

Personality

What makes us who we are?

Psychology 305A: Lecture 12

Self-Esteem

Begin Person/Situation Debate

Self-Esteem

Evaluations of the Self-Concept

Definition of Self-Esteem

- *Evaluation* (positive vs. negative) of one's self as a physical, social, psychological, and moral being
 - Affective component
 - Feelings about the self; self-liking
 - Cognitive component
 - Thoughts about one's competencies, abilities

Measuring Self-Esteem

- Self-report scales
- Similarity between actual and ideal self
- Observer report
 - Parent and teacher ratings for kids
 - Can someone else know your self-esteem?
- Pictorial measures for children

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

- Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
- I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- All in all, I am inclined to feel that I'm a failure. (R)
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)
- I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R)
- I certainly feel useless at times. (R)
- At times I think I am no good at all. (R)

Undergraduates' mean self-esteem

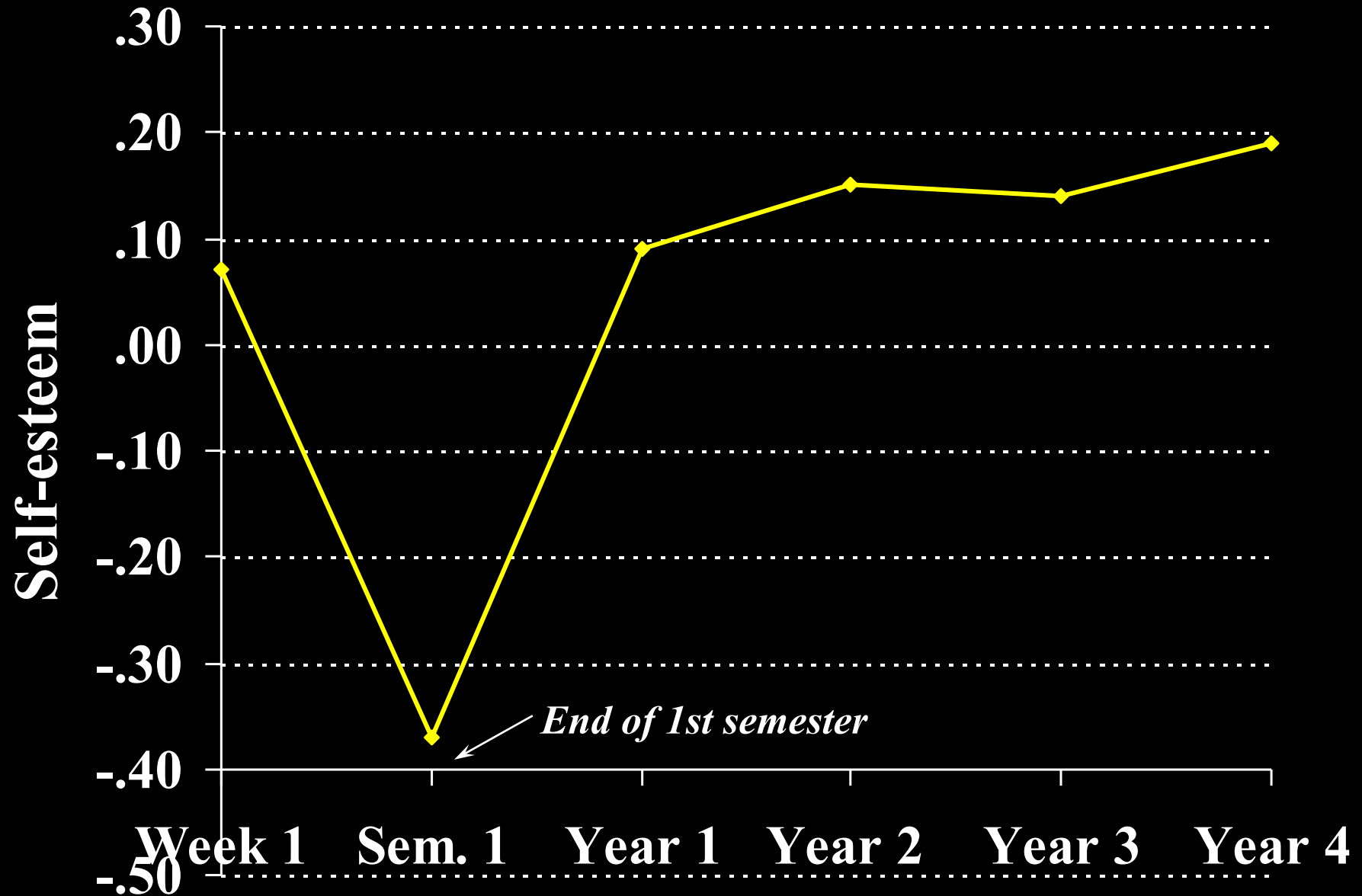
- **3.85**
- Based on 1,643 psych students

