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HOW DOES THE INTERNALIZATION OF MISOGYNY OPERATE: A THORETICAL APPROACH WITH EUROPEAN EXAMPLES

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Abstract

The present article will tackle the concept of internalized misogyny by trying to review existing theories and to extract a number of common threads of these theories in order to find some useful insights on the internal mechanisms that make up internalized misogyny, and on how internalized misogyny should be approached by practical action. I start the discussion by exploring oppression and the internalization of oppression, and afterwards move to internalized misogyny itself, charting its place within gender dynamics in general, as well as its impact on gender roles, on women's actions towards other women, and their actions towards themselves. Using data from the World Value Survey (2017–2020), I will explore how internalized misogyny is reflected in specific sexist attitudes, how it relates to male misogyny, and which aspects of gender relations seem to come to the fore when dealing with internalized sexism. This will allow us to confront and complement the theories on internalized sexism with data on attitudes and beliefs, and develop a clearer picture of the phenomenon, as well as drawing some brief conclusions regarding practical action to mitigate gender oppression.

Keywords

internalized misogyny • sexism • Haslanger • gender domination • World Value Survey

Introduction

Despite the fact that the data on the gender pay gap, domestic violence, together with statistics on rape or the hampered access to education are all a few clicks away, Romanian mainstream media present women with a narrative that gender equality has been achieved for decades and that feminists should ‘take a break’, as conversations on gender equality are outdated. More than that, the oppression of women has planted its roots so deeply that women themselves are part of this phenomenon. We can see this process as analogous to a collective gaslighting of women and the first step in dealing with it is to acknowledge that there is a problem.

This sort of denial of the issue is not new or particular to our current social order. If we look back, we can see that the problem of women's oppression shifts from being overlooked entirely in pre-war Romania, with the mainstream view being that women's subordination is the natural and desirable state of things, to a limited granting of political rights during the interbellum monarchy, neutralized by the progressive slide into dictatorship of the regime, and lastly to a partial economic emancipation under state socialism, which contrasted with the political oppression and continued subordination in

the domestic realm (Constantinescu 2017). Despite male attitudes towards women moving from considering them naturally inferior to admitting a formal gender equality, this transformation came with many caveats regarding both what a woman's role is in the household, as well as what activities she is best suited for outside the home. This state of affairs has been reflected in women's own understanding of themselves, though this is usually visible more often in the discourse of women revolting from the roles imposed by society (Nădejde, Cernat, and Mocanu 2019), as women supporting the gender status quo were assimilated into the discourse of this status quo and modulated their discourse accordingly or became marginalized. An interesting example of this is the transition from a more progressive view of gender roles in the first stage of Romanian socialism to a view centered on motherhood and child-rearing responsibilities during the 1970s and '80s, a shift that is visible in the discourse of the writers of the main propaganda outlet directed towards women (Constantinescu 2017).

In order to better understand this phenomenon, I will provide a theoretical overview of how the process of internalizing

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gender roles under the guise of sexist attitudes and ideas occurs. Using data on differences in men's and women's attitudes towards specific gender roles and rights, I will then map out how exactly women's internalized sexism interacts with more overt domination by men and provide a clearer picture of how sexism is internalized and what role it plays in preserving an unequal society.

Oppression and internalized oppression

Oppression is seen as the exercise of power by dominant groups on subaltern groups, and it can be traced back to Marxist theory and its analysis of modern capitalism (but also of precapitalist societies) as a social order based on the exploitation of human labour by the small segment of owners of the industrial means of production (i.e. capitalists). Therefore, in the Marxist view oppression, even gender or racial oppression, is cast in terms of relationships of production and domination that develop historically along with the socio-economic evolution of human society. While this view itself has been challenged or expanded, over time it has influenced a number of sociological approaches that focus on conflicts between dominant and dominated sections of a society as central to understanding the internal dynamics of that society. Providing an overview of the phenomenon of oppression, Young (1992) pinpoints five aspects of oppression: *economic exploitation, socio-economic marginalization, lack of power or autonomy over one's work, cultural imperialism, and systemic violence*. I argue that all of these aspects can be easily observed within society's treatment of women, through phenomena such as the gender pay gap, a higher share of domestic labour, resistance to offering women positions of power, the persistence of rape culture, or the lack of interest of the state in defending women's lives.

