"Keep your hands off our children."
A discourse analytical case study on the social perception of gender education for children in Hungary

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Abstract

The publication of the first storybook for children about LGBTQ people in the Hungarian language gave rise to controversy. The study seeks to delineate the social perception of Gender Education (GE) for children in Hungary by analyzing the voice of the Hungarian people who showed a genuine interest in the issue. The research draws on the online comments (N=340) which were displayed on the website that shared the official video about the LGBTQ children's book launch in a five-month period. In the online comments, social normativity was uncovered by using Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy of discursive (de)legitimation strategies. The findings show that both the supporters and the opponents of GE for children apply a wide variety of discursive constructions of (de)legitimation to express their competing values. However, there is a degree of overlap between the arguments of the two groups, which hold opposing positions with regard to norms.

1   Introduction

The European Commission presented its first-ever EU Strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) equality in 2020 (Union of Equality). The same year, the very first storybook for children about LGBTQ people in the Hungarian language, *Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody* (Nagy 2020),[1] was published by Labrisz.[2] *Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody* is a collection of unconventional retellings of seventeen tales featuring traditional elements, which are recast in inclusive, contemporary settings with gender-diverse or other minority characters. Gender education (GE) for children is a controversial topic in Hungary, thus the book aimed at children caught the public's attention and soon came under fire.

Three days after the publication of the storybook for children, an online petition was launched to remove it from the bookstores due to the idea that "influencing children with political and

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[1] In 2022, the Hungarian book was translated into English with the title *A Fairytale for Everyone* (Nagy 2022). This paper applies the word for word translation of the Hungarian title (*Meseország mindenkinek,* or Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody) as the calque carries the implications of the original title.

[2] Labrisz is a non-governmental organisation which represents the rights and the visibility of lesbians, bisexuals and trans (LBT) women in Hungary. The word *labris* is derived from the Greek word meaning 'double-edged axe', and it was adopted as a lesbian feminist symbol during the 1970s. The weapon is described as a symbol of strength (cf. Zimmerman 2000: 748).

sexual ideologies is against the interest of the children" (CitizenGo, petition 182339). Within those three days, more than 85,000 people had signed the petition. To emphasise the unacceptability of supplying children with what they evaluated as "homosexual propaganda" (Czeglédi 2020), the deputy leader of the opposition right-wing party Mi Hazánk ('Our Homeland', cf. SzMo) demonstratively shredded several pages of the book during a press conference. It was also underlined that "an abnormal way of life had been smuggled into the storybook for children", and that "homosexual princes were not part of Hungarian culture" (Czeglédi 2020).

In order to gain novel empirical knowledge about the social perception of GE for children in Hungary,[3] this study seeks to answer the following question:

Research Question (RQ): What do the discursive constructions of (de)legitimation reveal about social normativity, i. e., the accepted norms, values, social standards and taken-for-granted assumptions of the Hungarian people who showed an interest in the issue of GE for children?

To reach this aim, the research adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, and applied the methodological framework developed by Van Leeuwen's (2008) for the analysis of discursive (de)legitimation strategies. The empirical case study draws upon the comparison and contrast of the values that drive the discursive constructions of (de)legitimation regarding GE for children, thus the present sociolinguistic discourse analysis falls into the realm of comparative sociology. As Durkheim (1982: 157) underlined it, "comparative sociology is not a special branch of sociology; it is sociology itself". In his view, the comparative nature of sociology is emphatic since descriptive accounts of social phenomena are meaningful as long as the particular characteristics can be distinguished from the universal or more general features (cf. Crow 1997: 9). In this spirit, the research focuses on the social normativity expressed in one single location (in Hungary), thus it is not cross-national. Yet, the particular characteristics of the Hungarian case study provide grounds for further comparison with other Eastern European countries, where the Western-style sexual revolution of the 1960s did not take place. In addition, the results also create the possibility of drawing contrasts with Western European countries, where the perception of sexuality has undergone a significant shift, leading to its characterisation as "liberated" after the Second World War (cf. Baskerville 2017), which essentially meant a deviation from the prevailing social norms of the past.

The paper is organised according the following structure. First, in order to understand the Hungarian context, in which the various opinions were expressed, it briefly introduces several aspects of the Hungarian setting that are relevant to GE for children (Section 1). There follows the description of the corpus and its method of compilation (Section 2.1). Next, the reason why the CDA perspective was chosen for the research is explained, and the methodological framework, comprising Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy of discursive legitimation strategies, is introduced (Section 3.2). Following this, the topics of argumentation are mapped (Section 3). Finally, the paper compiles the insights into the current social normativity regarding GE for

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[3] In comparison, it is already evident that American society as a whole does not accept LGBTQ storybooks for children. For example, parents in Maryland requested that their children be exempted from classes in which storybooks with LGBT characters were read. They sued the school when this option was not offered. The US Supreme Court ruled in favour of the parents (cf. Chung 2025).

children in Hungary by comparing and contrasting the norms, social standards and presumptions that the supporters and opponents of GE for children valued (Section 4).

Researching a contested phenomenon as GE for children requires a critical and analytical stance in order to carefully involve diverse opinions, variant judgements and controversial evaluations of the social occurrence. As a scholar, I am committed to investigating both sides of the discourse in order to understand the complexity of the subject.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Historical context

Although time and space are not sociological variables, Crow (1997: 10) calls attention to the fact that "they are crucial dimensions of sociological accounts". In order to comprehend the social normativity regarding GE for children in the Hungarian context, its historical background in Hungary needs to be reviewed. The principles of the Critical Discourse Analytical (CDA) perspective also emphasise that discourses should be analysed against the backdrop of the particular social practice in which they were created (cf. Wodak/Meyer 2002; Fairclough 2003; Van Dijk 2006; Vaara/Tienary 2008). Let us then first turn our attention to the broader context of the topic; that is, the typical perception of sexuality in Hungary. This can be best understood in comparison with that of Western societies.

In post-war Western societies, sexual reconstruction started with the modernisation of sexuality after 1945 (cf. Hekma/Giami 2014). The events of the 1960s, which acted as a sexual explosion, created new perspectives and deviant sexual practices in the West. The May 1968 student uprisings and demonstrations resulted in the so-called "liberation" of sexuality and the establishment of new forms of its expression in the public sphere.

The declared driving force behind the 1968 student uprisings in Paris was the profound resistance to the prevailing forms of sexual, cultural, and economic oppression in society (cf. Cohn-Bendit/Cohn-Bendit 1969: 103–104); despite the fact that the students themselves did not regard themselves as economically oppressed, as Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the prominent figures of the Paris student revolts, claims, "few students have had real experience of grinding poverty" (ibd.: 107). On the contrary, the students' sense of oppression was derived from "oppression in comfort" (ibd.: 107), thus their rebellion stemmed not from a deficiency in material possession, but rather from the suffering they experienced due to their unfulfilled desires. These desires were predominantly related to sexuality. This is evidenced by the fact that, while students fought against the hierarchical structure of the society that they considered to be repressive and against university institutions that continued to uphold traditional dormitory rules, they launched a "sex-education campaign on the campus" (ibd.: 29), which resulted in "male students forcibly entering the women's hostels" (ibd.: 29).

The demand for the so-called "sexual liberation" was not a demand of the broad masses of society, but was solely articulated as a demand by revolutionary groups within society as a whole, consisting of organized students who occupied dormitories and were armed with the ideology of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. As a result, the change in societal sexual norms did not emerge as a consequence of organic social development (evolution), but rather a

radical change in the traditional system of sexual norms that was forcibly imposed by a marginally small social group[4] (revolution). At the same time, the destruction of prevailing sexual norms that were regarded as "oppressive" by the sexual revolution (Reich 1946: 22) not only resulted in the so-called "sexual freedom", but also led to a complete transformation of traditional social relations (cf. Bottomore 2003: 44). In accordance with this, the goal of the 1968 student revolution was not only sexual liberation, but also the comprehensive transformation of the entire economic and political systems (cf. Cohn-Bendit/Cohn-Bendit 1969: 48).

The theory of sexual repression, which provides the ideological basis for the sexual revolution, is rooted in Marcuse's philosophical reinterpretation of ,

 (cf. Bottomore 2003: 44). Using Freudian terminology and theoretical systems, Marcuse reverses Freud's basic cultural-philosophical principle that the restriction[5] of sexual instincts is imperative for the establishment and preservation of civilization (cf. Freud 1930/2004). In contrast to Freud, Marcuse argues that the new direction of progress is the activation of previously repressed biological needs with the aim of "making the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labour" (Marcuse 1955: xv) and "making life an end in itself, to live in joy a life without fear" (ibd.: xiv). Marcuse did not consider the consequences of the practical implementation of sexual liberation, of which Freud warned, stating that with the complete liberation of sexual life "the family, the germ-cell of culture, [will] cease to exist" (Freud 1930/2004: 72).