Development of Self-Esteem

Longitudinal Study

- Assessed undergrads' self-esteem
 - Used Rosenberg scale
- (1) Beginning of Year 1
- (2) End of first semester
- (3) End of Year 1, Year 2, Year3, Year 4

SELF-ESTEEM CHANGE DURING UNIVERSITY



Quotes from Participants in Longitudinal Study

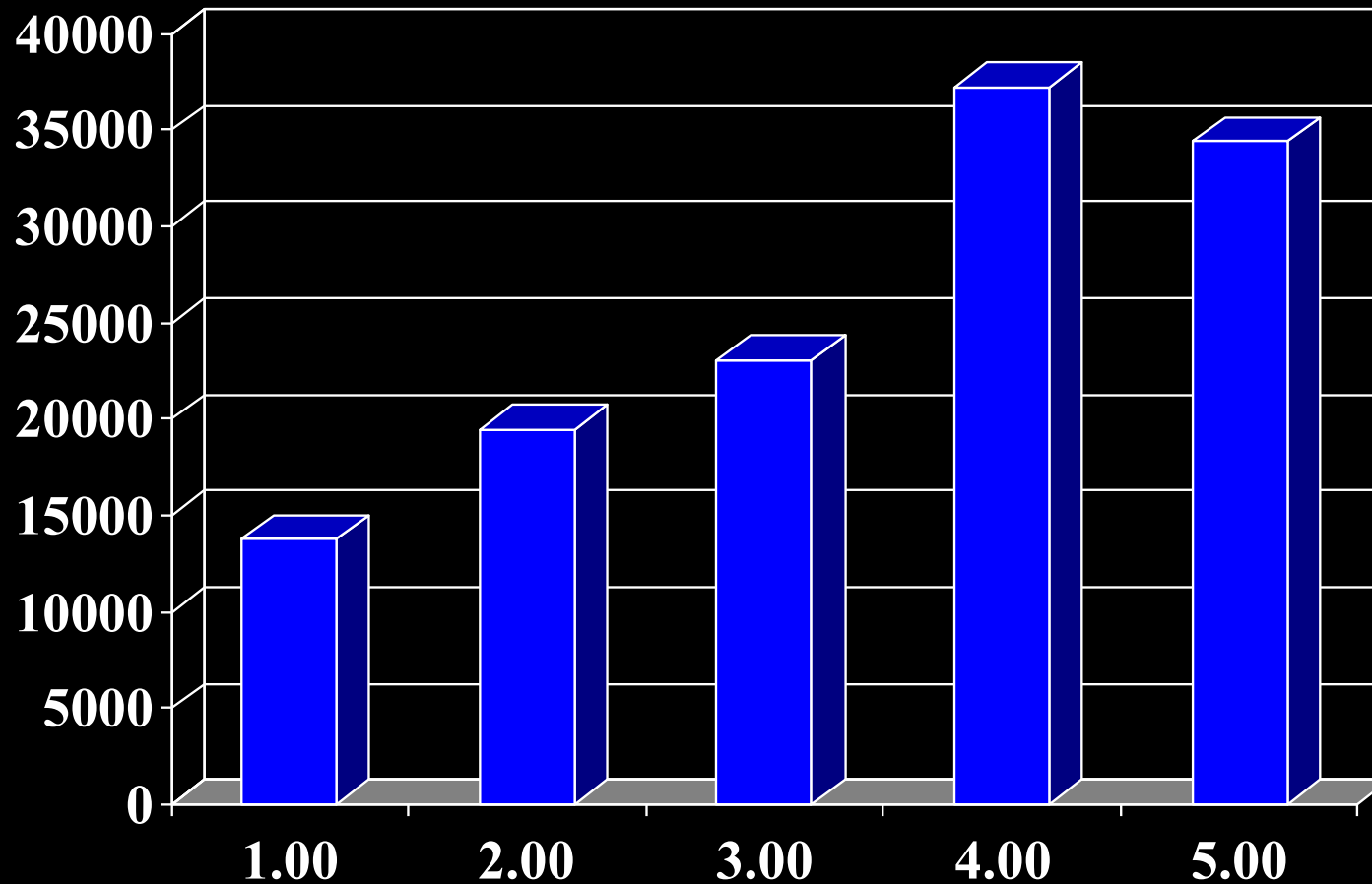
- **Self-Esteem Went Down**: “I used to think I was the best or one of the best students in school. College shattered that bubble which helped me get through things. There are so many people here who are much better than I am. I’m scared. I wish I were more confident in myself.”
- “I feel upset and ashamed at my failure, even a little depressed...Basically, I think my GPA sucks, ergo I suck. I value grades over education, which is wrong”
- **Self-Esteem Went Up**: “I am proud of my work and what I accomplish. My GPA is the only thing that is really mine here.
- I feel I can do better in school. It is hard for me to accept the fact that I have a C on my transcript. But I look at my grades and I am inspired to do well. And, despite my grades, I feel like I have learned a lot in college.

