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Partnering Patterns

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5.

Dissolution of unmarried cohabiting unions

and the role of partner choice

Abstract

This chapter challenges and tests the dominant hypothesis that exogamous migrant couples are more likely to separate than endogamous ones by examining whether and how the ethnic composition of couples relates to the dissolution of unmarried cohabiting unions among the children of Caribbean immigrants. Research on union dissolution among migrants focusses primarily on marital unions, the first generation, and specific origin groups holding relatively traditional relationship norms. As populations and union formation patterns are becoming increasingly diverse it is argued that this view is too narrow, especially when studying the so-called second generation. Longitudinal (1995-2018) population register data of Statistics Netherlands (20,088 couples) were analysed using event-history models. Our findings suggest that exogamy functions as a protective factor in unmarried cohabiting unions among the Caribbean second generation which supports convergence rather than homogamy theory. Little difference in the risk of union dissolution was found by generation of the co-ethnic partner.

5.1. Introduction

The existing literature by and large starts from the assumption that interethnic relationships are less stable than endogamous unions. This instability of exogamous unions has often been linked to difficulties that can arise from coping with different preferences and expectations in the culture of both partners. A range of studies, in both the United States (Bratter & King, 2008; Fu & Wolfinger, 2011; Heaton, 2002; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009) and Europe (Feng et al., 2012; Holland et al., 2018; Kalmijn et al., 2005; Milewski & Kulu, 2014; Potarca & Bernardi, 2018; Smith et al., 2012), find support for an increased risk of divorce in exogamous marriages. Although results are not universal and seem to vary across migrant groups (e.g. Dribe & Lundh, 2012), the assumption on instability of exogamous migrant unions prevails.

Previous research, however, has at least four limitations. First, most studies focus on first-generation migrants and few explore the link between the ethnic origin of partners and union dissolution for the increasing shares of children of immigrants in developed societies (Hernandez et al., 2009). Whereas the first generation often moved at adult ages and as such is largely socialised in the countries of origin, this is not (or at least less) the case for their offspring who have an immigrant origin but grew up in the society of settlement of their parents. Secondly, and related to this, it is important to reconsider the notion of endogamous relationships for this so-called second generation (Eeckhaut et al., 2011). For these young adults, the typically used exogamy-endogamy dichotomy, which merely distinguishes between marrying inside or outside ethnic group boundaries, is not self-evident (Song, 2009). Group boundaries might be less clear for the second generation due to being socialised in both the culture of their parents' country of origin and the majority population (Huynh et al., 2011) which should be taken into account when studying their union formation and dissolution.

Third, so far studies focus primarily on migrant groups that come from countries with more traditional union formation and dissolution patterns than those prevailing in the societies of settlement, indicated by, for example, lower rates of unmarried cohabitation or divorce. The strongest support for a de-stabilizing effect of exogamous marriages has been found for these more traditional migrant populations, such as those of Turkish and Moroccan origin in Europe (Janssen, 2002; Kalmijn et al., 2005; Potarca & Bernardi, 2018; Van Huis & Steenhof, 2003b) or Asians and Hispanics in the US (Bratter & King, 2008; Fu & Wolfinger, 2011; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Yet populations are becoming increasingly diverse and for some groups, such as African-Americans in the US and Caribbeans in Europe, a reversed pattern of traditionalism can be observed: for these groups, union formation and dissolution norms and behaviour are less traditional than among the majority population indicated also by much higher divorce rates (e.g. Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Kalmijn, 2003). In turn, having a partner from the majority population may in these cases have a stabilizing rather than a de-stabilizing effect (Jones, 1996).

Fourth, existing studies have almost exclusively focused on marriage and related divorce of marital unions. As noted by Van Hook and Glick (2020) it is however important to also consider unmarried cohabitation in research on family dynamics among immigrants.

Hardly anything is known about how the ethnic origin of partners relates to the dissolution of unmarried cohabiting unions which is unfortunate because unmarried cohabitation often precedes, but also is an alternative to marriage in many developed societies (Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). This not only holds for majority populations, but is also the case for certain migrant populations, such as those of Caribbean descent (Hannemann & Kulu, 2015; Hannemann et al., 2020; Kleinepier & De Valk, 2016).

The question thus remains how exogamy in unmarried cohabiting unions relates to union stability among the second generation, especially for migrant groups originating from regions with less traditional relationship norms and practices. In this paper we aim to address the gaps in the literature by studying the union dissolution of unmarried cohabiting unions (from here on simply referred to as cohabiting unions) among the Caribbean second generation. Based on homogamy and convergence theory, two frequently used theoretical frameworks in the literature on interethnic divorce, we formulate hypotheses on how the dissolution of cohabiting unions among this group relates to the ethnic origin of their partners.

We focus on the dissolution of cohabiting unions but acknowledge that unmarried cohabitation can also precede marriage which would indicate stability of a union rather than instability. Even though formulating hypotheses about the relationship between the ethnic origin of partners and getting married from an unmarried cohabitation is beyond the scope of this paper both outcomes are considered in the analyses. We thereby go beyond the typically used endogamy-exogamy dichotomy and distinguish between exogamous partners (defined as those with a Dutch background) and two types of endogamous partners; first- and second-generation co-ethnics. We use longitudinal, full population register data of Statistics Netherlands including all cohabitating couples born between 1980 and 1995 who started living together unmarried between 1995 and 2018. Whereas previous studies among migrant populations often had to rely on relatively small surveys of cohabiters (Hannemann & Kulu, 2015; Hannemann et al., 2020) and studies that use register data were often limited to including only part of the cohabiters (e.g. with children) (Holland, 2013; Nekby, 2010) we are able to include and follow the full population.

5.2. Background

The Caribbean population in the Netherlands consists mainly of immigrants and their descendants from the former Dutch colonies Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. As a result of the colonial history, migration between the Netherlands and the Caribbean is not new. A peak in immigration from Suriname occurred in anticipation of its independence in 1975 yet it dropped significantly after visa requirements were introduced in 1980 (Mielants, 2009). Migration from the Dutch Antilles is more continuous. The six islands of the Dutch Antilles are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, all with varying levels of autonomy. As a result, people from the Dutch Antilles are relatively free to move between the Caribbean and European part of the kingdom (Van Amersfoort & Van Niekerk, 2006). To date, there are 166,265 individuals with an Antillean background and 356,402 individuals with a Surinamese

background on a total population of 17.4 million, making them among the largest migrant groups in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, 2020a). Almost half belong to the second generation, meaning that they themselves were born in the Netherlands, but at least one of their parents was born in Suriname or the Dutch Antilles.

