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## How do gender values and household practices cohere? Value-practice configurations in a gender egalitarian context

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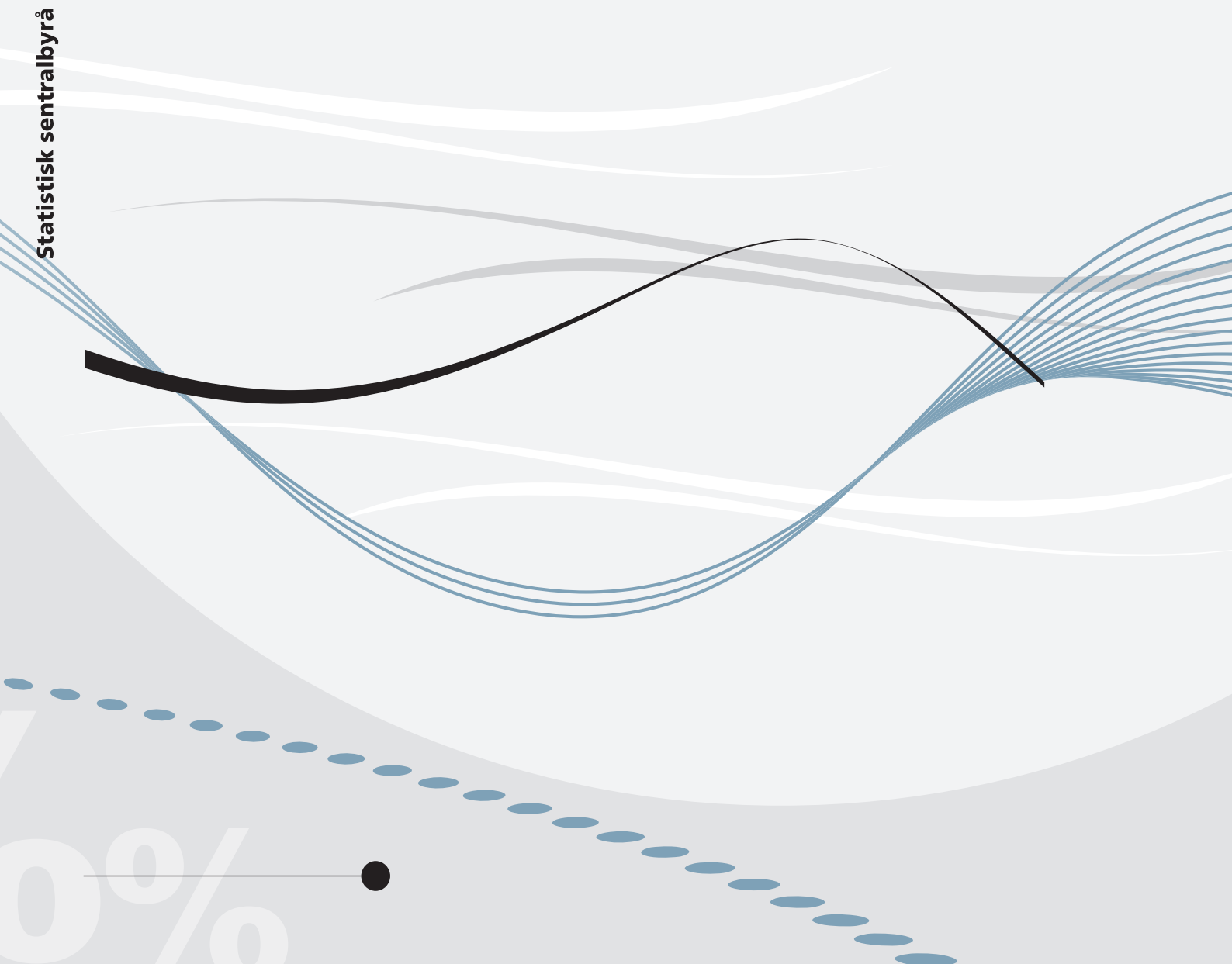
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*Randi Kjeldstad and Trude Lappegård*

## **How do gender values and household practices cohere?**

Value-practice configurations in a gender egalitarian context



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### **Abstract:**

Previous research shows a paradoxical simultaneity of egalitarian gender values and inegalitarian practices in Europe. The Socio-democratic welfare states stand out with the most coherent egalitarian value-practice configurations. With this as a point of departure we examine the coherencies and incoherencies between gender values and household practices in Norway, a socio-democratic and prevailing gender egalitarian country. Based on data from the Norwegian Generations and Gender survey, we estimate four distinct types of value-practices in families, using a multinomial logit latent class regression technique. The analysis reveals a relatively high proportion of couples reporting coherent gender egalitarian values and practices. But we also find quite frequently reported incoherent configurations. These are significantly gendered, and what is often denoted as a paradoxical simultaneity of egalitarian values and inegalitarian practices proves to be mainly a *female paradox*. At the same time, our study has unveiled an equally frequent incoherency of inegalitarian values and egalitarian practices, reflecting mainly a *male paradox*. The gendered “paradox” of incoherencies between values and practices is assumed to be attributed largely to women’s and men’s dissimilar perception of how the everyday household work is actually apportioned between the partners.