**What happens to self-esteem
across the lifespan?**

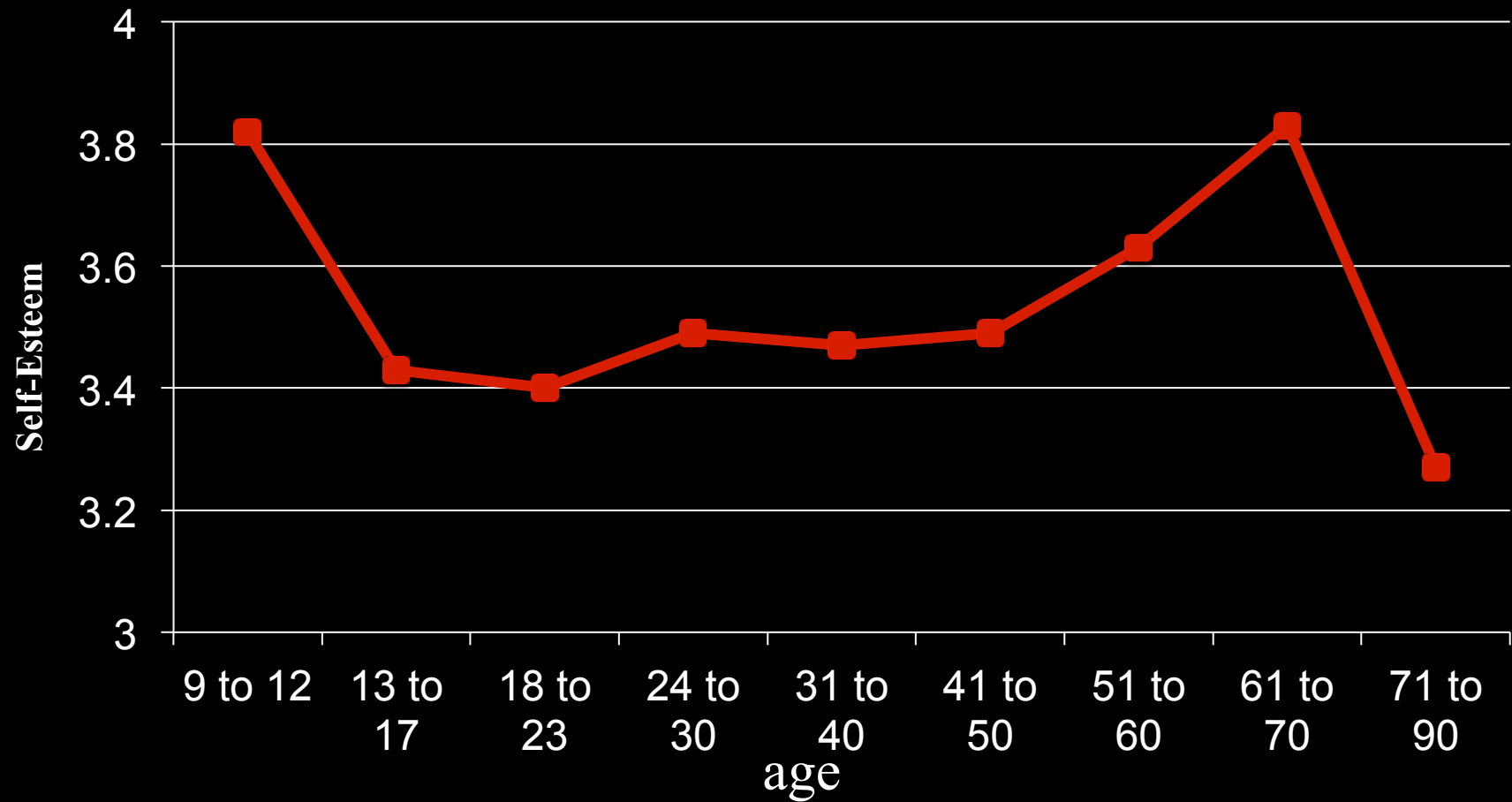
Cross-Sectional Study

<i>Age</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total (% of total)</i>
9 to 12	1,825	1,571	3,439 (2.7)
13 to 17	10,075	18,258	28,625 (22.4)
18 to 23	18,075	17,417	35,963 (28.1)
24 to 30	19,835	14,131	34,571 (27.0)
31 to 40	7,750	7,774	15,850 (12.4)
41 to 50	2,415	4,018	6,566 (5.1)
51 to 60	819	1,352	2,228 (1.7)
61 to 70	197	224	430 (.03)
71 to 90	94	69	166 (.01)
Total	61,085	64,814	127,838

