

Supporting pair forms while criticising the asterisk – A questionnaire to measure potential differences in attitudes towards binary and nonbinary gender-fair language in German

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Content

- Why did we want to develop this questionnaire in the first place?
- How does it look like?
- First insights from a sample of 216 participants

Content

- Why did we want to develop this questionnaire in the first place?
- How does it look like?
- First insights
- A call for collaboration

German as a grammatical gender language



Lehrer [teacher, masc. sing.]



Lehrerin [teacher, fem. sing.]

Masculine „generics“ ...

Masculine forms of role nouns have been used as generics.

*„Generic“ masculine
Lehrer [teacher, masc. plural]*



... and their critics:

Several experimental studies have shown that the use of masculine forms leads to an underrepresentation of women, while gender-fair forms increase their visibility.

Pair forms

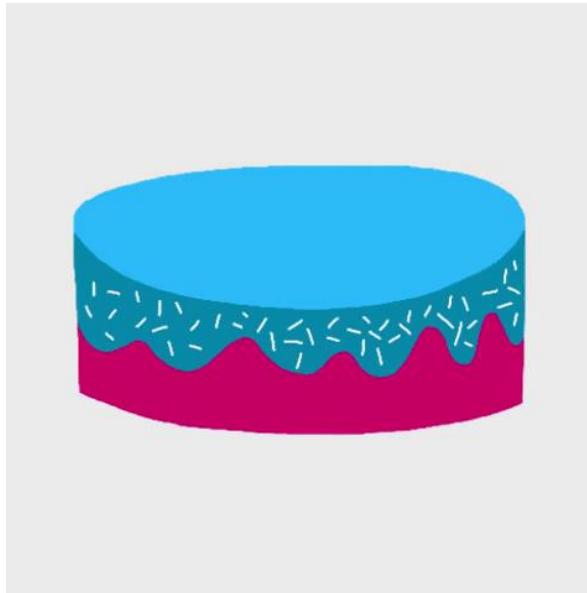
Lehrerinnen und Lehrer
[teachers [fem. pl.] and
teachers [masc. pl.]



Neutral forms

Lehrkräfte [teacher]

Beyond the binary...



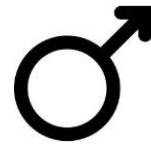
<https://giphy.com/gifs/nb-non-binary-non-binaire-cdBhSkomDbOnmrapC>

Nonbinary gender-fair forms

*Lehrer*in*

masculine form

feminine suffix -in



Lehrer [teacher, masc.]



Lehrerin [teacher, fem.]

Hornscheid 2008, Krome
et al. 2020

An emotionally charged debate

Opponents of GFL*

Geschäftsführer VDS über Gendern

„Genderwirrwarr beenden“

taz, December 6th, 2017



Masculine forms

Proponents of GFL

Gender-fair
alternatives

The variety of gender-fair forms

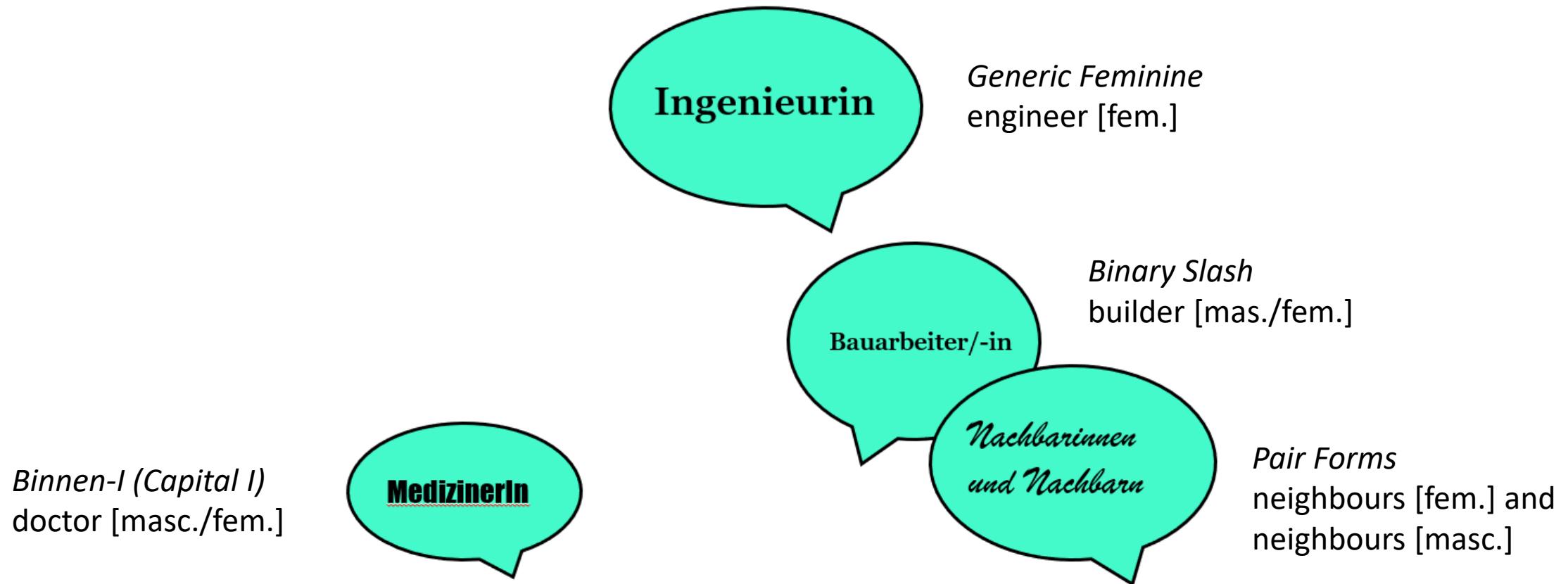
Balletttänzer

Masculine forms

A cluster of pink speech bubbles containing gender-fair alternatives to traditional masculine forms. The bubbles include: Profx, Ingenieurin, Stu_dentin, Lehrkraft, Sprecher*innen, Bauarbeiter/-in, Sportler:in, Nachbarinnen und Nachbarn, Vortragende, and MedizinerIn.

Gender-fair alternatives

Binary gender-fair forms



Nonbinary gender-fair forms

X-Form

professor [stem + x]

Profx

Genderstern (Gender asterisk)

referent [masc. * fem.]

