

Safety First? On the Timing of Moving in With a Partner and Its Determinants

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Abstract: We analyze the first cohabitation with a partner as one of the key events in the transition to adulthood and consider its interdependencies with other life events, using life course data from the survey AID:A 2019 of the German Youth Institute (DJI). A remarkable finding is that for men, cohabitation with a partner usually occurs after an individual's entry into permanent employment.

Keywords: Cohabitation, permanent employment, school-to-work-transitions, trajectories, event history analysis

Geht Sicherheit vor? Über den Zeitpunkt des Zusammenziehens in einer Partnerschaft und seine Determinanten

Zusammenfassung: Anhand von Lebensverlaufsdaten aus der Studie AID:A 2019 des Deutschen Jugendinstituts (DJI) analysieren wir das erste Zusammenziehen mit einer Partnerin oder einem Partner als eines der Schlüsselereignisse im Übergang zum Erwachsenenalter im Hinblick auf seine Interdependenzen mit anderen Lebensereignissen. Ein bemerkenswerter Befund ist, dass der Zusammenzug mit einer Partnerin oder einem Partner bei Männern in der Regel nach dem Eintritt in eine dauerhafte Beschäftigung erfolgt.

Schlüsselwörter: Kohabitation, unbefristete Beschäftigung, Übergang Schule-Beruf, Verläufe, Verlaufsdatenanalyse

La sécurité d'abord ? Le moment de la cohabitation avec un ou une partenaire et ses déterminants

Résumé : En utilisant les données relatives aux trajectoires de vie de l'enquête AID:A 2019 de l'Institut allemand de la jeunesse (DJI), nous analysons la première cohabitation avec un ou une partenaire comme l'un des événements clés de la transition vers l'âge adulte en terme d'interdépendance avec d'autres événements de vie. Nous arrivons au constat remarquable que chez les hommes, la cohabitation avec un ou une partenaire a généralement lieu après l'entrée dans un emploi stable.

Mots-clés : Cohabitation, emploi à durée indéterminée, transition école-emploi, trajectoires, analyse de survie

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1 Introduction

In recent decades, young people have faced increasing demands to make individually meaningful transitions into adulthood (Billari and Liefbroer 2010). At the same time, life course patterns have considerably diversified and biographical security has declined, especially with respect to educational and employment careers (Groh-Samberg and Wise 2017). Education and employment trajectories are of particular importance for the life course, as they traditionally set the stage for important tasks in the process of reaching adulthood (Schoon and Silbereisen 2009). However, rather little is known about the causal interaction of school-to-work transitions and other key steps in young adulthood, such as cohabitation with a partner.

Beginning in the 1960s, the institution of marriage started to erode, and cohabitation of life partners became detached from family formation. During this time, many values and attitudes about gender changed dramatically; female school enrollment and labor force participation increased, and states began to expand family policies and enhance state support for families (Perelli-Harris and Sánchez Gassen 2012). As a result, cohabitation patterns have undergone significant changes since then. People today often live together before their potential marriage, and the number of those who marry late or not at all is steadily increasing (Hiekel 2014, 21). This development led to the establishment of non-marital romantic relationships as a scientific research subject in its own right (Manning 2020), and thus the transition to a co-residential union also became an important topic of research (Hayford and Morgan 2008; Wagner et al. 2019).

Since being in a long-term committed relationship without being married is now considered “the new normal” (Sassler and Miller 2017, 1), recent research often focuses on the cohabitation of unmarried couples. Unmarried cohabitation is understood among scholars as being either a precursor to marriage, an alternative to being single, or an alternative to marriage (Oppenheimer 2003; Xie et al. 2003; Oppenheimer et al. 1997; Hiekel 2014; Sassler and Miller 2017). Casper and Cohen (2000) point out that dedicated data sources on cohabitation are still lacking – i. e., those in which respondents provide information about non-marital cohabitation relationships. Nevertheless, many studies look at cohabitation in one way or another; some previous studies deal with cohabitation primarily in terms of social reporting (Casper and Cohen 2000; Kiernan 2001; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004; Stanley et al. 2010; Konietzka and Tatjes 2014; Kuperberg 2014). The vast majority of research to date focuses on the implications of cohabitation for marriage (Oppenheimer 1988) and family formation (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Kiernan 2001; Lichter et al. 2016). With regard to the former, previous work focuses particularly on the role of cohabitation in declining marriage rates, in delayed marriages (Rindfuss and Vandenheuvel 1990; Bumpass and Sweet 1991), and in increasing divorce rates (Kline et al. 2004; Jose et al. 2010; Perelli-Harris

et al. 2017). Thus, previous research takes a close look at the outcomes of moving in together (Guzzo 2014).