A more recent example of this type of perspective can be found in Haslanger (2012), who treats gender and race similarly. She argues that 'the pattern of social relations that constitute the social classes of men as dominant and women as subordinate, of whites as dominant and people of colour as subordinate' (Haslanger 2012, 228), where to have a gender is not to have a specific reproductive anatomy, but to be integrated into a power dynamic. With this intersectional framework in mind, we will be able to approach the multifaceted relationship between internalized sexism and women's discriminatory attitudes towards racial and sexual minorities. Haslanger observes two types of oppression: (1) agent oppression, where the violence is exercised by a person and (2) structural oppression, in which the institution is the one that acts as the oppressor. The distinction between the two forms is interesting, as oppression is not usually considered at an individual level, but Haslanger advocates

for this, as she considers it crucial to distinguish between those who abuse their power and those who do not make use of their position of privilege. I agree with Haslanger that the main problem is systemic racism and systemic sexism, and that focusing the discussion on those who have power but do not abuse it is from the start a losing strategy: even if they do not act as gatekeepers, the effects of power are intrinsic, as those in a dominant position benefit from it even without acting themselves (Connell 2014).

In this sense, Haslanger's treatment of gender is peculiar to her so-called 'focal analysis' of gender. Haslanger's focal analysis refers to the examination and explanation of a set of phenomena 'in terms of their relations to one that is theorized, *for the purposes at hand*, as the focus or core phenomenon' (Haslanger 2012, 7)—which in the case of gender grounds it on 'the pattern of social of social relations that constitute the social classes of men as dominant and women as subordinate' (Haslanger 2012, 228). This core structure then proceeds to gender all other aspects of social life (norms and customs, identities, symbols, etc.). This account is based on the idea *that women are oppressed, and that they are oppressed as women*. Thus, belonging to a specific gender category is understood as a position within a more extensive web of oppressive relations between segments of society differentiated from each other through sexual difference.

In Haslanger's model, the various phenomena surrounding gender emerge from the core relations that constitute embodied groups as either dominant or subordinate based on sexual differences. Thus, gender differences (and gender discrimination) do not naturally spring up from the sexual division of bodies itself, but instead from the social prescriptions regarding how the sexed bodies of humans are to be perceived, acted upon, and allowed to act. In this way, Haslanger avoids both naturalizing gender, as well as completely disentangling gender from any bodily reality. For her, gender is neither the mere social derivative of sex, nor the random distribution of socially constructed roles to embodied individuals, but rather the social ordering of bodies based on their perceived capacities and traits. More specifically, it is the ordering of human bodies (male, female, or other) based on their reproductive capacities and the physical traits connected to these capacities, into dominant or subordinate positions.

This distinction, of course, evolves and shifts over time and across cultural spaces and ends up covering a great number of social norms that no longer have any direct connection with sexual anatomy. Moreover, there is an interdependent relationship between the gendered power positions and the body and its sexual traits, where gendered ways of treating the body end up enforcing rigid sexual categories, as well as leading to the embodiment of gender roles at the level of cosmetic alterations made to the body, regulation of the body's development across childhood and into adulthood, inscribing

particular habits onto the body, etc. This feedback loop of recognizing and enforcing gender to produce bodies that are more clearly gendered, which then reinforce the gender positions initially recognized, leads to an entrenchment of gender onto the individual's body and conscious identity.

For Haslanger, gender is thus supported through four categories of phenomena: gender roles (i.e. how a woman is supposed to behave in areas like sex, domestic and wage labour, family life, self-presentation, etc.), which in turn are fixed at the level of gender norms (social ideas regarding what behaviours and traits are feminine or masculine), that acquire cultural forms of presentation and representation through gender symbolism (any kind of gender depiction that imparts gender roles onto individuals), all of these finally converging at the level of the individual's gender identity (the gendering of their body and mind, together with their mode of self-identification). The individual's gender identity then determines their performance of social roles, according to social norms and informed by symbolic representations, keeping the loop in motion. Of course, at the level of concrete examples, this model is further complicated by other social identities the individual has to assume (race, sexuality, class). With regard to this research, our interests will naturally gravitate towards the issues surrounding gender identity, as it is here that the internalization of sexism occurs, where the individual woman takes on ideas, patterns of behaviour, and a gendered outlook on things from the outside social world, and makes them part of her behaviour, her attitude towards herself and others, and her understanding of herself and others.

