



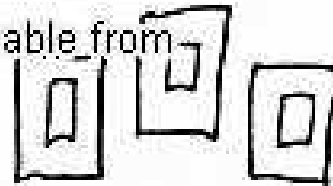
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Why are so many middle-aged people depressed?

Hilke Brockmann
Jacobs University

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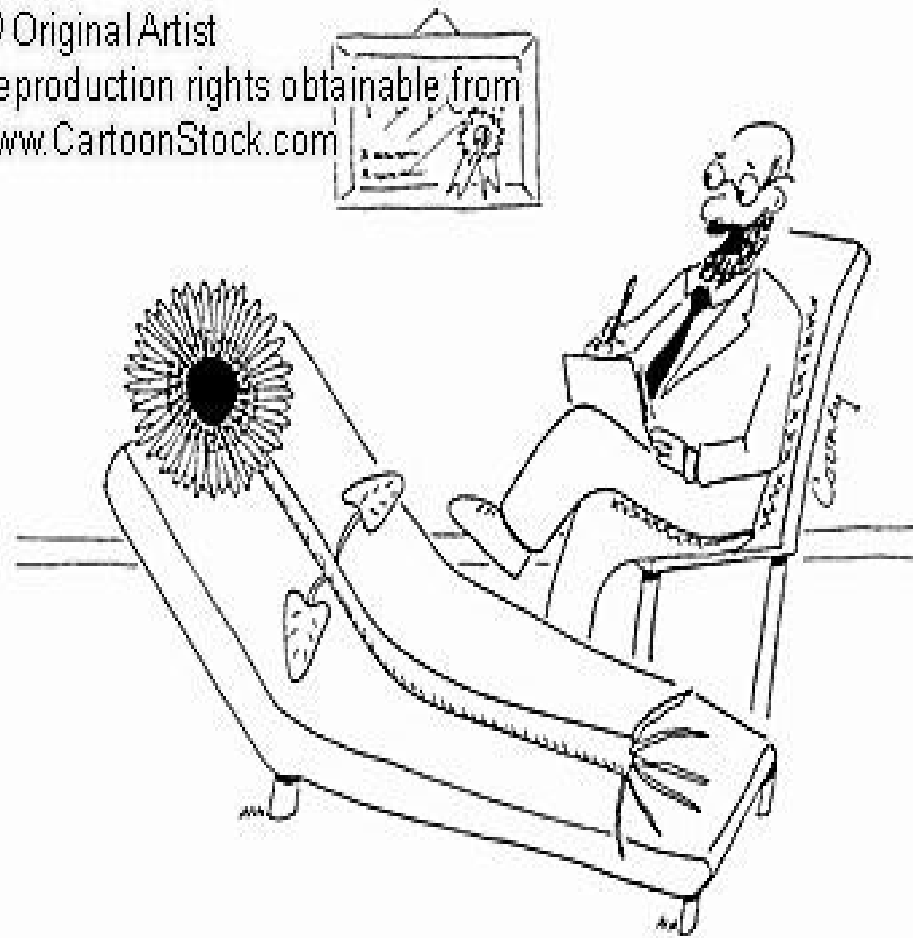
"ED, EVERY MAN EVENTUALLY REACHES AN AGE
WHEN THEIR BILL SHOULD BE WORN FORWARD."

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"I don't know who I am anymore."

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"Well, you are an annual, and it is July, I'd be more surprised if you weren't having a mid-life crisis."

Why the Middle-Aged – a Lost Focus

h1

But...

- Middle generation carries the burden of the societal survival.
- Generational accounting reveal stark intergenerational injustices.
- And most recent research leaves us puzzled ...

h1

While it is popular in society it is under researched in science

hbrockmann; 12.07.2008

Life cycle happiness and its sources Intersections of psychology, economics, and demography

