

New Roles, New Dimensions: Rethinking How We Measure and Analyse Gender Role Attitudes

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HILDA Conference 2026 – The University of Melbourne – 2 October 2026



**ARC Kathleen Fitzpatrick
Laureate Fellowship**



Australian Government
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Why gender role attitudes matter?

Widely used in research on **gender equality**

- Associated with key life-course outcomes, e.g. education, employment, fertility, division of labour within couples
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But what we find depends on:

- What we **measure**
- How we **analyse** responses

Four shifts in the study of gender role attitudes

01

ROLES SHIFT

Women's and men's **social roles have evolved** since measurements were first designed in 1970s-80s.

Revisit what gender roles mean today.

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Move from a unidimensional to a **multidimensional** understanding of gender role attitudes

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Call for items to measure the **diversity** of contemporary roles and previously unmeasured **dimensions**

Preserve longitudinal comparability

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04

ANALYTICAL SHIFT

Move beyond aggregated scales to methods that uncover **multidimensional profiles**

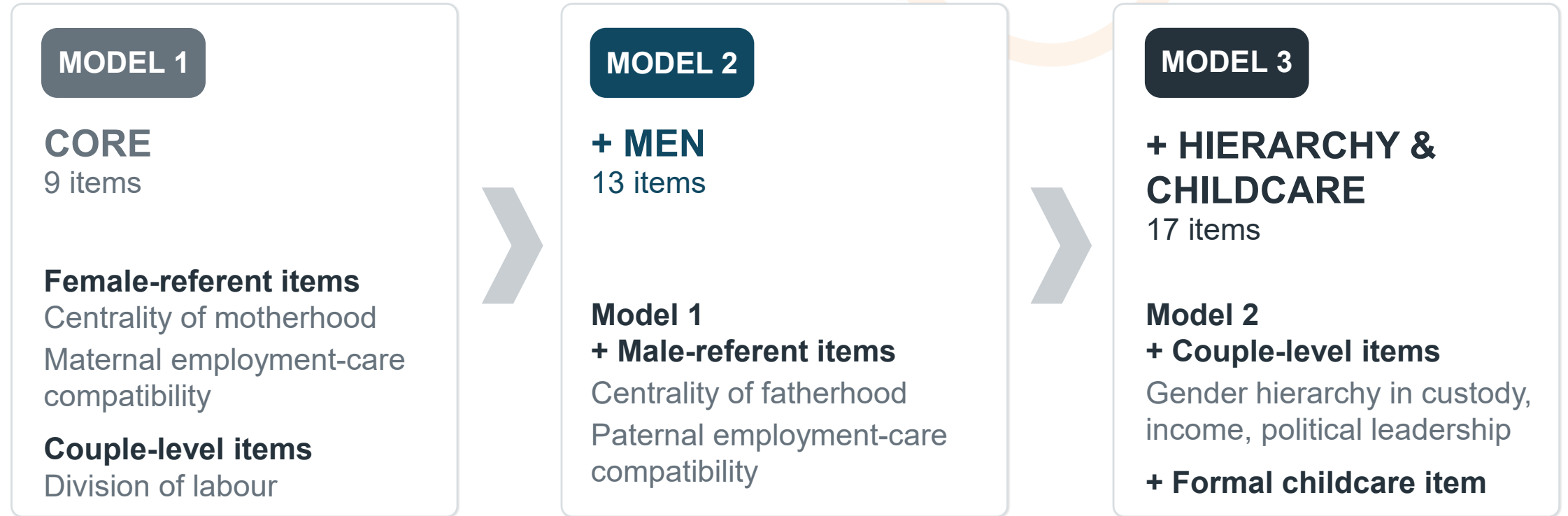
Research questions

1. How do item availability and analytical choices shape the profiles we identify?
2. How do these choices affect individuals' allocation to those profiles?

Case study: the HILDA Survey

- **17 gender role attitude items**, measured in 7 waves since 2001
→ 6 waves used in this study (2005-2023); 2001 excluded (only 12 items)
- **Target:** Assessing women (5 items) and men (4) specifically, as well as couple-comparison (7) and formal childcare (1)
- **Broad content coverage:**
 - Centrality of parenthood for identity (2 items)
 - Employment-care compatibility (7)
 - Division of paid and unpaid work (4)
 - Gender hierarchy (3)
 - Formal childcare (1)

Analytical strategy



Sample: Respondents who answered all the 17 items in at least one wave

Recoding: 7-point Likert scale recoded to binary (disagree/agree)

Do we find recurring profiles?

Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 1

CORE

Egalitarian
39.1%

Mixed
10.6%

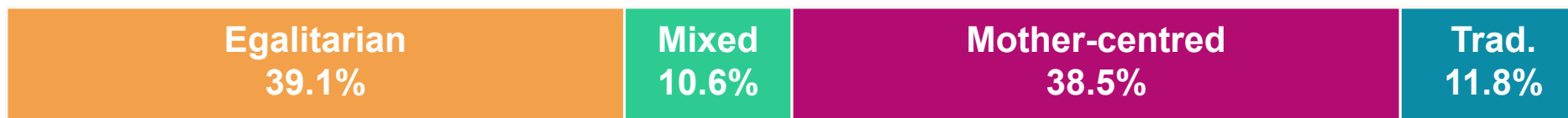
Mother-centred
38.5%

Trad.
11.8%

Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 1

CORE



Two Egalitarian profiles once fatherhood
measured are included

Sharpened profile interpretation

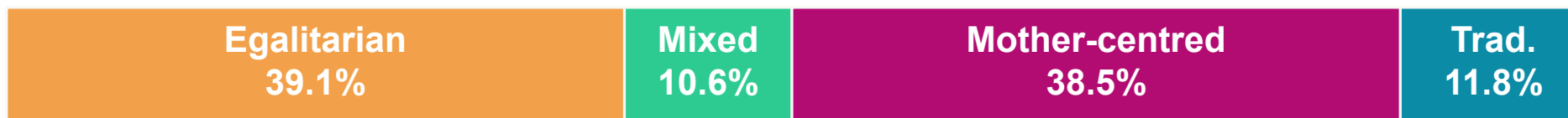
MODEL 2

+ MEN



Do we find recurring profiles?