Internalized misogyny

When I talk about internalized misogyny, I will concentrate on the tendency of women to be drawn into this form of in-group discrimination. The importance that internalization of oppression carries cannot be overstated, as it is a fundamentally necessary mechanism for oppression in general, and one of the main roadblocks for women trying to overcome sexism. Because it relies on the assimilation of an already gendered social order that precedes and envelops the individual, some degree of internalized oppression is ubiquitous and can even be found in some feminists and gender theorists, despite their best intentions. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that **women are afraid of losing social rewards** (the acceptance that comes with adopting the dominant attitudes, etc.) and also because self-stereotyping has the function of increasing personal and collective self-esteem. By collective self-esteem, Glick and Fiske (1999) talk about the belief women hold that they have superior domestic abilities, for example, and about attributing negative traits to men—arrogance, childishness, etc. In the

same tone, studies have demonstrated that women seem pressured to be polite (Swim and Hyers 1999) and that they fear being labelled feminists (Becker 2007). Thus, I believe that an explanation for the subservience of women in the face of oppression is the fear of being humiliated. If they act like *good girls*, there is no prize. However, they can expect punishment if they act in an undesirable manner. By contrast, take into account, for example, the pressure on children to be good students in school. A child from a demanding family will know that if they get a bad grade, they will be punished, but if their grades are good, a prize will be provided, be it by school or family. However, returning to the *good girl*, the threat of punishment is there, but the prize is an illusion at best. Thus gender-conforming women enjoy no specific benefits, but gender non-conforming women will experience disadvantages.

The role punishment plays in women's subjugation is clearly outlined in Frye's (1983) definition of oppression as 'a system of interrelated barriers and forces which reduce, immobilize, and mold people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group' (Frye 1983, 33). Frye argues that, in response to this oppression, all forms of feminism that take their struggle seriously would involve some degree of separatism, which would limit the amount of control that men could exert by limiting the situations in which women conform to gender norms in response to punishment/reward mechanisms. The issue of separatism is, in my view, better tackled by Haslanger (2012), who does not separate men from women (as well as leaving behind any third gender or gender-queer people who cannot be made to fit this outdated understanding of gender) as essentially distinct, but instead sees them as hierarchically distinguished, within an order that is not strictly dictated by one's sex, as second-wave feminists would treat it (Firestone 1970).

It should also be added that women, after hearing men demean the value and skills of women repeatedly, eventually internalize their beliefs and apply the misogynistic beliefs to themselves and other women (Bem 1993; Rich 1980). I would note that this occurs 'sooner' rather than 'eventually', as Bem (1993) puts it, because women, born in a society that devalues them as women, have the stage set for the internalization of their oppression at birth.

The internalization of sexism in women, however, does not start at the earliest stages of development; in fact, women only begin to internalize sexist attitudes during their adolescence. It has been shown that between the ages of eleven and fourteen, American girls become particularly vulnerable to the internalization of sexism. Pipher (quoted in Bearman, Korobov and Thorne, 2009, 19) shows that females change their personality during childhood and adolescent stages of development; if in elementary school they are confident, bold, and androgynous, in their late adolescence many girls 'lose

their assertive, energetic, and „tomboyish“ personalities and become more deferential, self-critical and depressed’.