Another line of research focuses on the differences of cohabiting couples and couples who are “living apart together” (Lois and Lois 2012; Régnier-Loilier 2016; Wagner et al. 2019). Such studies examine the motives for establishing a joint household (Sassler 2004, Rhoades et al. 2009, Huang et al. 2011; Hiekel et al. 2014; Hiekel and Keizer 2015; Coulter and Hu 2017; Krapf 2018; Lewin 2018) or analyze decisions about which partner moves in with the other (Krapf et al. 2021). Other studies focus on the social and economic preconditions for moving in together and related social-inequality aspects. They examine how financial aspects (Clarkberg 1999; Sassler and McNally 2003; Smock et al. 2005; Mulder et al. 2006; Wiik 2009; 2011; Kalmijn 2011; Jalovaara 2012; Lois and Lois 2012; Addo 2014; Wagner et al. 2019), social background (Thornton et al. 1995; Wiik 2009; 2011; Jalovaara 2012; Kuo and Raley 2016; Wagner et al. 2019), and gender differences (Waller and McLanahan 2005; Huang et al. 2011; Lewin 2018; Parker 2020) affect the occurrence of moving in together.

While family sociologists examine the cohabitation of unmarried partners in terms of their effects on marriage, family formation, and partnership stability, the phenomenon can also be understood as a (non-mandatory) step in the transition to adulthood. From the perspective of life course research, the event of moving in with a partner is certainly a pivotal one, to which many other life events are necessarily or potentially related. Moreover, moving in with a partner requires the obvious: a partner. This statement is not trivial, since the chance to form a romantic relationship is characterized by social inequalities. Consequently, the occurrence of the event of cohabitation is also dependent on the availability of a partner (Goldscheider and Waite 1986; Dykstra and Poortman 2010).

In this paper, we analyze the interdependencies between moving in together and other steps in the process of autonomy development, using life course data on educational and occupational biographies from the survey “Growing up in Germany (AID:A 2019)” of the German Youth Institute (DJI). We first examine relevant transitions in adolescence and early adulthood with respect to their timings and temporal order. In a second step, we focus on the timing of cohabitation, identify factors that lead to an earlier or later occurrence of this event, and investigate how these affect further transitions.

2 Theoretical Considerations

Before a couple moves in together, the partners have to make a conscious decision to establish a joint household. This step is also linked to biographical prerequisites, such as entering a stable partnership or leaving the parental home. Thus, if we look at the

life course of an individual – and especially the challenges of young adulthood – we find that moving in with a partner is usually embedded among other events. There are two different theoretical perspectives on the timing of the establishment of a joint household with a partner and the chronological position of this event among other key events in young adulthood. The first strand of theory considers this event as the result of rational decision-making, wherein economic considerations are the main determinants. The second strand of theory considers it in view of the events and processes that structure the life cycle and thus sees cohabitation as one significant step in the biographical path to adulthood.

2.1 Economic Perspectives on Establishing a Household With a Partner

According to economic approaches, the event of moving in with a partner is based on rational decision-making determined by individual preferences, resources, and constraints. The proponents of “new home economics” (most prominently Gary S. Becker) believe that partners benefit from establishing a joint household because they can specialize in the division of labor and thus reduce costs (Becker 1981). In this context, the male breadwinner model was traditionally assumed to be the most efficient specialization, in which men engage in the labor market and women are responsible for domestic work and family care. In line with this strand of theory, cohabitation should be less attractive for men with few economic resources and for women with significant economic capital. The increases in school enrollment and labor force participation of women, the decline in men’s earning power, and the establishment of unmarried cohabitation as an alternative to marriage changed these basic assumptions in the decades that followed these societal shifts (Oppenheimer 1988; Blossfeld and Huinink 1991; Sweeney 2002; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004). Therefore, it is often assumed for modern couples that the benefit of living together arises from shared consumption of household public goods and shared leisure, and less from a specialization based on the division of labor (Lundberg et al. 2016). In the course of individualization, romantic relationships are considered an expression of self-actualization, where specific relationship practices create benefits such as intimacy, personal growth, and egalitarianism (Giddens 1992; Hiekel and Wagner 2021). Among couples, moving in together is also considered the foundation for realizing future plans and is seen as a central step on the path to family formation (Wagner et al. 2019). In addition, living together in a partnership may also be beneficial for physical well-being (Lindenberg 2013). However, these advantages also entail costs that need to be covered.

Depending on the initial living situation, the decision to move in together involves material and non-material benefits and costs, both present and future, that have to be weighed against each other. For individuals who still live with their parents, establishing a co-residential union is likely to be more costly than for individuals who already live in an independent household. In addition to new

rental costs and costs to furnish the household, non-material costs – such as lack of experience in homemaking – potentially influence the decision to move in with a partner (Wagner et al. 2019).