As a result of the student revolution, organisations supporting gay and lesbian sexual practices sprang up during the late 1960s and kept growing in the early 1970s (cf. Adam/Duyvendak/ Krouwel 1999; Duberman/Vicinus/Chauncey 1989). The visibility of the so-called "gay liberation activism" increased rapidly (cf. Klimke/Scharlot 2008). In the following decades, the emancipatory feminism and the liberation of gay sexuality from social restrictions created an environment that advocated sexual openness (cf. Hekma/Giami 2014), which at the same time rejected the traditional sociocultural norms of sexuality that had been accepted until then. Speech about sexuality became liberated from conventional inhibitions (cf. Buda 2002: 264), transgressing sociocultural norms in this domain as well. Altogether, expressing the "peculiarities of one's sexuality" in the public domain changed the established norms and attitudes (Rubavičius 2007: 74). The "politicization of bodily and sexual expression […] that yet recently was considered indecent, socially unacceptable or even punishable" became legalised (Rubavičius 2007: 74). Thus, the gay liberation movements were closely tied to the transformation of existing public attitudes towards sexual practices, encompassing a spectrum of homosexual behaviour and other non-normative sexual behaviours (cf. Kurimay/Takács 2017: 586).

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[4] Daniel Cohn-Bendit (1969: 44) asserts that it was "only a minority" of the French student population that engaged in the protests.

[5] It is important to note that with regard to the activities driven by sexual instincts, Freud (1930/2004, English translation) uses the terms "restriction", "inhibition", or "transformation" ("sublimation"), which cover the channelling of the sexual drive. In contrast, Marcuse's (1955) terminology regarding activities driven by sexual instincts is "suppression" or "liberation", which imply the complete blocking or the free actualisation of this driving force.

In contrast to these processes in Western societies, Eastern European countries, which were dominated by the communist Soviet Union, did not go through the same changes after the Second World War (cf. Reich 1936/2013: 144). In particular, in Hungary, which was under Communist rule until 1989, no sexual revolution comparable to the radical changes in the West took place in the 20th century, and consequently, traditional social norms about sexuality were preserved. Hungary saw no radical changes regarding the acceptable sexual norms. From the point of view of the Communist state, homosexuals were continued to be viewed as "unreliable elements" (Kurimay 2012), and homosexual behaviour was generally seen as "a perversion, pathology or deviance" (Herzog 2008: 76). The majority of Hungarian people considered homosexuals to be a "medical aberration" (cf. Erőss 1984; Tóth 1994; Zombori 1986), both male and female homosexuals were regarded as "despicable" (Borgos 2015). In accordance with the etymological origins of the Latin word, *aberrātiōn*, ('to wander out of the way, to lose the way, to go astray', from *ab* [off] + past participle of *errāre* ('to wander, stray, roam, rove') (cf. OED 2025), the semantic domains of the Hungarian word (*aberráció*) encompass both biology (a deviation from an expected natural type; a proneness to sickly tendencies) and ethics (a departure from an ethical or behavioural standard; a moral irregularity) (cf. MÉKSZ 2024; MÉSZ). In this social context, Hungarian homosexuals were aware of the existing social norms and it was evident for them that by violating these long-established social norms they accept being "secondary citizens" (Kurimay/Takács 2017: 597) with all the practical difficulties involved (cf. Takács 2007).

Similarly to other Eastern European countries, public life in Hungary and Hungarian society was not eroticised in a manner that radically differed from traditional norms in the second half of the last century (cf. Hekma/Giami 2014). Public discourse on matters of sexuality was notably absent during this period (cf. Takács 2015). The practice of non-normative (homosexual) behaviour was not spoken about publically, there was "intense silence" surrounding the subject (Kurimay/Takács 2017: 586). Homosexual practices were limited to the "the publicly unnoticeable sphere" (Takács 2015). Those who practiced non-normative sexuality formed a "secretive and socially invisible subculture" (ibd.: 585).

It was the second half of the 1980s when homosexuality as a movement came to life in Hungary (cf. Kurimay/Takács 2017). With the introduction of western liberal ideas, "a new vocabulary of rights" demanded the acceptance of breaking existing social norms by "fuelling widespread feelings of marginalization among the LGBTQ community" (ibd.: 597). Thus, the appearance of sexually-based public figures is a novel phenomenon in Hungary.

2.2 The concept of family in Hungary

The notion of family is described in the Fundamental Law of Hungary, i. e. its Constitution, which is in consonance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR terms the family as the union of a man and a woman in marriage,[6] and states that it is "the natural and fundamental group unit of society [that] is entitled to protection by society and the State" (UDHR 1948 Article 16.3). Similarly, the Fundamental Law of Hungary conceptualizes

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[6] UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948) Article 16.1. The Article also specifies that the spouses should be full of age and without limitation due to race, nationality of religion.

the family on traditional, natural, and biologically-based social grounds. The ninth amendment (2020)[7] to the Hungarian Constitution (2011) defines parenthood as "a mother is a woman, a father is a man" (Foundation, Article L1, Fundamental Law of Hungary). The explanatory text of the amendment clarifies the necessity of the ninth amendment by claiming that "'modern' frames of ideas that relativise the creation of the two sexes (male and female) cause growing concern".[8] In accordance with the spirit of the Preamble of the Fundamental Law of Hungary, the amendment protects the child's right to identify with their sex at birth. As an additional measure, under the Child Protection Act, also known as the Anti-Paedophilia Act, it is forbidden "to make pornography available for minors",[9] as well as content that features any portrayal of sexuality as an end in itself, any deviation from the identity corresponding to one's sex at birth, sex reassignment, or promotion of homosexuality".[10] The same Act states that the education of minors on sexual culture, sex life, sexual preferences, and sexual development shall not aim to promote deviation from the identity corresponding to one's sex at birth, sex reassignment, or homosexuality. The Act bans unauthorised NGOs to organise GE courses for children in institutions, as so-called "sensitivity trainings" are considered to cause damage to the children's physical, mental, and moral development.[11] PM Viktor Orbán stressed that "we will not allow LGBTQ activists to enter our kindergartens and schools" (About Hungary, 9 July 2021).

The Child Protection Act focuses not only on children, but their parents as well. According to this law, Hungarian children cannot receive sex education without the full consent of their parents. Safeguarding the rights of the parents is a core value advocated by the European Union, whose Charter of Fundamental Rights (Chapter II, Article 14, adopted 18 December 2000) declares that parents have the right to raise their children based on their beliefs. That is, the Child Protection Act intends to secure the autonomy of the parents regarding child-rearing, which is a national competence according to the EU Founding Treaty. PM Viktor Orbán underlined that "education in schools must not be in conflict with the will of parents" (Daily News Hungary, 17 June 2021).

Taking the viewpoint of non-cis individuals and same-sex couples who apply a child-non-bearing model, in which they adopt and raise children who were born by other parent(s), the director of Amnesty International Hungary, Dávid Víg criticised the Child Protection Act by claiming it to "stigmatise LGBTQ people" (Amnesty International, 15 June 2021).

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[7] The 2020 amendment was adopted by the majority of the MPs. It was passed by 134 votes in favour (72.8%), 45 votes against (24.5%), and with 5 abstentions (2.7%).

[8] With the phrase "'modern' frames of ideas", the explanatory text refers to the promotion of LGBTQ rights. General Explanation, Fundamental Law of Hungary (2011), 9th Amendment, adopted 15 December 2020.

[9] Minors are under 18 in Hungary.

[10] Act LXXIX of 2021 on the Protection of Children was passed by 157 votes in favour (99.4%), 1 vote against (0.6%), and without abstention (0%) on the 14 June 2021.

[11] The protection of the "proper physical, mental and moral development" of children is ensured by Article XVI of the Fundamental Law of Hungary (2011).

2.3 Same-sex couples in Hungary: their legal status and their perception of discrimination

From a legal point of view, the practice of homosexual behaviour has been permitted in Hungary since 1961.[12] Twelve years later, in 1973, changes took place in the USA with repercussions for the manner in which individuals engaging in homosexual behaviour were treated in Hungary. Namely, homosexual behaviour was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-3)[13]. Since then, homosexual behaviour has not been considered to be a mental disorder[14]. Homosexual people in Hungary are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act of 2003 (§8 of CXXXV Act of 2003). Registered partnerships for adult, same-sex couples have been recognised in Hungary since 2009 (Act XXIX of 2009). The marriage of same-sex couples has never been practiced in Hungary, where the more than thousand-year[15] old practice of marriage between a man and a woman was defined in the last decade (2011) as the conjugal union between a man and a woman (Section 7 of Act CCXI of 2011). The same concept of marriage was enshrined in the Fundamental Law of Hungary in 2011 (4th Amendment).

