

Canada's population in 2017: population change and lifecourse dynamics

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The issues

- How many Canadians will there be in 2017?
- What will be their age distribution?
- Where will they come from?
- Where will they be living?
- What will be their living arrangements?
- What will be their living conditions?
- What will they be doing in the way of work: earning, caring, and participating?

Facing the issues conceptually

- From classical demography (predictability) to population studies and to interdisciplinary dialogue (complexity)
- From population change to the lifecourse (as the name of the SSHRC Strategic Research Cluster says)

From population change to the lifecourse

- From counts ...
- ...to transitions...
- ...to processes...
- ...to the lifecourse perspective

From population change to the lifecourse

- From counts (involving locality, and thus geography)...
- ...to transitions (counts are interdependent)...
- ...to processes (involving the search for causes underlying transitions, and thus interdisciplinary dialogue)...
- ...to the lifecourse perspective (providing a way to analyze the interaction between transitions and processes)

The lifecourse perspective: four principles

- Life is longitudinal
- Life is multifaceted
- Lives are linked
- Lives unfold in social contexts

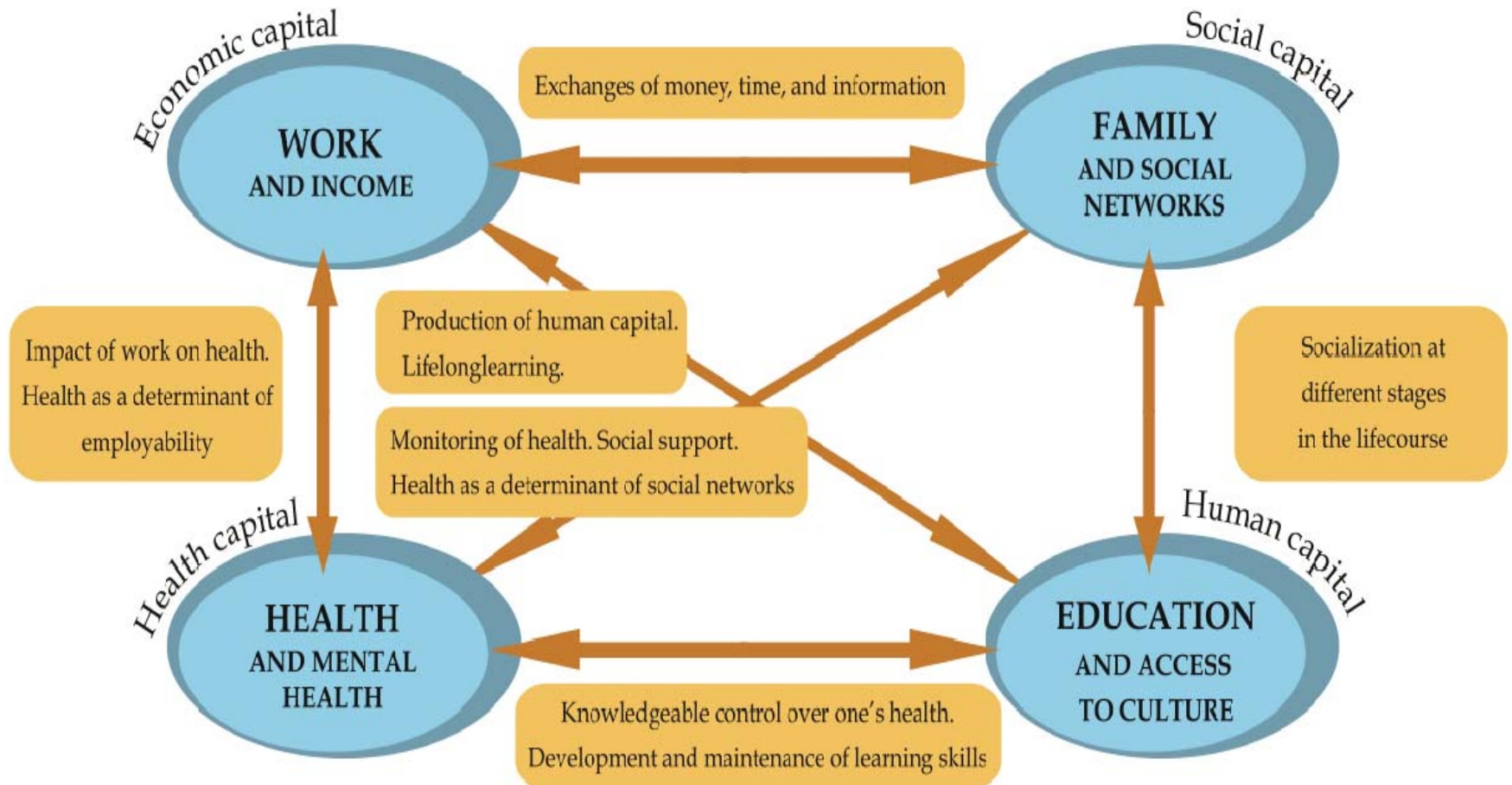
Life is longitudinal

- Individuals, as human agents, build their future on the basis of the constraints and opportunities provided by their past
- The process is iterative
- There are significant inequalities
 - in circumstances
 - in the quality of the knowledge available
- The process is cumulative: initial advantages or disadvantages often are amplified with time, although uncertainty remains and provides the basis for social insurance

Life is multifaceted

- Experientially, everything happens at the same time
- Individuals use, and also accumulate or lose, various interdependent forms of capital over their lifecourse
- Three basic resources (health, literacy, and economic security) can be seen as both causes and consequences of one another as the lifecourse unfolds
- Social capital: through social networks, individuals can mobilize other useful resources for themselves, their families and their communities

