

# unit 5 Later Life

## UNIT EXPECTATIONS

While reading this unit, you will:

- explain the historical and ethnocultural origins of contemporary individual lifestyles, socialization patterns, and family roles
- analyze changes that have occurred in family structure and function throughout the history of the family
- analyze decisions and behaviours related to individual role expectations
- analyze current issues and trends relevant to individual development, and speculate on future directions
- analyze current issues and trends affecting the dynamics of intimate relationships, and speculate on future directions for individuals and families
- analyze decisions and behaviours related to parental and caregiver role expectations, including the division of responsibilities for childrearing and socialization
- access, analyze, and evaluate information, including opinions, research evidence, and theories, related to individuals and families in a diverse society
- analyze issues and data from the perspectives associated with key theories in the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology

## chapter 12

Adults and Their Families

## chapter 13

Adult Life and Theories of Aging

## chapter 14

The Challenges of Later Life

Older Canadians can now enjoy a more active lifestyle than any generation before, thanks to their increased life expectancy and improved health.





## OVERVIEW

In this unit, the lives of individuals in middle and late adulthood, and their families, will be examined. To determine the role that adults of all ages play in Canadian society, the age transitions of adulthood, midlife, retirement, and old age will be outlined. Then the history of adulthood and aging will be traced. Next, the psychology of aging, and the factors that contribute to satisfaction at each stage of life for men and for women, will be examined. Finally, the specific issues and trends that are influencing the transitions from adulthood to midlife and to senior years today will be explored.





# chapter 12

## Adults and Their Families

### CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

#### KEY TERMS

age strata  
empty nest  
family-work  
conflict  
generation  
kin-keeper  
middle age  
retirement  
social clock  
work-family  
conflict

While reading this chapter, you will:

- describe the various roles of individuals in society and the potential for conflict between individual and family roles
- explain changing family forms and functions in various societies throughout history, and describe contemporary family forms
- describe the diversity in personal and family roles of individuals in various cultures and historical periods
- analyze male and female roles in various societies and historical periods, taking into consideration societal norms and ideals, individuals' perceptions of roles, and actual behaviours
- describe current perceptions, opinions, and demographic trends relating to the life patterns of individuals, and speculate on the significance of these trends for individual development
- describe current perceptions, opinions, and demographic trends relating to intimate relationships, and speculate on the significance of these trends for individual and family development
- identify and respond to the theoretical viewpoints, thesis, and supporting arguments of materials found in a variety of secondary sources
- summarize the factors that influence decisions about individual lifestyle at various stages of life, drawing on traditional and current research and theory
- summarize the factors that influence decisions about educational and occupational choices at various stages of life
- demonstrate an understanding of the role of intimate relationships in the lives of individuals and families, considering the similarities and differences for males and females, and traditional and non-traditional relationships
- analyze the division of responsibility for childrearing and socialization, and the interaction of caregivers



## RESEARCH SKILLS

- analyzing demographic trends



Grandparents are playing a more active role in their families' lives than in the past, partly due to an increase in dual-earner parents.

## CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, individuals and their families in adulthood will be studied from a sociological perspective. Adulthood, midlife, and aging will be defined, and their history will be examined to understand the cultural diversity of adult life. The interrelationship of individual, family, and work roles for men and women in Canada in a post-industrial society will also be explored. The impact of an increasing life expectancy, a declining birth rate, and the increase in the employment of women will be presented, so that you will be better prepared for making decisions concerning the later years of life.



## Adult Life in Canada

**C**anadians are living longer lives than ever before. The increase in life expectancy over the last hundred years means that when young people become adults in their early thirties, they can look forward to almost fifty more years of adulthood. If midlife is calculated as the middle of the normal life expectancy, midlife for men begins at 39, and at 41 for women. The lack of any common rite of passage suggests that adulthood is one long stage, but, according to the family life-cycle perspective, the normative events of marriage, childbearing, grandparenting, and retirement are transition points in the lives of most Canadian adults (McPherson, 1990). Significant trends in Canadian society are affecting the transitions in adult life (Veevers, 1991, p. 25):

- individuals are marrying later
- divorce and remarriage are more common
- working spouses face conflicting family and work roles
- the retirement age is declining
- the proportion of seniors in the population is increasing

The definitions of adulthood, midlife, and old age are usually determined by the chronological clock, which is based on age norms. Traditionally, sociologists identified middle age as the time in life when children left home, but now that childbearing is often being delayed and children do not always leave home until their late twenties, that significant rite of passage occurs long after the midpoint of the life span (Baker, 2001; McDaniel, 2001). In practice, however, there are cultural variations in the chronological clock that might limit opportunities for some individuals. For example, a compulsory retirement age could lead to the false assumption that individuals become less productive as they approach that age. However, the age of retirement in various countries ranges from the mid-50s to 70. Every society assigns its own meaning to age. In Japan, where age is valued, aging has a different meaning than in North America, where youth is valued presently (McPherson, 1990).