**Keywords:** Gender values, division of housework and childcare, value-practice configurations, gender perception

**JEL classification:** J22

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## Sammendrag

Tidligere forskning har pekt på et paradoksalt utbredt sammenfall mellom likestilte holdninger til kjønnsroller og ulikestilt praksis i Europa. Sosialdemokratiske velferdsstater peker seg imidlertid ut med størst sammenfall mellom likestilte holdninger og likestilt praksis. Med dette som utgangspunkt analyserer vi sammenheng mellom holdninger til likestilling og arbeidsdeling hjemme mellom partene i heteroseksuelle gifte og samboende par i Norge. Vi benytter data fra den norske "Generations and Gender survey". Ved hjelp av multinomisk logit latent klasse regresjonsanalyse estimerer vi fire forskjellige verdi-praksis-grupper av norske familier. Analysen viser at en relativt stor andel av norske par rapporterer samsvar mellom likestilte holdninger og arbeidsdeling hjemme. Men det rapporteres også hyppig om manglende sammenfall mellom holdninger og praksis, og her er det klare forskjeller mellom kvinner og menn. Det viser seg at det såkalt paradoksale sammenfallet mellom likestilte holdninger og ulikestilt praksis er primært et *kvinnelig paradoks*. Samtidig avdekker analysen et like utbredt sammenfall mellom ulikestilte holdninger og likstilt praksis, et hovedsakelig *mannlig paradoks*. Analysen tyder på at forskjellene i hvordan kvinner og menn rapporterer sammenhengen mellom holdninger og praksis i stor grad skyldes at kvinner og menn opplever og forstår sin egen og partnerens innsats i husholdsarbeidet forskjellig.

# 1. Introduction

The gender division of labour at home is often viewed as the last entrenchment of the process towards gender equality in society. Indeed, international time use studies reveal a slowly levelling out of gender differences, as women have decreased their hours of household work significantly and men have increased theirs modestly. These trends do not, however, alter the uniform picture of women still doing the bulk of household work. At the same time, attitudes and values favouring gender equality show a long term positive trend, as there has been a shift in beliefs about women's and men's work and family roles towards increased equality. Bühlman, et al. (2010) describe these merging trends as a "paradoxical simultaneity of egalitarian values and inegalitarian practices". Studies of the division of household work do, however, as a rule ignore that partners perceive and report differently about how household responsibilities are apportioned. Both women and men tend to overestimate their own, and underestimate the partner's contribution (Kamo 2000). At the same time, women hold more positive attitudes towards gender equality than men. Accordingly, women and men assess their actual household practices in the light of different standards, women reporting a more traditional division, and men reporting a more equal division of the household chores. Actually, one may ask whether the 'paradox' between egalitarian attitudes and unequal division of household work is primarily a female paradox. The present study will examine whether there might also be a male paradox, a simultaneity of traditional attitudes and perceived equal division of unpaid work.

We analyse the coherence between women's and men's expressed gender role attitudes and how they perceive their actual sharing or division of household tasks with their partner. Next, we estimate the prevalence and characteristics of various value-practice configurations among couples, including a great number of individual and family covariates. Thirdly, we examine which household tasks and which set of gender attitudes/values are the most significant predictors of the observed value-practice configurations. Our analysis is inspired by Bühlman et al. (2010), who examine the distribution of various value-practice configurations related to gender role attitudes and the division of labour among couples in 20 European countries. Our study offers a supplement to that of Bühlman et al., as it places a stronger emphasis on the significance of *gender*, both as concerns gender differences in gender ideology, *and* as concerns gender differences in how the division of household tasks is actually perceived and reported. Our study is carried out in a framework of a social democratic welfare state and a prevailing gender egalitarian society characterised by strong gender equality norms and a relatively long recent history of policies encouraging and promoting gender equality. To our knowledge, no other studies have formerly examined the prevalence and character of various value-practice configurations among Norwegian families, nor among families in the other Nordic social-democratic welfare states.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. The division of household work

How partners allocate housework and childcare may be affected both at micro level by individual and family characteristics, and at macro level by various community and national cultural, political and economic contexts (see Coltrane 2000 for review). As the current analysis is restricted to *one* country (Norway) and as such, to a relatively uniform institutional context, we draw primarily on a micro level framework. Scholars have developed a series of more or less mutually exclusive theories and conceptual approaches to explain differences in the allocation of household tasks within families. Greenstein (1996) draws particular attention to four (categories of) approaches, three of them principally gender neutral, the fourth category asserting that differences in *gender identity* motivate or cause significant differences in the allocation of household chores between couples. The three gender neutral approaches assume that most people like to avoid doing housework, and that housework allocation is governed by the rules and principles of exchange relations (Coltrane 2000). According to the *relative resources* approach the partners implicitly or explicitly negotiate the allocation of paid and unpaid work, and the partner holding the stronger bargaining power gets away with the least household work. Bargaining power comprises e.g. the (potential) economic resources of the partners, including education, labour market position and income. In general, the research literature finds some support of this perspective (cf. Greenstein 1996). The *time availability* perspective is also gender neutral in principle. Still, focus as a rule is set on the female partner's work and working hours outside the home, and the presumption is that husband's involvement in the households is strongly associated with the wife's involvement in paid work (Bouffartigue 2010). This perspective may however, be criticised for being theoretically weak, as the partner's (read the woman's) employment status is taken for granted and, hence, does not constitute an element of the couple's joint decision process. Besides, Greenstein (op.cit.) finds relatively weak support for the time availability perspective in the research literature. The third principally gender neutral approach focuses on the consequence of one partner being economically dependent on the other; the *economic dependency* model. Who of the two is dependent on the other is, however, seldom accidental. Brines' research (1993) supports this model, as she finds a negative relationship between women's degree of economic dependency upon their husband, and the husband's involvement in household work. Yet, like the case of the time availability perspective one may criticize the dependency model for taking the chain of causation for granted.

