OXFORD

A step to the left? Gender ideologies and political party identification in Germany

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After decades in which gender relations, as anchored in work-family policies and egalitarian gender ideologies, moved towards greater equality, the status quo is currently being challenged. Gender-ambivalent ideologies have spread in both the political and private realms. It is unclear how the rise in gender-ambivalence documented in current research relates to party identification. On the one hand, gender ambivalence may represent a variation of post-materialist liberal values corresponding with support for centre-left parties in Germany. On the other, ambivalence may reflect a modified form of traditionalism and thus, a step to the left among voters leaning towards right-wing and conservative parties. This paper uses the Leitbild Survey 2012 to provide empirical evidence to fill this research gap. In line with cross-national research, latent class analyses reveal four main gender ideologies among young Germans: unidimensional 'egalitarian' and 'moderate traditional', as well as ambivalent, multidimensional 'secondary earner', and 'intensive parenting'. Multinomial regression models show that egalitarian class members identify with centre-left parties while members of the ambivalent, multidimensional secondary earner, and intensive parenting classes as well as those of the moderate traditional class identify more strongly with centre-right parties. In light of the broader literature on gender ideology change, which documents a steep decline in traditionalism, our cross-sectional findings may be interpreted as capturing a step to the left among voters leaning towards right-wing and conservative parties in Germany, who now accept new mothers combining care-giving and part-time-work.

Introduction: gender ideologies and societal changes

Europe has been experiencing a strong rise in cultural conflict across a wide array of issues, which is having an increasing impact on national politics and partisanship (Teney, Lacewell and Wilde, 2014; De Vries, 2018). As a part of this conflict, attitudes towards gender roles are an important indicator of the state of gender equality and ultimately the future development of democracy. For example, anti-feminism has been found to be closely linked to other ideologies of inequality such as anti-semitism, racism, and LGBTQIA* hostility and thus to the overall political climate in democratic countries (Grollman, 2018; Scarborough *et al.*, 2021). Researchers claim that the cultural conflict associated with these issues is caused by the rise of a liberal-oriented higher-educated class and by a traditional cultural backlash in other societal groups (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Reckwitz, 2017; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). Both these trends are mirrored

in diverging party politics, with the success of populist-nationalist parties being framed as a reaction to the spread of the liberal and leftist agenda in mainstream politics (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015; Bornschier *et al.*, 2021).

In this literature, egalitarian gender ideologies are sometimes associated with leftist political orientations whereas traditional ideologies are seen as part of a wider cultural and political backlash (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), however, there are few empirical assessments of these claims. Importantly, we have not seen a rise of gender traditionalism concomitant with the rise of populist parties, as would be expected based on the backlash hypothesis (cp. Norris and Inglehart, 2019: pp. 228–231). Instead, gender ideology research points to a major decline in traditionalism and a shift away from a unidimensional egalitarian versus traditional ideology space towards an ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideology space (Scarborough, Sin and Risman, 2019). This

shift reflects a large increase in the number of individuals holding ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies that mix essentialist ideas about the distinct 'natures' of women and men with egalitarian ideas regarding the gender division of paid and unpaid work (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). Roughly half of the European population currently hold such ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies. These new gender ideologies confound expectations of a cultural backlash (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) because they mix traditional and egalitarian views of men's and women's roles with regard to work and care-giving. For instance, they support maternal employment but not paternal care, or support women but not mothers' doing paid work (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). It is thus unclear how these new ideologies are linked to the politics and patterns of political participation.

Given the sheer size of the ambivalent, multidimensional ideology groups, it is important to assess whether its members align themselves with the spectrum of centre-right and right-wing parties, and thus represent a cultural backlash in a new and unforeseen guise. Contrary to the expectation of a cultural backlash, feminist research suggests that the rise of ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideology groups may represent a shift away from traditionalism (Skewes, Fine and Haslam, 2018; Scarborough et al., 2021). In line with this latter perspective, the multiple equilibria hypothesis put forward by Esping-Andersen and Billari (2015) suggests that the complex gender ideologies we observe today constitute a transitional stage of development towards gender equality. The transitional stage reflects the current mismatch between egalitarian ideals for families on the one hand and politically shaped institutional realities on the other. Ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies, it has been argued, are hindering the progress of the gender revolution due to their essentialist core (England, 2010; Sullivan, Gershuny and Robinson, 2018). From this perspective, it would be instructive to see whether the members of ambivalent, multidimensional ideology groups tend to align themselves with parties oriented towards preserving the gender status quo, thus slowing down the gender revolution, or with parties pushing a gender-egalitarian agenda and the establishment of a new egalitarian equilibrium in society. As both the backlash and multiple equilibrium hypotheses have important but opposite political consequences, we need to assess whether gender ideologies are indeed linked with party identification. Because if they are, ideologies will determine the future development

of countries, with major consequences for gender equality, fertility, ageing, and the role of the family (England, 2010; Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015).