### The History of Adulthood

In the past in Canada, people died at what is termed **middle age** today, and few experienced old age. The life course of women, and therefore the men they married, can be described by tracing the ages at which they married, when they



### Life Expectancy at Birth

	Both Sexes	Males	Females	Difference
<b>Canada</b>				
	<b>Years</b>			
1920–22	59	59	61	2
1930–32	61	60	62	2
1940–42	65	63	66	3
1950–52	69	66	71	5
1960–62	71	68	74	6
1970–72	73	69	76	7
1980–82	75	72	79	7
1990–92	78	75	81	6
<b>1990–92</b>				
Newfoundland and Labrador	77	74	80	6
Prince Edward Island	77	73	81	8
Nova Scotia	77	74	80	6
New Brunswick	78	74	81	7
Québec	77	74	81	7
Ontario	78	75	81	6
Manitoba	78	75	81	6
Saskatchewan	78	75	82	7
Alberta	78	75	81	6
British Columbia	78	75	81	6

**Source:** Adapted from the Statistics Canada web site  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Health/health26.htm>.

gave birth to their last child, and when they died. In 1840, a woman might have married in her mid-to-late twenties, given birth to the last of four or more children at age 40, and died at age 62, so that she lived her whole adult life caring for dependent children (McDaniel, 2001). Men married when they could afford to, and spent their adult lives working to support their families. Since many women died giving birth to their last child, their husbands often remarried rather than raise children alone as widowers. Men stopped working only if declining health prevented them from doing their jobs. Because historically there has never been a tradition of the extended family in Canada, most Canadians who lived into old age continued to live in their homes, alone or with any unmarried children, until their death (Nett, 1993).



## Median Age at Selected Periods of the Family Career of Canadian Women Born 1880s to 1950s

Period of Family Career	80-Year Average	Period of Birth of Mother							
		1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s
		Approximate Year of First Marriage							
		1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
<b>Median Age at:</b>									
1. First Marriage									
mother	22.8	24.7	23.2	22.8	23.8	23.5	21.7	20.9	21.5
father	26.1	29.1	27.2	26.2	26.8	26.5	24.8	24.3	24.1
Difference	3.3	4.4	4.0	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.4	2.6
2. Birth of first child	23.9*	(26.1)*	(24.5)	(24.0)	(24.2)	24.7	23.8	23.2	23.9
3. Birth of last child	28.1*	(28.8)	(28.0)	(27.2)	28.5	28.2	29.2	28.8	26.3
4. Marriage of last child	51.1*	(55.1)	(53.0)	(50.4)	51.1	51.0	52.0	51.6	49.1
5. Death of one spouse	67.4 68.1*	65.6	65.6	67.6	67.5	68.0	68.2	68.4	68.2
<b>Difference Between Age at First Marriage and:</b>									
6. Birth of first child	1.6*	(1.4)	(1.3)	(1.2)	(0.4)	1.2	2.1	2.3	2.4
7. Birth of last child	5.8*	(5.1)	(4.8)	(4.4)	4.7	4.7	7.5	7.9	4.8
8. Marriage of last child	28.8*	(30.4)	(29.8)	(27.6)	27.3	27.9	30.3	30.7	27.6
9. Death of one spouse	44.6 45.7*	40.9	42.4	44.8	43.7	44.5	46.5	47.3	46.7
<b>Difference Between Age at:</b>									
10. Births of first and last children	4.2*	(3.1)	(3.5)	(3.2)	(4.3)	3.5	5.4	5.6	2.4
11. Birth and marriage of last child	23.0*	(25.3)	(25.0)	(23.2)	22.6	22.8	22.8	22.8	22.8
12. Marriage of last child and death of spouse	17.0*	(10.5)	(12.6)	(17.2)	16.4	17.0	16.2	16.8	19.1

\* Fifty-year average (1930–1980). Figures in parentheses are estimates.

**Source:** Roy H. Rogers, and Gail Witney. (1981). "The Family Cycle in Twentieth Century Canada." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 43(3): 129. Copyrighted 2002 by the National Council on Family Relations, 3989 Central Ave. NE, Suite 550, Minneapolis, MN 55421. Reprinted by permission.



