Department for Education, and elsewhere. For many years feminists have been corrupting academia for ideological reasons, but we're convinced they can be stopped. They **MUST** be stopped for the sake of academia, and all it should stand for – independence of thought, excellence, and so much more.



10 Jan 2018

...

Google's "Enforced diversity" is ILLEGAL, & UN-CONSTITUTIONAL. The boy who is Suing them, is correct to do so. DEMORATS DESIRE TO TEAR USA & OUR CONSTITUTION TO SHREDS, BC THEY WANT GLOBALIST COMMUNISM. They seek majority in Nov., to IMPEACH our Prez, to divide & conquer America.

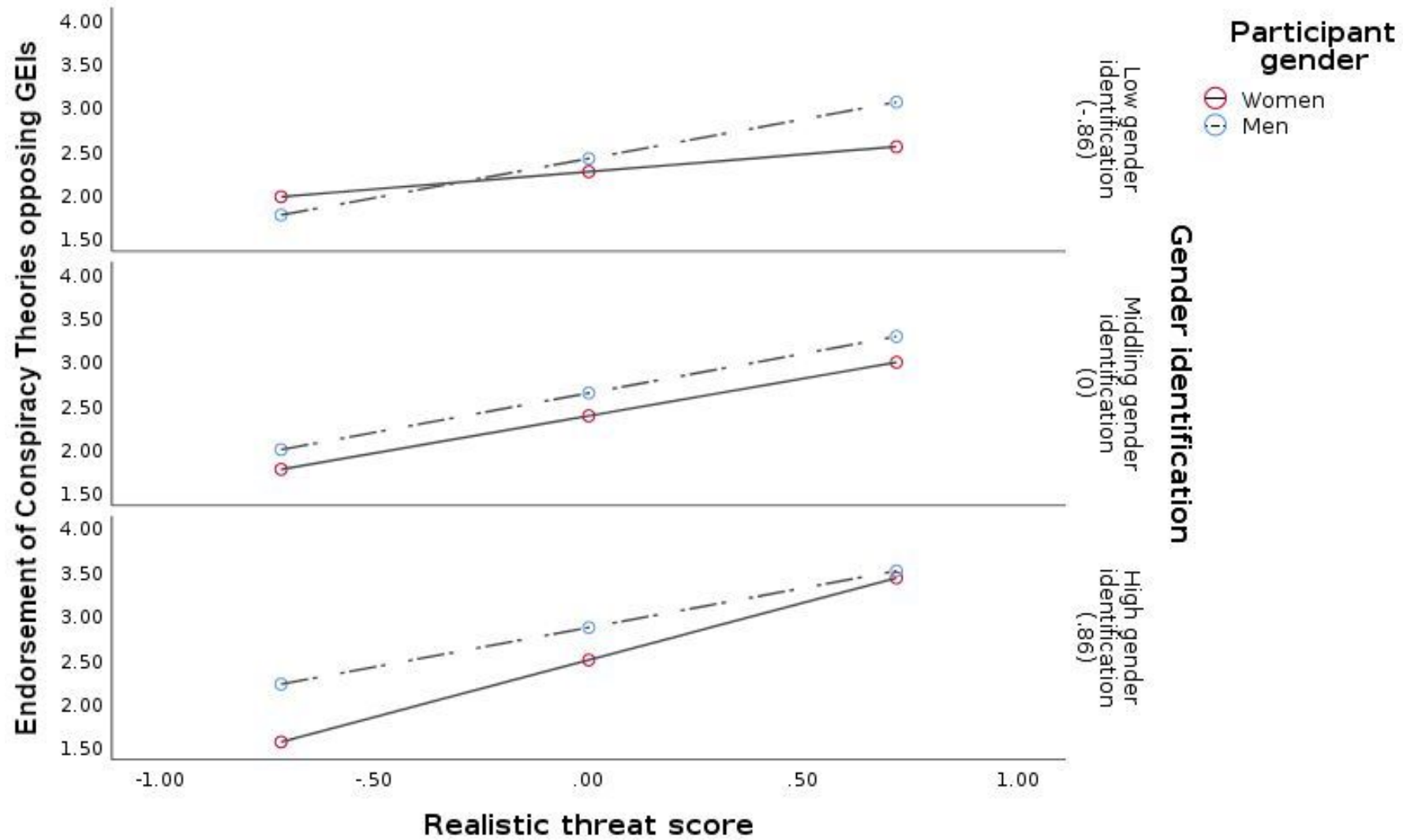


Feminists use “gender equality initiatives” to gain power and control.

Gender equality initiatives often involve illegal practices, which organizations try to cover up.

STUDY 1

- **Men** ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.06$) **more likely** to endorse conspiracy theories opposing gender equality initiatives than women ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 2.31$), $t(172.43) = -2.19$, $p = .03$
 - But no difference for trans inclusion, $t(167.06) = 0.04$, $p = .97$
- Moderation analysis indicated an **interaction between gender and gender identification** on endorsement of these conspiracy theories
 - Men: Higher threat associated with higher conspiracy theory endorsement, regardless of gender identification
 - Women: Higher threat associated with increased endorsement; effect strongest among highly identified women



STUDY 2

- Aimed to experimentally test intergroup threat
- Online survey; US resident men working in STEM ($n = 297$) via Prolific
- Participants shown one of three ostensible news articles:
 - **realistic threat:** women are a threat to career prospects
 - **symbolic threat:** women are a threat to workplace culture
 - **control:** STEM organisations are failing at public outreach (negative affect but no mention of gender)
- Conspiracy theory items from previous study

New report highlights the impacts of gender equality initiatives in STEM

2 MIN READ



By [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] - Gender equality initiatives are having a direct impact on workplace culture in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, according to a report produced by research institutions and professional bodies published on Friday.

The report, led by a team of researchers at [REDACTED] University, indicated that a competitive culture will no longer be the dominant culture in STEM by 2035.

The number of workplaces reporting family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, has also significantly increased.

