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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Private Life Preference and Life Satisfaction:

Mutual Impacts in Occupational and Private Life Among Former German High School Students from age 16 to 66

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Abstract
Life satisfaction should be analysed focussing on the institutionalized occupational and private life, on preferences, and on the life course and controlling for life success. To do so, four hypotheses are tested. (1) Private life preference affects private life satisfaction positively, and occupational life satisfaction negatively. (2) Private life preference is affected by private life satisfaction positively, and occupational life satisfaction negatively. (3) Both satisfactions and private life preference are stable over the life course. (4) In each domain, success affects satisfaction positively. The sample consists of – socially selected – German high school students at age 16 which have been re-interviewed at age 30, 43, 56, and 66. Among the 1013 permanent respondents, the hypotheses are investigated by structural equation models with random effects. Hypothesis (1) and (2) are confirmed for occupational life, yet not for private life. Hypothesis (3) is confirmed throughout. Hypothesis (4) is confirmed for occupational life, but only partly for private life. Paradoxically, the everyday prominence of private life excludes its determination by the preference for it.

Keywords Success and satisfaction · Occupational and private life · Prestige · Income · Partnership · Parenthood

Life satisfaction refers usually to social systems everybody lives in, such as politics, economics, culture, environment. Hower, everybody seeks satisfaction within one's personal life. The focus on personal life may be called the *biographical perspective* on life satisfaction and be characterized in three ways. First, neither the person nor the researcher evaluates life in detail, but only according to the institutionalized life course of advancements in family status and social status, that is, in the two perspectives on private and on occupational life (Kohli, 1985). Second, everybody develops a preference for either side which affects the investment of time and energy into each

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and the satisfaction with each. Third, everybody changes both statuses and the preference during life time, and consequently experiences changing satisfactions.

In the following, the biographical perspective on life satisfaction and life domain preferences is examined in a cohort at age 16, 30, 43, 56, and 66 where life satisfaction is equally conditioned by advances of social systems but differentially by biographical developments. In Sect. "Design of study" the design of the study is justified, in Sect. "Results" results are reported, and in Sect. "Conclusion" conclusions are drawn.

Design of study

Motivation and Question

Surveys on *life satisfaction in general* differ from the *biographical perspective* in three respects.

First, they ask *one general question* on life "all in all" and *many specific questions* on life domains (Statistisches Bundesamt et al., 2021: 412–415). The specific satisfactions are predominantly seen as determining the general satisfaction (Headey et al., 1991; Sirgy, 2022: 29–80) or as determining each other (Sirgy, 2022: 83–152). Yet the selection of domains is rarely justified. Predominantly, they are *social systems* people live in, such as politics and economics, which they assess only partly from personal experiences and mostly from media or expert information. Personal experiences comprise two classes. *Biographically scheduled experiences* underlie some "chronologization". Over the life course, they follow an "institutionalized" sequence set and administered by collective actors such as authorities and offices, such that, in principle, former successes are required for the attainment of later ones (Kohli, 1985: 6–10, 293–296) – marriage facilitates the managing of parenthood, and educational certificates the attainment of occupational status. *Biographically neutral experiences* know no "chronologization", although they may vary with age. Leisure, social life, and residence do not follow an institutionalized sequence; playing football during youth is not a requirement for playing golf in old age, and living in a city not for moving in the country.

In contrast, the biographical perspective focuses on biographically scheduled experiences rather than on biographically neutral experiences or social systems. Because the institutionalized life course is a sequence of education, work, and retirement, and of family statuses, people plan and review their development in two dimensions which cover their biographies exhaustively and exclusively, *occupational* and *private life*.

Second, surveys on life satisfaction in general often analyse the salience of single life domains which determines the corresponding satisfaction (Meulemann, 2001b: 177–187; Semple, 2021: 1131; 2017: 28; Sirgy, 2021: 340–371). But the preference for one domain over another as a determinant for satisfaction in both is rarely considered. However, people rank domains, as surveys about the importance of each show (Meulemann, 2001b), and allocate their finite time and energy to one domain at the cost of another.

In contrast, the biographical perspective introduces the *preference,* a "disposition to choose" (Semple, 2021: 1126), for one over another life domain as a determinant of satisfaction in both. In work-life-balance research, a related concept, "priority ideology", has been introduced – but it refers to the managing of "imbalances" in everyday life rather than evaluating whole life domains retrospectively (Sirgy, 2022: 20–22). Over the life course, the preference for life domains – the moving goals people strive for to gain satisfaction (Sirgy, 2022: 36–38) – materializes in more investments of time and energy, and ultimately successes and satisfaction. And as an investment in one domain reduces the investments in others, the preference does not only entail more satisfaction in the preferred domain, but also less in the subordinated ones (Sirgy, 2021: 355).

Third, life satisfaction in general is surveyed more often cross-sectionally than longitudinally, as comprehensive reviews (Sirgy, 2021, 2022) show. And longitudinal surveys rely more often on unbalanced panels which replace dropped out respondents (Kratz & Brüderl, 2021) than on cohorts with constant respondents. As the former continue in time, they can investigate effects of social systems on life satisfaction; as the latter are restricted to a life span common to each cohort member, they must take effects of social systems and their changes for granted, but can investigate the effects of different biographies.[1]

In contrast, the biographical perspective investigates satisfaction longitudinally over the life course. Thus, it controls for the changing demands of occupational and private life during the life course. And it allows to analyse causalities between occupational and private life satisfaction and the preference of either on in both directions.

The biographical perspective *agrees with* life satisfaction research in general by controlling for life success as its prime determinant (Sirgy, 2021: 109–128, 137–148).

The three peculiarities of the biographical perspective – focussing on the institutionalized occupational and private life, on preferences, and on the life course – and its one communality with life satisfaction research in general – controlling for success – characterize the analysis question of the following research. Does the preference for private over occupational life affect satisfaction with private life positively, and satisfaction with occupational life negatively; and can, in turn, satisfaction in a life domain reinforce the preference for it – even if the corresponding successes are controlled for?

Research Review: Occupational and Private Life; Developments and Stabilities

As this study asks whether the preference of private over occupational life determines and is determined by life-satisfaction, the evidence for this bipartition is reviewed first.

[1] This can be demonstrated by an example. In the CHiSP, 70.7, 68.7, 64.3, and 59.6% are Postmaterialists (Inglehart 1977: 40) at age 30, 43, 56, and 66 in 1984, 1997, 2010, and 2010 – two thirds in middle age slightly declining afterwards. In the German population, Postmaterialists grow according to the Eurobarometer from 9.9 to 19.7% from 1970 to 1990 (Birkelbach, 2017: 35, 140), and according to the ALLBUS from 13.5 to 26.7% from 1980 to 2021 (ALLBUScompact:1980–1921: Variable Report, https://dx.doi.org/10.4232/1.14299: 1164) – a tenth slowly growing to a quarter. The cohort becomes more sceptic because of accumulating experience, the country more sanguine because of increasing wealth. Both develop independently theoretically and empirically.