An improvement in life expectancy began in the 1850s in North America. Significant changes in the treatment of infectious diseases meant that fewer children died before reaching adulthood. The decline in mortality was not the same for men as it was for women, so a widening gap in life expectancy for men and women developed. This gender differential in mortality is explained by two health trends (Bangston & deTerre, 1991):

1. Improvements in care during childbirth resulted in a decline in maternal mortality, a major cause of death for adult women, so women lived to see their children grow up.
2. There was an increased mortality from the consequences of increased smoking, primarily a male habit until the middle of the twentieth century.

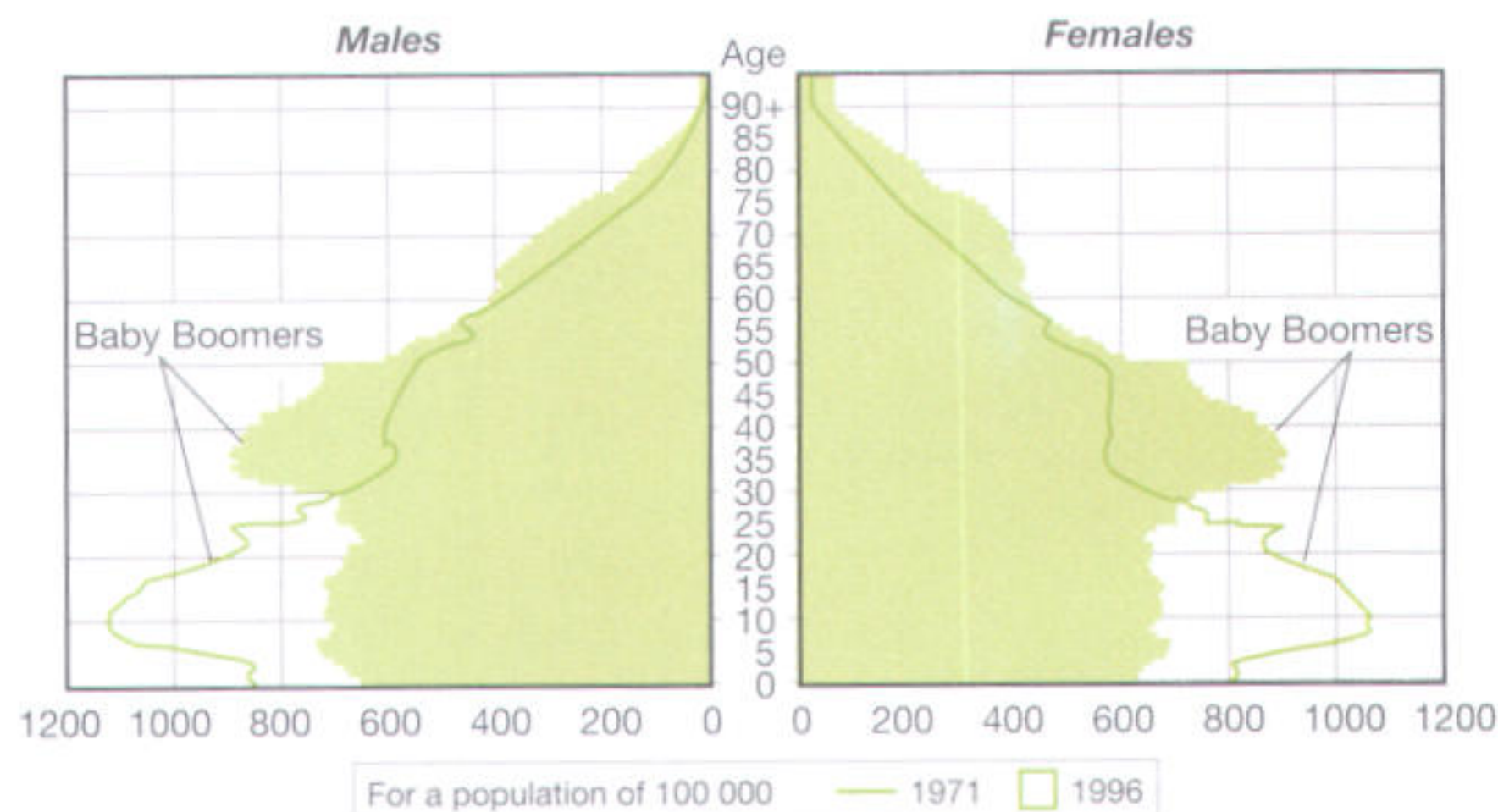
Consequently, the mortality rate of men in adulthood began to exceed that of women (Bangston & deTerre, 1991). Since the middle of the twentieth century, males outnumber females until midlife, then women increasingly outnumber men.

