Comparative Population Studies – Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft
Vol. 37, 3-4 (2012): 429-462 (Date of release: 07.03.2013)

Stability of Bilocal Relationships – Conditions and Development Paths

An Analysis of the First and Second Wave of Pairfam

Jürgen Dorbritz, Robert Naderi

Abstract: Bilocal relationships have lost their status as an exclusive living arrangement. They occur almost as frequently as unmarried cohabiting couples and can be found in virtually all social groups. Nevertheless, they are characterised by a set of very specific traits. The causes behind the increasing number of bilocal relationships can on the one hand be seen in a tendency towards greater individualisation, i.e. the desire for greater individual autonomy, and on the other hand in increasing demands for work-related mobility, which can only be met by separate households.

It is generally assumed that one defining characteristic of bilocal relationships is that they are rather short-lived and often merely seen as a temporary or stopgap solution. On the basis of the first and second wave of the pairfam survey, the aim of this paper is to investigate the general circumstances of bilocal relationships and its implications for their future stability. The central question is which conditions lead to the continuation or the breakup of a bilocal relationship or to an eventual shared household.

When looking at wave one and wave two in comparison (i.e. a time period of one year), profound changes have already occurred regarding continuation or breakup. From those bilocal relationships found in wave one, more than half of the age-group questioned had not changed their chosen relationship type. The smaller portion of respondents had separated and thus ended bilocality (just over 10 %). The remaining bilocal relationships had increased their level of institutionalisation by becoming spouses or cohabitants. As regarding the development from wave one to wave two, it becomes apparent through the results of a multivariate analysis that the general circumstances of older respondents should be judged differently than those of younger ones. The work-related constellation between the two partners, spatial proximity, educational homogamy, previous experience in cohabitating and intentions in regard to separation or moving in together are explaining factors for the continuation of a bilocal relationship, the set-up of a shared household or a breakup.

© Federal Institute for Population Research 2013
DOI: 10.4232/10.CPoS-2012-08en
URL: www.comparativepopulationstudies.de
URN: urn:nbn:de:bib-cpos-2012-08en0

Keywords: Bilocal relationships · Stability and instability of relationships · Change in living arrangements · Living apart together

1 Living apart and leading an intimate relationship

Bilocal relationships, generally defined as partners with separate households, have become a relevant living arrangement in terms of quantity. When looking at the population aged between 20 and 75, almost as many bilocal relationships as unmarried cohabiting couples can be found. The reasons behind the rising numbers are often attributed to a higher need for mobility and flexibility, but also to the wish for greater personal space within an intimate relationship. Bilocal relationships are characterised by a set of very specific traits. These include low fertility intentions, acting the part of a couple and then again of an individual or living apart, either voluntary or due to certain circumstances that do not allow a shared household. Distance between places of residence and frequency of contact are also variable criteria that characterise the bilocal relationship. Here, distances and contact frequency can range from low to high.

The term bilocal relationship refers to a relationship consisting of two partners who at the time of the interview did not have a shared household. At the same time, both partners should define the situation as an intimate relationship and are thus merely separated spatially. In recent literature on couples with separate households, four central factors can be found, on the basis of which bilocal relationships are identified:

Firstly, one requirement is the existence of separate households (two different addresses). Here, it is not relevant whether the couple is married or having a joint budget, as opposed to statements in previous works where bilocal relationships have been described as a living arrangement of unmarried couples (*Schlemmer* 1995: 363). In the present study, both married and unmarried couples can belong to the group defined as bilocal relationships.

Secondly, it depends on the duration of the relationship. Frequently, at least a year is required before a couple is defined as being in a bilocal relationship.

Thirdly, the couple should declare itself as being in a committed relationship, and *Haskey* (2005: 36) adds the presence of a sexual relationship as a requirement. However, it is not relevant whether the couple is in a hetero or homosexual relationship.

Fourthly, the couple should be recognised as such by other couples, meaning for example that the partner is accepted by the circle of friends.

Several authors have used further or other definitions in their works that only specify the existence of two separate households. The definition of *Schmitz-Köster* (1990: 20-21), for example, is frequently applied. It defines long-distance relationships as "married and unmarried couples, who voluntarily or involuntarily, temporarily or permanently have no shared household or economic community" (translated by CPoS). Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny chose a different approach to

the topic in which the existence of separate households was given less weight. He rather accentuated the fact of specific spheres of life. In the context of the so-called living apart together relationships, his focus lies on "the substantial autonomy of lifestyles and activities that are only minimally coordinated" (*Hoffmann-Nowotny* 1995: 341-342, translated by CPoS). Separate households are only the most obvious expression of this living arrangement. Further overviews of definitions and concepts are found in *Lichti* (2006: 7-9) and *Peuckert* (2008: 78-83).

Regarding the terminology, the term living apart together prevailed for a long time. The authors have decided to use *Huinink's* and *Konietzka's* (2007: 31) term bilocal relationships while at the same time not giving up living apart together (*Dorbritz* 2009: 36), the justification for this being that the term living apart together only covers a specific part of the relationships with separate households. living apart together is understood as couples who have a short-distance relationship, who can reach the place of their partner relatively quickly and who have more frequent face-to-face contacts. Despite separate households, the emphasis here is on the "Together". Long-distance relationships should be distinguished in their definition, as the two partners in this kind of relationship act both as a couple as well as singles. They are characterised by less frequent contacts and greater distances between place of residence. The distinction between living apart together and long-distance relationships is essential for the characterisation of bilocal relationships because they represent two important trends of social change – i.e. an increasing individualisation of living arrangements and a growing demand for mobility. It is the living arrangement in which intimacy and independence are perfectly compatible. As a consequence, the couple does not have to deal with the typical problems that might arise when living together (*Peuckert* 2008: 79). *Schneider* (2009: 679) portrays the situation as follows: "The partners enter into a solid relationship, but want to keep their distance because they deem greater individual autonomy and personal freedom as important and fear that these might be affected by moving in together" (translated by CPoS). On the other hand, increasing work-related mobility and career aspirations force couples to live relatively far apart in two separate households. In this case, private life is adapted to flexibility and career requirements. Thus, long-distance relationships are often formed on an involuntary basis. Bilocal relationships are generally referred to as the living arrangement which is best adjusted to the conditions of a postmodern society. At the same time, the probability is very low that bilocal relationships are maintained on a permanent basis.

The following investigations are based on data provided by pairfam – Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics, which started as a panel in 2008 and allows, inter alia, a differentiated analysis of the situation of bilocal couples. Bilocal relationships were reconstructed as follows: The respondents should show separate households, whereas those relationships which had only formed in the year of the first wave were excluded from the analysis. The question was designed in a way that only people responded who themselves define their relationship as intimate. The criterion for the definition as a couple was "overnight stays" (more often than never at least one month prior to the survey). Pairfam does not include a variable for the fourth criterion, i.e. whether the two people who consider

themselves as a couple are also recognised as such by others. Due to the number of cases, an explicit distinction between living apart together and long-distance relationships cannot be made in the survey design. Therefore, only the term bilocal relationship will be used hereafter, which should be understood as an umbrella term for both the categories living apart together and long-distance relationships.

The following research questions will be answered in this article:

1. What perspectives do bilocal relationships have in the context of a continuation, a break-up or an eventual set-up of a shared household?
2. Are there certain conditions that promote either a continuation, a break-up or an eventual set-up of a shared household?

The paper is structured as follows: In the next section, the current state of research will be reviewed shortly, complementing the definition of terminology outlined above. After having laid out the hypotheses in the third chapter, the fourth chapter will deal with the general approach. In sections 5 (prevalence of bilocal relationships in comparison to other ways of life) and 6 (bivariate analyses), descriptive findings are presented. Chapter 7 then outlines the results of a multinomial regression in order to explain the development of bilocal relationships within one year. Finally, the paper will end with a discussion about the results presented here.

2 Stability of bilocal relationships – literature review

One of the defining characteristics of bilocal relationships is their instability. The literature on family-demographics shows a range of findings on this. Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel, *Asendorpf* (2008: 762) proved that bilocal relationships are by far the least stable, compared to other types of relationships. The probability of separation was determined as 50 % for a time period of 6 years. The Generations and Gender Survey[1] (GGS) also shows a relatively short duration of this type of relationship (*Dorbritz* 2009: 40). Here, the average duration of bilocal relationships is 3.3 years in the age group of 20 to 75 year olds. One the one hand, the short duration of bilocal relationships might point towards a high frequency of separation. On the other hand, the end of a bilocal relationship does not necessarily mean the end of the relationship itself, that is to say, when couples move in together. The characteristics of instability and short duration are well-known. However, the causes of high instability have hardly been investigated so far.

As an explanation for this, the literature gives a number of reasons. It is often assumed that bilocal relationships are not designed as a permanent living arrangement in the first place. They are prevalent among younger people who are still in a decision or orientation phase (*Peuckert* 2008: 82). It is likely that especially for younger people – albeit being in a bilocal relationship – the search for a suitable

[1] cf. http://www.bib-demografie.de/cln_090/nn_750130/DE/Forschung/GGS/ggs__node.html?__nnn=true

partner is still on-going. In this context, it is noted that there is a high proportion of students among couples in bilocal relationships.

Schneider and *Ruckdeschel* (2003: 247) have found that some of the bilocal relationships are long-distance relationships, that their formation can be attributed to the constraints of the labour market and that they can therefore be characterised as involuntary in regard to having to keep separate households. If these constraints are mitigated by finding two appropriate workplaces in close vicinity of a chosen place of residence, this means the end of bilocality, but usually not the end of the relationship.

Another reason for the emergence of bilocal relationships is seen in the changing ideals of relationships and a weakened standardisation of behaviour through the social institution of marriage, where the traditional family model is given less weight as an aim of action. As part of this trend towards individualisation, personal factors have gained considerable influence in the choice for a certain living arrangement. Bilocal couples are the manifestation of a life style in which the perception of greater individual independence is of particular importance to the community of the couple. They are relationships with an emotional and individual distance, which are characterised by a certain reluctance toward too much closeness and by an increased attentiveness to possible unwanted influences by the partner (*Schneider* 2009: 679). In this respect, a bilocal relationship is a living arrangement which is lived with emotions at bay and with free spaces for both partners. It is a strongly individualised form of private life, where specific ideas about gender roles and life with children can be assumed. This kind of a bilocal relationship is voluntary and is thus given a unique character as a living arrangement, which is also accompanied by a greater degree of stability.

