

Theoretical Framework

- Substantial literature documents the positive effects of social networks on various aspects of health (Amieva et al., 2010).
- Most studies translate social networks in the quantity and quality of personal relationships
- Quality of personal relationships have been shown to be most effective in old age (Charles & Carstensen, 2010)
- Development of more social theories which stress the importance of groups and social identity in addition to personal relationships (Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012)

Research Questions

- Do groups enable a better coping to separation (divorce, separation, widowhood) in the second half of life?
- Concerning identity, what is the respective role of identity continuity (Spini & Jopp, in press)?

Hypotheses:

We expected that:

- Belonging to social groups would have a positive effect on well-being after the loss of an intimate partner;
- Belonging to social groups would have a positive effect of continuity;
- Continuity would mediate the relationship between belonging to groups and well-being, and/or...
- ... there would be an interaction between group belonging, continuity and time to cope with the partner loss.

Measures

Continuity measure (Source: Catherine Haslam, personal communication)

- I am the same person as I always was.
 - Over time, lots of things have changed, but I am still the same person.
 - I can not make sense of the changes I have been through.
 - My past helps me to understand my present life.
 - I am a different person now than I was in the past.
 - There is no connection between my past and present.
- (1 = does not apply to me at all; 5 = fully applies to me)

Social groups: (Source Jetten et al., 2012)

- Which groups are you member of?
- How important is this group? (1 = not at all; 5 = very important)
- Do you feel integrated in this group?

Total *n* of groups = 4442

Most cited groups: Sport 27.33%; Hobbies (games, etc.) 14.57%; Cultural (Choral, music, theatre, folkloric groups, etc.) 11.64%; Professional or unions 10.72%.

...but 37,2% of respondents did not mention any group.

Life satisfaction: 5-item scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Ex: «I am satisfied with my life»

Depression (CES-D Radloff, 1977). Ex: «I felt depressed», «I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing»

Data

Analyses were based on the “Vulnerability and Growth. Developmental dynamics and differential effects of the loss of an intimate partner in the second half of life” study, a prospective questionnaire-study on the partner loss in Swiss adult population (Hutchison et al., 2013).

Age: 40-90 years

Group of divorced and widowed who experienced loss or breakup within the last 5 years. Divorced *n* = 1236 (40-65 years); Widowed *n* = 569 (65+ years)

Group of age-matched continuously married controls, *n* = 1085

Recruitment plan:

Swiss Federal Office of Statistics

Vulnerable loss group (loss between 0 and 2 years ago): Recruitment by direct advertisements

References

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- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of personality assessment*, 49(1), 71-75. (08006)
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- Jetten, J., Haslam, C., & Haslam, S. A. (2012). *The social cure: Identity, health and well-being*. Psychology Press East Sussex. (00035)
- Radloff, L. S. (1977). The CES-D scale a self-report depression scale for research in the general population. *Applied psychological measurement*, 1(3), 385-401. (25470)

Results: Life Satisfaction

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	0.043*	0.034	0.033
Age	0.070**	0.051*	0.051*
Self-rated health	0.359***	0.312***	0.311***
Widow	-0.015	-0.038	-0.057
Divorced	-0.223***	-0.226***	-0.244***
Time to event	0.111**	0.057	0.318***
N Groups	0.110***	0.099***	0.112***
Continuity		0.256***	0.354***
Time × Continuity			-0.311***
Time × N groups			-0.016

Table 1: Mediation and Interaction Analysis of the Life Satisfaction

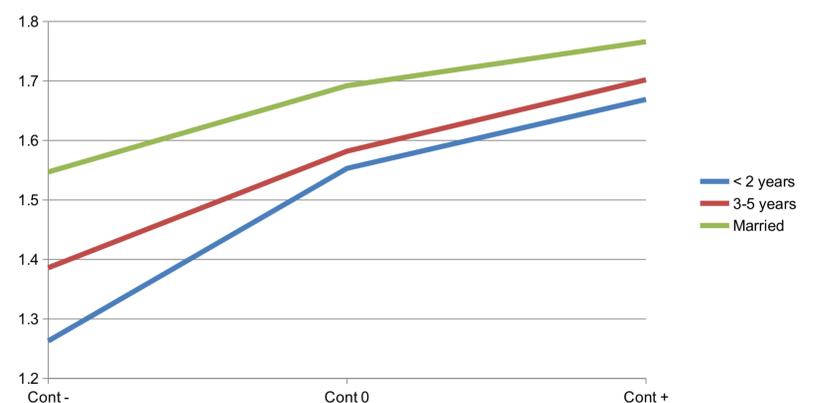


Figure 1: Interaction Between Continuity and Time on Life Satisfaction

Results: Depression

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	-0.050**	-0.043*	-0.043*
Age	0.012	0.026	0.028
Self-rated health	0.436***	0.398***	0.396***
Widow	-0.046	-0.026	-0.004
Divorced	-0.061	-0.058	-0.037
Time to event	-0.290***	-0.246***	-0.573***
N Groups	-0.101***	-0.092***	-0.109**
Continuity		-0.209***	-0.331***
Time × Continuity			0.389***
Time × N groups			0.020

Table 2: Mediation and Interaction Analysis of Depression

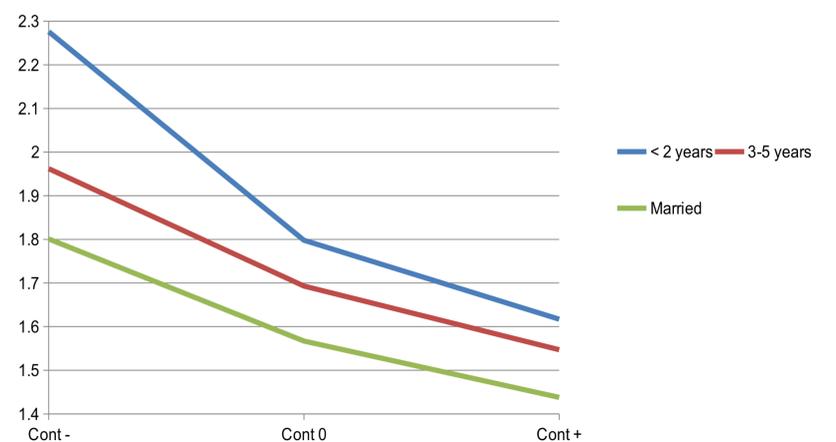


Figure 2: Interaction Between Continuity and Time on Depression

Main Findings

- Belonging to social groups was found to have a **positive effect on well-being**;
- Belonging to social groups had a **positive effect of continuity**;
- In contrast to our expectations, **continuity did not mediate** the relationship between belonging to groups and well-being
- The interaction between group membership and the time to event was not significant
- There was an **interaction between continuity and the time to event**