The *gender approaches* include a wide range of theories dealing with gender socialisation, gender roles, gender ideology and gender construction (Greenstein 1996, Coltrane 2000). These approaches

focus on women's and men's dissimilar gender identities; "the deepest sense of what one is" according to Goffman (1977, cf. Greenstein 1996 p 586). The assumption is that the female partner usually sees her role as mother, whereas the male partner sees his role as employee as the more important. According to the gender construction approach, both partners within the household act to validate their self-definition as male or female by constantly constructing and reconstructing their gendered selves. This process of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987) reproduces the gendered interaction order as both partners demonstrate to oneself and the other(s) that he or she holds the capacity and desire to perform appropriate gendered behaviours. Compared with most gender neutral approaches, it is particularly difficult to identify and operationalise the causation processes of the various gender approaches. Hence, these theories are often substantiated empirically by the gender neutral approaches being unable to explain the persistent and wide-ranging gender differences in the division of household work. Yet, Thompson and Walker (1989) argue for dismissing the gender neutral approaches as they "do not account for why wives still do the bulk of family work", and instead of focusing on factors accounting for small differences and limited change, one should focus on the persistence of the gender differences in the division of household work (Calasanti and Bailey (1991), see Coltrane p 1212).

The respondent's perception of the division of household work may be expressed as a systematic bias or error, related to the respondent's gender-role attitudes, perceived fairness in the marriage and demographic characteristics. As a rule such bias of perception is gendered. Among the possible explanations of such gendered perceptions, Kano (2000) mentions two dealing with the relation between values/attitudes and perceived practices, namely *social desirability* and *resentment against performing household work*. The social desirability explanation involves the individual overestimating his or her own contribution to appear socially desirable or "politically correct". Kano finds for the US that social desirability explains the amount of overestimation significantly more for husbands than for wives. We assume the same to be the case of Norway (and the Nordic countries) as the social desirability and political correctness of gender egalitarian practices is no less pronounced than in the US. Kano also found that both women and men over-report their contribution due to resentment of performing household work. This is particularly the case of husbands with less egalitarian gender-role attitudes and wives with more egalitarian attitudes. Women holding predominantly gender egalitarian values and high expectations towards equal sharing probably also accentuate their own efforts because they experience unequal practices at home as unwanted and even unfair (Thompson 1991, Ruppaner 2010).



## 2.2. Gender attitudes/gender values

Albeit the long term average trends towards increasing gender egalitarian attitudes, studies reveal a somewhat miscellaneous picture. Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) have shown that determinants and effects of gender role attitudes vary depending on which specific topics are inquired into. They found for the U.S. that whereas attitudes related to gender equality in general have been liberalized steadily during the last decades, the same is not true as regards attitudes towards abortion. Moreover, empirical research concludes differently as to whether sex differences in attitudes towards gender roles have increased or decreased (see Brewster & Padavic 2000). A fairly recent Norwegian study actually finds increased gender difference during the 1990s (Teigen 2006), mainly owing to a decline in young men's support to gender equality.

The most widely used explanation of differences in attitudes towards feminist issues are the so called *interest-based* explanations on the one side, and the *exposure-based* explanations on the other (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). A general assumption is that women's more favourable attitudes originate by their self-interest in increased, or equal chances of, participating in all social arenas and in obtaining influence and remuneration like men. Hence, as women's interests benefit more directly from a gender egalitarian ideology than men's, they are more likely to hold feminist attitudes. The interest-perspective generally assumes that women and men have different, and sometimes even conflicting, interests (Teigen 2006). Consequently men express feminist (or gender egalitarian) attitudes less frequently. The decreased support by young Norwegian men during later years may reflect that they see the increasing competition by young women in education and the labour market as threatening to their own prospects, and hence, in conflict with their own interests. The conflict perspective is however, not fully adequate, as men may also take interest in, and benefit from, a less traditional division of duties and rewards between the partners. Also, husbands are increasingly aware of their feasible (economic) advantages of both partners contributing to the maintenance of the family, and (emotionally) of both partners having a close and caring relationship with the child(ren). Studies from several countries find for instance, that men increasingly express positive attitudes towards household work, including childcare (cf. Coltrane 2000). Still, men continue to acknowledge their self-interest in equal sharing to a lesser degree than women.

The mainly "gender neutral" long-time positive trend of attitudes and values favouring gender equality is by and large seen as a consequence of both women's and men's exposure to new and progressive ideas towards gender relations (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). The exposure approach places emphasis on experience and education. The assumption is that gradual and long-term experiences of women and

men successfully taking new roles in society bring about non-traditional attitudes. Women and men make their own experiences as they undertake new duties and responsibilities and enter into new social relations. Increased egalitarian attitudes also reflect women and men experiencing new and untraditional achievements by others and by the other sex. Studies aiming at testing the exposure-based explanation empirically, most often use education as the main explanatory variable, finding by and large positive correlations between education and positive attitudes towards gender equality. Brewster and Padavic (2000) do however, find for the US, that the significance of education on gender role attitudes have decreased since the 1970s. Recent Norwegian figures also show the same picture since mid 1980s for young men (Teigen 2006).