Despite the relatively long-standing legal protection of the practice of homosexual behaviour in Hungary, non-heterosexual people tend to perceive discrimination in their daily lives. According to the largest comparative survey investigating discrimination against LGBTI people

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[12] The Criminal Code of 1961 does not list voluntary homosexual behaviour of people of age (those aged 21 and above) among the so-called "perversion against the order of nature", Chapter XV, Act V, §278 and §279 of 1961, adopted 15 December 1961. The removal of homosexual behaviour from the Criminal Code took place relatively early in Hungary. In comparison, in England and Wales it was removed from the Criminal Code six years later, in 1967, in the German Federal Republic in 1969, and it took 42 years to remove it in all the states of the USA in 2003.

[13] The decision to remove homosexuality from the DSM-3 was motivated by political considerations rather than being grounded in scientific evidence (cf. Satinover/Diamand 1999; Socarides 1992). At the time of the official depathologization of homosexuality, the position of psychiatrists on the matter of homosexual behaviour had long been held that it should be regarded as a serious mental illness, which requires treatment (cf. Bieber et al. 1962; Drescher 2003; Hatterer 1970; Socarides 1968, 1992). Typically, a scientific consensus is established over a considerable period of time, arising from the cumulative weight of a substantial number of studies. In the case of depathologizing homosexuality, no such research was conducted and no new data was introduced (cf. Socarides 1992). Rather than employing research findings, the intellectual and political moving force (cf. Bayer 1981; Decker 2013; Drescher 2003) behind the removal of homosexuality from the DSM-3, Robert L. Spitzer created a definition of mental disorder that permitted the depathologizaion of homosexual behaviour. According to this definition, a mental disorder "must either regularly cause subjective distress, or regularly be associated with some generalized impairment in social effectiveness or functioning" (Stoller 1973). Spitzer was aware of the problematic nature of the definition that attributed the determination of the patient's illness to their subjective experience of their own homosexuality (cf. Drescher 2003). Furthermore, he was cognisant of the fact that this definition enabled the classification of other mental disorders, including paraphilia and paedophilia, as non-pathological (cf. Drescher 2003).

[14] Despite the fact that three decades later Spitzer evaluated his own definition, which depathologized homosexual behaviours, as "inadequate" (Drescher 2003: 103), his "conceptual resolution" (Wakefield 2024) to the homosexuality debate has had a serious impact: a shift in societal perspective regarding the acceptance of homosexual behaviour has occurred (cf. Satinover/Diamand 1999) due to the fact that homosexual activists used the novel, inadequate definition as a reference point to legitimize their endeavours.

[15] The Kingdom of Hungary was founded in 1000 under King Saint Stephen.

in the EU (FRA 2020),[16] the perceived level of discrimination by LGBTI people in Hungary is fairly similar to that in other EU countries. Both in Hungary and in the EU, non-heterosexual people have felt discriminated at the workplace (23% in Hungary and 21% in the EU) and in other areas of life (49% and 42% respectively), they were hiding their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at school (36% and 30%), they were attacked (both 11%) or harassed (35% and 38%), they observed the rise of intolerance (41% and 28%), and they avoided certain locations (40% and 33%). A noticeable difference for non-heterosexual people that clearly differentiated Hungary from other EU countries was the Hungarian LGBTI people's lack of firm belief in their national government effectively combating prejudice against non-heterosexual people (5% and 33%).

LGBTI people's common experience of discrimination is not a European phenomenon, though. According to the American Psychological Association (2008), a great number of studies show that verbal harassment and abuse are "universal experiences" among LGB people in the United States, and discrimination in employment is also described to "remain widespread" in the USA.

2.4   Non-governmental organisation for LBT women in Hungary and the concept of gender education

The first storybook for children that promotes LGBTQ people in the Hungarian language was published by the association Labrisz. The association, established in 1999, was first in Hungary to represent LBT women. The aim of the association is to create a society in which women can choose their lifestyles regarding sexuality. The association considers its most important activities to be twofold (cf. Labrisz 2021). First, it seeks to build a visible community of LBT women in Hungary. Second, it strives to propagate LBT lifestyle in society. To fulfil its second goal, Labrisz promotes the dissemination of LBT literature, organises festivals and clubs, carries out lobbying activities, delivers LBT educational courses in schools, provides resource books for teachers and kindergarten teachers, and holds courses in teacher education (cf. Labrisz 2021). The publication of *Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody* is an example of realizing the second goal, that is, the propagation of LGBTQ lifestyle in Hungarian society through the production of educational literature for children and their educators. The association Labrisz communicated that the anthology of recast fairy tales was intended to be used in kindergarten groups and in primary school classes. In order to facilitate reaching this goal, the association published free, online available resource materials about the fairy tales for educators.

The issues raised in the rewritten traditional fairy tales, that is, in the educational material for children produced by the association Labrisz shows that in the understanding of the association GE embraces the following topics: 1) the proud realization of one's chosen sexual identity, 2) the free choice of one's sexual orientation, and 3) the conscious choice of one's sex-related roles in society (cf. Labrisz 2021).

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[16] In 2019, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted a survey among almost 140,000 participants who identified themselves as LGBTI across 30 countries (EU member states, Serbia and North Macedonia). The survey was the second wave of its kind, following the first, which was carried out in 2012. According to FRA, the "new survey results show little progress over the past seven years" (FRA 2020). The FRA research publishes comparable percentages across countries; however, it does not indicate whether the differences are statistically significant.

This interpretation of the notion of GE differs sharply from that of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which defines gender as "the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men" (EIGE 2023). EIGE does not conceptualize gender along sexuality, whereas Labrisz does so. The definition of gender provided by EIGE includes neither sexual identity, nor sexual orientation, nor the free choice of either of the two. What EIGE promotes is gender equality through "enabl[ing] both girls and boys, women and men to understand how constructions of masculinities and femininities and models for assigning social roles – which shape our societies – influence their lives, relationships, life choices, career trajectories" (EIGE 2023). It is worth pointing out that EIGE defines gender on a binary basis, making reference to the male-female, man-woman, boy-girl divide, which leaves no room for non-binary, so-called "fluid genders".

Furthermore, EIGE's definition of GE does not promote the change of traditional social norms, in contrast to the objective of Labrisz, which is to alter the long-standing norms that are widely accepted by Hungarian society. EIGE advocates the understanding of the particularity of different societies regarding gender roles. As EIGE underlines that a diversity of gender roles has evolved across various societies, it does not aim at universalizing a particular set of norms regarding gender roles either. What EIGE fails to clarify, however, is whether gender equality is meant to be understood as the equality of opportunity or the equality of outcome for the two genders.

Since the comments in the present study are discursive reactions to the interpretation of GE by the association Labrisz, the (de)legitimizing discourse of the corpus contains numerous references to sexual identity, to sexual orientation (to same-sex sexual behaviour in particular) and to the idea of changing social norms. Although these aspects are not covered by EIGE's notion of GE, the research studied these utterances as well in order to gain insights into the authentic issues of social normativity in the above social context.

2.5   The storybook for children '*Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody*'

The storybook for children contains seventeen stories featuring unconventional characters, including homosexuals, lesbians, transgender people, Gypsies, and adopted children. The website of the storybook states that these stories are "ground-breaking tales about acceptance" (meseorszagmindenkie 2025). The novel, unconventional approach to the characters and the plotlines is applied in stories that resemble traditional fairy tales. However, according to experts, such as Rádi, Lassú, and Déri, (cf. Keller-Alánt 2020), the book contains short stories rather than tales, despite the title's implication. Rádi (cf. Keller-Alánt 2020) explains that archetypical tales offer solutions rather than acceptance. Déri pinpoints (cf. Keller-Alánt 2020) that tales, which have developed organically, transfer social norms by distinguishing between positive and negative behavioural patterns. Through this discrimination, tales orient children to socialize into the community, which the present storybook fails to do. Another common feature of the stories in this book is that the evil characters are heterosexual. The Hungarian public media (cf. Híradó 2020) emphasized this feature of the storybook to imply that traditional characters are unable to keep up with the times, and that traditions are old-fashioned impediments. Regarding the

textual composition of the stories, it has been asserted that they are "too complicated" for children and "fundamentally poorly written" (Lassú, quoted in Keller-Alánt 2020). The illustrations in the storybook are characterized by an abundance of unhappiness and horror, which suggests that the unconventional life depicted by the storybook is "cold, scared and strange" (Rádi in Keller-Alánt 2020). The storybook has been translated into eleven languages (cf. Labrisz 2021).

3   Methods

3.1   Methods of data collection: Compiling the corpus

In order to investigate social normativity by delineating the social perception of GE for children in Hungary, a corpus consisting of comments given by Hungarian people[17] was compiled. The discourse of comments, which includes immediate personal reactions posted to an issue, can be described as an "argumentative evaluative language" (Ehret/Taboda 2020). Since comments are anonymous, their analysis has the potential to provide insights into the genuine feelings, personal sentiments, stances and opinions of the general public. For this reason, comments have come into the focus of discourse analytical research lately (cf. Stopfner 2015; Boyd 2018; Bouko/Garcia 2019; Koller/Miglbauer 2019; Ruzza/Pejovic 2019; Knoblock 2020; Cavasso/ Taboada 2021; Kopytowska 2022; Koller et al. 2023).