Richard A. Easterlin *

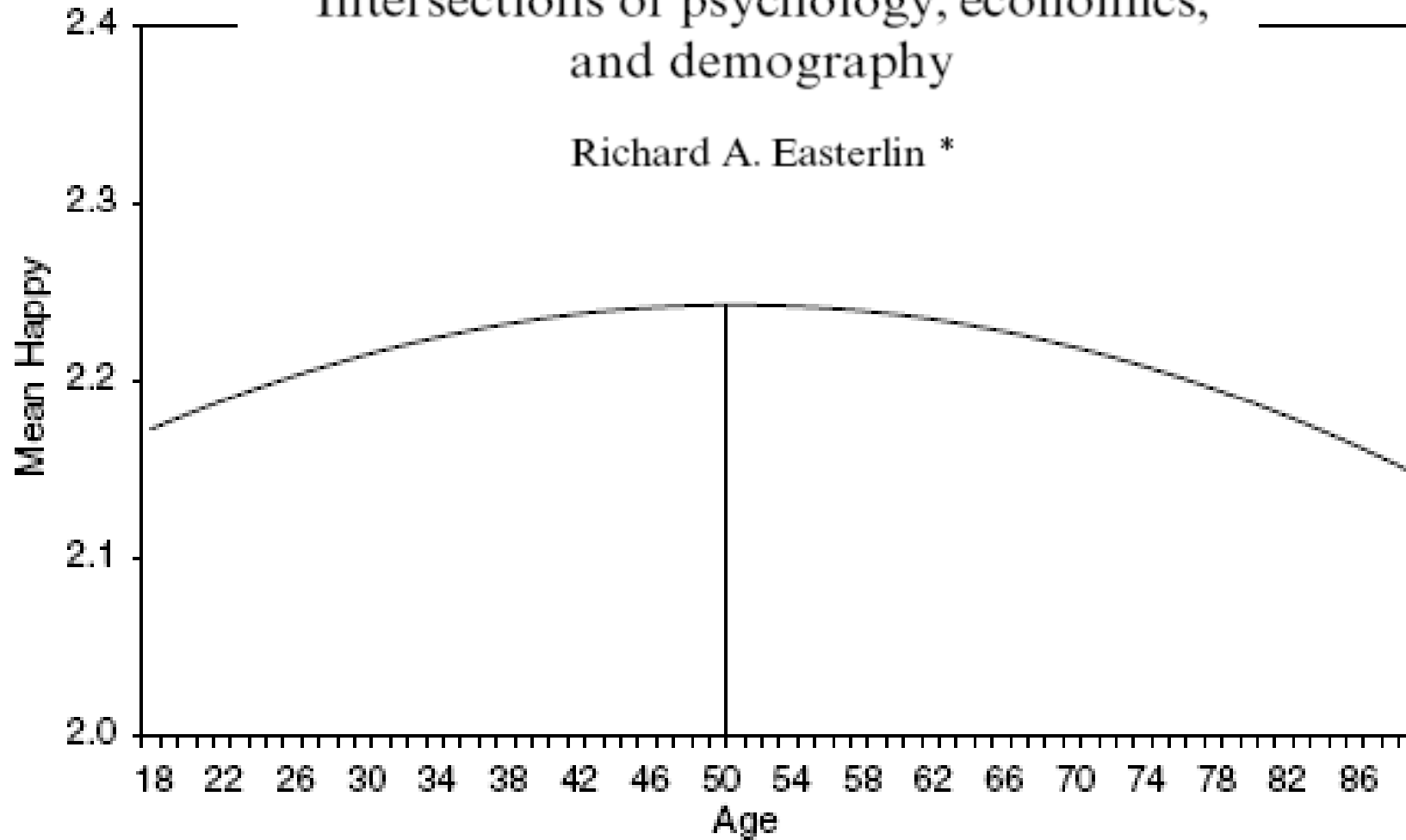


Fig. 1. Life cycle happiness.

Is well-being U-shaped over the life cycle?