According to other authors, these changes coincide with the increase in pressure to act like a grown-up woman, to copy them (Alfieri, Ruble and Higgins 1996; Hill and Lynch 1983; Eccles et al. 2003). This is linked to the ‘doing gender’ perspective (West and Zimmerman 1987), in which gender per se, and therefore all forms of gender difference, is socially constructed and constituted through interaction. ‘Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological’ (West and Zimmerman quoted in Becker 2007). This could also be linked to the fact that with the beginning of sexual development and the establishment of norms for attractiveness, gender conformity becomes a more prized behaviour. However, the discussion about whether this is indeed a prize is more complicated. One author (Hakim 2010; 2011), tried to explain this by coining the term sexual or erotic capital, explaining that ‘Women do not have a monopoly of erotic power. However, they have more erotic capital than men, and this gives them a significant potential advantage in negotiations with men. We present a new theory of erotic capital as a multi-faceted fourth asset that is very different from economic, social, and cultural capital’ (Hakim 2010, 505).

What I want to point out here is not that sexual capital cannot be a solid concept, but that it is a misleading notion, as I will explain in a moment. I would say that the criticisms of Hakim’s erotic capital are mostly deserved, but they miss the mark by arguing against the term itself. When talking about this, Green (2013, 137) explains that ‘her primary concept—erotic capital—is overstretched, internally inconsistent, and a-sociological, glossing over the structures of race, class, and age that mediate women’s access to the resource’. But while erotic capital may be a complicated form of capital, it is not necessarily a useless concept. It is presented as something that can empower women, but at the same time, evidence from game theory (methodology based on the trust game) shows us that both men and women are less trusting of women who are perceived as sexually accessible. Further to the point, we find women who inflicted costly punishment on a sexually accessible woman (methodology based on the Ultimatum Game) (Muggleton et al. 2018). The illusion of power through sexuality is frail not only because it provides women with an untrustworthy aura, but also because it is susceptible to race and class, and of course, age (Collins 2004; England and McClintock 2009; Fahs 2011; Farrer 2010; Lovejoy 2001).

Hakim (2010; 2011) goes even further with her explanations of erotic capital, talking about the ‘male sex deficit’, by which she understands that men need more sex than women can provide, thus giving women an advantage in erotic

capital. However, this hypothesis is actually contradicted by empirical data (Muggleton et al. 2018), and, I would further add, presents us with a reinforcement of what Foucault (1977) called self-surveillance, in this case women having to understand their own sexuality and sexual needs through the disciplinarian lens of having to be sexually desirable to men and having to provide sexual gratification for men. The pursuit of this so-called erotic capital can be understood as one of the forms that the practices of this self-surveillance can take. Women’s bodies are tied down by disciplinary practices like dieting, censoring of gestures and mobility, and bodily ornamentation. As Bartky (1990, 80) observes ‘it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies ... The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who frequently looks to see if her stocking has bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate in the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self-committed to relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy’.

It would also be relevant for the discussion around gendered subjection to acknowledge the role played by the notion of **compulsory heterosexuality** in constructing women as a gender category. As previous research already notes, compulsory heterosexuality already contributes heavily to gender polarization, thereby reinforcing traditional structures of male domination (Bem 1993; Rich 1980). From this point of view, Rich (1980), who coined the term, explains that heterosexuality is adopted by people regardless of their sexual orientation, as heterosexuality is considered to be the ‘normal’ and desired sexuality, and more so, is advocating for treating heterosexuality as a political institution, along with motherhood (Rich 1980).

However, women who internalize misogynist attitudes do not only enact the internalized sexism upon themselves, but also express them in their interaction with others, mistrusting and devaluing other women, as well as exhibiting a favorable bias towards men. Women will take up racialized, ageist or ableist standards of attractiveness, internalizing them and using them as benchmarks against which women evaluate themselves and others (Wolf 1991; Lovejoy 2001; Wingood et al. 2002; Collins 2004; Fahs 2011). This phenomenon can trigger a range of harmful or self-destructive effects, from harming women’s self-image (van den Berg et al. 2010) to raising the likelihood of women engaging in risky sexual behaviors (Eisenberg et al. 2005; Gillen et al. 2006).

This comes into contrast with Hakim’s (2010) framework, as it seems to indicate that beauty is less of an asset in social negotiations, and more of a dimension through which gender

conformity is measured. Furthermore, we see how in order to attain or maintain specific standards of beauty, women are much more likely than men to develop eating disorders, or to undergo medical procedures and draconian dietary plans (Davis 2003; Heyes and Jones 2009).

