

Adult Children Providing Support to their Aging Parents: Mixed Motives over the Family Life Course

Merril Silverstein, Ph.D.

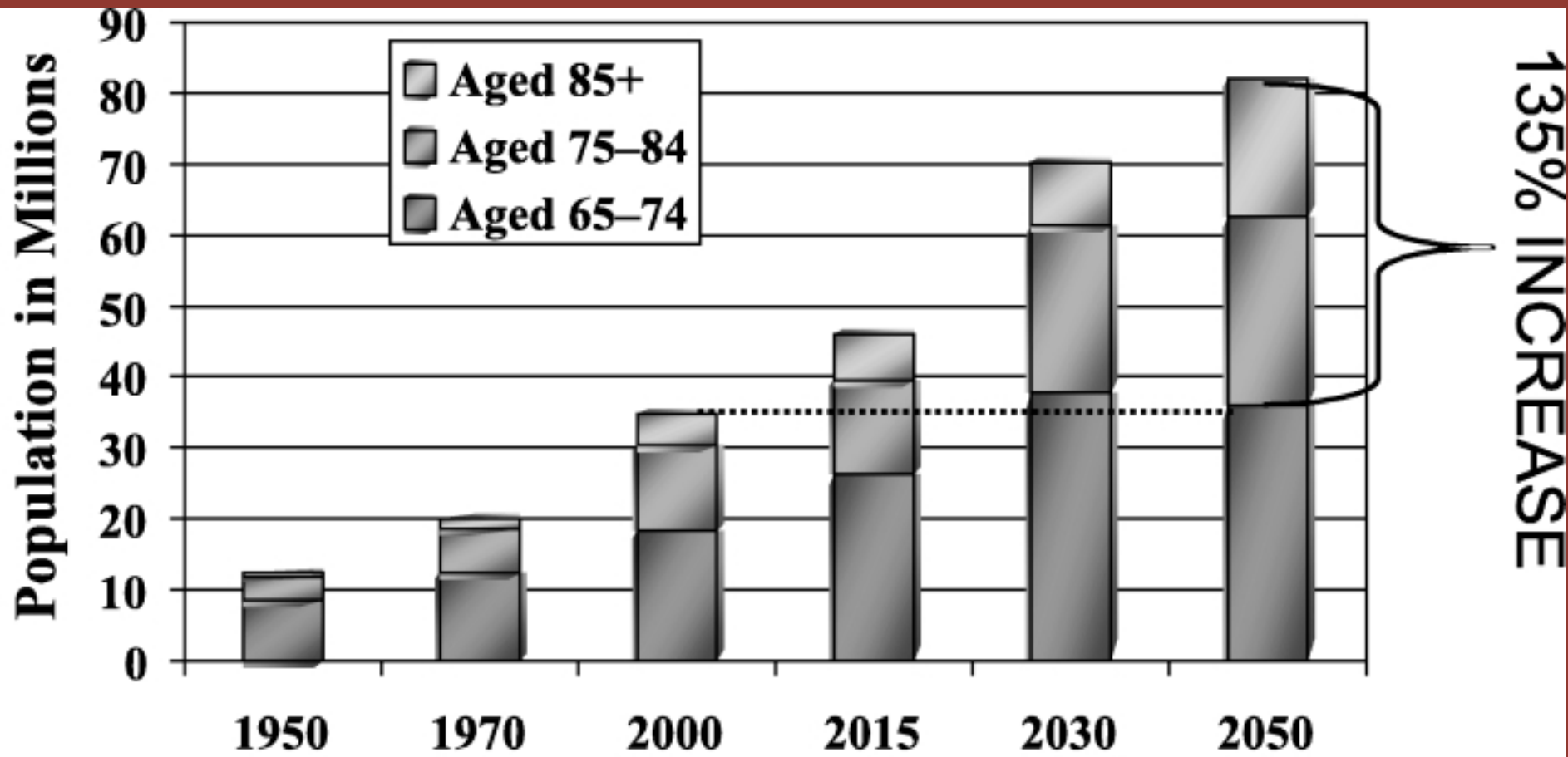
Marjorie Cantor Endowed Professor of
Aging Studies

Syracuse University

Presented at the Oxford Martin School, 24 February 2016.

Outline

1. Care and support for older parents as a normative life stage
2. Micro-family models of support provision by adult children
3. An empirical test of reciprocity and self-interest motives
4. Widening the lens to include norms and values
5. Welfare state-family balance in elder-care
6. Moral capital as an integrating concept



Source: (NP-T4) Projections of the Total Resident Population by 5 Year Age Groups, Race, and Hispanic Origin with Special Age Categories: Middle Series, 1999 to 2100

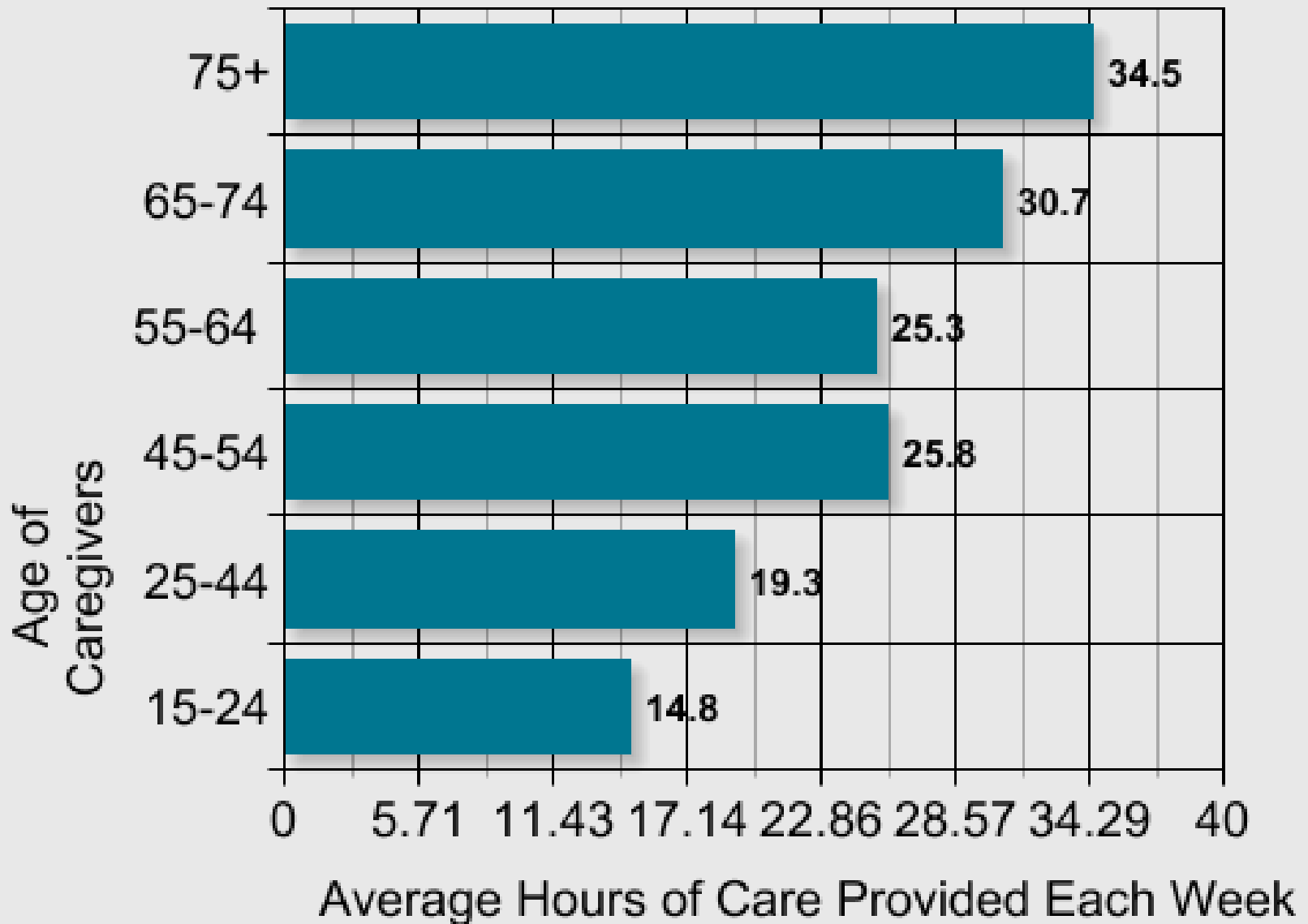
What is Caregiving for Frail Older Adults