In comparison to other large migrant groups in the Netherlands, such as Turks and Moroccans, the cultural and language differences between the Caribbean population and the Dutch majority population are smaller (Van Niekerk, 2007). Relationship patterns are however less traditional among the Caribbean population than among the Dutch majority group; married unions are less prevalent among the Caribbean population, especially among Antilleans, while union dissolution and single parenthood are occurring relatively often (Safa, 2005; Shaw, 2003). Where cohabitation and out of wedlock childbirth started to become accepted in western societies since the 1960s, it has long been common in the Caribbean (Esteve et al., 2016; Goulbourne, 2003). These relatively liberal relationship dynamics in the Caribbean culture have been linked to the specific family structure of Caribbean households (Shaw, 2003). Whereas in most cultures the man is the head of the household, Caribbean households are typically characterized by female headed family structures in which women are not only responsible for the household but also for their financial position (Ho, 1999).

As a result of this specific family structure, men are not automatically financially responsible for their partner or children and living together in the same household is an option rather than an obligation (Goulbourne, 2003). Although the ideal among women is generally to be in a long term monogamous relationship, it is rather common for Caribbean men to have multiple partners (Bertens et al., 2008). The relatively high absence of Caribbean men in family life is further indicated by the fact that, in 2015, 47 percent of the children in the Netherlands with an Antillean and 37 percent of the children with a Surinamese background lived in a single mother household compared to just 11 percent of the children with a Dutch background (Statistics Netherlands, 2020c). On the other hand, less than four percent of the children in these groups lived with only their father.

5.3. Theoretical Framework

5.3.1. Homogamy

The main premise of homogamy theory is that people search for partners who are similar to themselves on different characteristics as these endogamous unions would be more stable. Exogamous unions, for example along ethnic lines, are expected to be under more pressure due to potential differences between partners in views, preferences and expectations. This may be especially the case when the cultural distance between groups is large (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Moreover, homogamy is also expected by family, friends and other third parties who are, according to the theory, more likely to disapprove of exogamous unions which can add to relational stress (Kalmijn, 1998).

Applying this to union formation of those of migrant origin, exogamy generally refers to unions with a partner from the majority population and endogamy to unions with a

partner from the own ethnic origin group, regardless of whether this is a first- or second-generation co-ethnic. Yet, the notion of what an endogamous relationship entails should be reconsidered when applied to the second generation. As argued by Song (2009 p.336) second-generation individuals “may view new immigrants (even co-ethnic immigrants) as very different to themselves”. Couples with two second-generation co-ethnic partners share the experience of bicultural socialisation and can therefore be argued to be truly endogamous, whereas couples consisting of a second-generation partner and either a co-ethnic first-generation or Dutch partner can both be seen as exogamous. As such, homogamy theory should be more specified and we thus hypothesize that couples with two second-generation partners are less likely to separate than couples with a second-generation partner and either a first-generation co-ethnic or a Dutch partner (H1).

5.3.2. Convergence

The convergence hypothesis is increasingly used in the literature on interethnic divorce (e.g. Saarela & Finnäs, 2018; Smith et al., 2012; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Several studies have suggested that the increased risk of divorce among exogamous married couples may not be universally true but might differ according to the group under study as exogamous couples are not always less stable than endogamous ones (Dribe & Lundh, 2012; Fu & Wolfinger, 2011). This calls for a perspective in which the cultural norms about union dissolution in different ethnic groups are more central to explaining divorce propensities of exogamous couples.

The convergence hypothesis takes such cultural differences in union dissolution patterns into account and argues that ethnic groups hold specific attitudes and norms towards union dissolution, which may be more tolerant or restrictive (Jones, 1996). These norms regarding union dissolution are transmitted across members of a group through socialisation processes. Being socialised in a context where union dissolution is perceived negatively, to be avoided, and perhaps even sanctioned, increases the likelihood that someone will oppose divorce. Contrary, when socialised in a surrounding in which union dissolution is more common and accepted, one is likely more open to it. The risk of union dissolution among exogamous couples is subsequently expected to be in between the risk of union dissolution of endogamous couples from the same respective groups. Zhang and Van Hook (2009), for example, find that the divorce risk of mixed Asian-white couples in the United States is higher than the divorce risk of endogamous Asian couples and lower compared to endogamous white couples. As Asians have relatively low divorce risks compared to whites this finding indicates the convergence of divorce propensities in exogamous couples.

Empirical evidence from the Netherlands, although mainly focusing on marriage, clearly shows that marital divorce rates among Surinamese and Antilleans are higher than among the Dutch majority population (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006; Kalmijn et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2012). Their dissolution rates appear to be even higher in case of cohabitation (Rooyackers et al., 2015). Following the convergence hypothesis, we therefore expect that exogamous cohabiting unions of the Caribbean second generation are less likely to separate

than endogamous cohabiting unions between two partners with a Caribbean background (H2a) because the Dutch majority group partner is likely to be more apprehensive to separate.

Although convergence theory as it is typically used builds on an exogamy-endogamy dichotomy, it also offers a suitable framework for hypothesizing about how different types of endogamous partners relate to the stability of cohabiting relationships of the second generation. Due to being at least partially socialised with the Dutch norms regarding union dissolution, the risk of union dissolution is likely to be lower for the second generation than for the first generation as the latter was born and (to a larger extent) socialised with the union dissolution practices in Suriname or the Antilles where union dissolution is more common. This difference in socialisation between the first and second generation is expected to have an influence on the level of union stability for couples with two second-generation partners compared to couples with a second- and first-generation partner. In the latter type of endogamous couples the attitudes and norms with regard to union dissolution prevailing in the Caribbean are represented more strongly than in the former. As a result, we expect that endogamous cohabiting couples with two-second generation partners are less likely to separate than endogamous couples with a first- and second-generation partner (H2b).