Various studies show that single parents are involved in the "instability" of bilocal relationships in a special way. After the separation from one parent of the child (usually the father), a new relationship is started, usually as a bilocal relationship. Therefore, singles are defined by *Lichti* (2006: 35) as one of the three basic types of bilocal relationships, next to unmarried adolescents and elderly widowed persons. *Traub* (2005) draws attention to the efforts of single mothers, for whom separate households are no ideal solution for a relationship, but rather a compromise, which should be ended by moving in together.

The fact that persons in bilocal relationships always have to work on their shared commonalities, when coming together after having been in their own world of experience, is identified as a core problem by *Wendl* (2004: 1).

"The most central of all challenges, therefore, is finding an individual way of communication – both for the time spent together as well as for the time apart. The couple should try to talk about and thus share the different positive as well as negative experiences of everyday life, such as feelings, expectations or hopes, fears and apprehensions, in order to be able to take part in the experience and feelings of the partner" (*Wendl* 2004: 1, translated by CPoS). This disadvantage is also recognised as such by the persons affected, who complain about low emotional support, loneliness, lack of daily assistance and the high costs for commuting (*Eberle* 2004: 17). This can lead to dissatisfaction in the relationship.

In general, relationship satisfaction and its development pattern are essential for the continuation of bilocality or the eventual set-up of a shared household. In the literature, this is called "driven relationship", an approach that goes back to *Surra* and *Hughes* (1997), which was not – however – specifically designed for bilocal relationships but for pre-marital relationship types. Here, the process of becoming attuned to one another "develops slowly and steadily, controlled by positive episodes of interaction and a high satisfaction within the relationship" (*Kopp et al.* 2010: 60, translated by CPoS). A second pattern is called "event driven". In this model, relationship development is subject to high fluctuations, characterised by ambivalences, conflicts and setbacks. This is more likely to be the typical development of bilocal relationships and is an explaining factor for instability. The constant repetition of coming together and separating again, with two partners who do not share every day life most of the time, is likely to reinforce this aspect. If bilocal couples do not manage to handle this interdependency again and again, they are at high risk of separation.

In this context, differing assumptions can be found in the literature. It is generally believed that interactions between the partners have a strong influence on relationship satisfaction. *Haustein* and *Bierhoff* (1999) suggest that cohabiting couples do effect spend more time together. However, bilocal couples spend time together more consciously, which leads to higher satisfaction in the relationship. In addition, it is assumed that everyday life in a shared household has a greater potential for conflict than a weekend relationship (*Noyon/Kock* 2006: 29-30).

Eberle (2004: 14) reasons that relationship satisfaction in long-distance relationships is gender specific. Behind this is the assumption that men are more interested in status and independence whereas women are more interested in commitment and intimacy. Bilocal couples necessarily have a higher independence and autonomy within the relationship. Eberle concludes from this that a long-distance relationship is a living arrangement that is preferred by men, but leads to a lower relationship satisfaction on the part of women.

It is generally agreed upon the fact that cohabiting and bilocal couples have differing topics when arguing. To give an example, for bilocal couples, jealousy is more often a topic (*Freymeyer/Otzelberger* 2003). Household chores, on the other hand, lead to arguments less frequently (*Noyon/Kock* 2006: 29-30). Researchers believe that different perceptions of tidiness are tolerated, but housework is divided by gender with a higher burden on the women's side, which leads to greater dissatisfaction. This result contradicts Eberle's assumption that bilocal relationships are the better relationship type for men. *Meyer* and *Schulze* reported in 1992 that women are solely responsible for their single household in bilocal relationships, which prevents conflicts. The results of the GGS prove that cohabiting and bilocal couples differ in terms of their conflict potential (*Dorbritz* 2009: 51). Partners in bilocal relationships often argue about leisure time activities and parenting – if there are any children – and less often about their relationship to friends and alcohol consumption.

Different areas of conflict need not necessarily lead to different satisfaction levels or to a higher or lower instability within the relationship. The reason for higher instability could also be the lower level of institutionalisation compared to married

– and even to unmarried – couples living together. Bilocal relationships are naturally characterised by rare face-to-face contacts and spatial separation. This, for example, has an impact on expectations in regard to receiving and giving support, in regard to the integration into the nuclear family and kinship networks of the partner (*Diewald* 1993) and also in regard to the emergence of separate groups of friends. The spatial situation generally leads to greater independence in private life. Especially people in relationships with greater distances between places of residence often act as singles. In the literature, it is assumed that separate households lead to less of a commitment, especially because of limited opportunities to invest into the relationship (*Kopp et al.* 2010: 58). This may result in separations. In addition to that, a separation is made easier if there is no shared household in the first place that needs to be divided.

One of the defining characteristics of bilocal relationships is that these couples rarely have children or that – compared to cohabiting couples – the women as well as the men in these relationships have a lower desire to have children. The Generations and Gender Survey has shown that women in a bilocal relationship desire to have 1.5 children on average. Cohabiting women would like to have 1.64 and married women 2.1 children on average (*Dorbritz* 2009: 49). One of the most prominent reasons for these differences is the apprehension that a child might create a stronger bond to the partner. Due to the fact that there are fewer parents among those couples in bilocal relationships and that the desire to have children is lower, there is no motive to move in together or to get married.

Principally, a closer look into the current literature shows that there is a research gap regarding the impact of the current living conditions on the development of bilocal relationships. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify the factors that have an influence on the stability or instability of bilocal relationships. Those factors are looked for by analysing the circumstances of these living arrangements at the starting point and their impact on the results afterwards.

3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this paper are based on the idea that the development of a bilocal relationship is determined by a previous situation in the life course. Depending on the initial situation, there is a higher risk of separation, a higher chance of setting up a shared household or of continuing the bilocal relationship. Here, 12 months are regarded as a short time frame, which indeed is pre-determined by the data collection in the first two waves of pairfam but nevertheless useful for empirically verifying the following hypotheses.

The hypotheses are derived from various sociological approaches regarding the topic of family in order to explain stability of partnerships and the development of living arrangements, some of which are valid for all partnerships and were in part devised specifically for bilocal relationships. From a theoretical point of view, the hypotheses are based on the application of social exchange theory to relationship

stability, on the thesis of individualisation and the assumption of increasing mobility requirements in highly developed societies.

Social exchange theory suggests that living together in a relationship is seen as a rewarding exchange of resources by both partners. Firstly, it includes premarital resources, such as the financial situation, the family of origin as well as the circle of friends and secondly, socio-economic characteristics, such as employment, income, number of children and thirdly, characteristics of the relationship, such as emotional connectedness, interactions between the partners as well as mutual respect and appreciation (*Engelhardt* 2002: 30). For bilocal relationships, it is assumed that the benefit of this form of private lifestyle is that both partners can lead a loving relationship and at the same time realise their career aspirations.

The *thesis of individualisation* assumes that "in the process of modernisation, individuals were liberated from tradititional and normative social structures (not just those of the family) in several stages" (*Huinink/Konietzka* 2007: 105). At the social level, this process is characterised by a de-institutionalisation of guiding social institutions. For individuals, this means an extension of options within a life course. Looking at it from a relationship and family perspective, chances have increased that living arrangements deviating from that of the traditional family are becoming more common. This also includes the emergence of bilocal relationships, which beside job requirements may also reflect the partners' wish to lead a long-distance relationship. The decline in the standardisation of behaviour has enabled the increase in bilocal relationships, which in turn corresponds with the wish to lead long-distance relationships in individualised societies. This wish also arises on the basis of experiences in previous cohabiting relationships.

In recent years, the *increase in job-related mobility* requirements has received growing attention from researchers. In a highly technological and global world, the labour market demands a high degree of flexibility. Besides this, career opportunities or avoidance of unemployment also play an important role. In addition, the entry of women into the labour market has become self-evident and with this, job-related mobility is increasingly posing a problem for relationships. Those affected react in quite different ways to the growing mobility requirements. Common forms are daily commuting, weekend commuting, long-distance relationships with separate households or relocations. However, in comparison to other forms of mobility, relocations are rather rare. The wish to keep the social environment constant rather leads to forms of commuting (*Ruppenthal/Lück* 2009:1). This form of mobility leads to a number of consequences for those concerned, such as health problems, a re-traditionalisation of gender roles, impairments in voluntary commitment, decisions against parenthood and to the formation of bilocal relationships.

According to the *homogamy thesis*, there is a tendency to choose a partner with the same or very similar socio-structural characteristics (*Huinink/Konietzka* 2007:128-129). This homogamy can be explained by the phenomenon that people often associate with social groups similar to themselves. Thus, the chance to find a partner who is socio-structurally matching increases. It is assumed that in a homogamous relationship both partners benefit from the good match and as a consequence, relationship stability increases. In the context of bilocality, this is of major

significance, as the likelihood of two people meeting who are at the same time professionally committed increases. If the workplaces are far apart and a change of job is not possible (at least temporarily), the probability of a couple to live in separate households rises.

Based on the approaches, assumptions about the influence of personal circumstances on the frequency of relationship separation or the stability of bilocal relationships have been made:

Hypothesis 1:
If both partners are economically active, bilocal relationships have a higher chance to remain in this state, as no career changes and compromises have to be made.

Hypothesis 1 is based on the increasing demands for mobility in modern societies and on the social exchange theory. It is assumed that bilocal relationships are to a great extent due to work-related decisions. This primarily concerns long-distance relationships, which are characterised by relatively great spatial distances between the two households. Both partners wish to continue the relationship, but at the same time do not want to give up their job. If it is not possible to find two suitable workplaces close to one of the two households, then leading a bilocal relationship is the logical consequence. The desire to continue the relationship paired up with limited possibilities to find acceptable jobs on the labour market, lead to a higher chance of continuation of the bilocal relationship. Under the given conditions, both partners benefit most with this type of relationship.

Hypothesis 2:
The smaller the spatial distance between partners in a bilocal relationship, the more likely the set-up of a shared household.

The greater proportion of bilocal relationships is covered by living apart together relationships, which are primarily entered into by young people in larger cities and are characterised by short spatial distances between households. From this perspective, living apart together relationships are a way to get to know each other and to test whether the setting-up of a shared household appears promising. Therefore, shorter distances between partners facilitate the set-up of a shared household.