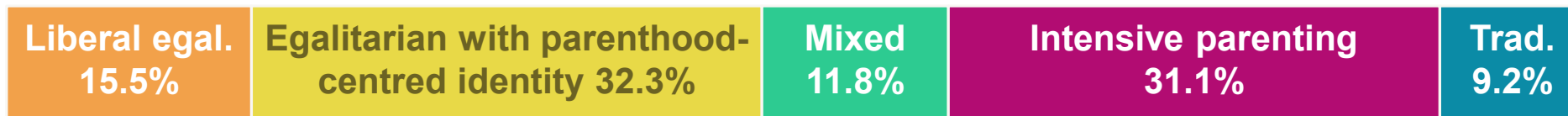
MODEL 1 CORE



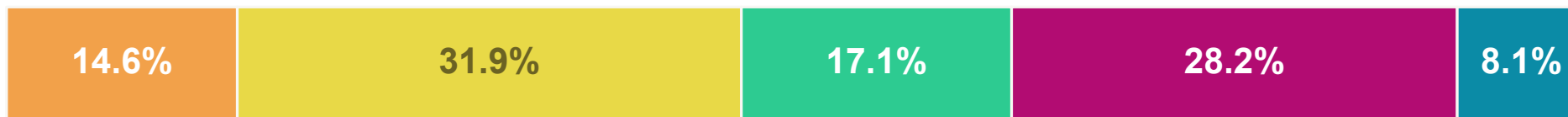
Two Egalitarian profiles once fatherhood measured are included

