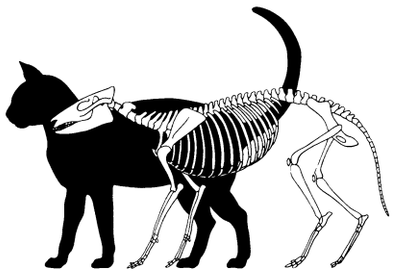

"The smallest-known fossil horse; a skeletal reconstruction of *Hyracotherium sandrae* (from the early Eocene of Wyoming) next to a silhouette of an average-size house cat." [From *Fossil Horses*, modified from Gingerich (1989); drawing by Wendy Zomlefer]

55 million years. Besides a recitation of horse history itself, MacFadden tells us about the history of study of fossil horses, about the dangers of orthogenetic misinterpretation, about where the specimens come from and where they are studied, and about how they can be placed in a temporal and stratigraphic framework. There are chapters dealing with population dynamics, evolutionary trends (often mistaken for continuous evolution), rates of apparent change seen at various powers of resolution, and functional morphology and even some philosophical concluding comments that include remarks on what ought to be done next by researchers. These bring the subject to life. I found the various conflicting cladograms and phylograms especially fascinating, for they highlight a deeper problem: how do we best express phylogenetic concepts in words rather than diagrams? Horse research hasn't quite solved that one yet, as one can see by comparing prose rosters and written classifications with cladograms or "connect-the-dots" efforts that imply continuity like the one shown in figure 8.3. If the success of a book is to be measured by the number of pro and con comments and expletives penciled into the margins by readers, then my copy suggests that this book will be widely read and discussed by students of evolution in general. Even creationists ought to read it; they could learn something from its spirit of inquiry.

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The Life Voyage

American Lives. Looking Back at the Children of the Great Depression. JOHN A. CLAUSEN. Free Press (Macmillan), New York, 1993. xxii, 592 pp., illus. $35.

Karl Schultz was a "homely" child. In 1929, at the age of seven, he lost his father to a heart attack that came on suddenly while he and his parents were out for a walk. With the country on the verge of the Great Depression, his mother, an energetic but restless woman, managed for a year or so on life insurance. But when her divorced sister and mother came to live with them she had no alternative but to find a job (in real estate) at a time when few women worked for wages. Hardly an auspicious beginning. Still, by the time he entered high school, Karl was both studious and sociable. Secure in his abilities in science and math, he aspired to be an engineer, like his father. Karl realized that ambition—and many others. Over the next six decades, he constructed what John Clausen calls a "life well lived"—with a happy marriage to a supportive wife and, for the most part, warm relations with his own children. Moreover, various interviewers over those decades characterized the once "homely" youth not only as "intellectual" but also as a "good looking" man.

Karl Schultz exemplifies the central argument of Clausen's *American Lives*. Despite personal dislocations, despite the massive social dislocations of war and peace, of boom and bust, Karl's life has been characterized by a remarkable stability. From adolescence to early adulthood and through maturity, Karl proved himself highly dependable, intellectually invested, and confident. These three traits make up what Clausen calls "planful competence," and, Clausen argues, the degree to which they are present predicts the likelihood of a "life well lived," at least among white males.

American Lives relies on an impressive array of longitudinal data collected by the Institute of Child Welfare (now renamed the Institute of Human Development) at the University of California at Berkeley. Clausen, who became the Institute's third director in 1960, combines data on almost 300 men and women in the Berkeley and Oakland area, drawn from three longitudinal studies, two begun in 1928 on infants and their families and one begun in 1930 on adolescents and their families. In 1957, 1969, 1981, and 1990, interviewers reinterviewed respondents—and often several members of any given family (husbands and wives, mothers, children, and children's children)—probing with lengthy open-ended questions, direct observation, physical examinations, and mailed questionnaires. In 1984, Clausen himself supplemented and updated the data through life-history interviews with part of the sample. Finally, Clausen asked those study members whose cases he presents in most detail here (each of six chapters is devoted to a single individual's life history) to review and react to their histories as he presents them.