Sprecher*innen

(Dynamischer) Genderunterstrich

(Dynamic gender underscore)

student [masc._fem. or dynamic]

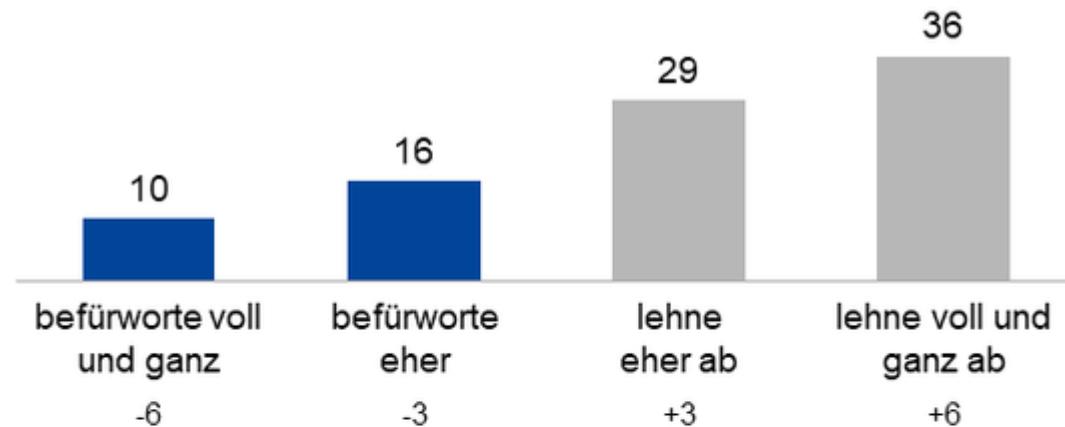
Stu_dentin

Sportler:in

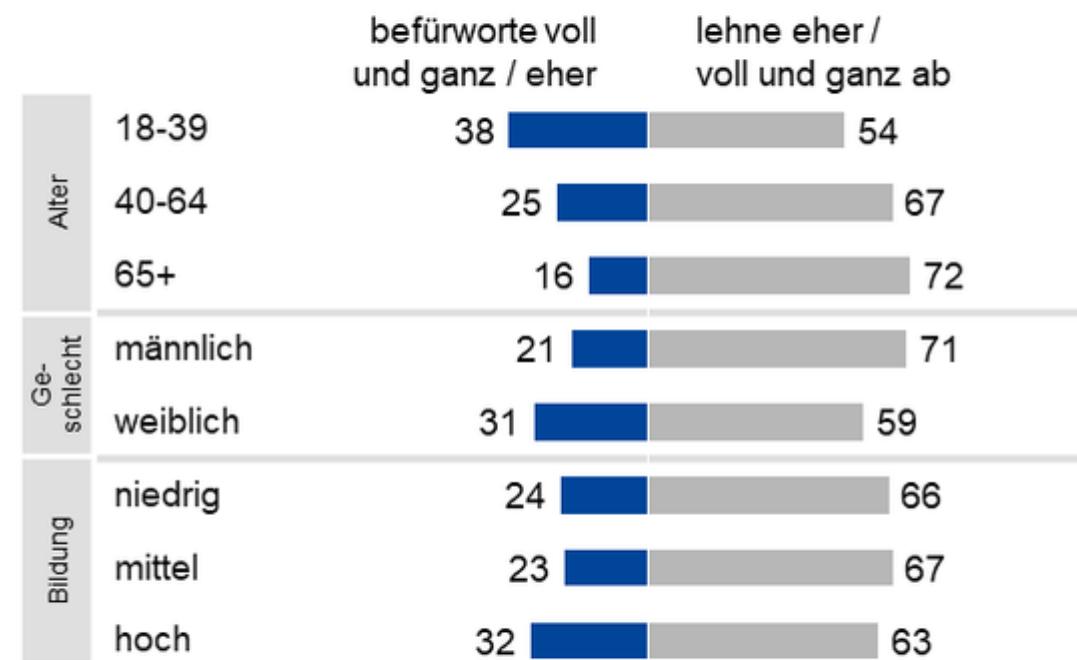
Genderdoppelpunkt

(Gender colon)

sport [masc. : fem.]



Bevölkerungsgruppen



Nun eine Frage zu einer geschlechterneutralen Sprache, also der sogenannten Gendersprache. Dafür wird beispielsweise beim sogenannten 'Binnen-I' nicht von Wählern und Wählerinnen, sondern in einem Wort von 'WählerInnen' gesprochen, d.h. mit kurzer Pause vor dem 'i'. Außerdem werden beispielsweise aus den Zuhörern die Zuhörenden. Wie stehen Sie zur Nutzung einer solchen Gendersprache in Presse, Radio und Fernsehen sowie bei öffentlichen Anlässen? Befürworten Sie dies voll und ganz, eher, lehnen Sie dies eher ab oder voll und ganz ab?

Supporting pair forms while rejecting the asterisk ...

Several prestigious feminist linguists who fought for the use of binary gender-fair forms speak up against the use of nonbinary forms like asterisk!

(e. g., Zifonun 2018, Kotthoff 2020)

... who are THE proponents?