Frequency Distribution of Self-Esteem Scores

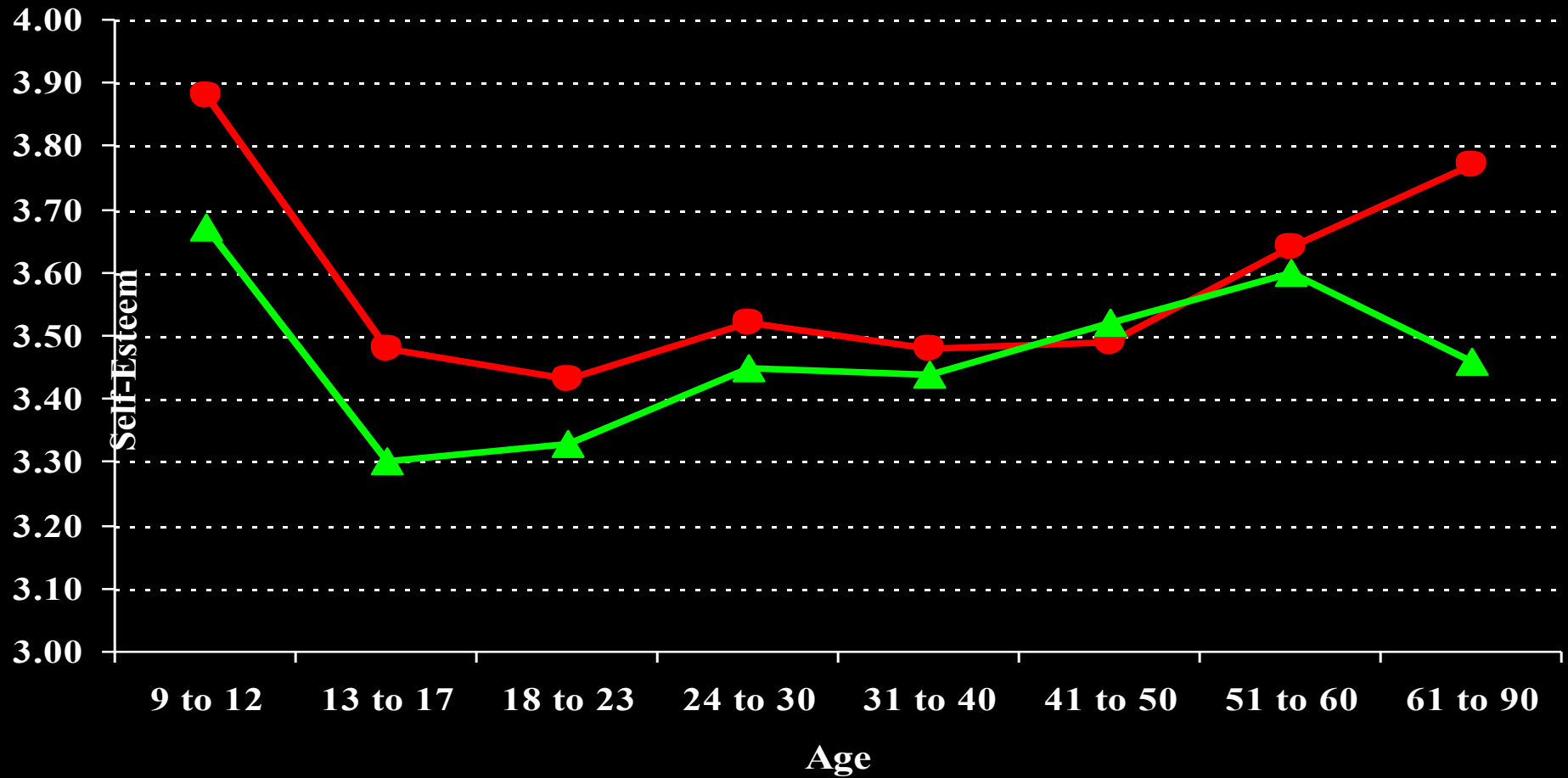


Trajectory of Self-Esteem from Age 9 to 90