Serving (young) voters' needs to process complex electoral decisions, party identification, it has been argued, develops during early adulthood and strengthens with age (Shively, 1979). We argue that gender ideologies, which start to form much earlier in life through socialization, are associated with party identification because parties represent distinct gender and family ideals held by voters. Chatillon, Charles, and Bradley define gender ideologies as *'sets of widely taken-for-granted cultural beliefs about the essential natures and relative worth of men and women'* (Chatillon, Charles and Bradley, 2018: p. 217). These sets of beliefs need not be coherent, as current studies show (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Chatillon, Charles and Bradley, 2018). Instead, they may reflect the ambiguities inherent in the gender status quo at a time when a traditional family equilibrium no longer exists and an alternative, stable equilibrium is yet to be established, both politically and at home (Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015). As gender ideologies reflect deeply rooted convictions regarding gendered responsibilities in the public and private sphere, political responses to these convictions, that is, work-family policies and party programmatic statements, should matter to individuals and play a role in the formation of a partisan identity. To be sure, we do not know the full extent of how individuals prioritize gender issues in relation to other political issues when forming a partisan identity or making a vote choice, but we argue here that investigating potential linkages between gender ideologies and party identification may be crucial to understand social change and current debates concerning lines of conflict between different social groups.

We test our claim by using the 'Leitbild Survey—Concepts of Family in Germany' (2012) to analyse Germans in the family formation phase (ages 20–39), a group which will shape future societal development by influencing the political landscape as voters and (future) parents raising the next generation. First, we confirm the existence of egalitarian, traditional, and ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies in our sample in line with current cross-national research (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). Second, we assess whether individual gender ideologies are associated with party preferences beyond socio-economic and demographic characteristics and explore whether the new ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies can be understood as a variation of egalitarian values, as suggested by feminist researchers or as a variety of traditionalism, as suggested by the backlash hypothesis.

Theoretical framework: gender ideologies and political party identification

Post-materialism, gender equality, and uneven gender change

For a long time, the spread of post-materialistic values was assumed to be linear, encompassing changes in almost every part of society, including gender roles (Inglehart, 1997; Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman, 2011). Equality in the division of care tasks and paid work was expected to spread with the second demographic transition in post-industrial societies (van de Kaa, 1987; Inglehart and Norris, 2003: p. 14). For some time, the expected changes were largely confirmed by empirical data. In recent decades, however, the changes slowed down or even stopped completely in some countries (England, 2010; Dieckhoff *et al.*, 2016; DeRose *et al.*, 2019). This dynamic has been described as the '*stalled gender revolution*' (England, 2010; England, Levine and Mishel, 2020). One reason for the slowdown of the gender revolution is seen in uneven gendered change in the spheres of paid and unpaid work (England, 2010; Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Lappegård, 2015). In spite of the increasing participation of women in the labour force, men have neither changed their employment patterns nor come close to compensating for women's time in paid work by increasing the amount of time they spend doing unpaid work and providing care (Altintas and Sullivan, 2016, 2017). Gender ideologies, especially gender-essentialist beliefs, as expressed in ambivalent, multidimensional, and traditional belief patterns, are seen as an important force in this process of uneven gender change (England, 2010). Although women now participate in formerly 'male' spheres of paid work, essentialist beliefs, that is, '*the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills*' (England, 2010: p. 150) have remained strong in western societies. At present, different gender ideologies co-exist in post-materialist European countries, reflecting a broad range of competing positions regarding the participation of women, in particular mothers, in the labour market, and the responsibility of both men and women for household tasks (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Barth and Trübner, 2018; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). Assessing these competing gender ideologies is an emerging field of research that political sociology has not yet incorporated in its theoretical model, and the ambivalent multidimensionality of gender ideologies has never been established with our data. Accordingly, we first need to confirm our baseline expectation of ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies before moving on to our other hypotheses.

> *H1:* We expect to find not only egalitarian and (to a lesser extent) traditional gender ideology profiles but also ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies in Germany.

Interest and exposure-based mechanisms

The co-occurrence of different gender ideologies in society has been explained in terms of interest and exposure-based social mechanisms (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). For example, individual experiences such as growing up with a working versus stay-at-home mother or an involved versus absent father shape gender ideologies from an early age. Related to these experiences, self-interest also determines this process, as some social groups, for example, highly educated women, have more to gain from egalitarian divisions of labour than men who are married to women with low human capital, for example. On the one hand, women's labour market participation can increase the support for gender equality, as women and their families have an interest in attaining greater financial stability. On the other hand, many single-parent and dual-earner families face major difficulties in reconciling paid work and care-giving in the current institutional setting. Work-family policies changed the interests, behaviours, and experiences of single and dual-earner families, indicating policy feedback loops regarding men's and women's work and family roles (Ziefle and Gangl, 2014; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). These processes are drivers of further social and political change (ibid.).

Taking the interest and experience-based perspective further, interests, and experiences may not only account for differences in gender ideologies, but also motivate the formation of political preferences. On a structural level, gender ideologies, policies, and gender cultures are intertwined (Geist and Cohen, 2011; Altintas and Sullivan, 2017), thus shaping, for example, the employment opportunities of mothers, the availability of public childcare and the employment patterns of married couples. Work-family policies thus ascribe gendered responsibilities to men and women in the realms of paid and unpaid work by limiting individuals' agency to live according to their own preferences (Edlund and Öun, 2016). The link between individual social situation and political preference is moderated by gender ideology, based on personal experience and biographical background. Depending on the normative climate and social context, individuals with an egalitarian or traditional gender ideology will experience higher or lower levels of conflict between their desired division of work and care-giving and the division of labour they achieve in a given policy setting (Grunow and Evertsson, 2016). They will thus have different motives for identifying with parties that seek to preserve or change the gender status quo.