5.3.3. Gendered Patterns

As described in section 5.2, the family structures of Caribbean families have a clear gendered nature in which women take a key position both in earning a living and raising children. Men are overall more absent and are less likely to be actively engaged in a long-term relationship. As such there may be gendered patterns in terms of likelihood of union dissolution related to origin of the partners. Based on the described specific family structures within the Caribbean culture and the common fact that men are more likely to leave the nuclear family it seems plausible that partners are more likely to separate when the man is of Caribbean origin and in particular when he is part of the first generation. We may thus expect that couples with a second-generation Caribbean woman and a Dutch man are less likely to separate than when the woman is Dutch and the man of Caribbean origin (H3). Along the same line of reasoning, couples with a first- and a second-generation partner are hypothesized to be least likely to separate when the woman is of the first generation rather than the man (H4).

5.4. Methods

5.4.1. Data

To test our hypotheses we used full population register data from the System of Social Statistical Datasets (SSD), compiled by Statistics Netherlands (Bakker et al., 2014). The SSD provides a longitudinal perspective from 1995 until the end of 2018 and combines several registers in which every individual is linked through an anonymous personal ID to the Dutch

municipal population registers. We focus on cohabitation using retrospective and prospective administrative information. Two partners are a cohabiting couple if they live at the same address, have no kinship and at least one of the following additional criteria applies; they have a common child, jointly moved houses or they have some sort of fiscal relationship. We selected all heterosexual couples with at least one second-generation Surinamese or Antillean partner who was born between 1980 and 1995. Furthermore we included only those who started their first cohabiting union between 1995 and 2018 with either a co-ethnic partner or a partner from the Dutch majority group. We excluded couples with a second-generation Caribbean partner and a partner who was neither Dutch nor a co-ethnic (respectively 26% and 24% of all cohabiting couples among the Antillean and Surinamese second generation). The reason for doing so is that these couples are a very heterogeneous group with partners of a large range of origins making it difficult to study any general patterns. Furthermore, the focus is on heterosexual couples as, based on the literature, we know that union dissolution patterns may be different for homosexual couples (Andersson et al., 2006). Finally, we study first cohabitations because our research population is still rather young and the risk for union dissolution is potentially different for higher order unions (Beaujouan, 2016). Since we are interested in unmarried cohabiting couples, we excluded couples who married before cohabitation or within one year after cohabitation as this indicates a direct marriage (19 % of all cohabiting couples for Surinamese and 11 % for Antilleans). In other words, 80-90% of the couples started off in an unmarried cohabitation which emphasizes the importance to examine the risk of union dissolution for this type of union for the Caribbean second generation. Couples with missing values on time-varying variables at each year of the cohabitation (less than 1 %) and those in which one or both partners died were excluded (less than 0.1 %). After making these selections, our study group included 14,536 cohabiting couples with at least one second-generation Surinamese partner and 5,552 cohabiting couples with at least one second-generation Antillean partner.

5.4.2. Analytical Strategy

We conducted discrete-time event-history analyses to examine the transition from unmarried cohabitation to union dissolution using STATA (Allison, 2014). The main event of interest is union dissolution, yet unmarried cohabitation can also be a precursor to marriage. In that case the period of unmarried cohabitation also ends but for a different reason than separating. A multinomial framework was adopted to take these two outcomes of unmarried cohabitation into account. The data were organized in a couple-period file with yearly time intervals from the start of the unmarried cohabitation until the unmarried cohabitation ended in either marriage or union dissolution, or until the end of the observation period (31-12-2018). These analyses take into account that some couples might still be living together unmarried by the end of our observation period but will marry or separate at a later point in time. The categorical outcome variable (0 = cohabitation did not end, 1= union dissolution, 2= marriage) was measured at each year since the start of the cohabitation. Union dissolution was identified as soon as partners started to live at different

addresses for more than 12 months or one of both partners emigrated. Marriage was identified by the registration date in the municipal registers. Couples were censored in case and at the time both partners emigrated simultaneously (1 %). We opted for multinomial models rather than including marriage as a time-varying factor in a logistic model because the dissolution of marriage may be subject to different processes and mechanisms than the dissolution of unmarried cohabiting relationships (Poortman & Lyngstad, 2007). Simultaneous estimation of union dissolution for cohabiting couples that remained unmarried and those who married may result in bias. All models were estimated separately for couples of the Antillean and Surinamese second generation. The analyses were based on 66,646 couple-years with at least one second-generation Surinamese partner and 25,494 couple-years with at least one second-generation Antillean partner. Standard errors were adjusted for the clustering of observations within units.

5.4.3. Measures

The main predictor in our models is the ethnic composition of couples, which was in line with common practice at Statistics Netherlands defined by the birth country of both partners and their parents. In the first set of models we distinguished between three types of couples: 1) a second-generation partner and a Dutch majority group partner (reference category; defined as: two parents born in the Netherlands), 2) a second-generation partner and a first-generation partner with the same ethnic origin (defined as: born abroad from at least one foreign born parent) and 3) two second-generation partners with the same ethnic origin.

To test our hypotheses on the gendered patterns, we constructed a variable with five categories to indicate the ethnic composition of couples by gender in which couples with a second-generation man and a Dutch woman were treated as the reference category. Our descriptive findings show, in line with earlier research, that having a Dutch partner is common for both the Surinamese (60 %) and Antillean second generation (81 %) for both men and women. Furthermore, 16 to 19 percent consisted of a second- and first-generation co-ethnic partner, with first-generation partners more often being male than female. Couples with two second-generation partners were rare among the Antillean second generation (3 %), and more common among the Surinamese second generation (21 %) (see Table 5.1).