The present research draws on the comments which were displayed on the website that shares the official video made by the association Labrisz about the book launch of the LGBTQ storybook *Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody*. The children's book launch provided opportunity for five of the seventeen authors of the anthology to introduce their reimagined fairy tales. At the event, the representatives of the association Labrisz emphasized that they chose children to be the target audience of their sensitivity campaign. Among other topics,[18] the participants of the book launch discussed if in their opinion fairy tales had an effect on children's sexual identity/ gender identity/sexual orientation. The comments on the website gave reactions to the statements made during the book launch, they showed no major deviation from the range of topics discussed.

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[17] Hungarian is a language spoken predominantly by Hungarian people. The estimated number of non-native speakers of Hungarian (including those whose language proficiency is below the level required for independent use) is below 7% (cf. Fejes 2010). Since all the comments to the sixty-seven-minute-long Hungarian-language video were posted in fluently composed Hungarian language, which reflect complete mastery of the language, the research presupposes that the comments were posted by Hungarian people. The use of translated reactions was not considered in the research since, at the time of data collection, the publicly available translation software succeeded in generating a variety of Hungarian language that was recognizably non-native.
A reviewer of the paper pointed out that speakers of a language are not the same as the nationals of a political entity in which this language is spoken. It is specifically true in the case of Hungary, which lost two-thirds of its territory and one-third of its indigenous ethnic Hungarian population after the First World War (cf. Romsics 2002; Jeszenszky 2014). As a consequence, millions of Hungarian people live outside the borders of Hungary (cf. Simsa 2022). The present research does not apply the notion "Hungarian people" in the administrative sense referring to the citizens of Hungary but applies it for people who speak Hungarian (typically as a mother-tongue), share Hungarian culture, traditions and history, and have Hungarian ancestors. The Hungarian language differentiates the two concepts (*magyarok* versus *magyarság*, cf. Borza 2023). This differentiation is hardly possible to be transposed into the English language.
[18] In the course of the discussion, the following four topics were addressed. 1) What themes were represented in the recast fairy tales? 2) In what manner were the original, traditional fairy tales rewritten? 3) What kind of reactions are expected from the public? 4) What concept created the design of the book?

The children's book launch took place on 26 September 2020, which was the starting point of data collection. In order to cover a relatively long time span, comments were extracted from the website until 20 February 2021. After this date, there was a noticeable decline in the level of engagement by the commenters. This five-month period ensured that both immediate opinions, that is feelings expressed right at the time of the publication of the storybook for children, and also sentiments voiced after the event became less frequently narrated in the media could be investigated. It is possible that some positions did not show up in the data collection due to censorship according to the general policies and routines of the media platform. All the comments visible within this timespan were saved as screenshots. The total number of comments amounted to 340,[19] which embraced 13,180 words.[20] The comments were ordered chronologically and divided into two subcorpora depending on the position of the comment: either supporting GE for children or opposing it. Comments which supported GE for children were coded as GES, while those opposed to it were coded as GEO. Accordingly, the code GES-1 refers to the first comment posted in support of GE, while code GEO-105 refers to the last comment rejecting GE. Comments expressing no particular position were not coded (e. g., ones that clarified certain concepts without expressing evaluation or ones that digressed from the topic). The corpus included 19 different commenters who supported GE for children, while 38 different commenters opposed it. That is, it can be supposed that 57 people participated in the discussion.[21] Due to ethical considerations, the present research applied the above coding scheme, and there are no references to the usernames of the commenters. The coding was carried out in tandem with a research assistant, which increased the reliability of the research (cf. Boréus/ Bergström 2017; Neuendorf 2017). Without any differences in their annotations, the two coders divided the corpus into two subcorpora (GES and GEO) in complete agreement. Since distinguishing between the two subcorpora required content analysis, no analytical software was used for the coding.

The pool of spontaneous reactions expressed in the comments of a near five dozen commenters cannot be regarded as representative of the entirety of the Hungarian society (in terms of, for instance, age, education, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or marital status) as no such systematic knowledge is available about the commenters. Yet, the research results draw attention to the system of values and norms of those who were dedicated enough to display their genuine interest in the topic.

Furthermore, we cannot be sure whether the comments were written by activists of pressure groups or by ordinary people. However, since the discussion was analysed not in terms of indi-

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[19] At the time of writing, the number of comments totalled 336, and it decreased to 300 by the time of revising the paper. That is, forty comments were deleted from the website for unknown reasons after the end of the data collection (20 February 2021).

[20] The length of a comment on average was 39 words, which provided sufficient discursive material to carry out meaningful discourse analysis.

[21] Each different username was presumed to be owned by a different person.

The activity of bots was not considered in the research, as the interactions of the commenters were mentally complex enough to presume human communication rather than the engagement of automated programs. Yet, if any of the commenters was a robot, their statements generated reactions from the public, that is, from a group of human beings.

vidual beliefs and considerations but rather with regard to the general public sphere, the expressed norms and social standards we find in the discourse delineate the values that are accepted on either side of the divide. Thus, the sample sheds light on several arguments based on differing worldviews that Hungarian people chose to express.

3.2   Methods of data analysis

To examine social normativity by uncovering the accepted norms, values, social standards and presumptions which Hungarian people showed with regard to GE for children (RQ), Van Leeuwen's (2008) comprehensive taxonomy of discursive legitimation strategies was applied. The taxonomy has been developed within the Critical Discourse Analytical (CDA) perspective, which considers both written and spoken discourse as a form of social practice (cf. Wodak 1996; Fairclough/Wodak 1997), and regards discourses as linguistically mediated representations of the world (cf. Wodak/Meyer 2002; Fairclough 2003). CDA is an appropriate perspective for the present research as it investigates social phenomena, controversial social or societal issues (cf. Vaara/Tienary 2008) by studying the discursive constructions of both normative and resistant representations and legitimations of social reality (cf. Van Leeuwen 2008). Since the social practice of expressing opinion about the introduction of GE in childcare institutions is binary in the sense that people argue either for or against a particular line of action (either taking a standpoint that supports GE for children or one that rejects it), the binary nature of the discourse analytical taxonomy (regarding legitimisation or delegitimation) is apt to be applied in the research.

It is evident that the discursive ways in which one can answer the questions "why should we do this?", or "why should we do it this way?" are numerous. In his "Discourse and Practice" (2008), Van Leeuwen developed a comprehensive taxonomy which enables the categorisation of the different forms of discursive constructions of legitimation and delegitimation. The taxonomy brings some order to the various discursive constructions which explain why particular social practices are performed or rejected. This discourse analytical framework embraces four major dimensions (authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation, and mythopoesis) with further subdivision, which can occur separately or in combination in discourses.

In order to delineate the discursive constructions of (de)legitimation, the comments in both subcorpora were manually annotated by the two coders according to the hierarchical classification of the taxonomy. Where the coders catalogued the same comment differently, the discrepancies were discussed, and complete agreement was reached in the annotation.[22] Comments that used several different discursive strategies of (de)legitimation were given more than one tag; that is, one comment could appear in different classes of the coding frame. Out of the four major dimensions, which include twelve categories and twenty-two subcategories in Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy, the following classes were represented in the corpus (see Table 1).

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[22] The reason for the discrepancy between the two annotator's initial tagging (tradition vs scientific rationalisation) is outlined in Footnote 31.

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Dimension	Category	Subcategory	GES	GEO
Authorisation	Custom	Tradition	✓	✓
	Authority	Personal	✓	✓
Moral evaluation	Evaluation		✓	✓
	Naturalisation		✓	✓
	Abstraction		✓	✓
Rationalisation	Instrumental rationalisation	Goal orientation	×	✓
		Effect orientation	✓	✓
	Theoretical Rationalisation	Scientific rationalisation	✓	✓
		Definition	✓	✓
		Explanation	✓	✓
Mythopoesis	Cautionary tale		×	✓

Table 1: Classes of Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy that were used in the two subcorpora for the discursive (de)legitimation of GE for children

In order to distinguish the four dimensions, the categories and subcategories of Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy let us have a brief look at the classification. The first major dimension, authorisation, makes reference to the authority of custom, tradition, or a person in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested (ibid.: 106). The category of custom involves no specific agent who enforces the social practice. Rather it is everyone, or "we", who necessitates it, and the members of the community comply with the norms held in common (ibid.: 108). Custom gives legitimacy to a social practice by the authority of the prevailing behaviour that is conventionally accepted in the community. The subcategory of tradition relies on our own practice, and "how we have always done it" (ibid.: 108). In contrast, personal authority legitimises social practices through the relative power inherent in statuses and roles such as principal, teacher, and parent (ibid.: 109).

