

Gender Construction and Women who Live as Men in Northern Albania

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Gender Norms & Stereotype Endorsement

Essentialist beliefs lead to stereotyping as essences are thought to cause category-typical behaviour.

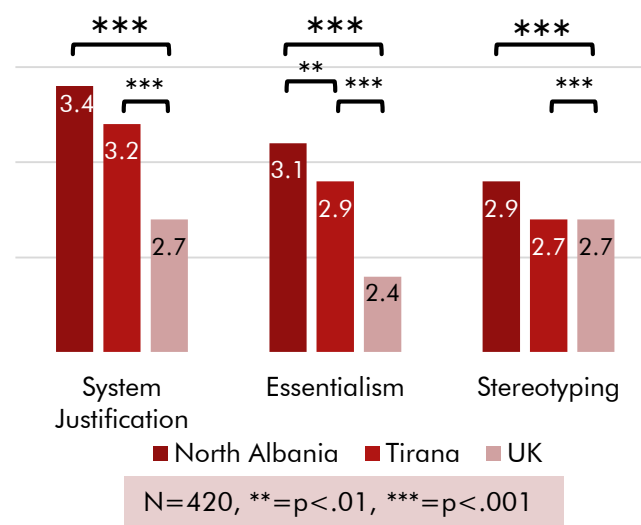


Essentialist Beliefs...
...are implicit beliefs that social categories are based on inherent, discrete, and unchangeable "essences".



If traditional Northern Albanian communities endorse rigid gender norms, psychological research predicts that they would also endorse essentialist beliefs. However, essentialist beliefs would suggest it highly unlikely for people to change their social category, as in the case of sworn virgins. So, how is their gender category transition justified?

Survey results:



Conclusions:

Although essentialism and system justification usually reinforce each other, it seems that in this context they are in conflict, and the need to justify the system is greater than the tendency to endorse essentialist beliefs. These results will later be integrated with qualitative data for more nuanced conclusions.

Sworn Virgins



Sworn virgins are certain women in traditional Northern Albanian communities who have adopted a male social identity (including dress, manner, and roles) with the original purpose of providing a leader and inheritor in the absence of males in their families.

System justification may motivate stereotypes endorsement because "that's the way it is".

System Justification...

...is the tendency to endorse the current social system, even at one's own disadvantage, to avoid cognitive effort and uncertainty.



The sworn virgin phenomenon may reflect system justification by reinforcing the association between leadership and masculinity.