

One Egalitarianism or Several? Two Decades of Gender-Role Attitude Change in Europe

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| ABSTRACT | This article challenges the implicit assumption of many cross-national studies that gender-role attitudes fall along a single continuum between traditional and egalitarian. We argue that this approach obscures theoretically important distinctions in attitudes and renders analyses of change over time incomplete. Using latent class analysis, we investigate the multidimensional nature of gender-role attitudes in seventeen postindustrial European countries. We identify three distinct varieties of egalitarianism that we designate as liberal egalitarianism, egalitarian familism, and flexible egalitarianism. We show that while traditional gender-role attitudes have precipitously and uniformly declined in accordance with the “rising tide” narrative towards greater egalitarianism, the relative prevalence of different egalitarianisms varies markedly across countries. Furthermore, we find that European nations are not converging towards one dominant egalitarian model, but rather, remain differentiated by varieties of egalitarianism.



| PROFILE | Mary Brinton is the Reischauer Institute Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. Her current work focuses on why several regions of the postindustrial world—including Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and East Asia—now exhibit historically low fertility rates that are leading to rapid population aging and the specter of lowered economic productivity. She is conducting a five-country comparative study of gender equality and fertility that utilizes survey data and original in-depth interviews with young urban adults in the family formation stage. Brinton’s broader interests are in labor markets and gender inequality in postindustrial societies, with a focus on Japanese society.

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| TIME | 3.00pm – 4.30pm

| VENUE | FASS Faculty Lounge, The Deck #02-01