Van Leeuwen (ibid.: 110) warns that the second major category, moral evaluation, tends to remain oblique in discourse, as references to value systems are rarely explicit on the discourse plane. Instances of morally evaluative legitimisation are typically recognisable on the basis of the commonsense cultural knowledge of the particular community, in which they are embedded. For this reason, it is of paramount importance to take the Hungarian context in which the comments were given into account in the analysis. In this respect, the CDA perspective shows similarities with content analysis, which is a method of inquiry that can be distinguished from

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[23] The reason for the discrepancy between the two annotator's initial tagging (tradition vs scientific rationalisation) is outlined in Footnote 31.

other methods by virtue of analysing texts in the particular context of their uses (cf. Krippen-dorff 2004: xiii). Despite the typical lack of explicitly verbalised value systems, Van Leeuwen's taxonomy does not discourage analysts from unveiling moral evaluations in discourse. On the contrary, Van Leeuwen (2008: 110) encourages discourse analysts to recognise them "on the basis of our commonsense cultural knowledge", knowing that the linguistic construction is only "the tip of a submerged iceberg of moral values" (ibid.). The second category of moral evalua-tion, naturalisation, is a special form of evaluation where there is a reference to time or the notion of change, which replaces moral and cultural orders with natural orders (ibid.: 111). In the case of abstraction, a quality is distilled that links the social practice to either desired or undesired values (ibid.).

A chief category of the third major dimension, rationalisation, is instrumental rationalisation, where legitimacy lies in the means of pursuing an aim (cf. ibid.: 113). This category includes references to goals, means, effects, and results. Legitimisation through theoretical rationalisa-tion, on the other hand, comprises the reliance on systematic bodies of knowledge (such as science, religion and other systems of belief); giving definitions; and explaining the nature of the actor to whom the social practice appears appropriate (ibid.: 115).

Finally, the fourth major dimension, mythopoesis, legitimises by focusing on the outcome of a social practice, which is either rewarding or punishing (ibid.: 117). Mythopoesis can make ref-erence to either a narrative whose outcome rewards the social actor who performed legitimate actions (moral tales) (ibid: 117), or to a narrative in which the social actor is punished for being engaged in a socially deviant or illegitimate activity (cautionary tales) (ibid: 118). Cautionary tales illustrate that neglecting or violating the legitimate order leads to disastrous results.

After annotating the corpus according to Van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomic coding frame, the comments that fell into any of the set classes were grouped around emerging topoi. That is, the comments with annotations of various different discursive constructions were gathered together as long as their (de)legitimation voiced the same topic. Comments that remained untagged in the Van Leeuwenian system were not considered at this point of the analysis, since they did not contain discursive (de)legitimation of GE for children. The emerging topics were data-driven, as the categories grew out of the topics of argumentation applied in the comments. Some of the topoi included a small number of comments (1–2), while others embraced numerous ones (up to 12). The topoi in which several comments accumulated were considered to be the hubs of the discussion. These nodes were regarded as the topoi which delineate the system of values and norms of the people expressing their stance regarding GE for children in Hungary. Conse-quently, the results and discussion of the study (in Section 4) are organized around them cf. (GES Nodes A–E and GEO Nodes A–F). Topics with fewer than three comments were viewed as points that were not prevalent in the discourse, even if they brought additional considerations to the debate. In other words, topoi which emerged with a relatively small number of comments were regarded as not primarily characteristic of the discursively expressed norms, values and social standards of this discourse community in general. For this reason, these additional topics were not collected among the nodes, and they will not be investigated in this research. The discussion that follows examines the norms, values and taken-for-granted assumptions accord-ing to which Hungarian commenters who showed genuine interest in the issue legitimise their choice of supporting or opposing GE for children.

4   Results and discussion

To gain an understanding of the social normativity in the Hungarian context, let us first see the norms, values, social standards and presumptions that can be revealed through the discursive constructions of legitimation of the public who support GE for children in Hungary (RQ).

4.1   Topics of argumentation when legitimising GE for children

Before examining the topics of argumentation that emerged in the comments legitimising GE for children in Hungary, it is worthy pointing out that the GES subcorpus did not contain two classes of the discursive constructions (from Van Leeuwen's 2008 taxonomy) that were present in the GEO subcorpus. At the discursive level, the GES subcorpus did not comprise any instances of goal orientation or mythopoetic cautionary tales. That is, the commenters supporting the issue did not explicitly verbalise what their goals are in wishing to promote GE for children. In terms of their objectives, proponents of GE for children did not engage in overt communication; rather, they kept their aims covert. Neither did the supporters address any possible harmful effects of GE for children in their discourse through warning narratives (cautionary tales). This shows that the proponents of GE for children did not consider any of the potential adverse effects of GE on children to be a deterrent.

GES – Node A: Homosexuality is genetically determined

It was widely accepted among the supporters of GE for children that homosexuality is genetically determined. Several comments argued that the sexual orientation of homosexuals is genetically coded, and as a consequence, homosexual people cannot change their sexual orientation. The proponents of GE treated homosexual orientation as a natural, thus an unquestionably acceptable condition.

(1)   Genetika, ezzel születik az ember, és sehogy sem lehet kezelni, változtatni rajta.
       'It is genetics. One is born this way, and no treatment can alter it'[24].
                                        (GES-18, Scientific rationalisation)

Using the argument of biological determination, the commenters promoting GE for children clearly expressed the view that the sexual orientation of people with homosexual behaviour is not an individual, autonomous choice. The argumentation of the supporters in GES – Node A that if something cannot be changed, then it should be accepted as it is. As such, the assumed deterministic quality of homosexual behaviour hindered further discussion, and, in the eyes of supporters, brought the need for the debate to an end.

By making frequent reference to the genetically determined nature of homosexual behaviour, the discourse of the supporting comments tended to portray people with homosexual behaviour as victims of their fate.

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[24] The wording of the translation of the comments from Hungarian into English was checked and discussed by a native speaker of English from Northern Ireland. The professional translator, whose linguistic competencies include English, German, French and Hungarian, has been residing in Hungary for a number of years, thus he does not only possess an in-depth understanding of the Hungarian language, but also a comprehensive awareness of the Hungarian context. In consideration of the fact that the annotation process was undertaken in the Hungarian language, the implementation of the back translation method was rendered redundant.

(2)   Nem ők tehetnek arról, amilyenek.
        'It is not their fault that they are the way they are'.
                    (GES-33, Scientific rationalisation)

This way, the discourse of the supporters depicted homosexual behaviour as a misfortune. The perceived disadvantage of people with homosexual behaviour did not result in estrangement from them among the supporters of GE for children. In contrast, the perceived victimhood of people with homosexual behaviour raised a feeling of empathy among the supporters. Due to the perception of people with homosexual behaviour as helpless victims in the face of misfortune, the supporters felt the urge to provide protection for them. Victimhood culture is claimed to be new (cf. Campbell/Manning 2018: 25).[25] However, in the context of homosexual behaviour, it was already in the 1980s that the concept of victimhood imagery emerged. In their strategic book on how to conquer fear and hatred towards people who engage in homosexual practices, Kirk/Madsen (1989: 183f.) warns that "gays must be portrayed as victims in need of protection so that straights will be inclined by reflex to adopt the role of protector (…) the public should be persuaded that gays are victims of circumstances, that they no more chose their sexual orientation than they did, say, their height, skin color, talents, or limitations". The phenomenon of the "protector reflex" can be identified in the comments of the supporters of GE for children.

GES – Node B: Culture has no effect on the sexual orientation of children

The comments of the supporters of GE for children tended to emphasise that tales containing LGBTQ characters do not have an effect on the sexual orientation of children. This notion is tightly connected to the argumentation that appeared in the previous Node. That is, supporters denied the importance of culture in the development of homosexual behaviour based on their firm belief that one's sexual orientation was genetically determined.

(3)   A szexuális orientáció nem megváltoztatható.
        'Sexual orientation cannot be changed'.
                              (GES-41, Naturalisation)
(4)   Ez NEM fogja megváltoztatni a gyerekek identitását.
        'This WON'T change the identity of children'
                          (GES-26, Effect orientation)

The comments in GES – Node B revealed that the supporters of GE for children saw biology as being of prime importance. Rather than giving preference to sentiments in one's definition of sexual orientation (such as feelings or moods), supporters placed the science of biology in the first place. Comments in this Node also indicated that the supporters valued a system of biological sexes that is composed of two elements: male and female. All the comments of the supporters were framed in binary terms, the consideration of non-binary spectrum or a fluid scale did not emerge in the corpus.

By emphasising the prime importance of biology in one's sexual orientation, supporters implied the legitimacy of homosexuality and heterosexuality alike, as they perceived both sexual orientations as biologically determined. This way, the supporters treated homosexual behaviour and heterosexual behaviour as being on an equal footing.