Sharpened profile interpretation

MODEL 2 + MEN



MODEL 3 + HIERARCHY & CHILDCARE



CORE



CORE

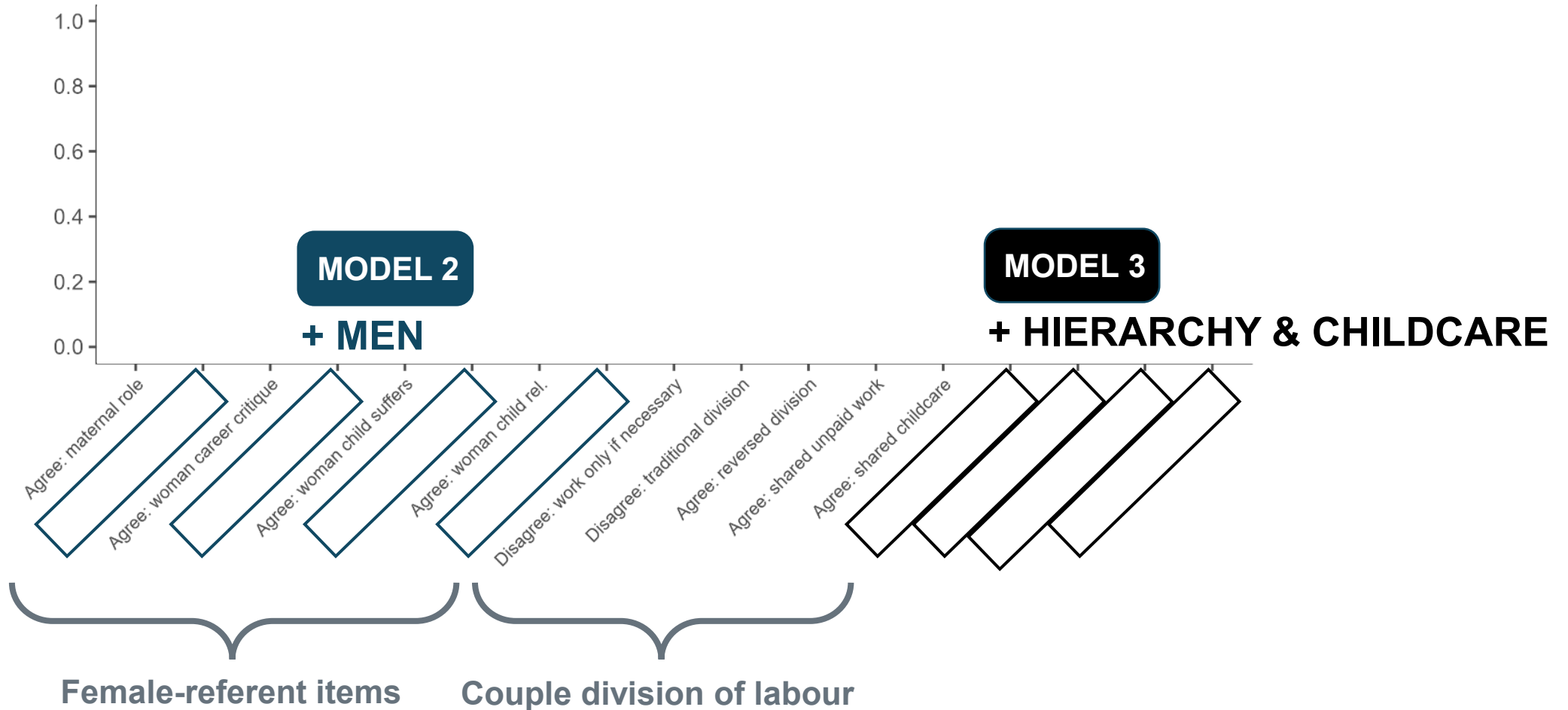
+ MEN



Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 1

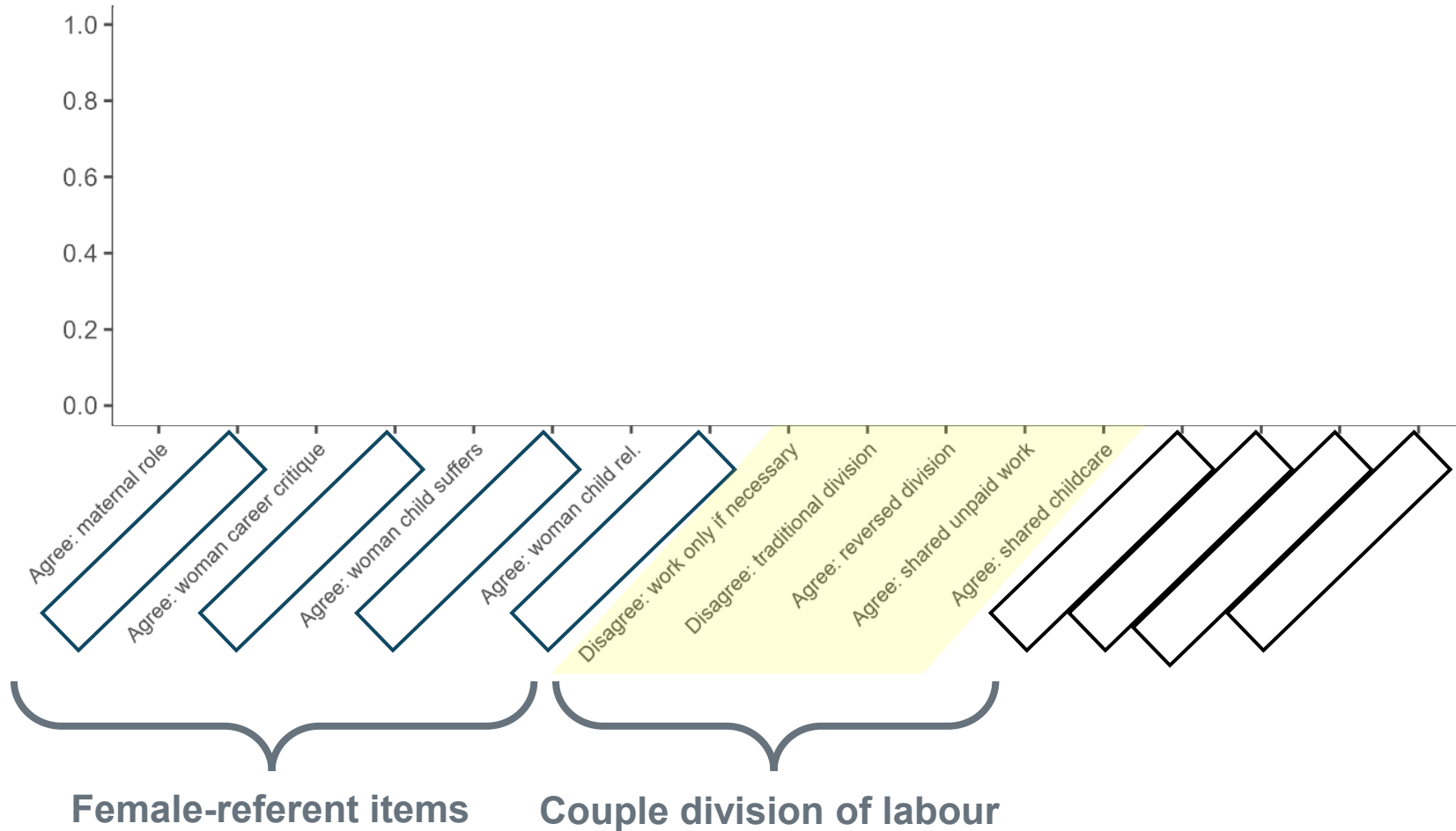
CORE



Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 1

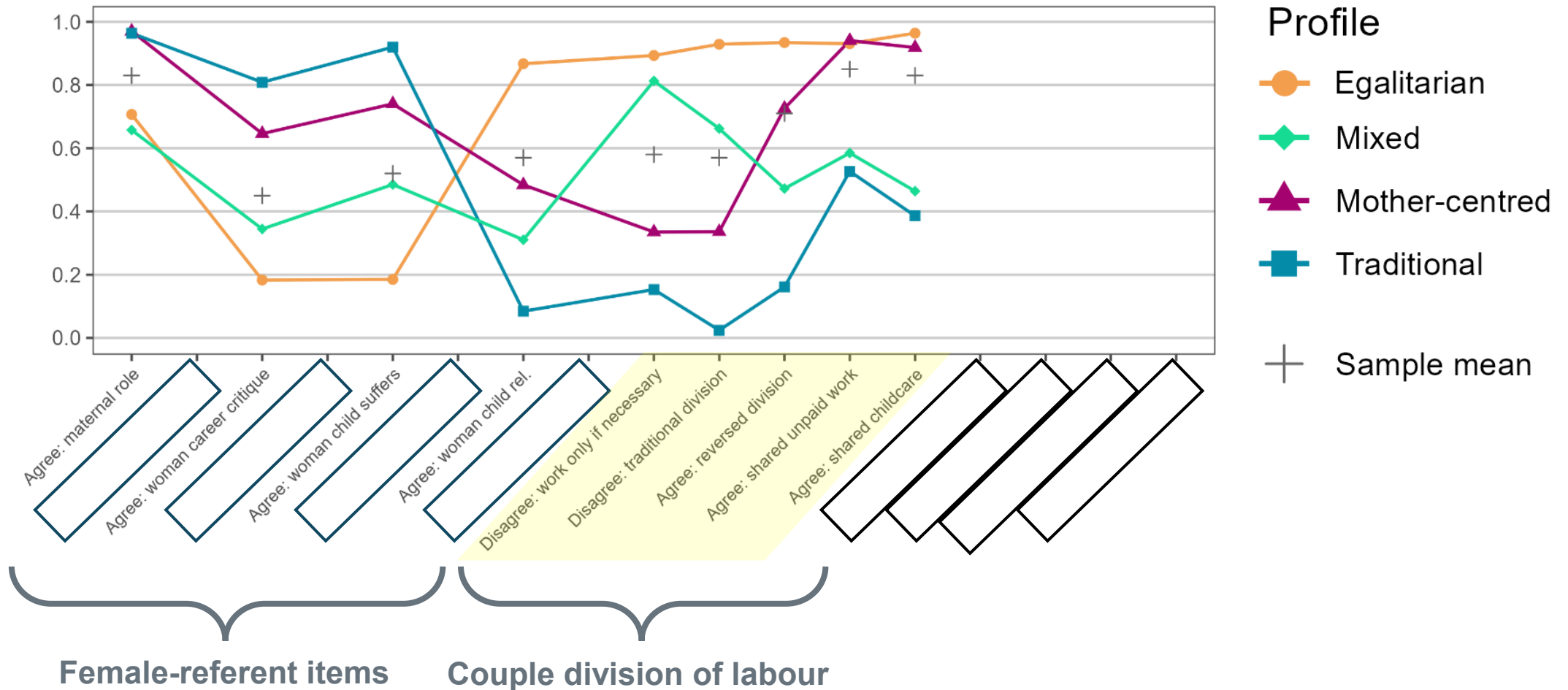
CORE



Do we find recurring profiles?