Bipartition of Occupational and Private Life

The preference for private over occupational life presupposes the psychic reality of their *bipartition.* It is taken for granted in work-life-balance research (Sirgy, 2022), and supported empirically in two forms. *First*, it is revealed in two exploratory factor analyses of the importance of life dimensions. In the GSOEP 1990, 1995, and 2004 (Headey, 2008: 220) and a seven-wave panel of Australian youth (Chen et al., 2015: 1079) from 1998 to 2010, private and occupational life emerge as two biographically relevant factors and are separated from a third, biographically neutral one. *Second*, it appears in a decision situation. Respondents had to distribute 100 points among *Leisure, Community, Work, Religion,* and *Family*; *Family* got 43, *Work* 28, and *Leisure* 20 points, while *Community* and *Religion* got less than 5 (Sharabi, 2015: 528–529). Thus, private life – family, but not leisure – and occupational life appear as the two main dimension and the first is strongly preferred to the latter.

If the bipartition is a psychic reality, it becomes meaningful to look for its determinants and consequences. As the question is whether *domain specific life satisfactions* depend on and have an impact on the *preference for private over occupational life*, controlling for *life success* effects on domain specific life satisfactions, *developments* and *stabilities* of these three topics are reviewed.

Domain Specific Life Satisfactions

The development and the stability of *domain specific life* satisfactions is treated in three *nationally representative* panels.

First, the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) of 1996, 2000, 2002 and 2004 covers the age range between 16 and 95. As for *developments*, the satisfactions with *Job* and *Income,* that is, with occupational life, increase slightly from age 30 to 56 and strongly to 66 and further on to 76 and decline only after 76. The satisfactions with *Spouse*, *Social Life*, *Amount of Leisure Time* and *Use of Leisure Time,* that is, with private life, follow the same pattern (McAdams et. al. 2012: 299). As for *stabilities*, the average *correlation* between waves for *Job* and *Income* as well as for *Spouse*, *Social Life*, *Amount of Leisure Time*, and *Use of Leisure Time* fluctuate narrowly around 0.55 (McAdams et. al. 2012: 298). Thus, in the age range from 30 to 66 relevant for our study, slight increases and high stabilities of occupational and private life satisfaction can be expected as well.

Second, the *development* of *Family Life Satisfaction* and *Job Satisfaction* was analysed in eight waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) between 1984 and 2016. The first declined, the second remained constant (Kramer & Rogers, 2020: 1503, 1507, Appendix S5, S15, S21). Thus, increases of private life satisfaction, but not of occupational life satisfaction, can be expected from age 30 to 66. *Stabilities* were not reported.

Third, the *stability* of *Marriage Satisfaction* was measured in four waves of the Australian Quality of Life Panel Study 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1987 by a *standardized autoregression* in a structural equation model, constrained to be equal for the three time-lags such that their development cannot be assessed; it was 0.65 (Headey

et al., 1991: 92). In two-year time-lags, thus, a specific life satisfaction is fairly stable.

Furthermore, domain specific satisfactions have been analysed – apart from our study (Meulemann, 2001b; Weber, 2017: 21–22) – in two *cohort* studies.

First, the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth followed up a cohort of 16-year-old pupils every year until age 25. As for *developments*, *Happiness with Life at Home* and *Happiness with the Work you do* remained constant (Nguyen, 2011: 8, 10). S*tabilities* were not reported.

Second, in a cohort of 517 Germans with a master's degree at age 34, 37, and 39 the *Career satisfaction* was investigated. As for *development*, it increased slightly and irregularly (Hagmaier et al., 2018: 148). As for *stability*, a structural equation model with cross-lags in both directions, showed *standardized autoregressions* of Career Satisfaction of 0.60 between age 34 and 37, and 0.53 between age 37 and 39 (Hagmaier et al., 2018: 149). Over five years, the stability of occupational life satisfaction decreases.

In sum, nationally representative panels as well as cohort studies are inconclusive for developments, and agree on high standardized stabilities – correlations and autoregressions – over short time-lags. For our study, thus, developments cannot be predicted and lower stabilities over its longer time lags must be expected.

Preference for Private or Occupational Life

The *development* of life domain preferences over the life course has been treated only once. In a two-wave population panel with a lag of nine years, *Engagement in Partnership* and *Engagement in Parenthood* from age 30 to age 85 was permanently above *Engagement in Work*; the first decreased more and more, the two latter ones less and less (Shane & Heckhausen, 2016: 287). *Stabilities* are not reported.

The *mutual relations* between life domain preferences and life satisfaction have been researched – apart from our study (Meulemann, 2001c: 222, 226; Weber, 2017: 28) – in two longitudinal studies.

First, in the GSOEP between 1990 and 2008 it was examined how family values in interaction with income affected general life satisfaction (Cheung & Lucas, 2015: 131–133). *Family Values* indicated a preference for family life; *income* was the mean of the time-varying values capturing the difference between persons rather than the development of income within persons, such that the analysis does not catch the longitudinal quality of the data. The interaction of *Family Values* and income had a positive effect on satisfaction such that *Family Values* contributed more to satisfaction in higher income; yet the main effect of *Family Values* is not reported (although the one of *income*). Thus, the result remains ambiguous because of its neglect of the development of income and of the main effect of preferences.

Second, in an eight-week three-wave panel of 99 employed Germans it was examined whether the effect of *Career Satisfaction* at time 1 on *Life Satisfaction* at time 3 and the reverse effect from *Life Satisfaction* at time 1 on *Career Satisfaction* at time 3 increased for persons with high *Work Centrality* at time 2 (Hagmaier et al., 2018: 153–155). In both directions *Work Centrality* had a strong and significant positive

effect. Thus, the impacts between a general and a specific satisfaction were boosted by the centrality of a specific life domain. *Work Centrality*, although measured without references to its counterpart private life, comes close to "preference".

In sum, preferences seem to determine and to be determined by satisfactions.

Life Success and Domain Specific Life Satisfactions

Apart from our study (Weber, 2017: 42; Meulemann, 1985: 498; Meulemann, 2001b: 226), two longitudinal studies have examined the effect of success on domain specific life satisfactions.

First, the already mentioned cohort of 571 Germans with a master's degree at ages 37, 39 and 42 examines whether *Occupational* life satisfaction is affected by *private* life success, that is, *across life domains.* It reports only correlations. *Occupational Life Satisfaction* and *partnership* correlated 0.13, 0.11, and 0.13 at the time points, and 0.11 and 0.14 between adjacent time points; while all preceding correlation were significant, none was between *Occupational Life Satisfaction* and *parenthood* (Hagmaier et al., 2018: 148).

Second, the GSOEP produced contradictory results. While entry into parenthood *lowered* family life satisfaction, but left job satisfaction unaffected in eight waves between 1984 and 2016 (Kramer & Rogers, 2020: 1507, Appendix S5, S15, S21; Sirgy, 2021: 134), entry into parenthood *increased* general life satisfaction from 1994 to 2010 (Pollmann-Schult, 2014: 324, 328); its effect on family life satisfaction was not examined.