### **2.3. Gender role attitudes and the allocation of household work**

Values are considered to be “non-redundant” (but by no means “sufficient”) elements in the process of steering actual behaviour (Lesthaeghe and Moors 2002). Yet, the literature reveals considerable variation as regards the empirical correlation between gender role attitudes and family behaviour. This is especially true in a direct causal sense, as expressed values and attitudes are not always followed by suitable action. As a matter of fact, the research literature reveals that the causation process may just as well take the reverse direction, as actual behaviour and life course decisions often contribute to reconsiderations and changes in previously held values (Lesthaeghe (ed.) 2002). Reviewing the literature on gender attitudes and household work, Baxter (1997) points to several studies finding attitudes the most important predictor of household labour patterns, whereas others find no, or only marginal, relationship between gender role attitudes and housework involvement. Baxter concludes that one main reason for this diversity in findings is the great variation in the measurement of attitudes.

An overall finding in later studies is that the impact of values and attitudes on the allocation of household work is conditioned by whom of the two, the woman or the man, holds the more or less gender (un)traditional values. Poortman and Van der Lippe (2009) for instance, found in a Dutch analysis of attitudes towards various household tasks that men’s attitudes influence more than women’s attitudes on the division of household work. Whereas most studies have focused on the relation between individual attitudes and the amount of household work performed by each partner separately, Greenstein (1996) and Jansen and Liefbroer (2006) have analysed the interactive or joint effects of the partner’s attitudes on the division of household work, i.e. on the relative contribution by each partner. They found, no surprise that the partner’s attitudes are not always identical, and maintain that it is essential to consider the interaction between the ideologies of husband and wife in order to understand how the division of household labour emerges. Jansen and Liefbroer found that the

allocation of household chores is a result of joint decisions between the partners, where both partners' attitudes are equally important, whereas Greenstein found that the attitudes of the husband influence the allocation of household work only when the wife holds egalitarian attitudes. A prerequisite for a relatively gender equal division of the domestic work, then, is that both partners hold non-traditional beliefs about gender and marital roles. Greenstein concludes that the background for husbands' persistently low contribution to household chores is that their gender ideologies have not kept pace with those of their wives in the shift from traditional "separate spheres" ideologies to more egalitarian beliefs (p. 594).

Particularly significant as regards the current study, Bühlman et al.'s (2010) analysis on value-practice configurations takes a special focus on the coherencies versus the incoherencies between gender values and gender practices. They found that the extent to which values and practices coincide varies both at the individual/family level and at the societal level, and that the translation of individual (egalitarian) attitudes and values into suitable practices is moderated and shaped by social structures of opportunities and constraints. According to Bühlman et al., most European heterosexual couples report practices largely consistent with their gender role attitudes and values during pre-parental phases. Birth of the first child however, brings along a shift to a situation of tension between egalitarian values and gendered practices. At country level the magnitude of this shift is strongly moderated by welfare policies, and social-democratic welfare regimes, including Norway, are characterised by such shifts being less evident and more reversible than what is the case with the liberal, conservative and post-communist welfare regimes.

### **3. Data and Methods**

#### **3.1. The sample**

We use data from the Norwegian Generations and Gender survey from 2007. The response rate was 60 percent of a gross sample of 24,830 respondents (Bjørshol et al. 2010). We have restricted our sample to respondents living in heterosexual couples (married or cohabiting) with children aged 1-12 years in the household. The latter restriction is due to the fact that questions on the division of childcare tasks were posed only to respondents with children under the age 13. Moreover, we excluded respondents with children under the age of 1 because most mothers and quite a few fathers are on parental leave, and accordingly, these families are assumed to practice a more biased apportion of household work during this period than they usually do. Our net sample consists of 3,112 respondents. The sample units are individuals, but the respondents provide some relevant information also about their partners

including the relative involvement in household work by both partners. Hence we obtain information both at the individual and the couple level. Whereas the information on attitudes relates to each respondent, the information on the allocation of household work relates to the couple.

### 3.2. Statistical Approach

We use multinomial logit latent class regression models in order to estimate distinct types or “classes” of value-practices in families and predict class membership. This is done in one procedure. A latent class model is a technique well fit, either to study the interrelationship between observed indicators and identify discrete latent variables from two or more discrete observed variables, or to construct a typology or characterize a set of latent types within a set of observed indicators. The latter is what is done here. The method studies categorically scored variables and is principally analogous with factor analysis, which is used for continuous observed and latent variables. It makes possible the characterization of a multidimensional discrete latent variable from a cross-classification of two or more categorical variables (McCutcheon 1987). Also, the observed individual’s responses are determined by a combination of the individual’s latent class and random error (Collins and Lanza, 2010:47).

In our analysis we search for the most typical classes and test for different number of classes. When estimating latent class membership, however, there will be uncertainty as to whether an individual  $i$  belongs to class  $c$ . This uncertainty is allowed for by computing a latent class model and a multinomial model in the same procedure, implying that the latent class membership is estimated as a probability. This method is not very widely used in social science, but the usefulness of the method has i.a. been demonstrated in an analysis of predictors of gender-role attitudes among Japanese women (Yamaguchi 2000). The model provides three sets of parameters: gamma ( $\gamma$ ) parameters: latent class membership probabilities (table 2), rho ( $\rho$ ) parameters: item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership (table 4) and beta ( $\beta$ ) parameters: logistic regression coefficients for covariates, predicting class membership (table 3). The  $\rho$  parameters express the correspondence between the observed items and the latent classes, and form the basis for the interpretation of latent classes. When covariates are included only  $\rho$  and  $\beta$  parameters are estimated; in this case, the  $\gamma$  parameters are calculated as function of  $\beta$  parameters and the covariates and provided in the output. We make use of a program developed for SAS for Windows (Proc LCA) by The Methodology Center, The Pennsylvania State University.