Opponents of GFL

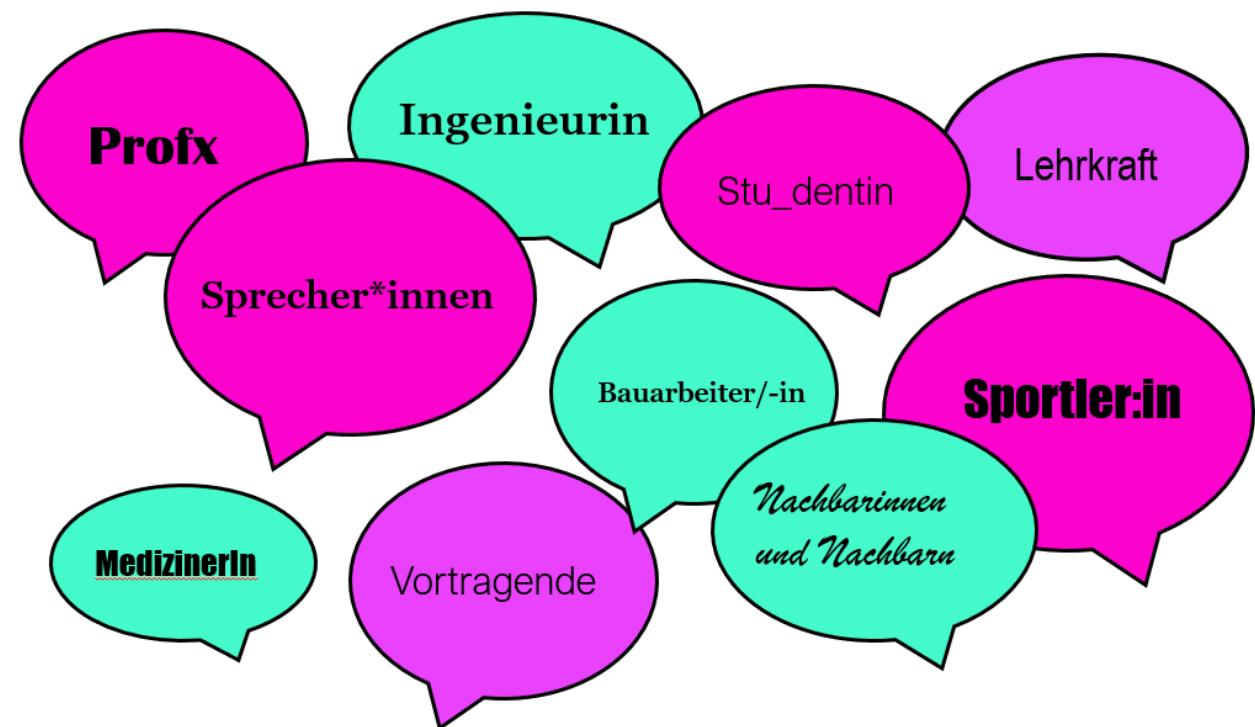
Geschäftsführer VDS über Gendern

„Genderwirrwarr beenden“

taz, December 6th, 2017



THE Proponents of GFL



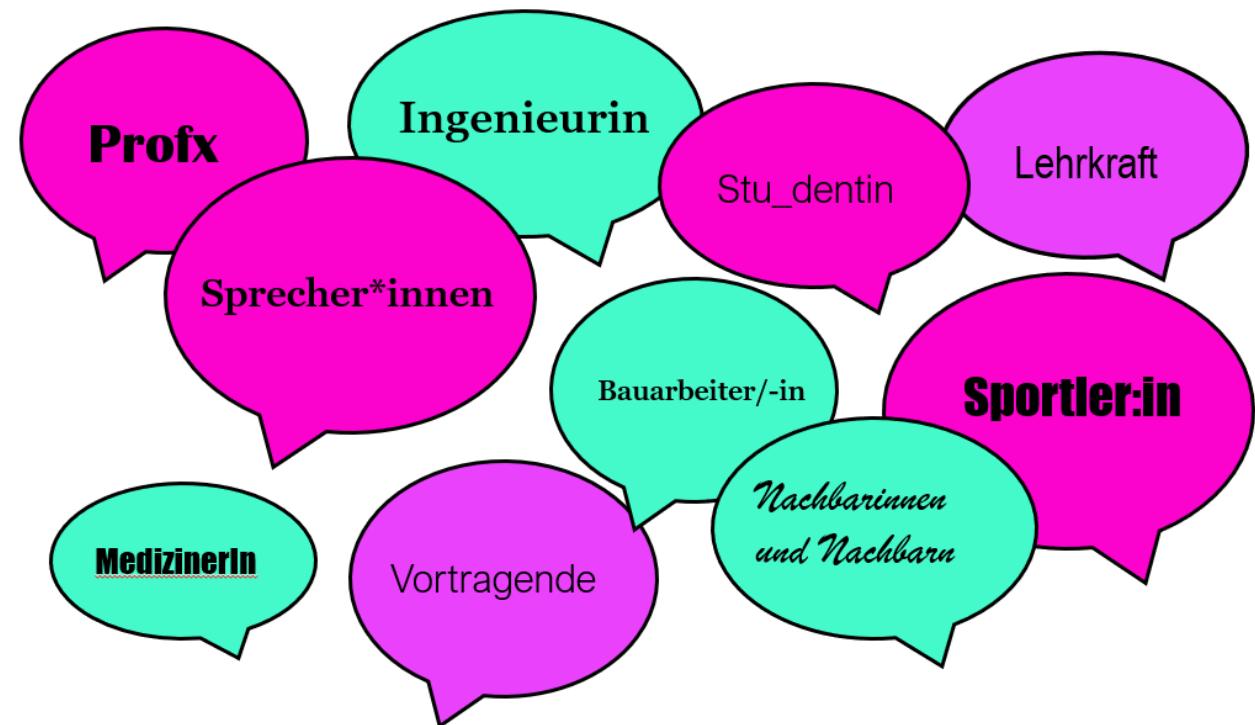
... who are THE opponents?



THE Opponents of GFL



THE Proponents of GFL



Why is this interesting?

- Some psycholinguistic studies have shown that participants' attitudes towards (binary) gender-fair language has an effect on:
 - participants' preference of GFs (Steiger and Irmel 2007)
 - the processing of the “generic” masculine in contrast to binary GFs (Steiger-Loerbroks and Stockhausen 2014)

→ Future experimental studies should take potential differences between attitudes towards binary and nonbinary GFL into account!

The Questionnaire's Framework (Parks and Robertson 2000)

- Beliefs
- Recognition
- Willingness

Categories and Subcategories

- Beliefs
 - sexist language
 - binary
 - nonbinary
- Recognition
 - binary
 - nonbinary
- Willingness
 - binary
 - nonbinary
 - neutral forms

The Questionnaire

- 42 Items
 - 18 binary items
 - 16 nonbinary items
 - 4 items on neutral forms
 - 4 items on sexist language and language reforms
- Likert-Scale 0-9

Item Examples: Sexist Language

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated	Source
Beliefs Sexist Language	general	Sexistische Sprache ist eng mit sexistischer Diskriminierung im Alltag verknüpft.	Sexist language is closely related to sexist discrimination in everyday life.	Prentice 1994
Beliefs Sexist Language	general	Sexistische Sprache zu eliminieren, ist ein wichtiges Ziel.	Eliminating sexist language is an important goal.	Parks and Robertson 2000

Item Examples: Beliefs (Language)

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated
Beliefs Language	Binary	Formulierungen wie 'die Studenten und Studentinnen' machen Texte unnötig kompliziert und schlecht lesbar. (reversed item)	Formulations like 'die Studenten (students, plural masc.) und Studentinnen' (plural fem.) render texts unnecessarily complicated and hard to read. (reversed item)
Beliefs Language	Nonbinary	Wenn ich den Begriff 'Lehrer*innen' lese, denke ich auch an Personen mit nichtbinärer Geschlechtsidentität.	When I read the term 'Lehrer*innen' I also think of persons who identify as being nonbinary.

Bitte bewerten Sie die folgenden Aussagen auf einer Skala von 'stimme überhaupt nicht zu' bis 'stimme voll und ganz zu'. [Likert Scale 0-9]

Item Examples: Beliefs (Sexism)

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated	Source
Beliefs (Sexism)	Binary	Die Diskriminierung von Frauen ist in unserer Gesellschaft kein Problem mehr. (reversed item)	Discrimination of women is no longer a problem in our society. (reversed item)	Swim et al. 1995
Beliefs (Sexism)	Nonbinary	Es gibt nur zwei klar bestimmbarer Geschlechter, männlich und weiblich. (reversed item)	There are only two clearly defined genders, male and female. (reversed item)	Molin et al. 2020

Bitte bewerten Sie die folgenden Aussagen auf einer Skala von 'stimme überhaupt nicht zu' bis 'stimme voll und ganz zu'. [Likert Scale 0-9]

Item Examples: Recognition Sexism

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated	Source
Recognition of sexist language	Binary	Der Wähler hat sich entschieden: Die CDU ist erneut die stärkste Partei.	The voter (sing. masc.) has decided: The CDU is, again, the strongest party.	Braun 1996, Stahlberg & Sczesny 2001
Recognition of sexist language	Nonbinary	Lieber Student, liebe Studentin, willkommen an unserer Universität!	Dear student (sing. masc.), dear student (sing. fem.), welcome to our university!	