- What is caregiving?
 - Help and support provided to a chronically impaired individual usually defined as someone having difficulty with an activity of daily living.
- Help can be emotional, but is usually instrumental or personal in nature
 - (IADL) = meals, laundry, errands, housework
 - (ADL) = bathing, dressing, feeding).
- In the U.S., 43% of those 85+ in the community are receiving some form of informal care

Caregiving as Career

- The "typical" U.S. caregiver is a 46-year-old woman who works outside the home and spends more than 20 hours per week providing unpaid care to her mother.
- Given increased longevity, the majority of the adult population will provide care for another adult at some point in their lives and this role can last for years
- About half of caregivers are adult children.

Hours Dedicated to Caregiving



Why Adult Children Provide Support to Older Parents

- Bio-evolutionary explanation is weak given little overt gene-survival benefit to providers
- Exceptions are:
 - “Grandmother effect” and the survival of altruistic genes in grandchildren
 - Self-interested behaviors intended to insure downward transfer of resources
- Most explanations rely on social mechanisms.

Scholarly Orientations Toward Intergenerational Support and Care

- Those that emphasize normative structures, affect, and social integration.
 - E.g., Intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson)
- Those that emphasize transactions between family members (usually in the form of time and money transfers).
 - E.g., Rotten child effect (Becker)

Normative-Affective Models

- Families and the formal institutions of society existed in separate spheres the former affectual and the latter instrumental support (*Litwak, 1985; Sussman 1977*).
- Families could be intimate-at-a-distance and still deliver care if necessary (*Rosenmayer, 1968*).
- *Intergenerational solidarity* itemized the sentiments, behaviors, attitudes, values, and geographic arrangements that bind the generations (*Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991*).

Transactional Models

- Parents attempt to reduce uncertainty about old age support by investing in children as insurance against unmet need (*Becker, 1991*).
- “Pure” altruism not found in U.S. (Altonji et. al., 1997), but in developing countries (Cox, et. al, 2004).
- Power dynamics: Promise of a bequest incentivizes adult children to serve their aging parents (*Bernheim, Shleifer, & Summers, 1985*).
- The risk of non-compliance over the long-term is minimized by moral training of children (*Cox & Stark, 1992*).

Social Capital

- While definitions of social capital vary in terms of their locus (e.g., individuals, relationships, networks, and communities), a notion common to many definitions is that social capital is built through the investment of temporal, emotional, and material resources that build in others the obligation to reciprocate.

Parent/Adult Child Relations: Exchange Over the Life Course

- Parents and children are a major source of support for each other throughout the life course. Early in life course parents give more; in late-life parents receive more.
- Support is often reciprocal, but reciprocity is usually lagged, not completely enforceable, and operates under principles outside of market mechanisms.
- Reciprocity has little contractual enforcement and relies on norms and obligation (guilt).

Care and Support Provided To Older Mothers

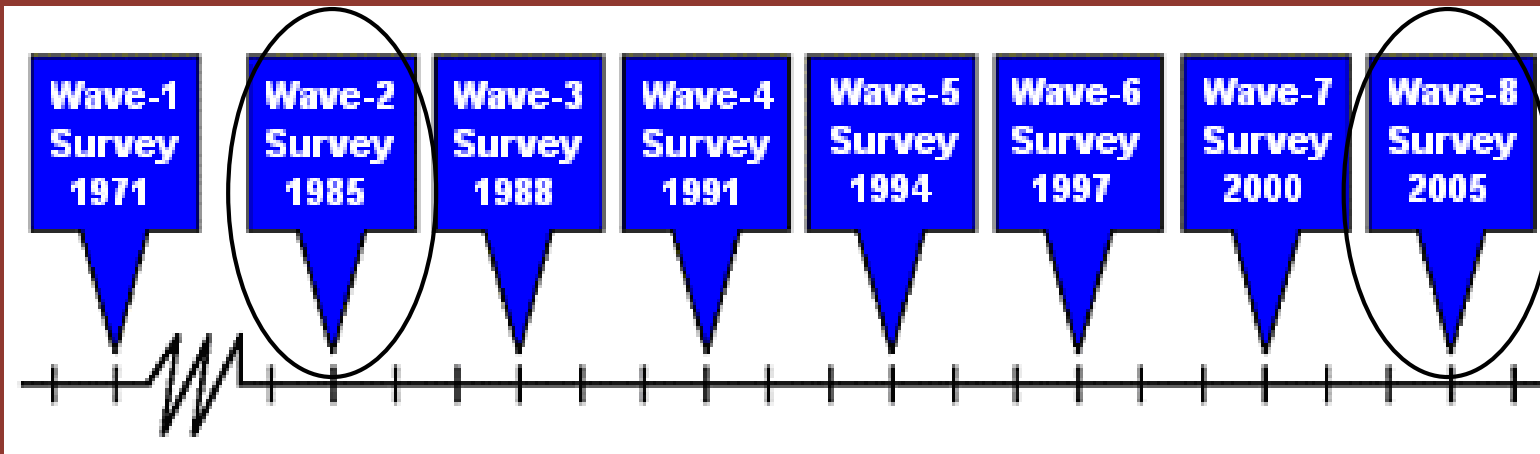
- In previous work (*Silverstein et al., 2002*) we showed that adolescent children who spent more shared activities with their parents, provided more support to them 30 years later.
- Our interest here is in examining *adult* intergenerational exchange dynamics.
- We examined how parental investments in young adult children predict future provisions of care and support by now middle aged children to their older mothers.

Parental Strategies for Insuring Intergenerational Support

- Modeling of desired behavior
 - Parents instill in their children values of elder care responsibility by **modeling** or **demonstrating** the desired behavior toward their own parents
- Support bank
 - Parents invest materially in children as **pre-payment** against unmet need in old age, enforced by norm of reciprocity.
- Bequest motive
 - Parents leverage children's expectation for a bequest into support by promise of **post-payment**.

The Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG)

- A multigenerational multi-time-point study, started in 1971 with repeated panels → 2005.
- Consists of about 3,500 individuals from four generations in 374 families recruited within Southern California region.
- Middle generation 33 years old in 1985 and 53 years old in 2005 with a surviving mother.