## 4. Variables and descriptives

### 4.1. Response variables

The analysis aims at estimating a number of distinct types of family value-practices based on women's and men's reported allocation of housework and childcare within the family on the one side and on individual gender attitudes and values on the other. We use two sets of *response variables*: gender attitudes and values and the reported division of household work, assuming that we can create a typology of configurations based on various degrees of gendered vs. egalitarian, both attitudes and family practices. The respondent's gender attitudes/values are constituted by his or her stated attitudes towards six statements on partnership relations (P), societal issues (S) and child-related issues (C). The respondents were asked to respond to each statement on a 5-point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Egalitarian attitude is defined as disagreeing with the statement (score 4 and 5). See table 1 for details.

Division of housework and maintenance work includes three female dominated tasks (F), two neutral tasks (N) and one male dominant task (M), while division of childcare includes two female dominated tasks (F) and two neutral tasks (N). The respondent was asked whether he/she or his/her partner usually performs, or whether they by and large share, each of the tasks. A gendered division reflects the female partner being the main responsible of housework and childcare and the male partner being the main responsible of maintenance work. A gender equal division is defined, either by the couple sharing the task equally, or the male partner being the main responsible of housework and childcare and the female partner being the main responsible of maintenance work. The latter is done because the fractions with untraditional division are too small to separate meaningful categories. Household tasks that are done by a third person or by the child(ren) were coded as equal sharing. In order to include missing cases on one or more of the response variables we used a multiple imputation procedure suggested by Rubin (1987). Table 1 presents an overview of the typology measures.

### Background variables

In order to identify what characterizes partners with different value-practice configurations we introduce several background variables: *sex* and *age* of respondent, *union status*, *number of children* in the household and *age of the youngest child*. Mothers' and fathers' *employment status* was included as separate variables; *part time* only for mothers<sup>1</sup>, while *educational attainment* combines mother's and fathers' educational levels. We also include mother's and father's *income*, and the ratio of her to his

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<sup>1</sup> The part-time proportion of Norwegian fathers is trifling (5-6 percent).

income. Table A1 shows background variable frequencies, divided by gender when relevant. The regression analysis controls also for missing values. The largest missing proportion relates to educational attainment where information was missing for 10 percent of the couples, mainly due to missing partner information. But as these coefficients proved to be insignificant, they are not shown in the regression table (table 3).

**Table 1. Proportion with egalitarian attitudes and equal share of division of housework, maintenance work and childcare. Per cent. Women and men (N=3,112)**

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
<b><i>Gender ideology (percent disagreeing with statement)</i></b>		
“In a couple it is better for the man to be older than the women” (P)	51	38
“If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship” (P)	72	63
“One the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” (S)	81	62
“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women” (S)	89	73
“If parents divorce it is better for the child to stay with the mother than the father” (C)	44	53
“A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works” (C)	77	53
<b><i>Division of housework and maintenance work (percent stating equal share)</i></b>		
Preparing daily meals (F)	39	52
Washing clothes (F)	19	27
Cleaning the house (F)	40	53
Doing the dishes (N)	61	75
Shopping for food (N)	53	71
Doing small repairs in and around the house (M)	4	4
<b><i>Division of childcare (percent stating equal share)</i></b>		
Dressing the children or seeing that the children are properly dressed (F)	50	61
Staying at home with the children when they are ill (F)	61	70
Putting the children to bed and/or seeing that the children go to bed (N)	76	88
Playing with the children and/or taking part in leisure activities (N)	85	90

Note: P = attitudes towards partnership relations; S = attitudes towards societal issues; C = attitudes towards child-related issues; F = female dominated tasks; N = neutral tasks; M = male dominated tasks.

## 4.2. Women’s and men’s reported attitudes and household practices

The overview of Norwegian women’s and men’s attitudes towards gender sensitive statements presented in our data shows a varied picture (table 1). Women state, with one exception, more positive attitudes than men. The one exception, namely that men more seldom than women agree that it is better for the child to stay with the mother than with the father after divorce, is in accordance with the increased engagement in Norwegian fathers’ rights and duties during later years, also after divorce,

and reflects a long smouldering discontent among many divorced fathers with what they see as a raw deal concerning the rights to be with their children. Although the partly persistent traditional views reflected in table 1, especially among men, may seem somewhat surprising in a prevailing gender equal context like the Norwegian, it appears intelligible that both women and men express less traditional attitudes towards general, societal matters than towards private matters associated with the partner and child(ren). This is in accordance with earlier studies accounted for above, showing great variation depending on which specific topics are inquired into. We suggest that the relatively liberal societal attitudes should be interpreted mainly in the light of a generalised *exposure-based* explanation, whereas the different attitudes between women and men, and especially on private matters, to a larger degree reflect *interest-based* gender differences.

Norwegian women and men hardly differ from other women and men in that both partners tend to overestimate their own contribution to the household work and to underestimate the contribution of her/his partner. As a matter of fact the partners disagree significantly as to how they actually apportion all but one household chore (table 1). This disagreement persists also after control for a variety of individual and family characteristics (figures not shown). As accounted for above, the gendered perception may stem from either a wish to appear in a *socially desirable* manner, or from a *resentment* of performing household work. The latter implies an overestimation of own efforts as a reaction to what he or she may experience as an unfair or superfluous demand of his or her contribution. In Norway, with its strong gender egalitarian norms, the perceptions and the replies of men are most probably affected by both conditions, i.e. both a wish for social desirability and a resentment against high demands (most presumably by their partner). As for women, however, the general social norm of equal sharing should sooner, if anything, contribute to a (relative) underestimation of own efforts. Possible impatience caused by non-satisfied expectancies of equal sharing might however, possibly result in resentment also among women, as a reaction to what they may experience as an unfair division of the household work.