We additionally controlled for several couple characteristics which are known to influence the risk of union dissolution (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010) and may also be correlated with the couple's ethnic composition (Fu & Heaton, 2008). First, a linear and a quadratic specification of the duration of the cohabitation were included in all models to model the hazard function, as the risk of union dissolution might not be linear (Chan & Halpin, 2002). We controlled for the age difference of the couple in three categories: age difference of 5 years or less (reference category), male partner is more than five years older (1) and female partner is more than five years older (2) (Frimmel et al., 2013). Next to age differences, union stability may be positively correlated with age at entering a union (Kuperberg, 2014) which was measured by the age of the youngest partner at the start of

the cohabitation. Whether (1) or not (0) the cohabitation was formalized through a registered partnership was added as a time-varying variable. In the Netherlands registered partnerships are in a legal sense to a large extent similar to a marriage, yet the reasons for getting a registered partnership differ from marriage and are often of a practical rather than a conforming, romantic nature (Hiekel & Keizer, 2015). We controlled for the presence of children born during the union and born to the second-generation partner before the start of the cohabitation. Having a child together may indicate a commitment to the relationship and may increase union stability (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010) whereas stepchildren might put a strain on relationships (Coleman et al., 2000). The partners' level of educational attainment at the start of the cohabitation was included by distinguishing between having the same (tertiary or lower) or a different level of education. From a homogamy perspective sharing the same level of education may stabilize a union. Moreover, previous studies have suggested that the risk of union dissolution is negatively associated with educational level (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Missing values on this variable (6.5%) were imputed 10 times using multinomial logistic regression imputation. We included the couple's household income (averaged percentiles) as a time-varying variable¹⁵ because economic insecurity can put pressure on a couple which, in turn, might destabilize the relationship (Conger et al., 2010).

Finally, previous research focusing on the individual level has demonstrated that it is important to consider possible differences between the second generation with one or two foreign born parents when studying their partnership dynamics (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2016). This might be especially important when examining the Caribbean second generation as they relatively often come from mixed parentage (Kalmijn, 2010). We could, however, not control for the number of foreign-born parents in our analyses as this is highly correlated with the partners' ethnic origin and migrant generation, and thus causes problems of multicollinearity. An additional analysis was therefore performed replacing the ethnic composition of couples by the number of foreign-born parents of a couple (ranging from one to four).

5.5. Results

5.5.1. Descriptive Findings

Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics for each of the independent variables separately for couples of the Surinamese and Antillean second generation. As shown in the first row, 37 percent of the Antillean and 42 percent of the Surinamese second generation experienced union dissolution during the observation period. The survival curves (Figure 5.1) clearly show that the duration of unmarried cohabitation differed across the ethnic composition of couples. Endogamous Dutch couples were included in the figures for reasons of comparison and were overall found to be least likely to separate. With regard to couples including at least

¹⁵ In case information was missing for a certain year it was imputed with the first known income. All remaining variables had no missing values.

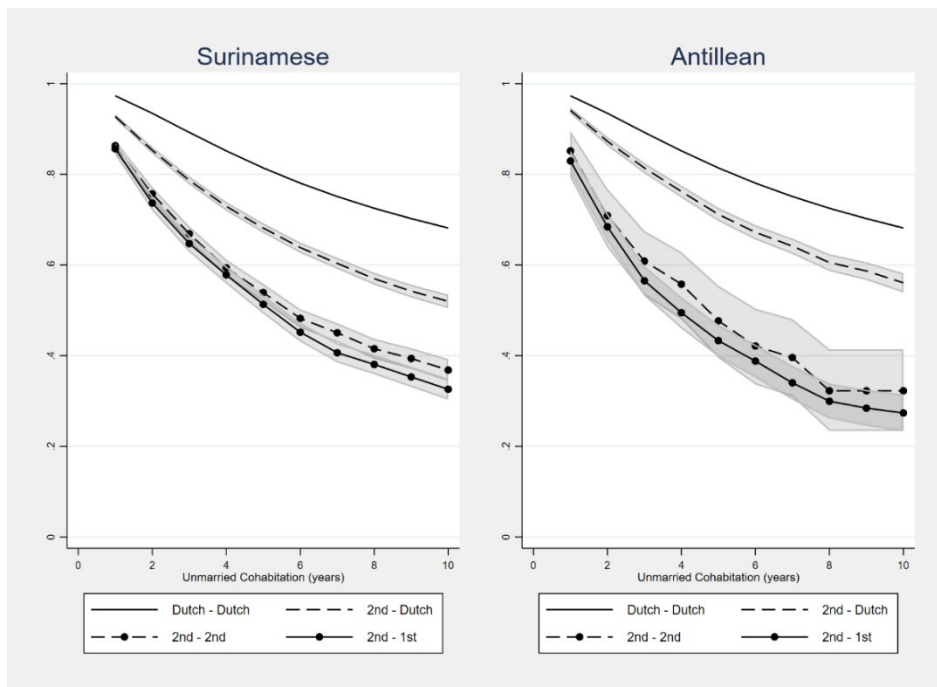
one second-generation partner it was first of all found that exogamous unions were less likely to separate than those consisting of two Caribbean origin partners. This contradicts our first hypothesis which, based on homogamy theory, predicted that couples with two second-generation partners would be less likely to separate than exogamous couples or couples with a first-generation co-ethnic partner due to the shared experience of bicultural socialisation. Second, although this finding is not in accordance with homogamy theory the lower risk of union dissolution among exogamous couples is, on the other hand, in line with convergence theory and supports hypothesis 2a. Even though this finding holds for both groups, it was even more pronounced for the Antillean second generation. After eight years, for example, 61 percent of the couples with a second-generation Antillean partner and a Dutch partner were still living together unmarried versus 57 percent of couples with a second-generation Surinamese partner and a Dutch partner. Third, and also based on convergence theory it was expected that couples with two second-generation partners would be less likely to separate than couples where one was of the second and the other was of the first generation (H2b). This does however not seem to be the case as there was hardly any difference in the risk of union dissolution between these two types of endogamous couples for both the Surinamese and Antillean second generation.

Table 5.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Couples by Ethnic Origin of the Second Generation.