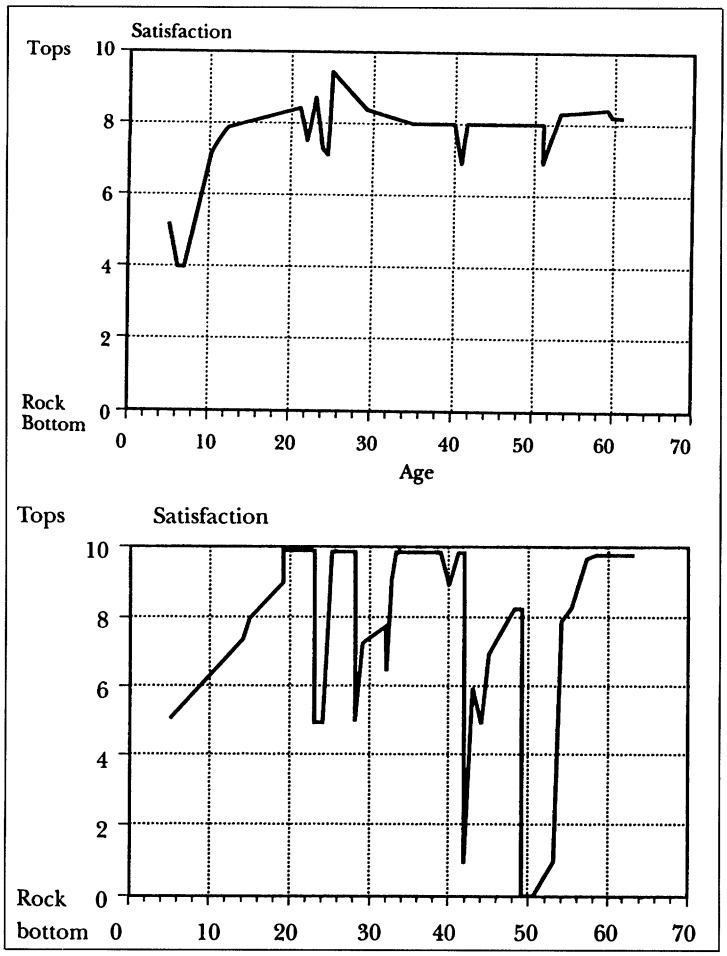
As Clausen notes, these studies were begun at a time when research design, measurement, and technology were crude by today's standards: there were, for example, no tape recorders, no computers, and few standardized psychological tests. His reflection on the imperfections of the data is refreshing; in fact, the book is made more fascinating by a historical record of research methodology and technology that parallels the history of the respondents.

Clausen's chapters alternate between the detailed case studies (three of men, three of women) and complex statistical analyses. Thus, in a display of methodological virtuosity, Clausen manages to combine longitudinal variable analysis with life histories and the analysis of these histories as narrative. This combination of techniques—with patently real people situated firmly in larger samples—produces convincing stories of a sort all too rare in a field that more often relies either on a small number of intensive life histories (whose generalizability is unknown) or on the quantitative analysis of large data sets (which often lose the humanity of the people they count). The combination of methods is impressive. But it is also occasionally awkward.

Life history and narrative analysis, more frequently practiced by anthropologists and historical biographers than by sociologists, are particularly useful for making sense of the adaptive aspects of life experience and of the cumulative relations between one stage of life and the next. Toward these ends, Clausen uses his materials effectively. But the analysis of life histories and, even more so, of narratives (of what are in effect folk autobiographies) typically also acknowledges the significance of the ways men and women make sense of their own experience. And here Clausen is less compelling. To be sure, Clausen did ask his subjects to comment on their life histories as he had written them. But these comments typically contain minor factual corrections, are bracketed in brief paragraphs, and are set apart from the main story of the life history. Thus Clausen continues to frame the life histories in his own terms—around, for example, "planful competence"—rather than those of his respondents.