David G. Blanchflower^{a,b,c}, Andrew J. Oswald^{d,*}

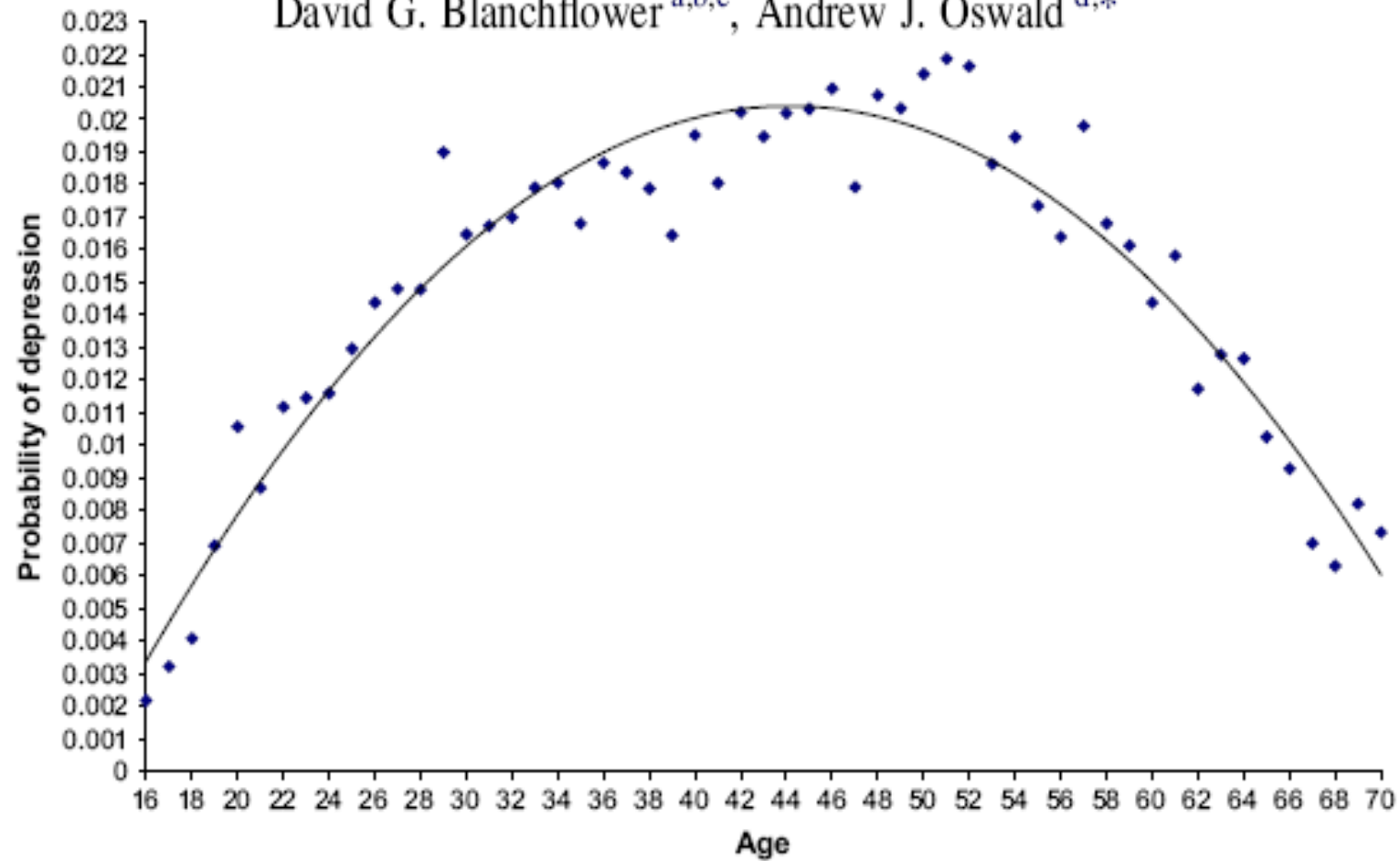
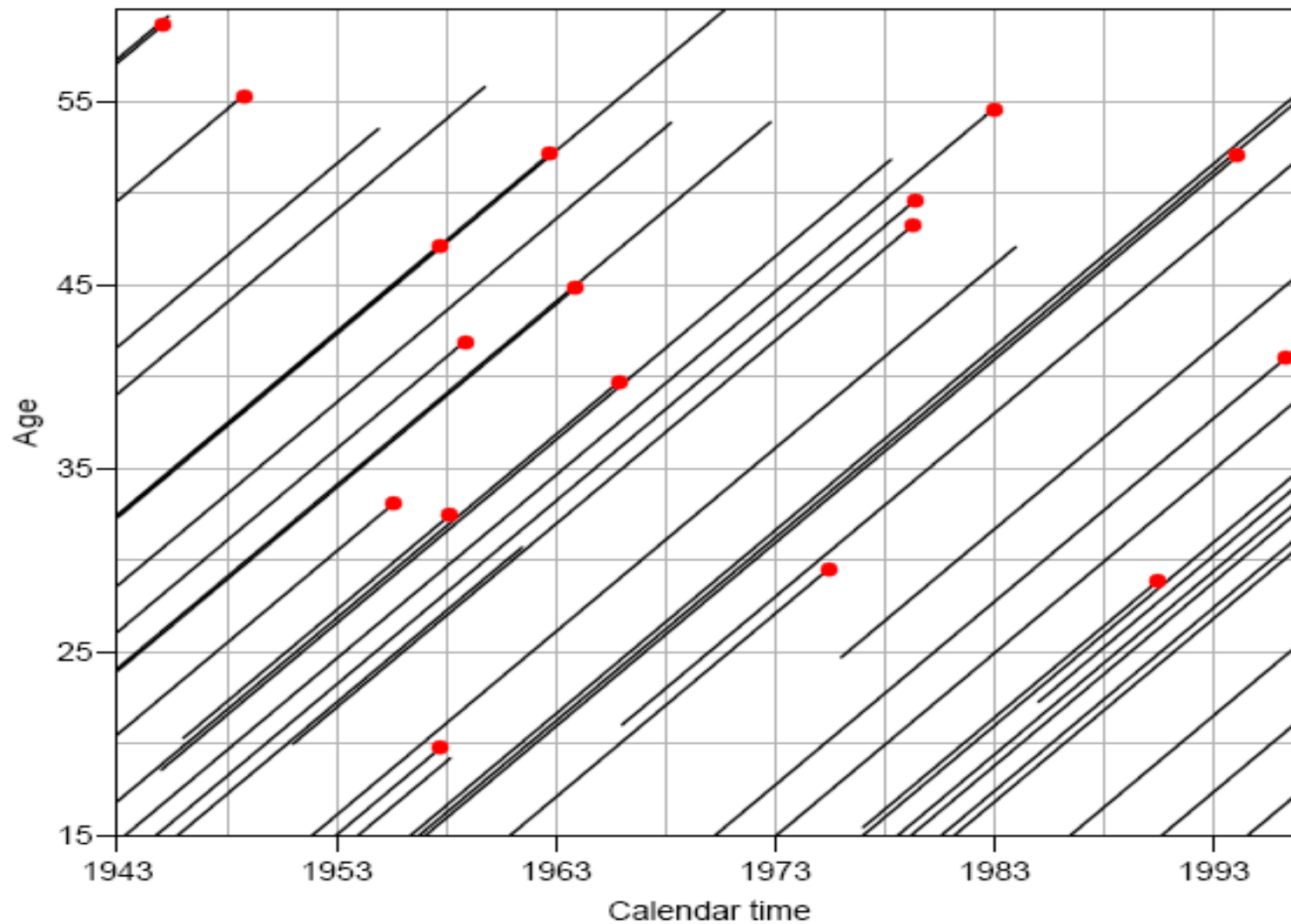