Hypothesis 3:
The more homogamous a bilocal relationship, as measured by the level of education of both partners, the more likely the set-up of a shared household.

A homogamous partner choice, meaning the tendency to choose a partner with the same social background (education, religion, age, socio-economic status), is a phenomenon that has long been known. Here, the literature especially highlights the importance of educational homogamy. Various studies show that the risk of divorce is low when educational homogamy is high (especially at higher education levels) (*Dieckmann/Schmidheiny* 2000). Following this, we believe that if educational homogamy exists in bilocal relationships, there is a greater willingness to move into a shared household because there might be a stronger tendency to institutionalise. In the context of the job situation, homogamy might initially lead to an increase in the

risk of living in separate households. At the same time, however, homogamy is also a way to stabilise a relationship and thus increases the wish to move in together, if the general circumstances allow this.

Hypothesis 4:
The higher the number of previous relationships, the higher the probability that the bilocal relationship is not transformed into a relationship with a shared household.

With increasing relationship experience, especially with cohabitations, the likelihood that bilocal relationships remain permanently or at least last longer becomes greater, as previous separations may lead to negative associations with relationships in general. Negative experiences might for instance be the costs and emotional strain when breaking up a shared household. Therefore, the bilocal relationship is preferred as a type of relationship that ensures a greater degree of individual autonomy.

Hypothesis 5:
The more a bilocal relationship is institutionalised, the greater the chance of set up of a shared household.

Bilocal relationships differ in their degree of institutionalisation, such as in the frequency of contact, the number of nights spent together as well as in the discussion of intentions to move in together. It can be assumed that planning and intention determine the future of bilocal relationships to a great extent, meaning if the set up of a shared household is intended by at least one partner, then it also has a higher chance of realisation. This also applies to the intention to end the relationship.

Hypothesis 6:
The characteristics of bilocal relationships differ significantly between the two birth cohorts observed (1981-1983 and 1971-1973).

Bilocality in younger people is more strongly connected to the living situation (still living with their parents), the dating phase (no set-up of a shared household in the phase of getting to know each other) and the education phase (vocational or higher education at different locations). In older people, it is the job situation (see hypothesis 1) and bilocality as a relationship ideal or as a stage after separation which determine the character of the relationship. Furthermore, a higher stability of relationship is assumed in older people.

4 Methodology and data basis

This piece of work uses data from the first and second wave (release 2.0) of the German Family Panel (pairfam). The project is run by Josef Brüderl, Johannes Huinink, Bernhard Nauck and Sabine Walper and has been sponsored as a long-term project by the German Research Foundation (DFG). A detailed description of pairfam can be found in *Huinink et al.* (2011). For the analysis conducted here, the required variables of both data sets were combined. The first wave of the survey took place in

the years 2008 and 2009, the second wave one year later. For this article, only the data from the interviews with the anchorpersons were used. These data were then cut down further to focus exclusively on the birth cohorts of 1981 to 1983 as well as 1971 to 1973. The youngest group from 1991 to 1993 was not considered, as they were still underage at the point of the survey and thus subject to different relationship conditions and situations than adults.

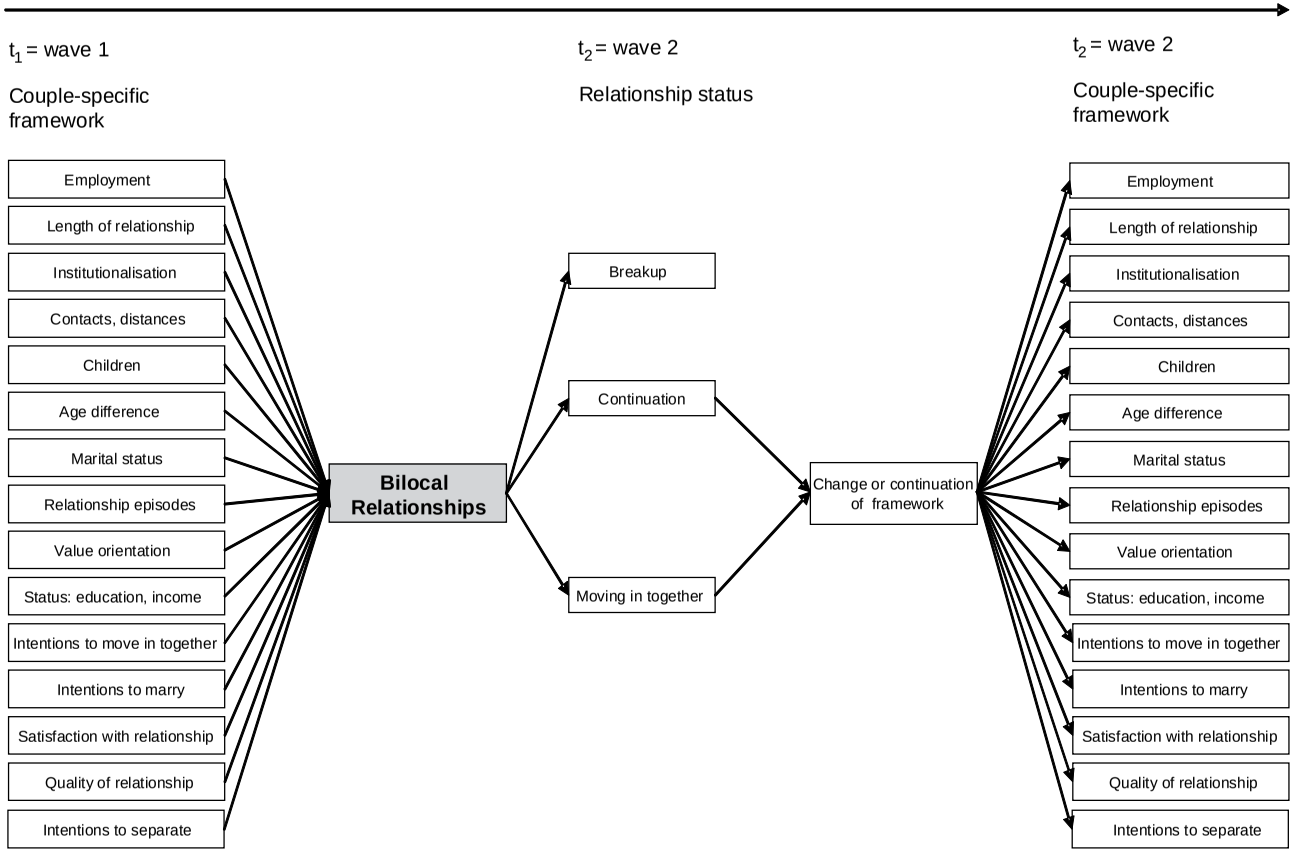
Basis for the construction of the dependent variable is the statement of the so-called anchorperson (main interviewed person – pairfam has a multi-actor design) that he or she is in an intimate relationship. A dichotomous variable was created, which consists of bilocal relationships on one and cohabitations on the other side. Here, it was not taken into account whether the anchorperson is married or not. In the descriptive part of the article, the percentage distributions between several independent variables and bilocal relationships in the first wave will be presented. For this purpose, the relevant information given by respondents in the survey was extracted from the data sets, meaning in a first step those that stated to be in a relationship but do not cohabit with their partner. The group was then narrowed down further by selecting those whose relationship had already started in the year prior to the first wave of the survey and who had stayed overnight at each others' apartments at least one month prior to the survey on at least a rare or irregular basis. Thus, respondents who had indicated that they "never" spent nights together in the month prior to the survey were excluded from the analysis.

The bilocal relationships that were identified in the procedure described above, thus provided the basis for the analysis and were studied in their development in the time period of one year. Pairfaim records changes in living arrangements between wave 1 and 2. Panel attrition has to be considered. This results in the dependent variable, which was used in the multivariate model. If a couple had moved in together prior to the second interview and if this was still the case at the point of the interview, the relevant cases were assigned to the category "set-up of shared household". The same procedure was applied to separations which had occurred between wave 1 and wave 2. If a relationship was still bilocal at the end of wave 2, it was defined as continued. Cases in which the bilocal relationship might have been transformed into a cohabitation to then be turned back to bilocality in the 12 months between wave 1 and wave 2 could not be detected.

The categories of independent variables were combined for the most part, especially to take into account the small sample size in the multivariate model. For the group born between 1981 and 1983, this amounts to 350 cases (out of 4010 cases in this age group), and for the group born between 1971 and 1973, it was 109 cases (out of a possible 4054).

The model shown in figure 1 can be seen as a conceptional model for studying the influence of general circumstances on the bilocal relationship. Unfortunately, it could not be fully implemented due to a rather small sample size compared to the number of variables in the regression model.

Fig. 1: Full model regarding the influence of general circumstances on the prospects of bilocal relationships



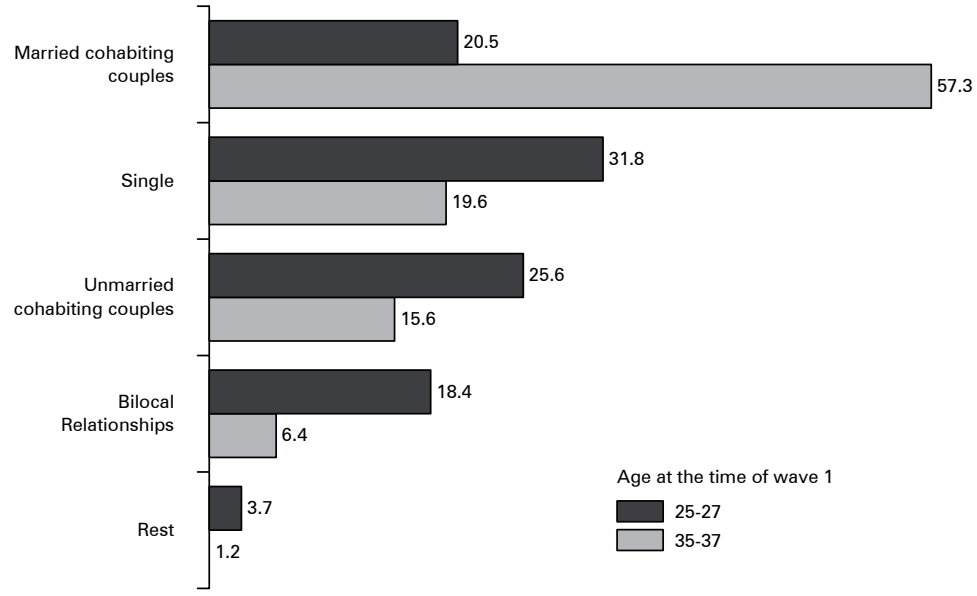
Source: own design

5 Prevalence of bilocal relationships compared to other living arrangements

The structure of living arrangements and the occurrence of bilocal relationships differ significantly in the two studied birth cohorts (see fig. 2). In the younger age group, singles occupy the highest share with 31.8 %, followed by unmarried cohabiting couples. With 18.4 %, bilocal relationships are also high in numbers. This reflects the fact that separate living plays an important role in the phase of getting to know each other and early relationship formation. The couples concerned might still be in education, but might also live in circumstances that do not allow a shared household (e.g. still living with the parents) or where a shared household is not (yet) desired. *Peuckert* (2008: 79) assumes that due to the situation on the labour market and the extended periods of education, this living arrangements will lengthen in time among younger adults.