A representation of the lifecourse perspective



Lives are linked

- Individuals are involved in “*linked lives*”, largely through family and generational relationships
- Linked lives mean that the lifecourse of individuals is profoundly affected by what happens in the lifecourse of their family members, and vice versa

Lives unfold in local communities

- Local communities offer
 - various levels of opportunities (for instance jobs, quality of schools and childcare services, physical security, quality of the environment, availability of commercial services)
 - and various levels of support (sociability, community organizations)
- These obviously shape the trajectories of residents, especially for the more place-bound sub-populations, such as children, the aged, the handicapped, and the poor

Lives unfold in societal contexts shaped by welfare regimes

- *Liberal* welfare regimes : individuals and families largely fend for themselves over their lifecourse, with means-tested social protection and very unequally distributed incentives
- *Conservative* welfare regimes : attending to important specific risks so as to maintain the position of individuals, and indirectly of families, over their lifecourse
- *Social-democratic* welfare regimes : adopting a broader, lifecourse approach to risks, thus inducing individuals and families to be active and contributing to the sustainability of the welfare regime

The strengths of the lifecourse perspective

- The lifecourse perspective has proven very fruitful in research, especially interdisciplinary research
- The lifecourse perspective opens new avenues for social policy, and indeed for public policy in general, with such issues as population change, straddling economic and social development
- The lifecourse perspective is intelligible by the public
- It is a perspective, not a specific theory

The interaction between population change and the unfolding of the lifecourse

- Population changes, together with economic and cultural changes, are major determinants of how transitions, trajectories and lifecourses are shaped.
- In turn, the various processes at play in the lifecourse of individuals are, in the aggregate, the causes of population changes.