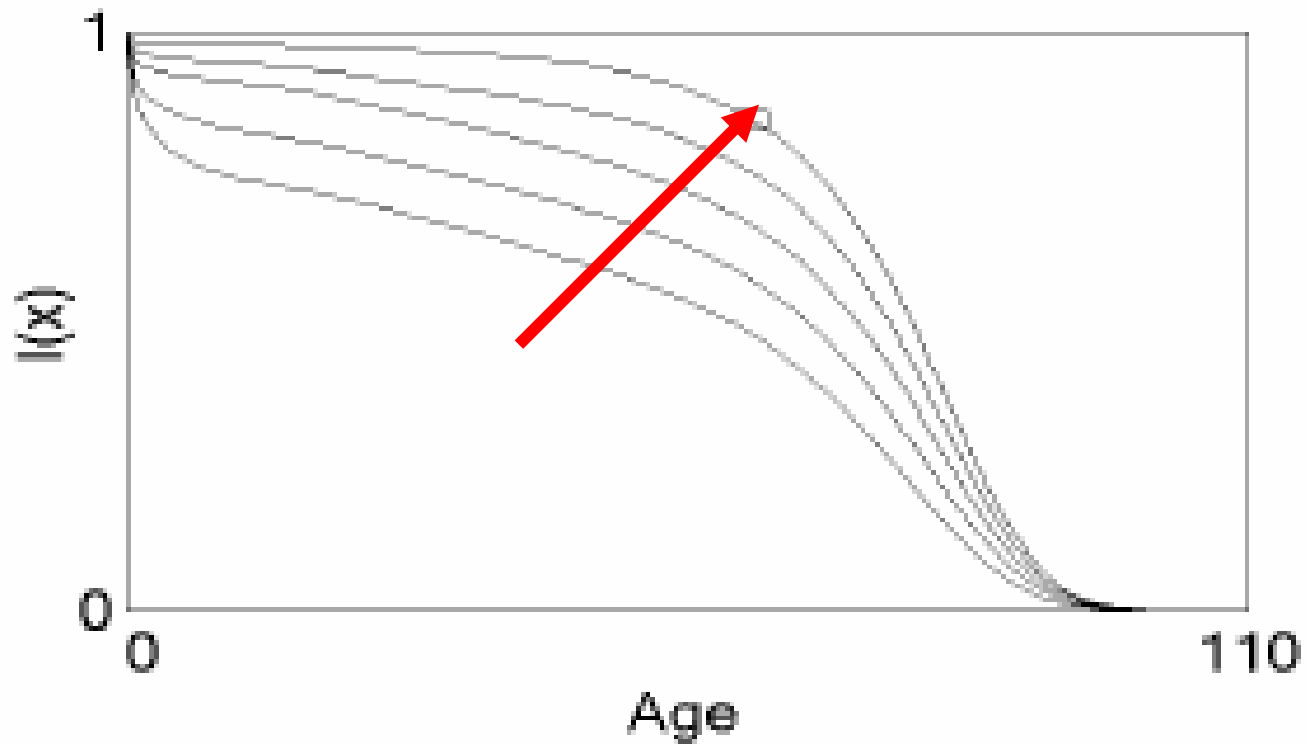