In 2018, the #MeToo movement, which went viral in October 2017, underwent a (not so) surprising turn. Several women sent an open letter (the French actress Catherine Deneuve being one of the famous co-signers) saying that the movement is wrong because it changes the way in which men and women interact (Willsher 2018). Missing the point of the campaign, their statement is that men will not be allowed to flirt anymore. This type of reaction to keep the status quo is intriguing, and cannot be analyzed apart from class. As seen with other powerful women, the discussion on misogyny is not only a discussion on gender but also a debate on class; for example, Firestone (1970) talks about sex class and keeping the privilege that enslaves women. Internalized misogyny cannot be therefore seen in a vacuum, without looking at how other social dimensions (race, class, sexuality, etc.) may lead some women to participate in the perpetuation of sexism on a social scale, especially when certain aspects of that sexism may not impact them as heavily as is the case with other groups of women.

Methodology

Using World Value Survey data from the 2017–2020 wave, we will look at how women are answering gender-sensitive questions. The countries were chosen looking at the highest and lowest ranked according to the Gender Equality Index from 2021 (European Institute for Gender Equality 2021): two countries that ranked high for gender equality, Sweden (83.9) and France (75.5), and two countries that ranked low, Romania (54.5), and Hungary (53.4). The European Union score was 68 points out of 100.

Data analysis

The analysis is descriptive, with the purpose of exemplifying the main literature approaches to internalized misogyny. As shown in the previous section, the internalization of misogyny can be traced to oppression theory. Therefore, in the present study, two directions were followed: are women positioning themselves in a subordinate position to men regarding educational, political or economic power?, and is there a difference between women and men regarding these types of attitudes? In order to do this, the answers to gender-related questions from the most recent available World Value Survey were compared by respondents' sex. Taking into account the four questions relevant to our discussion of gender oppression and internalized misogyny, a fairly obvious pattern emerges,

Table 1. Jobs scarce: Men should have more right to a job than women (5-point scale)

Agree + strongly agree	Women (%)	Men (%)
France	11.9	9
Hungary	17.4	25.5
Romania	39.2	44.1
Sweden	2.7	1.8

where the countries with worse gender equality scores will also present more widespread sexist attitudes. With regards to the question of access to the labour market during periods of job scarcity (Table 1), both France and Sweden had a fairly low percentage of respondents agreeing that men should be privileged for employment over women, with small differences between the responses. This pattern is repeated for the other questions as well (Tables 2–4). Interestingly, in both cases, women have a slightly higher rate of agreeing with the idea that men should have more rights to a job during a crisis. However, this could simply be the result of men being less open about having sexist beliefs in societies where gender equality in rights has been the long-established norm. It could also be that internalized sexism has more staying power, due to its being tied to more subtle forms of sexism than overt denial of equal rights.

By contrast, both Romania and Hungary, while displaying higher levels of women agreeing with sexist claims, also present a larger gap between men and women, with men having higher rates of sexist attitudes. This is true for all other questions. This dual phenomenon of higher rates of internalized sexism on the part of women, together with a wider gap between women and men's attitudes seems to support Haslanger's (2012) model. While women do seem to internalize social norms and expectations within their gender identity, as can be seen from their attitudes, this internalized sexism seems to be secondary to the sexism of the dominant gender group (men). This seems to lend credence to Haslanger's idea that the 'focal phenomenon' of the structuring of gender relations is the relationship of dominance/subordination between the genders, since, in societies with greater gender inequality, men will more frequently assert their own claims to a dominant position compared to the degree to which women accept their subordinate place. According to Haslanger's treatment, this is due to the fact that women's internalized sexism is a consequence of phenomena such as gender identity formation, which is informed by a number of other social phenomena such as the formation of gender symbolism, the construction of gender norms, and the scripting of gender roles, all concentrating around the focal phenomenon of gender domination.

