

- Agenda** | Family & family change
1. Family and marriage
 2. Demography of family
 3. Developmental idealism

Family & marriage



What is "a" family?

- ⋮ **Unit of economic activity**
Pooled economic resources
Inheritance of property
Domain for unpaid labor
- ⋮ **Unit of emotional/social support**
Dependable support network
Advice and norm-checking
- ⋮ **Unit of human reproduction**
- ⋮ **Unit of romantic/sexual involvement**
Romantic love
Sexual partnership
- ⋮ **Unit of socialization/customs**





Marriage

- ∴ Formal relationship between two or more people
- ∴ Viewed as having intention of permanence
- ∴ ***Institutionally recognized***
Religion, government, community, ...

Cultural link to family

- ∴ Sex, child rearing, love, economic union, ...
- ∴ Neither a strict criterion for nor result of family formation
- ∴ Frameworks exist to reconcile marriage and family
I.e. "common-law" marriage



Diversity of family forms

- ∴ Monogamy vs. polygamy vs. polyamory ...
- ∴ Single-parent vs. two-parent
- ∴ Biological vs chosen

- ∴ "Nuclear" vs. extended
- ∴ Married vs unmarried
- ∴ Same-gender vs. different-gender



Family is a central concern within the study of *demography*

- ∴ Family forms affect patterns of fertility and migration
- ∴ Norms and culture deeply influenced by family
- ∴ Legal, economic, and other social factors both influence and are influenced by family

Some descriptive data...

