

## Consistent Egalitarianism or Heterogeneous Belief Patterns? Gender Ideologies of the Younger Generations in Contemporary Germany

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Federal Institute for  
Population Research

**BiB Working Paper 3/2023**

## Consistent Egalitarianism or Heterogeneous Belief Patterns? Gender Ideologies of the Younger Generations in Contemporary Germany

Leonie Kleinschrot



# Consistent Egalitarianism or Heterogeneous Belief Patterns? Gender Ideologies of the Younger Generations in Contemporary Germany

Leonie Kleinschrot<sup>a</sup>

## Abstract

This paper examines the prevalence of gender ideology classes among younger generations in contemporary Germany and analyses whether chances of class membership differ by gender or region. Studies based on a multidimensional understanding of gender ideology for Germany are rare and rely on ten-year-old data. This study draws on data from 18,530 women and men aged 18-49, collected in 2021 as part of the representative Family-Demography Panel Study FReDA, and applies latent class analysis to eight gender role attitude items. Subsequent regression modelling allows the identification of important predictors of gender ideology class membership.

The largest identified class are the *egalitarians*, which forms the one end of the gender ideology spectrum, while the smallest class, the *traditionals*, forms the other. In addition, there are two heterogeneous classes, the *egalitarian essentialists* and the *intensive parenting endorsers*. Both men and West German residents have significantly higher chances of belonging to a class other than the egalitarians.

The findings show that egalitarians are widespread and traditionals are rare among the younger generations in Germany, but above all that a considerable proportion of respondents have heterogeneous belief patterns. This is in line with international research showing that attitudinal change is not necessarily stalled, but rather that there has been a diversification of gender ideologies.

**Keywords:** latent class analysis; gender role attitudes; gender revolution;

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## 1 Introduction

International research notes a “stalled gender revolution” in the area of gender roles since the late twentieth century in the USA and large parts of Europe, including Germany (Esping-Andersen 2009; England 2010; Goldscheider et al. 2015; Brinton & Lee 2016; Sullivan et al. 2018). This is not in line with the predictions of modernisation theory, which assumes continuous progress in gender equality (Inglehart & Welzel 2005). In the case of gender role behaviours, the stalled gender revolution refers to the much greater gender equality in education or labour force participation, while this development has not continued in the area of unpaid care work, which is still predominantly performed by women (Samtleben 2019; Schulz 2021; Vargha et al. 2023). Similar to behaviours, attitudes towards gender roles internationally have long been subject to a steady liberalisation, but one which has been levelled off since the 1990s (Cotter et al. 2011). Recent findings from attitudinal research on these developments show that, alongside the increase in egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles, there has been a greater diversification of belief patterns and that consistently traditional beliefs have been replaced by heterogeneous ones, combining an endorsement of gender equality in the public domain, for example in terms of paid work, with varying degrees of support for gender equality in the family (Cotter et al. 2011; Knight & Brinton 2017; Grunow et al. 2018; Pepin & Cotter 2018; Scarborough et al. 2019).

These insights were only able to be gained through an adapted, person-centred way of examining gender ideologies, in which the identification of latent gender ideology classes – in contrast to the use of summative attitude indices – makes it possible to consider various attitude dimensions (Chatillon et al. 2018). However, gender ideology studies applying this multidimensional concept and person-centred approach while focusing to the German case are still scarce and they seldom differentiate between East and West Germany, which is essential, however, due to the differences in gender role behaviours and attitudes that still exist between the regions (exceptions are Barth & Trübner 2018; Sievers & Warner 2022). Another weakness is that the few existing studies for Germany are based on data collected more than ten years ago (Barth & Trübner 2018; Sievers & Warner 2022; Diabaté et al. 2023). They therefore fail to provide current insights into the multidimensionality of gender ideologies.

However, recent findings on gender ideologies are not only instructive against the background of the political measures introduced in Germany since 2007 to strengthen gender equality (Bujard 2013). The time of data collection is also of great importance because of the significant changes in family life that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first Covid-19 wave, German educational and childcare facilities were shut down, and at the same time,

employees were asked to work from home where possible, which led to an increase in paternal, but also maternal childcare time (Boll et al. 2021; Kreyenfeld & Zinn 2021). So far, however, it is unclear what the current, i.e. post-Covid-19 pandemic, status of multidimensional gender ideologies is.

This study addresses these research gaps by providing an insight into gender ideology prevalence in contemporary Germany, using the most recent representative data from FReDA – the Family Demography Panel Study (Bujard et al. 2023b) – from the year 2021, as well as by elaborating gender ideology differences between East and West Germany as well as between women and men. This makes it possible to examine whether previous findings for Germany, according to which traditional gender ideologies have been replaced by heterogeneous ones, are still valid today.

Using the person-centred approach of latent class analysis (LCA), the study investigates (1) the prevalence of multidimensional gender ideology classes in Germany, (2) their socio-demographic composition, and (3) whether women or men, and people living in East or West Germany differ in their chances of having certain gender ideologies.

The article is structured as follows. First, I will briefly discuss the German context. Then I will review the theoretical and empirical state of research on gender ideologies (in Germany) and derive expectations for the present study. After that I will give a description of the FReDA data and the method of the three-step approach of LCA. Finally, I shall present and discuss the results and their robustness testing.

## **2 Contextualizing the German Case Study**

When analysing gender ideologies, some important specifics for Germany have to be mentioned. There are still clear differences between East and West Germany, which can be traced back to its division into a socialist East and a capitalist West from 1949 until reunification in 1990. The labour market and childcare policies of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East resulted in very high institutional childcare rates and labour force participation for women and mothers. In contrast, the policies of the former Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) supported the male breadwinner model, with women focusing on the care of the household and children (Rosenfeld et al. 2004; Pfau-Effinger & Smidt 2011). Still today, maternal employment, as well as the availability of institutional childcare, is significantly higher in East Germany than in West Germany and people there still hold more egalitarian gender role attitudes than those in West Germany (Barth et al. 2020; Ebner et al. 2020; Zoch 2021).