Couples who are living apart together face the question of whether they want to continue living in separate places or if they would like to form a joint household. Without doubt, relationship quality and the intention to make a long-term commitment also play crucial roles here (Liefbroer et al. 2015; Krapf 2018; Wagner et al. 2019; Krapf et al. 2021), but the decision to relocate residentially is also determined by cost-benefit considerations. Krapf et al. (2021, 4) describe the costs of moving in together as follows: “First, there are the actual moving costs, including the opportunity cost of spending time on arranging the move as well as the direct cost of transporting one’s belongings. Second, there may be other costs related to the move, such as the costs of furnishing and home improvement. Third, long-distance moves create considerable indirect costs because they affect the working and social life of the person who moves”.

Even if unmarried cohabitation serves as a trial phase for many couples before marriage and thus may be associated with fewer economic and family obligations than married life (Oppenheimer 2003), the establishment of a joint household entails considerable relocation and acquisition costs, at least in the short term. Therefore, from an economic point of view, moving in together is usually only worthwhile if the expected benefits of living together exceed short-term acquisition costs and, from a couple’s perspective, if one assumes a long-term prospective co-residential union. Consequently, it is rational for individuals to include their expected or actual income in these considerations. Permanent employment and a work history without major interruptions of periods of unemployment are likely to contribute positively to such calculations, while precarious employment can lead to conflicts that strain relationship quality (Berninger et al. 2011). As a result, according to economic theories, moving in together is expected to occur after entry into stable employment.

Even though gender role segregation today no longer fully corresponds to the male-breadwinner model postulated by the new household economists, women’s labor force participation is still lower than men’s, and women’s career paths are still characterized by more discontinuities. In this respect, the assumptions of new home economics should still hold some validity today, thereby making economic security (in the sense of entering secure gainful employment) of greater importance for men.

2.2 The Life Course Perspective on Establishing a Household With a Partner

Similar to economic approaches, life course approaches look at the constitution of biographies as the result of intentional actions taken in institutionalized life contexts. However, the life course approach primarily views single biographical events, such as the event of moving in with a partner, as structuring elements in the trajectories to adulthood (Hogan 1978; 1980; Marini 1984a; 1984b; Settersten and Mayer 1997;

Konietzka and Huinink 2003; Settersten 2003; Mortimer et al. 2005; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). The rhythm of the life cycle is a central topic in life course research; key concepts include the occurrence, timing, duration, and ordering of events, life stages and their corresponding trajectories, transitions, and possible turning points (see Elder et al. 2003 or Macmillan 2005 for conceptual specifications).

In the literature, it is widely assumed that a so-called normal biography, with a predictable sequence of life events, has emerged in the life courses of the postwar period (Osterland 1989). According to these assumptions, processes of institutionalization and standardization contributed to the emergence of a distinct life course structure that also defines the markers of the transitions into adulthood. In this context, age holds a special significance as the pace-setting organizer of life. Social norms are often suggested as an explanation for the observed statistical regularities in the transition to adulthood; these involve concrete values and beliefs regarding the appropriate order and timing of life events (Neugarten et al. 1965, 710).

However, many researchers argue that the idea of a normatively-shaped life course, with defined social roles and pre-structured transitions, no longer applies to the contemporary realities of life. They observe that life courses today are undergoing several significant developments, including processes of de-standardization, de-institutionalization, differentiation, and individualization (Settersten and Mayer 1997; Shanahan 2000; Brückner and Mayer 2005; Macmillan 2005).¹ These also blur the contours of youth as a phase of life. According to this theory, the adolescent normal biography as a biographically fixed sequence of events is dissolving.

According to Blossfeld and Prein (1998, 21), life courses are highly time-related, selective, and cumulative processes that can be characterized by causal and temporal dependencies. Resources are accumulated, opening up or blocking options in different areas of life, thereby determining further paths. From this point of view, the decisive events of the life course are both cause and consequence of other significant events.

2.3 Hypotheses on the Timing of Moving in With a Partner

The theoretical considerations point to two central aspects of the first cohabitation with a partner, for which corresponding hypotheses can be derived. The first aspect involves assumptions about interdependencies between the event of moving in with a partner and other events in the life course. According to economic theory, the establishment of a cohabiting union entails costs that can only be met if a certain level of financial security is achieved. This argument is also supported by life course theory: even though biographical trajectories today may have lost their rigidity and no longer conform to a timetable prescribed by age norms, it is expected that moving in with a partner is determined by earlier events that enable the possibility of moving in with a partner by ensuring some stable financial foundation upon which

1 For an overview, along with detailed conceptual explanations, see Brückner and Mayer (2005), Konietzka (2010), or Shanahan (2000).

to establish a joint household. Thus, *moving in with a partner is assumed to occur temporally after entering permanent work (hypothesis 1).*