In sum, only unsystematic and contradictory effects of *specific* life successes on corresponding life satisfactions are found.

Concepts and Hypotheses

Private and Occupational Life and the Preference for Either One

Life moves daily between two domains: private and occupational. As time budget surveys show (Meulemann, 2021: 153), they absorb a weekday almost totally, and call for much more time than activities in the public – churches, parties, and associations. Private life has its centre at the family and is extended into kinship, friendship and neighbourhood. Occupational life has its place at the job, and indirectly via the firm in the public. In both life domains one aims at specific successes, acknowledged and followed by everybody – at the establishment and maintenance of "particularistic" (Parsons & Shils, 1951: 76–91) relations, which hold only for the respective incumbents; and at the attainment and accumulation of educational certificates and of occupational status in "universalistic" relations, where persons of similar qualification are exchangeable. Together, both domains govern life mentally and pragmatically (Semple, 2021: 1131).

Yet people attach different importance to them, and reveal their preference in the rank order of importance. For most people private life is central. It takes more time of an average weekday than every other activity (Meulemann, 2021: 152). It holds a pivotal position among domains around which, most closely, occupational life and, further out, public life form concentric circles of diminishing personal importance

(Meulemann, 2001a; Sharabi, 2015: 523–525). It is for most people the end to which occupational life serves as means. Accordingly, most people compare private with occupational life, not vice versa. Although the preference can be viewed either way, it appears in everyday life as the preference of private *over* occupational life.

Mutual Effects Among Preference and Satisfaction, Stabilities of Both

The preference for private over occupational life affects satisfactions by guiding *investments* into either one (Ormel et al., 1999: 65). As everyone's time and money are limited, investments in one come at costs in the other one – just as scarcity theory suggests (Sirgy, 2021: 385). Thus, the higher the private life preference, the more is invested in private activities; and the less is invested in occupational life activities.

Satisfaction accumulates the more and persists the longer, the more it is confirmed by some output, tangible to the producer and acknowledged by others. The more one aspires to accomplish a task, defined beforehand and tangible to oneself and others afterwards, the more one gains satisfaction from its attainment. And this satisfaction is genuinely provided in occupational life. Thus, the higher the private life preference, the lower the occupational life satisfaction and the higher the private life satisfaction – a case of "domain compensation" among satisfactions (Sirgy, 2021: 355–358). The causal chain preference-investment-satisfaction implies that private life preference costs life satisfaction in its counterpart, namely occupational life; and pays off in terms of its implicit goal, namely private life satisfaction. Together, these two hypotheses will be called (1) the *contingency hypothesis*.[2]

Yet the causal relation between preferences and satisfaction can also run the other way round (Headey, 2008: 227). Satisfactions affect preferences by creating *expectations*. If someone's satisfaction with a life domain indicates the realization of its personal potentials, an increase of satisfaction indicates future potentials. The more satisfaction one has got in a domain, the more one concentrates one's future attention on it. The promise of future satisfaction raises the importance of the respective life domain, and lowers the importance of the other one – a case of "compensation" among domain preferences not treated in the literature. Thus, an increase of private life satisfaction strengthens private life preference, and an increase of occupational life satisfaction decreases private life preference. Together, these two hypotheses will be called (2) the *feedback hypothesis*.

Life preferences and life satisfaction do not only affect each other, but themselves. They are based on the successes in the institutionalized life course which people intend to accumulate against the inevitable failures. Thus, the autoregressions should be strong but decrease with the time lags between measurements. As the time lags of our study range from 10 to 14 years, the autoregressions of preferences and satisfactions between adjacent time points should be lower than in the panels with shorter time lags reviewed in Sect. Research Review: Occupational and Private Life; Developments and Stabilities, but still moderately positive – which will be called (3) *the stability hypothesis*.

[2] The private life preference, as the starting point of our analysis, may in turn depend on attitudes in the CHiSP at age 16– such as religiosity, post-materialism and political interest. We analyze the effects of starting conditions at age 16 – intelligence, grades, social origin, life plans and life goals – on occupational success at age 39, 43, 56 and 66 in Birkelbach et al. (2025).

Success Effects Upon Satisfaction

In occupational and in private life, satisfactions increase with the success before preferences come into play (Clark et al., 2019: 19, 218, 220; Meulemann, 2001c: 222, 226; Weber, 2017: 36, 42; Sirgy, 2021: 109–119, 359).

Yet in private life, this holds for partnership (Pollmann-Schult, 2014: 322; Clark et al., 2019: 220; Sirgy, 2021: 138, 140), but is debatable for parenthood (Clark et al., 2019: 220; Sirgy, 2021: 139). While partnership requires commitment to a grown up, parenthood requires a commitment for someone still growing up who may fail and generate *dis*satisfaction. Also, the longitudinal analyses of the GSOEP presented in Sect. Research Review: Occupational and Private Life; Developments and Stabilities showed contradictory results. For theoretical and empirical reasons, therefore, the effect of parenthood on private life satisfaction will only be explored. Successes in both life domains – except parenthood – are expected to have positive effects on the corresponding life satisfaction. Together, these two hypotheses are called the (4) *success hypothesis of satisfaction.*

A Causal System

The hypotheses (1) to (4) suppose a long-term incubation of the causes such that they can be examined causally with the time lags of 10 to 14 years between our surveys at age 16, 30, 43, 56 and 66. They are depicted in the causal system of Fig. 1. It contains 20 variables of three kinds. First, 2*1 + 3*3 *endogenous* and *time-variant* variables: OL-SAT 30, PL-SAT 30; OL-SAT 43, PL-PREF 43, PL-SAT 43; OL-SAT 56, PL-PREF 56, PL-SAT 56; OL-SAT 66, PL-PREF 66, PL-SAT 66. They are distinguished from the exogenous ones by an arrow without origin and sign, which represents the unexplained variance. Second, one variable is *exogenous* and *time-specific*: PL-PREF 30. These altogether 12 satisfaction and preference variables constitute the core of the system, and are written in capital letters. Third, 2*4 variables are *exogenous* and *time-variant*, namely four occupational and four private-life successes. They are the periphery of the system, written in lower case characters.

In the core of the system, the *downward and upward* arrows represent cross-lagged effects. The (1) *contingency hypothesis* – the negative effect of private life preference on occupational satisfaction and its positive effect on private satisfaction – is represented by the upward and downward arrows going *out* from the private life preference at age 30, 43 and 56. The (2) *feedback hypothesis* – the negative dependence of private life preference on occupational satisfaction and its positive dependence on private satisfaction – is represented by the downward arrows from occupational life satisfaction and by the upward arrows from private life satisfaction going *into* private life preference at age 43, 56, and 66. The (3) *stability hypothesis* is represented by the horizontal arrows into age 43, 56, and 66. Thus, each of hypotheses (1) to (3) is examined in three lags from age 30 to 43, 43 to 56, and 56 to 66.