In the older age groups, the image changes toward a dominance of married cohabiting couples, which make up 57.3 % in proportion. With 19.6 %, the second most important living arrangement are the singles. The proportion of bilocal relationships is reduced to 6.4 %. Thus, the composition of living arrangements changes in the years of birth from 1971 to 1973. In pairfam, same-sex relationships are

Fig. 2: Living arrangements of respondents in the age groups 25-27 (born between 1981-1983) and 35-37 (born between 1971-1973), in % of all anchorpersons



Source: pairfam, own calculation

overall underrepresented. In the age group 25 to 27 years, there are only 69 and in the age group 35 to 37 only 66 cases. In the following analysis, this group is not considered separately.

6 Situation and development of bilocal relationships – descriptive findings

When talking about the circumstances of bilocal relationships, we mean the conditions – subjective as well as objective – that may prompt a couple to decide for or against a relationship with separate households, voluntarily or involuntarily, for a shorter or longer time period. With regard to the circumstances, the following empirical contexts could be determined – without being included in the regression model. If possible, the bilocal relationships were compared to the couples with a shared household.[2]

Couple-specific employment

With regard to the couple-specific employment situation, there are significant differences between the two age groups. In the age group born between 1981 and 1983, the are hardly any differences between bilocal relationships and couples with a shared household (see table 1). The most common constellation is full-time employment of both partners (bilocal relationships: 26.8 %, shared household: 27.7 %). The most obvious difference can be found in couples where on partner is full-time employed and the other non-employed. With 21.2 %, this constellation is less common in bilocal relationships compared to couples with a shared household (27.1 %).

In the birth cohorts from 1971 to 1973, the proportions of employment situations of bilocal relationships compared to couples with a shared household show greater differences. As these couples are usually in an important professional and career phase at this point in their lives, it is not surprising that the proportion of those with both partners economically active is highest. In the case of cohabitations, the proportion then shifts towards the single-earner-model. Rises in proportions could also be recorded in those constellations in which one partner works full-time and the other part-time.

Thus, bilocal relationships are living arrangements where full-time employment is being realised by separate households. Reasons for this development might be changes in the labour market. This includes the globalisation of labour markets, precarious jobs, flexibilisation of employment, but also greater participation of women as well as the context between educational expansion and selectivity of regional

[2] For the descriptive analysis, applying the independent variables of wave 1, the weighting factor for wave 1 was used, which is supposed to compensate for deviations from the basic population. Later on in the regression models, no weighting factor was used.

Tab. 1: Couple-specific employment situations in bilocal relationships and in couples with a shared household, by birth cohorts (in %)

Division of labour within relationships	Birth cohorts/Living arrangements			
	1981-1983		1971-1973	
	bilocal relationships (N=594)	Shared household (N=1504)	bilocal relationships (N=228)	Shared household (N=2719)
Full-time/full-time	26.8	27.7	33.3	18.9
Full-time/non-employed	21.2	27.1	17.1	27.1
Non-employed/non-employed	12.5	7.6	4.8	3.2
Full-time/part-time	7.1	10.7	11.8	21.9
In education/full-time	6.7	2.6	3.1	0.6
Full-time/marginally employed	3.7	4.6	7.5	7.0
Self-employed/full-time	3.4	3.4	8.3	7.3
Other divisions	18.6	16.3	14.1	14.0

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

labour markets, making it difficult to find work in the region of the partner (*Reuschke* 2010: 279-280; *Schneider et al.* 2002: 14).

The changes in employment from wave 1 to wave 2 show a correlation between continuity in the employment situation and continuity of the type of relationship, at least to a certain point (see table 2). If changes did occur between wave 1 and 2, this lead to the set-up of a shared household more often among the 36 to 38 year olds, among the younger respondents to a separation. Overall, however, the change in couple-specific employment situations has no significant effect on the development of bilocal relationships.

Tab. 2: Changes in or continuity of couple-specific employment situations and the development of bilocal relationships, by birth cohorts (in %)

	1981-1983 (N=325) Employment situation			1971-1973 (N=135) Employment situation		
	constant	changed	N	constant	changed	N
Continuation of bilocal relationship	52.4	47.6	196	60.7	39.3	87
Breakup of bilocal relationship through separation/divorce	26.7	73.3	17	-	-	2
Termination of bilocal relationship through set-up of a shared household	47.4	52.6	112	44.7	55.3	46

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

Duration of relationships

In the birth cohorts from 1971 to 1973, bilocal relationships have an average duration of 5.5 years. In the birth cohorts from 1981 to 1983, it is only 3.6 years on average. The difference in durations might be due to the fact that bilocal relationships have a greater chance for a longer existence in the older age groups. In addition, a phenomenon that has already been frequently discussed in the literature can be confirmed here: Bilocal relationships do not last long. That, however, does not mean that they are not intended to last long. Among the older respondents, 17.0 % of bilocal relationships have already lasted at least 10 years. Among the couples with a shared household, however, it is 66.2 %. 43.8 % of bilocal relationships in the older age group last 5 years or longer. In the younger age group, it is 29.2 %.

Institutionalisation of relationships

The degree of institutionalisation of a relationship is considered crucial for its future prospects. Here, the assumption is: The more a bilocal relationship is institutionalised, the greater its stability and its chance to eventually be transformed into a relationship with a shared household. Pairfam measures the degree of institutionalisation based in four criteria: 1. whether one has already introduced the partner to the parents, 2. whether the partners have already told each other that they are in love, 3. whether personal belongings have already been deposited at the partner's apartment and 4. whether nights have already been spent together at the partner's apartment. A comparison to couples with a shared household can unfortunately not be drawn up at this point.

- In the vast majority of bilocal relationships, the partner has already been presented to the parents (age group 1981 to 1983: 94.0 %, age group 1971 to 1973: 86.6 %).
- Approx. 95 to 96 % in both age groups have told each other that they are in love.
- 83.6 % of the younger and 78.0 % of the older respondents have deposited personal belongings at the partner's apartment.
- As described above, the respondents must have at least rarely or irregularly spent nights together in the month prior to the survey in order to be categorised as a relationship by our definition. According to the anchor persons, most of the couples spend their nights together two to three times a week (1981 to 1983: 45.2 %, 1971 to 1973: 43.8 %). Almost a third of respondents even spend their nights together more than four times a week. 11 to 12 % of respondents only spend a night together once a week, and 12 to 14 % irregularly spend nights together.

Using these four criteria, pairs with different degrees of institutionalisation can be matched. This is done by the number of times each criterion was chosen. A highly institutionalised relationship is present, if there are four nominations, meaning the partner has been introduced to the parents, both partners have told each other that they are in love, items have been deposited at the partner's apartment

and the couple has spent nights together on a regular basis. If two or three items are nominated, the relationship is categorised as moderately institutionalised. With only one item or no items, it is weakly institutionalised. In the birth cohorts from 1981 to 1983, 57.4 % of bilocal relationships are strongly institutionalised, and from 1971 to 1973, it is 43.6 %. At a moderate level, there are 35.2 % in the younger and 37.3 % in the older group. The smaller proportion of bilocal relationships are weakly institutionalised, at 7.4 % in the younger and 19.1 % in the older group.

Frequency of contact and distances

As frequency of contact and distances between the partners are closely connected, both are analysed in context to each other. The frequency of contact is calculated based on the number of nights spent together per week (never to rarely, 1 to 3 times a week, 4 to 5 times a week, almost every night). The distance to the partner (on a normal day, by ordinary means of transport) was divided into four groups (less than one hour, one to less than 2 hours, 2 to less than 3 hours, three hours or longer). The matrix of both criteria put together shows a number of typical and not unexpected constellations (see table 3). There are only few minor differences between the two age groups, which is why they were summed up in one. Generally one can conclude: Bilocal relationships are oftentimes close in proximity and nights are often spent together.

Tab. 3: Frequency of nights spent together and spatial distances between partners (in %)

Overnight stays per week	Distance between the households of the two partners				
	Up to one hour (n=628)	One to less than two hours (n=106)	Two to less than three hours (n=49)	Three hours or more (n=93)	Overall (n=876)
Never, rarely (n=134)	8.1	1.7	0.7	4.8	15.3
1-3 nights (n=481)	38.8	8.4	4.2	3.4	54.9
4-5 nights (n=118)	10.6	1.0	0.6	1.3	13.5
Almost every night (n=143)	14.2	0.9	0.1	1.1	16.3
Overall (n=876)	71.7	12.1	5.6	10.6	100.0

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

Children

According to the data of the Generations and Gender Survey from 2005, bilocal relationships are a living arrangements in which partners rarely live together with children and in which the desire to have children is not very common (*Dorbritz* 2009: 47-50). For the anchor persons interviewed in pairfam, similar findings apply. In the birth cohorts 1981 to 1983, bilocal relationships hardly have any children. The average number of children is 0.16, the proportion of childless couples is as high as 87.5 %.

