

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, LIFE COURSE, AND  
FAMILY CYCLE — THE CANADIAN EXAMPLE:  
Part II. Employment, Parenting, and Their Alternatives**

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*Résumé* — Les réactions du cours de vie individuelle et du cycle de vie familiale aux tendances démographiques, sont le principal mécanisme par lequel la vie sociale et personnelle réagit aux changements modernes en démographie, en technologie et en informations. La structure du cours de vie est elle-même affectée par des changements démographiques, y compris la longévité prolongée, la paternité diminuée, et les plus petits réseaux de parenté. De plus, les changements technologiques menant à une contraction de la vie active et les changements politiques menant au revenu extra-travail et aux droits de service, affectent le cours de vie et ses dimensions centrales. Des changements en cours de vie, tour à tour, impliquent de nouveaux types de dépendance et d'obligations engendrant ainsi de nouveaux besoins et exigences pour les services publics et sociaux et, peut-être bien, de nouvelles ressources privées et familiales pour les aborder. Aussi, ils entraînent des changements dans les types de participation en production, en consommation, en relations communautaires, et en activité sociale et économique en général.

*Abstract* — Individual life course and family life cycle responses to demographic trends are the main mechanism by which social and personal life respond to modern demographic, technological and informational changes. Life course structure is itself affected by demographic changes, including extended longevity, diminished parent-

ing and smaller kinship networks. In addition, the technological changes that lead to contraction of worklife and the political changes that lead to extra-employment income and service entitlements affect the life course and its central dimensions. Changes in the life course in turn imply new patterns of dependency and obligations that engender new needs and demands for public and social services and, possibly, new private and familial resources for addressing them. As well, they entail changes in patterns of participation in production, consumption, community relations, and social and economic activity in general.

*Key Words* — mortality, fertility, life course, family cycle, aging

### *Introduction*

An earlier companion paper, Part I (Matras, 1990), reviewed trends in mortality and fertility in Canada in the present century and tried to show how they bear upon the individual life course and family cycle through their effects on longevity, on parenting and on numbers, presence, or "availability" of surviving spouses, children, siblings and parents at various junctures. Variations in life course and family cycle patterns and constellations of dependency, obligations and entitlements are held there to be important factors in the frequency, direction and timing of key transitions. Thus, they operate to link the demographic factors to individual life course and family cycle structure and to the social organizational settings and arrangements in which they are played out. The present paper considers the patterns of life course employment, parenting and their alternatives which have followed from — or at least accompanied — the major demographic and socioeconomic trends of the present century.

Historically, it is probably correct to say that most men, at most ages, have reported being "at work" or in gainful employment; and there has been an historical decrease in the frequencies or rates at which boys, adolescent males, young adult or post-adolescent men, and elderly men have been "at work," "gainfully employed" or "seeking employment." In the past, women and girls were only infrequently "at work" or in "gainful employment" — and those who were, were mostly women not married. However, the numbers and proportions of women at all ages, and in all marital statuses, employed or in the labour force have increased dramatically in this century. As this paper will illustrate for Canada, calculations and inferences employing such data and constructing

hypothetical cohorts, their total "life years" and "life years" at each age, and their "life years in employment" at each age and altogether suggest that: (a) for both males and females, total volume of life years has increased with declining mortality and increasing longevity; (b) total volume of life years in the labour force (employed, or seeking employment) has increased; but (c) for males, the proportion of total life years spent in employment or in the labour force has decreased markedly while (d) for females, the proportion of total life years in employment or in the labour force has increased.

However, such calculations and models of hypothetical cohorts do not yield definitive answers to the question, "How much of life is devoted to work?" for actual people or groups, much less do they give us *distributions* of a population or cohort by work-life time, volume or pattern. We generally do not have data in the form of biographies or histories, which alone can describe lifetime or life course patterns of work by providing the actual numbers of persons working through entire lifetimes, the numbers working only through part of their lifetimes, and perhaps those never, or almost never, working at all.

It is important to distinguish between current work and lifetime work. At any moment or period of time, some persons are working or have worked very intensively, say, many hours of the day, or many days of the week or month, or many days or weeks of the year. Others work less intensively, say, fewer hours or even less-than-full-time, fewer days weekly or monthly, or with more frequent holidays. Still others may not be working at all in the period in question. Thus current work or employment varies in intensity, and it is of interest and importance to study and understand the reasons for this variation and the trends over time in intensity of current employment or work.