In addition, reunified Germany has undergone a paradigm shift in family policy since the early 2000s (Bujard 2013; Gangl & Ziefle 2015), mainly due to the following factors: the introduction of a total of 14 months of paid parental leave, including a quota for fathers in 2007; the expansion of day-care, particularly for under-threes, which has included the right to day-care places from the age of one since 2013; and the plans to introduce paid paternity leave of two weeks directly after birth from 2024 onwards or a legal entitlement to full-time care for primary school children from 2026 onwards (Blum et al. 2022). Various studies on Germany show that policy changes have had an impact not only on gender role behaviour, but also on attitudes. For example, the introduction of a fathers' quota within the parental leave scheme led to more egalitarian attitudes among grandmothers (Unterhofer & Wrohlich 2017), the expansion of public childcare led to more egalitarian attitudes towards maternal employment among highly educated mothers in West Germany (Zoch & Schober 2018), and the extension of parental leave led mothers to judge work as less central to their lives (Gangl & Ziefle 2015).

At the same time, there are still political, as well as labour market-related factors in Germany that encourage a gender-specific division of labour, such as the system of joint income taxation that favours single earner families, the insufficient supply of day-care places, especially for under-threes or school-aged children, or the widespread existence of the ideal worker norm, which expects fathers to work full-time, to work overtime, and to always be available for the job (Rosenfeld et al. 2004; Williams et al. 2013; Gangl & Ziefle 2015). Most parents in Germany live the "male breadwinner/female part-time carer" model (Pfau-Effinger 2018; BMFSFJ 2020), with which West Germans appear to be satisfied (Florea & Engelhardt-Woelfler 2020), but which is often associated with negative long-term consequences for women's wages and derived entitlements, as well as their careers as a whole (OECD 2017). Against the background of a political framework which provides ambivalent orientations with regard to gender roles, the study of gender ideologies on the basis of very recent data for Germany seems particularly interesting.

### **3 Theoretical Perspectives, Previous Research and Expectations**

In the search for explanations for the observed stalled gender revolution, or the levelling off of the egalitarian development in attitudes towards gender roles, there is agreement that a one-dimensional understanding of gender ideologies as a monolithic block is over-simplistic. Studies using a multidimensional conception of gender ideologies suggest that a trend towards egalitarianism can still be observed, as traditional gender ideologies have been consistently replaced by heterogeneous ones in which beliefs on different dimensions are structured independently of each other (Chatillon et al. 2018).

### 3.1 The Multidimensionality of Gender Ideologies

Previous quantitative attitudinal research differs in its approach to the multidimensionality of gender ideologies by applying either deductive or inductive procedures. Drawing on the theoretical considerations behind the survey items, the former rejects the use of summative gender role attitudinal indices as the various survey items address different domains of life, e.g. the employment or the household (Pfau-Effinger & Euler 2014; Pepin & Cotter 2018). Thus, in the deductive approach, the gender role attitude items are analysed separately.

In the inductive procedure, on the other hand, different belief patterns are derived from the survey responses. Gender ideology is thus understood as a latent construct, and the dimensions addressed by the items are considered in their interplay<sup>1</sup> (Brinton & Lee 2016; Knight & Brinton 2017; Grunow et al. 2018; Begall et al. 2023). This is predominantly done by using person-centred, model based LCA (Lazarsfeld & Henry 1968; Masyn 2013).

In order to gain a comprehensive picture of gender ideologies in an open-ended way, this study also follows the methodology of an inductive approach. Thus, gender ideologies are understood as the interplay of individual beliefs about the behaviour and responsibilities of men and women within and outside the family (Scanzoni 1975; Kroska 2000; Davis & Greenstein 2009). The beliefs, therefore, refer to different domains of life (Brinton & Lee 2016), and are measured in surveys by the degree of agreement with various gender role attitude items. The domains of life can be broadly differentiated into public, i.e. the labour market, politics, education, and private, i.e. housework, childcare and care for other family members (Yu & Lee 2013; Pepin & Cotter 2018). Thus also in this study, a consistent traditional gender ideology is understood as supporting male dominance in the public domain (politics, education, labour market), and emphasising the better suitability and responsibility of women for the private domain (household, childcare) (Davis & Greenstein 2009). A consistent egalitarian ideology, on the other hand, means that the public, as well as the private domains, are understood as shared or not gender-specific, i.e. no inherent differences between women and men are assumed, and the individual's choice to adopt a role is emphasised (Davis & Greenstein 2009). Yet, in line with the definition of multidimensional gender ideologies, individuals may also have heterogeneous gender ideologies in which traditional and egalitarian attitudes towards the two domains are mixed.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to make clear by terminology that this study refers to a multi- and not a one-dimensional (summary index) understanding of attitudes towards gender roles, I use the term gender ideologies – as is common in similar studies, e.g. Grunow et al. (2018) or Begall et al. (2023).

### 3.2 Diversification instead of Stagnation

Several international comparative studies are available, which, based on European and US surveys, have identified the gender ideologies prevalent in populations, and traced their spread in some studies over several decades (Yu & Lee 2013; Brinton & Lee 2016; Knight & Brinton 2017; Grunow et al. 2018; Scarborough et al. 2019; Sievers & Warner 2022; Begall et al. 2023). Taken together, these studies have shown that traditional gender ideologies have been consistently replaced by heterogeneous ones, which combine egalitarian beliefs concerning the public domain with less egalitarian attitudes towards the private domain. Thus, these studies, based on the conception of multidimensional gender ideologies, state that there has been less of a stagnation in the egalitarian development of gender ideologies, but rather a diversification of gender ideologies that continues to embrace egalitarian tendencies concerning some domains.