	Surinamese second generation (N=14,536)	Antillean second generation (N=5,552)
	%	%
Union Dissolution	42.2	37.0
Married	21.1	23.8
Ethnic composition of couples		
2 nd generation - Dutch	59.9	80.6
2 nd generation - 1 st generation	18.9	16.1
2 nd generation - 2 nd generation	21.1	3.4
Ethnic composition of couples by gender		
Man 2 nd – Woman Dutch	30.3	40.6
Woman 2 nd – Man Dutch	6.6	5.3
Man 2 nd – Woman 2 nd	21.1	3.4
Man 2 nd – Woman 1 st	29.6	40.0
Woman 2 nd – Man 1 st	12.4	10.8
Age difference		
5 years or less	83.1	85.9
Man > 5 years older	14.1	11.5
Woman > 5 years older	2.9	2.6
Educational difference		
Different education	19.2	19.9
Both lower educated	71.9	65.5
Both higher educated	8.9	14.6
Child before cohabitation	16.6	12.6
Child during cohabitation	54.5	53.4
Registered partnership	5.5	6.6
Couple's household income ^a		
Low	13.1	14.6
Medium-low	34.1	30.5
Medium-high	41.3	39.5
High	11.4	15.5
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Age youngest partner (range = 16-37)	23,1(3,6)	22,9(3,4)

Note: a Based on couple-period years.

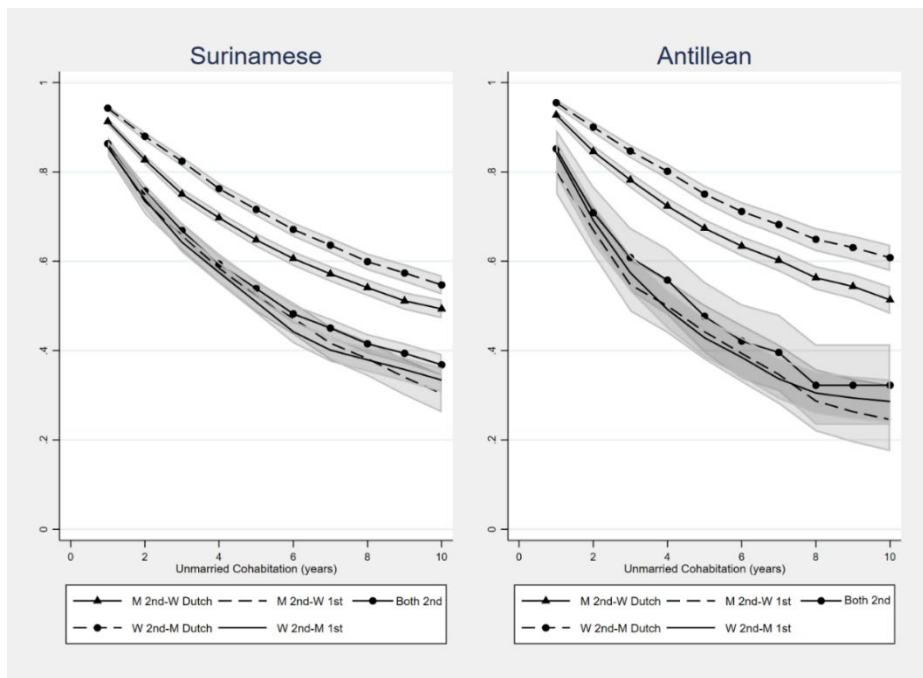
Figure 5.1. Survival Curves Showing the Probability of Union Dissolution for the Surinamese and Antillean Second Generation by Ethnic Composition of Couples.



Note: Only the first ten years are shown due to the small numbers surviving longer. 2nd = second generation co-ethnic. 1st = first generation co-ethnic. Marriage was censored.

Figure 5.2 shows the survival curves while taking the gender and ethnic origin of both partners into account. It was hypothesized that couples with a Dutch partner would be less likely to separate if the man rather than the woman was Dutch (H3), and this is indeed what we found for both the Surinamese and the Antillean second generation. Having said that, the gendered difference in the duration of unmarried cohabitation was small for those unions that involved a first-generation partner: overall these couples had high union dissolution rates. This contradicts H4, which expected differences by gender and predicted that couples with a first-generation man would be more likely to separate than couples with a first-generation woman. All in all, couples that involve a Dutch partner were least likely to separate and this was particularly the case when the man was Dutch and the woman was of second-generation origin. All Caribbean endogamous couples were more likely to separate than these exogamous unions.

Figure 5.2. Survival Curves Showing the Probability of Union Dissolution for the Surinamese and Antillean Second Generation by Ethnic Origin and Gender of the Partners.



Note: Only the first ten years are shown due to the small numbers surviving longer. 2nd = second generation co-ethnic. 1st = first generation co-ethnic. M = Man. W = Woman. Marriage was censored.

5.5.2. Explanatory Findings

Models A in Tables 5.2a and 5.2b present the results from the event-history analyses without taking the control variables and the gendered perspective into account. We focus on the left columns about the risk of union dissolution. Overall these analyses confirm the findings shown in the survival curves. Models B of Table 5.2a and 5.2b show the multivariate models including the control variables. In line with the bivariate results we found that exogamous unmarried cohabiting couples were still least likely to separate also after inclusion of couple characteristics. Having said that, part of the difference was explained by these couple characteristics as the differences did decrease, especially for the Antillean second generation. Whereas the risk of cohabitation ending for this group was two to three times higher for couples with two second-generation partners or a first- and second-generation partner (compared to exogamous couples), this reduced to an increased risk of 50 to 70 percent after adding the controls. Some, though not all, of the difference between couples with a Dutch partner and couples with a first- or second-generation partner could thus be explained by couples' compositional differences. We therefore reject H1 based on homogamy theory stating that couples with two second-generation partners would be least

likely to separate but support H2a based on convergence theory that couples including a Dutch partner would be least likely to separate. Once more we found very little difference in the risk of union dissolution between couples with a first-generation partner and couples with two second-generation partners, making us reject H2b.