In particular, individuals holding gender-egalitarian ideologies should have a preference for, and identify with, political parties that promise to support joint earning and caring. German political parties clearly differ in their response to these preferences (e.g. Anan,

2017; Decker and Neu, 2018). Parties of the centre-left (Social-Democratic Party: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD; the Greens: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen; the Lefts: Die Linke), emphasize gender equality. Their party programmes focus on expanding daycare and on reforming parental leave programmes to motivate mothers to pursue paid work and fathers to engage in care-giving. Individuals holding traditional ideologies should have a preference for parties that prioritize traditional family arrangements. This is the case for parties belonging to the centre-right (Christian-Democrats: Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CDU/CSU; Free Democrats: Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) and right-wing spectrum (National-Democrats: Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD; German Republicans: Republikaner, REP). The NPD and Republicans hold highly conservative ideas about family life, from which all other major parties in Germany distance themselves. The centre-right parties represent a more moderate approach to traditional family arrangements, with the CDU/CSU parties still committed to taxing spouses jointly ('spouse-splitting'). This system financially privileges breadwinner-homemaker arrangements and reduces the incentive for both members of a couple to pursue full-time work. The FDP generally promotes freedom of choice in family arrangements, although without challenging the status quo.

H2: Therefore, we expect individuals with traditional gender ideologies to be more likely to prefer centre-right or right-wing parties, while more egalitarian individuals should be more likely to prefer a centre-left party.

Linking ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies to party identification

Over recent decades, *'women's collective mobilization to change gender ideologies, norms, and practices, (…) has influenced the programs of all political parties'* (Korpi, Ferrarini and Englund, 2013: p. 28). Thus, party identification has not only a strong association with voting decisions (Arzheimer, 2017), but can be understood as a core element of individual self-concept. Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954: p. 90; Campbell *et al.*, 1960) put party identification into a behaviouristic perspective by considering parties as *'standard-setting groups'* in society. They argue *'that many people associate themselves psychologically with one or the other of the parties, and that this identification has predictable relationships with their perceptions, evaluations, and actions'* (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954: p. 90). Political parties can be classified using a political left/right ideological dimension, characterized by economic

(Scherer and Stövsand, 2019: pp. 220–222) and by cultural issues (Dolezal, 2008). In this classification, a distinction is made between individuals holding, and parties promoting, authoritarian and libertarian values, with issues of order, tradition, and preservation of the status quo on one side (authoritarianism), and individuals and parties emphasizing personal freedom regarding questions of liberality towards gender, immigration, or homosexuality (libertarianism) on the other (Norris and Inglehart, 2019: pp. 228–231).

Given the spread of ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies documented in current research (see also *H1*), we want to explore the interpretation of these gender ideologies in terms of the different political camps. We ask whether forms of gender ambivalence represent (i) a variety of former traditional ideologies and thus foster identification with (centre) right parties or (ii) a by-product and variety of increasing egalitarianism in light of modernization theory, fostering identification with (centre) left parties. Our basic assumption is that gender ideologies play a role during the formation of party identification because they emerge early in life in the context of primary and secondary socialization (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004) while party identification tends to form later (Shively, 1979). Both gender ideology and party identification may arguably change over the life course, for example, as a reaction to political campaigns or as individuals strive to reduce cognitive dissonance (Davis and Greenstein, 2009; Wolak, 2009). However, such changes have been found to be gradual (Davis and Greenstein, 2009; Arzheimer, 2017).

First, ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies may be a new variety of traditionalism with more disadvantages for women who are now supposed to shoulder both paid and unpaid work (Levanon and Grusky, 2016) or just a step away from traditional ideologies but still connected to '*the gender status quo*' (Skewes, Fine and Haslam, 2018: p. 12). If this is the case, individuals holding ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies should be more similar in their party preferences to individuals with traditional gender ideologies.

H3a: In particular, we would expect individuals with ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies to prefer centre-right or right-wing parties which prioritize traditional family values over joint earning and caring.

Second, ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies may be rising because 'people in postindustrial societies are coming to demand freer choice in all aspects of life. Gender roles, (…) and voting behavior all become increasingly matters of individual choice' (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: p. 3). Consequently, it may be seen as a legitimate individual decision not

to desire joint spheres of labour market participation and care tasks for men and women, but to emphasize partly separated and thus ambivalent roles to facilitate 'intensive', child-centred forms of parenting (Hays, 1996; Reckwitz, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018; Pepin and Cotter, 2018). Certainly, the freedom of choice between dual earning and intensive parenting crucially depends on institutional support for both models, that is, availability of state-provided high-quality daycare on the one hand and financial transfers to stay-at-home parents on the other. Freedom of choice thus requires the state playing an active role. States that do not offer any of these options limit personal freedom of choice and instead foster 'familialism by default' (Saraceno, 2016: p. 316). Applying this line of thinking to the German context, individuals holding ambivalent, multidimensional ideologies emphasizing freedom of choice should be more similar in their party preferences to individuals with egalitarian gender ideologies, because it is the centre-left parties which prioritize and foster respective policies.