One of the most often identified heterogeneous ideologies can be categorised in the framework of egalitarian essentialism (Charles & Grusky 2004; England 2010; Cotter et al. 2011; Grunow et al. 2018). This represents an ideology that favours equality between women and men but at the same time believes in an inherent superiority of women in care work or in the private domain that also leads to gendered preferences, and thus emphasises women's freedom of choice between family and work. Another frequently observed, heterogeneous gender ideology is described as intensive mothering (Hays 1996) or intensive parenting (Lee et al. 2014). Both patterns emphasise the child-centredness of parents, which is considered necessary for children's healthy development. Intensive mothering advocates that it is primarily the mother who should focus on the children. Childcare is seen as a genuinely female attribute, it is supported that childcare should always be prioritised, even over maternal employment, and that children should be predominantly cared for by their mothers for developmental reasons (Hays 1996; Liss et al. 2013; Dechant & Rinklake 2016; Diabaté & Beringer 2018). Intensive parenting places greater emphasis on the need for both mothers and fathers to be involved in childcare in order to meet the high demands that are essential for the children's optimal development (Wall 2010; Faircloth 2014; Lee et al. 2014; Ruckdeschel 2015). It can therefore be seen as a more gender-neutral extension of intensive mothering.

One of the few gender ideology classes studies<sup>2</sup> that includes the whole of Germany in an international and longitudinal comparison is that of Knight & Brinton (2017) (see also Begall et al. 2023), comparing 17 OECD countries in Europe using the European Values Study and World Values

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<sup>2</sup> A shortcoming of extant research on gender ideologies is that each study introduces its own labels for gender ideology classes which makes it difficult to compare results.



Survey waves 1990 to 2009 (Grunow et al. (2018) focus on West-Germany only). They showed that the traditionalism class, which incorporates traditional beliefs about the role of women in the public as well as private domains, comprised almost 40% of respondents in Germany in 1990, but then only around 15% in 2009, as in most of the countries observed. The most egalitarian ideology, labelled liberal egalitarianism, which supports women's and mothers' paid work while at the same time rejecting women's focus on home and children, increased considerably in most of the countries studied (in Germany from around 40% to almost 60% prevalence) during the observation period. Besides, Knight & Brinton (2017) identified two heterogeneous classes. One of them was called egalitarian familism, which mainly favours female employment, but at the same time supports the high importance of home and family for the female role. In the whole observation period, around 20% of respondents in Germany held this ideology. Members of the second heterogeneous class, flexible egalitarianism, approve both of women and mothers working, or focussing more on traditional family roles. In this sense, they advocate "autonomous choice in enacting gender roles" (Knight & Brinton 2017: 1504). Compared to the other countries, Germany was and still is the country where this flexible egalitarianism class is the second least common, with less than 10% of people surveyed falling into this belief pattern category.

Based on the theoretical considerations and numerous empirical findings on the multidimensionality of gender ideologies, I expect to find heterogeneous gender ideology classes in contemporary Germany alongside a consistent egalitarian ideology, but to not find a consistent traditional gender ideology that advocates gender-specific domains (Hypothesis 1).

### **3.3 Differences in Gender Ideology between Women and Men**

Several studies (Brewster & Padavic 2000; Davis & Greenstein 2009; Knight & Brinton 2017; Grunow et al. 2018) have shown that gender is one of the most important gender ideology predictors. Following Bolzendahl & Myers' (2004) interest based theory, individuals are more egalitarian if equality helps them to achieve their objectives. Since women benefit more than men from greater gender equality, e.g. from an equal division of housework, they are more likely than men to be egalitarian. This has already been confirmed in numerous, (inter)national studies (for an overview see Davis & Greenstein 2009; Chatillon et al. 2018). Therefore, I expect that women in contemporary Germany have a higher chance of belonging to egalitarian gender ideology classes than men (Hypothesis 2).

As a further explanation for gender differences, Bolzendahl & Myers (2004) suggest exposure-based considerations. They suggest that exposure to behaviours, situations or beliefs that are characterised by egalitarianism, e.g. women's participation in the labour force, leads to egalitarian gender ideologies in the long run. Exposure can occur within the processes of

socialisation or education or through individual experiences. During the Covid-19-lockdown, in many cases both parents worked from home, and due to facility closures they additionally had to care for their children at home, which meant that fathers spent more time on childcare than before (Boll et al. 2021). It could therefore be theorised that these experiences fostered egalitarian views, particularly among men, as they were exposed to situations in which they experienced greater egalitarianism in the private domain. Thus, for the post-Covid-19-lockdown time point considered in this study, I expect gender ideology classes characterised by support for a shared responsibility for childcare to be prevalent among men (Hypothesis 3).

### **3.4 Differences in Gender Ideology between East and West Germany**

Although the political system of the GDR was replaced by that of the former FRG in 1990, and the same political framework conditions have applied in both regions since reunification, there are still clear differences between East and West Germany in terms of gender behaviour and ideologies. However, only a few studies that work with the multidimensional gender ideology conception have explicitly taken the two regions into account (Barth & Trübner 2018; Sievers & Warner 2022; Kleinschrot et al. 2023), which is probably due to the restricted number of respondents involved in these studies.

A theoretical explanation for the still observable differences in behaviour and attitudes of people residing in East and West Germany is provided by the concept of gender arrangement by Pfau-Effinger (1998). According to this concept, the consequences of the same or similar family policy instruments typically vary between countries due to their cultural embeddedness. The gender arrangement in a country is the complex interplay between the gender order and gender culture, where gender order refers to the institutions of the welfare state, the labour market, and the family. Gender culture encompasses the norms and cultural values surrounding gender relations and the work-family relationship, which are entrenched in the institutional system, as well as in social actions, and thus permeate all levels of society (see also Grunow & Veltkamp 2016).

The legacy of the politically supported, predominantly lived and culturally backed family models – the “dual breadwinner/state carer model” (Pfau-Effinger & Smidt 2011: 222) in the former GDR and the “male breadwinner/female part-time carer model” (Pfau-Effinger & Smidt 2011: 222) in the former FRG (Kleinschrot 2023) – persist in contemporary populations’ gender ideologies (Barth & Trübner 2018; Ebner et al. 2020; Zoch 2021).