By 1960, men and women were marrying in their early twenties, and the average age of a woman having her last child was 28. The average family was still patriarchal, men were the earners, and there was a clear division of roles. A woman was usually a full-time mother and homemaker, but she now had technology to help her with household tasks. When the children married and left home, she was probably about 50, and she could expect to live to be 82. She and her husband could look forward to many years as an **empty-nest** couple. The adjustment to the “empty nest” was assumed to be a crisis for women, since they had lost their primary role as mother, but men and women could anticipate being grandparents and enjoying another generation of children. Additional crises in the lives of women in the patriarchal family were the adjustment to her husband’s retirement, a time when he lost his primary role, and the likelihood of surviving her husband as a widow.

An increased life expectancy over the last 150 years has changed the family structure in Canada. In 1910, only 16 percent of 50-year-olds had a surviving parent. Most middle-aged adults were the senior generation in their families. By 1991, 60 percent of 50-year-olds had a surviving parent, and 25 percent of 60-year-olds (McDaniel, 2001). Since women have traditionally married men who were several years older, and because the life expectancy of men is several years less than that of women, women became the senior member of their families after they were widowed.



## Population Distribution of Canada by Age and Sex, 1971 and 1996



Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada web site <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/970729/d970729.htm>.

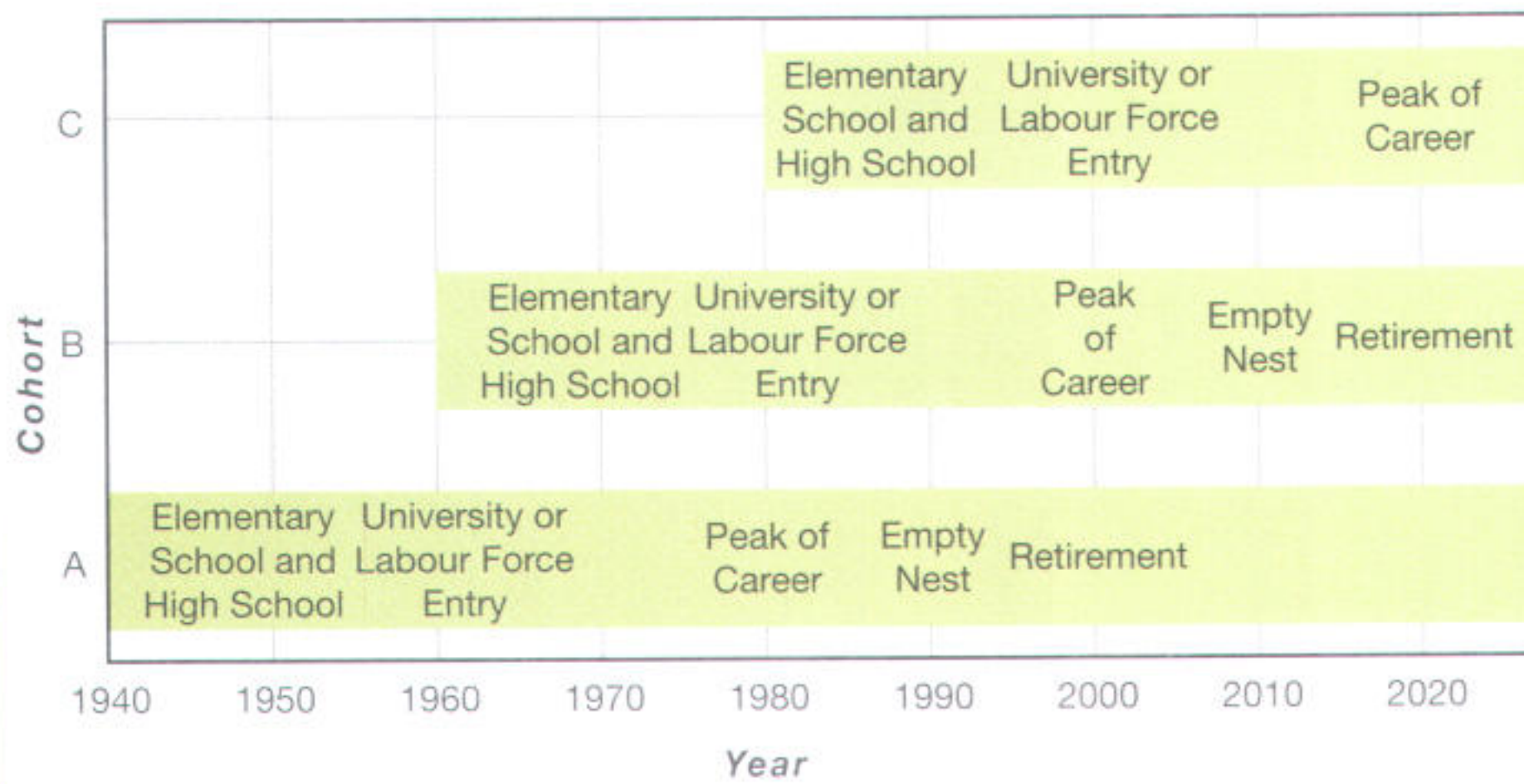
### Age Strata

There are more cohorts of Canadians alive now than at any other time. The **social clock** defines **age strata**, or layers, within a society. Each successive cohort (people born within the same time frame) follows the previous one through the socially defined ages. Each cohort faces similar challenges as it progresses through each of the transitions in adulthood, but the cohorts' needs may differ. The impact of the economic, social, and political stresses in the last century differs according to the size of the cohort; their age at the