The researchers collected social and well-being data from more than 100 organizations across STEM fields in 19 countries, and conducted focus groups within many of these.

“Gender equality initiatives have increased the attention paid to emotional well-being and work-life balance, which has translated into a number of changes in organizational cultures”, the report said.

However, the report highlighted that men may face disadvantages because of these changes.

The report indicated that career-oriented men may feel alienated by policies which discourage long working hours in favor of work-life balance.

Some men may also struggle to adapt to the emerging focus on collaboration over independence and competitiveness.

The report emphasized that despite these changes in workplace culture, the proportion of men being hired and promoted is expected to remain at present levels as the number of jobs in STEM is projected to increase.

“Senior management across STEM domains must continue to exercise caution to maintain a good balance of cultures and values in STEM,” the report concluded.



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STUDY 2

- **No significant difference** in conspiracy theory endorsement across conditions, $F(2, 290) = .06, p = .94$
- Within moderation analyses testing condition and zero-sum beliefs, **only zero-sum beliefs** was a significant predictor of conspiracy theory endorsement ($B = .66, SE = .08, p < .001$)
- Multiple hierarchical regression analysis ($R^2 = .37, F(2, 294) = 84.48, p < .001$): **collective narcissism** ($B = .61, SE = .07, p < .001$) predicted conspiracy theory endorsement **over and above gender identification** (1st model: $B = .50, SE = .06, p < .001$; 2nd model: $B = .12, SE = .07, p = .07$)

STUDY 3 (ONGOING)

- Aims to test the reverse effect (conspiracy theories → intergroup threat)
- Experimental online survey; opportunity sample of UK residents
- Participants are shown one of three articles:
 - **Conspiracy theories about gender equality initiatives:** influencer claiming that gender equality initiatives/policies are a front for ideology
 - **Matched control:** same article, instead spreading conspiracy theories about environmental initiatives
 - **Control:** issues with public outreach in STEM
- Outcome: gendered intergroup threat
- Also measuring zero-sum beliefs and male collective narcissism

“They’re Literally Everywhere”: Social Media Influencer Exposes The Influence Of Gender Ideology

A social media influencer has spoken out about how feminist ideologues are influencing society and implementing “destructive” policies

By



Speaking to a [REDACTED] reporter, the influencer, who wishes to remain anonymous, explained how “Marxists and other leftists” are infiltrating major institutions to push their “gender agenda”.