Fig. 1. Depression probability, LFS 2004Q2–2007Q1.

Lexis-Diagram: Age-Period-Cohort Effects



Prolongation and Rectangularization of the Human Life Span



Hypotheses

- H1. Subjective well-being follows a curvilinear age trajectory over the individual life course. Happiness during mid-life is lowest and differs between men and women.
- H2. Cohort effects significantly impact SWB. The larger the cohort, the lower is the SWB of individuals.
- H3. A periodic event like reunification has a sudden effect on SWB but attenuates over time and particularly among the middle-aged.
- H4. Social inequalities are more important during mid-life than during any other phase in life. The loss of job or a life-time partner hit middle-aged more than younger or older groups.
- H5: SWB during mid-life is more affected by future expectations and economic worries than by personal traits.

Data

- GSOEP 1984-2005
- West-German Sample
- 6,568 men and 7,038 women
- 146,977 person years

- DV “How satisfied are you with your life, all things considered?” with 0 “completely dissatisfied” to 10 “completely satisfied”.

Model

- Hierarchical 3-level models, which embed personal clusters (j) with repeated individual measurement occasions (i) in cohort and period superclusters (k).

- Level 1

$$y_{ijk} = \eta_{1jk} + \beta_2 x_{ijk} + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

- Level 2

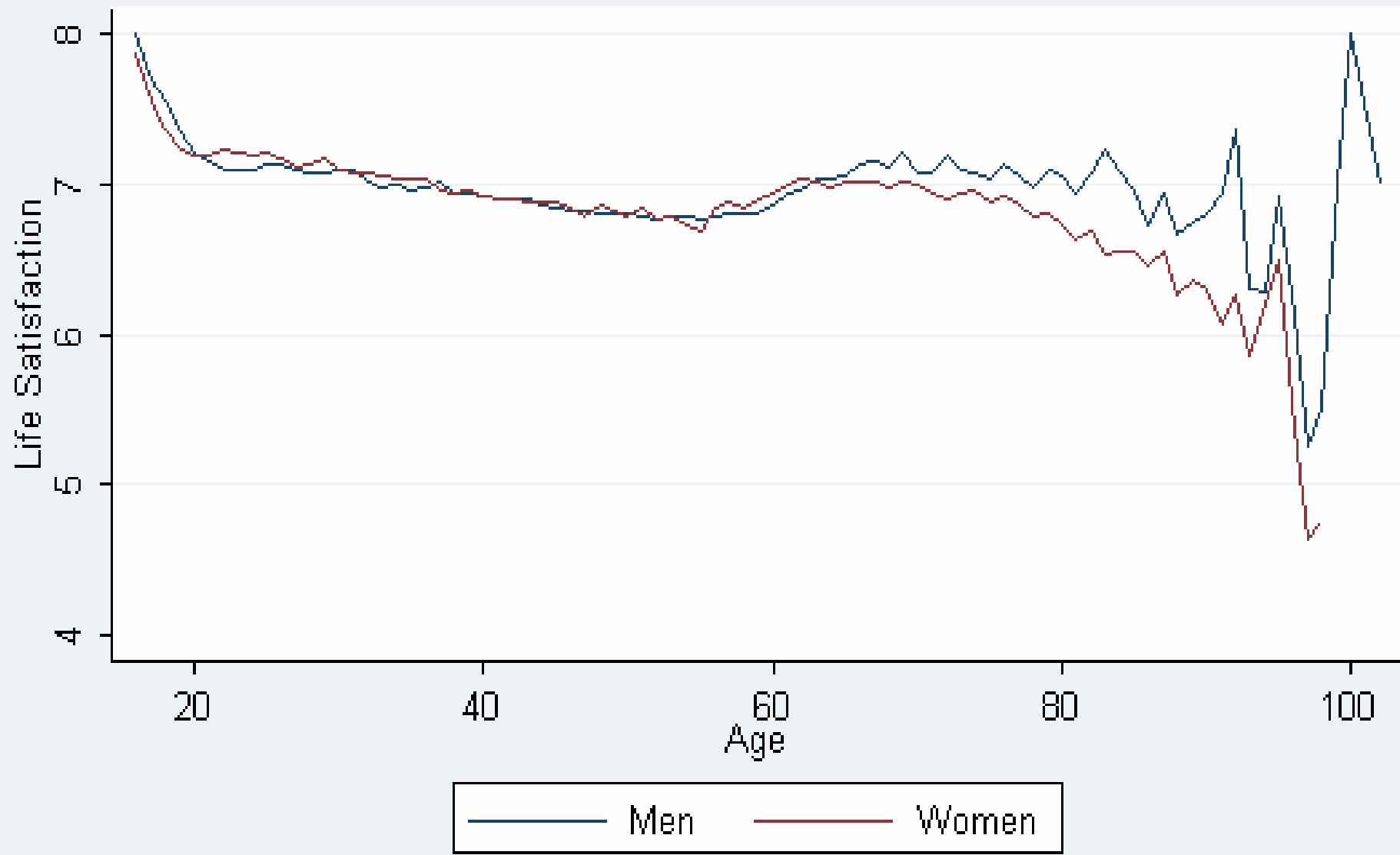
$$\eta_{1jk} = \pi_{11k} + \zeta_{jk}^{(2)}$$