In the periphery of the system, the (4) *success hypothesis* is represented by the downward positive arrows from occupational life success on occupational life satisfaction and by the upward positive arrows from private life success to private life

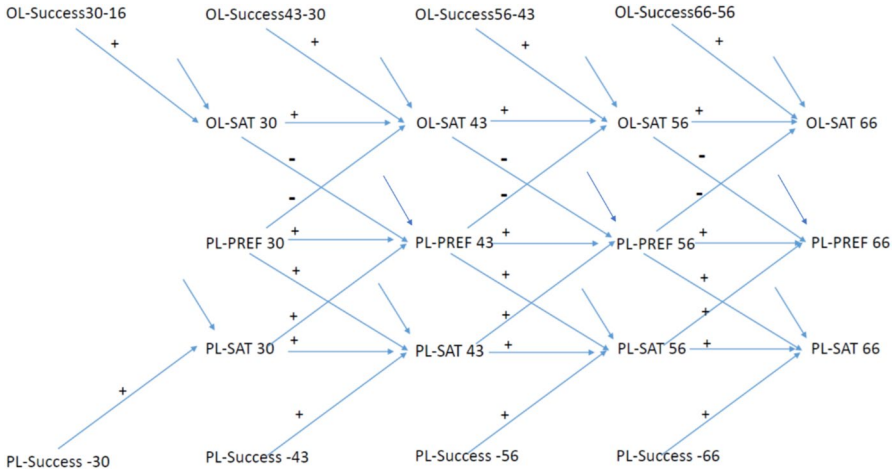


Fig. 1 Private life preference and life satisfaction from age 16 to 66 OL: Occupational Life, PL: private life, SAT: Satisfaction, PREF: Preference. Variables followed by an age difference: difference of values. Variables with a hyphen before an age: last value up to that age. Variables followed by an empty space and an age: value at that age

satisfaction. Thus, the success hypothesis is examined in four lags from age 16 to 30, 30 to 43, 43 to 56, and 56 to 66.

The system contains also correlations between the residuals of all pairs of endogenous variables *at the same age* which capture *common* unmeasured age-specific impacts; they are, for reasons of clarity, not depicted.

The system excludes three relations for *specific* reasons concerning the research question.

First, causal arrows between the two satisfactions *over adjacent ages* are excluded – for example, between OL-SAT 30 and PL-SAT 43. Spill-over processes over time (Judge & Watanabe, 1994; Car et al., 2018: 351–353; Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020: 2–3) are disregarded. For, as both satisfactions are on the same conceptual level, there can be neither top-down from general to specific nor bottom-up effects from specific to general (Hagmaier et al., 2018: 14). The two satisfactions form of a comprehensive perspective on the life course (Sirgy, 2022: 83–97), but not a causal sequence. Their relations are semantic.

Therefore, the communalities of both satisfactions are captured only cross-sectionally by residual correlations at the same age – for example, between the arrows into OL-SAT 30 and into PL-SAT 30 – which capture common impacts upon the satisfactions not in the model; for clarity they are not depicted. Of course, indirect effects between the two satisfactions – for example, OL-SAT 30, PL-PREF 43, PL-SAT 56 – are not only allowed, but capture our core assumption: people become satisfied according to their preference.

Second, effects of occupational and of private life success up to a given age on the preference at that age are excluded – for example, from OL-Success30-16 to PL-PREF 30. Success transforms into satisfaction within each domain, but is hard

to see why occupational or private success should govern the preference without the intervention of satisfaction.

For the same reason, *third,* there are no effects of successes on satisfactions across domains – for example, from OL-Success30-16 to PL-SAT 30. For their exclusion, there is additionally an empirical reason: They are very small in comparison to the effects within domains (Shane & Heckhausen, 2016: 288). Again, indirect effects mediated by preferences over several ages are allowed.

Furthermore, the system excludes two relations because of *general* requirements of longitudinal causal systems.

First, causal arrows *between non-adjacent ages* for a relation where causal arrows between adjacent ages have been already specified are not admissible – for example, from OL-SAT 30 to PL-PREF 56. This holds for logical and statistical reasons.

Logically, only the preceding age can be effective at each age. Earlier experiences are assimilated in the following phase before they can flow into the next one (Allison et al., 2017: 2). Life advances, but what has happened cannot change. Over more than two adjacent time points, a cross-lag is as meaningless as an autoregression (examples in Hagmaier et al., 2018: 149).

Statistically, the introduction of further causal arrows beyond the ones between adjacent ages produces multi-collinearity and often a reversal of sign between the immediate and the further off effects (examples in Alwin et al., 1991: 150–162).

Second, residual correlations *across ages* – in contrast to residuals at each age – are not admissible. This holds for *adjacent stages*, that is, where causal arrows are specified (Allison et al., 2017: 2); and for *non-adjacent stages*, where causal arrows are not admissible – for OL-SAT 30 and PL-PREF 43 as well as for OL-SAT 30 and PL-PREF 56. All processes are, so to speak, squeezed in the causal chains between the measurements; but the processes within each age are not included in the system.

Data and Variables

Data

To follow up satisfactions, preferences, and successes over the life course, a cohort study is used: the Cologne High School Panel (CHISP).[3] It starts with a survey of 3240 *Gymnasium* – the German high school – students at age 16 in 1969 from a representative sample of 68 upper secondary schools of the federal state *North Rhine-Westphalia*. As the *Gymnasium* was socially selective in 1969, the sample

[3] Each follow-up survey has been fully financed by grants to Birkelbach (Award Number Bi 633/3_1) and Meulemann (Award Number Me 577/18_1) from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) to which we are very grateful. A report which contains an extended analysis of this analysis is in progress and will be published in 2024 (Birkelbach & Meulemann). The data of the surveys at age 16 (ZA0600, https://doi.org/10.4232/1.0600), 30 (ZA 1441, https://doi.org/10.4232/1.1441), 43 (ZA4228, https://doi.org/10.4232/1.4228, and 56 (ZA5648, https://doi.org/10.4232/1.11920) are available at the *Gesis Data Archive* at Cologne, the data of the survey at age 66 will be in 2025.—All Authors have contributed equally to the field work and the data preparation, Birkelbach and Meulemann have shared the data analysis, Birkelbach has contributed about a fifth, Meulemann about four fifth to the data reporting.

is so as well from the scratch: The mean prestige of father's occupation according to Treiman (1977: 173) in 1969 of 48.8 (SD = 13.5) was 6 points above the scale mean (range roughly from 0 to 100, M = 43.3, SD = 16.9). But social selectivity increased only minimally later on (Birkelbach, 2017, 2022).[4] As intended, *Gymnasium* students are selected positively according to intelligence: their mean score on the *Amthauer Intelligence Structure Test IST* is 112 (SD = 13.5) – roughly a standard deviation (SD = 10) above the calibrated mean of 100.

These students have been re-interviewed at the median age of 30, 43, 56 and 66; 1013 respondents remained at age 66 and constitute the sample of this analysis. They lived through the German history from 1969 to 2020 common to all, but led different biographies.