People in bilocal relationships less frequently plan to become a mother or father within the next two years (current desire to have children), especially when they are younger. Here, only the answers "yes, definitely" and "no, definitely not" were included. Following this, 23.7 % in the younger age group and in bilocal relationships answered with "yes, definitely", 50.3 % of the unmarried cohabiting couples and 70.5 % of the married cohabiting couples. When looking at the older age group, the differences are not as striking. The proportion of those who desire to have children within the next two years increases to 64.3 % for bilocal relationships and to 71.4 % for unmarried cohabiting relationships, whereas for married couples it drops to 45.5 %. It is assumed that married couples aged between 35 and 37 years already have children which implies a lower fertility intention compared to couples at the beginning of their family planning.

Marital status

The distribution regarding marital status also differs significantly between the two age groups. Among the younger cohorts, single men and women are most frequently represented (96.6 %). Here, bilocality can be seen as more of a pre-marital status. The literature often refers to this as the phase of getting to know each other and testing the relationship, which also indicates a spatial proximity. In older adults, singles are still in the first place with 68.2 %. However, the proportion of married people increases to 13.2 % and that of divorced people to 16.9 % so that bilocal relationships are associated with more of a marital or post-marital status. For the divorced, it is assumed that their bilocal relationships are still at the beginning whereas for the married, external constraints – such as great spatial distances between workplaces – are the reason for the choice of this living arrangement.

Relationship episodes

People who are in a bilocal relationship have had more relationships as a partner in a relationship with a shared household. This applies to both age groups. Of those people in the age group of 1981 to 1983 who are in bilocal relationships, the proportion without previous relationship experiences is 26.2 %. Among cohabiting couples, it is 41.9 %. In the older age group, the difference is similarly significant (bilocal relationships: 20.3 %, shared households: 34.0 %). It can be assumed that

experience with failed relationships increases the chance to subsequently enter into a bilocal relationship.

Status: education and income

Status is being measured by looking at educational attainment and income. The results clearly show that bilocal relationships have lost their of social exclusiveness. They are no longer found in only one particular social group. This is especially true for the birth cohorts of 1971 to 1973 where the proportion of bilocal relationships by educational attainment of the anchors compared to the proportion of cohabiting couples is almost identical (approx. 46 % highly qualified, 44 % with upper secondary education, 7 % with lower secondary education, 2 % with no qualifications, 1 % still in education).

When looking at the educational levels of both partners within a relationship, bilocal relationships do not differ from relationships with a shared household. A high level of educational homogamy can also be found in bilocal relationships. Among those respondents born between 1981 and 1983, 52.6 % have a partner with the same educational level (couples with a shared household: 53.9 %). In the older age group, the proportion of couples in a bilocal relationship with the same educational level increases to 57.4 % (couples with a shared household: 62.0 %).

Intentions to move in together

Regarding the intentions to move in together within the next 12 months, bilocal relationships present a heterogeneous picture and show significant differences when it comes to age. In the younger birth cohorts, bilocal relationships rather take on the form of a preliminary stage, which comes before the eventual set-up of a shared household. With 52.3 % making up the largest group are those partners who both (have a tendency to) wish to move in together. 24.5 % are against the set-up of a shared household, 17.4 % are not sure (see table 4).

Tab. 4: Bilocal relationships and intentions to move in together within the next 12 months, by birth cohorts (in %)

Intentions to move in together	Birth cohorts	
	1981-1983 (N=155)	1971-1973 (N=70)
Both partners are in favour of it (tendency)	52.3	38.6
Both partners are not in favour of it (tendency)	24.5	32.9
The partners disagree	17.4	17.1
The topic has not been addressed	1.3	0.0
Uncertainty, if topic has been addressed	4.5	11.4

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

Among the older respondents, considerably fewer couples in bilocal relationships intend to move in together (38.6 %). In contrast, the proportion of couples who unanimously agree on not moving in together is much higher at 32.9 %. The group of 35 to 37 year olds who have not discussed a shared household is also larger in comparison (11.4 %). Therefore, bilocal relationships at later stages of life are more frequently designed as a permanent living arrangement, which is characterised by emotional closeness while at the same time the partners are physically separated. This arrangement is often adopted when job-related external constraints create spatial distances between partners.

Intentions to marry

Here, marriage plans of bilocal couples were compared to those of unmarried cohabiting couples. The results show that bilocal relationships are an expression of a need for greater autonomy. The intention to marry within the next year is significantly lower in bilocal couples than in unmarried cohabiting couples. The differences between these two relationship types are the same in both age groups so that an overall assessment is possible for this issue. Only 13.5 % of the respondents in bilocal relationships said that they definitely or possibly plan to marry within the next year. Among unmarried cohabiting couples, the proportion was as high as 38.5 %. The vast majority of bilocal couples do not plan to marry in the near future.

Relationship satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction was measured with an 11-point scale (0 = very unsatisfied, 10 = very satisfied) so that the satisfaction can be shown using mean values. The closer the mean value is to point 10, the greater the satisfaction with the relationship. Respondents were asked about their own satisfaction as well as how they evaluated the satisfaction of their partner. Bilocal couples were compared to unmarried cohabiting couples and married couples. In general, relationship satisfaction is relatively high, mean values are in the range of 7.59 (bilocal relationships, birth cohorts 1971 to 1973) and 8.30 (marriage, birth cohorts 1981 to 1983, own satisfaction) (see table 5). For married couples, the own and the perceived satisfaction of the partner reached the highest values in both age groups. Bilocal couples and unmarried cohabiting couples are similar in their perceptions. In the age group of 1971 to 1973, the own satisfaction with the relationships is less pronounced than in unmarried cohabiting couples and married couples. Some findings apply to all types of relationships: The satisfaction is higher in the younger age group, and the satisfaction of the partner is perceived as lower than the own satisfaction.

The general assumption in the literature that women in bilocal relationships show less satisfaction with their relationship could not be proven on the basis of pairfam-data. Men indeed show slightly higher satisfaction levels, however, the values are not significant.

Tab. 5: Own satisfaction with the relationship and evaluation of the partner's satisfaction, by living arrangements (mean values)

Living arrangement	Own satisfaction		Evaluation of partner's satisfaction	
	1981-1983	1971-1973	1981-1983	1971-1973
Bilocal relationship	8.20 (n=599)	7.81 (n=236)	8.02 (n=580)	7.59 (n=221)
Unmarried cohabiting couples	8.13 (n=832)	8.05 (n=574)	7.96 (n=817)	7.81 (n=559)
Married cohabiting couples	8.30 (n=668)	8.22 (n=2123)	8.14 (n=651)	8.03 (n=2041)

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

General preferences and relationships

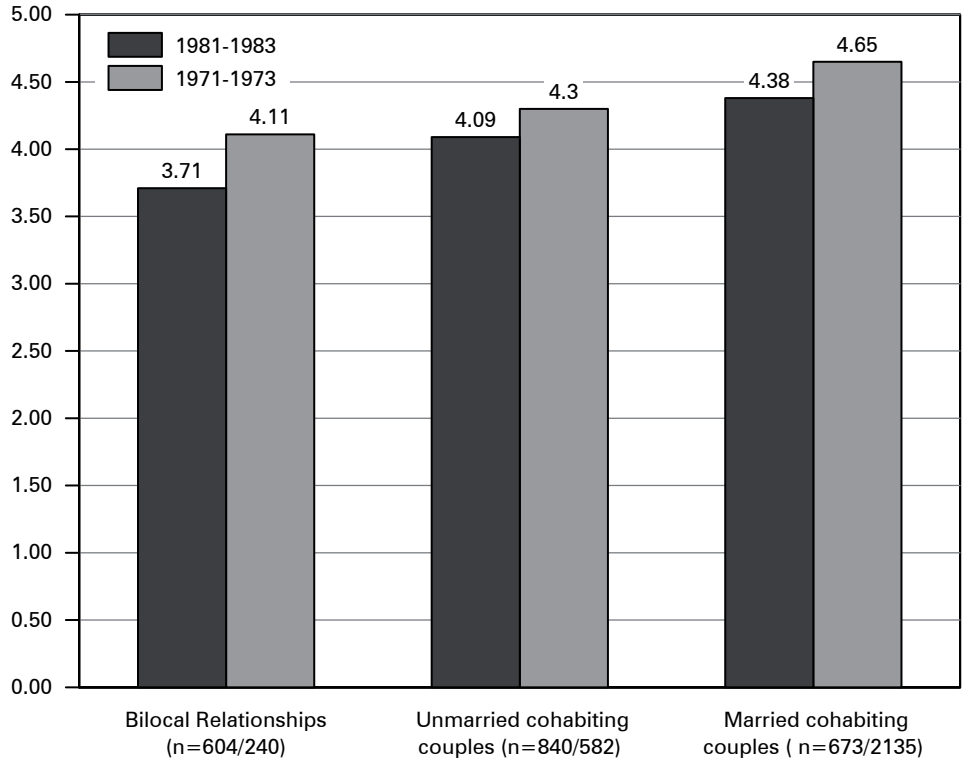
Pairfam asks the respondents to evaluate the importance of certain areas of life. For this purpose, respondents were able to assign a total of 15 labels to 5 items in the order of importance: a) work and career, b) hobbies and personal interests, c) social contacts, d) relationship and e) have (more) children. When looking at the allocations, meaning to which areas of life and by which age group the labels were allocated on average, the results were as follows: With 4.17, the importance of living in a relationship is at number 1 in the age group of 1971 to 1973 at the point of the first wave. In the younger age group, it comes second place with 3.59, first place being work and career. It should also be mentioned on the side that the area of having children shows an arithmetic mean of less than two and a modal value of zero in all age groups. This means that work and career is generally more important than family planning.

The comparison of different living arrangements clearly shows that the importance of living in a relationship increases with the level of institutionalisation, both in the younger as well as in the older age group (see fig. 3). Nevertheless, bilocal relationships also show scores above average when it comes to importance of relationship as compared to other areas of life. This demonstrates that it is first and foremost important to live in a relationship. It can be assumed that with increasing importance the tendency to move in together or to even get married also increases.