We can therefore see that for every statement that more or less overtly implies male domination, either directly through

Table 2. Men make better political leaders than women do

Agree + strongly agree	Women (%)	Men (%)
France	13.3	9.8
Hungary	28.7	37.9
Romania	34.3	46.4
Sweden	3.6	5.6

leadership positions in politics or business (Tables 2, 4), or indirectly as a result of privileged access to employment (Table 1), men in more unequal countries tend towards defending this domination (e.g. nearly half of Romanian men think they have more rights to a job, that they make better political leaders and business executives, etc.). In contrast to male domination, which is both immediately enacted and yields tangible material benefits, female subordination is internalized by women through the mediation of gender identity. For women there is an additional mediating step between the social phenomenon of their subordination and the idea that reflects this phenomenon in women's minds (i.e. the idea that their inferiority is an objective fact), which consists in internalizing their subordination as part of their identity. This is in addition to the fact that, as I have pointed out, women's acceptance of their gender roles has less to do with receiving social prizes, and more to do with avoiding social penalties for not conforming.

An interesting observation can be made that, while French women tend to agree with sexist statements more than French men (Tables 1, 2, 4), an exception occurs when it comes to the importance of a university education (Table 3). While in all cases, both the overall percentage of agreement and the gender difference are small (the greatest percentage being 13.3% of French women agreeing that men make better political leaders than women, where we also find the largest gender difference in responses: 3.5%), the phenomenon is notable, as in the case of Sweden, the level of internalized misogyny is lower than the level of male misogyny (except in the case of rights of employment, where the difference is minute). Men being less open about their sexist beliefs remain a possible explanation.

Additionally, we can also look at the fact that despite a greater degree of gender equality being achieved, France still lags behind Sweden when it comes to the division of domestic labour. French women still undertake a larger share of housework and child rearing than Swedish women, and France has lower levels of accessing child care for infants than Sweden (Anxo et al. 2007). Therefore, while French men have accepted that women have a right to employment and to positions of leadership, the day-to-day reality of unequal distribution of domestic labour could be influencing the greater degree of internalized sexism on the part of women, who come to see it as natural that they spend more time in

Table 3. University is more important for a boy than for a girl

Agree + strongly agree	Women (%)	Men (%)
France	3.8	6.4
Hungary	9	14.3
Romania	17.1	21.5
Sweden	0.7	2.1

the household, while men engage in wage work, politics, or business.

The question regarding higher education offers us more interesting results. First, when it comes to the countries with greater levels of gender inequality, here we find the smallest gap between male and female respondents (5.3% for Hungary and 4.4% for Romania), as well as the smallest levels of both internalized misogyny for women and misogyny on the part of men. This should indicate that having a university degree is not as immediately involved in gender hierarchies—this is likely due to the fact that, unlike with the other questions, this one presents less of a zero-sum game to the respondents, where one gender achieves dominance at the expense of the other (as in the case of political leadership or job scarcity). We can also look to the smaller gender gap for researchers in Central and East European countries, a legacy of the gender policies of previous regimes similar to other former Soviet bloc countries (Huyer 2015), as another source for setting these particular gender norms with regards to higher education in these societies.

The second interesting aspect about the responses regarding the importance of a university education is that it is the only question where women in both countries with greater gender equality (France and Sweden) have agreed in slightly lower percentages than men with the sexist statement being put forth. As with the examples of Romania and Hungary, one explanation could be simply that the different phrasing of the statement is less overt in asserting male superiority, and thus male respondents may be slightly less uncomfortable with this tempered sexism.

The statement 'men make better business executives than women do' yields some interesting responses (Table 4). The idea that men are more competent business leaders is often grounded on a gendered understanding of leadership as requiring stereotypically 'masculine' traits (Yoder 2001), despite the fact that studies on actual organizations identify a vast number of different leadership styles favoring a variety of gendered traits, and these studies do not seem to find any significant difference between the leadership styles of men and women, despite a slight tendency in male subordinates to perceive their female leaders as more authoritarian (Cuadrado et al. 2012). In the case of the present data, it was interesting to see a higher discrepancy between the attitudes of Swedish men and women, which otherwise tended to be fairly close in

Table 4. Men make better business executives than women do

Agree + strongly agree	Women (%)	Men (%)
France	9.3	9
Hungary	20.1	27.2
Romania	27.8	45
Sweden	1.8	6.7

their responses. While it could be argued that this may be due to national differences in the executive gender gap (where the most recent data shows Sweden lagging behind France, with 38% women in company board positions compared to 45.1% in France), this does not seem to hold when we look at the cases of Romania and Hungary, which have a very low level of representation for women in corporate board positions (12.8% and 9.9%, respectively) that does not seem to indicate any correlation with the attitudes of men and women in these countries (European Commission 2021). The more likely explanation is that because traits associated with business leadership tend to be stereotyped as masculine, attitudes with regards to business leadership and gender will shift at a slower pace than in other areas.