Barth & Trübner (2018) find five gender ideology classes with different prevalence in East and West Germany based on the German General Social Survey data from 2012. The

unconditionally egalitarian class was found most frequently in the East (51%), and second most frequently in the West (23%), and is characterised by a consistent rejection of gender-specific domains. Among the moderately egalitarian class (25% in the West, 38% in the East), there is also support for gender-separate domains, although this is somewhat weaker. The other three classes, all of which are sceptical of maternal employment to varying degrees, showed the clearest East-West differences. One such was the conflicted egalitarian class which supports female employment in principle, and rejects a gender-specific division of labour, except when it comes to the care of young children, which should be provided by the mother. This class was barely present in the East (1%), whereas in the West one-fifth of the respondents were assigned to it. Similarly prevalent in the West (but only 7% in the East) were the child-oriented traditionals who reject female employment primarily because of expected negative consequences for the children. Slightly less common in both regions of the country were the family-oriented traditionals (12% in the West, 4% in the East), who strongly endorse female focus on and responsibility for the household.

Only three gender ideology classes in West Germany were found by Sievers & Warner (2022) in 2012: traditional, egalitarian and intensive mothering. The smallest, the traditional class, endorses gender-specific responsibilities in the public and private domains, although even in this class female employment is accepted. The egalitarian gender ideology was the most widespread, and is characterised by a consistent rejection of gendered domains. The intensive mothering class is heterogeneous because it does not completely endorse gender separated domains, but agree that the family and children suffer from maternal employment. For East Germany, on the other hand, Sievers & Warner (2022) showed that the traditional gender ideology was not to be found here, and the egalitarian class comprised 90% of the sample.

I therefore expect gender ideologies of people living in East or West Germany to differ – despite today’s uniform political framework – in that there is a higher prevalence of egalitarian gender ideology classes in East Germany than in West Germany (Hypothesis 4).

## **4 Data and Method**

### **4.1 Data and Sample**

I relied on data from the German “Family Research and Demographic Analysis (FReDA)” wave 1 panel study from the end of 2021 (Schneider et al. 2021; Bujard et al. 2023b). FReDA is a large-scale bi-annual survey, which asks respondents and their partners in Germany about – among other things – their partnership and family life situations, their family planning, life satisfaction, gender role behaviour and attitudes. The study was conducted via self-administered web- or

paper-based surveys (Gummer et al. 2020). The representative sample of the 18-49-year-old population in Germany was drawn in a random two-stage sampling process (primary sampling units: municipalities; secondary sampling units: individuals). For the analyses at hand, I restricted the sample to respondents holding German citizenship, identifying themselves as women or men, and being aged 18 to 49, which resulted in 18,530 respondents. The analytic sample consisted of 49 % woman and 51 % men. 83 % of the respondents lived in West and 17 % in East Germany.

FReDA Wave 1 is well suited for the objective of this study as – at the time of analysis – it provided the most recent data on eight gender role items for a representative German sample, and had a sufficiently large sample size to check for differences between people residing in East or West Germany. Moreover, Wave 1 in 2021 was the first nationally representative study after the period of strict Covid-19 lockdowns. Additionally, the FReDA questionnaire covered attitudes towards gender roles within families, but also in the public domain.

## **4.2 Methods**

In light of the theoretical and empirical findings on the multidimensionality of gender ideologies, I chose an inductive approach, the LCA, which develops patterns of gender ideology from responses. For the subsequent identification of important predictors (gender, region) of class membership, I estimated multinomial logistic regression models with the use of the three-step approach, as suggested by Vermunt (2010) and Asparouhov & Muthén (2014).

### **4.2.1 Indicators for Latent Class Analysis**

I used the following observed eight indicator variables for the LCA. Due to the different item answer scales and the skewness of responses (many respondents chose the egalitarian answer options), I dichotomised<sup>3</sup>, and where necessary, reversed items so that the value “1” reflects an egalitarian- and the value “0” a traditional attitude (the distribution based on the initial answer scale can be found in Appendix Table A1).

Respondents answered items 1 to 3 on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. For each item, I combined the two agreeing response categories (item 2 was reversed) and the neutral middle category (“Neither agree nor disagree”) to form the traditional group, because no clear egalitarian stance can be identified here, and the majority of respondents chose the two egalitarian response categories. Items 4 to 8 featured the response categories 1/2 = “men definitely/slightly”, 3 = “both sexes equally”, 4/5 = “women slightly/definitely”. In these

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed justification for dichotomizing the indicators see Yamaguchi (2000) or Weller et al. (2020).

items, I contrasted the response categories that describe traditional gender segregation with those that stand for the opposite in the sense of “reverse traditionalism” (Grunow et al. 2018: 44) or equality (“both sexes equally”). These are the eight indicator variables:

1. A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works. (*child suffers*)
2. Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career. (*focus on family*)
3. A working mother can establish just as loving and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. (*relation*)
4. On the whole, who would make better political leaders, men or women? (*politics*)
5. For whom is a university education more important, men or women? (*university*)
6. For whom is having a job more important, men or women? (*job*)
7. For whom is looking after the home and children more important, men or women? (*care work*)
8. Who are better at caring for small children, men or women? (*young children*)

#### **4.2.2 Procedure of Latent Class Analysis**

With the use of LCA, respondents can be grouped into homogeneous unobserved classes based on their response behaviour to the above-mentioned eight indicators (Lazarsfeld & Henry 1968; Yamaguchi 2000; Vermunt & Magidson 2002; Masyn 2013; Nylund-Gibson & Choi 2018; Weller et al. 2020). Thus, the underlying assumption is that response patterns are conditioned by latent class membership. Consequently, respondents in the same class have similar item response probabilities for the indicators, and differentiate themselves from members of other classes. To conduct LCA, I used the three-step approach established in Mplus 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén 1998-2017). To adjust for the sampling design and reduce biases due to nonresponse, I used the scaled and truncated total weight provided in FReDA (Bujard et al. 2023a).

In the three-step approach, the parameters of the underlying probability distribution of the data were estimated first (without the inclusion of covariates) using maximum likelihood estimation, i.e. the unconditional class model (Vermunt 2010; Asparouhov & Muthén 2014). The treatment of missing data in Mplus in this step was based on a full information maximum likelihood estimation (Masyn 2013). To avoid local maxima, and to ensure that the best log likelihood was replicated, I used a sufficient set of random start values. I estimated models with one to seven gender ideology classes using the full sample. The decision regarding which class solution was the most appropriate was based on fit statistics and interpretability (Masyn 2013; Weller et al. 2020). The lower the (adjusted) BIC values, the better the fit of the model. Furthermore, the significant p-value of the Vuong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (VLMR-LR test) indicates that a k-class model fits the data better than the k-1 class model. Additionally, to evaluate the pattern

classification, I report entropy, which provides information on how clearly the classes can be demarcated from each other, and should approach the value 1 (Weller et al. 2020) (see Table 1).