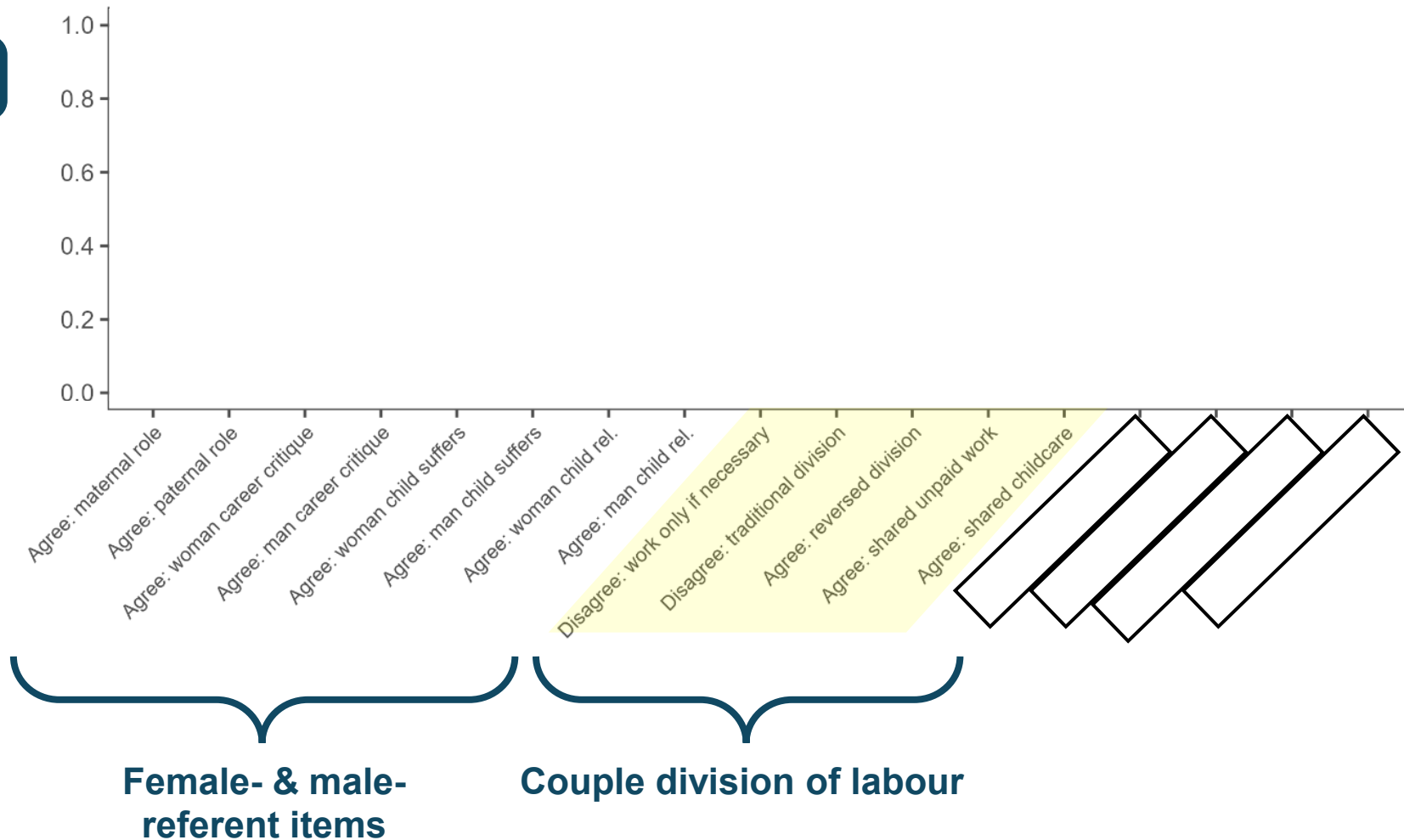
MODEL 1

CORE



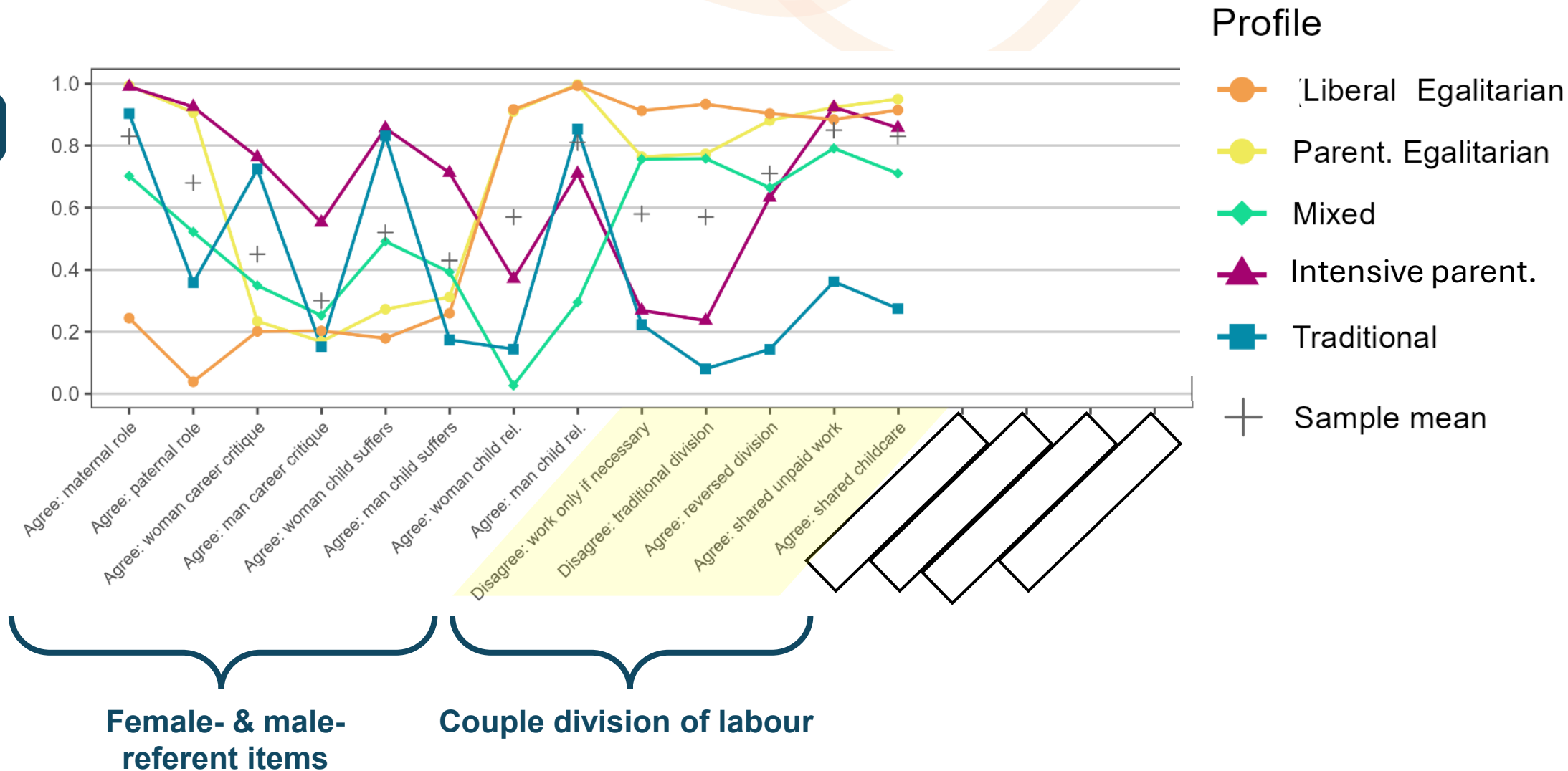
Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 2