Empfinden Sie die fettgedruckten Formulierungen als sexistisch gegenüber Frauen?
Bitte bewerten Sie die folgenden Aussagen auf einer Skala von 'überhaupt nicht sexistisch' bis 'sehr sexistisch'. [Likert Scale 0-9]

Item Examples: Recognition of Gender-Fair Forms

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated
Recognition of gender-fair forms	Binary	Beidnennungen wie 'Liebe Lehrerinnen und Lehrer'	Binary pair forms
Recognition of gender-fair forms	Nonbinary	Formulierungen mit Sonderzeichen wie 'der*die Lehrer*in'	Nonbinary asterisk
Recognition of neutral gender-fair forms	Neutral	Neutrale Formulierungen wie 'die Lehrenden'	Neutralizations

Im Folgenden werden Ihnen verschiedene Sprachformen präsentiert. Bitte geben Sie an, wie bekannt Ihnen die jeweilige Sprachform ist. Bitte bewerten Sie diese hierzu auf einer Skala von 'völlig unbekannt' bis 'häufig gehört oder gelesen'.

Item Examples: Willingness to Use Gender-Fair Forms in Speaking

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated
Willingness (Speaking)	Binary	Beidnennungen wie 'Liebe Lehrerinnen und Lehrer'	Binary pair forms
Willingness (Speaking)	Nonbinary	Formulierungen mit Sonderzeichen wie 'der*die Lehrer*in'	Nonbinary asterisk
Willingness (Speaking)	Neutral	Neutrale Formulierungen wie 'die Lehrenden'	Neutralizations

Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden auf einer Skala von 'fast nie' bis
'fast immer' an, wie häufig Sie die unten genannten
Formulierungen verwenden, wenn Sie im Alltag **sprechen**.

Item Examples: Willingness to Use Gender-Fair Forms in Writing

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated
Willingness (Writing)	Binary	Beidnennungen wie 'Liebe Lehrerinnen und Lehrer'	Binary pair forms
	Nonbinary	Formulierungen mit Sonderzeichen wie 'der*die Lehrer*in'	Nonbinary asterisk
Willingness (Writing)	Neutral	Neutrale Formulierungen wie 'die Lehrenden'	Neutralizations

Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden auf einer Skala von 'fast nie' bis
'fast immer' an, wie häufig Sie die unten genannten
Formulierungen verwenden, wenn Sie im Alltag **schreiben**.

Item Examples: Attitude towards the Use of Gender-fair forms in Media

Category	Sub-Category	Example Item, Original	Example Item, Translated
Willingness (Writing)	Binary	Beidnennungen wie 'Liebe Lehrerinnen und Lehrer'	Binary pair forms
	Nonbinary	Formulierungen mit Sonderzeichen wie 'der*die Lehrer*in'	Nonbinary asterisk
Willingness (Writing)	Neutral	Neutrale Formulierungen wie 'die Lehrenden'	Neutralizations

Wie stehen Sie zur Nutzung der aufgelisteten Formen gendergerechter Sprache in Presse, Radio, Fernsehen und bei öffentlichen Anlässen? Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden Ihre Einstellung zur Verwendung der jeweiligen Sprachform auf einer Skala von 'lehne voll und ganz ab' bis 'befürworte voll und ganz' an.

Participants

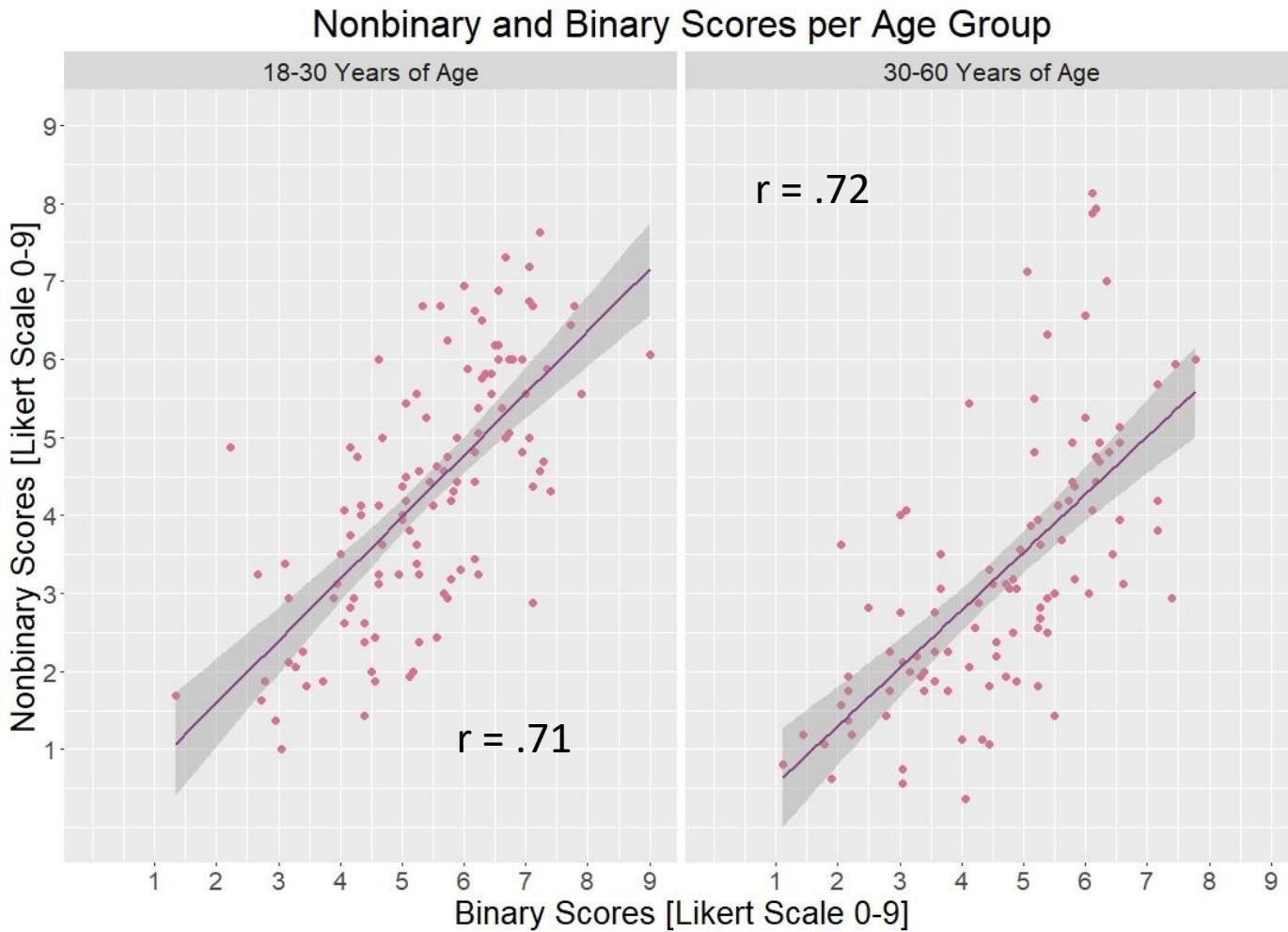
Students between 18 and 30 years of age (N = 115)

- Humanities (N = 32), male: 11, female: 21
- Natural Sciences (N = 23), male: 13, female: 9, nonbinary: 1
- Psychology and Cognitive Science (N = 60), male: 19, female: 49

Professionals between 30 and 60 years of age (N = 101)

- Academics (N = 55), male: 30, female: 24, nonbinary: 1
- Non-Academics (N = 46), male: 22, female: 24