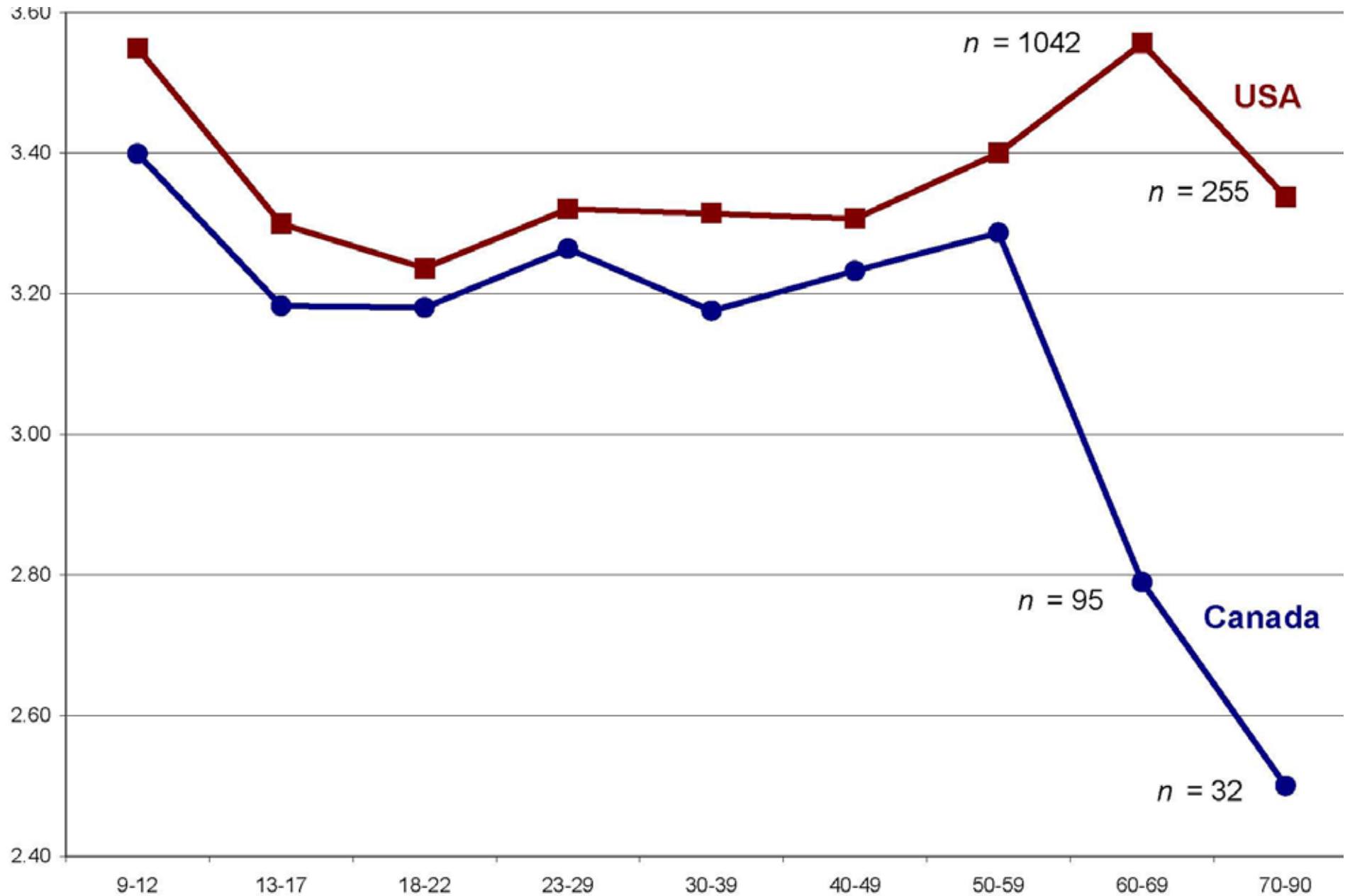


U.S. vs. Other countries

● Living within U.S. ▲ Living outside U.S.

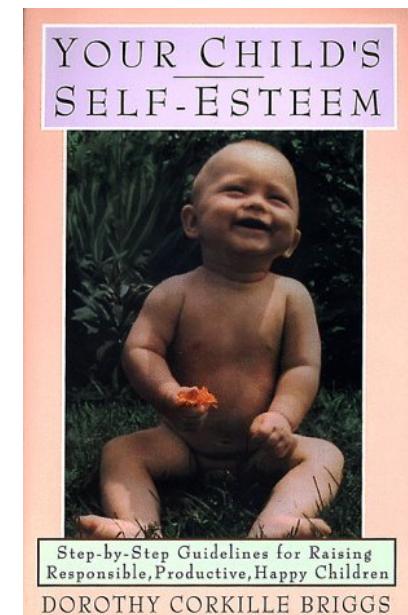