Measure of Modeling

- Was the mother a caregiver to an older relative between 1971 and 1985?
- Asked retrospectively of mothers in 1985.

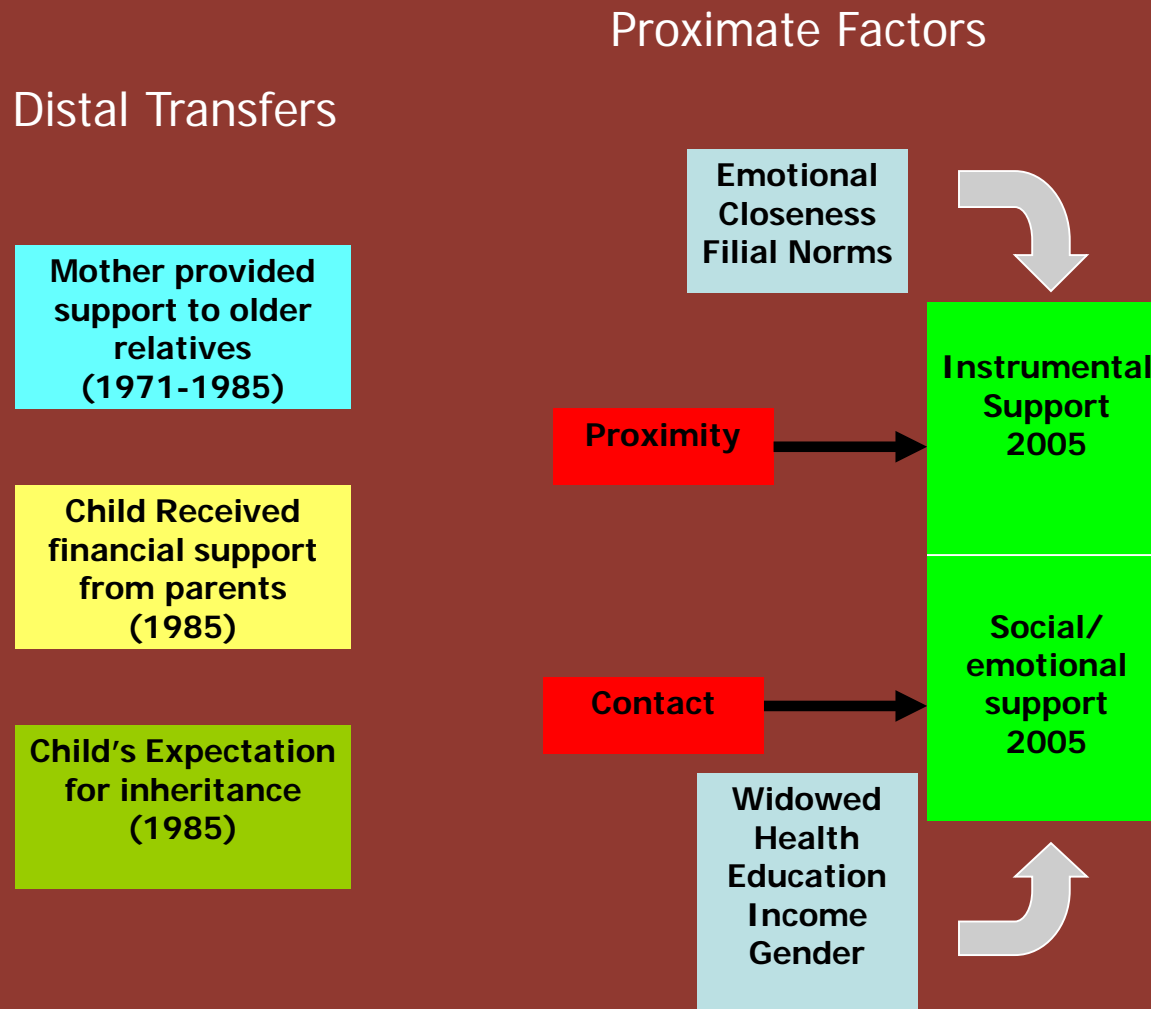
Measures of Life-cycle Reciprocity

- Past transfers from parents into “support bank”
 - Adult children reported in 1985 whether they received the following from parents:
 - “large gifts in the form of cash, stocks, bonds, or major items such as large appliances, audio/visual equipment, furniture, or automobile”
- Anticipation of bequest
 - Adult children reported in 1985 whether they “expect to receive inheritance from your parents”

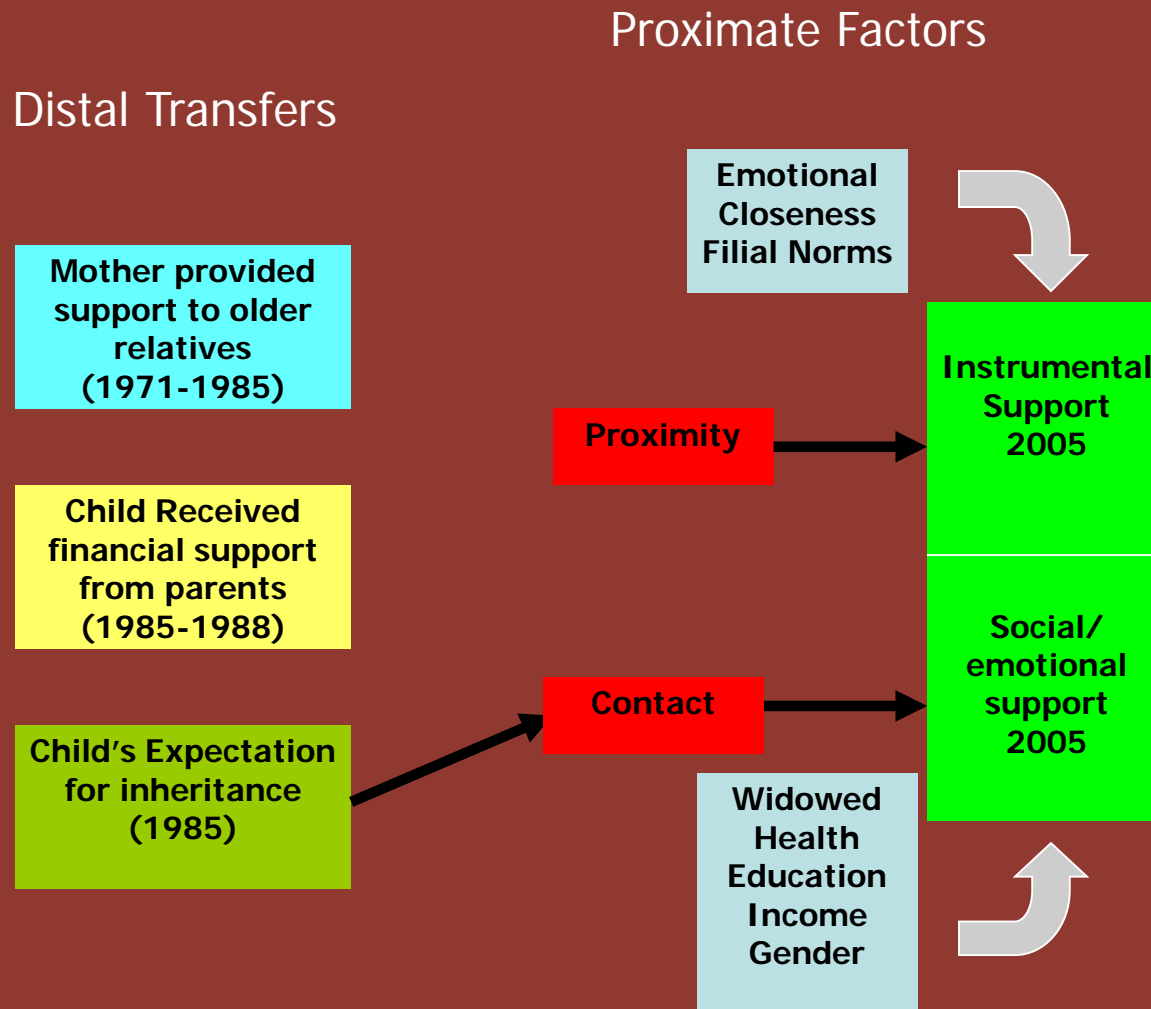
Instrumental Support and Social Support Provided by Adult Children to Their Older Mothers in 2005