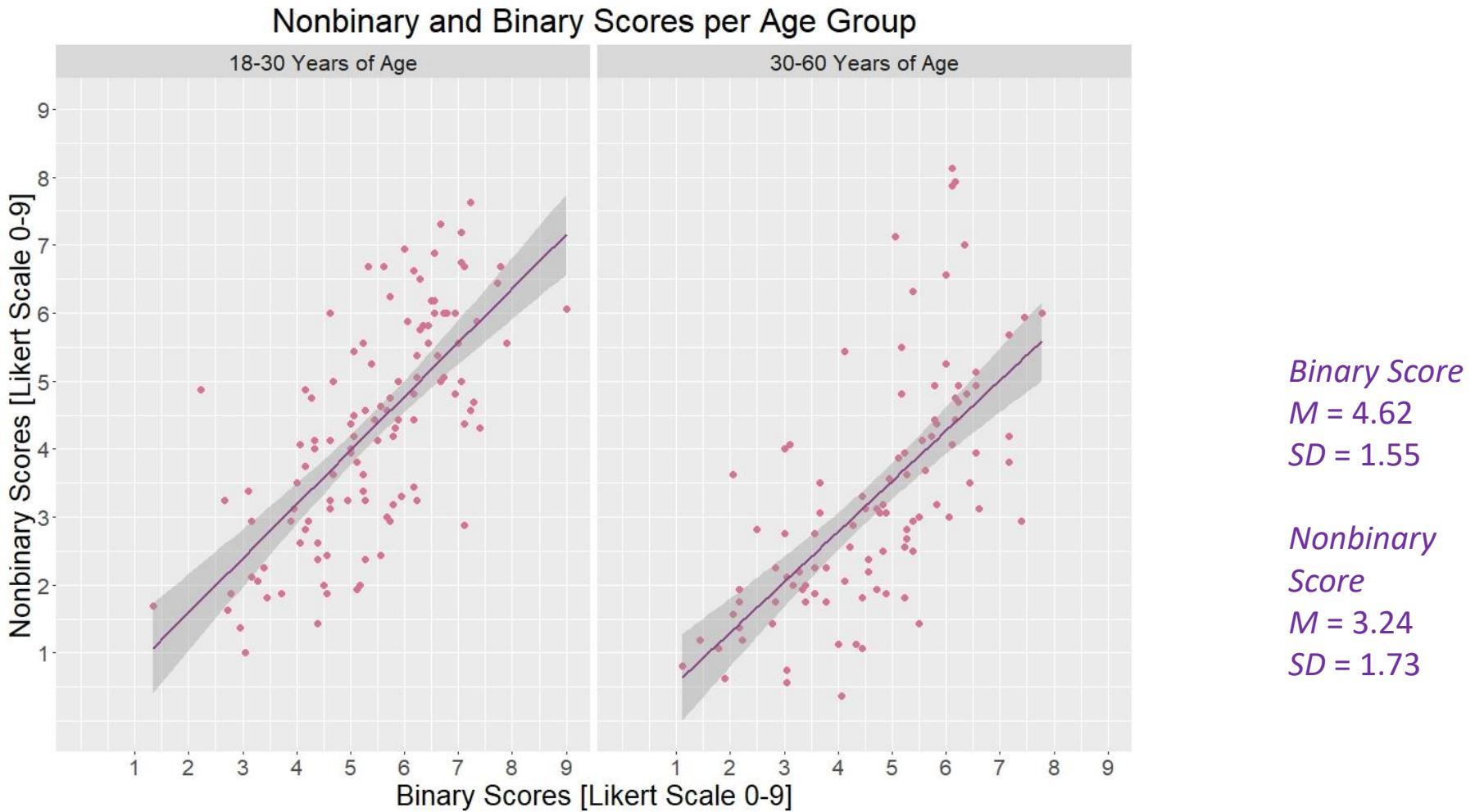
Interindividual Differences: Age



Interindividual Differences: Age

Binary Score
 $M = 5.40$
 $SD = 1.39$

Nonbinary
Score
 $M = 4.30$
 $SD = 1.59$



Nonbinary scores are marginally significantly lower than binary scores.

