

Intergenerational Conflicts Due to Exogamy? The Impact of Migrants' Interethnic Partner Choices on Ties to Mothers

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1. Topic: A growing body of research examines intergenerational ties in migrant families, with a focus on how migration and assimilation impact these ties across generations and ethnic backgrounds (Albertini et al., 2019). However, there is limited research on familial diversification within migrant families (Steinbach 2013). The rising migrant population in European societies has resulted in a higher prevalence of ethnic boundary crossing partnerships (i.e., unions between migrants and natives, interethnic/exogamous unions) in relation to unions between individuals of the same ethnic background (i.e., endogamous unions) (Burkart, 2018). Although exogamy is perceived to indicate migrants' assimilation towards the majority society (Alba and Nee, 2003), prior research focusing on the link between exogamy and intergenerational ties primarily examined the influence of these ties on migrants' propensity to exogamy (e.g., Carol, 2014; Zhang & Sassler, 2019). To gain insights on the impact of migrants' exogamous partner choices in comparison to endogamous partner choices on intergenerational ties, I investigate the following research question: *Do migrants in exogamous unions experience more conflicts with mothers compared to their counterparts in endogamous unions?*

The few previous quantitative studies on exogamous partnerships and its consequences on intergenerational ties examined either intermarriages (Kalmijn 2019; Yahirun 2019), exogamous pre-marital dating (Shenhav et al. 2017), or exogamous pre-marital cohabitation and intermarriages (Hohmann-Marriott and Amato 2008) in a cross-sectional perspective. To investigate the role of exogamy as the “ultimate boundary breaker” (Rodríguez-García 2015, p. 13), I do not only compare migrants in exogamous and endogamous unions. I also employ a longitudinal approach that examines the role of the individual transitions from pre-marital dating and cohabitation to marriages of shorter and longer duration.

2. Theoretical focus: Drawing on theoretical considerations on migrant assimilation and partner choice, three hypotheses can be derived: (H1) The *Homogamy Hypothesis* posits that intergenerational conflicts in exogamous migrants (i.e., migrants in exogamous unions) may stem from their parents' preferences for endogamy. While younger generations favor exogamy more than older generations (Osanami Törngren 2016), parents often prefer endogamous partner choices for their children (e.g., Carol, 2014). This preference may be rooted in the perception of exogamy as a potential threat to intergenerational solidarity (Rosenthal 1985, p. 970), *leading to intergenerational conflicts when a child opts for exogamy.*

(H2) The *Selection Hypothesis* highlights the role of selection into exogamy (Yahirun 2019). For instance, migrants' cultural (e.g., greater proficiency in the host-country's language) and structural assimilation (like higher education and income) may contribute to migrants' likelihood to choose a native partner (e.g., Furtado and Song 2015). However, the different degrees and paces of assimilation between the generations (denoted as *adaptation gap*) may cause strains in intergenerational ties (Albertini et al., 2019). *Thus, as long as exogamy follows after migrants' assimilation, rather the adaptation gap between the generations than exogamy may contribute to intergenerational conflicts.*

(H3) The *Assimilation Hypothesis* emphasizes exogamy as indicator of social assimilation (Alba and Nee, 2003). As exogamous unions link the social networks to which the partners belong, exogamy should contribute at least to mutual acceptance in the course of time (Gordon, 1964; Kalmijn 2015). *Thus, as unions' trajectory progresses (e.g., with unions' increasing institutional degree and marriage duration), intergenerational conflicts may decrease.*

3. Data & methods: Using data from the German Family Panel (pairfam, wave 1-13, 2008/2009-2020/21), I examine conflicts with mothers among first- and second-generation migrants (aged 15 to 50) in exogamous and endogamous unions. To derive the outcome *conflicts with mothers* I merge responses from two questions: "How often are you and your mother annoyed or angry with each other?" and "How often do you and your mother disagree and quarrel?" These questions were rated on a five-point scale, from (1) never to (3) sometimes to (5) always. In the final metric outcome, higher values indicate more frequent conflicts with mothers. To obtain the *union type*, I differentiate between migrants with partners from the same country of origin (endogamous) and those with native partners (exogamous). In total, I have 3,359 observations of 201 (38.6%) exogamous and 320 (61.4%) endogamous migrants.

The analysis proceeds as follows: First, I explore the link between migrants' partner choice (exogamous vs. endogamous) and conflicts with mothers using random-effects models with various control variables (migrants' age, gender, migrant generation, country of origin, parental status and history of cohabitation/marriage, religion, education, employment / union trajectory, partner's education and employment / mother's age, family structure, distance and emotional closeness to mother). Second, I examine the impact of transitioning from pre-marital dating and cohabitation to newlywed marriages (0-5 years) and longer-term marriages (more than 5 years) using fixed-effects models.

4. Findings: The random-effects analyses indicate that exogamous migrants exhibit on average more conflicts with mothers than endogamous migrants (see Tab. 1, Model 1). The reduction

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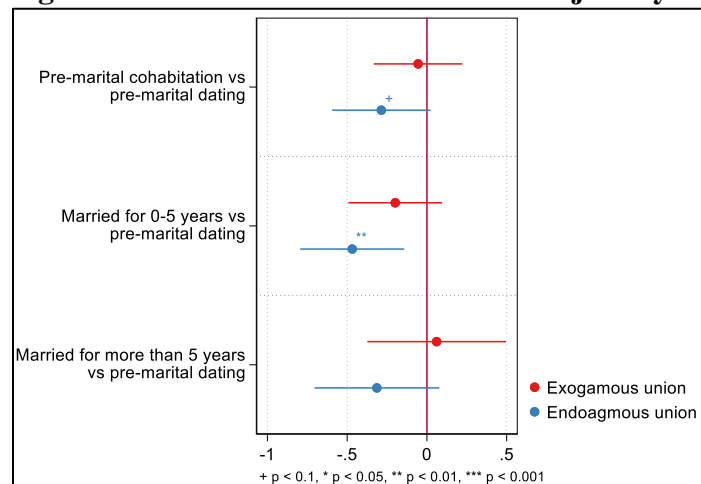
in size and significance in Model 2 is attributed to accounting for migrant generation. Second-generation migrants experience increased conflicts with mothers (analysis not shown) and tend to form exogamous (55%) rather than endogamous unions (28%). The results of Table 1 mainly support the selection hypothesis (H2).