- **Instrumental Support**
 - household chores
 - transportation/shopping
 - help when sick
- **Social/emotional support**
 - information and advice
 - emotional support
 - discussing important life decisions
- Each item rated on an 8-point Likert-scale ranging from “none”- “daily”

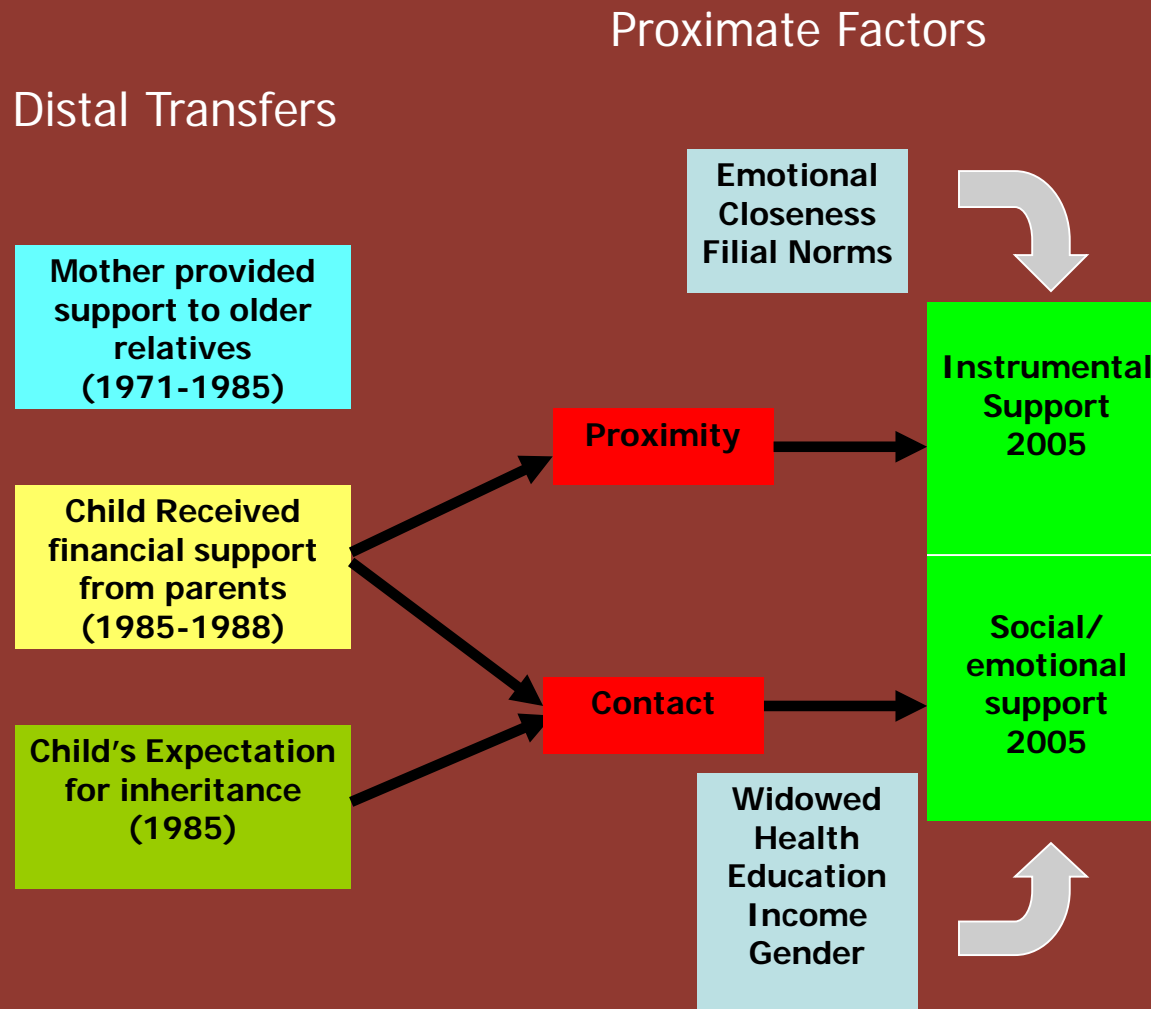
Family Life-Cycle Model of Support Provided by Middle Aged Children to Older Mothers: Summary of Path Model