Endogenous Variables

Occupational and private life satisfaction have been surveyed with the following questions:

How satisfied are you with your private development and your private life? And how satisfied are you with your occupational development and your occupational life? (from 0 totally unsatisfied to 10 totally satisfied).

As in most panels, the measurements rely on a single item. As for *general life satisfaction*, most of the large national panels use single-item questions (Cheung & Lucas 2015; Frijters et al., 2014; Kratz & Brüderl, 2021; Layard et al., 2014) with the exception of Headey and Wearing (1989: 732). Of the eight longitudinal studies reviewed in Galambos et al. (2020, Table 1) and covering the same age range as the CHISP, all use single item measures; of the 13 covering all age ranges, only one (Shankar et al., 2015) uses multiple items. Yet many cross-sectional studies use multiple items (review in Hagmaier et al., 2018). As for *general and occupational life satisfaction*, two panel studies use multiple items (Hagmaier et al., 2018; Heady et al., 1991).

As often in satisfaction scales (Piper, 2022: 4; Layard et al., 2014; Frijters et al., 2014; Cheung & Lucas, 2015; Kratz & Brüderl, 2021), low values are rarely chosen and the distribution is left-skewed, reflecting the "positivity bias" of self-evaluations (Sirgy, 2021: 350). In all CHISP waves together, values up to 7 are only chosen by 27.9% of the sample for the private life satisfaction, and by 36.3% for the occupational life satisfaction. For multivariate analyses, therefore, the scores of occupational and of private life satisfaction *over all waves* have been transformed

[4] Over fifty years the panel lost about 69% of the initial sample. Looking at starting conditions, we found a very small bias for intelligence (in FU66 112.0 compared to 110.5 in the initial sample), study aspirations and average grade class 10, but not for father's occupational prestige and not for gender. Looking at life course variables the largest attrition was found for the attainment of an university degree: in FU30, 57.5% reached an university degree. This percentage increases significantly to 64.0% in the sample of FU66. The mean value of the last MPS measured in FU30 (92.6) increases significantly by 2.7 points up to FU66. No bias was found for income. Looking at private successes we found a small but significant bias for having a partner in FU30 (72%). Up to FU66 this share increases to 75%. No attrition was found for having children, for Postmaterialism, and for occupational, private and general life satisfaction.

Table 1 Hypotheses and effects

	Average effects in	
Hypothesis	*Occupational Life*	*Private Life*
(1) Contingency of satisfaction on preference	**-.15**	0
(2) Reinforcement of preference through satisfaction	**-.15**	0
(3) Stability: *Satisfaction*	**+.30**	**+.30**
Private life preference		**+.35**
(4) Success	**+.10**	**+.30**/-.05

into z-scores under the standardized normal distribution which moves means close to zero and standard-deviations close to 1, but preserves the order of scores.

Private life preference has been measured as the advantage of its importance over the one of occupational life. Importance has been surveyed by the following question[5]:

On these cards, different life domains are listed. We would like to know from you, how important for you these different domains are (from 0 not important to 7 very important).

A Marriage partner / life partner
B Own family with kids
C Occupation and work
E Friends and acquaintances
F Relatives

The importance of private life is the mean of the personal relations A, B, E, and F.[6] The *preference for private life* is the difference between this mean and the value of C (Semple, 2021: 1119). While importance assessments are often driven by positive response tendencies and skewed to higher values, the preference cancels them out and is nearly normally distributed around 0 with a range from −7 to 7.

The development of the endogenous measures is presented in Fig. 2.[7] Over the whole life course, private life satisfaction ranks above occupational life satisfaction, just as in cross-sections (Headey, 2008: 224) and in a longitudinal

[5] Apart from "Own family with kids", the list is taken from the ALLBUS (https://www.gesis.org/allbus/inhalte-suche/studienprofile-1980-bis-2018/kumulation-1980-2014) and originated from *The Quality of American Life* surveys (Hsieh, 2016).

[6] *D leisure and recreation* was not included. Leisure is "discretionary time" (Moore, 1963) when one can, within limits, do what one wishes to. It is biographically neutral and refers only to the self, irrespective of relations to others as in A, B, E, and F. Its preference over occupational life exceeded the private life preference as defined above at age 30 by far and fell slightly behind it from age 43 onwards, closely following its increase (Birkelbach and Meulemann, 2024: Chapter 2).

[7] The standard deviations of the occupational life satisfaction decrease monotonously from 2.3 to 1.6, the ones of the private life satisfaction from 1.8 to 1.4; the ones of the private life preference oscillate between 1.3 and 1.6.

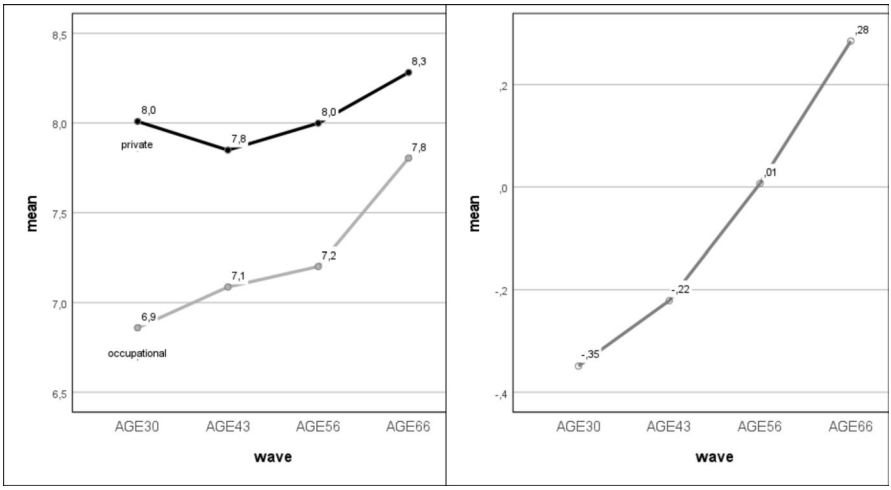


Fig. 2 Means of life satisfactions (left panel) and of private life preference (right panel) at age 30, 43, 56 and 66, 1013 persons responding in each wave

study (Orth et al., 2012: 1282, Panel A and B) – which supports its priority. Private life satisfaction increases per saldo in a U-form, occupational life satisfaction continuously, just as in the longitudinal study (Orth et al., 2012: 1282, Panel A and B). As for private life preference, one may have expected that it responds positively or negatively to the increasing demands of the family during the "rush hour" in mid-life (Knecht & Freund, 2016) – age 43 – such that a U-shaped or an inverted U-shaped curve result. Yet it increases continuously. Possibly, occupational life stabilizes itself over the life course such that success and satisfaction become self-evident and lose weight against private life.