Tab. 1: Association between migrants' exogamous partner choices and conflicts with mothers

	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)
	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
<i>Union type</i> (ref. endogamous union)				
Exogamous union	0.50*** (0.12)	0.07 (0.12)	0.04 (0.12)	0.02 (0.12)
Constant	4.15*** (0.07)	3.85*** (0.16)	4.00*** (0.20)	3.96*** (0.20)
N	3,359	3,359	3,359	3,359

Source: Calculations based on pairfam wave 1-13; Standard errors in parentheses; + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$;
M1: union type / **M2:** + migrants' age, gender, migrant generation, country of origin, parental status and history of cohabitation/marriage, religion, education, employment / **M3:** + union trajectory; partner's education and employment / **M4:** + mother's age, family structure, distance and emotional closeness to mother

Fig. 1: Differences based on the union trajectory



Source: Calculations based on pairfam wave 1-13; **Controlled for:** migrant's age, parental status, religion, education, employment, partner's education and employment, mother's age, family structure, distance and emotional closeness to mother

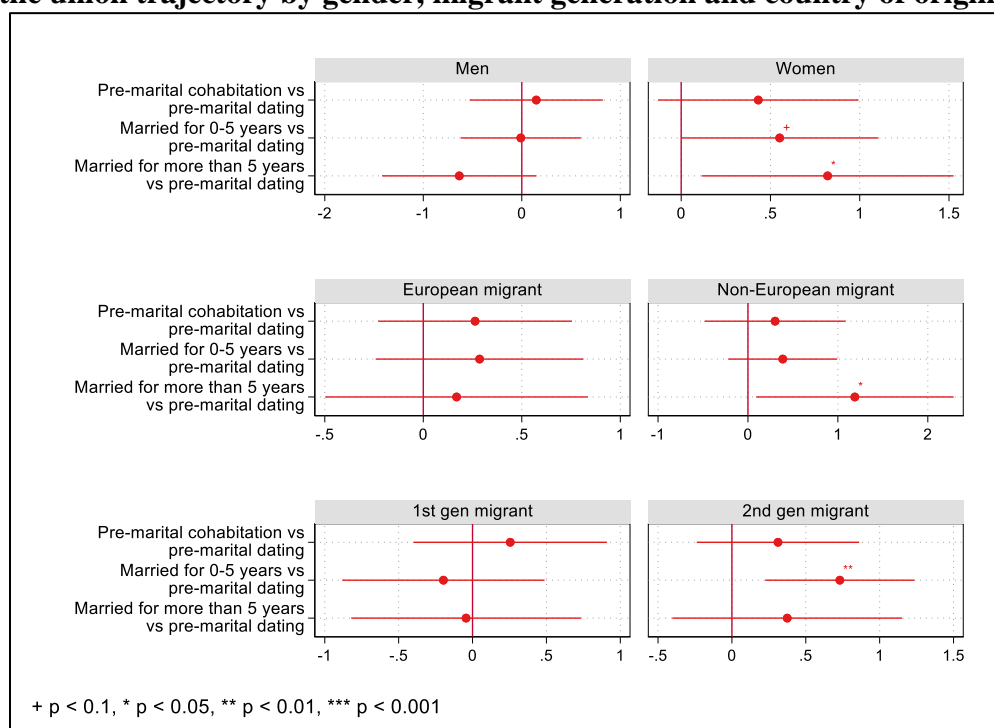
To examine the association between migrants' exogamous partner choices and conflicts with mothers across the union trajectory, I run fixed-effects analyses (see Fig. 1). For endogamous migrants, conflicts with mothers decrease during pre-marital cohabitation and early marriage, but exogamous migrants do not exhibit a significant decrease in conflicts. Moreover, throughout the union trajectory, exogamous migrants report slightly more conflicts with mothers compared to their endogamous counterparts. Contrasting exogamous and endogamous migrants across the union trajectory does not indicate significant differences (analysis not shown). However, when comparing exogamous and endogamous migrants across the union trajectory for various sub-groups (see Fig. 2), significant dissimilarities between these union types are observable for certain groups even as the unions' institutional degree and marriage duration increase. Notably, women and non-Europeans may continue to experience conflicts with mothers as their marriages endure. Thus, in contrast to Table 1, Figure 2 highlights that selection (H2) cannot fully explain differences between exogamous and

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endogamous migrants in their ties with their mothers. Especially migrants' intermarriage can influence intergenerational ties (H1). In addition, as Figure 2 partly contradicts the assimilation hypothesis (H3), these results also emphasize that assimilation may be a long-term process.

All in all, this investigation underscores the long-term impact of exogamy on intergenerational ties. This findings contradict previous results showing that after getting married, children in exogamous unions typically maintain similar relationships with their mothers when compared to those who marry endogamously (Yahirun 2019).

Fig. 2: Contrasting exogamous migrants in relation to endogamous migrants (ref.) along the union trajectory by gender, migrant generation and country of origin



Source: Calculations based on pairfam wave 1-13; **Controlled for:** migrant's age, parental status, religion, education, employment, partner's education and employment, mother's age, family structure, distance and emotional closeness to mother

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