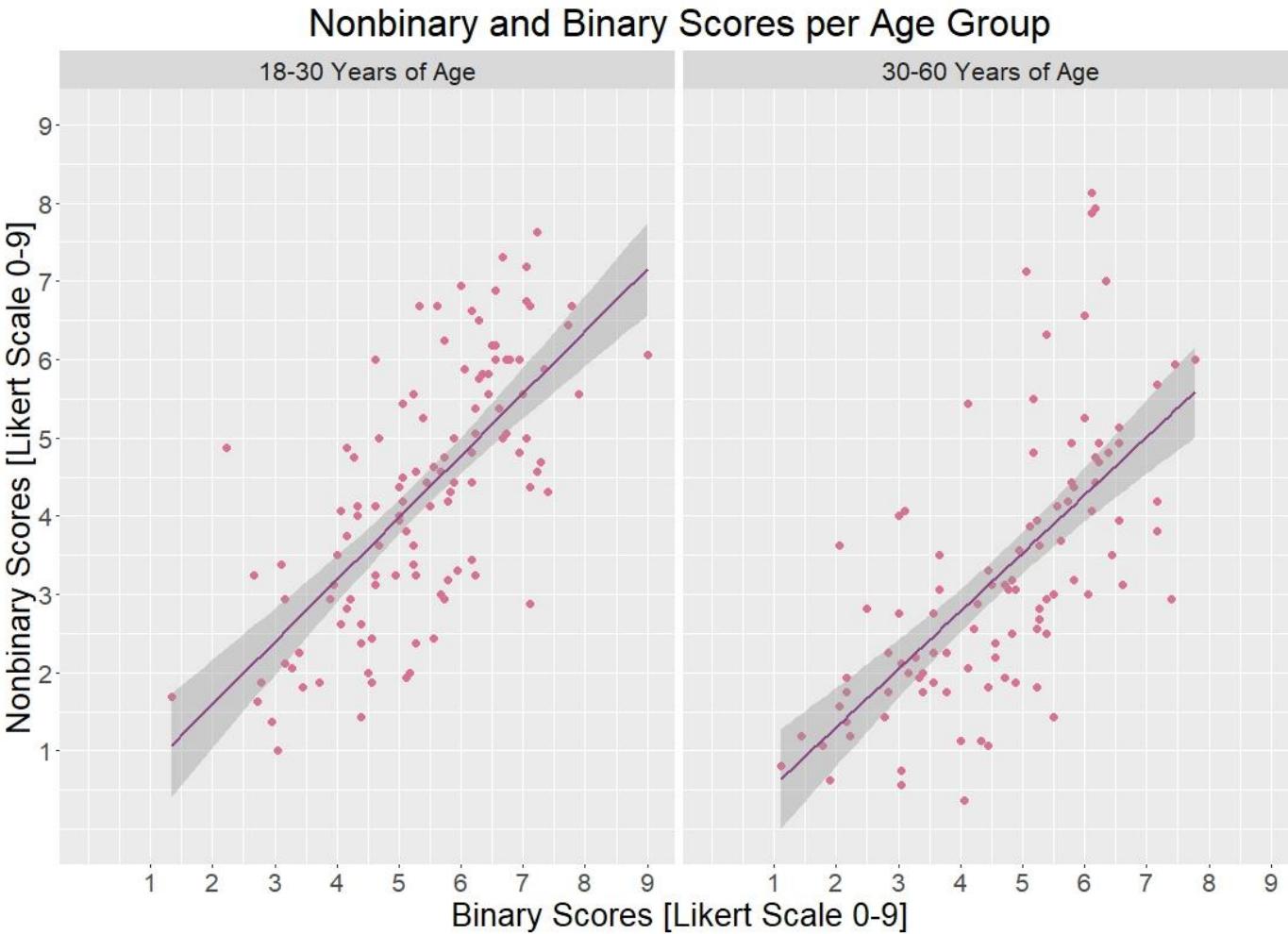
Interindividual Differences: Age

Binary Score
 $M = 5.40$
 $SD = 1.39$

Nonbinary
Score
 $M = 4.30$
 $SD = 1.59$

Binary Score
 $M = 4.62$
 $SD = 1.55$

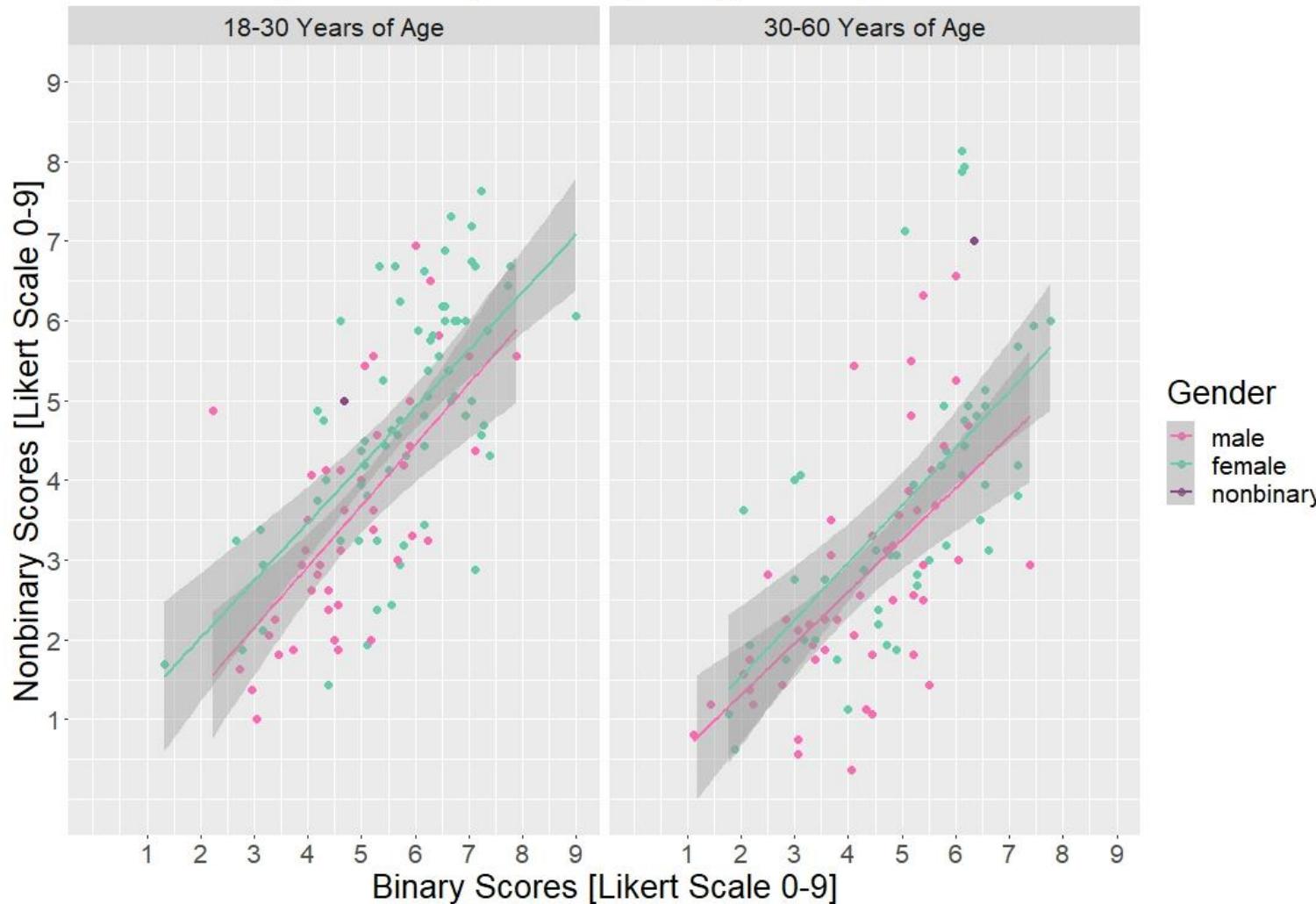
Nonbinary
Score
 $M = 3.24$
 $SD = 1.73$



Younger people show highly significantly higher scores than older people.
Younger people show significantly higher nonbinary scores than older people.

Interindividual Differences: Age and Gender Identity

Nonbinary and Binary Scores per Age Group and Gender



Participants identifying as female show highly significantly higher scores than participants identifying as masculine.

Females:

$M = 5.19$

$SD = 3.45$

Males:

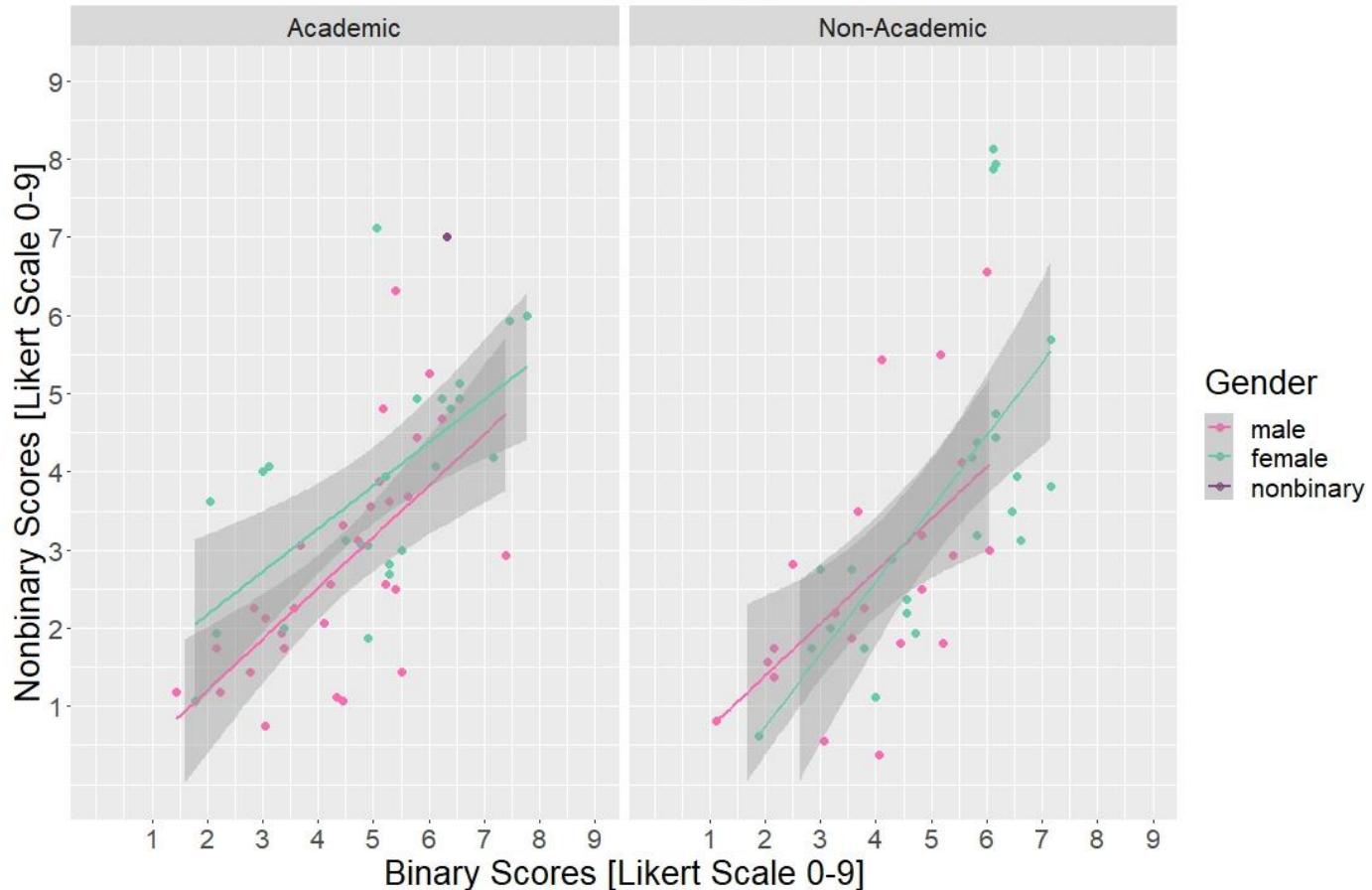
$M = 4.07$

$SD = 3.34$

30-60 Years of Age

Interindividual Differences: Educational Background and Gender Identity

Nonbinary and Binary Scores per Educational Background and Gender
30-60 Years of Age

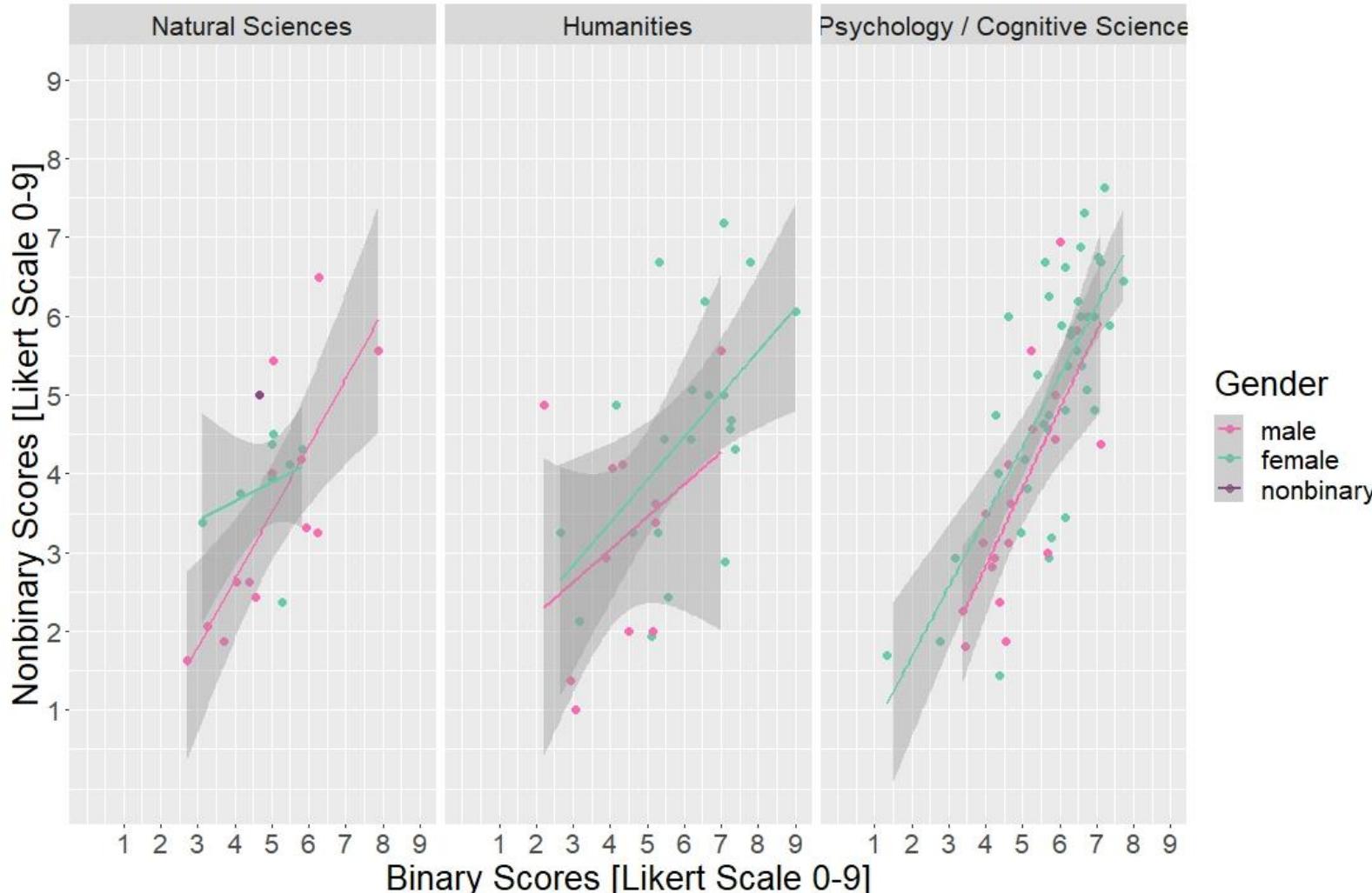


No significant differences between participants with or without academic background.