## 5. Value-practice configurations

### 5.1. Hypotheses

As shown, Norwegian women and men express differently as regards gender attitudes and the division of duties and responsibilities at home. But how do women's and men's attitudes and (perceived) practices cohere? We take five hypotheses as a point of departure:

- H1. Firstly, and despite the evident gender differences, we expect to find that Norwegians on the average are predominantly characterised by coherence between egalitarian gender values and egali-

tarian practices. This is substantiated by Bùhlman et al.'s (2010) findings of prevailing coherence between gender egalitarian values and household practices in social-democratic regime countries, *and* by the fact that Norway is a predominantly gender egalitarian society, - the latter at least as public practices, norms and policies are concerned. To assess the content of “prevailing coherence” we will undertake a rough comparison with the findings of Bùhlman et al.'s (op.cit.) analysis of 20 European countries grouped in four welfare regimes.

- H2. Due to the fact that women and men report largely dissimilar both attitudes and practices, however, we expect that value-practice configurations vary significantly according to the sex of the respondent. If that is true, it points in the direction of a gendered paradox, particularly as regards incoherent value-practices. We assume that the female paradox reflects egalitarian attitudes and (perceived) inegalitarian household practices, whereas the male paradox reflects inegalitarian attitudes and (perceived) egalitarian practices.
- H3. Thirdly, in line with Bùhlman et al.'s assertion that social democratic welfare arrangements moderates the possible value-practice tensions caused by life course and family changes, we expect to find little or no significant correlation between value-practice configurations and the age of the partners and/or the age and number of children.
- H4. Fourthly, we assume that expressed gender egalitarian attitudes towards family matters are more significant predictors of coherent egalitarian values and practices than expressed egalitarianism towards general societal matters. That is because we imagine that general political attitudes may well exist more or less independently of family and household practices.
- H5. Analogously, we expect to find that the more equal sharing of the most gendered household chores, the higher probability of belonging to the coherent egalitarian “class” of couples. We assume that the coherent egalitarian couples may represent a type of pioneering men and women, willing to accommodate untraditional values to untraditional practices.

## 5.2. Results

The results from the multinomial logit latent class regression analysis are presented in tables 2-4. The first step was to create a typology of Norwegian couples, based on gender role attitudes and the division of household tasks. Testing for different numbers of latent classes, we ended up with four classes or types of couples. Based on the distribution of the attitudes and practices within each class (see table 4) we denote the classes “Coherent egalitarian”, “Egalitarian attitudes – gendered practices”, “Gendered attitudes – egalitarian practices”, and “Coherent gendered”. The findings will be discussed in relation to each of our five hypotheses.



**Table 2. Multinomial logit latent-class regression. Distribution of latent class (value-practice configurations) probabilities based on information by all respondents and by female and male respondents separately**

	Coherent egalitarian	Egalitarian attitudes – gendered practices	Gendered attitudes – egalitarian practices	Coherent gendered
<i>Latent class prevalence</i>				
All respondents model	.39	.25	.27	.10
Male respondents model	.40	.05	.35	.20
Female respondents model	.47	.33	.08	.12

Starting with hypothesis 1, 39 percent of Norwegian women and men living in heterosexual couples with children 1-12 years, experience a family life where her/his predominantly gender egalitarian values are in coherence with a predominantly egalitarian division of the household work (table 2). How does this result coincide with our expectations? Bühlman et al., indeed using another set of data and different methodology than the present study, find on the average that approximately one out of two couples in socio-democratic regime countries against one out four and five in liberal, conservative and post-communistic regime countries are characterized by coherent egalitarian values and occupational practices. They do not present accurate numbers from their corresponding analysis of configurations of household work, but conclude that the results as regards household work do not differ substantially from those of occupational work (p.59). Due to the dissimilarities between ours and Bühlman et al.'s studies, we cannot state precisely whether the results of the two analyses concur. The fact that our Norwegian results display a proportion of coherent egalitarian couples almost twice the proportion of the Non-social-democratic countries according to Bühlman et al., does however, corroborate their conclusions.

Still, as citizens of one of the internationally most gender egalitarian countries, we are somewhat surprised by what we consider to be a modest proportion of parents and partners experiencing coherent gender egalitarian family lives. We find it somewhat surprising also, that more than half of the couples report incoherent configurations, and particularly that 27 percent of the partners express gendered values and at the same time report egalitarian household practices. The latter proportion constitutes almost three times the proportion found by Bühlman et al. This incongruity between the two studies in addition to the widespread contrast between attitudes and household practices revealed in Norwegian families rise interesting theoretical and empirical questions that cannot be inquired further into in the present paper.