+ MEN



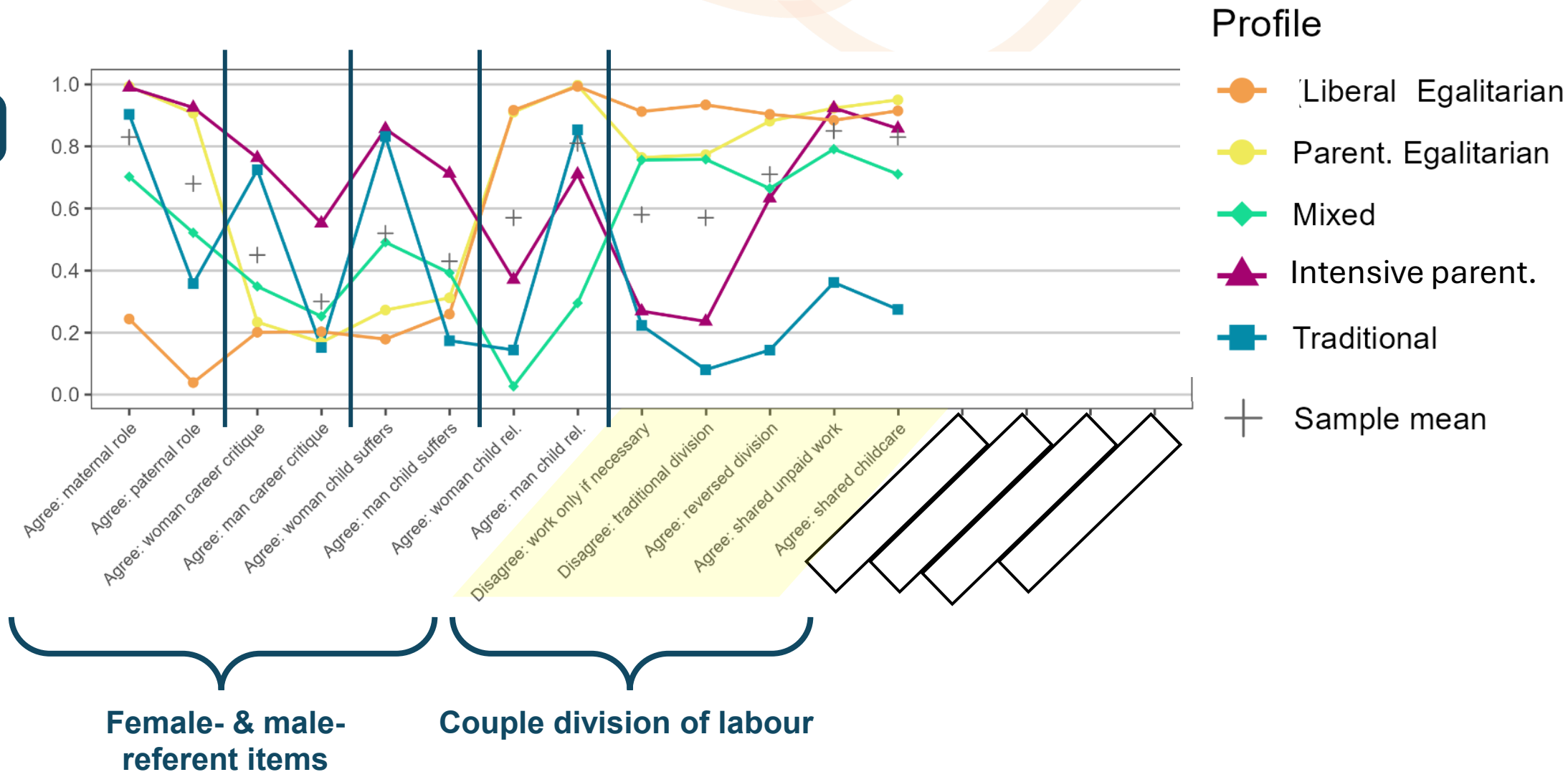
Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 2
+ MEN