Since we assume that expected income stability plays a decisive role in the decision to enter into a co-residential union, the predicted effect should only be evident for individuals with a permanent contract. Therefore, *prolonged episodes without education, training, or employment should reduce the likelihood of moving in together (hypothesis 2).*

The second aspect that can be extrapolated from the theoretical considerations deals with the social determinants that can foster or impede the timing of moving in with a partner. Since the gendered division of labor assumed by economic theories is still prevalent today (albeit to a lesser degree), we expect a gender effect regarding the importance of economic resources for cohabiting with a life partner. We expect that *for women, both entry into permanent employment and previous educational and employment histories are less significant for moving in with a partner than for men (hypothesis 3).* For the same reason, we expect a gender difference for educational attainment. Therefore, we expect that *men with higher educational resources are more likely to cohabit with their partner, while for women, higher educational resources are more likely to lead to lower transition rates to a co-residential union (hypothesis 4).* A corresponding influence can be assumed for parental educational background: *While a low parental educational level should reduce the likelihood of entering a co-residential union for men, it should increase the likelihood of this for women (hypothesis 5).*

3 Previous Research Findings

Empirical findings on three aspects of cohabitation are of particular relevance to the research interest outlined in this paper: first, findings on the age at which couples move in together for the first time; second, evidence for causal links with other life events and developmental steps that need to be mastered in adolescence; and third, factors of social inequality that may accelerate or impede the key steps in adolescence and, in particular, the formation of a couple household. Importantly, these factors also include gender differences.

Findings on *the age of entry into first cohabitation* vary to some degree in the research literature. There are several reasons for this. To start, the object of study is not always the same: while some researchers have examined the event of moving in together regardless of the partners' marital status (Kley and Huinink 2006; Wiik 2009; Konietzka and Tatjes 2014), others considered the entry into first cohabitation only among unmarried individuals. Among the latter, some studied only premarital cohabitation, that is, the entry into first cohabitation of couples whose partnership later resulted in marriage (Kuperberg 2014), while others also considered individuals who did not marry at all (at least during the observation period) (Konietzka and

Huinink 2003). Another important point is that some authors report the average age at first cohabitation with a partner (Wiik 2009; Kuperberg 2014), while others use the median age (Konietzka and Huinink 2003; Kley and Huinink 2006; Konietzka and Tatjes 2014). For example, Konietzka and Huinink (2003) stated that half of the women born in the 1970s engaged in their first non-marital cohabitation by the age of 23.5 years, and Kuperberg (2014) observed in her sample an average age of 22.4 years for female premarital cohabitants.

The age at which the event of moving in together typically occurs also depends on the cohort surveyed. For example, Kuperberg (2014) notes an average age of 22.2 years for women in premarital cohabitation in the 1985–1999 marriage cohort, and 22.7 years in the 2000–2009 cohort. Furthermore, the findings vary depending on region (Kley and Huinink 2006; Konietzka and Tatjes 2014). For example, Konietzka and Tatjes (2014) state that for both the 1971–1973 and 1981–1983 cohorts, young women in East Germany were younger than those in West Germany when starting a household with their partner (1971–1973: 21.7 vs. 23.3 years [median]; 1981–1983: 22.1 vs. 23.1 years [median]). Kley and Huinink (2006) find almost identical results for East German (21.7 years [median]) and West German (23.6 years [median]) women born in 1971.

Particularly striking are the observed gender differences concerning the age at entry into cohabitation with a partner. The literature consistently finds that women are younger than men when they start cohabiting with their partner (Konietzka and Huinink 2003; Kley and Huinink 2006; Wiik 2009; Konietzka and Tatjes 2014). While the median age of young women born in 1971–1974 is 23.5 years at the start of non-marital cohabitation, that of young men is significantly higher at 27 years (Konietzka and Huinink 2003). Similarly, Kley and Huinink (2006) found a median age of 27.8 years for West German men at first cohabitation with a partner and a median age of 25.8 years for East German men.

Overall, it can be concluded that despite certain limiting factors that must be taken into account when comparing findings on age at the onset of cohabitation with a partner, study results do not diverge very much.

Several studies have also explored associations and interdependencies between different life events in adolescence. “Individuals often experience events simultaneously across life course domains, and changes in one area can encourage or inhibit changes in another,” states Guzzo (2006, 384f), whose study examines the embeddedness of union formation in the life course. However, rather few studies specifically investigate *the interaction between first cohabitation with a partner and other life events* in young adulthood. Of particular interest to the present research topic are findings on the relationship between school-to-work-transitions and entry into a cohabitating union. However, some of the studies investigating the preconditions for unmarried cohabitation concurrently examine marriage as a “competing risk” (Thornton et al. 1995; Xie et al. 2003; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004; Guzzo 2006;

Wiik 2009; Kalmijn 2011), which complicates the transferability of those findings. For example, Thornton et al. (1995) examine the influence of school enrollment on union formation, distinguishing between effects on marriage and those on cohabitation. Overall, their results indicate that school enrollment tends to be incompatible with the financial responsibilities of both marital and non-marital cohabitation.