Mean age of first birth across 131 countries

CIA World Factbook 2017

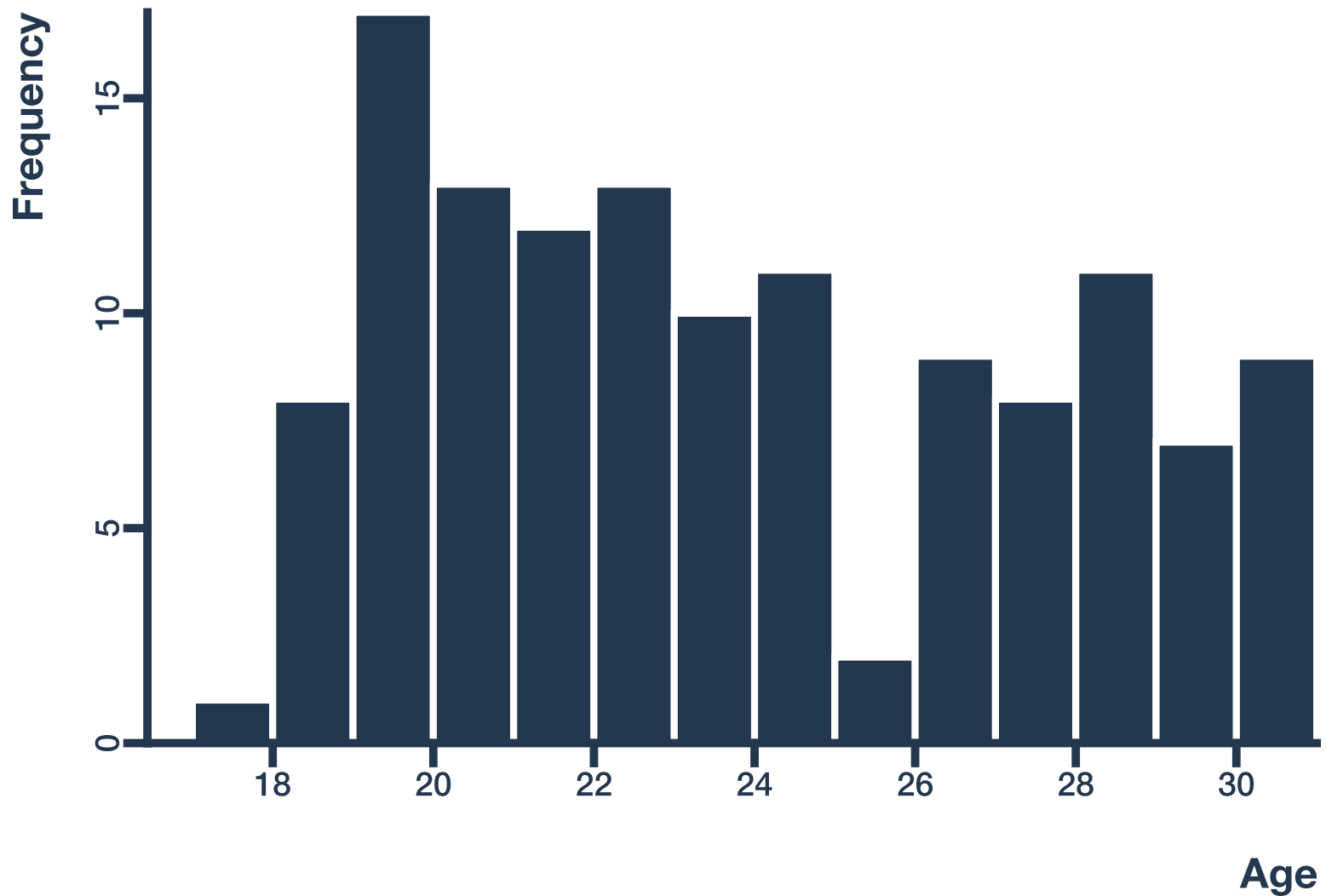
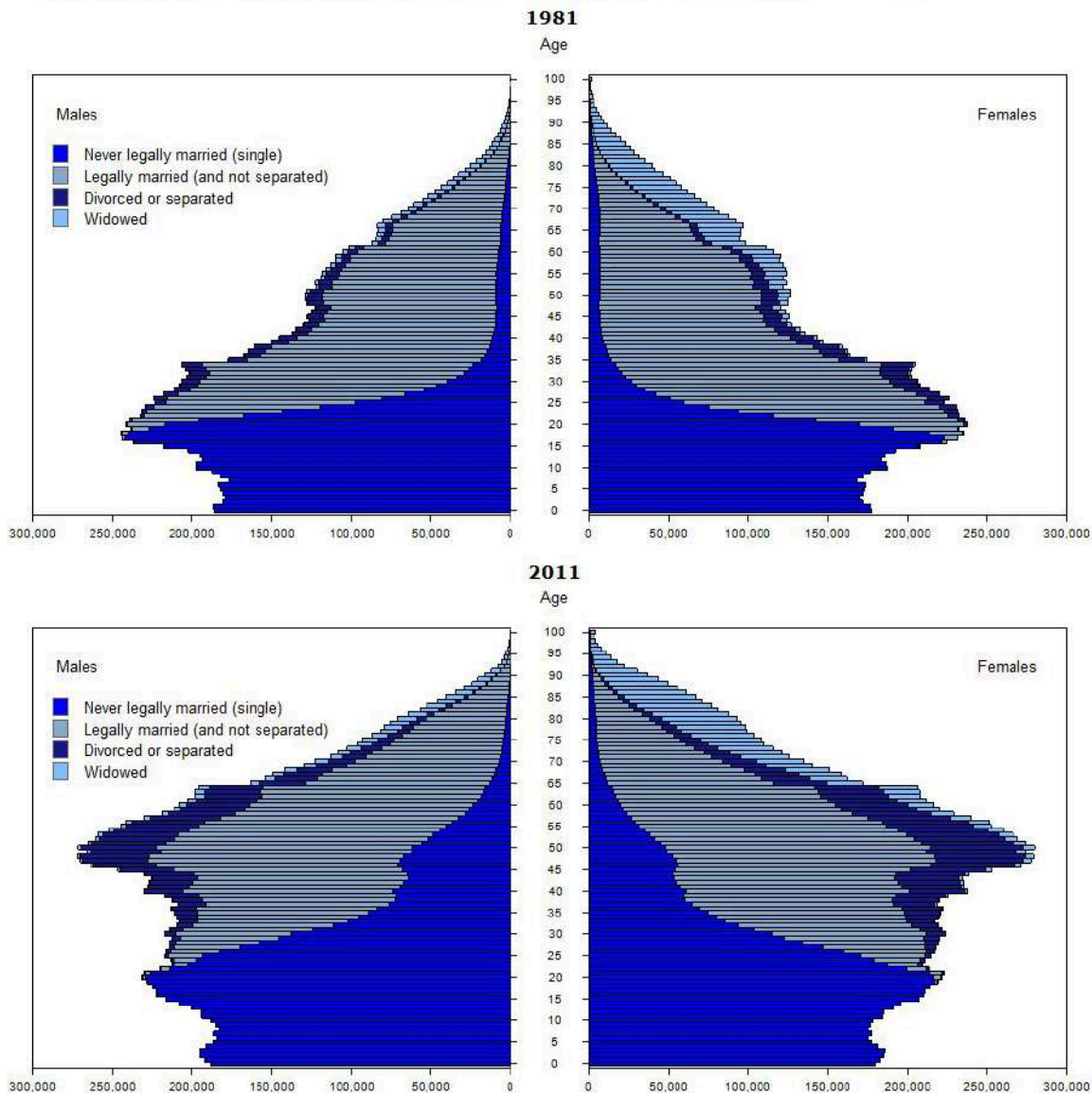