Do we find recurring profiles?

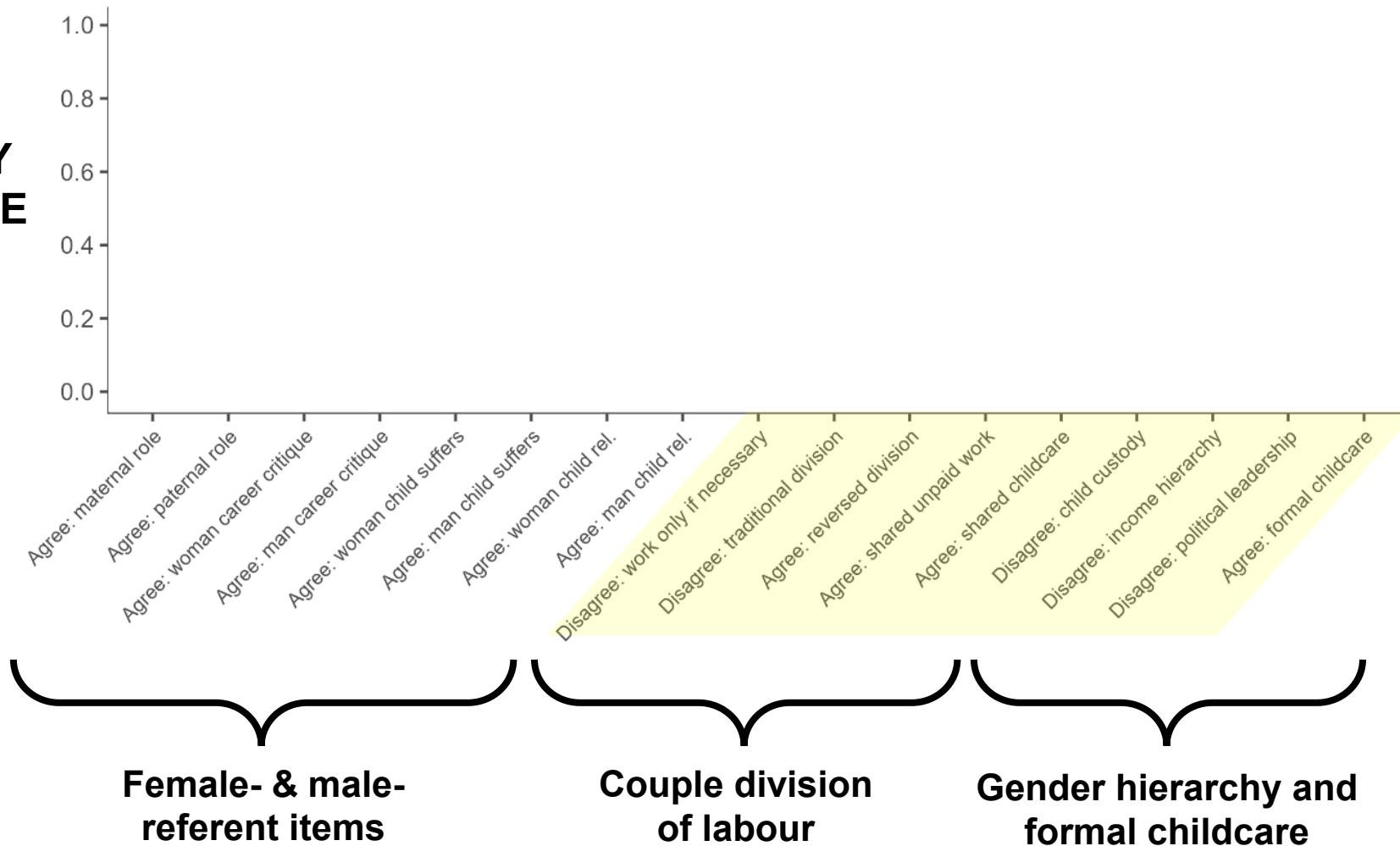
MODEL 2
+ MEN



Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 3

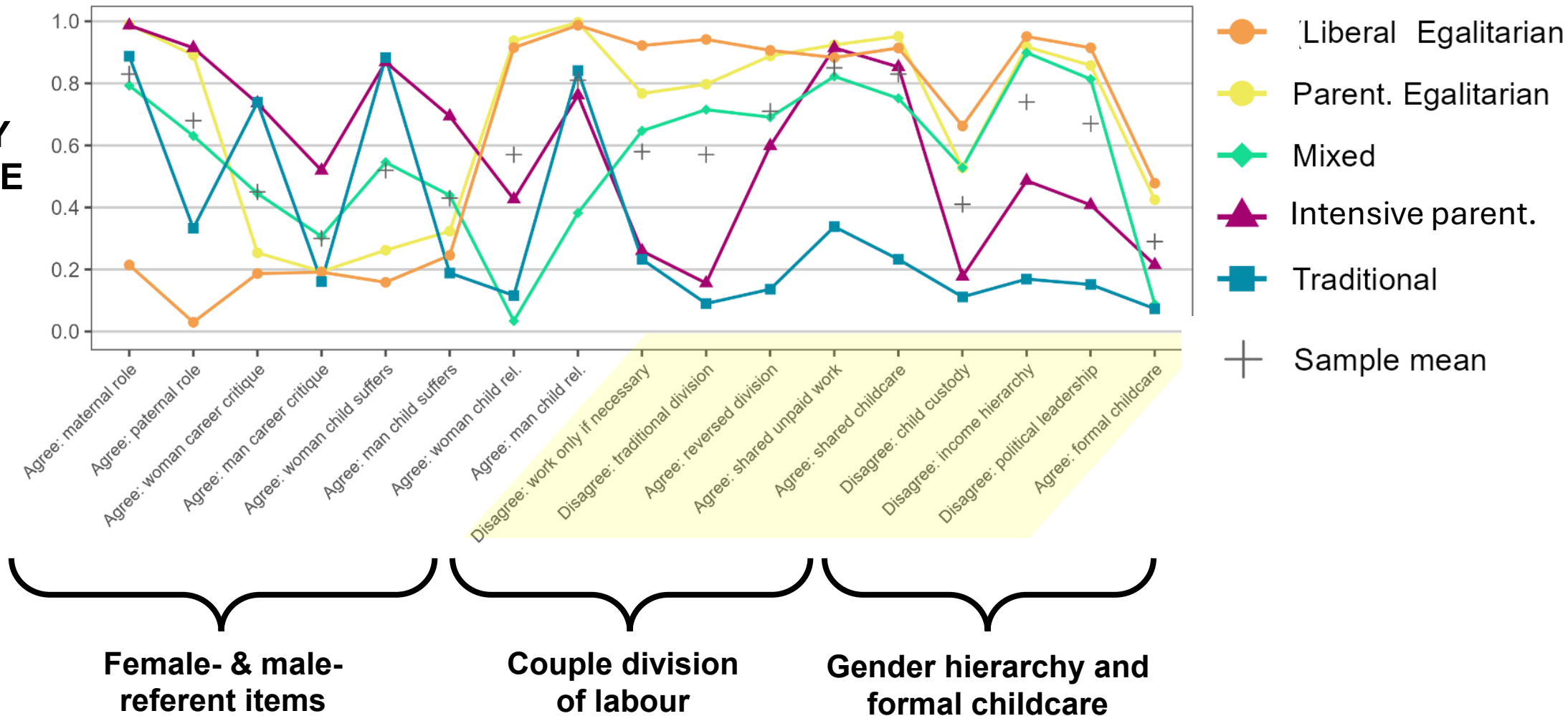
+ HIERARCHY
& CHILDCARE



Do we find recurring profiles?

MODEL 3

+ HIERARCHY
& CHILDCARE



The more, the merrier?

What additional items reveal

- Broader item coverage sharpens **profile interpretation**