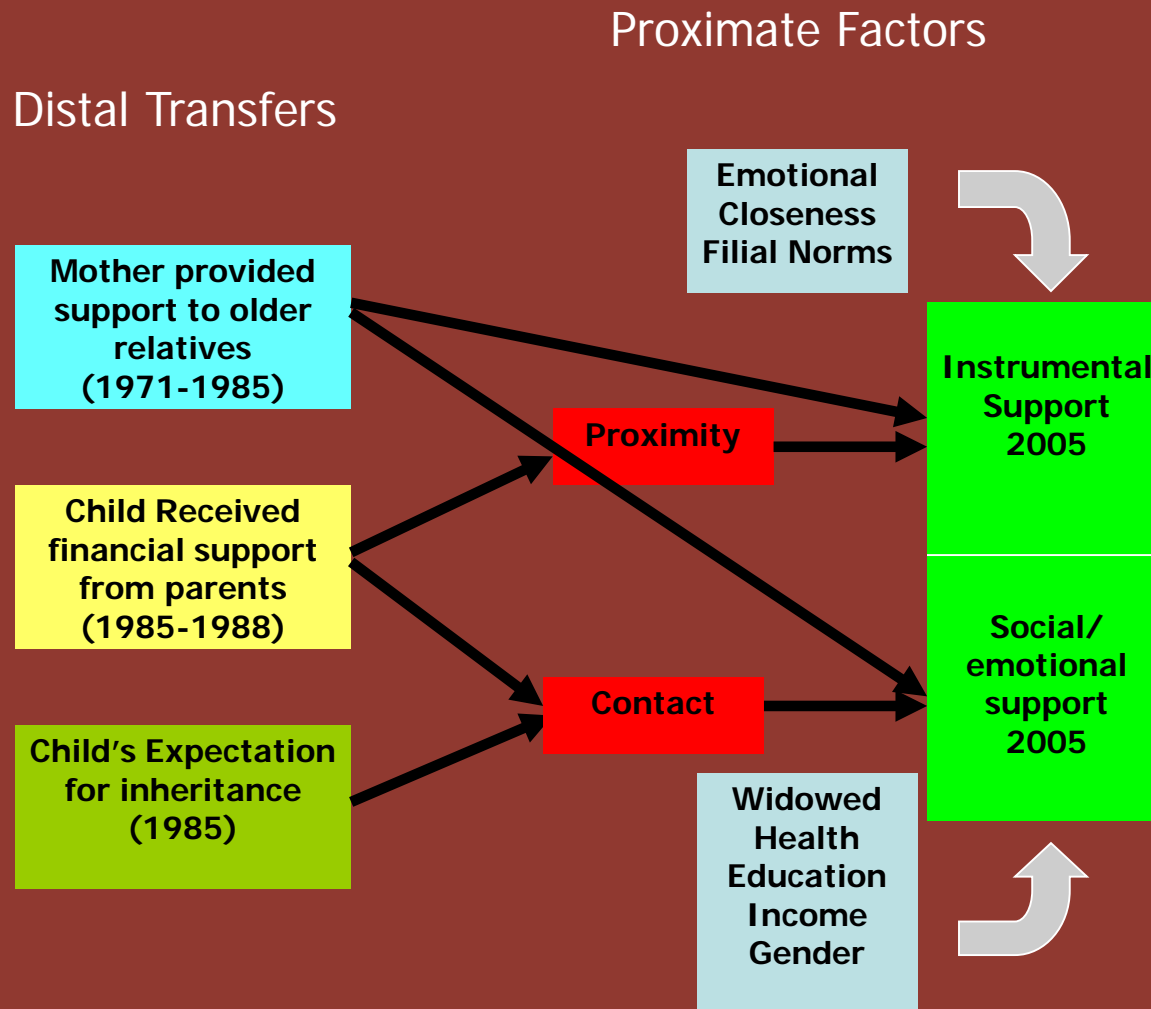
Family Life-Cycle Model of Support Provided by Middle Aged Children to Older Mothers: Summary of Path Model



Family Life-Cycle Model of Support Provided by Middle Aged Children to Older Mothers: Summary of Path Model



Family Life-Cycle Model of Support Provided by Middle Aged Children to Older Mothers: Summary of Path Model



Summary

- Evidence of direct effect of modeling on support to mothers.
- Evidence of pre-payment and post-payment reciprocity by enhancing opportunities for exchange through contact and proximity.

Important Points

- Intergenerational support is reciprocal over the life course.
- There are mixed motivations on the part of children in providing support and care to older parents that include
 - Reciprocating for investments made in them by their parents earlier in adulthood promoted by living close and engaging in more frequent contact,
 - Absorbing a culture of caregiving in the family that stretches across multiple generations.

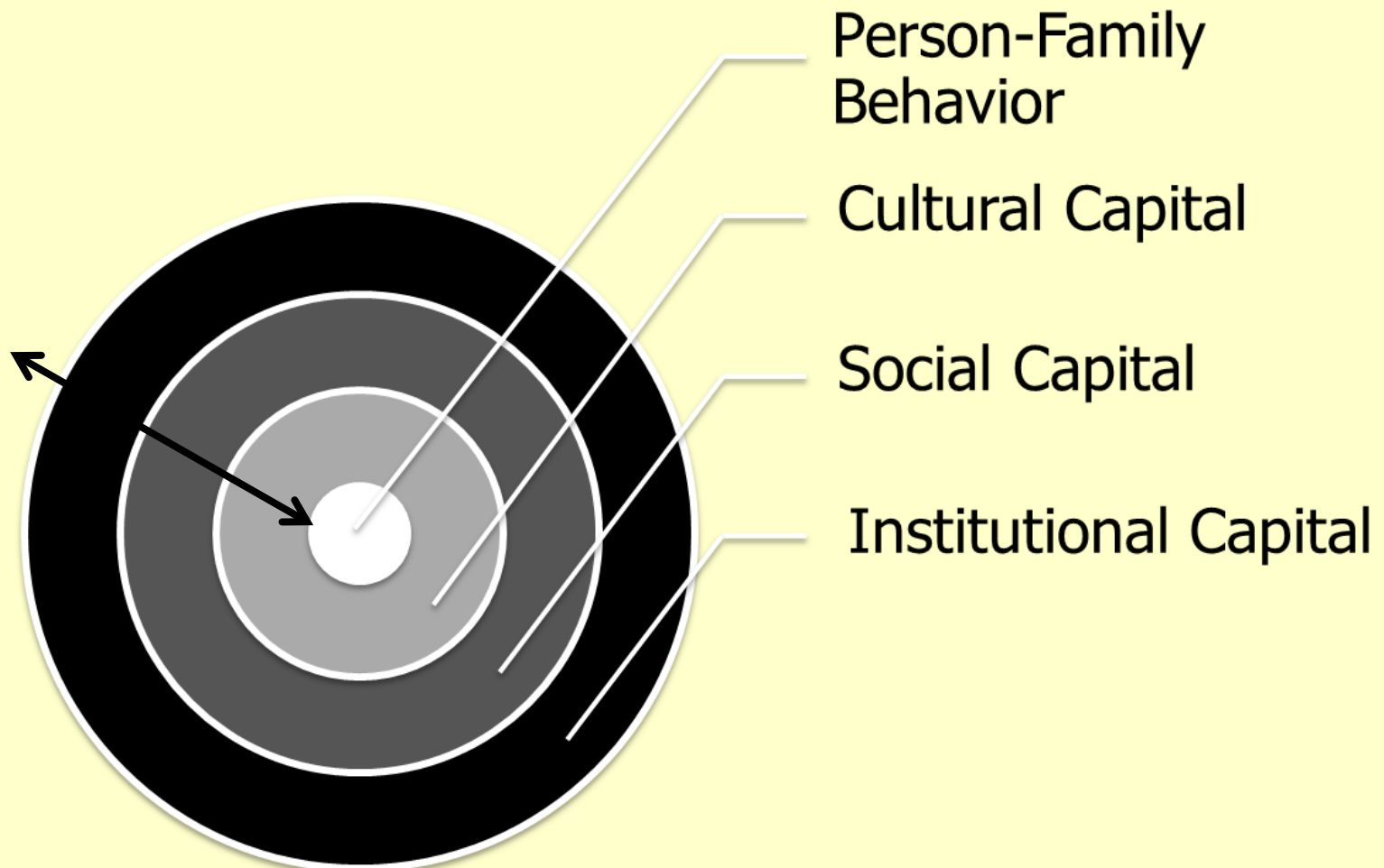
New Family Forms



Recalibration of Exchange Dynamics

- Smaller, delayed, or no families
- More step-relations
- Economic stagnation for young adults
- Retirement insecurity for older adults
- Retrenchment of welfare state

Multi-level Organization of Intergenerational Family Behavior



The Moral Hazard of Non-Compliant Children

- Since there are few formal sanctions imposed on children who renege on the informal contract with parents, enforcement must rely on the internalization of norms for what constitutes appropriate behavior of children.
- Social capital can be enhanced by cultural capital if parents invest in children knowing that their children will follow the cultural scripts of their role position
- Moral hazard avoided by transmitting values and norms to children about their duties and obligations.