It is, then, in his longitudinal variable analysis that Clausen is at his best. His central point is that those men who as adolescents were high in "planful competence" (as measured by an index combining scores assigned by clinical psychologists and social workers) were more likely to feel better and function effectively as they traversed the life course than were those low in that early competence. In contrast, for those men who were low in early competence, there is much discontinuity, often crises (both on the job and in the family). Much to the point, these crises rarely occur in midlife. Moreover, when they do, their sources are more often the death of a loved one or the rebellion of an adolescent offspring than a problem in a marriage or job.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this study is that planful competence—as an organizing principle of the life course—is itself organized around gender. For most men born in the Depression years, the concept predicts remarkably well. For them, youthful competence (often the result of nurturant but demanding, highstatus parents) led to high educational and occupational achievement, as well as to stable marriages. Men, then, lived a cumulative effect: those who started out with advantage accumulated it; those who did not accumulated disadvantage.



Life satisfaction charts for Karl Schulz (top) and Mary Wylie (bottom) at age 61. For Karl the lowest points (ages 6 to 9) were marked by illness and the death of his father. Other lows coincided with a case of mononucleosis and the death of his mother. One high was the acquisition of a car at the age of 16. Highs for both subjects were associated with marriage and the birth of children, but Mary's low times included a spell of "post-partum blues." A high point following the illness and death of her husband (ages 48 to 49) was associated with enrollment in art classes. The chart completed by Mary in 1982 showed sharper dips and climbs than a chart she had completed earlier. [From *American Lives*]

For most women in the cohort, the model does not work nearly so well. A "competent" adolescent girl was far less assured of becoming a "competent" woman (and neither did a lack of competence in youth foretell its absence in adulthood). To some extent, youthful competence helped women make happier, longer marriages to more successful men (often seen by these wives and sometimes their husbands in the early years of marriage as good providers but overly involved in their jobs). That competence also led this cohort of women to produce more children. But women's self-concepts, their aspirations, their personalities, and their work lives showed far more change over the life course than did men's. Early planful competence for this cohort of women bore little relationship to their adult paid careers, though having such careers bore a strong, and positive, relationship to their adult sense of competence (even though many reported that employment negatively affected their marriages).

For women, the larger social context mattered more. Though most did not become participants in, or even advocates of, the women's movement, its principles and (perhaps more important) the accompanying increase in women's participation in the labor force made their youthful aspirations far less relevant to their adult lives. The central principle of the book is, then, as the author himself acknowledges, "a male-centered perspective" (p. 519). But the book as a whole has no such perspective: one of its virtues is a constant attention to both women and men and to the differences between them in this now aged cohort.

But Clausen also finds shared crises borne of cohort experience. Many children of the Great Depression—men and women alike—faced, for example, a generation gap, especially traumatic for that large number, conservative themselves, who had adolescent children sympathetic to the protest of the Vietnam years. But that gap was bounded: once the Vietnam War was over, the salience of political disagreements between the generations diminished, although sometimes these were replaced by less frequent and less salient disagreements over economics. The children of the Great Depression were often worried, at least bemused, by the difference between their own frugality and their children's free-and-easy ways (often underwritten, at least in part, by the frugal parents). Nonetheless, these parents tend to see their current relationships with their children in a favorable light—in fact, more favorably than their children do.

This book is part of an important movement in psychology and sociology that insists that "life chances" depend in large part on the historical circumstances of one's youth. Though he finds important differences among them, Clausen shows how those who grew up in the Depression years had more orderly careers and, in general, more continuity in their lives than their children have had. On the basis of his research findings and his sensitivity to the larger social context, Clausen predicts there will be fewer differences between men and women among his study members' grandchildren, many of whom are now adolescents. If early abilities, orientations, and choices for women do come to matter as much as for men (as Clausen implies), he may have provided a model that becomes more generalizable over time: for the current generation of young adults, at least, discontinuity may become gender-blind.

Overall, then, this book's importance rests on its weaving together the strands that compose and predict any life—individuals' orientations and choices in the early years, family relations as children and adults, occupational aspirations and commitments, and the all too often invisible hand of the sociopolitical context—which together exert a more powerful grasp than most of us can recall or envision. *American Lives* is both comforting and unnerving—for the predictability it finds and the discontinuity it predicts.

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