Figure 1
Population pyramids of legal marital status by single year of age and sex, Canada, 1981 and 2011



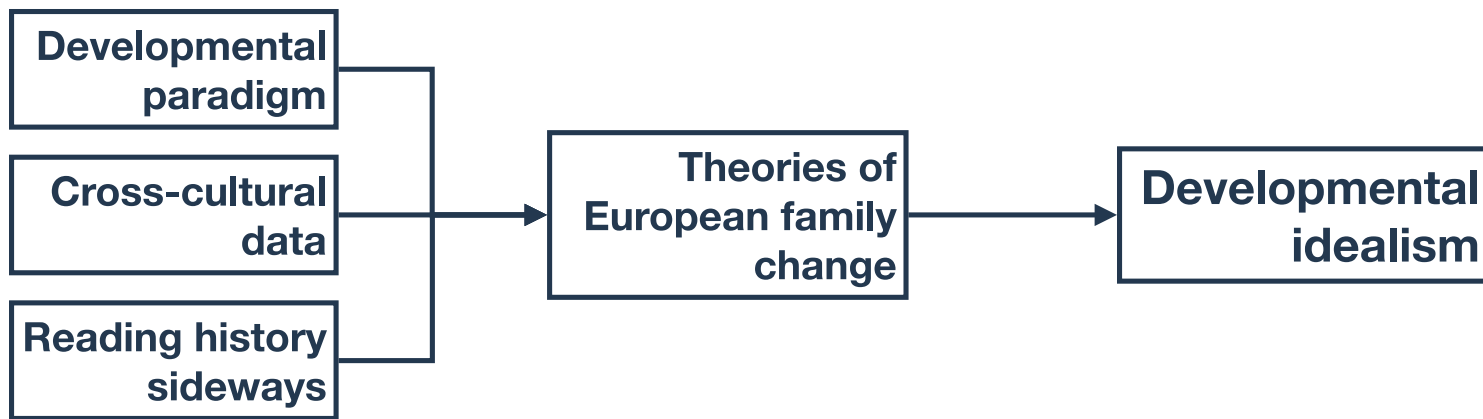
Notes: In 1981, common-law partners were included with the married population. This represents about 715,700 people or 3.8% of the population aged 15 and over. Consequently, the legally married population is slightly overestimated and the single (never married), divorced or separated and widowed populations are slightly underestimated.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2011.

Develop- mental idealism

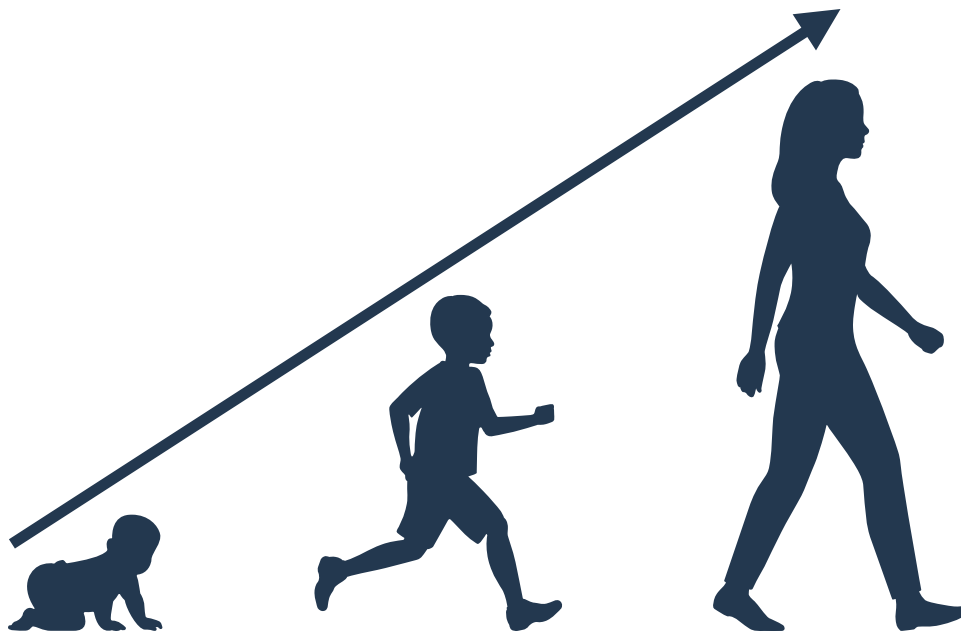


Thornton, Arland. 2001. "The Developmental Paradigm, Reading History Sideways, and Family Change."
Demography 38 (4): 449–65.