Why do both satisfactions not *de*crease – as *general* satisfaction does in population panels (Kratz & Brüderl, 2021: 5)? Why does success not lose salience through *habituation* such that a "diminishing satisfaction effect" translates less and less into satisfaction – "at a decreasing marginal rate with repeated experiences" (Sirgy, 2022: 67–68)? Probably, the increase of satisfactions reflects *identity stabilization* in a cohort of a given birth year over the life course. Risks and opportunities to succeed are greater in early than in later stages. In a first job, one must prove one's capabilities and convince others of one's achievements which becomes easier later on when one has passed the test and won a reputation. And during youth, the partnership market is bigger and less transparent than later on, such that a choice may turn out equally well as happy or unhappy. In the beginning of occupational and private life, thus, failures and restarts are more probable than later on. But the identity formation required in youth is more demanding than the identity maintenance required in mid-life and later on (Meulemann, 2001a; Greve, 2007) such that successes become more secure and satisfactions more probable over the life course.

Exogeneous Variables

Occupational life comprises occupational prestige and hourly income. Measures were derived from the maximally 44 occupational stations over all waves, defined by changes of occupation, kind of labour or firm. For each time span between waves the value of the last available station was chosen. Of the 1013 respondents, more than 750 were employed from age 30 onwards, more than 910 from at age 43 to 59, still 890 at age 56, and still 350 at age 66; the rare cases of being not employed over all stations of a period were coded zero. As occupational success cumulates and correlates strongly between waves, *success* was defined by the *differences* between the current and the preceding wave, that is, as *mobility*.

Occupational prestige was measured at age 16 for the respondents' father by Treiman's (1977) prestige scale and at later ages by Wegener's (1988) Magnitude Prestige Scale MPS. The Treiman scores were rescaled to MPS. Between the ages, prestige differences were constructed: 30–16, 43–30, 56–43, and 66–56.

Hourly income was measured as monthly net income, corrected for inflation, divided by the weekly working hours, times 4.3. The differences referred to the same stations of the occupational career as for prestige. Yet after age 16, the first income is not variable. Everybody starts with zero at some time-point after 16 such that its value equals the difference. Just as for prestige, four hourly income differences were constructed.

In contrast to occupational life success, *private life success* cannot be regarded as mobility. Partnership and parenthood offer only a restricted range of options most people use early in life. Both persist until a partner moves out or a child arrives. Yet after a new partner has moved in or a child has moved out, the new situation becomes routine. The re-established relations weigh heavier than the change of persons. In brief, both states are intermittently constant. Therefore, only the most recent value at a given age is considered as a success.

Partnership varies according to commitment. It has been surveyed by 16 combinations of legal and factual relationships which have been collapsed into three states of increasing commitment: single (including separated, divorced, and widowed) as base category with value 0; partnered and married as dummy variables with value 1.

The number of children ranged from 0 to 10. As cases above 3 were rare, they have been collapsed together with 3.

In the online appendix, the distributions of occupational prestige and income and of partnership status and number of children over the four ages are presented in table A1 and A2, and empirical reasons for their differential treatment are discussed.

Analysis Procedure

Figure 1 depicts a cross-lagged panel Model (CLPM). In such a model, the autoregressions and cross-lags can be over-estimated because of unobserved heterogeneity between subjects. Constant "traits" differ between persons and must not interfere with the estimation of the changes of "states" within subjects (Baetschmann, 2013; Hamaker et al., 2015: 103–105; Allison et al., 2017). They can be controlled for by a latent factor – a random intercept (RI) for each person – such that CLPM becomes

RI-CLPM. For this, two analysis techniques offer themselves: Structural Equation Models (SEM) in a wide data format with a random effect or constant intercept for each person (Bollen & Pearl, 2013); as well as Random-Effects- and Fixed-Effects-Regression (REM and FEM) (Andreß et al., 2013: 177–180) in a long data format. For our cohort study, SEM has two advantages.

First, the wide data format of SEM is advantageous in four respects. *To begin*, it allows the analysis of the effects of earlier on later endogenous variables (Bollen & Brand, 2010: 9–11, 21–23, 33–35; Allison et al., 2017: 11), that is, of autoregressions and cross-lagged effects, according to Fig. 1, while FEM and REM construct independent variables as differences between time specific values and their mean, or between values adjacent in time (Andreß et al., 2013: 167, 182), and cannot put earlier values of the dependent variable on the right-hand side of the regression equation. *Moreover*, it allows to compare the exogeneous effects on different endogenous variables of a given time-point – and the exogeneous effects on the same endogenous variable between time-points (without the construction of interaction effects, as necessary in FEM and REM). *Furthermore*, it allows to compute correlations between residuals of endogenous variables at the same time-point and over time-points. *Finally,* it allows to examine whether the error variances of the endogenous variables are equal over waves (Bollen & Brand, 2010: 5–7; Allison et al., 2017: 2) while the long data format of REM and FEM requires a single error variance for all waves (Andreß et al., 2013: 135, 152). In our cohort study, the development of the error variances indicates in how far people stabilize their identities over the life course.

Second, SEM tests rather than assumes correlations between the factor and exogeneous variables. REM assumes that the factor does not correlate with *any* exogenous variable, and FEM admits *each* of these correlations. SEM, however, allows tests of these correlation globally and for each variable.

In contrast to FEM and REM, SEM tests the fit of the covariances implied in the model with the empirical ones. In large samples, however, the difference is almost always significant. Therefore, the average differences between given and predicted covariances rather than statistical tests are used to compare the fit between models.

Results

Construction and Fit of the Model

The model contains the 4*3 preferences and satisfactions, 4*2 occupational life successes and 4*3 private life successes – altogether 32 variables. Of the 1013 respondents, only 540 had valid values on all of them. Therefore, the estimation procedure of Full Maximum Likelihood, FIML (Wothke, 2009; Allison et al., 2017: 2), is chosen which uses the valid answers of each subject and amounts to a multiple data imputation.[8]

[8] Computation was performed with SAS-CALIS https://documentation.sas.com/doc/en/pgmsascdc/9.4_3.3/statug/statug_calis_syntax13.htm.

The input consists of 32 means, 32 standard deviations and 32*31/2 = 496 covariances, in sum 560 moments. The output consists of the following parameters: (1) 11 intercepts; and the following numbers of regression coefficients: for the occupational life satisfaction 2 at age 30 and 3*4 at the later ages, in sum 14; for the private life satisfaction 3 at age 30 and 3*5 at the later ages, in sum 18; for the private life preference at age 43, 56, and 66 3*3 – altogether *52 regression parameters.* To these, the following parameters for the exogenous variables are added: (2) *21 means,* of which are 8 for the occupational life success at each age, 12 for private life success at each age and 1 for the private life preference at age 30; (3) *33 variances*: 1 for the factor, 11 for the residuals, and 21 for the exogenous variables; and (4) *241 covariances*: 21*20/2 = 210 among the exogenous variables, 21 between factor and exogenous variables, and 10 between the errors (1 at age 30 and 3*3 at the later ages) which must be included because the correlations within each age are not represented causally. Summing up the numbers in italics, the model has 347 parameters. Subtracting them from 560 moments results in the model's degrees of freedom: 213.