**Table 3. Multinomial logit latent-class regression: predicting the effect of gender plus individual and family demographic and socio-economic characteristics on latent-class (value-practice configuration-) membership. Odds ratio estimates. Reference class: Coherent gendered**

	Coherent egalitarian	Egalitarian attitudes – gendered practices	Gendered attitudes – egalitarian practices
Female respondent (vs. male)	1.70*	3.65*	.59*
Age of female partner (vs. below 30 years)			
30-36 years	.79	1.03	.90
37-42 years	0.98	1.28	1.01
Above 42 years	1.13	1.58	1.20
Age of male partner (vs. below 30 years)			
30-36 years	1.66	1.44	1.11
37-42 years	1.37	1.33	.97
Above 42 years	1.23	1.16	.86
Couple married (vs. cohabiting)	0.87	.68*	.80
No. of children in the household (vs. 1 child)			
2 children	1.18	1.22	1.27
3 or more children	0.83	0.90	.89
Age of the youngest child (vs. 1-2 years)			
3-6 years	.81	.92	.91
7-12 years	.78	1.06	.87
Female partner's work activity (vs. not employed)			
Full-time employed	2.74*	1.35	3.29*
Part-time employed	1.23	1.08	1.63*
Male partner's work activity (vs. not employed)			
Employed	1.06	1.29	.78
Couples educational attainment (vs. both low)			
Woman low - man high	1.65*	1.17	1.45
Woman high – man low	1.86*	1.96*	1.38
Both high	3.71*	2.12*	1.98*
Income of female partner (linear)	1.01*	1.00	1.01
Fathers income (linear)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Income ratio within the couple (vs. mother earns up to 25% of fathers income)			
26-50%	1.27	1.24	1.44
51-75%	1.20	1.15	1.58*
76-100%	2.46*	1.64*	2.41*
Mother earns more than the father	1.31	.90	1.15

Note: \* significant at 0.05 level

Our second hypothesis (hypothesis 2) postulates that the general picture of value-practice configurations will differ significantly depending on the views of women and men, as women and men experience and express differently both as concerns attitudes and household practices. Table 3 presents the results of three multinomial regression models with the coherent gendered configuration as reference class and including a number of relevant independent variables. Compared to coherent gendered value-practices, the odds ratio estimate of female respondents reporting incoherence between egalitarian attitudes and gendered practices are significant as expected, and almost four times that of men, and the analogous estimate of reporting coherence between egalitarian attitudes and practices is all but two times that of men. At the same time, the likelihood of men reporting incoherence between gendered attitudes and egalitarian practices is almost twice that of women. To test the hypothesis of gendered paradoxes further, we have defined separate models for women and men (table 2). As expected, these estimates reveal distinct gendered patterns, particularly as regards incoherent configurations. Whereas the gender different prevalence of coherent configurations makes less than ten percentage points, the egalitarian attitudes - gendered practices paradox appears almost exclusively female, and the gendered attitudes - egalitarian practices paradox appears almost exclusively male.

As expected also, net of other assumed significant characteristics, there is virtually no significant correlation between value-practice configurations and biographical stage of life, i.e. the age of the partners and the number and age of children (hypothesis 3), cf. table 3. It should be put in mind however, that couples without children under 13 and couples with children under 1 year of age, are not included in our analysis (cf. above). Hence, we do not register possible changes in connection with childbirth. Factors that *do* correlate with partners' adjustment between attitudes and household practices are, however, socio-economic characteristics, especially women's (full time) employment, both partners (high) educational level and relatively equal income ratio between the partners. These factors increase the probability of all configurations as compared to the coherent gendered. The correlation with employment and income is most significant for configurations of equal practices. This is no surprise, and underlines the relevance also of the three so called gender neutral approaches to the understanding of the allocation of household work accounted for in the theoretical background paragraph.

**Table 4. Multinomial logit latent-class regression. Item-response probabilities conditional on latent class- (value-practice configuration-) membership. All respondents**

	Coherent egalitarian	Egalitarian attitudes – gendered practices	Gendered attitudes – egalitarian practices	Coherent gendered
<i>Gender ideology (Disagreeing in statement)</i>				
“In a couple it is better for the man to be older than the women” (P)	.63	.56	.33	.07
“If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship” (P)	.90	.78	.42	.26
“One the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” (S)	.93	.88	.41	.24
“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than Women” (S)	.97	.91	.63	.43
“If parents divorce it is better for the child to stay with the mother than the father” (C)	.60	.46	.44	.21
“A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works” (C)	.83	.72	.47	.29
<i>Division of housework and maintenance work (stating equal share)</i>				
Preparing daily meals (F)	.59	.18	.62	.15
Washing clothes (F)	.32	.07	.31	.05
Cleaning the house (F)	.62	.15	.41	.22
Doing the dishes (N)	.82	.38	.83	.52
Shopping for food (N)	.61	.36	.78	.45
Doing small repairs in and around the house) (M)	.04	.05	.04	.04
<i>Division of childcare (stating equal share)</i>				
Dressing the children or seeing that the children are properly dressed (F)	.69	.27	.73	.26
Staying at home with the children when they are ill (F)	.80	.42	.79	.31
Putting the children to bed and/or seeing that the children go to bed (N)	.93	.61	.92	.66
Playing with the children and/or taking part in leisure activities (N)	.95	.74	.95	.78

Note: P = attitudes towards partnership relations; S = attitudes towards societal issues; C = attitudes towards child-related issues; F = female dominated tasks; N = neutral tasks; M = male dominated tasks.