Unfortunately, hardly any studies specifically examine a causal link between entering the labor market and moving in with a partner. However, a large body of research provides empirical evidence on the importance of economic resources for related processes, such as moving out of the parental home and establishing one's own household. These are of particular interest, as the underlying decisions are likely to be similar in their social mechanisms. For instance, Le Blanc and Wolff's (2006) work emphasizes the importance of financial resources in leaving the parental home; they find that a child's income is far more important to moving out of the parental home than the parents' economic resources. In addition, Aassve et al. (2001), who study young adults leaving the parental home in Italy, find that future income sources and stable employment are important preconditions to establishing one's own household. The authors also provide evidence for the importance of the employment history, as they observe that individuals with episodes of unemployment are less likely to start living on their own. This finding is similar to that of Dykstra and Poortman (2010), who conclude that a poor employment history is associated with a higher probability of remaining single. However, this finding only applies to men.

As can be seen, findings on the impact of life events already provide some evidence that educational level, social origin, and gender substantially structure the life course. Consistent with this, previous research provides further empirical evidence on *determinants that influence the occurrence and timing of cohabitation*. As outlined above, school enrollment has a negative impact on cohabitation. In line with these findings, Konietzka and Tatjes (2014) reveal that highly educated men and women start to cohabit with a partner later in life. Findings on socioeconomic background point in a similar direction: increasing levels of maternal and paternal education are associated with significant postponement of first cohabitation (Wiik 2011). Moreover, as mentioned above, gender has a notable influence on life events. Guzzo (2006, 403) observes gender differences in her study regarding the impact of school enrollment on union formation and concludes: "[...] men's school enrollment [...] discouraged union formation, suggesting that despite women's increasing levels of education and employment, men are still expected to have the ability to form and support their own household when forming a new union". Similarly, Aassve et al. (2001) find significant gender differences in their study, concluding that only for men, stable employment is an important prerequisite for moving out of the parental home. Additionally, Kley and Huinink (2006) observe in their study that employment is still less important for women's autonomy development than for men's.

Furthermore, Kalmijn (2011) states, on the basis of his study results, that unemployment, little work experience, low income, and temporary employment on the part of men deter union formation. Comparing the competing risks of cohabitation and marriage, he concludes that marriage appears to be more sensitive to men's economic position than does cohabitation. However, from a life course perspective, the widespread modeling of cohabitation and marriage as competing risks seems unconvincing, given that most unmarried couples view their cohabitation as an intermediate step toward marriage (Hiekel 2014) and not as an outcome independent of marriage (as is assumed by competing risk models).

Thus, research literature already shows that some events in the life course are interrelated and can influence the occurrence of other events. Previous research also indicates that life events are highly characterized by social inequalities, which can significantly influence the occurrence and timing of these events. Empirical findings suggest that these might also be true for moving in with a partner.

4 Data and Analytical Strategy

4.1 Data

The data source for our analyses comes from the survey AID:A 2019 (Growing up in Germany 2019) administered by the German Youth Institute (Kuger et al. 2020).² In 2019, the sample was first established, making it the first wave of a panel survey. More than 6,100 households were interviewed using Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI).³ Among other topics, educational and employment histories were recorded retrospectively on a monthly basis. They contain detailed information on the nature and context of an episode in addition to the exact beginning and end of it, as well as whether an employment episode is based on a fixed-term or permanent working contract. The resulting data structure thus offers the possibility to trace the educational and employment histories of individuals over years. The two events "moving out of the parental home" and "moving in with a partner for the first time"

2 Data are publicly available for scientific use at: <http://surveys.dji.de>. The study was funded by the German Youth Institute (DJI).

3 The sample of the AID:A study is intended to represent the population of 0 to 32-year-olds in Germany. To achieve this, a three-stage approach was taken: In the first step, 262 municipalities were randomly selected with selection probabilities proportional to the number of inhabitants. To achieve this, larger cities were divided into sampling points. Then, in a second step, a fixed number of persons aged 0 to 32 was drawn from the population registers of these sampling points. These persons were contacted and asked to cooperate in the survey. In a third step, all other household members aged 0 to 32 years and all parents of minors who were willing to participate were interviewed as well. With this sampling approach, selection probabilities become unequal between households and clustering has to be considered. Therefore, all analyses had to be conducted using weights and survey statistics.

were recorded as part of a set of questions about major life events. If a specific event had occurred, the year of the first occurrence of this event was registered.

