It was fifty years ago today...

Fifty years on since The Beatles released their Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album (June 1st 1967), two academics have carried out research related to one of the album’s songs: She’s Leaving Home. In this song, the Beatles sing about the sadness felt by parents when their daughter leaves home. Using 30 years of nationally representative German data, Dr Alan Piper (Europa-Universität Flensburg) and Dr Ian Jackson (Staffordshire University, UK) have empirically investigated the change in well-being experienced by parents when they become empty nesters.

Dr. Jackson states: “Our results are compelling evidence that there is a substantial drop in life satisfaction for people who have recently experienced the departure of all their children from the parental home. This is possibly the first large scale economic investigation of the phenomenon known widely as the Empty Nest Syndrome. Additionally, there is a big effect particularly for some groups such as those parents who are not (or no longer) married. The outcome of this research has possible wider implications across economics and other social sciences, suggesting that parenting has other social benefits such as the identification with the status of being a parent, which in turn may diminish once a person becomes an empty-nester.”

This research has been mentioned – often in the context of Father’s Day (fathers suffer from the empty nest situation at least as much as mothers) – by Die Welt, the German Press Association (Deutsche Presse Agentur), the Huffingtonpost and some online news and specialist websites including the Nordwest Zeitung online. In their web article, Die Welt has illustrated this with a short video. The MDR has also sent a broadcast about the study.

Paper available here: The DIW's SOEP paper series.

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