time of significant events, such as a war; and society's response to those stresses. Thus, each cohort may become a **generation** with distinctive characteristics, such as the baby boom or the echo-boom generations (McPherson, 1990; McDaniel, 1998). The different experiences of generations within a society may create conflicting needs. However, all generations co-exist within families, so the conflicting needs of different individuals in different generations are interfamily conflicts (McDaniel, 1998).

The varying experiences of different cohorts result in generations that have distinctive expectations and norms. This makes it difficult to determine whether patterns of behaviour in adulthood are developmental characteristics that apply to that stage of life, or characteristics that result from the cohort effect. For example, the anti-authoritarian behaviour of "hippies" was a



## Cohort Differences and the Aging Process



**Source:** Based on Figure 1.1, McPherson, Barry D. *Aging as a Social Process: An Introduction to Individual and Population Aging*. Toronto: Butterworths Canada Ltd., 1990. Reprinted with permission of Nelson Thomson Learning, a division of Thomson Learning. Fax 800-730-2215.

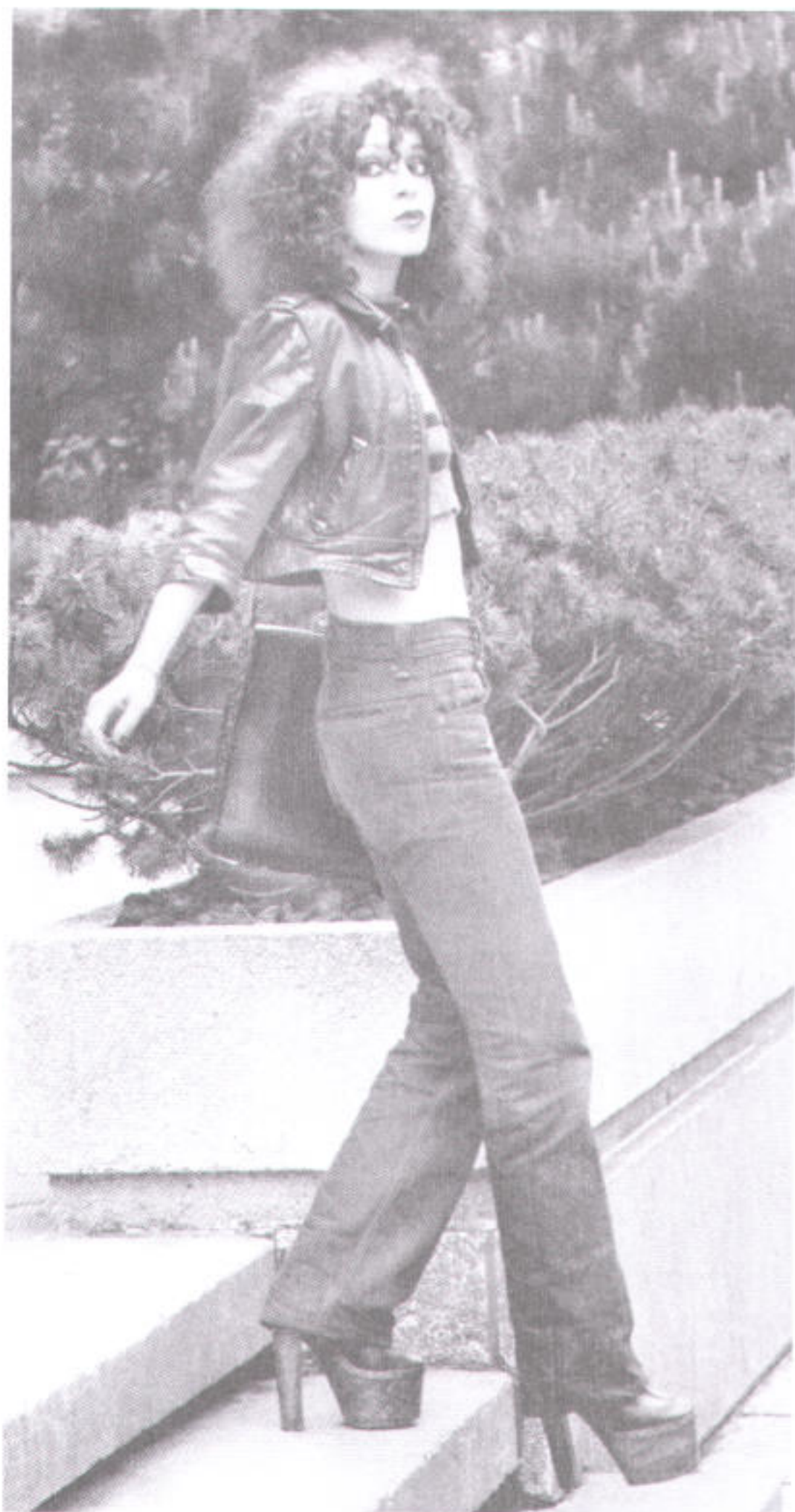
cohort effect in response to social conditions of the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States that was not repeated by successive cohorts (McPherson, 1990). Barry McPherson, a Canadian sociologist and gerontologist, suggests that socialization within the family may be more influential than the cohort effect because children acquire the values and norms of their parents. Therefore, generational units, based on social class, race, and ethnicity, differ in their expectations and social norms. For example, some baby boomers became “hippies” and were anti-government and protested the Vietnam War, but others supported the war and conscription. The children of anti-authoritarian parents may resist authority in ways more typical of the children’s cohort, whereas the children of conservative parents support the status quo of their own generation. Although there may be conflicting needs between generations within a society, there is little intergenerational conflict, because social norms remain consistent from generation to generation within families (1990).