18-30 Years of Age

Interindividual Differences: University Subject and Gender Identity

Nonbinary and Binary Scores per University Subject and Gender
18-30 Years of Age

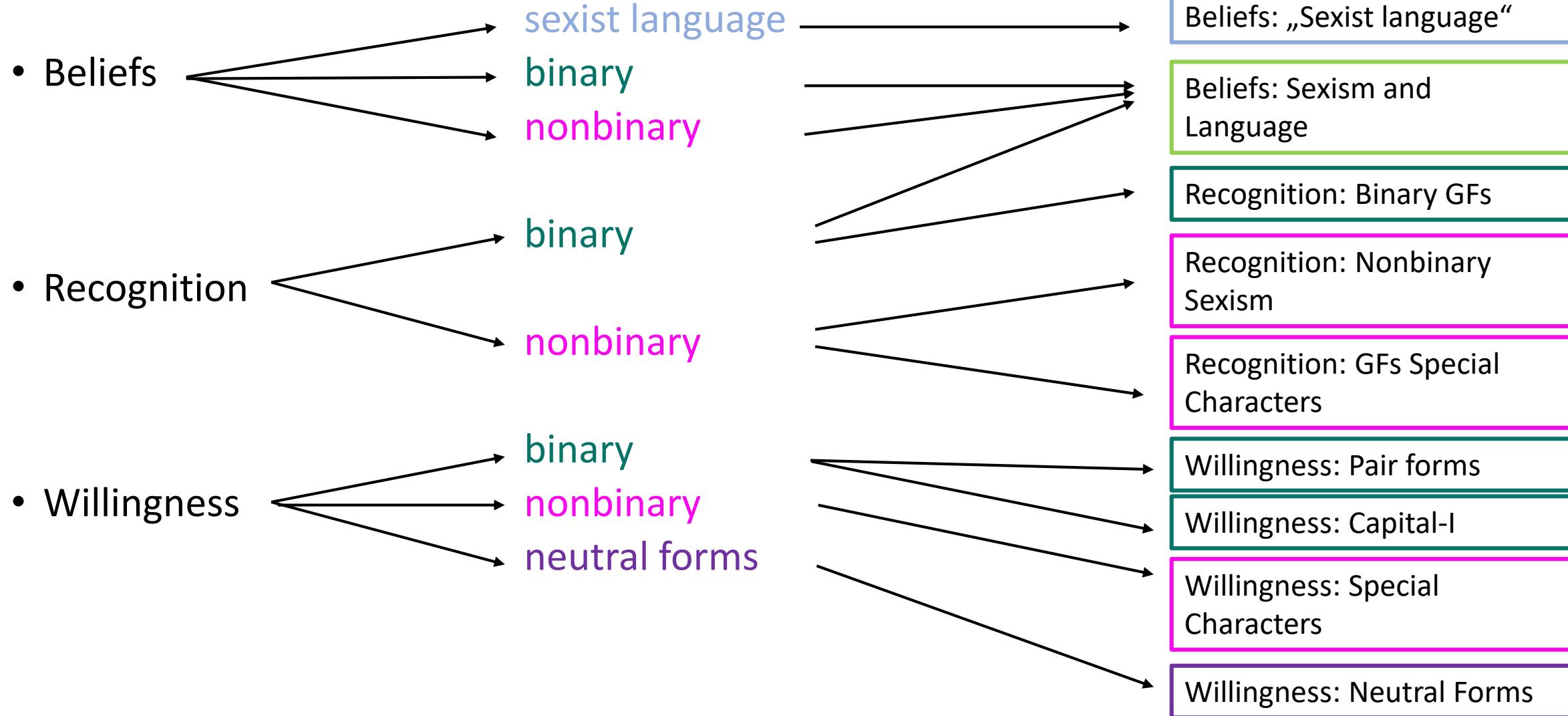


Nonbinary scores are lower than binary scores.

Students of natural sciences overall show lower scores than students of humanities.

Students of psychology and cognitive science show higher nonbinary scores.

Factor Analysis: 9 Factors



Correlations between Factors

More positive beliefs about GFL are positively correlated with

- Beliefs about sexist language



Correlations between Factors

More positive beliefs about GFL are positively correlated with

- Beliefs about sexist language
 - The recognition of nonbinary sexism



Correlations between Factors

More positive beliefs about GFL are positively correlated with

- Beliefs about sexist language
 - The recognition of nonbinary sexism
 - The willingness to use nonbinary gender-fair forms with special character



Correlations between Factors

More positive beliefs about GFL are positively correlated with

- Beliefs about sexist language
 - The recognition of nonbinary sexism
 - The willingness to use nonbinary gender-fair forms with special character
 - ... and the non-orthographic Capital-I



Correlations between Factors

More positive beliefs about GFL are positively correlated with

- Beliefs about sexist language
 - The recognition of nonbinary sexism
 - The willingness to use nonbinary gender-fair forms with special character
 - ... and the non-orthographic Capital-I

There is also a positive correlation between the willingness to use forms like the asterisk and to use the Binnen-I.



Correlations between Factors

Familiarity with nonbinary gender-fair forms with special characters is positively correlated with

- The willingness to use characters with special characters



Correlations between Factors



Recognition of sexist language	Nonbinary	Lieber Student, liebe Studentin, willkommen an unserer Universität!	Dear student (sing. masc.), dear student (sing. fem.), welcome to our university!
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Summary 1

A person's attitudes towards binary and nonbinary gender-fair languages may vary.

Interindividual differences modulating these differences are

- Age
- Gender identity
- University Subject (for students)

Summary 2

The willingness to use special character forms (e. g. the asterisk) and the willingness to use the Binnen-I are positively correlated.

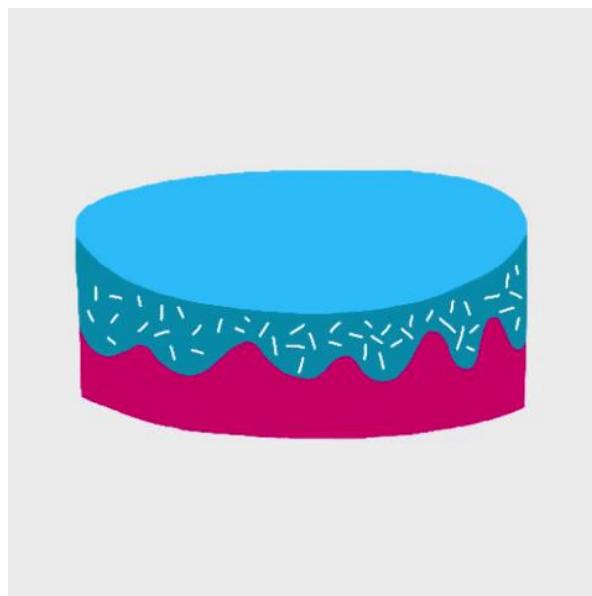
Familiarity with nonbinary gender-fair forms is positively correlated with the willingness to use those.

Recognition of nonbinary sexism is positively correlated with the willingness to use nonbinary forms with special characters.

Recognition of nonbinary sexism is negatively correlated with the willingness to use pair forms.

Conclusion

Awareness of the need of a language which allows to address persons of all gender identities is crucial.



<https://giphy.com/gifs/nb-non-binary-non-binaire-cdBMhSkomDbOnmrapC>

Outlook: A Crosslinguistic Questionnaire?

Interested in developing a crosslinguistic version?

Please reach out ☺

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Thank you!



Evelyn Ferstl
Helga Kotthoff
Damaris Nübling

Hannah Bröder
Paul Meuleneers
Lisa Zacharski

Thank you!



Evelyn Ferstl
Helga Kotthoff
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Lisa Zacharski

Sarah Kapp and Tim Sudermann

Thank you!



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Sarah Kapp and Tim Sudermann

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