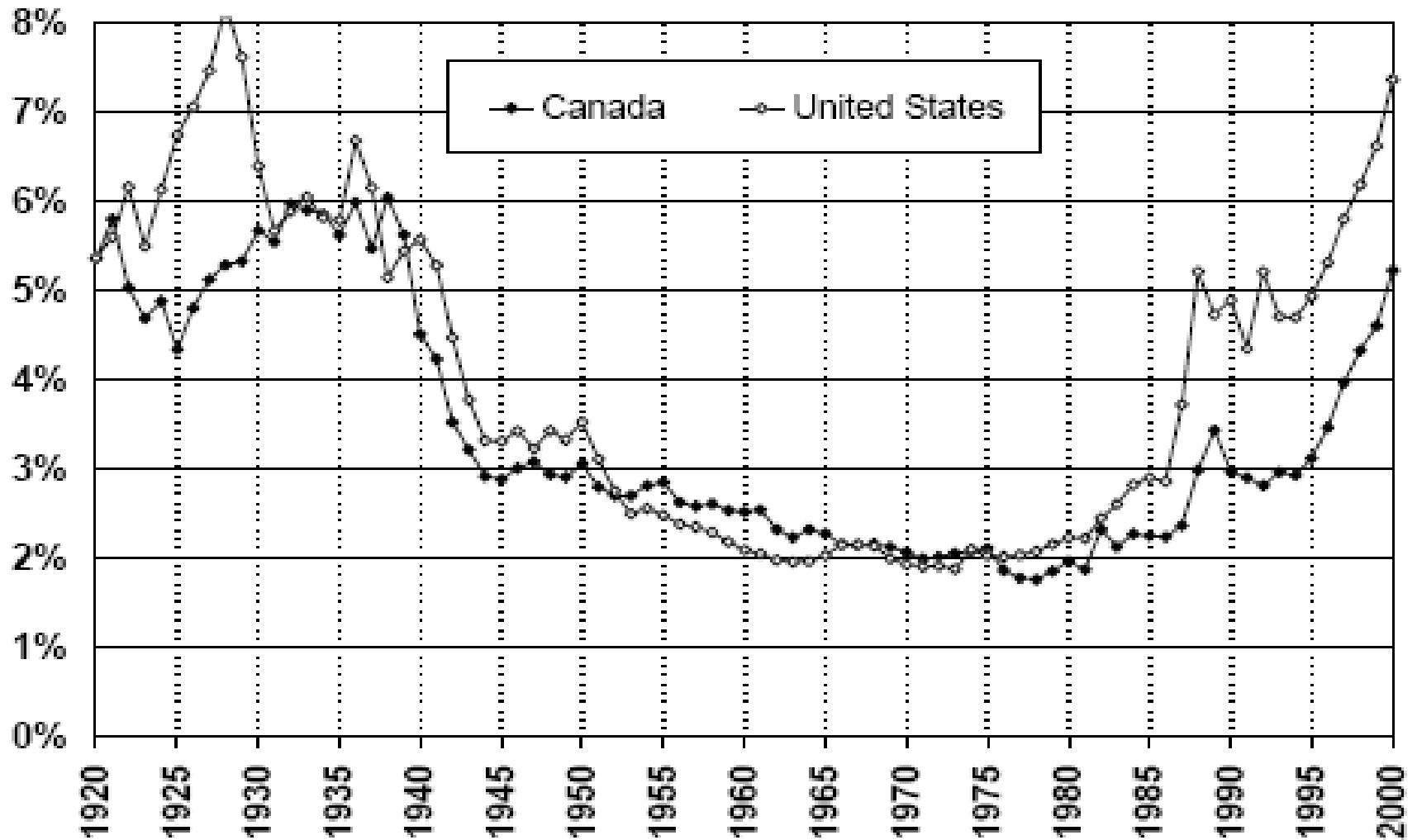
Is the lifecourse perspective on population change individualistic?

- As Marshall has pointed out, there is some mismatch between the more individualistic North-American lifecourse perspective and the more structuralist European one; they are complementary
- The lifecourse perspective does insist on individual agency...
- ...but it should be *agency for all*, as Amartya Sen would put it ("Development as freedom"); it involves "resourcing" individuals and families
- Equality of opportunities needs constant repair

A worrisome situation with respect to inequality

- According to Heisz (2007), our social programs and fiscal arrangements can no longer keep in check the forces of increasingly unequal earnings
- According to Saez and Veall (2005) –and to Murphy, Roberts and Wolfson (2007) for Canada– high incomes are very strongly on the rise; we can expect this to shape public debates and decisions on public policies.

A. Income share of the top 0.1% (P99.9-100)



Robert G. Evans's comment:

“From World War to Class War: The Rebound of the Rich”

The interplay between inequality and population change

- Inequality is partly shaped by demography
 - The rising tide of educational homogamy and growing inequalities (Heisz)
 - The partly failed integration of recent immigrants into the labour market: skills, language proficiency, missing social capital, discrimination?
 - The rise of persons living alone among the poor: fatal lifecourse sequences?

The interplay between inequality and population change

- Demography is partly shaped by inequalities
 - Regional booms in resources, as well as ecological problems (probably soon) redistribute the population
 - How can we avoid a postponed adulthood for our currently young cohorts (Myles)? How can we allow them to have all of the children that they want? A question of education, of income support, of low wages, and of family support services.

Further insights from the lifecourse perspective, and their policy implications (a project in collaboration with HRSDC)

- Institutions are abstract, individuals can't be but concrete
 - They live in real time, and have to think about tomorrow and the day after
 - They live in a real multifaceted environment, where they cannot afford to discard any piece of the puzzle
- In terms of policies, this implies
 - Coordination mechanisms among government departments and agencies
 - Experiments such as "When the Bough Breaks"

Further insights

- Asymmetry: lifecourses are like sweaters, they are slowly knitted, and they unravel rapidly
- For instance, when lifecourses are disrupted by health problems (as exemplified in two *qualitative* studies)
 - The coordinated release of Statistics Canada's post-censal survey on activity limitations and of a qualitative report on families with a handicapped child by the "Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance du Québec"
 - A poster presented here at this Symposium by Normand Carpentier about how carers cope with the situation created by Alzheimer's disease
- In terms of policies, this implies that
 - Early interventions are less costly than later ones
 - Individual and collective empowerment play a key role, as recognized in Québec's Law to fight poverty and social inclusion, for instance