The challenge to separate cohort effects from life-course-related effects suggests that the future for today’s young adults may not resemble adult life for previous or current generations (McDaniel, 2001). Myths and stereotypes persist about life in adulthood, midlife, and old age, just as they do about adolescence. In the mid-twentieth century, most research on adulthood focused on problems such as the midlife crisis, the so-called “empty-nest syndrome,” and the problems of senility, or declining mental ability in old age. More

*“Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.”*

—George Orwell,  
*Animal Farm*





Baby boomers who wore high heels for decades may suffer from hip and knee problems when in their fifties.

recently, research has focused on the health problems associated with aging because of debates about the cost of health care in Canada. However, evidence suggests that many health problems result from lifestyle, which is a cohort effect, not the effects of aging. Individual choices about nutrition, exercise, smoking and drinking, and even fashion reflect the social and cultural norms of each generation and can affect health and longevity. For example, heart disease and cancer, the major causes of death for 50-year-olds, are strongly related to poor diet and lack of exercise. High-heeled shoes may not be life-threatening, but female baby boomers who wore them for decades are more likely to be disabled by knee and hip problems in their fifties and to require expensive orthopedic surgery. If successive generations are changing their diets, pursuing a more active lifestyle, and wearing more comfortable fashions, then Canadians may have fewer health problems in the future.

## Adulthood in Canada

Adult individuals are expected to be financially, socially, and emotionally independent. The transition to adulthood is generally considered to be complete at about 34 years of age (Meunier, Bernard, & Boisjoly, 1998). By that age, most Canadian adults are employed, have formed intimate couple relationships, and have children. How they live their adult lives will be influenced by the success with which they made the transition to adulthood. Their lifestyles will also be affected by the changes in Canadian society. The major

factors affecting family life today are the declining birth rate, employment of women outside the home, and an increased life expectancy. Dual-earner couples are negotiating marital and parental roles unlike those experienced by any other generation, as well as balancing them with the demands of workplace roles. Women in the work force contribute to an increased family income that supports a consumer lifestyle, but will face the transition of retirement in the future. Men and women can anticipate greater involvement as grandparents. Women are also more likely to acquire the financial security that should improve their independence in later life.