In Table 5.3 we expand the model adding a specification of gendered ethnic origin of the partners. We expected a gradient in union stability depending on whether the man or the woman was respectively Dutch or from the first generation. In line with hypothesis 3, exogamous couples were least likely to separate when the woman was of the second-generation and the man was Dutch. Couples in which the woman rather than the man was Dutch were less likely to separate compared to all couples without a Dutch partner. This finding holds both with and without adjusting for other couple characteristics and for both the Surinamese and Antillean second generation. Hypothesis 4 was, on the other hand, not confirmed by our results. Contrary to our expectation that unmarried cohabiting relationships between a first- and a second-generation partner would be least likely to end in union dissolution when the man was of the second generation and the woman of the first generation, this is not what we found. Furthermore, we have to note that the patterns we find are highly similar for both the Surinamese and the Antillean second generation. With regard to the control variables the effects are in the direction that we expected based on previous research (details in Table 5.2a and 5.2b). Finally, the additional analysis in which the ethnic composition of the couple was replaced by the number of foreign-born parents showed a gradient in the risk of union dissolution by number of foreign-born parents. With each extra foreign-born parent the cohabitating couple was more likely to separate, and this held especially for those of Antillean descent (see Table 5.4).

Thus far, the focus has been on the dissolution of cohabiting unions. Yet as mentioned, unmarried cohabitation is not always an alternative to marriage it can also be a precursor (Hiekel & Keizer, 2015). Although the transition from unmarried cohabitation to marriage is not the main interest of this paper, we did include it as a potential outcome in our models and therefore shortly discuss the findings (see right columns Table 5.2a and 5.2b). Couples with two second-generation Surinamese partners were more likely to marry than those with a Surinamese second-generation partner and a Dutch partner. No difference was found between these two types of couples for the Antillean second generation. Couples with a first-generation partner were least likely to get married, although no such difference was found for the Surinamese second generation after including the control variables.

Table 5.2a. Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analyses Predicting Dissolution of Cohabitation and Marriage by Ethnic Composition of the Couples.

	Surinamese second generation					
	Dissolution					
	Model A			Model B		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples (2 nd - Dutch = ref)						
2 nd - 1 st generation	1.77***	0.06	1.65-1.89	1.40***	0.05	1.31-1.50
2 nd - 2 nd generation	1.64***	0.06	1.54-1.75	1.36***	0.05	1.27-1.46
Age difference (5 years or less = ref)						
Man > 5 years older				1.07	0.04	0.99-1.16
Woman > 5 years older				1.74***	0.13	1.50-2.01
Age youngest partner				0.99	0.01	0.98-1.00
Educational difference (Different education = ref)						
Both lower educated				1.36***	0.06	1.24-1.48
Both higher educated				0.72***	0.06	0.61-0.84
Child before cohabitation				1.84***	0.07	1.70-1.99
Child during cohabitation				0.86***	0.03	0.81-0.91
Registered partnership				0.46***	0.05	0.37-0.56
Couple's household income (Low = ref)						
Medium low				0.70***	0.03	0.65-0.75
Medium high				0.42***	0.02	0.39-0.46
High				0.43***	0.03	0.38-0.49
Duration UC (years)	0.99	0.01	0.96-1.01	1.07***	0.02	1.04-1.10
Duration UC ² (years)	1.00**	0.00	0.99-1.00	0.99***	0.00	0.99-0.99
constant	0.09***	0.00	0.09-0.10	0.13***	0.02	0.10-0.16
N couple-years	66,646			66,646		
N couples	14,536			14,536		

Note: Table continues on next page. RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. UC = Unmarried Cohabitation. Ref = reference category. 2nd = second generation. 1st = first generation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.2a (continued). Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analyses Predicting Dissolution of Cohabitation and Marriage by Ethnic Composition of the Couples.

	Surinamese second generation					
	Marriage					
	Model A			Model B		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples (2 nd - Dutch = ref)						
2 nd - 1 st generation	0.88*	0.05	0.79-0.98	0.99	0.06	0.89-1.11
2 nd - 2 nd generation	1.12*	0.05	1.02-1.24	1.26****	0.06	1.14-1.39
Age difference (5 years or less = ref)						
Man > 5 years older				1.02	0.06	0.91-1.14
Woman > 5 years older				0.59**	0.10	0.43-0.83
Age youngest partner				0.99	0.01	0.98-1.01
Educational difference (Different education = ref)						
Both lower educated				0.82***	0.04	0.74-0.91
Both higher educated				1.11	0.08	0.30-0.48
Child before cohabitation				0.71***	0.05	0.61-0.83
Child during cohabitation				0.86**	0.04	0.79-0.94
Registered partnership				0.38***	0.05	0.30-0.48
Couple's household income (Low = ref)						
Medium low				1.59***	0.14	1.33-1.89
Medium high				2.27***	0.20	1.91-2.70
High				2.97***	0.30	2.44-3.62
Duration UC (years)	1.56***	0.01	1.49-1.63	1.52***	0.03	1.46-1.59
Duration UC ² (years)	0.96***	0.00	0.96-0.97	0.96***	0.00	0.96-0.97
constant	0.03***	0.00	0.02-0.03	0.02***	0.00	0.01-0.03
N couple-years	66,646			66,646		
N couples	14,536			14,536		

Note: RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. UC = Unmarried Cohabitation. Ref = reference category. 2nd = second generation. 1st = first generation. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 5.2b. Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analyses Predicting Dissolution of Cohabitation and Marriage by Ethnic Composition of the Couples.

	Antillean second generation					
	Dissolution					
	Model A			Model B		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples (2 nd - Dutch = ref)						
2 nd - 1 st generation	2.63***	0.15	2.36-2.94	1.53***	0.10	1.35-1.74
2 nd - 2 nd generation	2.31***	0.26	1.85-2.88	1.67***	0.19	1.33-2.08
Age difference (5 years or less = ref)						
Man > 5 years older				1.23**	0.09	1.07-1.42
Woman > 5 years older				1.82***	0.26	1.38-2.39
Age youngest partner				0.97	0.01	0.95-0.99
Educational difference (Different education = ref)						
Both lower educated				1.53***	0.12	1.30-1.80
Both higher educated				0.68*	0.09	0.53-0.88
Child before cohabitation				1.85***	0.13	1.60-2.13
Child during cohabitation				0.88*	0.05	0.79-0.98
Registered partnership				0.42***	0.08	0.30-0.60
Couple's household income (Low = ref)						
Medium low				0.68***	0.04	0.60-0.77
Medium high				0.44***	0.03	0.38-0.51
High				0.38***	0.05	0.30-0.49
Duration UC (years)	1.01	0.02	0.96-1.05	1.11***	0.03	1.06-1.16
Duration UC ² (years)	1.00	0.00	0.99-1.00	0.99***	0.00	0.99-1.00
constant	0.08***	0.00	0.07-0.08	0.17***	0.04	0.11-0.26
N couple-years	25,494			25,494		
N couples	5,552			5,552		

Note: Table continues on next page. RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. UC = Unmarried Cohabitation. Ref = reference category. 2nd = second generation. 1st = first generation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.2b (continued). Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analyses Predicting Dissolution of Cohabitation and Marriage by Ethnic Composition of the Couples.