Intentions to separate

The intentions to separate were determined on the basis of two factors. Firstly, the respondents were asked whether they had thought about a separation or divorce in the year prior to the interview, and secondly whether a separation or divorce had actually been proposed (possible answers: yes or no). The results were similar to those about relationship satisfaction. It is the people in bilocal relationships who think most about or propose a separation (see table 6). Unmarried cohabiting couples are somewhere in between bilocal and married couples. They generally think more often about separation or divorce than actually proposing it. There are further

Fig. 3: Average number of allocated labels (a total of 15) for the importance of living in a relationship, sorted by type of relationship and birth cohorts in wave 1



Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

Tab. 6: Intentions to separate, by living arrangements (proportion of affirmative answers / in %)

Living arrangement	Have thought about separation/divorce		Have suggested separation/divorce	
	1981-1983 (n=355)	1971-1973 (n=322)	1981-1983 (n=262)	1971-1973 (n=245)
Bilocal relationship	22.6	23.2	16.5	19.5
Unmarried cohabiting couples	17.1	17.8	12.2	11.9
Married cohabiting couples	9.4	7.5	7.8	6.0

Source: pairfam wave 1 (release 2.0), own calculations

differences between the living arrangements: In bilocal relationships, a separation is more often proposed than in unmarried cohabiting and married relationships. People in bilocal relationships are less satisfied with their relationship and think about separation more often.

A first conclusion

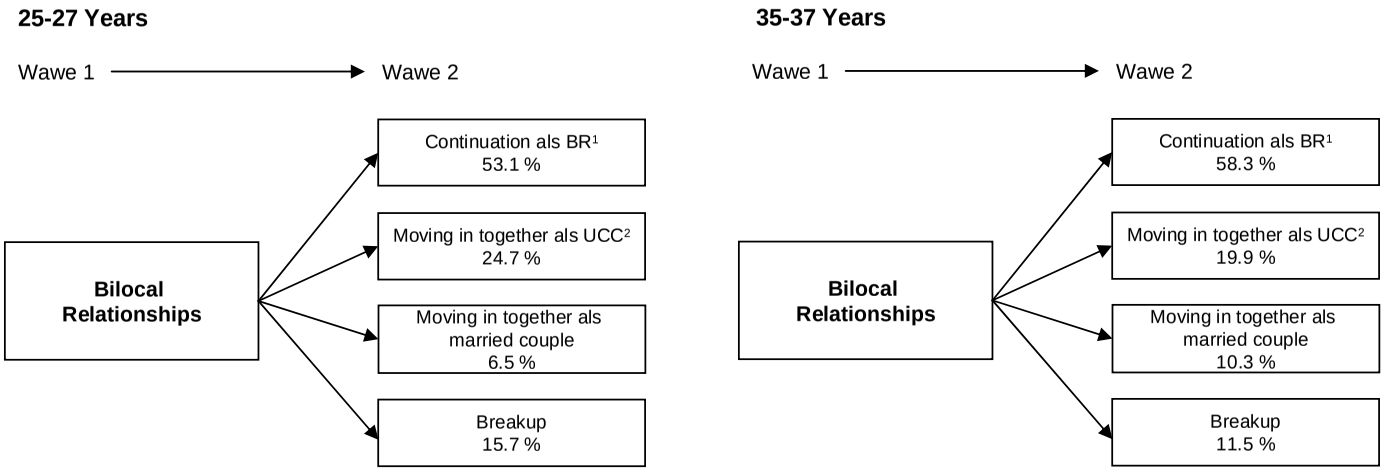
Bilocal relationships turn out to be an extraordinarily heterogeneous living arrangement. The empirical analyses show that for those born from 1971 to 1973 and 1981 to 1983, bilocal relationships show a specific character for each cohort group in the majority of the observed circumstances. Following this, as a first conclusion one can say that both age groups should be looked at separately in the multivariate analyses. What is striking is that with increasing age, full-time employment of both partners increases, that among the younger group, highly institutionalised relationships can be found and that bilocal relationships are mainly entered into by unmarried people. When looking at the older group, there is a history of more relationships and having separate households meets their idea of a relationship. Thus, there are rarely intentions to move in together.

The unique character of bilocal relationships compared to cohabiting couples is reflected by the fact that full-time employment of both partners is more common, living with children is less common and fewer children are desired. Compared to married couples, relationship satisfaction in bilocal couples is lower and they think about or propose a separation more frequently. Regarding education and income, there are no differences between bilocal and cohabiting couples.

7 Multivariate analysis of the development of bilocal relationships

Figure 4 describes the extent to which the relationship statuses of the bilocal relationships found in wave one have changed between the first wave (2008/2009) and second wave (2009/2010). This is the basis for the construction of the dependent variable. Four possible transitions in the two age groups were investigated (described above). In each, a small majority of bilocal relationships had not changed their relationship status within one year (see fig. 4). These are 53.1 % in the birth cohorts 1981 to 1983 and 58.3 % in the birth cohorts 1971 to 1973. The other bilocal relationships had changed their status in some way or the other. More set-ups of shared households were recorded than separations. The fact that more than 40 % of bilocal relationships changed their status within the short time period of one year can be seen as an evidence for the dynamics of this living arrangement. The most common change was the transition from a bilocal relationship to an unmarried cohabiting relationship. 15.7 % of bilocal relationships in the age group 1981 to 1983 and 11.5 % in the age group 1971 to 1973 had separated by the time of the second wave. The smallest group is made up of those who moved in together as a married couple. In the older age group, bilocal relationships show a higher degree of stability between wave 1 and wave 2. Their relationship status often remained

Fig. 4: Development of bilocal relationships between wave 1 and wave 2, by age groups (in %)



[1] Bilocal Relationships
[2] Unmarried cohabiting couples

Source: pairfam wave 1 and wave 2 (release 2.0), own calculations

unchanged and separations occurred less frequently. It is likely that bilocal relationships in the older age group are understood as a conscious living arrangement, whereas in younger people, they rather represent a relationship model for the beginning of a relationship. It is generally assumed that relationships at a younger age are less stable due to a lack of steps towards more commitment, such as setting up a shared household or becoming parents (*Kopp et al.* 2010: 80).

With the following regression, the effects of the theoretically and at the bivariate level plausible independent variable were examined primarily regarding the development of bilocal relationships. At the same time, the overall quality of the model was estimated, although their values might have been overestimated due to the small number of cases in relation to the number of input variables. A multinomial logistic regression was run in which the dependent variable consisted of the three categories continuation, set-up of a shared household and separation. Here, the continuation of the bilocal relationship was the reference category. The independent variables were added in one step. For each age group (1981-83 and 1971-73), the regression was run separately.

The selection of the explanatory variables shown in tables 7a and 7b are the result of theoretical considerations and based on the empirical relevance on the bivariate level. A selection is necessary, not least because of the small number of cases. In addition, the explanation also becomes clearer. All independent variables were combined so that they are dichotomous. As it is a multinomial logistic regression, the columns only show the set-up of a shared household and separation because the continuation of a bilocal relationship is the reference category. The odds ratios should be interpreted accordingly to this reference category. Next to the odds ratios, the significances are shown, all effects with a value of less than 0.1 are highlighted. The maximum number of cases are the result of the combination of all variables used.

When looking at the effects and their statistical significance, it becomes apparent that different variables are significant depending on the age group or the development of bilocal relationships. The results point to a very different picture of the two birth cohorts examined. This is neither surprising nor implausible, as there are certain reasons why bilocal relationships transform into a cohabiting relationship or end in separation, especially as there are specific situations in each phase of life. Accordingly, hypothesis 6 can already be confirmed at this point: The character of bilocal relationships differs between the two investigated birth cohort groups.

Employment or education in wave 1

In this variable, the activity status of the respondent and the partner were combined. One the one hand, both partners are employed or in education in the binary version of this variable. On the other, only one partner or neither of them is employed or in education. This variable was added in regard to hypothesis 1 and because of its theoretical plausibility in explaining bilocal circumstances. One should expect that partners who are both active, have a tendency to remain in the bilocal state for longer or even permanently. However, this cannot be proven, and a reliable inter-

Tab. 7a: Multinomial logistic regression* with respect to the development of bilocal relationships within one year, reference category of the dependent variable is the continuation of the relationship with a separate household, birth cohorts 1981 to 1983

Situation wave 1 Independent variables	Categories	1981 to 1983 (n=350) Set-up of shared household		Breakup of shared household	
		Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
Employment or vocational education	Ref.: Both are active (n=162) Only one is active/both are not active (n=188)	0.809	0.433	0.950	0.882
Distance in time between places of residence of partners	Ref.: Less than two hours away (n=297) Two hours and more (n=53)	0.631	0.252	0.778	0.593
Nights spent together	Ref.: No more than one per week (n=86) Two and more nights per week (n=264)	0.817	0.538	**0.441**	**0.031**
Duration of relationship in years at point of interview	Ref.: two and more years (n=269) Less than two years (n=81)	1.334	0.368	1.810	0.124
Number of preceding cohabitations of respondents	Ref.: at least one cohabitation (n=65) None (n=285)	**1.966**	**0.074**	0.579	0.155
Relationship satisfaction of respondents	Ref.: Satisfied (7-10; n=309) Unsatisfied (0-6; n=41)	0.773	0.585	1.506	0.396
Education homogamy	Ref.: No homogamy (n=204) Homogamy (n=146)	1.098	0.733	1.598	0.186
Intentions of respondents to move in together	Ref.: Not present (n=147) Present (n=203)	**4.135**	**0.000**	1.169	0.663
Intentions of respondents to get married	Ref.: Not present (n=300) present (n=50)	1.018	0.959	**0.204**	**0.040**
Serious suggestion of respondents or their partners to end the relationship	Ref. No (n=298) Yes (n=52)	1.349	0.448	**4.113**	**0.001**
Pseudo R^2 (Nagelkerke)		0.207			

* The procedure NOMREG was used in SPSS.

Source: pairfam wave 1 and wave 2 (release 2.0), own calculations

pretation cannot be made because of a high probability of error. Despite their low statistical significance, the results for the respondents born between 1971 and 1973 indicate that the probability to share a common household increases among couples with only one employed partner. For the younger group, the opposite should be the case, this being reasonable as in this phase of life, economic stability would be a prerequisite for the set-up of a shared household.