- Level 3

$$\pi_{11k} = \gamma_{111} + \zeta_k^{(3)}$$

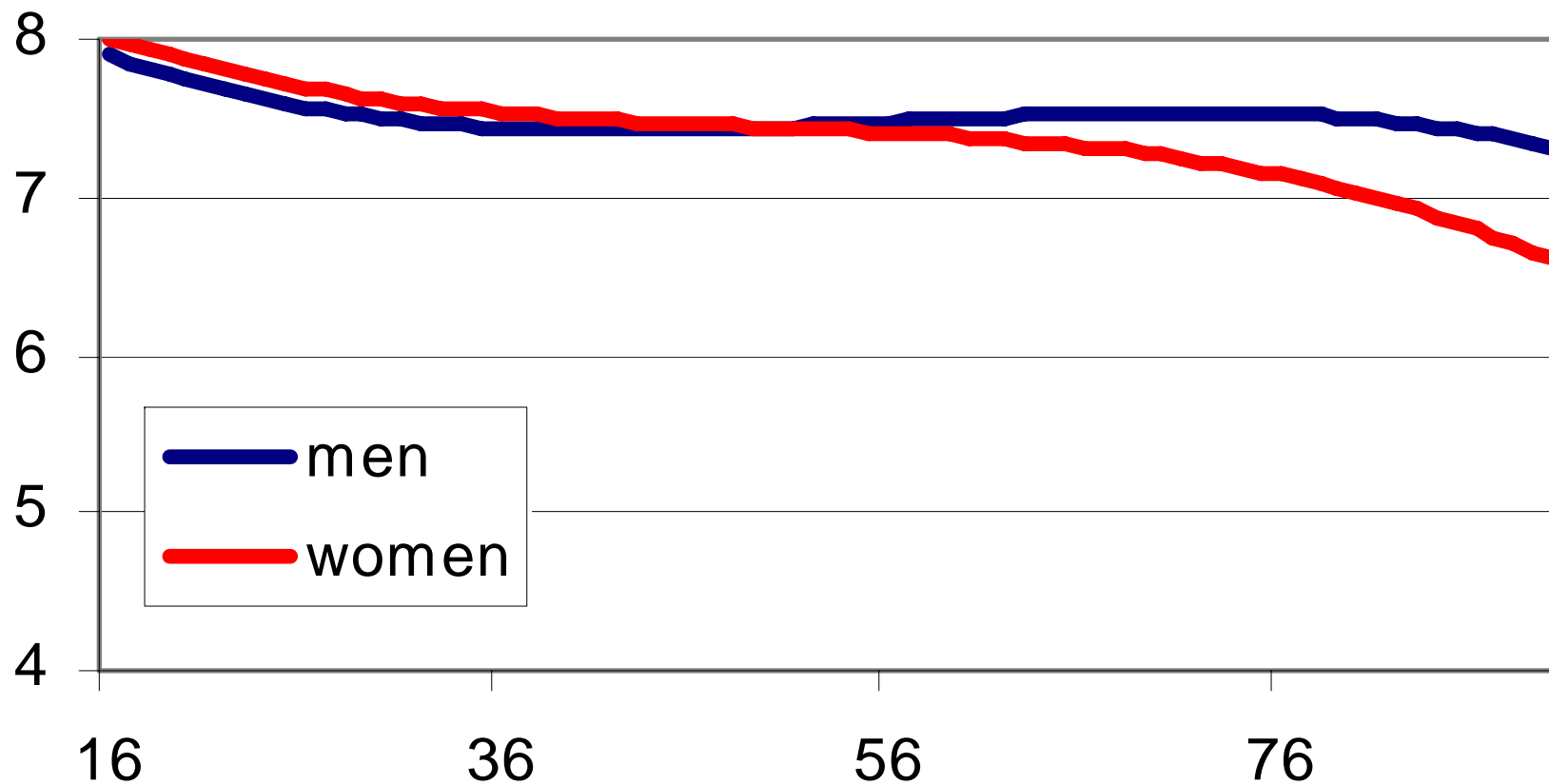
General Satisfaction with Life

West Germans 1984-2005



Source: GSOEP 1984-2005, own calculations

Life Cycle Dynamics – The Happy Interplay of Timing, Environment and Endowment



Age, Cohort and Period Effects

	Men	Women
Age	-0.09***	-0.08***
Age*Age/100	0.17***	0.15***
Age*Age*Age/100	-0.001***	-0.001***
Person	1.21***	1.27***
Cohort	0.49**	0.47**
Period	0.20**	0.21**