Over the lifetimes of any group of persons, some will have worked very intensively — say for virtually all the years of their lives or even, hypothetically, from birth until death; while others may have worked somewhat less intensively — say starting later though continuing to work to quite advanced ages or to death, or starting early but withdrawing from work or employment relatively early or, at least, a number of years before death. Still others may have worked even less intensively over their lifetimes, starting employment quite late, withdrawing or retiring early, or perhaps even withdrawing temporarily once or even more times. Finally, some may not have worked or been employed at all during their lifetimes, due to disability, to the absence of any need or wish for employment or because they were engaged in other activities, for example, housekeeping or childrearing or unpaid care of others. Thus lifetime employment varies in intensity; and, as in the case of current employment, it is interesting and important to study and understand variation and trends over time in intensity of lifetime employment.

For all countries for which data is available, and for all the years or time periods for which they exist, virtually all men aged 25-50 years are reported in census or survey data to be working or "in the labour force." For men at these ages, "working" has clearly been the usual situation for all but a very small percentage, say, four or five per cent who probably include persons disabled, physically or mentally ill, or other deviant cases. For men at other ages — that is, for children, adolescents, or even young adult men under 25 years of age — and for men aged 55 and over, and for women at all ages, no such pattern of universal "working" attachment is observed across the various countries or over time, and no such generalization is possible. Rather, there are variations among the various countries in the percentages working or participating in the labour force among those of the various age groups, and there have been some dramatic changes over time.

#### *The Compression and Partial Redundance of Male Employment*

Participation of adolescent, and even of young adult, men in the labour force has undergone a more or less continuous decline throughout the twentieth century in industrialized and semi-industrialized societies and even to a certain extent in agrarian societies. This trend has been accompanied by an extension of schooling and vocational training, in part due to compulsory school attendance legislation, but in more recent years largely extending well beyond compulsory schooling.

At the other end of the age scale, there has been a trend toward diminishing participation in the labour force among men aged 50 and over, especially since the late 1960s. A trend toward diminishing labour force participation among men in industrial societies aged 65 and over is discernible even earlier. This is presumably associated with the growth of "retirement," whether enforced by mandatory job separation rules or encouraged by pension plans and benefits, or both. However since 1965-70, there have been dramatic reductions in numbers and percentages of employed men in the 50-64 or 55-64 age groups as well as in the 65 and over groups, a trend generally connoted "early retirement."

Using labour force participation rates for males in 1951 and in 1981 in conjunction with the stationary populations shown in Table 1, we can make some simple calculations of estimated working life implied for cohorts by the simultaneous operation of the Canadian male mortality conditions and labour force participation rates of those years. These are shown in Table 1, and the comparison of the 1951 and 1981 columns is suggestive of changes in working

life and in non-working life implied jointly by the mortality and labour force participation trends.

TABLE 1. ESTIMATES OF MALE LIFE YEARS IN THE LABOUR FORCE, BY AGE, CANADA: 1951 AND 1981

Age Group	1951		1981	
	Labour Force Participation Rate	Life Years in Labour Force	Labour Force Participation Rate	Life Years in Labour Force
15-19	58.4	274058	58.2	285318
20-24	92.4	430071	86.5	420941
25-34	96.4	887912	95.3	917588
35-44	96.7	866906	96.1	910194
45-54	94.5	802623	92.8	845878
55-59	89.6	348970	} 75.1	616709
60-64	81.4	286543		
65-69	60.1	182343	21.9	76196
70+	23.4	134180	8.9	65951
Total All Ages		4213606		4138775
Total Life Years at Ages 15 and Over		5217074		5708285
Percent of Life Years at Ages 15+ in the Labour Force		80.8		75.7
Total Life Years in the Labour Force at Ages 55 and Over				
Total Life Years at Ages 55 and Over		1618313		1910136
Percent of Life Years at Ages 55+ in the Labour Force		58.8		39.7

Source: Cansim-Statistics Canada, 1986, and Appendix Table A.

In Canada labour force participation rates of males under 20 — at the ages of late post-primary or early post-secondary schooling — declined in the period prior to 1951, but not very much since then (though the proportion in part time work among those employed at ages 15-19 has increased very markedly). Rather, it is the rate of labour force participation at the ages 20-24 — the later post-secondary and graduate schooling ages — which did decline in the period.

the individual, familial, and societal problems associated with the "role strains" of adult women of all ages would almost surely be partly dependent upon analysis of such information.