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[25] Campbell/Manning (2018) applied the term victimhood culture in the context of American universities, which could be the reason for evaluating the phenomenon as novel.

GES – Node C: Tolerance

A frequently appearing topic among the comments of the supporters of GE for children was tolerance.

(5) Én egyszerűen a társadalomtól egy kis megértést várnék. Egy kis emberséget.
     'What I would simply expect of society is a bit of understanding. A bit of humanity'.
                                                                (GES-69, Abstraction)

When referring to tolerance, supporters called on people with heterosexual behaviour to accept the practices of people with homosexual behaviour. The reference to tolerance among the supporters' comments was unidirectional. Supporters treated society as being primarily comprised of people with heterosexual behaviour, and expected them to change their long-standing norms by accepting and tolerating homosexual behaviour. In a unidirectional manner, non-LGBTQ people were urged to be tolerant towards people of different sexual orientations and of different gender-diverse identities in the discourse of the supporters. In contrast, LGBTQ people were not expressly encouraged to tolerate the norms and behaviour of people with heterosexual behaviour whose identity is based on their biologically given sex. In this sense, the discourse of the supporters of GE for children did not apply the notion of tolerance with a universal scope. Questioning the value of universal toleration and universal indiscrimination is not without history. More than half a century ago, Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School, advocated the importance of discrimination against actors of universal toleration. He asserted that universal toleration is "false toleration" when "freedom and happiness themselves are at stake" (Marcuse 1965: 88). In Marcuse's line of reasoning, tolerance is discouraged to be applied in a universal manner. Rather, Marcuse (1965: 81–119) promoted the selective application of tolerance, which he termed as "repressive tolerance". Given their unidirectional nature, the comments of the supporters of GE for children applied the notion of tolerance in a repressive manner in Marcuse's terms, even if the lexical item that they used[26] implies universal toleration. The comments fail to clarify the object of toleration, and they do not explicitly delineate or narrow down the scope of tolerance, thus the notion of discrimination does not appear at the discourse level. In other words, the discrimination of heterosexual people is an act that the supporters of GE for children do not expressly talk about.

The comments in GES – Node C show that supporters held unconditional compassion and unconditional acceptance in high esteem. More specifically, supporters encouraged an attitude of compassion and acceptance without forming moral judgements. The supporters of GE for children expected non-LGBTQ people to tolerate the practice of homosexual behaviour without raising and discussing moral, social, cultural or biological questions. Rubavičius (2007: 76) warns that the lack of such deliberation blocks the discussion of whether breaching established "social norms and taboos forces others to adapt to the new social and cultural conditions". In other words, in considering compassion and acceptance as unconditional and independent of moral judgements, the supporters of GE for children effectively stifled the discussion of the

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[26] In the discourse, the noun tolerance was used without any object or modifier, which implies a sense of universality. The verb form (to tolerate) might have given some limitation to the concept since the verb is transitive, that is, it requires the specification of its object (to tolerate what?). However, the notion of tolerance was not expressed in a verbal manner at any point in the discourse.

societal implications of their novel practices from moral, social, cultural and biological per-
spectives.

GES – Node D: Cool and trendy

The commenters supporting GE frequently brought up the importance of departing from the
existing, socially accepted norms. Following an established course of action was viewed disap-
provingly by the supporters, who saw this as dull.

(6)   Menő a másság. És unalmas az átlagember.
       'Being different is cool. And the ordinary person is boring'
                                        (GES51, Evaluation)

In contrast, performing behaviour at variance with what is commonly accepted in the commu-
nity was regarded as impressive and attractive by supporters. The values celebrated by support-
ers were unconventionality and non-conformity, while conforming to standards was regarded
unfavourably. Breaking away from socially accepted norms is characteristic of the culture of
transgression, where "the breaking of taboos and norms came to be seen as an individual and
creative act of liberation par excellence as well as the essential means of self-expression" (Rub-
avičius 2007: 69). The culture of transgression, however, does not take it into consideration that
non-conformity can be valued and practiced as an expression of individuality as long as a set
of norms are followed by the majority of society, from which non-conforming individuals can
depart. In the absence of a group that sets the norms and conforms to the norms, there is no
basis for deviation, thus deviation becomes impossible. The fetishisation of change, the belief
that "whatever comes next is better than what went before" (Robins 1995: 149), is not a novel
phenomenon. Neophilia, the "fetishistic love of all that is new" (Rhodes/Pullen 2010: 2) has its
roots in modernity. As change became synonymous with progress, with little consideration
given to whether the change in question is an improvement (cf. Baudouin 1950), modernity
identified progress as an underlying concept of Western culture (cf. Burgess 2004). The concept
of neophilia posits that newness is a virtue in itself, which should be embraced and upheld as
an end in itself without considering the quality of the new. However, as De Cock/Rehn (2006:
123) caution, the appeal of the novel involves the "deconstruction of the old".

The culture of transgression was so emphatic among the supporting comments that peculiarity
in itself was appreciated without drawing limits. Supporters recommended putting inhibitions
and shame aside when behaving unconventionally, in order to act in a manner that is generally
treated as eccentric, outlandish or even bizarre by the majority.

(7)   Ez a világ a gátlástalanok játszótere.
       'This world [LGBTQ] is a playground for the shameless'
                                        (GES-54, Evaluation)

GES – Node E: Inclusiveness

Comments proposing GE for children pointed to the importance of being inclusive. The commenters found it crucial to allow for behaviour that is considered non-conformist in a community. The arguments in GES-Node E relativised the norms and standards accepted by the majority of their particular society by making frequent reference to other communities that are structured differently.

(8) Vannak olyan megengedő társadalmak, (pl. Új-Guineában van egy törzs), akiknél intézményes biszexualitás van
'There are inclusive societies, for example there is a tribe in New Guinea where bisexuality is institutional.'

(GES-27, Scientific rationalisation[27])

Comments in this Node often made mention of tradition. The reference to tradition, however, did not apply to the long-established customs in the commenters' own society. Instead, the notion of tradition brought different ways of behaviour that are not traditional in the society of the commenter into the discourse. The notion of tradition, with reference to other systems of norms, was employed by the supporters in their discourse to reject the tradition of their own society. By emphasising the value of inclusiveness, and by offering competing alternatives, supporters signalled their intention to effect a change in the prevailing practices of the local tradition of their own society.

4.2   Topics of argumentation when delegitimising GE for children

After investigating the most frequent nodes of legitimisation, let us now examine what the discursive constructions of delegitimation reveal about the accepted norms, values, social standards and presumptions of the Hungarian people who opposed GE for children on the platform (RQ).

GEO – Node A: The sexes and gender identity

A considerable proportion of the comments rejected GE for children on grounds of biology. The commenters were of the opinion that people belong to either of the two sexes, male or female. In view of the commenters, the primary function of the difference between the sexes was the propagation of new generations in order for humanity to survive.

(9) Az embernek kétféle biológiai jellege van, ami biztosítja az emberi nem létét.
'The existence of humanity is ensured by the biologically two different characteristics of people [by the two sexes].'

(GEO-32, Naturalisation)

Commenters appreciated the idea of gender identity (that is, the notion of one's personal sense of being a male or a female) as long as it is based on one's biologically given sex. However, the opponents' comments expressed disapproval in cases when one's gender role did not match

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[27] Comments legitimising GE for children through making reference to tradition that is not typical in Hungary but is described to be accepted in another society were annotated as scientific rationalisation. The underlying reason for this categorisation is that the reference applies to a systematic body of knowledge (the manner how other people are known to hold certain traditions) rather than to a standard behaviour perceived to be practiced in the society ("the way we have always done it", as Van Leeuwen (2008) phrases it).

their biological sex, and regarded it as a malfunction. The discourse of the commenters called attention to the importance of education regarding the development of one's gender identity.

(10)   A fejlődő gyermek számára egyértelmű, stabil fogalmakra van szükség a nemi alapfogalmak terén is. Melyek a férfiak ill. nők alapvető viselkedési jellemzői. Nem elég a genetikai alapozottság, férfivé, vagy nővé NEVELNI kell a gyermeket
'A child in their development needs straightforward and stable concepts even about the basic terms in the field of sexuality. What are the fundamental characteristics of the behaviour of a man and those of a woman? Genetics is not enough; children should be RAISED to become a man or a woman.'

(GEO-91, Naturalisation)

The affective and cognitive distress that accompanies "the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender" is termed as gender dysphoria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (cf. DSM-5: 451). Gender dysphoria, a condition which the commenters often described, is listed among the mental disorders related to sexual and gender identity disorders in the medical manual. The commenters regarded this condition as a result of not having properly experienced or not having properly grown into traditional gender roles. The discourse of the opponents of GE for children treated gender dysphoria as an effect, rather than a cause due to which one should change one's gender identity.

(11)   A nemi szerepet tanulni is kell, nemcsak érezni.
'Gender roles should be learnt as well; it is not enough to have a feeling about it.'