The Chi-Square of the model fit is 103.5 with 213 df ($p < 0.0001$). The *Standardized Root Mean Square Residual* (SRMR) between the empirical covariances and the ones implied by the model which targets at a value of 0 is 0.06; and the *Goodness of Fit Index Adjusted* for degrees of freedom (AGFI) which targets at a value of 1 is 0.858. Eight of the ten biggest residuals refer to variances of, and two to the over-time covariances between the exogeneous variables of occupational life success which both are not treated as causal in the model. Thus, apart from the causally irrelevant relations among the exogenous variables, the causal structure among preferences and satisfactions is reproduced sufficiently well.

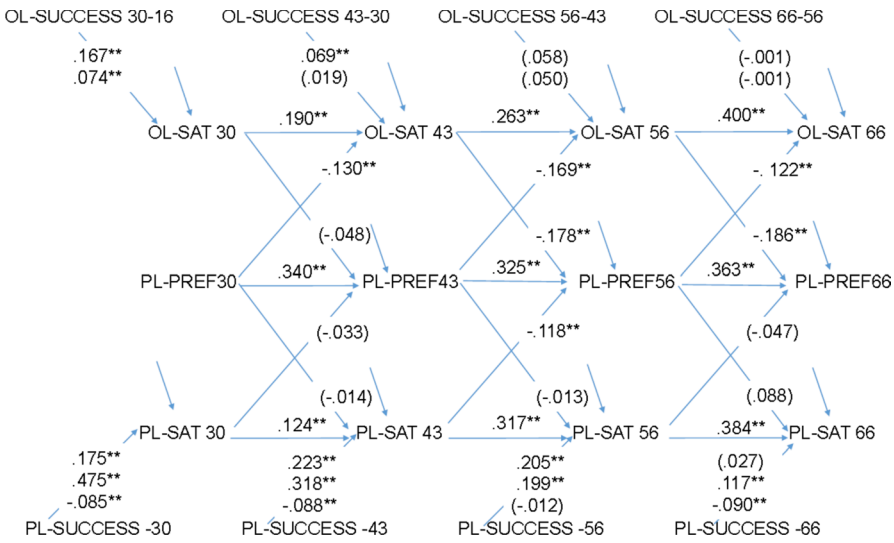
Regression Coefficients

The *upper panel* of Fig. 3 presents the standardized coefficients of the eleven regressions of the endogenous variables; the intercepts, the unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors are in the online appendix, table A3.

Private life preference has the expected negative effects on occupational life satisfaction, but not the expected positive effects on private life satisfaction, which are insignificant. Conversely, private life preference is determined negatively by occupational life satisfaction, but not positively – at age 56 even significantly negatively – by private life satisfaction. The (1) *contingency hypothesis* and the (2) *feedback hypothesis* hold for occupational, but not for private life.

(3) The *stabilities* of the *satisfactions* are, as expected, moderately positive. They increase monotonously – indicating identity stabilization. Yet the stability of the *preference* is constantly positive. It is not disturbed by specific demands of life stages – as during the mid-life "rush hour" (Knecht & Freund, 2016).

If one compares the stabilities over time, the two satisfactions lie behind the preference from 30 to 43 and from 43 to 56, and all three are nearly equally high from 56 and 66. Thus, differences of stabilities are overridden by differences of developments. Satisfactions crystallize while preferences are continuously re-confirmed – as is also visible at the R^2 values reported in the lower panel of Fig. 3.



Age	*30*	*43*	*56*	*66*
R²				
OL-SAT	*.140****	*.221****	*.295****	*.439****
PL-PREF		*.211****	*.232****	*.244****
PL-SAT	*.238****	*.213****	*.321****	*.387****
Residual Correlations				
OL-SAT – PL-SAT	*.144****	*.155****	*.165****	*.119****
PL-PREF – OL-SAT		*-.200****	*-.161****	*-.112****
PL-PREF – PL-SAT		*.030*	*.044*	*-.047*
Factor regression coefficients				
OL-SAT	*.297****	*.374****	*.371****	*.371****
PL-PREF		*.264****	*.255****	*.215****
PL-SAT	*.292****	*.311****	*.337****	*.333****

**** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05*

Fig. 3 Private life preference, life success, and life satisfaction, standardized regression coefficients, 540 full observations, FIML estimation, 347 parameters. OL Success: first entry hourly income, second prestige. PL Success: partner, married and child number successively. $^{**}p < .001$, brackets $p > .01$

(4) The *occupational life success* increases occupational life satisfaction significantly from age 16 to 30. The effect is much stronger for the hourly income where a value of zero for age 16 has been subtracted from the last value before age 30, than for prestige where father's prestige has been subtracted from the last value before age 30. Thus, the *success hypothesis* is confirmed – and more strongly so, when the occupational career is followed from a common than from an individual starting point. The advantage of the income over the prestige effect until age 30 reflects the power of family support. After age 30, however, neither income nor prestige gains increase satisfaction – except for the effect of income gains on occupational life satisfaction at age 43. As for the transmission of social inequality, this can be evaluated positively. Inherited opportunities condition occupational life at its start, but no more later on.

The *private life success* refers, first, to partnership statuses. At each age, they increase private life satisfaction almost always strongly and significantly, and the more committing one, marriage, has a stronger (or at least as strong) effect as the less committing one, being partnered. All in all, the *success hypothesis* is supported for partnership. Yet over the life course, being partnered has roughly the same effect up to age 56 and drops afterwards, and the effect of marriage monotonously decreases. As marriage is the more committing and individually more constant status, the decrease may be read as a matter of habituation – even when partners change. Partnership remains a dominant ingredient of satisfaction, but loses saliency. While the effects of occupational success on satisfaction reach a peak age 30 in order to drop down abruptly, the routinization of partnership creepingly diminishes its effects on satisfaction.

Private life success refers, second, to parenthood. At each age, the number of children has a *negative* effect on private life satisfaction, which is significant except for age 56. Having children has the same negative effect on *private life* satisfaction in the four waves of the CHISP between age 30 and 66 as entry into parenthood on *family life* satisfaction in five waves of the GSOEP between 1984 and 2016 (Krämer & Rodgers, 2020: 1500, 1503, 1506). Also, the negative effect may be due to lacking controls. In the GSOEP, relative leisure time – its percentage of the time of leisure, housework, errands, and child care of a weekday – and household equivalent income, which shrink with parenthood, operated as a suppressor of the positive relation of having children on *general* life satisfaction (Pollmann-Schult, 2014: 325, 328). Probably, the negative effect reflects high aspirations for children which, when disappointed, generate dissatisfaction and come more strongly to mind in the frame of *private* (CHISP) than of *general* life satisfaction (GSOEP).

But why does the negative effect of parenthood not decrease over the life course? With the age of the kids, costs of time, energy, and money (Pollmann-Schult, 2018: 389–390) which cause dissatisfaction (as in Hagmaier et al., 2018: 148) should lose, and emotional benefits should gain impact; cross-sectionally, the "value of children" increases with age in Germany (Meulemann, 2007: 42, 44). Again, probably, kids who disappoint expectations in *adult* life cause dissatisfactions to *older* parents.

Model Evaluation

The *lower panel* of Fig. 3 presents parameters for the model evaluation.