Our analyses are based on a subsample of young people who were at least 18 years old at the time of the interview and who were either still in school but did not aspire to enter university or who had achieved at most an intermediate school-leaving certificate. This means that we exclude all those who might attend university, because they usually have different life trajectories, especially regarding the duration of educational episodes and the corresponding timing of other life events. Furthermore, we exclude from the analyses all those who have never had an intimate relationship before, as they were not “at risk” for moving in with a partner. This results in an initial sample size of $N = 1420$, which serves as the basis for the analyses.

4.2 Analytical Strategy

The analyses are divided into two stages. In the first step, we look at the traditional key steps in adolescence and early adulthood with regard to their timing and chronological order. The transitions we consider are school-to-work transitions (entering vocational training, obtaining a vocational qualification, entering the labor market) and transitions that affect living arrangements (moving out of the parental home, moving in with a partner for the first time). Due to limited data on marriage timing and birth of a first child, these transitions cannot be modeled in the context of our analysis.

In the second step, we focus on the timing of cohabitation – i. e., the event of moving in with a partner – as a significant (though not mandatory) event on the path to adulthood. The timing of this event represents the dependent variable in the following analyses. Since no information is provided about the month of this event, only the year, the month of transition was set as January, in order to ensure that other events occurring during this year – such as a transition to a permanent job – are not misinterpreted as causal to moving in together. We utilize time-discrete rate models (Yamaguchi 1991, 118 ff.) to test the influence of certain time-constant and time-dependent variables that may affect the occurrence of this life event and may accelerate or delay its timing. Technically, this means that we split our episode data on a monthly basis and estimate logistic regression models with “moving in with a partner” as the dependent variable. In order to identify possible gender effects, the models are calculated separately for men and for women. To capture age dependencies, we include age groups by using three dummy variables (similar to piecewise-constant models) representing four-year intervals on the time axis (under 22 years as the reference group; 22 to under 26 years; 26 to under 30 years; 30 years and older).

The other independent variables relate to the current main activity status and past employment history, as well as to respondents’ own and parental educational level. The main activity status includes the categories “employment/internship

without permanent contract”, “school/vocational training/study”, “NEET (not in education, employment, or training)”⁴ and “employment with permanent contract”. For the employment biography, the months characterized by periods of NEET are cumulated. The educational level upon leaving general education for the first time differentiates between intermediate school-leaving certificate, lower secondary school-leaving certificate, and no or unclassifiable school-leaving certificate. Parental educational level is determined by the highest educational attainment of both mother and father, differentiated between a university degree, a university entrance qualification, an intermediate school-leaving certificate, a secondary school-leaving certificate, and no school-leaving certificate.

5 Results

5.1 The Event of Moving in Together and Other Life Events in Adolescence and Young Adulthood

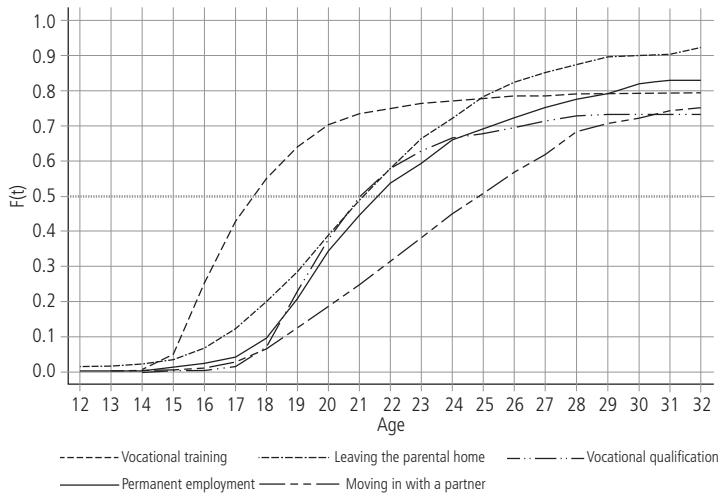
The first step of our analyses considers key transitions in adolescence and early adulthood in terms of their timing and sequence, using product limit estimates to assess the transition to different life stages by age. Despite the presumed processes of social de-standardization and individualization, the relevant transitions in adolescence and early adulthood still reveal an order that corresponds in its timing and chronology to traditional patterns.

Figure 1 shows the transitions into different life stages by age. The horizontal line in the middle corresponds to the median. In chronological order, the life events considered here are: 1) transition into vocational training, 2) moving out of the parental home, 3) obtaining a vocational qualification, 4) finding a permanent employment, and 5) moving in with a partner. In our sample, the median age for the transition into vocational training is 18 years. Moving out of the parental home follows significantly later, close to the completion of vocational education, at about 21 years. The entry into permanent employment occurs shortly thereafter, at about the age of 21.5 years. Moving in with a partner generally occurs later, at about age 25.