	Antillean second generation					
	Marriage					
	Model A			Model B		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples (2 nd - Dutch = ref)						
2 nd - 1 st generation	0.63***	0.07	0.51-0.78	0.79*	0.09	0.63-0.98
2 nd - 2 nd generation	0.84	0.16	0.57-1.22	0.93	0.18	0.63-1.36
Age difference (5 years or less = ref)						
Man > 5 years older				0.93	0.09	0.77-1.12
Woman > 5 years older				0.43*	0.15	0.22-0.83
Age youngest partner				1.01	0.01	0.99-1.04
Educational difference (Different education = ref)						
Both lower educated				0.97	0.08	0.84-1.14
Both higher educated				1.05	0.10	0.87-1.25
Child before cohabitation				0.84	0.11	0.65-1.08
Child during cohabitation				0.96	0.07	0.84-1.10
Registered partnership				0.26***	0.05	0.18-0.39
Couple's household income (Low = ref)						
Medium low				1.38*	0.18	1.06-1.79
Medium high				1.90***	0.25	1.46-2.46
High				2.45***	0.37	1.83-3.29
Duration UC (years)	1.67***	0.06	1.56-1.79	1.62***	0.06	1.51-1.74
Duration UC ² (years)	0.96***	0.00	0.95-0.96	0.96***	0.00	0.95-0.97
constant	0.03***	0.00	0.02-0.03	0.01***	0.00	0.01-0.02
N couple-years	25,494			25,494		
N couples	5,552			5,552		

Note: RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. UC = Unmarried Cohabitation. Ref = reference category. 2nd = second generation. 1st = first generation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5.3. Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analyses Predicting Dissolution of Cohabitation and Marriage by Ethnic Origin of the Partners in Combination with the Partners' Gender.

	Surinamese second generation					
	Dissolution			Marriage		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples by gender (Man 2 nd – Woman Dutch = ref)						
Woman 2 nd – Man Dutch	0.82***	0.03	0.76-0.89	1.24***	0.06	1.13-1.36
Man 2 nd – Woman 2 nd	1.24***	0.05	1.15-1.34	1.42***	0.08	1.27-1.58
Man 2 nd – Woman 1 st	1.26***	0.07	1.12-1.41	1.16	0.11	0.96-1.40
Woman 2 nd – Man 1 st	1.28***	0.06	1.17-1.41	1.11	0.08	0.96-1.28
Constant	0.14***	0.02	0.11-0.18	0.02***	0.00	0.01-0.02
N couple-years	66,646			66,646		
N couples	14,536			14,536		
	Antillean second generation					
	Dissolution			Marriage		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Ethnic composition of couples by gender (Man 2 nd – Woman Dutch = ref)						
Woman 2 nd – Man Dutch	0.77***	0.04	0.68-0.86	1.20**	0.08	1.06-1.36
Man 2 nd – Woman 2 nd	1.48**	0.17	1.17-1.86	1.02	0.20	0.69-1.51
Man 2 nd – Woman 1 st	1.39**	0.14	1.13-1.70	0.88	0.18	0.58-1.32
Woman 2 nd – Man 1 st	1.35***	0.11	1.16-1.57	0.87	0.12	0.66-1.13
Constant	0.19***	0.04	0.12-0.30	0.01***	0.00	0.01-0.02
N couple-years	25,494			25,494		
N couples	5,552			5,552		

Note: RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. ref = reference category. 2nd = second generation. 1st = first generation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. The same duration of cohabitation and control variables included as in the previous models (omitted from the table).

Table 5.4. Results of the Multinomial Event-History Analysis Predicting the Dissolution of Unmarried Cohabitation by the Number of Foreign-Born Parents of the Couple.

	Surinamese second generation			Antillean second generation		
	RRR	SE	95% CI	RRR	SE	95% CI
Number of foreign-born parents (1 = ref)						
2	1.24***	0.05	1.15-1.33	1.50***	0.09	1.34-1.69
3	1.60***	0.10	1.42-1.80	1.77***	0.18	1.45-2.16
4	1.55***	0.06	1.44-1.66	1.90***	0.14	1.65-2.19
N couple-years	66,646			25,494		
N couples	14,536			5,552		

Note: RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. ref = reference category. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. The same duration of cohabitation and control variables included as in the previous models (omitted from the table). Risk of marriage omitted from the table.

5.6. Discussion

This paper questioned how and in what way the ethnic origin of partners is important for the risk of dissolution of unmarried cohabiting unions among the Caribbean second generation. We challenged the dominant hypothesis that exogamous unions between migrants and majority group members are more likely to dissolve than endogamous migrant unions and examined whether the generation of the endogamous partner is of importance in predicting union dissolution. The premises of both homogamy theory and convergence theory were tested using full population register data from the Netherlands. Our work adds to the literature that predominantly focuses on marital divorce, migrant groups holding relatively traditional relationship norms, and often does not distinguish between different types of endogamous partners.