> *H3b*: In particular, we would expect individuals with ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies to prefer centre-left parties which prioritize gender equality and child well-being.

Gender ideologies and non-identification with political parties

It is further unclear how gender ideologies relate to the large group of individuals who have no party preference. The cultural divide between those with materialist (authoritarian) and post-materialist (libertarian) values has been connected to an increasing group of non-voters and individuals with no party identification in Western Europe because these groups no longer feel represented by any political party (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018; Häusermann, 2020). Others have argued that partisanship declined because voters have become politically more sophisticated (Dalton, 2012). Non-identification and non-voting may also be effects of precarious working and living conditions (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018; Häusermann, 2020) or reflect alternative forms of political activism, especially of post-materialist and persons with a left-wing orientation (Melo and Stockemer, 2014). Consequently, we consider the relationship between gender ideologies and having no party preference to be an open question and refrain from formulating a hypothesis.

Data and limitations

This study uses data from the 'Leitbild Survey—Concepts of Family in Germany' (FLB[1,] Schneider *et*

al., 2016; Diabaté *et al.*, 2019; Schneider, Diabaté and Ruckdeschel 2015) panel. In the FLB, respondents rate their personal response to several statements about partnership, family, and childcare. In 2012, a representative sample of 5,000 German residents[2], born between 1973 and 1992, were interviewed based on a standardized questionnaire using the computer-assisted telephone interview technique (CATI). Our dataset is the most suitable for our research questions because, first, it contains all the central gender and parenting dimensions that we know from previous research, and second, it includes a question on party identification, unlike other comparable data sets. Moreover, the Leitbild Survey is a crucial source for research on gender attitudes in Germany and is used, for example, in the recent official German Social Data Report (BpB et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, our study has clear limitations. The most obvious is that our data are not recent—a problem identified in other studies combining gender ideologies with other societal fields (Lappegård, Neyer and Vignoli, 2021). Another limitation is the restricted age range of the respondents. Whereas the age bracket is predetermined by the data, the family formation phase is nevertheless crucial in linking gender ideologies with political orientation because young adults have to think about how to reconcile family and professional work when starting a family. According to policy feedback theory, people in the family formation phase are thus especially receptive to family policies and a force in the process of changing gender divisions of labour in society (Ziefle and Gangl, 2014), which is the main advantage of the age range covered by our data. A disadvantage is that we lack a broad picture of the gender views held by society at large. A further limitation concerns the lack of information available regarding other political views or orientations of the respondents. Such data would provide a more comprehensive picture of individual attitudes and how these connect to cultural conflict (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015; Bornschier *et al.*, 2021). Finally, our analyses are based on cross-sectional data and thus do not allow us to assess change over time or whether gender ideologies causally affect party identification, as we suggest here, or vice-versa. We also cannot rule out that other factors, such as individual life events shape either gender ideology or party identification or both.

Measurements

For the first part of our study, which addresses Hypothesis 1, we used seven items to measure attitudes toward gender ideologies. We reversed the coding of items where necessary, so that a higher score consistently reflects an egalitarian position and a lower score

a traditional position. We dichotomized the responses provided on a 4-point scale (1 = 'strongly agree', 2 = 'agree' into '1', 3 = 'disagree', 4 = 'strongly disagree' = into '0'). Our method is in line with previous research (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). The items we draw on are shown in Table 1.

For the second part of our study, which addresses Hypotheses 2 and 3ab, our dependent variable for the nominal regression is identification with one of the German political parties[3]. In order to obtain robust results, we grouped them into three party-family groups using the classification provided by Scherer and Stövsand (2019)[4] and add a fourth category for no affiliation with any political party, so that the dependent variable consist at least four categories: centre-left, centre-right, right-wing, and no party-identification.

As independent control variables, we included dummy variables for the sex of the respondent (45 per cent men, 55 per cent women) and place of residence, western (78 per cent) or eastern (22 per cent) Germany. We grouped respondents' ages into two broad categories (43 per cent aged 20–29; 57 per cent aged 30–39) and used the ISCED[5] scale to distinguish between low (4 per cent), medium (64 per cent), and high (32 per cent) educational levels. We controlled for having children (44 per cent) or not (46 per cent) and the religiosity of respondents: not religious (35 per cent), low (49 per cent), and high degree of religiosity (16 per cent). We also controlled for employment status: employed (75 per cent), in education (16 per cent), not employed (9 per cent) as well as for whether respondents classified their subjective economic situation as poor (7 per cent), okay (32 per cent), or good (61 per cent).