In contrast to theories predicting an increasing individualization of life courses, the chronology of life events presented here seem to follow a traditional and equally predictable pattern. However, this finding does not shed light on possible correlations between life events and on influential factors that lead to systematic variations in the sequence of events.

4 This status consists of the stages “unemployed”, “military service”, “child-raising period”, and “other”.

Figure 1 The Event of Moving In Together and Other Life Events in Adolescence and Young Adulthood (Product Limit Estimates)



Source: AID:A 2019.

5.2 Determinants of Moving in With a Partner

For the reason given above, in the second step, we focus on variations in the timing of the event of first cohabitation with a partner. Model 1 shows the transition rate when accounting only for age group and main-activity status. In Model 2, the effect of cumulated NEET is added to the model. Model 3 includes the educational level at the time of leaving general education for the first time. Finally, Model 4 incorporates the parents' highest level of education. All models were calculated separately for men and for women.

With respect to age groups, the models for men consistently show that moving in with a partner becomes more likely after the age of 22 years and before the age of 30 years. However, these results do not hold for women: it seems that some women enter into cohabitation even at under 22 years old. Thus, for women, the decision to move in together seems to depend on circumstances other than age.

In terms of the main activity status, gender-specific effects can be found across all four models. For women, there is a significant effect of educational episodes: women who are attending school, vocational training, or university show lower transition rates. For men, however, the expected effect is found that having permanent employment increases the probability of moving in with their partner. Furthermore, there is a negative effect of cumulative NEET for men. This is consistent with the finding that for men, phases of NEET hinder cohabitation. This means that hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are supported by our data.

Table 1 Transition Rate of Entering a Co-Residential Union (Duration in Months Since Leaving General Education, Time-Discrete Rate Models, Log Odds Ratios, Standard Errors in Brackets)^a

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Age group								
under 22 years	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
22 to under 26 years	0.324* (0.158)	-0.141 (0.148)	0.420* (0.167)	-0.126 (0.151)	0.319* (0.159)	-0.133 (0.148)	0.365* (0.160)	-0.116 (0.154)
26 to under 30 years	0.344 (0.212)	-0.162 (0.230)	0.485* (0.221)	-0.131 (0.242)	0.330 (0.212)	-0.164 (0.228)	0.407 (0.220)	-0.100 (0.231)
30 years and older	-1.311* (0.579)	-1.225 (0.802)	-1.076+ (0.590)	-1.189 (0.809)	-1.308* (0.579)	-1.218 (0.800)	-1.458* (0.674)	-1.058 (0.807)
Main activity status								
Employment/internship without permanent contract	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
School/vocational training/study	-0.203 (0.239)	-0.539* (0.223)	-0.166 (0.244)	-0.541* (0.223)	-0.257 (0.236)	-0.616* (0.219)	-0.116 (0.259)	-0.683*** (0.209)
NEET	-0.020 (0.330)	-0.256 (0.254)	0.297 (0.339)	-0.196 (0.250)	0.020 (0.325)	-0.206 (0.248)	-0.074 (0.348)	-0.321 (0.252)
Employment with permanent contract	0.514* (0.215)	-0.058 (0.246)	0.496* (0.218)	-0.069 (0.247)	0.485* (0.210)	-0.120 (0.239)	0.534* (0.233)	-0.190 (0.218)
Education and employment history								
Cumulative NEET (months)			-0.022* (0.010)	-0.004 (0.007)				
School leaving certificate when leaving school for the first time								
Intermediate school leaving certificate					0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)		
Secondary school diploma					-0.193 (0.174)	-0.252 (0.177)		
No/other school diploma					-0.368 (0.285)	-0.634* (0.307)		
Highest educational level among parents								
University degree							0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
University entrance qualification							-0.129 (0.264)	0.479+ (0.273)
Intermediate school leaving certificate							-0.373+ (0.224)	0.273 (0.244)
Secondary school diploma							-0.150 (0.237)	0.342 (0.258)
No school diploma							-0.966+ (0.554)	0.669+ (0.353)
Intercept	-5.312*** (0.222)	-4.136*** (0.211)	-5.326*** (0.228)	-4.134*** (0.212)	-5.186*** (0.223)	-3.969*** (0.210)	-5.191*** (0.294)	-4.267*** (0.294)
n (number of individuals)	763	657	763	657	763	657	696	607

Note: ^a In this table, log odds ratios for transition probabilities are reported. Positive coefficients imply an increase in transition probability and thus a shorter expected duration until the event of moving in with the partner occurs. Accordingly, negative coefficients mean a decrease in transition probability and therefore a longer expected duration until cohabitation. +p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Source: AID: A 2019.