As the results of the 2001 Canada Census were released, the headlines in the media suggested changes in the Canadian population that were not anticipated. It is difficult to predict how people will behave in the future based on how they have acted in the past. Humans are decision makers. They have the ability to choose whether they will attend school, marry, have children, work or not work, move, or retire. Mortality is beyond people's control and remains unpredictable. Yet, foretelling the behaviour of Canadians in the future is necessary to enable governments and businesses to make policy decisions that will affect the availability of services and products that people will need. For example, underestimating the number of children that will be born could mean overcrowded or portable classrooms. In this textbook, you have examined current demographic trends related to leaving home, education, marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, dual-income families, retirement, and living arrangements. What will be the trends in these aspects of individual and family life in the future?

Predicting future trends requires a careful analysis of past behaviour and the factors that influenced it, and then speculating on how those factors might influence future behaviour. There are several important questions to consider as you complete this analysis:

- **What has been the long-term pattern?** Do not assume that a recent change will be the last change that occurs. Analyze the data over generations to determine whether short-term changes in the past resulted in long-term trends. For example, the age at which people marry has decreased and increased several times in the last century.
- **What are the cohort factors that influenced the pattern?** For example, when predicting the birth rate for Canada, the echo boom could have been predicted because of the size of the baby boom, despite the decline in the number of births per woman. However, demographers at the time did not know that effective contraception would result in baby boomers delaying parenthood. Based on fertility rates during the traditional childbearing years, demographers predicted a sharp decline in the Canadian population. A similar baby boom might occur when the echo boom begins to have children, unless other cohort factors affect their fertility.
- **What legal or policy procedures might have affected the behaviour?** For example, the passage of laws legalizing divorce changed divorce rates in Canada. Such changes reflect the opportunity to divorce, not necessarily the motivation to stay married or to divorce.
- **What social and economic changes have influenced demographic changes?** For example, the economic changes in Canada resulting from the employment of women have occurred over a long time. This change has affected demographic trends related to education, marriage, and parenthood, but the impact of this change is just beginning to affect trends for the aging years. ■

### Work Versus Family Roles

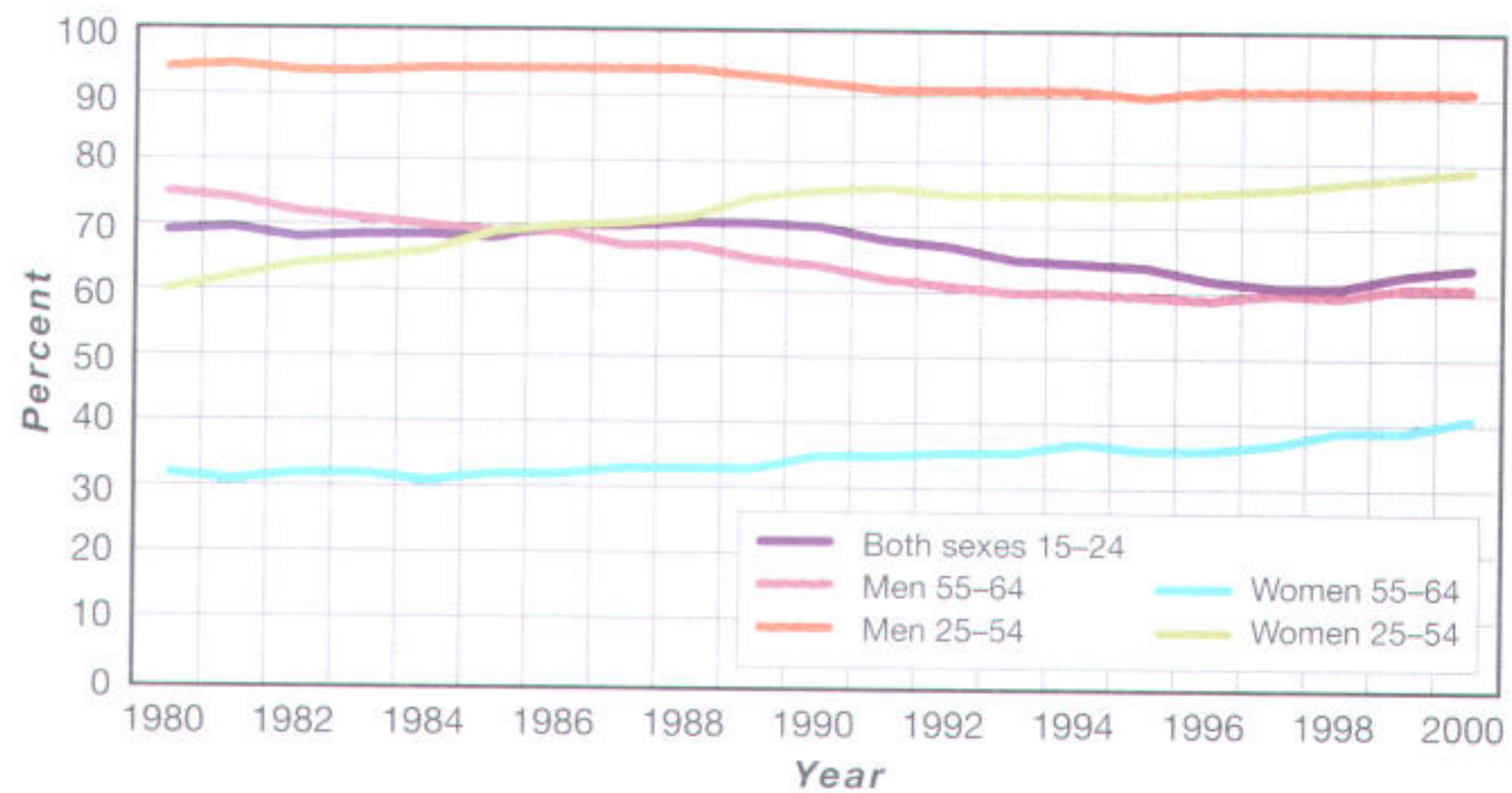
The dramatic economic and social changes from 1970 to 2000 resulted in major role transformations for women and for men. The majority of young women expect to balance individual goals in a career with marriage and family (Davey,