Methods

We test our first hypothesis regarding the occurrence of ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies by employing a LCA to identify gender ideology profiles in our sample. LCA is a method for classifying observed discrete variables into a latent structure, based on individual responses to a set of categorical indicators. These latent structures are known as classes and associated class memberships (Lazarsfeld and Henry, 1968; Vermunt and Magidson, 2004). In contrast to factor analysis, the person-centred approach of LCA allows respondents to be grouped into classes based on their individual answers to the seven items presented in Table 1. The number of items is restricted by the data set. Previous research used a similar number or even fewer items, resulting in coherent findings regarding latent gender ideology classes across studies (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018; Scarborough, Sin and Risman, 2019, Scarborough et al., 2021). The grouping of individuals in the latent classes is based on individuals' conditional probability of responding to each item in an egalitarian or traditional way while assuming that the groups are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. As LCA is based on the assumption of local independence, response patterns to the single items are expected to represent a latent class structure (Lazarsfeld and Henry, 1968; Linzer and Lewis, 2011). We use STATA to estimate our models.

The appropriate number of classes in LCA is guided by index measurements of model fit as well as theoretical considerations, including the interpretability of the classes. We estimated up to six models using six class solutions. Model fit was estimated using the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and the Lo-Mendell-Rubin (LMR) likelihood ratio test, which are the best-fit indexes for determining the number of classes in mixture modelling (Nylund, Asparouhov and Muthén, 2007). The LMR likelihood ratio test indicated that a four-class model fit the data best. We also preferred this solution because the BIC-levelled off after four classes and the four-class model[6] was interpretable. The results show class structures and

Table 1 Support for dichotomized gender ideology items (descriptives, percent)

Gender ideology items	Agreement
A mother ought to, if at all possible, not work at all (reversed).	95.5
For a child between 1 and 3 years old, it's best to be cared for only by its mother (reversed).	83.8
Mothers ought to pursue a career in order to remain independent of their husbands.	79.4
It is not good for a child if the father leaves child rearing solely to the mother.	77.4
A mother who only stays home and takes care of her children will eventually become dissatisfied.	74.6
Children aged between 1 and 3 years suffer when they are cared for mostly in a childcare facility or daycare centre for children (reversed).	60.7
Fathers should spend less time at work for the sake of their children.	59.1

Source: Leitbild Survey 2012, authors' calculation, *N* = 4,594. Note: Items reversed for LCA.

sizes that resemble those identified in earlier studies, suggesting that our results are in conformity with the current state of research.

We ran multinomial logistic regression models for our second and third hypotheses regarding the links between gender ideologies and political identification ([Long and Freese, 2006](#)). Here, our latent gender ideology classes are the main explanatory variables and our dependent variable is the grouped political party identification. In a further step, we added the control variables described above. We show the results of the regression models as average marginal effects (AME).

Results

LCA: multidimensional and unidimensional gender ideology profiles

The LCA generated the prevalence (or size) of the four ideology classes and respondents' conditional response probabilities for each gender ideology item. Our interpretation and labelling of the four classes are based on our theoretical framework and the state of research. [Figure 1](#) shows the conditional probabilities of an egalitarian response to our gender ideology items for each latent class profile. High values (close to 100 per cent) indicate a high conditional probability of an egalitarian response to an item, whereas a low value indicates a high probability of a traditional response (close to 0 per cent).

For example, respondents of the secondary earner class have a roughly 97 per cent conditional probability of disagreeing with the item that a mother ought not to work if possible, which is a very high likelihood of an egalitarian response. Conversely, members of the intensive parenting class have a conditional probability of close to 0 per cent of disagreeing with the statement that children between 1 and 3 years suffer when they are cared for mostly in a childcare facility or daycare centre. The response patterns of the different groups show the complexity of gender ideologies, signifying that some items tend to polarize more than others. For example, agreement with the question of whether fathers should spend less time at work for the sake of their children is fairly similar across classes, whereas there is large variation regarding the likelihood of agreement with the statement that children suffer when they are cared for mostly in public childcare settings.

Secondary earner class (39 per cent)

Our largest class, covering 39 per cent of respondents is ambivalent and multidimensional and labelled *secondary earner class*. The class is considered ambivalent and multidimensional because its members have high levels of agreement with some egalitarian statements but not with others. Public childcare and maternal

employment are widely accepted in this class. There is also fairly high conditional support for fathers' involvement in childcare (70 per cent). However, respondents in this class are not particularly likely to expect fathers to spend less time at work (47 per cent). We interpret this as an indication that the father is considered the main breadwinner of the family. This interpretation is backed up by the fact that the secondary earner model, in which fathers work full-time and mothers work part-time to care for their children, is the most common family model in Germany ([Rosenfeld, Trappe and Gornick, 2004](#)).

Egalitarian class (34 per cent)

Our second largest class, covering one-third of respondents, is labelled *egalitarian*. This class is marked by consistently high agreement with egalitarian statements and thus categorized as unidimensional. Members of this class have the highest estimated probabilities of supporting paid and unpaid work for both women and men. Notably, and unlike the secondary earner class, support for reducing fathers' employment level is high (80 per cent) and conditional agreement that a mother's employment is important to remain financially independent from her partner (93 per cent) is highest compared to all other classes. Mothers and fathers are thus seen as equal partners in this class, a core aspect of an egalitarian ideology.

Intensive parenting class (21 per cent)

The class labelled *intensive parenting* is ambivalent and multidimensional and covers 21 per cent of respondents. This ideology profile is rather similar to the secondary earner profile, except for respondents' attitudes towards childcare for under 3-year-old children. Respondents in this class have a high estimated probability of rejecting childcare facilities or daycare centres for children under 3 years of age and view mothers as primary caregivers, combined with a rather high probability of supporting maternal employment. We interpret this class profile as child-focussed, emphasizing strong parental involvement, including aspects of intensive mothering.