The educational level only shows a significant effect for women; compared to the reference category, women without a school degree are significantly less likely to start a joint household with their partner. However, with regard to the other (non-significant) coefficients, we see a tendency that men and women with a lower educational level are less likely to enter into cohabitation. Thus, for hypothesis 4, we can conclude that the level of education among women does not have the expected effect on the transition to a co-residential union. Women without a school degree have even lower transition rates to a co-residential union compared to women with a secondary school diploma or an intermediate school-leaving certificate.

The highest level of parental education has different effects on women and men in terms of the transition rate to cohabitation. Young men whose parents have lower educational levels – and especially when they have no school diploma – are less likely to cohabit with their partner; in contrast, women move in with their partner sooner if their parents have a lower level of education. Therefore, hypothesis 5 can be confirmed.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

So far, the cohabitation of life partners has primarily been studied from a family sociological approach. From a life course perspective, the event of moving in with a partner has received little attention. However, it is certainly of interest to know how earlier events influence the event of moving in together and how this directs the course further, such as the timing and occurrence of other life events. In any case, the establishment of a co-residential union can be regarded as an important step on the path to adulthood.

For the majority of men, however, this step is not undertaken until a certain level of economic security is guaranteed: our results show that the event of moving in together usually follows the event of entering permanent employment, while a similar correlation between these two events cannot be identified for women. This finding is remarkable in that it suggests that Becker's assumptions about the gender-based division of labor in households still have empirical relevance today. Despite rising female labor market participation, it still seems to be the responsibility of men to ensure a breadwinning status for economically dependent family members.

Since economic resources – and, in particular, the transition to permanent employment – seem to be important for the transition into cohabitation with a partner (at least for men), it is necessary to take a closer look at school-to-work transitions. Different factors influence the transition into vocational training and into permanent employment. Most of these are well known: in Germany, for example, Buchholz and Kurz (2008, 72) identify that East Germans and migrants face especially high risks in the transition to a stable position in the labor market

and that education and occupational classes have become more important across birth cohorts. These and similar findings have been observed in a large number of studies and can also be found in our data, and they point to an endogenous causal relationship between biographical steps in vocational training and employment on the one hand and steps in family formation on the other.

Nevertheless, our study results have some limitations. First, due to data limitations, we were unable to test the effects of some factors that may influence the decision to move in together. This is particularly true for information about respondents' partners at the time of the first cohabitation (e.g., activity status, age, educational level, major life events, income, and other economic resources), but also for certain relationship characteristics (e.g., spatial distance before moving in together, or relationship quality). Furthermore, we have no information about the time of an eventual first marriage, shared children,⁵ nor the possible end of a relationship or cohabitation. We also do not know exactly who is "at risk" for cohabitation, because while we excluded anyone who has never had a partner, some may have separated and stayed single. Finally, due to our restrictions on the sample group, the findings cannot be generalized to individuals with high educational attainment.

This yields some implications for future research. It would be reasonable for upcoming studies to examine the event of cohabitation more specifically from a life-course perspective. In empirical research, such an approach requires that both potentially important preceding and subsequent events be captured precisely. In order to expand the models to include partner characteristics that may affect the decision to establish a co-residential union, it would be necessary to collect this information from dating couples in prospective longitudinal studies. Meanwhile, the AID:A survey reaches the third wave of its longitudinal study with AID:A 2023, which allows both a continuation of retrospective episodic data on school-to-work transitions as well as a prospective monitoring of life circumstances.

7 References

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5 In preliminary analyses, we also examined the effects of other possible determinants, such as a preceding pregnancy. Since the inclusion of these variables did not fundamentally alter the results presented here, but their validity was questionable due to the data limitations, these events were not included as independent variables in the models.

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Marylène Lieber

Oui, c'est oui **Le consentement** **à l'épreuve de la** **justice**

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En dévoilant les enjeux actuels de la pratique de l'enquête et du jugement, et les représentations genrées qui façonnent la justice ici comme ailleurs, cet ouvrage intervient dans le débat autour de la révision du droit pénal sexuel suisse, en présentant une recherche menée à Genève sur le devenir des plaintes pour violences sexuelles.

Plaidoyer pour une révision du code pénal qui mette le consentement au cœur de sa définition, cet ouvrage en présente toutefois certaines limites : changer la définition légale ne change pas tout et certains enjeux continueront de peser sur la façon dont la chaîne pénale s'empare des violences sexuelles. Mettre le consentement au cœur de la définition pénale apparaît comme une urgence sociale pour favoriser l'égalité, mais d'autres aménagements restent tout autant nécessaires, comme la place donnée aux victimes dans les procédures et la formation des professionnel·le·s de la justice à une meilleure compréhension des spécificités des violences sexuelles.

Marylène Lieber est sociologue, professeure et directrice de l'Institut des Études genre à l'Université de Genève. Ses travaux portent principalement sur l'action publique concernant les violences de genre, l'espace public et les migrations.

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