Now turning to hypothesis 4, where we assumed that expressed egalitarian attitudes towards *family matters* constitute a particularly significant premise for living a coherent egalitarian family life. Table

4, presenting the conditional probability of disagreeing with the six gender traditional statements, does, however, show the highest expressed non-traditional attitudes relate to the more general social and political matters. This is true both for the coherent egalitarian and, albeit at a lower level, for the egalitarian attitudes-gendered practices class. Coherent egalitarian couples score the least traditional, and coherent gendered couples score the most traditional on all statements. Hence, it turns out that the distinction between the four classes of value-configurations identified in the present study are induced by dissimilar attitudes towards a broad spectre of gender related social and familial concerns, and not to only a few, (or) detached issues. This indicates that the observed dissimilarities in practical and experienced household arrangements stem from differences as regards *general gender value orientations*, which implies according to Moors (2002: p 221) an organization of attitudes focusing on different objects, and transcending the specificity of each attitude.

Finally, we find that the results by and large corroborate our expectation that the extent to which partners share the most gendered household chores differentiates more significantly between the various configurations than does the extent of sharing the more gender neutral chores (hypothesis 5). This is substantiated by the larger percentual class differences as regards female dominated than as regards “neutral” chores (table 4). This is the case of both housework and childcare. The conditional probability patterns of equal sharing are however, almost identical between the two classes of egalitarian-practices and between the two classes of gendered-practices. Hence, the corroboration of the hypothesis should be somewhat differentiated, as the “pioneering” achievements of crossing persistently traditional gender barriers are not confined only to the couples expressing untraditional gender values. In addition, there is *one* catchy exception to the described picture, namely the unisonant, traditional unequal sharing of maintenance work. Irrespective of value-practice configuration, men do by far the better part of the necessary repairs in and around the house. This indicates that women are no less reluctant than men to cross traditional barriers at home.

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

The analysis presented in this article was inspired by Bühlman et al.’s comparative analysis of gender value-practice configurations among heterosexual couples in 20 European countries. They concluded that socio-democratic countries are, more than other welfare state regimes, conducive to women and men experiencing coherence between gender egalitarian attitudes and ditto practices, regardless of family stage. As Norway is a socio-democratic and a predominantly gender egalitarian country, we expected and found a relatively large share of coherent egalitarian value-practice configurations. Also, we expected and found no signs of increased tension between attitudes and practices in phases with

small children. We were surprised, though, to find also a large proportion, actually half of the couples, reporting incoherent attitudes and practices. The present study reveals that these incoherencies are significantly gendered, and that what Bühlman et al. denoted as a paradoxical simultaneity of egalitarian values and inegalitarian practices proves to be mainly a *female paradox*. At the same time, our study has unveiled an equally frequent incoherency of inegalitarian values and egalitarian practices, reflecting mainly a *male paradox*. This underlines the importance of applying a gender approach to the questions discussed in this article. Yet, the existing gender approaches to changing attitudes and the division of household work appear inadequate to explain women's and men's dissimilar perception of who does what in the household and the fact that both women and men report significant discrepancies between her/his own values and everyday family practices. Hence, the present study represents a challenge to the prevailing theories of the division of family work and responsibilities, both to the so called gender neutral and gender sensitive theories.

Several limitations should be recognised in this study. The Norwegian Generations and Gender survey does not include information on individual attitudes which can be linked into partner- or couple information, and the information on household practices does not show the (absolute) amount of household work done by each partner. This means among other things that we cannot identify and examine the *mutual* connection between the partners' values and the partners' practices at couple level. Nor are we able to demonstrate to what extent the gendered value-practice configurations reflect gender differences in *perceived* practices, and to what extent the reported practices reflect reality. These limitations are all mainly attributed to data constraints. The first limitation could be met by survey data based on couples as sampling units. The second limitation is not easily met, as all surveys reflect the respondent's more or less subjective understanding. Time-use surveys could, however, "force" the respondent to proportion his or her reported time use on various tasks to a 24-hour period, and thus contribute to a correction of biased perceptions. Thirdly, and like most studies in this field, we use cross-sectional data. The usual criticism against using cross-sectional data in the analysis of relations and coherencies, particularly when hints of causality are attributed to the observed correlations, is relevant also to the present analysis. We have however, throughout the discussion been careful not to assert clear causal relations or directions. Despite the limitations mentioned, and despite the fact that our analysis is carried out exclusively in a social democratic and a relatively gender egalitarian context, we believe that the observed gendered paradox of value-practice incoherencies is more or less a universal phenomenon. This assumption may be examined further by means of the International Generations and Gender survey, where the present Norwegian analysis can be made internationally comparable.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1. Frequencies of background variables. Women and men separately when relevant.  
Per cent (N = 3,112)**

Age	Mother	Father
below 30 years	10.7	5.2
30-36 years	35.9	26.5
37-42 years	37.5	37.7
Above 42 years	15.9	30.7
Marital status		
married	72.8	
Cohabiting	27.2	
No. of children in the household		
1 child	21.4	
2 children	45.7	
3 or more children	32.9	
Age of the youngest child		
1-2 years	26.4	
3-6 years	36.8	
7-12 years	36.8	
Work activity	Mother	Father
Not employed	13.7	4.8
Full-time employed	52.5	94.1
Part-time employed	32.1	
Missing	1.6	1.1
Couples educational attainment		
Both low	37.6	
Mother low-Father high	7.5	
Mother high-Father low	19.0	
Both high	25.6	
Missing	10.4	
Mothers income (10,000)	34.17 (mean)	
Fathers income (10,000)	55.65 (mean)	
Income ratio within the couple		
-25%	11.3	
26-50%	19.3	
51-75%	25.5	
76-100%	21.3	
Mother earns more than the father	22.6	

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