“They’ve already got a stranglehold on Higher Education,” the source said. “For example, there’s been this massive push to [make the curriculum feature more gender issues](#), but it’s entirely to support their own causes. It’s a coordinated attack to make sure that future leaders believe the right things.”

The influencer explained that feminist academics are also using their positions to suppress research which opposes their agenda, and manipulate statistics to support the narrative that women are disadvantaged. This in turn affects policy decisions within politics, education and business.

GENDER ACTIVISTS STOLE HIS CAREER, NOW HE’S FIGHTING BACK

“Their focus on promoting more women is to make sure they’ve got control, they want power and money,” the source added.

“Anyone who speaks out about this, or even just publicizes findings which contradict this narrative, are publicly shamed and can even be fired from their jobs,” the influencer continued. “I have evidence but I can’t share it, they’d find me and I’d lose advertiser support. It’s a really scary situation for those of us who believe in the truth.” The influencer declined to show [REDACTED] their evidence.

The source claimed that businesses are generally on board with this approach, as many executives are “in on it.” They added that other executives believe that “feminist virtue signaling” can [improve their reputation among young and middle-class customers](#). This approach increases their sales without the financial impact of philanthropy or active community engagement, and provides a buffer against gender discrimination lawsuits.

“It also means their own gender equality initiatives won’t be dug into,” the source added. “These often involve [illegal practices](#), but no-one will question them when they see how easy it is to be canceled. Who would risk that?”

GET THE [REDACTED] APP



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ATTITUDE INOCULATION

Misinformation can be resisted by:

1. Highlighting that the misinformation exists
2. Teaching about the manipulation techniques used to spread it (e.g. scaremongering)

Shows promise for COVID-19 misinformation, fake news, radicalisation and more ^[12]



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ATTITUDE INOCULATION STUDIES (ONGOING)

- Two studies aiming to develop an attitude inoculation intervention
- First will use a media intervention embedded into an online survey
 - **Control** (no intervention) vs. **passive** (watch video) vs. **active** (watch video and apply learning to examples)
 - Outcomes: ability to discern misinformation & endorsement of conspiracy theories about gender equality
- Second will use a **game-based training tool**
 - Integrates gender equality/bias training with attitude inoculation
 - Will collect quantitative and qualitative data about attitude towards gender equality and relevant policies/initiatives

ATTITUDE INOCULATION STUDIES (ONGOING)

Common misinformation techniques to target:

- **fearmongering/invoking negative emotions:** suggesting that gender equality policies/initiatives are being used to discriminate against men
- **scapegoating:** blaming all of [their individual/men's/society's] problems on feminism and gender equality policies/initiatives
- **false dichotomies:** zero-sum arguments about gender equality
- **misrepresenting data/statistics:** statistics about gender equality are often misrepresented, despite overwhelmingly showing that women are disadvantaged and that gender equality benefits everyone

DISCUSSION

This project is exploring an understudied area of misinformation, but:

- Uses an **unvalidated measure** of conspiracy theory endorsement
 - Unfortunately common in conspiracy theory beliefs research
 - Could be replicated with the conspiracy suspicions measure ^[13]
- Relies on **potentially unsuitable manipulations** using “news articles”
 - Strong chance of demand effects if people are used to doing surveys
 - Difficult to parse out realistic threat and zero-sum thinking
- Has **limited investigation of misinformation about trans people**
 - Needed given the current political climate

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