Tab. 7b: Multinomial logistic regression with respect to the development of bilocal relationships within one year, reference category of the dependent variable is the continuation of the relationship with a separate household, birth cohorts 1971 to 1973

Situation wave 1 Independent variables	Categories	1971 to 1973 (n=350) Set-up of shared household		Breakup of shared household	
		Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
Employment or vocational education	Ref.: Both are active (n=60) Only one is active/both are not active (n=49)	1.756	0.316	0.590	0.493
Distance in time between places of residence of partners	Ref.: Less than two hours away (n=93) Two hours and more (n=16)	**9.714**	**0.006**	0.597	0.722
Nights spent together	Ref.: No more than one per week (n=27) Two and more nights per week (n=82)	**8.392**	**0.015**	2.218	0.430
Duration of relationship in years at point of interview	Ref.: two and more years (n=90) Less than two years (n=19)	3.003	0.114	**5.895**	**0.056**
Number of preceding cohabitations of respondents	Ref.: at least one cohabitation (n=72) None (n=37)	1.730	0.341	0.344	0.260
Relationship satisfaction of respondents	Ref.: Satisfied (7-10; n=87) Unsatisfied (0-6; n=22)	1.104	0.904	**10.297**	**0.009**
Education homogamy	Ref.: No homogamy (n=48) Homogamy (n=61)	**2.949**	**0.059**	1.469	0.605
Intentions of respondents to move in together	Ref.: Not present (n=57) Present (n=52)	**8.649**	**0.001**	0.580	0.545
Intentions of respondents to get married	Ref.: Not present (n=91) present (n=18)	0.396	0.253	0.735	0.812
Serious suggestion of respondents or their partners to end the relationship	Ref.: No (n=93) Yes (n=16)	2.673	0.248	1.004	0.996
Pseudo R^2 (Nagelkerke)		0.408			

Source: pairfam wave 1 and wave 2 (release 2.0), own calculations

Distance between the places of residence of both partners in wave 1

The distance between the places of residence was measured by asking the respondents for the time it takes on average to reach the partner's residence. Regarding the set-up of a shared household, this variable is only significant for the respondents born between 1971 and 1973. There is a clearly positive effect for the set-up of a shared household if the couple had a great distance between their residences at the

time of the interview in wave 1. Therefore, hypothesis 2 cannot be proven. It stated that if the partners' residences were in close proximity to each other, it would lead to the set-up of a shared household. However, it can be assumed that a great distance between residences is seen as undesirable and merely as a temporary state which can be changed by moving in together (again). As this is only significant for those who were 35 to 37 years old at the time of the interview, the result is plausible: This is the economically active group, whereas the younger group is to a large extent still in education. As theoretically discussed above, these relationships are typically long-distance relationships of which the majority is only temporary and involuntary due to job-related reasons. On the other side, there are the voluntary living apart together relationships in the older birth cohort, who can spend time together but also have autonomy due to relatively small spatial proximity. In the younger group, however, living apart together relationships are rarely on a voluntary basis. There is a spatial proximity, but the set-up of a shared household is prevented by external constraints.

Nights spent together in wave 1

Hypothesis 2 assumes that spatial proximity between two partners leads to the set-up of a shared household. This was tested further by the question of how many nights are spent together. There is a significant and negative effect regarding separation among the younger respondents, when respondents frequently spent nights together with their partner. Thus, frequent overnight stays lead to a continuation of the bilocal relationship among respondents born between 1981 and 1983. Here, the effect for the set-up of a shared household is also negative, but not significant. In the 1970-cohort, there is a positive effect regarding the set-up of a shared household. In this group, frequent overnight stays lead to or increase the chance of a transformation of the bilocal relationship into a cohabiting relationship. Consequently, for the older birth cohort, hypothesis 2 can be confirmed with this variable. However, the result for the younger group is not necessarily a contradiction. It seems likely that frequent overnight stays might be a compensation for not being able to move in together due to, for example, financial or residence-specific reasons.

Relationship duration in years up to the time of the first wave

The variable relationship duration was generated by using the information as to when the anchor respondents had met their partner in combination with the time of the interview in wave 1. This information is retrospective. The integration of this variable is not directly related to the verification of a hypothesis, but has been included to reflect the duration as a criterion for institutionalisation. This can be seen in the result, which is only significant for the 1970-cohort: There is a strong positive effect regarding separation if the relationship had only been of short duration at the time of the interview. Therefore, this means that the overall chance of a permanent or longer duration of a bilocal relationship decreases if the relationship is established over the age of 30.

Number of previous cohabitations of respondents in wave 1

This variable is based directly on a generated variable, which contains the information on how many previous cohabitations a respondent had prior to the current relationship. Hypothesis 4 assumes that previous experiences with cohabitations may cause the respondents to prefer longer phases or even permanently prefer bilocal types of relationships. For the group born between 1981 and 1983, this was confirmed with a significant effect. There is a positive effect regarding the set-up of a shared household and thus a negative one for the continuation as a bilocal relationship in cases where the respondent did not have any prior experiences with cohabitation. The reason might be a more cautious approach with the currently existing relationship if cohabitations have previously failed.

Relationship satisfaction of respondents in wave 1

The variable for relationship satisfaction is based on a 10-point scale developed by pairfam, which was summarised for the regression. We assume that a deviation from the top scale points is an indicator for the tendency towards dissatisfaction. The result is accordingly, although only significant for the 1970-cohort. Respondents who were unsatisfied with their relationship showed a significantly higher risk for a separation of the relationship between wave 1 and wave 2. This variable was also used to control and not to test a hypothesis.

Educational homogamy in wave 1

The variable educational homogamy was constructed using information provided by the respondents about their and their partners' educational levels. For this purpose, ISCED-variables (6 groups, levels 1-8 and 0) generated by the data provider were used. Educational homogamy is present in the case of partners belonging to the same group. Hypothesis 3 states that there is a higher probability of moving in together among couples with educational homogamy because they dare to take the next step of institutionalisation more often. This result is significant (10 %-level) and true for the 1970-cohort, because when looking at the set-up of a shared household, there is a positive odds ratio for homogamy.

Intentions of respondents to move in together in wave 1

The initial variable in the pairfam-questionnaire contains four categories consisting of the possible statements: definitely, maybe, rather not, definitely not want to move in together. The overall affirmative attitude was summed up into one category and the negating one – together with the statement that one has not yet talked about it – into another category. Both age groups show a significant effect, meaning that the intention had actually been put into practice. With respect to the continuation, this means that the intention not to move in together is a commitment to the continuation of the bilocal relationship, provided that a possible disagreement of both

partners about this perspective did not lead to a separation. Hypothesis 5, which stated that planning and intention determines the actual development of the bilocal relationship, can be confirmed with this variable.

Intentions of respondents to marry in wave 1

The intentions to marry were asked in the same way as the intentions to move in together. It is obvious that marriage at least leads to a stabilisation of the relationship or to the set-up of a shared household. This effect is only significant for the 1980-cohort, with a negative effect on separation in cases where there are intentions to marry. Accordingly, the continuation of bilocal relationships is at least partly given when the partners do not plan to marry, as this is an expression of efforts to institutionalise. This result confirms hypothesis 5.

Intentions of the respondents or their partners to end the relationship in wave 1

Again, only for the group of those born between 1981 and 1983, there is a highly significant effect regarding a separation, if this had been proposed. Thus, the intention about how to proceed with the relationship stands in the foreground. It is quite likely that the intention to separate is not directly linked to the bilocal state, unless this is seen as a burden. Rather, the relationship in itself did not work out. Whether moving in together would lead to a stabilisation cannot be tested with only two waves.

Assessment of the overall model quality

Finally, the pseudo R^2 should also be mentioned, which shows a relatively high value for both groups. The development of the bilocal relationships within one year could be explained very well due to a sound choice of variables. The high value might be ascribed to the ratio of the number of variables to the number of cases. Nevertheless, the results are plausible and comprehensible. Here, the explanatory power is higher for the older than for the younger age group.

8 Discussion

The aim of this paper was to present a longitudinal empirical study of the development of bilocal relationships. Two age groups (198-1983 and 1971-1973) were interviewed in order to find out which influence external circumstances had at the point of the first interview. Here, the influence of external constraints on the relationship – only regarding the first wave – was described. For the explanation, the development of the bilocal relationships between wave 1 and wave 2 was used as a dependent variable and were investigated with a selection of independent variables in a regression model.

The investigation of the change in status in wave 2 of the relationships defined as bilocal in wave 1 showed that the majority of respondents (more than 50 %) were still in a bilocal relationship after 12 months, regardless of the age group. Second came those couples who moved in together, adding up to more than 30 % in both age groups. Considering the fact that all these relationships had already existed at least one year prior to the first wave, bilocality seems to present itself as a longer-lasting living arrangements to the respondents. Bilocality occurs in married relationships, but in the majority of cases in unmarried relationships. Nevertheless, the high degree of change within one year indicates a high dynamic that characterises this living arrangements. There were only few cases in which the end of a bilocal relationship represented a separation. All in all, external constraints have the most important influence, meaning the situation of the couple and the personal intentions regarding the development of the relationship.

The stability of bilocal relationships is strongly dependent on age. One of the most important result of the analysis is that the character of bilocal relationships is very different in the two age groups. In the younger group, bilocality is often due to the educational situation or because respondents still live with their parents, a typical situation for the age group around 20. This is confirmed by the fact that bilocal relationships do not only occur more often, but are also accompanied by a lot of time spent together in one of the two apartments. The effect shows that frequent meetings encourage the continuation of bilocality but also stabilise and protect the relationship against separation. However, bilocality is not desired as a permanent situation and thus often transforms into cohabitation as soon as there are changes in the economic or spatial circumstances or, in the worst case, leads to a separation. The age group ten years senior, on the other hand, show a very different pattern. Overall, there are significantly fewer bilocal relationships among those born between 1971 and 1973 – most of them are married und live together. Quite remarkable was the finding that if residences were far apart from each other in wave 1, this had a significantly strong effect on the couple moving in together. Again, this shows that bilocality is an undesired situation in most cases. We are dealing with long-distance relationships in which two partners live apart most of the time due to job-related reasons. However, bilocality is possibly changed as soon as two adequate jobs are found in close proximity to each other.

At the same time, compared to the younger group there is some evidence that primarily those with previous experiences with cohabitations are more cautious when it comes to moving in together. In addition, bilocal relationships at this age show lower stability in those cases where the relationship had been of a duration of less than two years at the time of the first interview. The following is especially striking: The congruence between expressing the intention to move in together or not to move in together in wave 1 and then actually (not) following through with it. This highlights a certain degree of freedom of choice for life in bilocal relationships. It is therefore a particularly planned type of relationship.