- **Male-referent items** reveal **split** in egalitarian profiles and gendered **asymmetries** (i.e., double standards)
- **Hierarchy items** show where equality is accepted, not only whether work and care are shared

→ Item availability shapes what we can **identify**

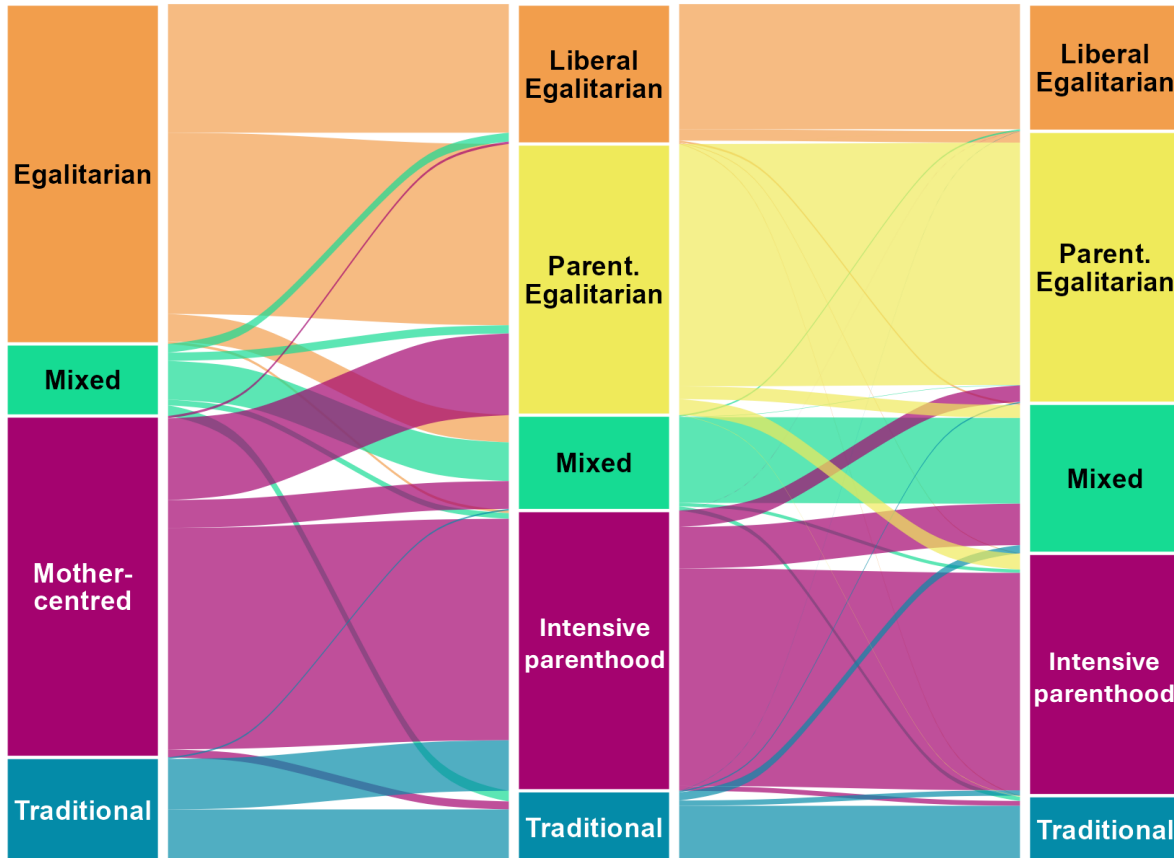


How stable is classification across specifications?