The fact that this statement, together with that on political leadership, were the ones that most overtly expressed forms of gendered domination, and drew the most support across the four countries, despite their differences in gender equality, seems to support the link found in the theoretical overview of the link between oppressive gender relations of domination/subordination and the internalization of sexist attitudes. What the data flesh out more clearly is the difference between the degree to which women will self-identify with and assimilate their subordinate position, when compared to men and their dominant position.

Conclusions

The double standard when it comes to gender behaviour is present throughout the world. We can see this, for example, with regards to sexual behaviour: if young men are encouraged to develop and explore their sexuality (Crawford and Popp 2003), young women engaging in the same behaviour are making themselves a target for slut-shaming, female genital cutting, and honour killings (Doğan 2016; Gruenbaum 2005; Tate 2016). Throughout the literature, we have seen conceptualizations of how women participate in their own subordination by enforcing sexist gender norms that conform to the forms of sexism they have internalized as part of their identities. This process can be reflected in the data as well, as significant percentages of women display self-sabotaging beliefs and attitudes as a reflection of this internalized sexism.

Determining the precise role that internalized misogyny plays is not simply a matter of clarifying our theoretical models, but also affects how we practically intervene to change social orders that maintain women in a subordinate position. In this sense, I want to underline three aspects of internalized misogyny that the various conceptual frameworks I have reviewed seem to point to:

1. The internalization of sexism is an effect of women assimilating certain gender norms and gender symbolism into their own gender identity, thus 'naturalizing' their subordination in their own perspectives. While this point may seem trivial, the fact that the internalization of misogyny is not the focal phenomenon of gender oppression, as per Haslanger's (2012) model, means that it cannot represent the primary site of action against sexism, as internalized sexism is merely a reinforcing factor.
2. Internalized misogyny has a complicated relationship with other forms of prejudice women may hold, and often it is important to investigate to what degree a particular belief or attitude represents internalized misogyny and to what degree it represents racism, classism, etc., i.e. to what degree a woman expressing derogatory views on women is referring to particular groups of women (black women, poor women, etc.).
3. While internalized misogyny may be instrumental in enforcing gender roles, an important part of its effect as a part of a woman's gender identity is the self-enforcing of these norms through the woman's actions upon her own body and lifestyle.

The analyzed data on attitudes seem to support the theory in a number of ways. As we have seen, internalized misogyny seems to parallel the state of gender inequality within a given society, being informed by the degree of gender domination rather than informing it, as can be concluded from the fact that women's internalized misogyny always lags behind the average level of sexist attitudes within a country. Moreover, as I have underscored in the theoretical discussion, without the tangible material benefits of domination, women are less willing than men to assume misogynist beliefs. Nonetheless, even without women participating in their gender oppression to the same degree as men, unequal distribution of power between the genders still seems to occur. The central role of the relationship of domination itself comes into play here. As we have seen, the strongest sexist attitudes, and the ones with the largest differences between men and women, come up when respondents are confronted with sexist claims that grant men superior rights when it comes to forms of domination, be they political or economic. As I have pointed out, this seems to support models that focus on the phenomenon of domination itself, rather than looking for other grounding causes (be they biological, economic, etc.), since the form of domination itself seems to be unimportant to the respondents.

We can therefore conclude that, while countering the reinforcing effects of internalized sexism may be beneficial to combating structural, society-wide sexism, undoing the various forms of gendered domination in society, which take either legal or practical forms, should be the focus of feminist movements, targeting both the male monopolies on positions of power, as well as unequal divisions of domestic and reproductive labour (Federici 2004). Nonetheless, targeting attitudes could still yield useful results, especially when it comes to enlisting support or at least reducing hostility on the part of women (and men) towards feminist struggles.

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