Societal development

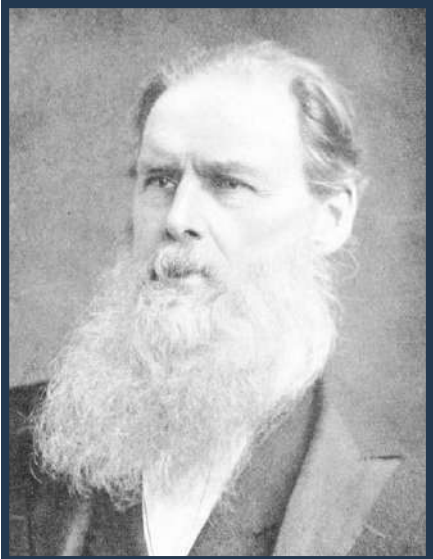
- ∴ Paradigm:
Basic model used to make sense of a wide range of situations.
- ∴ Understanding societies as progressing along set, developmental "path."
- ∴ Biological metaphor.



Two assumptions

1. Societies progress along a developmental path.
(Developmental paradigm)
2. Northwest European society is the most advanced along this developmental path.
(Compared to other cultures)

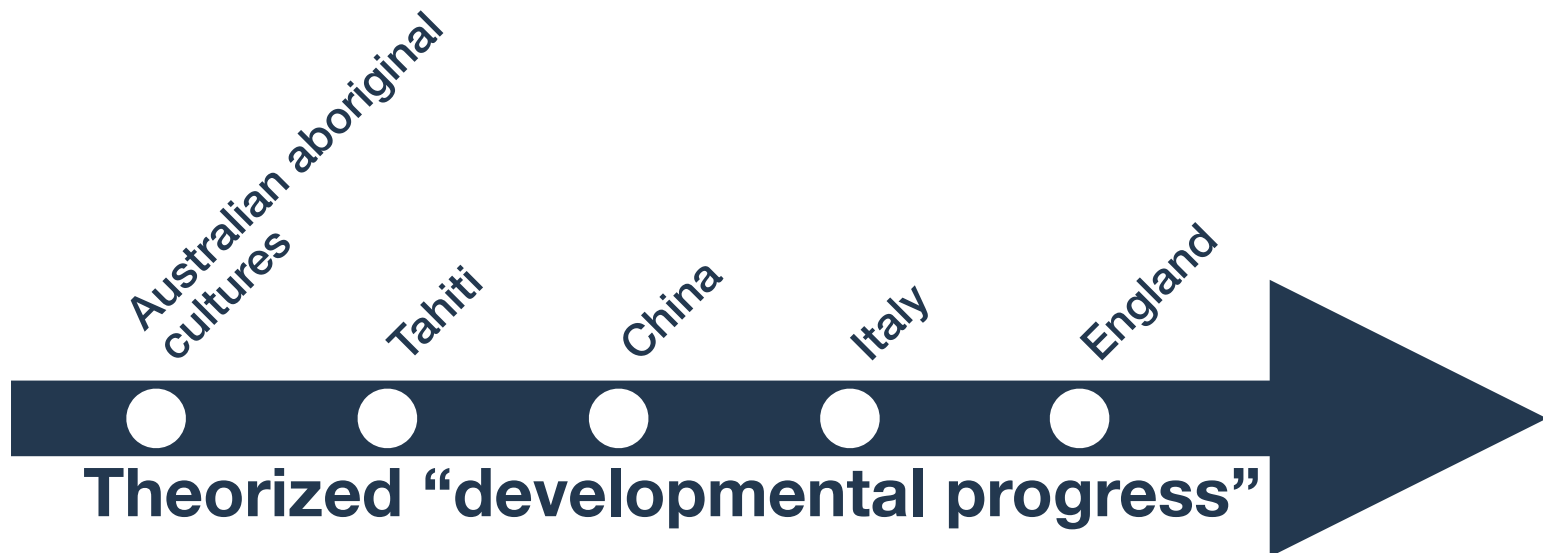
Societies ordered by perceived similarity to northwest Europe