In the second step, the assignment of respondents to each of the identified latent classes was undertaken (Vermunt 2010; Asparouhov & Muthén 2014). The classification was based on the largest posterior class membership probability, which follows from the measured response patterns and the estimated latent class model parameters from the first step. The classification error that occurs here due to the varying individual probabilities used for the class assignment was corrected in the third step. In addition, the item response probabilities were calculated in the second step, i.e. the conditional probability that the respondents in a latent class give an – in this case – egalitarian response to the indicator in question. I based the interpretation of the classes on the item response probabilities.

#### **4.2.3 Subsequent Multinomial Logistic Regression**

In addition to the socio-demographic description of the identified gender ideology classes, in the third step, the estimated class membership was regressed on gender and region. For this multinomial logistic regression, I used the three-step approach implemented in Mplus (Asparouhov & Muthén 2014), which at the same time “fixes” the unconditional class solution, and corrects for classification errors which occur due to the probabilistic class assignment (Vermunt 2010).

The two main predictors were gender, which distinguished between male and female based on respondents’ self-report, and East and West Germany, which referred to respondents’ current place of residence, but did not necessarily have to be identical with the region where they grew up. Since it is known from existing literature that in addition to gender and region, other micro-level characteristics are relevant for gender ideology class membership (Knight & Brinton 2017; Scarborough et al. 2019; Begall et al. 2023), age, marital status, whether the respondent has children, level of education, and employment status were controlled for in the models. Age was measured in years. Relationship status differentiated between respondents who are married, who are partnered but not married (including living apart together, cohabiting, divorced/widowed with a new partnership), and those who are not partnered (also those divorced or widowed). Parenthood distinguished whether the respondent has children (including biological, adopted, step- or foster children) or not. For education, the educational attainment classified according to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED-11) was used and grouped into low (ISCED levels 0 to 2), medium (ISCED levels 3 and 4) and high (ISCED levels 5 to 8) levels of education. Employment status differentiated between not being employed (in education/training, parental leave, homemaker, unemployed, retired, military/civic service, ill, other), working part-

time (self-stated part-time or marginal employment), and working full-time (including self-employed). Respondents with missing data on these predictors were not taken into account, resulting in a sample size of 16 119.

## 5 Results

The 4-class solution, which has an entropy of 0.72, turns out to fit the data best and provides reasonable possibilities for interpretation. The fit statistics can be found in Table 1. The values of BIC and sample size adjusted BIC improved considerably up to the 4-class-solution, and only marginally thereafter. The VLMR-LR test showed the 4-class solution to significantly fit better than the 3-class solution, while the 5-class solution did not fit any better than the previous one.

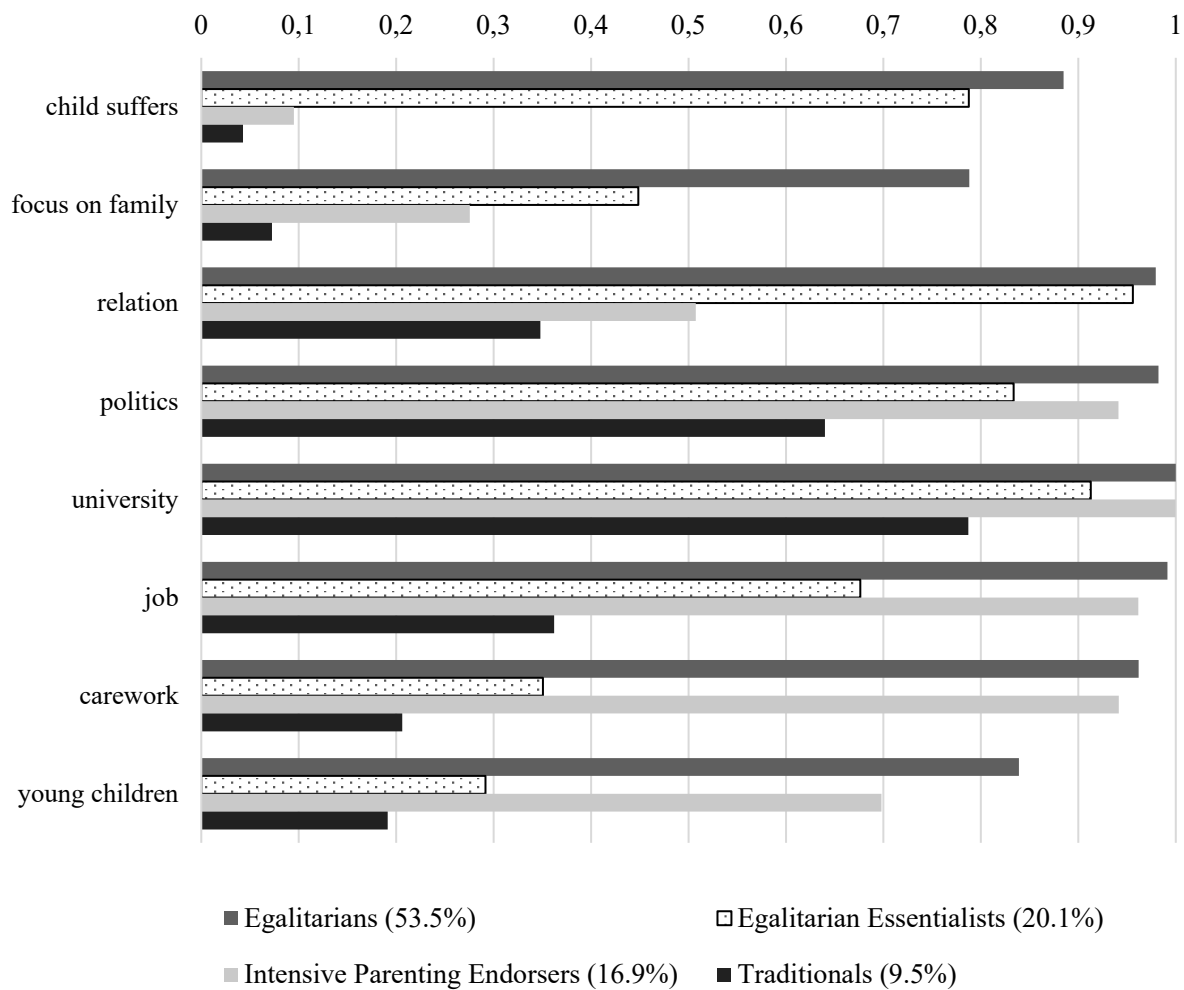
Table 1: Latent Class Model fit statistics