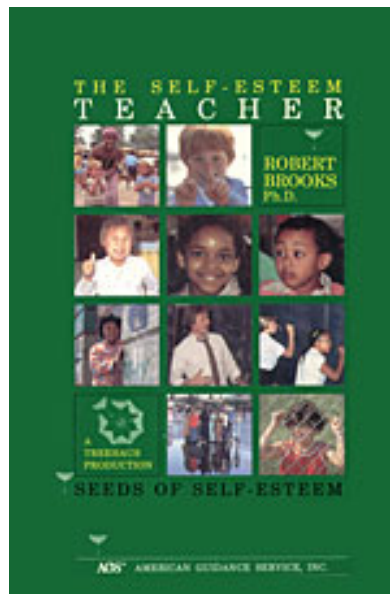
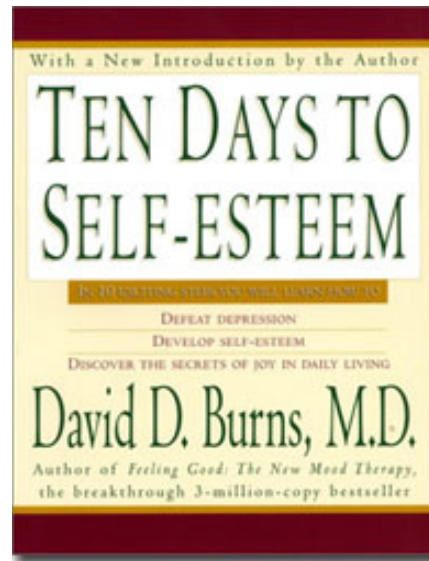
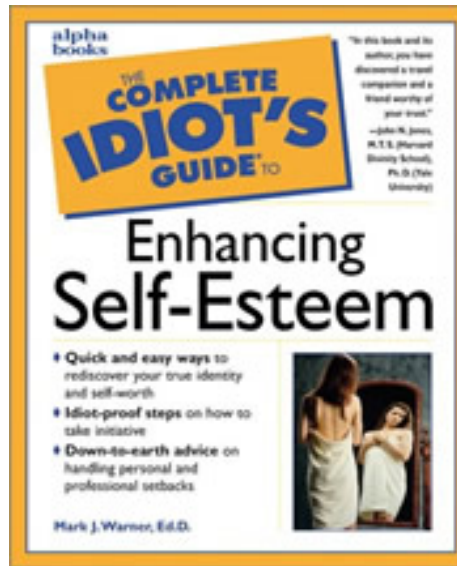