Our key finding is that cohabiting unions of the Caribbean second generation have a lower rate of union dissolution when the partner is from the Dutch majority population. In other words, exogamous cohabiting unions were found to be less likely to dissolve than endogamous unions regardless of the migrant generation of the endogamous partner. How does this finding relate to both homogamy and convergence theory? First of all it contradicts the literature based on homogamy theory. Following the usual line of reasoning from this theory, that partners who are more alike will be less likely to separate, it was expected that couples with two Caribbean second-generation partners would be least likely to end their cohabitation due to their shared experience with bi-cultural socialisation. Yet this was not the case. Moreover, our finding also contradicts the common application of homogamy theory where it is argued that relationships between migrants and majority group members are most prone to union dissolution. Second, this finding is on the other hand in accordance with convergence theory. In line with previous studies from the Netherlands focusing

mainly on marital divorce (Rooyackers et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2012; Van Huis & Steenhof, 2003b), the risk of union dissolution among exogamous couples appears to reflect the norms of both the Dutch majority population and those of Caribbean origin. The relatively more conservative norms about union dissolution among the Dutch majority population seem to lower the risk of separation among exogamous couples compared to endogamous Caribbean couples in which both partners are generally more liberal regarding union dissolution. In a study on the stability of interethnic marriage, Smith et al. (2012) however only found this to be the case for Surinamese migrants and not for Antilleans. This indicates the importance of including cohabiting unions when studying union dissolution, especially among groups where cohabitation is common, as merely focusing on marriage may lead to inaccurate or incomplete conclusions about the durability of crossing group boundaries in romantic relationships. It should also be noted that couples with two second-generation Surinamese partners were not only more likely to end the unmarried cohabitation than those including a Dutch partner, but these couples also more often got married. This suggests a bimodal pattern within this group: couples with two second-generation partners are more likely to separate than exogamous couples but in case they do not break up they seem more inclined to marry.

It is noteworthy to mention that our findings to some extent differ from several studies from the US and the UK. Similar to Caribbean descendants in the Netherlands, blacks in the US (where this term is often used to indicate a combination of different origin groups) and Caribbeans in the UK have lower marriage rates and higher divorce rates than the majority population (Hannemann & Kulu, 2015; Orbuch et al., 2002; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004). Based on convergence theory it would thus be expected that exogamous relationships among these groups would be more stable than endogamous ones. Yet studies from these countries show a higher likelihood of divorce for exogamous marriages compared to endogamous marriages or no difference (after adding control variables) (Bratter & King, 2008; Feng et al., 2012; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). This may have to do with differences in intergroup dynamics. As suggested by Kalmijn and Van Tubergen (2006), group boundaries in the UK and the US between blacks or Caribbeans on the one hand and the majority population on the other hand may be stronger than in the Netherlands. The difference in findings may therefore imply that the convergence hypothesis mainly applies under circumstances of relatively permeable group boundaries and positive intergroup attitudes. In order to test this assumption, comparative research is needed in which the stability of exogamous couples of a specific origin group is examined in different contexts. Both the dissolution of unmarried cohabitation and marriage should be considered to understand whether the ethnic composition of couples plays a different role in the stability of different types of unions.

One of the contributions of our study is distinguishing between different types of endogamous unions as it was expected that there would be a difference in the risk of union dissolution between couples with a first- and a second-generation partner. Our study however suggests that there is no difference in the risk of union dissolution by migrant generation. How can we explain that we do not find this generational gradient? First, migration between the Caribbean and the Netherlands among people with a Surinamese and

Antillean background is relatively common, both for the first generation (Van Niekerk, 2007) as well as the second generation (De Jong et al., 2020). Part of the first generation might therefore be (partially) socialised in the Netherlands and the second generation in their parents' country of origin. As a result, the socialisation contexts of both generations might be more similar than expected which may explain the small difference between the two types of endogamous relationships. As such it is potentially more meaningful to unravel the socialisation context by considering the number of foreign born parents of a couple, as Dutch parents may increase exposure to the Dutch norms regarding relationship dynamics that are in this case more conservative than those of the migrant group. Our analysis indeed showed that, with each additional foreign born parent, the risk of union dissolution increased. With more and more children being born from mixed parentage, both in European countries (Coleman, 2010; Eurostat, 2011) and the US (Alba et al., 2018), our results suggest that the concept of migrant generations needs to be redefined. This has already been suggested for studies examining the children of immigrants on the individual level (Karthick Ramakrishnan, 2004), but it might also benefit future research interested in partnership dynamics of the second generation at the couple level. Second, in our data we had relatively few couples with two second-generation partners, especially among the Antilleans. These small numbers may lead to statistically insignificant differences that simply get unobserved (type II error).

Finally we took a gendered perspective because of the specific gender roles within the Caribbean population. This study showed that couples with a Dutch partner are even less likely to separate when the man is Dutch rather than the woman, which is in accordance with the family structures of the Caribbean culture in which men are less attached to the nuclear family than women. This finding stresses the need for future research on union dissolution among exogamous couples to consider the specific gender roles in the culture of both partners as men and women from different groups may influence union stability differently. No gendered pattern in union dissolution was found for the two types of endogamous unions.

Despite the strengths of our data to study the dissolution of cohabiting relationships among the Caribbean second generation, several limitations need to be mentioned. First, we were not able to control for religious homogeneity. Yet differences in religion between partners have been found to be related to union dissolution (Hwang et al., 2019; Kalmijn et al., 2005), especially in couples with majority group partners and immigrant partners (Smith et al., 2012). With regard to the Caribbean second generation this is however likely to play a relatively small role since the religious differences with the majority population are limited. Second, ethnic origin in this study is not self-defined but rather based on the country of birth of individuals and their parents. Whereas the Antillean population is relatively homogenous, different ethnicities can be distinguished within the Surinamese second generation with Creoles and Hindus being the most prominent (Choenni & Harmsen, 2007). Just like differences in socio-economic performances (Van Niekerk, 2004), demographic behaviour such as union dissolution may differ between both groups that are impossible to capture with the existing data. In addition, our study cannot give insight into the dynamics

leading to a separation. Additional, in depth data on why, when and how partners decide to split needs further attention in the literature and even more so among diverse populations.

In sum, we show that universal application of homogamy theory may not be suitable when studying diverse migrant populations. At least in case of relatively permeable group boundaries convergence theory seems a better fit for explaining the risk of union dissolution among exogamous couples. On top of that, processes of adaptation to the society of settlement of immigrant groups may go in different directions and are not necessarily a path to more progressive or less traditional demographic behaviour. Our study shows that it is important to take the diversity in population structures and union formation dynamics into account when conducting empirical studies and formulating theoretical starting points. In the context of increasing numbers of second-generation young adults making the transition to adulthood it is crucial to critically reconsider and reflect on existing theories, concepts and definitions before drawing firm conclusions.