Class solution	BIC	Adjusted BIC	VLMR-Test (p-value)	Entropy
1	142034.90	142009.47	n.a.	n.a.
2	129439.43	129385.41	0.00	0.70
3	126544.00	126461.37	0.00	0.76
4	125012.71	124901.48	0.00	0.72
5	124883.87	124744.04	0.65	0.74
6	124774.04	124605.61	0.21	0.72
7	124743.88	124546.85	0.29	0.75

Note: FReDA W1, weighted data. N=18 530.

The LCA model estimates the gender ideology class sizes, as well as the conditional probabilities for egalitarian responses on each of the eight indicators, which is shown in Figure 1. The class sizes range from 9.5% to 53.5% coverage of the sample, with the homogeneous *egalitarians* class comprising the greatest proportion of the sample and the *traditionalists* class the smallest. The other two classes are relatively similar in size and are heterogeneous as the degree of egalitarianism varied across different items. In labelling the gender ideology classes, I have been guided by class members' response patterns, but for the comparability with other studies I tried to choose labels which have previously been used: (1) *egalitarians* (2) *egalitarian essentialists* (3) *intensive parenting endorsers* (4) *traditionalists*.

Figure 1: Conditional Probability for Giving Egalitarian Responses by Classes



Note: FReDA W1, weighted data. N=18 530.

In the following, I will describe each gender ideology class, and indicate its size and socio-demographic composition (see Table 2). I will also report the results of the multinomial logistic regression, i.e. which micro-level characteristics increase the chance of class membership (results given as odds ratios can be found in Table 3), and report the results of sensitivity analyses.

The largest gender ideology class (covering 53.5% of respondents) is labelled *egalitarians* because it reflects egalitarian attitudes towards all indicators (nearly all indicators over 80% probability for egalitarian responses), i.e. it is one-dimensionally egalitarian, irrespective of whether the indicator addresses the public or private domain. Accordingly, this class does not expect any negative consequences from maternal employment for children, and rejects traditional gender roles in public domains or within families. In this gender ideology class, 45.1% of members have children, 36.3% are married, and 53.6% are employed full-time. Compared to the other classes, the *egalitarians* class has the highest ratio of women (56.5%), of highly educated (35.0%),



of partnered but unmarried respondents (35.3%), and people residing in East Germany are most frequently found in this class (19.8%).

Table 2: Socio-demographic composition of classes (based on most likely latent class membership)

	<b>egalitarians</b>	<b>egalitarian essentialists</b>	<b>intensive parenting endorsers</b>	<b>traditionals</b>
Proportion: Women	56.5	38.1	29.0	46.2
Proportion: East	19.8	15.3	12.2	7.9
Mean: Age	33.4	34.0	34.0	34.6
Proportion: Parents	45.1	43.6	48.2	55.9
Relationship status				
<i>Married</i>	36.3	35.6	38.6	43.6
<i>Partnered but not married</i>	35.3	32.1	24.9	31.2
<i>No partner</i>	28.5	32.3	36.5	25.3
Education				
<i>Low</i>	8.8	14.3	16.7	11.7
<i>Medium</i>	56.1	63.5	61.3	60.5
<i>High</i>	35.0	22.2	22.0	27.8
Employment status				
<i>Not employed</i>	30.0	31.4	32.0	27.9
<i>Part-time</i>	16.3	12.1	11.5	17.0
<i>Full-time</i>	53.6	56.5	56.6	55.1

Note: FReDA W1, weighted data. N=16 119.

The second latent gender ideology class, the *egalitarian essentialists*, covers one-fifth of the sample. These respondents believe in an inherent difference between men and women, which is why they expect the latter to be better suited for care work. They believe that women should focus on family rather than on career, that it is more important for women than for men to look after the home and children, as well as that women are the better carers for young children. At the same time, *egalitarian essentialists* are likely to endorse gender-equal access to politics, university and employment, and do not expect negative consequences for children from maternal

employment. The *egalitarian essentialist* class has a share of 61.9% men, 43.6% parents, 35.6% married respondents, 15.3% people in East Germany, 63.5% of its members have medium level education, and more than half (56.5%) are full-time employed. As the multinomial logistic regression shows, women and people residing in East Germany have a lower chance of being in the *egalitarian essentialists* class than to be in the egalitarians class. Additionally, parents (compared to childless persons) and individuals with medium or low (compared to high) levels of education have a higher chance of belonging to this class than to the class of egalitarians.

The class labelled *intensive parenting endorsers*, contains 16.9% of the sample and is characterised by the belief that mothers should prioritise children over employment. *Intensive parenting endorsers* are likely to expect negative consequences of maternal employment for young children (they are ambivalent concerning the worsening of the mother-child-relationship due to employment), and they strongly support mothers focusing on children and family rather than on their career. At the same time, they also think that it is important for both parents to engage in housework and childcare, and that parents of both genders are equally suited for the care of young children – something that distinguishes them from the egalitarian essentialists. In this, the child-centredness of this class becomes very clear. Additionally, *intensive parenting endorsers* have a high likelihood for egalitarian views concerning the public domain, i.e. access to politics, university and employment. This class consists of 71.0% men, 48.2% of the members are parents, 38.6% are married, and people in East Germany are underrepresented. 61.3% of the *intensive parenting endorsers* have a medium level education, and 56.6% have a full-time job. People in East Germany<sup>4</sup> and women have a lower chance of being a member of the class of *intensive parenting endorsers* than the class of egalitarians, but older respondents and respondents with low or medium education have higher chances.