Moderate traditional class (6 per cent)

The final and smallest class in our data is unidimensional and labelled *moderate traditional*. It covers only a small group of respondents (6 per cent). Members of this class have the highest conditional probability of supporting traditionally gendered, separate spheres of male breadwinning and female homemaking. Note, however, that a fully traditional class would consistently display values close to zero. In the moderate traditional class, mothers are seen as responsible for childcare and not in need of employment. Importantly,
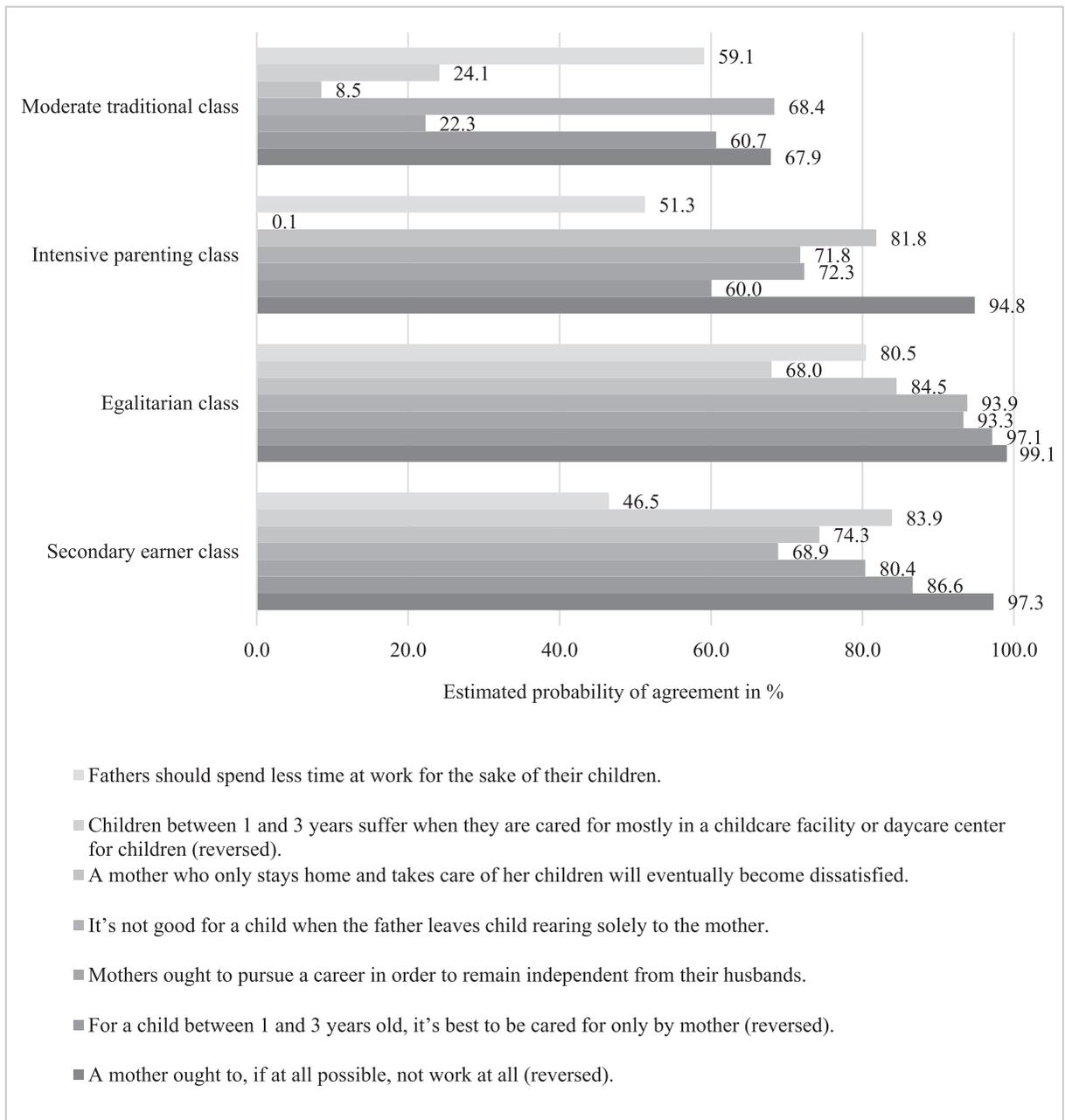
Figure 1 Graphic representation of the estimated probability of agreement with statements per class—results of the LCA. Source: Leitbild Survey 2012, authors' calculation. For details regarding the conditional probabilities of egalitarian responses to each item see Supplementary Appendix, Table A2

this class considers maternal homemaking fulfilling and opposes public childcare.

In sum, these findings support our baseline assumption that we would find not only unidimensional egalitarian but also, to a lesser extent, traditional and also ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideology classes in our data, in line with earlier research.