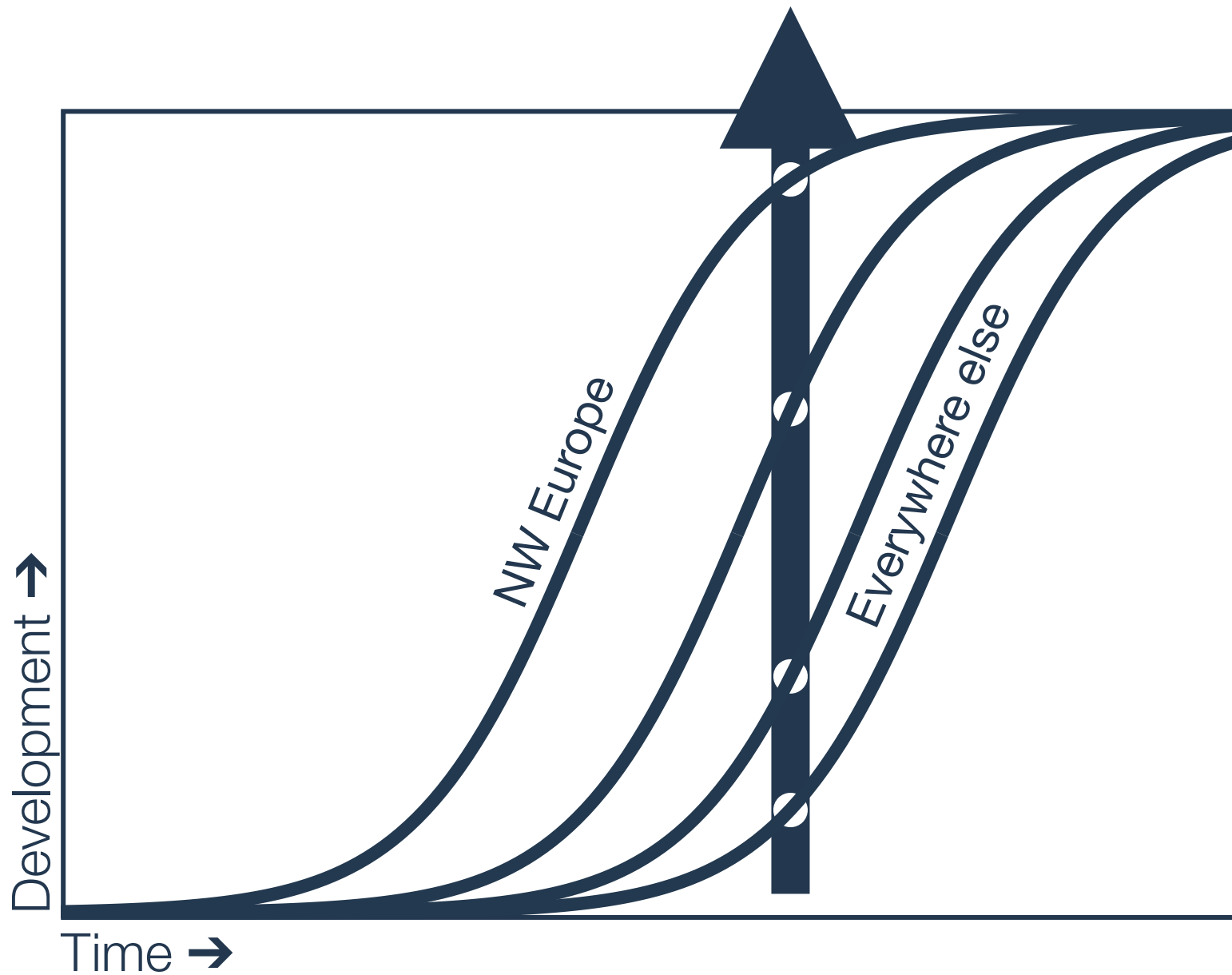


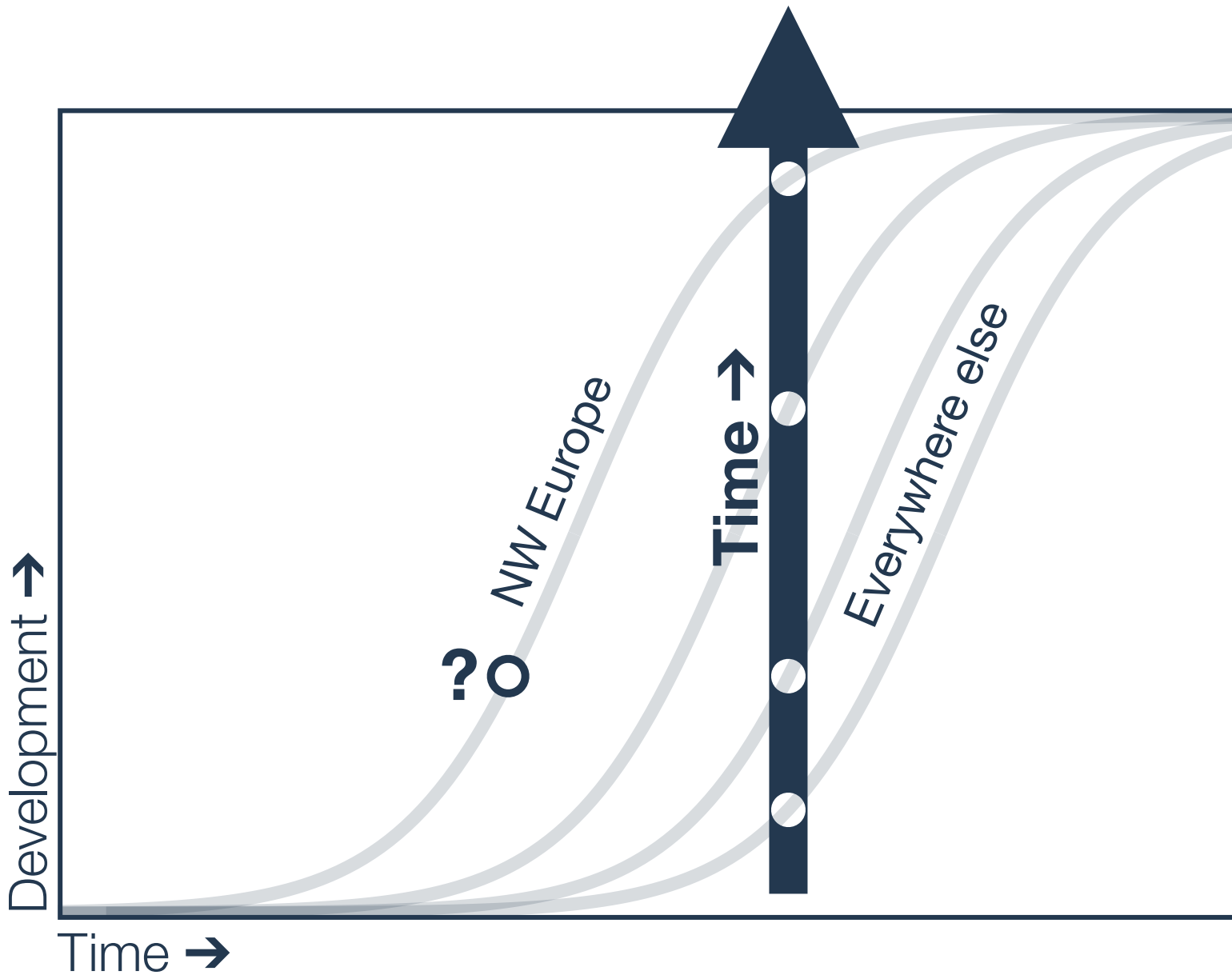
Edward Tylor (1871:24), an important English scholar of the era, suggested that “few would dispute that the following races are arranged rightly in order of culture: Australian (aborigines), Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, Italian,” with the English ultimately being the highest (Stocking 1987).

By "Photo. Elliot & Fry." - Folk-Lore: A Quarterly Review of Myth, Tradition, Institution & Custom volume 28. 1917. London, Folk-lore Society.

Thornton (2001:451)







In short, most of the so-called “great family transition” that previous generations of scholars believed had occurred in northwest Europe before the early 1800s could not be documented in the European archives. In fact, the evidence suggested that much of this transition was simply a myth—the myth of the extended household, young and universal marriage, arranged marriage, and no affection before marriage.

Thornton (2001: 453)

This conclusion also suggests that ideas need not be true to be powerful for both scholars and ordinary people. In addition, the most influential ideas in both scholarship and everyday life are often those we think about the least. This suggests that it would be very useful for us, as social scientists, to be more introspective about our unstated beliefs and their influence on our conclusions.

Thornton (2001: 460)