*Non-Employment-Based Income Entitlements and Non-Market-Distributed Goods and Services*

Just as we often do not know what it is that people "do" if they are not working nor parenting nor engaged in any of the conventional and legitimate alternatives, we also often do not know what is the source of income and of material support for those not employed or parenting. Yet we do know that a growing proportion of personal and family income in Canada is obtained from sources other than employment, and probably a growing proportion of services, and perhaps goods, is obtained from sources other than purchase at market. Since just after World War II, the percentage of personal income derived from employment — which was in the 84-86 percent range in 1947-48 — has declined to about 70-71 per cent in 1984-85 (Table 2). In this period the percentage of income derived from farm operators' sales of agricultural products fell drastically, and the percentage of income derived from non-farm self-employment and unincorporated businesses declined by more than half. By the mid-1980s the overwhelming part (about nine-tenths, compared to about 72 per cent in the late 1940s) of employment income was derived from wage and salaried employment; but the percentage of total personal income derived from wage and salaried employment increased only very little in the period. Instead, the percentages of income from investments and income from government transfers virtually doubled in this period. By 1985, government transfers comprised about 15 per cent of total personal income in Canada; and interest, dividends and other investment income comprised more than 13 per cent of the total (CANSIM-Statistics Canada, 1986). For the elderly, government transfers provide more income than all other sources combined (Statistics Canada, 1984: Chart 8).

The same period witnessed enormous growth of public expenditures, agencies and provision of a wide range of services, from health and educational services to protective and regulatory services. These are, of course, "consumed" at widely varying rates among the various respective population subgroups and at various ages and social statuses. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assign prices, values, and proportions of total "consumption of goods and services" to those acquired other than by purchase at market. Nonetheless, it seems certain that entitlement to significant and costly services both helps render it possible for some — including many of those receiving only transfer income — to forgo

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full-time employment and contributes significantly to the life chances of those without full-time employment whether by choice or otherwise.

TABLE 3. SOURCES OF PERSONAL INCOME.  
CANADA: 1947, 1948, 1984 AND 1985.  
(percentage distributions)

Source of Income	1947	1948	1984	1985
Total Personal Income	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wages, Salaries, and Supplementary Labour Income	61.0	61.6	64.2	63.3
Farm Income	9.7	11.6	1.0	1.2
Non-Farm Self-Employment and Unincorporated Business Income	13.8	12.8	5.7	6.0
Total Employment Income*	84.4	85.9	70.8	70.5
Interest, Dividends, and Miscellaneous Investment Income	6.6	6.1	13.1	13.4
Government Transfers to Persons	7.6	7.0	14.9	14.9
All Other	1.4	1.0	1.2	1.1

\*except military pay and allowances.

Source: CANSIM- Statistics Canada, 1986.

At least as far as the transition to "retirement" is concerned, there has been recognition of the possible bearing of transfer income entitlements upon the willingness, or "propensities," to make life course transitions (for an early but penetrating discussion of lifetime allocation of work and income, see Kreps, 1971; see also Davis and van den Oever, 1981). Similarly, it has been recognized that household formation or maintenance among the widowed elderly is related to their transfer income entitlements. As far as the entrance or re-entrance of married women or mothers into the labour force is concerned, there is both implicit and explicit recognition of the importance of entitlements to childcare and educational services for this category of life course and family cycle transition.

*Discussion*

Despite the fact that the age patterns of labour force participation and employment are not new, it is still not clear why many older, usually ex-

perienced, workers drop out of employment or reduce the hours or weeks of employment, while others the same age — and, for the most part, probably not physically healthier or more able — continue in full-time employment. Similarly, it is not clear why many younger men delay entrance into full-time employment, or remain in part-time employment for extended periods, or move into and out of employment with great frequency, while others make stable full-time employment attachments early in life.

A variety of factors have been posited to account for this variation, including labour market factors, characteristics of jobs, and personal characteristics of the older and of the younger male in, or potentially in, the labour force. Some of these factors have some presumed connection with the age of the men: the younger ones may sometimes be supposed "inexperienced," "unstable or uncommitted" workers, lacking sufficient training; and the older ones may be supposed to be "too expensive," at risk of high absenteeism or health problems and costs, having redundant skills or experience, being unproductive or unadaptable to new technologies. However, in the first place, these have not actually been demonstrated to characterize younger or older workers; and, in the second place, these would not suffice to account for the relative stability of rates of labour force participation and of full-time employment at the central working ages, 35-54. The latter also experience very considerable rates of job mobility and turnover and, yet, are much more likely at any moment in time to be employed full-time.

In a similar vein, it is not obvious why some married women work at any moment in time while others do not; and we know relatively little about the short-, mid- and long-term employment *histories* of married women. Davis has pointed out that the widespread attention to the increasing rate of married women's labour force participation has obscured the fact that a very large proportion of married women remain outside the labour force at any moment in time. He has suggested that there are alternative calculus of family obligations, preferences and rewards even as the "breadwinner system" has been eroding (Davis, 1984).