Multinomial logistic regression results for political party identification

Table 2 displays the multivariate results of linking respondents' membership in one of the gender ideology classes to political party identification. In the first model (Table 2, Model 1), we compare the political party identification of respondents with an egalitarian

gender ideology (reference group) to respondents in the other three gender ideology classes. In the second model (Table 2, Model 2) we add socio-demographic control variables. In an additional model (see Supplementary Appendix, A6) we control for migration status, particular for affiliation to first and second generation, because we wanted to capture familiarity with the party system, which had a significant effect on non-party-identification.

According to these models, individuals who belong to the unidimensional egalitarian class have the highest probability of identifying with a centre-left party, compared to the members of other ideology classes. In contrast, those who belong to the moderate traditional ideology class have a higher probability of identifying with a centre-right or right-wing party (only in Model 1). In both model specifications, members of the ambivalent, multidimensional intensive parenting, and secondary earner classes are more likely than the egalitarian class members to identify with a centre-right party or have no party identification at all. The latter finding holds after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics. These findings shed new light on our hypotheses which we discuss in the next section.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper aimed to assess whether and how gender ideologies and party preferences are linked in Germany. In the first step we established the existence of both unidimensional egalitarian and moderate traditional, as well as two ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideology classes in Germany. These findings support our first baseline expectation (H1) that a fully traditional class no longer exists in Germany (Knight and Brinton, 2017; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). We can observe that in Germany, also due to the family policy instrument of parental leave (Ziefle and Gangl, 2014), a norm has emerged whereby it is socially accepted for

mothers to return to work part-time about one year after giving birth. In line with this norm, the ambivalent, multidimensional *secondary earner* class captures the largest group of young adults in our sample (39 per cent). This finding can be interpreted in light of the political agenda in recent years, especially since 2007, which has largely been fiscally, structurally, and culturally supportive of this family model. The secondary earner model can thus be understood as a primary role model for young families in Germany.

The second ambivalent, multidimensional ideology class of *intensive parenting* that we identified could be interpreted using an alternative family model which is now less common in Germany, where it covers one in five respondents, but which remains widespread across European countries (Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). According to this model, parents—usually mothers—extend their time as full-time homemakers until their children are 2 or 3 years old and considered developed enough to attend kindergarten. This concept is reflective of the family model that used to dominate in Germany prior to the reforms which started in 2007 (Grunow and Evertsson, 2019) and which is still compatible with current parental leave legislation, though less financially attractive than the secondary earner model. In sum, even though we lack longitudinal data, our findings concur with research showing that multiple gender ideologies have spread and currently co-exist in Germany, in line with the prediction of the multiple equilibria hypothesis (Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015; Knight and Brinton, 2017). Our cross-sectional data evidently capture a snapshot of gender ideologies and gender relations in transition and thus a potentially unstable equilibrium of normative confusion '*in which any of a number of alternative normative regimes may emerge*' (Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015: p. 9).

In the second step, which went beyond previous research, we established that gender ideology is linked

Table 2 Multinomial regression results for political party identification effects (with AME)

		Model 1				Model 2			
		Centre-left	Centre-right	Right-wing	No party identification	Centre-left	Centre-right	Right-wing	No party identification
Gender ideology class (Ref. egalitarian)	Secondary earner	−0.101***	0.017***	−0.002	0.086***	−0.073***	0.031**	−0.003	0.045**
	Intensive parenting	−0.160***	0.049***	0.001	0.110***	−0.124***	0.062***	0.001	0.061**
	moderate traditional	−0.117***	0.065*	0.020*	0.032	−0.082***	0.052*	0.018	0.012

Source: Leitbild Survey 2012, authors' calculation.
Note: *$P \le 0.05$, **$P \le 0.01$, ***$P \le 0.001$; $N = 4,594$ in both models; Results as AME; controlled for socio-demographic characteristics (full model in Supplementary Appendix, Tables A4 and A5, (all parties, not grouped)).

with political party identification in line with our theoretical framework. The multinomial logistic regression results show that an egalitarian gender ideology is associated with identifying with a party of the centre-left spectrum, while a moderate traditional gender ideology is associated with identifying with a party from the centre-right and right-wing spectrum (H2). Our second hypothesis is thus confirmed. To be sure, we do not know the full extent of how respondents in our data set prioritize gender issues in relation to other political issues. However, our findings fit the theoretical expectations we derived from extending the interest- and exposure-based approach developed by Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) to capture party identification. Concerning our third Hypothesis (H3), individuals with ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies tend to be more likely to identify with a centre-right party, but not with a party from the right-wing spectrum, and less likely to identify with a centre-left party than members of the egalitarian class. These findings lend support to Hypothesis 3a and lead us to reject Hypothesis 3b. In our view, this finding gives rise to speculations that the two ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies we identified potentially represent varieties of traditionalism in Germany, not of egalitarianism as suggested by Knight and Brinton (2017). However, this debate is ongoing and more targeted research designs are needed to deepen our understanding of ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies.

