(T_t) such as inheritances, gifts, or asset division upon divorce, all at time t. Each of these components may vary by gender as well as institutional and cultural context, thus leading to differences in wealth accumulation.\footnote{The initial level of wealth A_t is of course the sum of previous periods’ A_{t+1}, and its gender difference is therefore dependant on the other components of equation 1.}

Income (Y_t) differs by gender since women receive lower wages than men for the same work (OECD, 2015). Furthermore, women’s income is lower than men’s since women are more likely to face interruptions in their work histories (Gangl and Zießle, 2009) and to work in part-time jobs (Bardasi and Gornick, 2008; Matteazzi et al., 2014) as a result of care and housework responsibilities. In addition, gendered sectoral and occupational segregation has been demonstrated to have an important impact on earnings differences between men and women. Finally, the wealth accumulation patterns of the self-employed differ from those of employees (Humer et al., 2015), and the gendered selection into these two groups is thus likely to affect differences in wealth (Anna et al., 2000; Burke et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2004). In general, women have less exposure to the structures that enable wealth accumulation via wage income and are more often subject to the economic penalties that result from child rearing (Denton and Boos, 2007; Chang, 2010; Ruel and Hauser, 2013).

Consumption (C_t) may vary with age, which is most commonly captured by the life-cycle hypothesis. The consumption smoothing assumed by the life-cycle hypothesis implies the accumulation of wealth during phases of labour market activity and dissaving in times of negative income shocks, but especially after retirement. Even though the high rate of dissaving in retirement suggested by the life-cycle hypothesis is not unambiguously observed in the empirical literature (Piketty et al., 2014), wealth holdings over age nevertheless tends to have a broadly inverted u-shaped form. Since women typically have higher life expectancies than men, the life-cycle hypothesis would predict that women accumulate higher levels of wealth (i.e. save more) during their active years. In this study, we focus on the wealth of working-age (25-60 years) male and female single households; for this group, the life-cycle hypothesis predicts higher saving by women when controlling for age. At the same time, older and especially widowed women would be expected to have higher inheritances than men as a result of the combined asset accumulation within the couple.

Transfers of wealth (T_t) comprise inheritances and inter-vivo transfers, as well as asset separation upon divorce. Inheritances are a key factor in explaining wealth inequality (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Piketty et al., 2014), a fact which is also observed in the European HFCS data used in this analysis (Fessler and Schürz, 2013; Leitner, 2015). The distribution of inheritances has also become more unequal over time (Piketty, 2014). Some literature suggests that the share of women within the wealthiest 0.4% of people in the U.S. may even serve as a proxy for the importance of inherited wealth (Edlund and Kopczuk, 2009). However, Edlund and Kopczuk (2009) note that the hypothesis that “men make, but women inherit great fortunes” does not hold for the lower wealth groups. The case of gifts among the living does not appear to be quite as clear-cut, since these tend to be given