Again the central hypothesis advanced here, as in the earlier companion paper (Matras, 1990) is that *considerations of dependency and obligations with respect to close kin bear heavily upon the timing and direction of life course transitions*— in this case, on the transitions into or out of employment, or among full- or part-time jobs. Young persons able to draw support from parents or other kin may delay entrance into full-time employment or may more readily withdraw from full-time employment and choose some alternative; while those with no source of support — and even more so, those with others dependent upon their contribution to support—are more likely to make stable commitments

to full-time jobs. Findings in longitudinal studies of transitions to adulthood and early career patterns in the U.S.A., Israel, Norway, and West Germany seem to support this kind of hypothesis (Coleman, 1984; Featherman *et al.*, 1984; Featherman and Sorensen, 1983; Kobrin, 1980; Matras *et al.*, 1984; Shavit *et al.*, 1987).

Older workers can be more casual about finding new full-time jobs after loss of or voluntary separation from previous jobs, and they can more readily agree to early retirement schemes, if they have even modest alternative income entitlements, *provided* the number and overall burden of obligations — that is, dependent kin — is not greater than can be managed without permanent full-time employment. Studies of retirement report reasons given by respondents, such as health and disability problems, mandatory retirement, extended unemployment, or the wish to change major activities and to "retire" (Atchley, 1976; Sheppard, 1976).

As women's labour force participation has increased in this century, it has been accompanied by a notable change in age-specific patterns of participation: among female cohorts entering the labour force after the turn of the century and until the mid-1950s, there was a "double-peak" pattern of labour force participation, in which women worked before marriage or childbearing, left the labour force to raise children, and then returned after their children were partially grown, albeit at younger and younger ages. However, among cohorts completing school and entering the labour force since the 1960s, the women characteristically have *not* left the labour force for extended *childrearing*, but only briefly for *childbearing* (Treiman, 1985).

Canadian data on work histories in relation to family histories have shown that whereas marriage was previously not only the major reason for women's employment interruption, such interruptions were previously permanent and only among later cohorts did women return to employment after years of *childrearing*. However, more recently marriage has become only a minor reason for work interruptions, and these interruptions are brief. The major reason for work interruptions is now pregnancy and *childbearing*, and their length has diminished dramatically over successive cohorts of Canadian women (Robinson, 1985).

It is important to generalize and extend the consideration of the bearing of income and services entitlements to the analysis of the nature of dependency and obligations among close kin and of their bearing upon an individual's life course transitions. Thus, "available kin" are not only "out there" and "available," but *they have varying needs, resources for addressing their own or others' needs, and, accordingly, varying measures of dependency upon, or obligations to, the individuals in question.* Transitions to the "empty nest" stage of the family

cycle are recognized to be related to the employment, marital status, and dependency or independence of a couple's children. They are related, as well, to the economic dependency or independence of the couple's parents. Moreover, transitions into the "empty nest" stage, as well as transitions of middle-aged women into or out of the labour force, may also be affected by the parents' health status, dependency or independence in activities of daily life (ADL), and entitlements to health care services.

Thus the "map" of the life course kinship network or social support "convoy" should include not only "availability" of kin of the various types and degrees but also their propinquity (residence in relation to that of the individuals in question), their employment or alternative income entitlement status, and their health of ADL status. We may expect that at—any point in the individual's life course — his kinship constellation, including the links of his dependency upon them or theirs upon him, and the alternative support entitlements, will bear importantly upon the directions and timing of events and transitions.

#### *The Timing and Directions of Life Course and Family Cycle Events and Transitions*

The most familiar — and probably the most important — of the life course and family cycle transitions are school leaving, leaving the parental home, entering employment, marriage, childbearing, household formation, migration, job mobility, large gain (or loss) of income, departure (or death) of children, withdrawal from employment, own or family member's serious illness, death of parents, death of spouse, other marital or union dissolution, and death of friends or intimates. Other important transitions could include those involving second- or higher-degree kin (for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins) or friends, and personal life course transitions tied to the developments, changes, or "transitions" of extra-familial social units such as business organizations and political parties. The more familiar transitions listed almost always carry some direct or indirect implication of increment or decrement or change in demand for a public or social service. These include the obvious health care, educational and income maintenance services, but also planning and regulatory, protective, legal and administrative services, as well.

We know in a general way that the frequencies, timing and directions of these transitions vary in the population and that their distributions have changed over time. Yet we have surprisingly little knowledge of the actual baseline frequency and timing distributions of the major transitions. For example, questions such as: how many women have never worked outside the home? what

are the ages at which young persons leave school? at what ages do men enter their first full-time jobs? what is the distribution of durations of employment in first full-time jobs? how many young persons leave their parental homes before marriage, and when? at what ages are women widowed? how many men experience widowhood, at what ages, and for how long? how long do couples live in the houses into which they move after marriage? how many additional residences do they have until widowhood or marital dissolution? what is the distribution of durations of widowhood ended by remarriage, of widowhood ended by death?