In the first bloc, the *explained variances* –the square roots of which are the residual arrows – show what the model has achieved. If one follows the lines, R^2 increases for the life satisfactions, and remains constant for private life preference. This mirrors the increasing stabilities of both satisfactions and the constant stability of the preference presented in the upper panel. The variance increase of the satisfactions reflects identity stabilization; the constant variance of the preferences reflect habituation. Identities consolidate, preference are habits continuously revised.

In the second bloc, the *residual correlations* indicate neglected predictors. They show what the model has *not* achieved. They are – absolutely – fairly high for the first and second variable pair. The residual correlations *between the two satisfactions*

fluctuate around 0.13. Possibly, they represent some trait to be "generally" satisfied. And the residual correlations *between private life preference and occupational life satisfaction* fluctuate around −0.15. Possibly, experiences and attitudes beyond private life preference affect occupational life satisfaction negatively: persistent negative work experiences, absorbing leisure activities, family centredness (Headey et al., 1991: 92; Headey & Wearing, 1989: 736; Headey, 2008; Hagmaier et al., 2018: 155).

In the third bloc, the *factor regression coefficients* indicate unobserved heterogeneity or constant personal traits. They are often higher than the ones for the manifest variables. There is more behind both satisfactions than private life preference – probably the same impacts as behind the residual correlations. Moreover, the heterogeneity of the two satisfactions is constantly higher than the one of the preferences. There are more unknown impacts on satisfactions than on their modelled driving force. Finally, the impact of unobserved heterogeneity on the three dependent variables is nearly equal at each time point after age 30 when private life preference enters as a predictor; it affects preferences and satisfactions equally over the life course, as a constant unobserved factor should do.

Conclusion

Summary and an Explanation of the Central Result

The effects presented in Fig. 3 can be roughly averaged over ages. As for the (1) contingency, (2) reinforcement, and the (3) stability of private life preference hypothesis, signs and sizes are nearly constant; as for the (3) stability of satisfaction hypotheses, they increase monotonously; as for (4) success, it loses impact in occupational life and keeps it in private life.

Remarkably, in the core of the system, the relations change only slightly over the 50-year-span: Preferences and satisfactions affect each other in constant forms; preferences remain fairly stable and satisfactions gain stability. And on the periphery, occupational success has a minor and diminishing positive effect on occupational life satisfaction; and private success contradictory effects on private life satisfaction: Partnership furthers satisfaction strongly positively and constantly, parenthood weakly negatively and somewhat inconsistently. Looking back at the contradictory expectations and results discussed in Sects. Research Review: Occupational and Private Life; Developments and Stabilities and "Concepts and hypotheses", its negative effect is confirmed. Occupational life satisfaction depends on success only weakly and early in the career. Private life satisfaction is rooted deeply in partnership success, and disturbed superficially by parenthood.

These average effects are summarized in Table 1 according to the hypotheses. Fat types indicate confirmation. For success in private life, the first figure refers to partnership, the second to parenthood.

The central result is the expected mutual negative dependence of private life preference and occupational life satisfaction; and the unexpected mutual independence of private life preference and private life satisfaction. The failure of the contingency

and the reinforcement hypotheses in private life probably reflects its dominant position discussed in Sect. "Concepts and hypotheses": Private life is pivotal to plan and evaluate one's life; and occupational life serves to attain what is planned in private life.

The contingency hypothesis fails in private life because each of its facets of may be preferred to another one (Sirgy, 2022: 116–141). Thus, the preference becomes fuzzy and unstable and gains no impact on the satisfaction. Furthermore, private life preference may generate more forces against than for satisfaction. The preoccupation with a particularly risky facet of private life, partnership, can heighten expectations, reduce frustration tolerance, and instigate conflicts such that preference and satisfaction drive in opposite directions. Thus, again, the preference becomes inconsistent and variable and attains no impact on the satisfaction.

The reinforcement hypothesis fails in private life because it keeps its pivotal position, while satisfaction develops as life dictates. Divorces, generation conflicts, sibling rivalries, inheritance disputes, and friendship breakups notwithstanding, most people live first and irrevocably in private. Thus, the satisfaction becomes mixed and unsafe and attains no impact on the preference. Furthermore, the bases of satisfactions are not easily brought above one denominator. Some are proud of their marriage, others of their children, again others of their kinship and friendship networks. Thus, again, the satisfaction refers to various and changing relations and attains no impact on the preference.

Summed up paradoxically: The mutual irrelevance of preference and satisfaction in private life mirrors its dominance in life generally. Private life needs no emphasis through preference to raise satisfaction and no satisfaction to strengthen its already pivotal position. It *is* established as *the* life domain one does not escape from. Occupational life, however, *must be* focused upon to gain preference and to raise satisfaction. It requires attention and investment, and suffers from their withdrawal.

Limitations and Extensions

The limitation of this study is the selection of its first sample according to education. In the German general population (Kratz & Brüderl, 2021, supplement 2–4, 11, 22), education increases the *level* of general life satisfaction and most probably of domain specific satisfactions as well. But a *differential development of satisfaction over the life course according to education* has never been investigated (Sirgy, 2021: 146). For private life, it is difficult to imagine. For occupational life, a better education might open *more* opportunities of success and, consequently, satisfaction, than in the broad population such that relations might have become stronger. In any case, the topic of the study are *relations* rather than l*evels* such that, for lack of contrary evidence, the results can be provisionally generalized.

The analysis did not include *time invariant predictors* of satisfaction which constitute the starting conditions of a career before age 30. Time invariant predictors can be tested only once and at best at a time before the first wave at age 30, that is, leftmost in Fig. 1. In such an analysis of all waves (Birkelbach & Meulemann, 2024:

Chapter 3), occupational life satisfaction at age 30 (OL-SAT 30) has been regressed on the highest income and prestige up to age 30 (rather than the difference between age 30 and 16) and on three time-invariant predictors at age 16 h, father's occupational status, average school grade and female gender. None of the latter had a significant impact. Equally, private life satisfaction at age 30 (PL-SAT 30) has been regressed on partnership, marriage and parentship at age 30 and on female gender – which had no significant effect. Over all waves, the gender differences of the occupational and the private life satisfaction were not significant (Birkelbach & Meulemann, 2024: Chapter 4). Thus, neglecting time invariant predictors did not impair the analysis.

Also, further *time variant predictors* can be introduced. Failure can be as detrimental for satisfaction, as success is productive. In the life history inventories of age 30, 43, 56, and 66 waiting, unemployment, and disability times as well as divorces and separations for each period in between had negative effects on the life evaluation at age 66 (Birkelbach and Meulemann, 2024: Chapter 9).

Finally, although this cohort study tested mutual effects among preferences and satisfactions in each wave, irrespective of its location in the life course, it is genuinely suited to test *developmental hypotheses.* Apart from hints to the mid-life "rush hour", we found no theories and no empirical studies on developments. As for the CHiSP, developmental hypotheses were examined in Birkelbach and Meulemann (2024: Chapter 8).

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