Additionally, the class of *traditionalists* can be identified, which has low probabilities for egalitarian responses on six of the eight indicators. This is the smallest class, however, comprising just 9.5% of the sample. *Traditionalists* endorse women focusing on family, and believe them to be better suited for care work and childcare. The members of this class also believe that children and the mother-child-relationship will suffer from maternal employment, and consequently, that a job is less important for women than for men. Only in terms of political competence and access to university education, do they believe in male and female equality. Thus, traditionalists strongly endorse the male-breadwinner/ female-carer model. The class of traditionalists comprises 46.2%

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<sup>4</sup> If only the East German sample is used for LCA (see sensitivity analyses), a two-class solution is found to fit best, in which neither the intensive parenting endorsers nor the traditionalists occur.

women, and compared to the other classes it contains the greatest share of parents (55.9%) and married respondents (43.6%). The greatest proportion of this class have a medium level education, and 55.1% of the *traditionals* are employed full-time. The chance of being assigned to this class (instead of to the *egalitarians*) was lower for women, for people living in East Germany, and for those who are partnered but not married. Those with lower levels of education, on the other hand, had a higher chance of being *traditionals*.

Table 3: Results from Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Class Membership derived from 3-Step Procedure in Mplus, odds ratios

<i>Base category: egalitarians</i>	<i>egalitarian essentialists</i>		<i>intensive parenting endorsers</i>		<i>traditionals</i>	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Age	1.005	0.007	1.028***	0.008	1.017	0.009
East-Germany ( <i>ref.: West</i> )	0.689**	0.081	0.471***	0.077	0.252***	0.065
Relationship status ( <i>ref. no partner</i> )						
Married	1.201	0.162	1.012	0.146	0.770	0.123
Partnered but not married	1.087	0.130	0.998	0.119	0.607**	0.087
Parent ( <i>ref.: childless</i> )	1.633***	0.196	0.861	0.123	1.317	0.213
Female ( <i>ref.: male</i> )	0.560***	0.050	0.342***	0.036	0.211***	0.026
Education ( <i>ref.: high</i> )						
Low	1.928**	0.442	4.104***	0.827	4.482***	0.998
Medium	1.717***	0.140	2.439***	0.224	2.110***	0.230
Employment status ( <i>ref.: full-time</i> )						
Not employed	0.993	0.114	1.119	0.141	1.129	0.176
Part-time	1.067	0.123	0.977	0.156	1.031	0.197

Note: FReDA W1, weighted data. N = 16 119. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

To test the robustness of the identified 4-class solution and the multinomial logistic regression results, I additionally ran the LCA models with separate samples for a) women or men, and b) for people residing in East or West Germany. Just like for the full sample, for women and men the 4-class solution turns out to fit best. The class sizes within the gender groups reflect the results of the multinomial logistic regression models using the full sample insofar as the egalitarians class comprises a larger share of the women's than the men's sample, and accordingly, egalitarian essentialists, intensive parenting endorsers, and traditionalists are more strongly represented in the men's sample. The probabilities for egalitarian answers to each indicator only differ marginally between gender separated samples and the full sample. Moreover, there is hardly any difference in the results concerning class sizes or conditional item response probabilities between the West German and the full sample. Yet in the sample of people living in East Germany, there is not a very clear class solution. If the model selection is guided by the VLMR-LR test, a 2-class solution (p-value: 0.0205; BIC: 16726.6; adj. BIC: 16672.6) is superior to a 3-class solution (p-value: 0.078; BIC: 16368.0; adj. BIC: 16285.4), meaning that only the gender ideology classes of egalitarians and egalitarian essentialists can be identified in the East German sample. This is already indicated by the socio-demographic composition of the classes reported above, according to which people living in East Germany are markedly underrepresented in the intensive parenting endorsers and traditionalists classes. And also the analysis of predictors of class membership using the full sample shows that East Germans have significantly lower chances of being members of these two classes than being in the egalitarians class. Thus, the sensitivity analyses using separated samples strengthen the results based on the full sample.

To sum up the findings, they are related back to the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 – which expected homogeneous egalitarian as well as heterogeneous classes, but no traditional class – is not completely confirmed, due to the existence of the traditionalists class in contemporary Germany. This is the smallest latent gender ideology class in the sample, however, and is not found if we only take the East German sample into account. The expectation of hypothesis 2, that women are more egalitarian than men, is met. The chances of women being members of classes other than traditionalists are significantly higher than for men. Hypothesis 3 explicitly considered the time after the Covid-19 lockdowns in Germany, during which fathers took on larger shares of childcare than before, and therefore were expected to support shared responsibility for care work in the following time. And indeed, the class of intensive parenting endorsers, who believe in the importance of family and children for both parents, and in the paternal ability to take care of young children, is more prevalent among men than among women. The regional differences expected in hypothesis 4 also show up. People living in East Germany have a significantly higher chance of being egalitarians than being members of the three less egalitarian classes.

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper identified gender ideology classes in the 18-49-year-old population in Germany in 2021 and their socio-demographical characteristics. It thereby examined if women or men, or people living in East or West Germany differ in their belief patterns.

The multidimensional conception of gender ideology applied in this study, and its examination by latent class analysis ties in with the latest findings of (inter-)national research on gender role attitudes (Scarborough et al. 2019; Sievers & Warner 2022; Begall et al. 2023). At the same time, it expands them considerably, since the most recent data for Germany from the representative FReDA study (Bujard et al. 2023b) were used, which also allowed a differentiation between East and West Germany.