Beyond the Inter-Personal: Cultural Capital of Filial Piety



- “Filial piety consists in the practice of filial **respect** and **care** to parents, which has been a normative duty and obligation of adult children” (Sung, 1998).
- Includes rules about conduct, material and service support delivered with a sense of “spiritual devotion”.

Judeo-Christian Dictates in the Bible

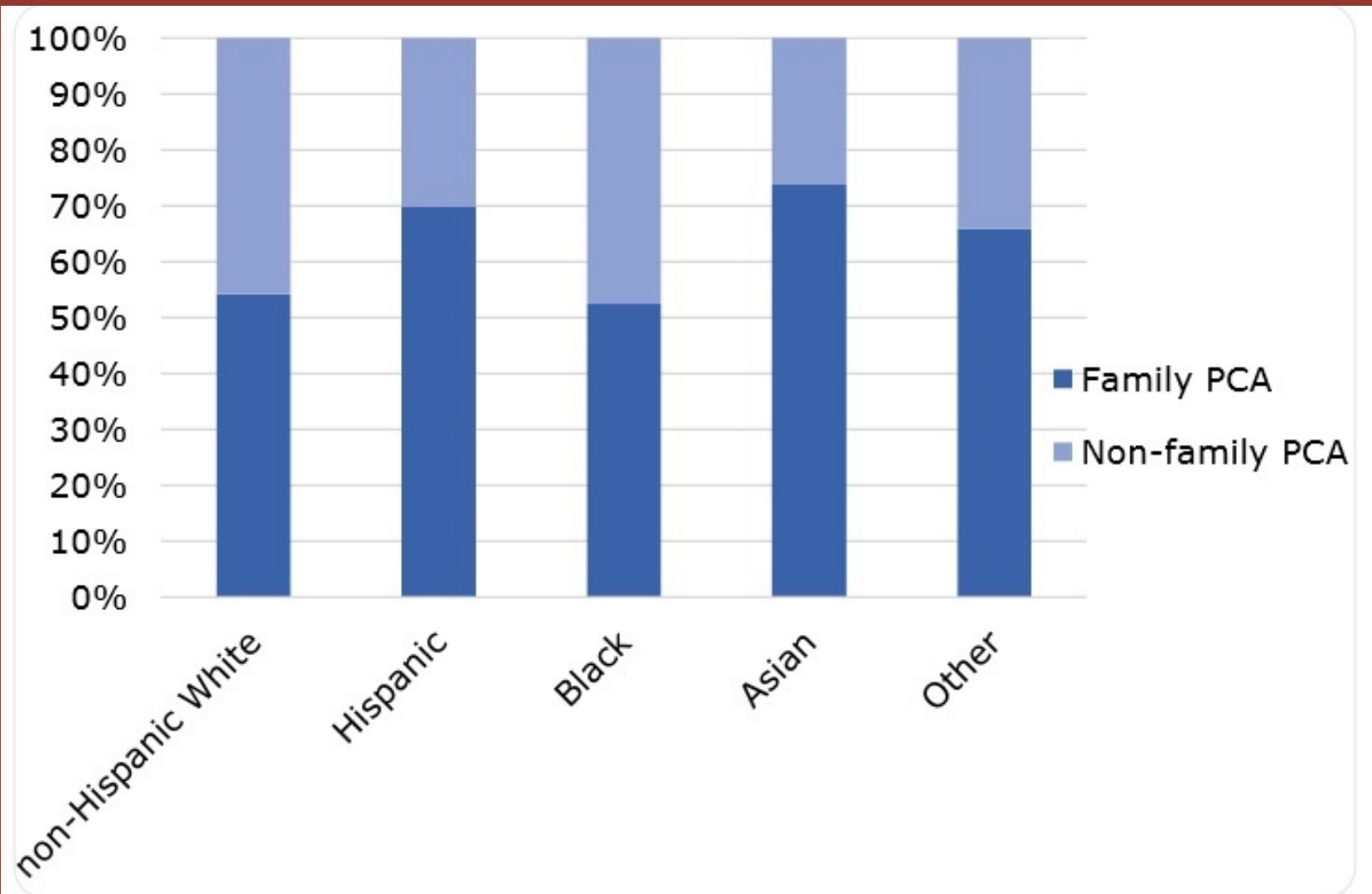


- **Exodus 20: 2-14 (The Ten Commandments)**
 - #5. “Honor your father and mother.”
- **Leviticus 19: 1-2**
 - “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: Thou shall each **revere** his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I the Lord am your God.”
- Various interpretations define ‘revere’ as **respect** and ‘honor’ as **care**.

Cultural Capital

- Normative obligations based on a shared cultural beliefs about desirable behaviors learned within communities and families.
- Hispanic, and Asian families are more likely to care for their impaired elderly members and do so at higher intensities and within family-dense care networks.
- Cultural justification for caregiving and intrinsic rewards of caregiving higher for African Americans (Dilworth-Andersen, 2005)

Primary Source of Personal Assistance by Race and Ethnicity of Recipient



Source: California Medicaid claims, Medicaid enrollment, and Case Management Information and Payrolling System (CMIPS).

Institutional Capital

- State support for older adults has rendered families less important for elder care provision than in the past.
- Life course intergenerational dynamics may have softened.

Forms of Capital (Bourdieu, 1986)

- Cultural capital: implicit *knowledge* of expected behavior gained from the environment through socialization and traditions, often communicated through families
- Social capital: *resources* based on group membership, relationships & networks of influence and investment.
- Institutional capital: Political economy that institutionalizes allocation of resources that can complement or counter cultural capital in families

Esping-Andersen Model of the Welfare State

- The nation-state structures how welfare production is allocated among state, market, and households.
 - Social democratic welfare states, all citizens are incorporated under a single *universal* insurance system (Scandinavian countries)
 - Liberal welfare states, assistance is means-tested and modest social-insurance plans (UK, Germany, and the U.S.)
 - Conservative welfare states, the state will only intervene when the family's resources are exhausted (Southern European and Eastern European countries).