U.S. vs. Canada



Limitations with Internet Study

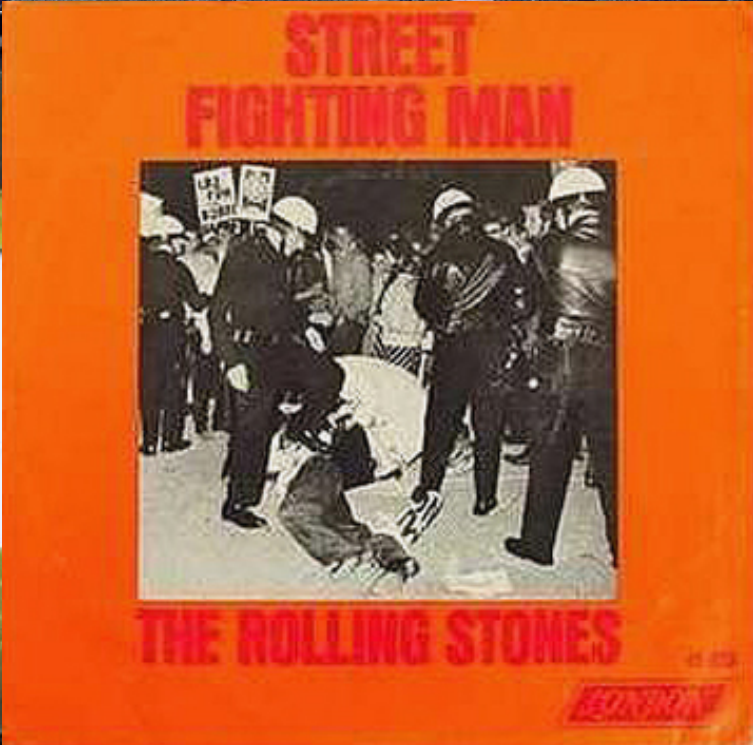
- Sample selectivity
 - Is it different on a computer?
 - Are internet users a select sample?
- Cross-sectional design
 - “Cohort” effects
 - Selective mortality



Theoretical and Measurement Issues in Trait Research: Person-Situation Debate



1968



1968

PERSONALITY
AND
ASSESSMENT

Walter Mischel



What was going on in '68?

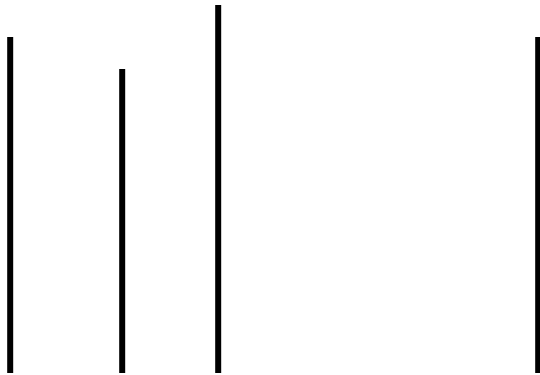
- Changes in Field of Personality:
 - End of the era of mega-theories (Freud, Jung, Maslow, Murray, etc.)
 - Era of middle-level theories
 - Domain-specific
 - Personality traits used to describe and predict certain types of behavior
 - $B = f(P)$
 - Behavior is determined by personality

What was going on in '68?

- Rise of Social Psychology
 - *Lewin's Interactionism*
 - Behavior as a function of person and situation
 - $B = f(P \times S)$
 - *Festinger's Situationism*
 - Reduced to $B = f(S)$
 - Personality = error variance, irrelevant

Situationism

- Emphasis on the *power of the situation* to shape people's behavior
 - Asch's conformity study



- Milgram's obedience study
- Zimbardo's prison study



Mischel's Critique



- Personality does not predict behavior
 - $B = f(P)$ is wrong
- People act differently in different situations
- Knowing a person's level on a particular trait does not allow you to predict their behavior on any specific occasion

The result of Mischel's critique

- Personality psychology suffered!
 - Fewer grad programs
 - Currently, almost no solely P programs in the US or Canada, and possibly more pure S programs than combined S-P
 - Fewer researchers in the area
 - Fewer jobs

The Result of Mischel's Critique

- Social Psychology blossomed
 - Huge area of research
 - Many grad programs, researchers, and jobs
- But, over time, personality psychology fought back... and became stronger

Next Class

- Begin Biological Approach: Genetics
 - Read Larsen & Buss Chapter 6