MODEL 1 CORE

MODEL 2 + MEN

MODEL 3 + HIERARCHY & CHILDCARE



- **Substantial reclassification between Models 1 and 2**
→ Male-referent items drive most of the change
- **Much greater stability between Models 2 and 3**
→ New domains mainly sharpen profile interpretation rather than redefine the underlying response patterns

Key take aways and next steps

Key takeaways

- **The same core profiles recur across Models 1-3**
- **Adding male-referent items sharpens their interpretation**, revealing gendered asymmetries otherwise invisible
- **Extending the item set reveals additional dimensions of gender hierarchy**

Next steps

- **Respondent classification across specifications**
Examine who moves between profiles as model specifications change
- **Sensitivity to response coding**
Compare the binary LCA with a three-category LCA and a LPA using the original seven-point scale

Thank you!

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This research was funded by the ARC Bringing Equality Home Laureate Project FL230100104.

Items wording (1/2)

Statement (variable)	Referent
Centrality of parenthood to identity	
1. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother. (atwkwrl)	Woman
2. Whatever career a man may have, his most important role in life is still that of being a father. (atwkmrl)	Man
Employment-care compatibility	
3. Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children. (atwkwms)	Woman
4. A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay. (atwkwmr)	Woman
5. A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works full-time. (atwkpsc)	Woman
6. Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work. (atwkmsw)	Woman
7. Many working fathers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children. (atwkwfs)	Man
8. A working father can establish just as good a relationship with his children as a father who does not work for pay. (atwkwfr)	Man
9. Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work. (atwkcs)	Man

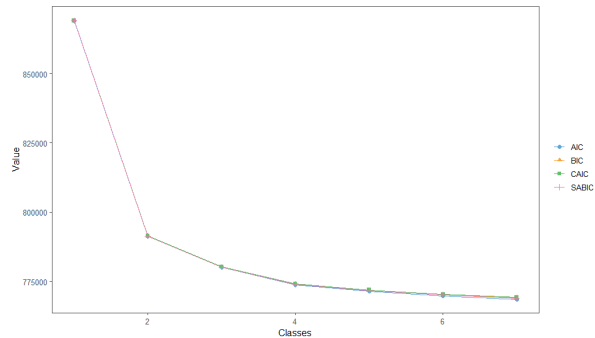
Items wording (2/2)

Statement (variable)	Referent
Division of paid and unpaid work	
10. It is better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children. (atwkbmw)	Male/female comparison
11. Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children. (atwkcdw)	Male/female comparison
12. If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the housework and care of children. (atwkseh)	Male/female comparison
13. A father should be as heavily involved in the care of his children as the mother. (atwkfhi)	Male/female comparison
Gendered hierarchies and care norms	
14. If parents divorce it is usually better for the child to stay with the mother than with the father. (atwkdcn)	Male/female comparison
15. It is not good for a relationship if the woman earns more than the man. (atwkmmf)	Male/female comparison
16. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do. (atwkmpl)	Male/female comparison
17. As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in child care all day for 5 days a week. (atwkadc)	Formal childcare

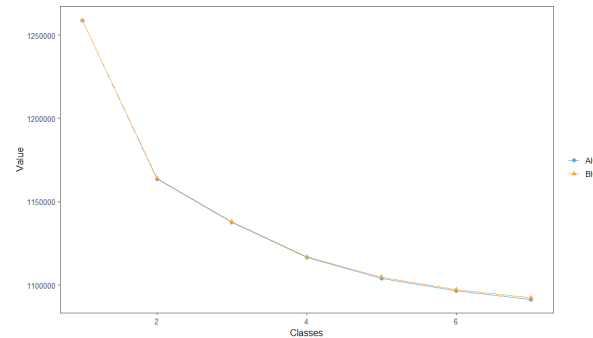
Model selection diagnostics

- Fit improves with additional classes, so selection also uses parsimony, classification quality and interpretability.
- Selected solutions: Model 1 = 4 classes; Models 2–3 = 5 classes.
- Average posterior probabilities $\geq .73$, $.80$, $.82$; Entropy = $.69$, $.78$ and $.81$.

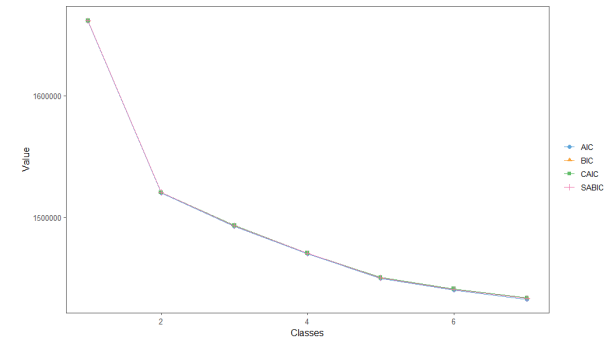
MODEL 1
CORE



MODEL 2
+ MEN



MODEL 3
**+ HIERARCHY
& CHILDCARE**



Parenthood status

Probability of being classified as liberal egalitarian or parent-identity egalitarian in Model 2 among respondents classified as egalitarian in Model 1