Clearly the answers to these kinds of questions are of very considerable importance in the planning and evaluation of a wide range of public and social services. So, too, are answers to questions concerning the individual, family and kin network, and socioeconomic factors which bear on variations and change in the distributions of frequencies, timing and directions of life course transitions. Client and target populations of the public and social service agencies and organizations are, of course, not only persons of given ages and sexes, but persons in various states and statuses, engaged in activities in the various life course domains and characterized by given configurations of resources as well as needs. These, in turn, are direct and indirect outcomes of the present and past structure of the life course, with individuals moving across the life course stages and transitions in accordance with rules and regularities so far primarily conjectured and hypothesized, but yet to be investigated and ascertained systematically.

There are now some opportunities to glean information about the life course and the family cycle in Canada for individuals and for cohorts using national data sets. Perhaps the most prominent among these is the Family History Survey (Burch, 1985; Statistics Canada, 1985). However, there are a number of additional sources, including the York University Institute for Social Research "Quality of Life" surveys, carried out in several "rounds" over the past decade, the National Mobility Survey carried out by Statistics Canada in 1973 (Boyd *et al.*, 1985), and the new Statistics Canada "General Social Survey" inquiries.

This paper and its earlier companion paper have tried to advance the argument that much of personal and social life is organized by the individual life course and family life cycle, its parameters, timing of transitions, and mobility among and within activity domains. Indeed, life course and life cycle responses to demographic trends is the main mechanism by which social and personal life responds to demographic, technological and informational revolution changes subsumed under the "societal growth" rubric. Life course structure is itself affected by demographic changes, and especially in the modern period of the aging of populations, by extended longevity, diminished parenting, and

smaller kinship networks through most of the life course. In addition, the technological changes leading to contraction of worklife and the political changes leading to extra-employment income and service entitlements, affect the life course and its central dimensions. Changes in the life course in turn imply new needs and demands for public and social services and, possibly, new private and familial resources for addressing some of them as well as for changes in patterns of participation in production, consumption, community relations, and social and economic activity generally.

Public and private sector responses to these changes can take a number of possible alternative directions. They can continue the rigid patterns of age-grading and age discrimination which lead to exclusion of younger and older groups from employment and social opportunities and make age segregation even more rigid, though perhaps affording privileged access to opportunities to the adult men bearing the greatest weight of family dependency and obligations. Or they can move or be designed to erode some of the age-grading norms and practices and render social and economic participation much more flexible throughout all the ages and stages of the life course and family cycle. However, the social costs and benefits of these alternatives, not to mention the mechanisms and intervention schemes which can bring them about, are far from clear at this point in our knowledge and information. Additional investigation and analysis may help clarify these issues and directions.

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APPENDIX TABLE A. LIFE TABLE STATIONARY POPULATIONS (Lx)  
BY SEX AND AGE. CANADA: 1920-22, 1950-52 AND 1980-82

AGE	MALES			FEMALES		
	1920-22	1950-52	1980-82	1920-22	1950-52	1980-82
Total	5884297	6640474	7187867	6060369	7090403	7905888
<1	93642	96853	99219	95029	97502	99395
1-5	355786	380884	395046	363951	384673	396171
5-10	437484	4738673	493057	448384	479128	494668
10-15	431181	471796	492260	443286	477691	494120
15-20	426550	469277	490237	438358	476163	493283
20-25	419355	465445	486637	431338	474081	492141
25-30	411352	461247	483022	422852	471631	490922
30-35	403587	456966	479809	413778	468676	489513
35-40	395307	451834	476170	403470	464647	487557
40-45	385378	444656	470952	392058	458867	484430
45-50	373208	433456	462559	379327	450338	479499
50-55	357719	415880	448753	363231	438186	471735
55-60	335826	389475	426923	342321	420718	459787
60-65	305845	352019	394261	314989	394647	442037
65-70	265881	303399	347927	276243	356945	415717
70-75	211245	243457	286927	222880	303319	377110
75-80	145935	172490	213787	158584	230391	322001
80-85	83022	100093	136606	93990	145544	246862
85-90	35237	42967	70137	42192	69844	159068
90+	10057	14413	33568	14108	27412	109872

Source: D.Nagnur, 1986. Longevity and Historical Life Tables 1921-1981 (Abridged) Canada and the Provinces. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Catalogue 89-506.