(GEO-41, Naturalisation)

When the opponents suggested that one's gender identity should be in congruity with one's biologically given characteristics of being male or female, the value they cherish was the state of harmony with nature. Opponents endorse the concordance between one's social roles and one's biologically given, thus natural, characteristics.

GEO – Node B: Sexualisation is not for children

Commenters rejecting GE for children often expressed their disapproval of introducing the topic of sexuality to children. It was not the type of sexuality that commenters disliked, regardless whether heterosexual behaviour or any of the different kinds of sexual behaviours advocated by a particular LGBTQ group, but the mere fact of creating a situation in which children encounter sexuality.

(12)   Hogy gondolták, hogy a szexualitás egy óvodás gyerek témája?
'How did they think that sexuality is a topic [suitable] for nursery school children?'

(GEO-17, Naturalisation)

Opponents of introducing GE for children were of the opinion that the topic of sexuality was not appropriate for youngsters. The commenters were not simply arguing that inappropriateness makes the topic irrelevant and uninteresting for children; rather, they were claiming that it was harmful to children. The harmful nature of GE for children is considered to be such a matter of gravity by the commenters that they regard it be a moral irregularity, a sickly tendency that deviates from the natural course of action (see the etymology of *aberration* in Section 2.1). The

main reason justifying this claim among the comments was that children tend to experience tales by imagining themselves as having commonalities with the protagonists.

(13)   A gyerekek eljátsszák és beleélik magukat sokszor egy mesefigura szerepébe. Ezért aberrált már csak a gondolata is, hogy oktatásban lehessen 'dolgozni' ilyen mesékkel.
    'Children act out [tales] and often identify with the character in a tale. This is why even the thought of "working" with these tales in education is aberrant.'

<div align="right">(GEO-82, Naturalisation)</div>

The notion of children forming a bond with the protagonist of a tale is consistent with the theory of Bettelheim (1976/2010) and the findings of Alexander/Miller/Hengst (2002), which point out that children tend to establish a relationship with the characters in their favourite stories. Relying on the claim that children experience tales by identifying with the characters, several comments equated the encouragement of introducing sexuality to children with the attribution of sex role to children, that is, with paedophilia.

(14)   Egyetlen olyan felnőtt fajtát ismerek, aki úgy gondolja, hogy a kisgyermek világába be kell vinni a szexualitást… és ezek a pedofilok.
    'I know one single type of adult who thinks that sexuality should be introduced into the world of a young child… they are paedophiles.'

<div align="right">(GEO-67, Naturalisation)</div>

The most emotionally phrased comments in the corpus appeared in GEO – Node B. Opponents of GE for children expressed their anger at exposing children to sexuality.

(15)   HAGYJÁTOK BÉKÉN A GYEREKEKET!
    'LEAVE THE KIDS ALONE!'
                (GEO-25, Effect)

Node B revealed that the value opponents treated as of great importance was that which they regarded as the natural process of child development. In this natural process, the child experiences no sexual attribution.

GEO – Node C: The rights and duties of parents

Rather than focusing on the child directly, several comments opposing GE for children focused on the parents. Those who rejected GE for children wished to maintain the autonomy of the parents regarding the choice of values they wish to pass on to their children. Opponents of GE were convinced that it is the parents who should provide the models according to which their children are raised.

(16)   A szülőknek joga van hozzá, fogadjuk el, ne nyomjuk el benne azt, hogy eldöntse, mit olvas a gyerekének mese gyanánt.
    'The parents have the right to decide what to read to their children as a fairy tale – let's accept it, and not suppress it.'

<div align="right">(GEO-77, Abstraction)</div>

Commenters opposing GE for children emphasised the importance of parental care, which in their view, involved the protection of the child from effects that harm their psychological, psycho-sexual, and moral development. The commenters strengthened their argument by specifying that children, by their very nature, are not mature enough to make life choices.

(17)   A gyerekek fiatalon könnyen befolyásolhatók és olyan dolgokba is belemehetnek, amiket ké-
       sőbb megbánhatnak.
       'Young children are easily influenced, and they might agree to do things they would regret
       later on.'

                                                            (GEO-71, Evaluation)

In order for parents to retain their autonomy in raising their children, the comments tended to
underline the significance of keeping the LGBTQ storybook away from child care institutions
and schools.[28]

(18)   Szomorú ezt látni és hallgatni, nagyon bízom benne, hogy eza könyv sosem kerül be az
       ovodákba, iskolákba.
       'It is sad to see and hear. I really trust that this book will never make its way to kindergartens
       and schools.'

                                                            (GEO-56, Evaluation)

A year after data collection, held on 4 April 2022, the so-called "child protection referendum"
enquired Hungarian people about parental autonomy regarding sexual education. The referen-
dum brought it to light that fewer than 4% of the electorate supported the idea that children in
public schools, kindergartens, and child care institutions should be provided education on sex-
ual orientation without parental consent (cf. National Election Office 2022).

GEO – Node D: Homosexual behaviour is not determined by genetics

The opponents of GE for children were of the opinion that sexual attraction towards the same
sex is not genetically determined. Commenters emphasised that it is one's cultural environment
that plays the most significant role in the development of homosexual behaviour.

(19)   A környezet nagyobb hatással van a személyiségre.
       'The environment has a greater impact on the personality [than genetics].'
                                                       (GEO-1, Scientific rationalisation)

Since homosexual behaviour is not biologically determined in the view of opponents, they
shifted their focus on the propagation of the idea of homosexual behaviour in a community.
Commenters were convinced that the promotion of homosexuality increases the number of peo-
ple who perform homosexual behaviour, which the commenters found undesirable. The com-
ments voiced the opinion that homosexuality was gaining ground as it was being made fash-
ionable, and young people could not resist peer pressure. Adolescents are particularly interested
in peer relations (cf. Berndt 1979; Larson/Richards 1991; Steinberg 2008; Dustin/Chein/Stein-
berg 2013), and they become heavily distressed if they receive negative criticism from peers
(cf. Sebastian et al. 2011; Blakemore/Mills 2014), which drives them to take more risks (cf.
Eaton et al. 2006; Steinberg 2010) in order to avoid peer exclusion.

(20)   A fiatalok divatból lesznek homoszexuálisok és szereznek traumatikus élményeket.
       'Young people become homosexual because of fashion, and have traumatic experiences.'
                                                            (GEO-105, Evaluation)

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[28] The commenters focused on the childcare institutions (rather than discussing the issue of parents reading the
recast tales to their own children at home) as the participants of the book launch of *Fairy-Tale-Land for Everybody*
explicitly propagated the collection of recast tales to be used in kindergartens and primary schools.

Commenters shared their expressly common sense beliefs about the genetically not determined nature of homosexual behaviour. The conviction of the opponents, that of plainly laymen, shows congruity with the state-of-the-art results of medical research. Ganna and her team (2019), using whole-genome analytic techniques to explore human sexual behaviour, found that there is "certainly no single genetic determinant" for homosexuality, and the loci in the whole genome "do not allow meaningful prediction of an individual's sexual preference" (Ganna et al. 2019: 6). Given that the "loci [of the whole genome] with individually small effects […] on the predisposition to same-sex sexual behavior" (ibid.: 6) do not predetermine the sexual preference of the individual, Ganna and her colleagues suggest the investigation of sociocultural influences regarding the development of homosexual behaviour.

Node D demonstrates that the value opponents of GE for children consider important is taking responsibility for one's life choices, and also making these decisions at a mature age. For this reason, opponents valued the creation of a social environment in which children do not need to make choices that profoundly influence their lifestyle in adulthood.

It is worthy to point out that both the opponents and the proponents of GE for children apply biology, more specifically genetics, in their argumentation. Regardless whether they considered homosexual behaviour to be genetically determined or not, all the commenters turn to medical science in their discourse as an authoritative source of knowledge that gives legitimation to their arguments. Neither the opponents, nor the proponents questioned the validity of scientific biological knowledge.

What the opponents and the proponents of GE both failed to consider was that the mutability of sexual orientation does not depend on the fact whether it is an inherited or an acquired trait. Bereczkei/Hoffmann (2012: 164) argue that, in a manner analogous to the case of disorders, where the curability of a disease is not determined by the fact whether it developed due to genetic or environmental causes, the possibility of modifying one's sexual orientation is not contingent on the origin of that orientation. They argue that once the mechanisms which trigger inclinations to perform homosexual behaviour are identified, the success of changing this condition increases, as long as the individual wishes to alter their homosexual behaviour.

GEO – Node E: Discussing sexual behaviour and sexual identity is a private matter

Numerous commenters rejecting GE for children expressed their opinion that sexuality is a topic best discussed in a private circle. Opponents wished to distinguish between the spheres of public and private life. In their view, the discussion of sexual behaviour did not fall into the public domain. Along the same lines, sexual attraction and sexual identity were also treated as private matters.