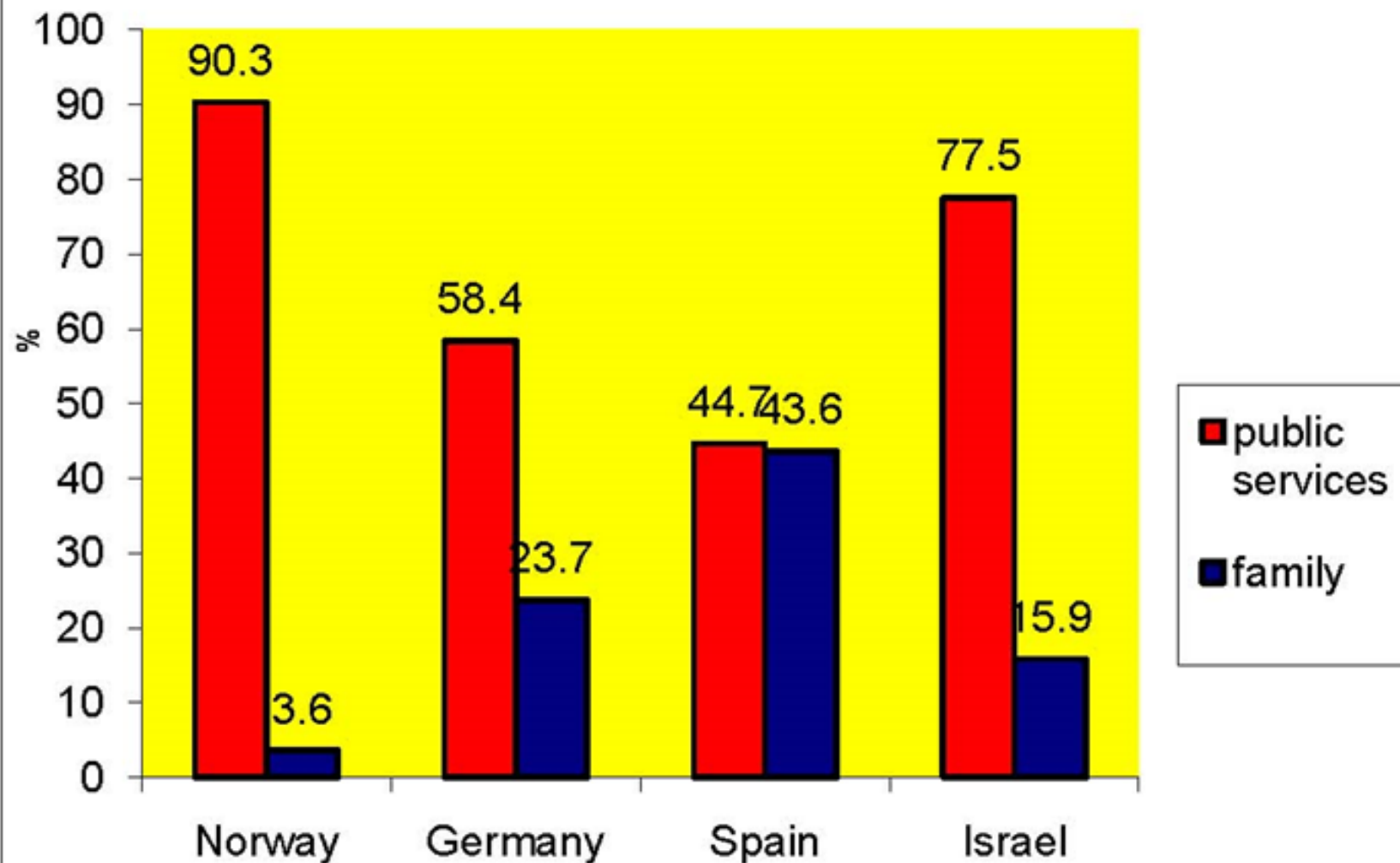
The Nation-State a Value Object

- The institution of the welfare state is a moral agent, the policies of which frees or obligates intergenerational behaviours based on national cultural dispositions.

Formal and Informal Care

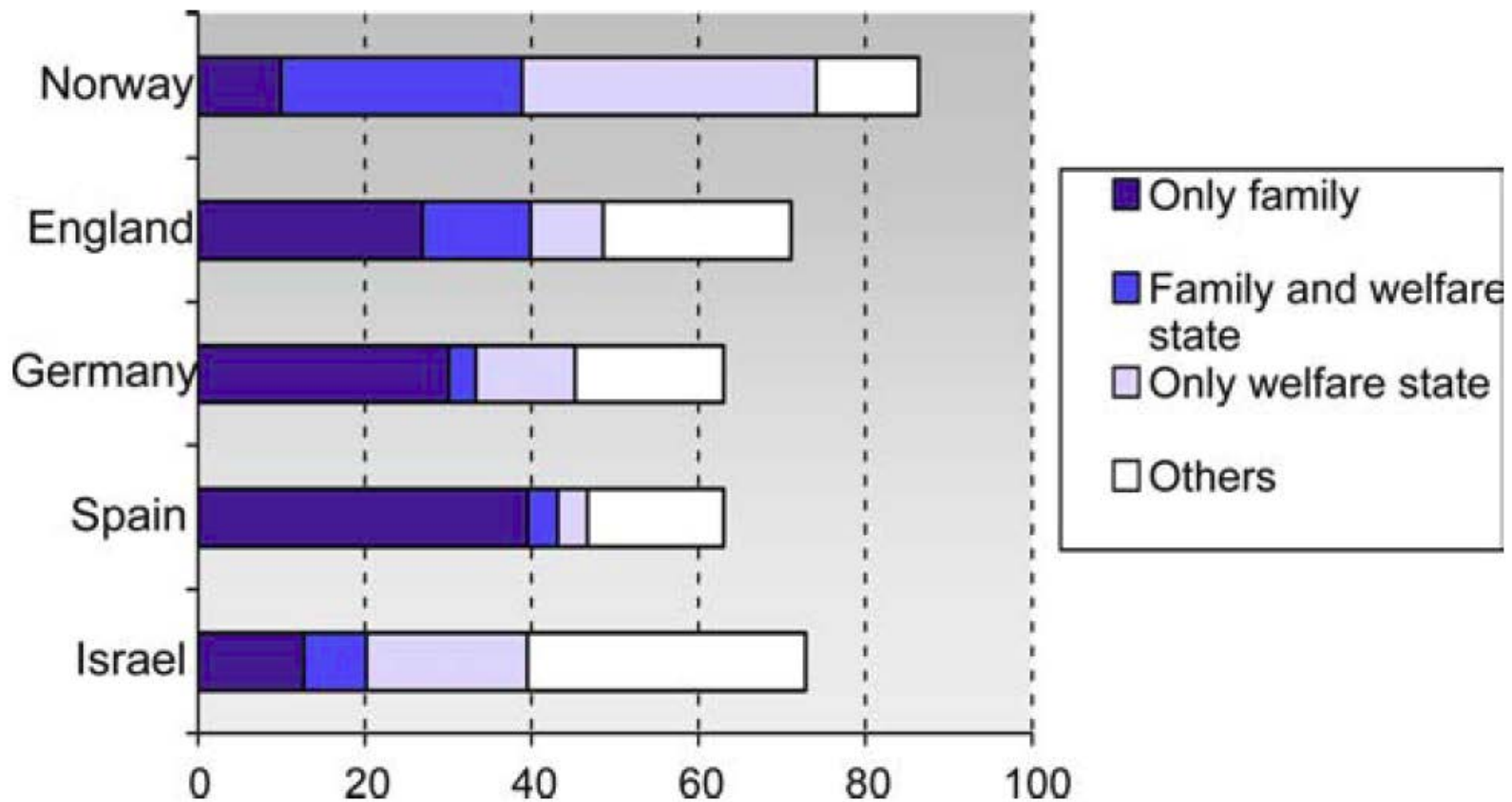
- Crowding-out and crowding-in debate
 - Formal care crowds-out family care (substitutability)
 - Formal care crowds-in family care (complementarity)
 - Evidence shows that home help provisions crowds-in *less intensive* forms of family care, but *crowds-out* more intensive forms of family care.