I identified four gender ideology classes in contemporary Germany. The largest and most consistent class, comprising more than half of the respondents, was the gender ideology class of *egalitarians*. Its members were very likely to hold gender-equal beliefs, both in the public and private domains. Thus, the prevalence of *egalitarians* in Germany in 2021 is high. The age of the respondents, who were a maximum of 49 years old, may play a role here, but other studies including wider age ranges also found a similar prevalence (Knight & Brinton 2017; Barth & Trübner 2018; Begall et al. 2023). Nevertheless, when comparing this widespread attitudinal egalitarianism with the still less egalitarian gender role behaviours, especially concerning care work (OECD 2017), a discrepancy between ideologies and behaviours becomes visible. Future research should therefore examine in more detail what prevents women and men from transforming their egalitarian beliefs into corresponding behaviours.

In addition, I identified the other end of the gender ideology spectrum in Germany: the *traditionals* class. Traditionals were characterised by their strong emphasis on women's focus on the household and childcare, and the importance of paid work for men. Yet they also supported gender equality in terms of political competence and access to tertiary education. It was the smallest class, at just under one-tenth of the sample, and its prevalence was considerably lower than in studies conducted on Germany with (more than) ten year old data (Knight & Brinton 2017; Barth & Trübner 2018; Sievers & Warner 2022). I initially had expected the traditional class to have disappeared entirely, but taking into account the results of e.g. Barth & Trübner (2018), which are based on data from 2012 (the prevalence of the two traditional classes was 11% in East Germany and 23% in West Germany), then it becomes clear that the prevalence of traditionals has further declined, especially in East Germany.

Between the two ends of the gender ideology spectrum, there were two heterogeneous classes. *Egalitarian essentialists* made up one-fifth of the German sample. In addition to their support for gender equality in the public domain, they saw women as better suited, and as responsible for childcare and housework, although for them this did not conflict with women or mothers being employed. Thus, they assumed an inherent difference between women and men that is particularly apparent in care work. It is also possible that the respondents were expressing here what they considered to be feasible behaviour in terms of gender roles within the current political and social framework. The second heterogeneous class, the *intensive parenting endorsers*, focused on the child's well-being, and on this basis saw maternal employment as subordinated and negative. However, their favoured prioritisation of childcare also comprised the involvement of fathers. Since this class was dominated by men and was more likely to be prevalent in West Germany, it might also reflect the desire of West-German fathers to be able to engage more in childcare.

The results also corroborate previous research on the importance of respondents' gender and region of residence in Germany for their gender ideologies (Grunow et al. 2018; Ebner et al. 2020; Zoch 2021; Begall et al. 2023). Women and people living in East Germany had significantly higher chances of having a consistently egalitarian gender ideology than men or people residing in West Germany. Even 30 years after reunification, and in a sample consisting of people who either came of age or were born after 1990, robust East-West differences in gender ideologies are apparent. More research is needed to clarify the explanatory role of differences in institutional conditions (childcare provision, labour market) between the East and West, or the persistence of varying cultural norms.

Some limitations of the study have to be kept in mind. First and foremost, the surveyed indicators may cause problems. They only asked about the consequences of maternal, but not paternal employment. Moreover, the distribution of responses to some indicators were much skewed, as most respondents gave egalitarian answers. Due to the somewhat suggestive wording of the survey questions, social desirability in the answers may be an issue. Subsequent research should therefore develop indicators that generate more variance in responses, which would possibly lead to different results. Second, the coding of the indicators, especially the coding of reverse traditionalism as "egalitarian", must also be taken into account when interpreting the results. Third, the labelling of the classes already required some interpretation, so this might have been done differently by other researchers. Nevertheless, I refrained from inventing new labels, instead referring to ones that were used in other studies for greater comparability. Fourth, due to the novelty of the FReDA survey, the study can only look at the year 2021, and therefore has to

draw on other studies to make statements on trends in gender ideologies. Due to the lack of longitudinal data at the moment, neither a description of gender ideology development, nor a causal relationship between gender ideology and exposure to a more egalitarian labour division during the Covid-19-lockdowns can be tested. However, the following waves of the FReDA panel study in the next years will make it possible to examine the stability of gender ideologies in East and West Germany over time, whereby the information gathered in this study can serve as a 2021 baseline for future longitudinal studies. Moreover, because FReDA also includes the German Generations and Gender Survey, the forthcoming GGS-II data for twelve countries will enable international gender ideology comparisons (e.g. with Sweden or Austria) in the coming years.

Finally, the study provides a diversified view of gender ideologies. The finding that around two-fifths of the younger generations in Germany hold heterogeneous ideologies confirms, firstly, the multidimensional conception of gender ideologies, and secondly, previous studies for Europe, which showed that the gender revolution in attitudes has not come to a halt, but that there is still a replacement of traditional gender ideologies by heterogeneous ones. From a societal perspective, the study is relevant because it has shown that egalitarian gender ideologies are widespread, and that consistently traditional belief patterns have further declined among younger people. As the majority of respondents support gender equality in the public as well as in the private domain, it might be possible that more equality-oriented institutional conditions could help to reduce gender unequal behaviours in families.

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## Appendix

Appendix Table A1: Distribution of Indicators

<b>Indicator (Abbreviation)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works. ( <i>child suffers</i> )	32.2	33.1	17.3	14.0	3.4
Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career. ( <i>focus on family</i> )	33.7	22.9	28.0	11.9	3.6
A working mother can establish just as loving and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. ( <i>relation</i> )	1.8	8.2	6.5	28.0	55.5
	<b>Men definitely</b>	<b>Men slightly</b>	<b>Both sexes equally</b>	<b>Women slightly</b>	<b>Women definitely</b>
On the whole, who would make better political leaders, men or women? ( <i>politics</i> )	2.1	6.6	81.8	7.5	2.0
For whom is a university education more important, men or women? ( <i>university</i> )	0.6	3.2	92.2	3.4	0.6
For whom is having a job more important, men or women? ( <i>job</i> )	2.6	11.0	85.5	0.6	0.3
For whom is looking after the home and children more important, men or women? ( <i>care work</i> )	0.0	0.2	76.2	21.3	2.4
Who are better at caring for small children, men or women? ( <i>young children</i> )	0.0	0.2	64.1	29.7	5.9

Note: FReDA W1, weighted data. N=18 527-18 530.



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