(21)   Egy nemi identitás kérdése kizárólag magánügyi dolog
        'The issue of sexual identity is an absolutely private matter'
                                (GEO-7, Naturalisation)

Those who viewed homosexual behaviour as a deviation from normal sexual behaviour fervently argued for separating the private and the public spheres with regard to discussing sexuality.

(22)   A beteg perverziótokat miért nem tartjátok a hálószobátokban?
          'Why don't you keep your sickly perversion in your bedroom?'
                                                              (GEO-87, Evaluation)

As Hungary did not go through a sexual revolution after the Second World War, what communism preserved as social norms for sexuality was similar to the condition that characterised Western Europe before the sixties. Public speech about sexuality was not liberated in Hungary (cf. Buda 2002) before the fall of the communist regime, and the discussion of sexuality remained a private matter up until these days (cf. Tóth/Murai 2014; Takács 2015).

The discourse of the opponents' comments in Node E revealed that they valued the respect of privacy highly; that is, the opponents held the lack of intrusion in one's private life in high esteem.

GEO – Node F: Homosexual behaviour is a "biological blind alley"

Opponents of GE for children were apprehensive about the continuity of generations. The discourse of the comments disclosed that opponents considered it important that couples established families by giving birth to children, and they raised concerns as to whether the goal of founding the family could be realised. The comments criticised the inability of homosexual couples to beget their own children. The opponents considered this incapacity as a destructive course in society, whose basic unit was viewed as the family. The opponents of GE expressed their opinion that same-sex couples were not in the position to uphold society, thus their lifestyle was not considered as exemplary.

(23)   Mindannyian az emberi faj fenntartásában vagyunk érdekeltek, és olyan utódokban, akik ugyanezt a törekvést hordozzák magukban, és az apa-anya modellt megismerve nőnek fel.
          'We all have an interest in the continuity of the human species, and in the [reproduction of] offspring who bear the same drive, and grow up within the father-and-mother [family] model.'
                                                              (GEO-34, Naturalistaion)

The comments in this node underlined the fact that it is biologically impossible for same-sex couples to give birth to their own children. This biological point of view is encoded in the Hungarian language, as the noun 'parent' (*szülő*) in Hungarian is a derivative of the verb 'to beget', 'to bring forth', 'to give birth to' (*szül*)[29]. Thus, for the Hungarian speaker, the notions of parents and their child do not simply lie in the same semantic field, but there is a tight, biological connection between the two.

When treating same-sex couples incapable of begetting children, opponents of GE consider the same-sex couple as a unit. The argumentation focuses on this unit, which in itself is incapable of producing children. If a member of the same-sex unit bears a child, it is a sign of the same-sex parent having entered into heterosexual relationship with another person who is outside the same-sex unit (third party reproduction). Following this line of argumentation, the opponents of GE regard the existence of the child to be a reinforcement of the unit's incapability of repro-

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[29] The English word *parent* has similar roots, as it is directly derived from the Latin word *parens*, which is the present participle of the verb *parire* ('to bring forth, to give birth to, to produce').

duction. Since same-sex couples are not in the position to beget their own children, it is impossible for them not to deviate from the traditional family model, which is disapproved of by the opponents.

Contrasting the infertility of heterosexual couples and same-sex couples, Szilvay (2022) finds the two relationships disparate. In the case of the former, infertility is accidental. In contrast, the latter is characterised by structural incapability to reproduce. That is, same-sex couples are unable to have children due to the "opposite nature of their relationship" (ibid.: 286).

The opponents of GE based their argument on a biological view, in which a condition that results in unsuccessful fitness,[30] the lack of reproduction in particular, is avoided to be accepted as a social norm. Although the discourse of the opponents of GE did not make explicit reference to human rights, their argumentation also echoed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration, which was created in 1948, vindicates the right to found a family to men and women.[31] Also, the Declaration considers the family to be the "natural and fundamental group unit of society" (UDHR, Article 16), which is analogous to the position of the opponents of GE.

5   Conclusion

5.1   The use of discursive constructions of (de)legitimation

The discourse analysis of the comments discussing the issue of GE for children in Hungary revealed that both supporters and opponents of the issue applied a wide variety of diverse discursive constructions of (de)legitimation. The Van Leeuwenian categories of tradition, personal authority, evaluation, naturalisation, abstraction, effect orientation, scientific rationalisation, definition, and explanation all appeared on both sides of the argument.

However, goal orientation was only present in the discourse of the opponents. Supporters did not verbalise explicitly their goals of promoting GE for children. That is, by engaging in covert communication, the opponents refrained from disclosing their objective to promote GE for children.

Another Van Leeuwenian category that appeared only in the discourse of the opponents was mythopoesis. Opponents warned against the perceived dangers of GE for children (cautionary tales), while supporters expressed only the positively perceived aspects of GE without resorting to mythoposesis (moral tales). That is, proponents did not undertake a balanced consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of GE for children.

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[30] Fitness is the ability of an organism to produce a large number of offspring that survive to reproductive age (cf. Owen/Daintith 2004: 85).

[31] „Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family." (UDHR, Article 16)

5.2 Norms, social standards and presumptions that the supporters of GE for children valued

The discursive constructions of legitimation revealed that the supporters of GE for children apply a system of values that comprises the following norms, social standards and presumptions.

A) Those who are perceived as victims should be protected. In the context of GE for children, homosexual people were perceived as victims of fate, which induced feelings of empathy in the supporters. This in turn encouraged them to protect people who engage in homosexual behaviour.

B) Those who behave non-conventionally should be tolerated with non-judgemental acceptance. The value of tolerance was highly valued. Tolerance was applied in a unidirectional manner, devoid of a universal scope; that is, conventional, heterosexual individuals were not encouraged to be subject to tolerance.

C) Being a nonconventional individual (that is, being peculiar and irregular, breaching traditions and conventions, and breaking taboos) was considered creative and trendy.

D) The inclusion of bits and pieces from the traditions of other societies was an approved alternative to the practice of one's own local, long-established traditions.

5.3 Norms, social standards and presumptions that the opponents of GE for children valued

The discursive constructions of delegitimation used by the opponents of GE for children unveiled the following system of values, norms, social standards and presumptions.

A) Harmony with nature was approved of. One should learn to bring one's gender identity and social roles in congruity with one's biologically given characteristics.

B) Natural processes should not be disturbed. Regarding the process of child development, children should not be exposed to sexual attribution, and children's social environment should be free from sexualisation.

C) Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children. Parents should have autonomy regarding the choice of values they pass on to their children, and the models by which they raise their children.

D) Life choices should be made with responsibility. Children are not mature enough to make decisions that have a profound influence on their adulthood. For this reason, children should be raised in a social environment in which they live free from making life choices.

E) Sexuality is a private matter. The discussion of one's sexual orientation should take place in the private sphere, not in the public domain.

F) One's society survives if there are new generations. Social norms should not run counter to this law of nature.

5.4 Common values in the discussion of the issue of GE for children

Despite the fact that the views of the supporters of GE for children contrast starkly with those of the opponents, and the values, social norms and presuppositions which they hold in high esteem differ greatly, some common ground can be found on which values show some areas of overlap.

A) Both the supporters and the opponents of GE for children see biology as being of primary importance. Both groups argued about the issue of GE for children by relying on a biologically-based binary framework in which people are either male or female. Neither the supporters nor the opponents considered non-binary sexualities in their discourse. Likewise, no commenters made reference to a fluid range of gender identities detached from biological bases.

B) Supporters and opponents of GE alike placed their trust in natural sciences, more specifically in biology and in genetics. Although commenters were informed to different degrees about the state-of-the art in these natural sciences, both groups referred to genetics in their discourse in order to increase the legitimising force of their arguments. The authority of biological knowledge was not questioned among the commenters.

C) Neither the supporters nor the opponents of GE adopted the social constructionist perspective on gender. According to the social constructionist view, gender is an arbitrary creation of society, that is, a social construct. The constructionist approach holds that the differences between males and females are socially constructed. However, the commenters acknowledged the innate biological and psychological differences between men and women and they did not repudiate the contributions of biological factors in one's gender identity. None of the comments argued that gender identity was the product of socialization independent of one's biological characteristics.

D) Culture was held in high esteem by the supporters and the opponents alike. While supporters aimed at changing social norms by cultural means (e. g. replacing traditional characters in traditional fairy tales with gender diverse characters), the opponents sought to maintain traditional social norms (through keeping traditional tales unchanged).

E) When discussing GE for children, Hungarian people used various synonyms of the word homosexual. However, the public discourse did not make reference to lesbians, bisexuals, trans gender, fluid, trans sex, intersex, queer or asexual people. The most probable reason for not introducing these sexual and gender minority groups into the discussion is their invisibility or non-existence in Hungarian public life, where at the time of data collection it was untypical for respected public figures to be sexually-based characters in a non-traditional manner.

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