Preferences for Public or Family Care



Source of Care Among Frail Elders 75+ in Five Countries (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005)

179



Intergenerational Help and Care in Europe

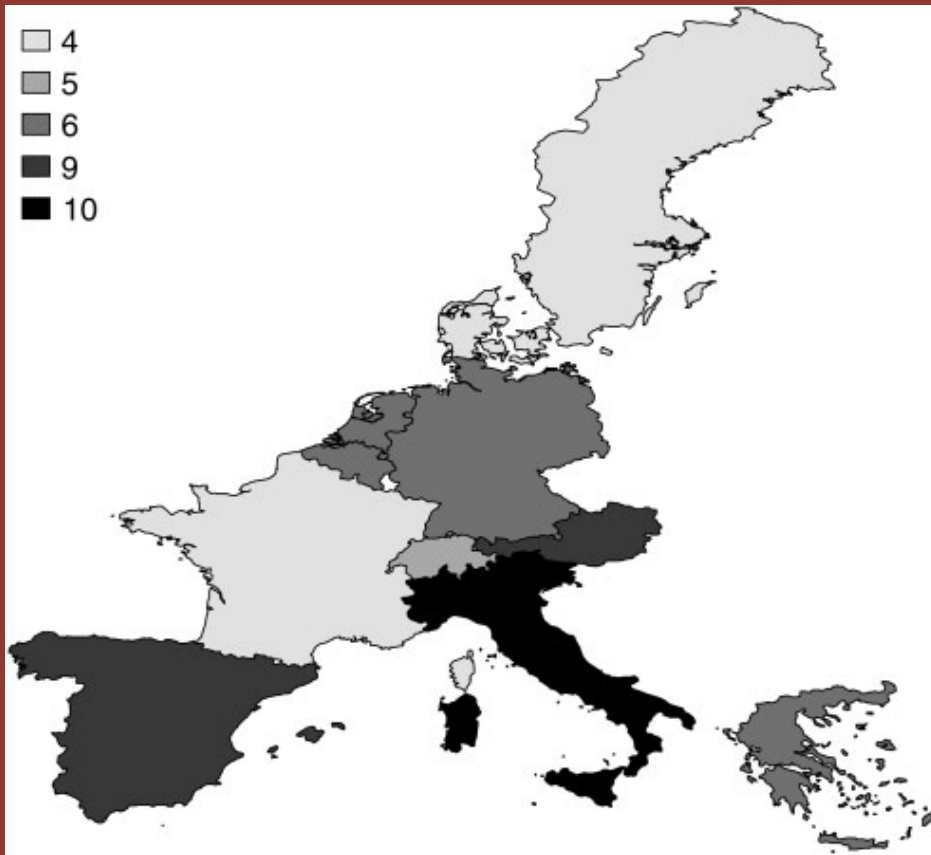


Figure 1: Care for parents during the last 12 months

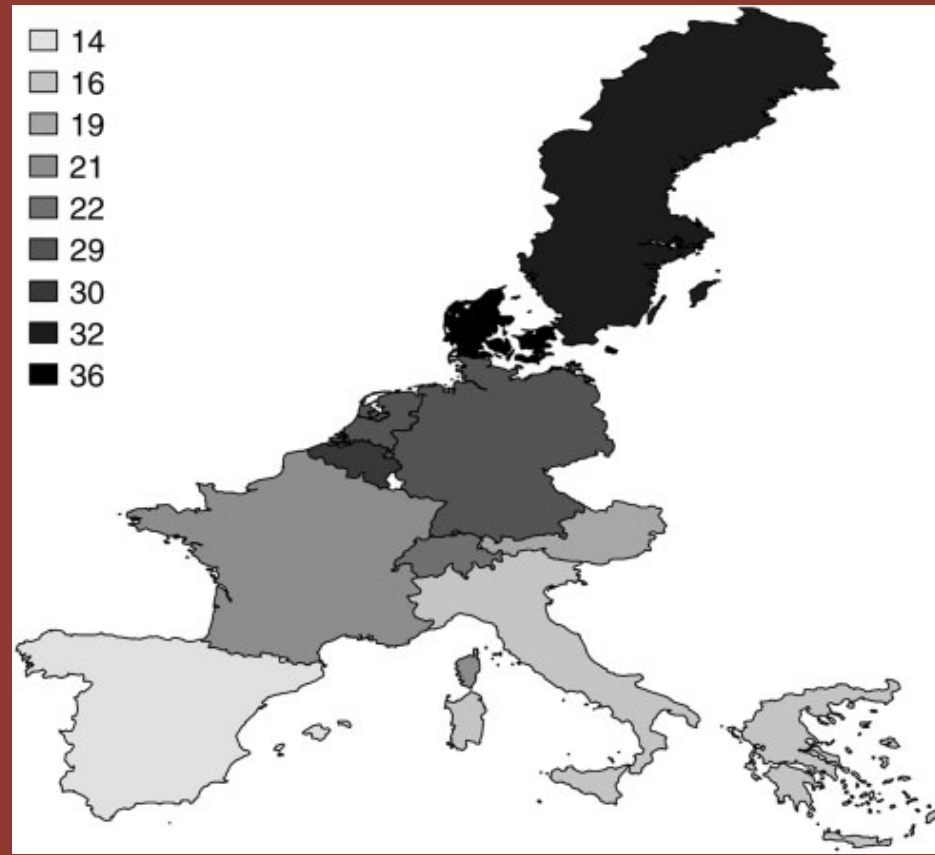


Figure 2: Help for parents during the last 12 months

Source: SHARE 2004 release 2, weighted. n=8021 dyads, percentages per country, In *Intergenerational Help and Care in Europe*, Martina Brandt, Klaus Haberkern and Marc Szydlik (2009), *European Sociological Review*, Vol 25, No. 5

Dialectic Between Cultural and Institutional Capital

- Family caregiving is lower in Nordic than in Mediterranean countries
 - Nordic cultures prefer state over family provided care, and Mediterranean cultures prefer family over state provided care (Daatland and Lowenstein, 2004).
- Each region solves the same problem with capital currencies that are balanced differently between family and state.

Moral Capital as Unifying Concept

- Moral capital reflects the values that drive expectations and preferred actions of family and government for old age support.

Cultural and Institutional Capital are Interchangeable

- Moral capital unites cultural and institutional capital into a common “currency”—moral capital may be constant across countries but balanced differently between family and state (and with unique consequences).
- Balance toward family care might elevate caregiver burden, keep women out of the workforce
- Balance toward institutional capital might create inefficiencies by crowding-out families and leading to more impersonal care.

Moral Capital Embedded in National Values

- Welfare states
 - Built on values of egalitarianism, collective responsibility for the needy, women's rights (high institutional capital)
- Confucian states
 - Built on values of family primacy, obligation of children, principles of reciprocity (high cultural capital)

Summing Up

- Micro-exchange dynamics and culture continue to be potent forces that explain kinship dynamics in mature families.
- Cultural norms and reciprocity motivate and justify role duties in families, but calibrated relative to the resources provided (or not) by the state.
- National regimes reflect a culture-of-care ideology that variously frees or obligates family support.
- Family and state are complementary and substitutable manifestations of moral capital.
- Do we get the welfare state-family balance that is most consistent with our national culture?

Policy Implications

- Programs that support informal caregivers—such as respite, home help services, and cash payments-- can enable families to fulfill their duties as long as possible.
- Formal services can enable the expression of familistic tendencies by lifting heavy burdens from informal caregivers.
- As societies adapt to their aging populations, moral capital in cultural and institutional forms may shift, making for
 - Scandinavian filial piety
 - Confucian welfare state