Life Course Investments

	Men	Women
Education, Apprenticeship, Military/Civil Service	0.22***	-0.04
Pensioner	0.18***	0.00
Worker	0.23***	-0.04+
Chief Worker	0.27***	0.04
Self-employed <=9 employees	0.16***	0.02
Self-employed >9 employees	0.11	-0.21
Professionals, Managerial	0.3***	0.03
Civil Service	0.32***	-0.03
Years in Education	0.1**	0.02**
Log Household Net Income	0.17***	0.2***
Satisfaction with health	0.15***	0.13***

Live Course Investments

	Men	Women
Couple w/o Children	0.05+	-0.1***
Single Parent	-0.22***	-0.28***
Couple w Children < 16	-0.01	-0.24***
Couple w Children > 16 (or age unknown)	-0.1***	-0.25***
Multiple Generation Household	-0.19***	-0.31***
Number of Children in the Household	-0.05***	-0.04**
Member of Church	0.21***	0.2***
<i>Reference group: non- denominational</i>		

Life Course Investments

	Men		Women	
Education, Apprenticeship, Military/Civil Service	0.22***	0.04	-0.04	-0.23**
Pensioner	0.18***	0.02	0.00	-0.08
Worker	0.23***	0.25***	-0.04+	-0.04
Chief Worker	0.27***	0.34***	0.04	0.09
Self-employed <=9 employees	0.16***	0.16***	0.02	0.01
Self-employed >9 employees	0.11	0.1	-0.21	-0.04
Professionals, Managerial	0.3***	0.35***	0.03	0.05+
Civil Service	0.32***	0.43***	-0.03	0.06
Years in Education	0.1**	0.1	0.02**	0.01
Log Household Net Income	0.17***	0.2***	0.2***	0.22***
Satisfaction with health	0.15***	0.14***	0.13***	0.13***

Live Course Investments

	Men		Women	
Couple w/o Children	0.05+	0.06	-0.1***	0.04
Single Parent	-0.22***	-0.14*	-0.28***	-0.08
Couple w Children < 16	-0.01	-0.02	-0.24***	-0.05
Couple w Children > 16 (or age unknown)	-0.1***	-0.03	-0.25***	-0.05
Multiple Generation Household	-0.19***	-0.14+	-0.31***	-0.14+
Number of Children in the Household	-0.05***	-0.05***	-0.04**	-0.08***
Member of Church	0.21***	0.17***	0.2***	0.23***

Reference group: non-denominational

Scarring Effects

	Men	Women
Unemployed	-0.31***	-0.20***
Separated from Partner	-0.26***	-0.33***

Scarring Effects

	Men		Women	
	Overall / 30-60		Overall / 30-60	
Unemployed	-0.31***	-0.31***	-0.20***	-0.24***
Separated from Partner	-0.26***	-0.26***	-0.33***	-0.22***

Endowment and Perception

	Men	Women
Self-Confidence	0.11***	0.10***
Future Expectations (1=optimistic, 4=pessimistic)	-0.88***	-0.95***
Economic Worries	0.21***	0.22***

Endowment and Perception

	Men		Women	
Self-Confidence	0.11***	0.06*	0.10***	0.07**
Future Expectations (1=optimistic, 4=pessimistic)	-0.88***	-0.66***	-0.95***	-0.7***
Economic Worries	0.21***	0.24***	0.22***	0.25***

Conclusion and Discussion

- Aggregated **timing influences** on SWB remained **limited**. Unhappiness during mid-life seems to be mainly driven by **age** and other individual level factors. But the rationale of mid-life depression can be only understood from an individual perspective.
- Social inequalities during mid-life result mostly from long-term **investments** in the **labor and marriage market**.
- In contrast, concrete living circumstances as well as missing investment into children do not affect people's happiness.
- But recent **losses** have a significant **negative effect**.
- Generally, happiness lies in the **eyes of the beholder**. Personal endowments and individual perceptions are crucial impact factors.

A Theoretical Frame

- Long-term investments are likely to fail during mid-life. Decisions over time are generally insecure and particularly early life-time decisions are prone to a **focusing illusion** biased towards present influences or normative orientations.
- Stronger age effects among middle-aged men on happiness reflect **age-segmented rules** on labor markets. Significant birth cohort effects define **comparative standards** and establish a basis for many “frustrated achievers” in mid-age.

Thank you for your attention!