Our theoretical framework yielded less clear-cut expectations regarding the link between gender ideologies and having no party identification. We found members of the ambivalent, multidimensional secondary earner and intensive parenting classes to be less likely to identify with any party at all, compared to members of the unidimensional egalitarian and moderate traditional classes. It is possible that individuals with gender-ambivalent mindsets have not yet developed a party identification. However, they might also feel a lack of political representation or guidance by existing political parties in light of inconsistent family policies (Dalton, 2012; Geisler, Kreyenfeld and Trappe 2016). Future research, ideally based on longitudinal data, will be needed to clarify the relationship between gender ideologies and non-partisanship, respectively apartisanship. At present, no such data are available.

Taken together, our findings can be interpreted using the *'gender status quo'* framework (Skewes, Fin and Haslam, 2018: p. 12), which suggests that individuals can adapt to changing social context conditions, in this case family policies, without challenging the gender status quo. This has important implications for gender scholars and policymakers, suggesting that

political mobilization in the form of gender backlash may be likely not only among the small group of people holding moderate traditional gender ideologies, but also among the large group of potential voters holding ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies. However, more research is needed to validate and substantiate this interpretation.

Another central finding indicates that individuals with a preference for a right-wing party, who have previously been considered gender traditionalist, have apparently incorporated and accepted part of the gender revolution into their ideological mindset. Thus, in light of research documenting the change of gender ideologies over time, and in particular the decline of traditionalism (Knight and Brinton, 2017), our cross-sectional findings suggest that the most gender traditional group we could identify in Germany appears to have made a step to the left: In particular, the practice of new mothers to combine care-giving and part-time-work seems nowadays widely accepted, even in right-wing and conservative milieus.

Motherhood and fatherhood concepts are in an ongoing process of transformation. Cultural and structural barriers persist and it is evidently difficult to truly overcome essentialist beliefs and develop fully egalitarian forms of parenthood (Diabaté, Lück and Schiefer, 2022). This is particularly evident in the spread of ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies, such as intensive motherhood and parenting which embrace gender essentialism (Hays, 1996; Diabaté and Beringer, 2018; Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). Drawing on England (2010) and Sullivan, Gershuny and Robinson (2018), we interpret our findings as evidence supporting the 'stalled gender revolution' diagnosis and provide novel evidence that gender ideologies are likely to contribute to preserving the gender status quo in politics.

Whereas our analyses are limited to Germany, comparative research suggests that the coexistence of different and, in particular, ambivalent, multidimensional gender ideologies reflects inconsistencies between the cultural and institutional setting. These inconsistencies are even larger in other European countries, except for Sweden and other parts of Scandinavia (Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). However, the question of how gender ideologies relate to party preferences in other political systems remains open and requires further research.

In conclusion, this paper highlights the importance of linking gender and politics to understand social change and certain lines of conflict between different social groups. Whereas previous studies focus on socio-economic and a range of cultural aspects of political conflicts (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018), more

general conflicts between cosmopolitans and communitarians (Teney, Lacewell and Wilde, 2014), or gender and candidate preferences (Long, Dawe and Suhay, 2021), our findings emphasize the role of gender ideologies in these conflicts.

Notes

1. www.bib-demografie.de/leitbild.
2. In our analytical sample, we dropped cases with missing information about education and subjective economic situation as well as those which did not specify their employment situation. Further, we dropped cases where respondents refused to answer the question about political party identification and those who identified with other small parties. Therefore, our analytical sample consists of 4,594 persons with a random failure of 8 per cent missing.
3. 'Many people tend to prefer a certain political party for a longer period of time although they also vote for other parties now and then. Do you tend to prefer a certain political party and, if so, which?'
4. We list the party family, followed in brackets by the corresponding parties displayed by full party name, abbreviation, case numbers, and percentage in our data set. Centre-left (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD, n = 536, 11.7 per cent; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Grüne, n = 370, 8.1 per cent; Die Linke, Linke, n = 103, 2.2 per cent; Piratenpartei Deutschland, Piraten, n = 57, 1.2 per cent; centre-right (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CDU/CSU, n = 627, 13.7 per cent; Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP, n = 83, 1.8 per cent; and right-wing (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD and Republikaner, REP, together n = 28, 0.6 per cent). In Supplementary Appendix, Table A1 we show the distribution of the original variable. In addition, we included a category for cases with no political party identification, which is the largest group in our sample, covering 60.7 per cent of respondents, in line with previous research (Arzheimer, 2017). In Supplementary Appendix, Table A3a–d we show the characteristics for those who identify with the different party-family groups and provide separate analyses for each party (Supplementary Appendix, Table A4/A5).
5. ISCED refers to the International Standard Classification of Education. We distinguish three educational levels: (i) 'Low' = without a school-leaving certificate or vocational qualification (including those still in training or studies), secondary school-leaving certificate, and polytechnic secondary school, each without vocational qualification (ISCED level 1–2); (ii) 'Medium' = high school diploma, completed apprenticeship, or vocational school (ISCED level 3–5); and (iii) 'High' = (technical) university degree (Bachelor/Master), doctorate/PHD, or Master craftsman/technician (ISCED level 6–8).
6. Model Fit: AIC = 32107.354; BIC = 32300.329.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

Data Availability

Data is available at Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS): Schneider, N. F.; Diabaté, S.; Bujard, M. GESIS Datenarchiv, Köln. ZA6760 Datenfile Version 1.0.0, https://doi.org/10.4232/1.1264 (https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6760).

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