Hypothesis 1, which assumed that the employment of both partners leads to a continuation of bilocality, is only valid for the older respondents. Hypothesis 2, which assumed a correlation between spatial proximity and the probability of the set-up

of a shared household in wave 2, could not be confirmed. Hypothesis 3, which assumed that educational homogamy leads to the set-up of a shared household, only applies to the older birth cohorts. Hypothesis 4, which assumed a correlation between experiences with cohabitation and remaining in the form of a bilocal relationship, could be confirmed. However, previous experiences with cohabitations only decrease the chances of an eventual set-up of a shared household in the younger age group. Not surprisingly, hypothesis 5 was found true. As soon as intentions to move in together or to separate are communicated, the chance of actual realisation of those intentions increases. Testing hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 confirm the validity of hypothesis 6, which assumed a different character of the bilocal relationships in the two age groups.

The analyses presented here are limited to wave 1 and 2 of pairfam, as there were no further surveys available at the point of this investigation. However, the next waves will surely bring further insights into the stability or instability of bilocal relationships. The authors consider the results presented here as only one step in their research. Further investigations will follow, which will not be limited to bilocal relationships, but will also consider other living arrangements and parenting.

References

Asendorpf, Jens B. 2008: Living Apart Together: Alters- und Kohortenabhängigkeit einer heterogenen Lebensform. In: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 60,4: 749-764 [doi: 10.1007/s11577-008-0035-4].

Dieckmann, Andreas; Schmidheiny, Kurt 2000: Bildung und Ehestabilität. Eine Untersuchung schweizerischer Familienbiografien mit den Methoden der Ereignisanalyse. Arbeitspapier [http://www.socio.ethz.ch/people/andreasd/working_papers/Scheidung.pdf, 05.03.2013].

Diewald, Martin 1993: Netzwerkorientierungen und Exklusivität der Paarbeziehung. Zeitschrift für Soziologie 22,4: 279-295.

Dorbritz, Jürgen 2009: Bilokale Paarbeziehungen – die Bedeutung und Vielfalt einer Lebensform. In: Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft 34,1-2: 31-56 [doi: 10.1007/s12523-010-0032-3].

Eberle, Thomas S. 2004: Pendler-Paare. Die Beziehungsform des Getrennt-Zusammen-Lebens. In: *Müller, Ulrich* (Eds.): Paare und Paarungen: Festschrift für Werner Wunderlich zum 60. Geburtstag. Stuttgart: Heinz: 10-22.

Engelhardt, Henriette 2002: Zur Dynamik von Ehescheidungen. Theoretische und empirische Analysen. Rostocker Beiträge zur Demographie, Band 2. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Freymeyer, Karin; Otzelberger, Manfred 2003: In der Ferne so nah. Lust und Last der Wochenendbeziehungen. München: dtv.

Haskey, John 2005: Living arrangements in contemporary Britain: Having a Partner who usually lives elsewhere and Living Apart Together (LAT). In: Population Trends 122: 35-45.

Haustein, Sonja; Bierhoff, Hans W. 1999: Zusammen und getrennt wohnende Paare: Unterschiede in grundlegenden Beziehungsdimensionen. In: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung 11,1: 59-76.

Hoffmann-Nowotny, Hans-Joachim 1995: Die Zukunft der Familie – Die Familie der Zukunft. In: *Gerhard, Uta; Hradil, Stefan; Lucke, Doris; Nauck, Bernhard*: Familie der Zukunft. Opladen: Leske + Budrich: 325-344.

Huinink, Johannes; Konietzka, Dirk 2007: Familiensoziologie. Eine Einführung. Frankfurt/New York: Campus.

Huinink, Johannes et al. 2011: Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam): Conceptual framework and design. In: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung 23: 77-101.

Kopp, Johannes; Lois, Daniel; Kunz, Christina; Arrànz Becker, Oliver 2010: Verliebt, verlobt, verheiratet. Institutionalisierungsprozesse in Partnerschaften. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag [doi: 10.1007/978-3-531-92304-8_2].

Lichti, Marion 2006: Die Frau zwischen Liebe, Tradition und Arbeitsmarkt: Partnerschaften mit getrennten Haushalten – Idealmodell oder Notlösung für die berufstätige Frau. Ruprecht-Karl-Universität Heidelberg, Institut für Soziologie (Seminararbeit) [doi: 10.3239/9783638856010].

Meyer, Sybille; Schulze, Eva 1992: Familie im Umbruch. Schriftenreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie und Senioren 7. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Noyon, Alexander; Kock, Tanja 2006: Living apart together: Ein Vergleich getrennt wohnender Paare mit klassischen Partnerschaften. In: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung 18,1: 27-45.

Peuckert, Rüdiger 2008: Familienformen im sozialen Wandel, 7. vollständig überarbeitete Auflage. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften [doi: 10.1007/978-3-531-19031-0].

Reuschke, Darja 2010: Multilokales Wohnen. Raum-zeitliche Muster multilokaler Wohnarrangements von Shuttles und Personen in einer Fernbeziehung. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften [doi: 10.1007/978-3-531-92283-6].

Ruppenthal, Silvia; Lück, Detlev 2009: Jeder fünfte Erwerbstätige ist aus beruflichen Gründen mobil. Berufsbedingte räumliche Mobilität im Vergleich. In: Informationsdienst soziale Indikatoren 42: 1-5.

Schlemmer, Elisabeth 1995: Living apart together. Eine partnerschaftliche Lebensform von Singles? In: *Bertram, Hans* (Eds.): Das Individuum und seine Familie. In: DJI-Familiensurvey 4. Opladen: 363-398.

Schmitz-Köster, Dorothee 1990: Liebe auf Distanz. Getrennt zusammen leben. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Schneider, Norbert F. 2009: Distanzbeziehungen. In: *Lenz, Karl; Nestmann, Frank* (Eds.): Handbuch Persönliche Beziehungen. Weinheim/München: Juventa Verlag: 677-693.

Schneider, Norbert F.; Ruckdeschel, Kerstin 2003: Partnerschaften mit zwei Haushalten: Eine moderne Lebensform zwischen Partnerschaftsideal und beruflichen Erfordernissen. In: *Bien, Walter; Marbach, Jan H.* (Eds.): Partnerschaft und Familiengründung. Ergebnisse der dritten Welle des Familien-Survey. Opladen: Leske+Budrich: 245-258.

Schneider, Norbert F., Limmer, Ruth; Ruckdeschel, Kerstin 2002: Mobil, flexibel, gebunden. Familie und Beruf in der mobilen Gesellschaft. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus.

Surra, Catherine A.; Hughes, Debra K. 1997: Commitment processes accounts of the development of premarital relationships. In: Journal of Marriage and the Family 59: 5-21 [doi: 10.2307/353658].

Traub, Angelika 2005: Neue Liebe in getrennten Haushalten. Zur Bedeutung von Living-apart-together-Partnerschaften für das Wohlbefinden und Stresserleben alleinerziehender Mütter. Berlin: Logos.

Wendl, Peter 2004: Fern-Beziehung und Wochenendbeziehungen – Chancen und Belastungen [http://www.gelingende-fernbeziehung.de/fern-beziehung.html, 05.03.2013].

Translated from the original text by the Federal Institute for Population Research, for information only. The reviewed and authors' authorised original article in German is available under the title "Stabilität bilokaler Paarbeziehungen – Rahmenbedingungen und Entwicklungspfade. Eine Analyse der ersten und zweiten Welle von pairfam", DOI 10.4232/10.CPoS-2012-08de or URN urn:nbn:de:bib-cpos-2012-08de2, at http://www.comparativepopulationstudies.de.

Date of submission: 02.01.2012 *Date of Acceptance: 15.08.2012*

Jürgen Dorbritz, Robert Naderi (✉). Federal Institute for Population Research. Wiesbaden, Germany. E-Mail: juergen.dorbritz@bib.bund.de, robert.naderi@bib.bund.de

URL: http://www.bib-demografie.de/DE/Institut/Mitarbeiter/WissMitarbeiter/dorbritz/dorbritz_node.html, http://www.bib-demografie.de/DE/Institut/Mitarbeiter/WissMitarbeiter/naderi/naderi_node.html

Comparative Population Studies – **Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft**

www.comparativepopulationstudies.de

ISSN: 1869-8080 (Print) – 1869-8999 (Internet)

Published by / Herausgegeben von
Prof. Dr. Norbert F. Schneider

Federal Institute for Population Research
D-65180 Wiesbaden / Germany

Managing Editor / Verantwortlicher Redakteur
Frank Swiaczny

Editorial Assistant / Redaktionsassistenz
Katrin Schiefer

Language & Copy Editor (English) / Lektorat & Übersetzungen (englisch)
Amelie Franke

Copy Editor (German) / Lektorat (deutsch)
Dr. Evelyn Grünheid

Layout / Satz
Beatriz Feiler-Fuchs

E-mail: cpos@bib.bund.de

Scientific Advisory Board / Wissenschaftlicher Beirat
Jürgen Dorbritz (Wiesbaden)
Paul Gans (Mannheim)
Johannes Huinink (Bremen)
Marc Luy (Wien)
Clara H. Mulder (Groningen)
Notburga Ott (Bochum)
Peter Preisendörfer (Mainz)

Board of Reviewers / Gutachterbeirat
Martin Abraham (Erlangen)
Laura Bernardi (Lausanne)
Hansjörg Bucher (Bonn)
Claudia Diehl (Göttingen)
Andreas Diekmann (Zürich)
Gabriele Doblhammer-Reiter (Rostock)
Henriette Engelhardt-Wölfler (Bamberg)
E.-Jürgen Flöthmann (Bielefeld)
Alexia Fürnkranz-Prskawetz (Wien)
Beat Fux (Zürich)
Joshua Goldstein (Rostock)
Karsten Hank (Köln)
Sonja Haug (Regensburg)
Franz-Josef Kemper (Berlin) †
Michaela Kreyenfeld (Rostock)
Aart C. Liefbroer (Den Haag)
Kurt Lüscher (Konstanz)
Dimiter Philipov (Wien)
Thomáš Sobotka (Wien)
Heike Trappe (Rostock)

© Federal Institute for Population Research 2013 – All rights reserved