1998), and that is exactly what adult Canadian women are doing now. Almost 80 percent of women aged 25 to 54 are now working, whether or not they have children. About 91 percent of men of that age are working. The traditional gender roles that were based on the patriarchal family no longer fit the contemporary family. Research questions that arise from this change include:

- Why have dual-earner families become the norm?
- How have husbands adjusted their roles to accommodate working wives?
- What are the stresses associated with dual-earner families?
- How do the new male and female roles affect marriage?
- What are the effects of the new roles on parenting?

Labour Force Participation\* Rates by Age and Sex, 1980–2000



\*Labour force participation (for a particular group): The labour force (individuals employed and unemployed) in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group.

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Labour Force Historical Review, 2000*, Catalogue 71F0004.

Historically, it was assumed that men would be the sole earner in a family. Generations of men experienced the economic and personal stress of supporting their families, even though this ideal proved to be unattainable for most working-class and many middle-class men in the twentieth century (Conway, 1997). Many were unable to earn enough to provide the desired standard of living, yet a working wife was an admission to this shortcoming. When the wives of middle-class men entered the work force by the mid-twentieth century, the income differential between dual-earner families and single-income families



began to grow. For a time, dual-earner families could afford a higher standard of living, so a wife's income was valued because it provided some luxuries for the family. The assumption that a wife's employment merely met her individual needs and provided extras for the family supported the myth that a man was the real provider, but it *did* allow men and women to adjust gradually to the idea of women being employed (Conway, 1997). In a time period lasting about one generation, Canadians have made a dramatic transition from assuming a clear division of labour based on gender, in which men earned the sole income, to a division of labour based more on economic need.

The traditional “breadwinner” and “housewife” roles are no longer economically viable. For several reasons, single-earner families are three times more likely than dual-earner families to be poor (Conway, 1997). In the past, married men were paid wages based on the assumption that they were supporting a family, but the “family wage” has disappeared since women began to enter the work force in the 1960s. The more education a woman has, the more likely she is to work continuously, and the higher her income is likely to be. The more education a man has, the more likely it is that his wife will work. There has been no real growth in family incomes in Canada since they peaked in 1989, and the incomes of young men have declined during that period (Morissette, 1997). As a result, having a sole earner in a family has been a major risk for poverty during the 1990s, and there is almost no chance of a young man earning enough to be the sole support of his family. John Conway, a sociologist at the University of Calgary, predicts that because there are no economic rewards for the traditional male breadwinner role in the family, it will soon disappear (1997).

Co-ordinating the demands of family and workplace roles causes stress for men and for women, resulting in **work-family conflict**, in which work responsibilities affect family roles (Aryee, 1999). Fifty percent of men and women report worry and stress related to balancing two roles. Men whose wives work take on a greater share of family and childrearing tasks than do men whose wives stay at home. An American study of dual-earner couples found that 39 percent of men and 50 percent of women reported that they have turned down transfers at work, and 22 percent of men and 30 percent of women declined promotions (Conway, 1997). Transfers and promotions can affect family roles if they require more hours at work, more travel,

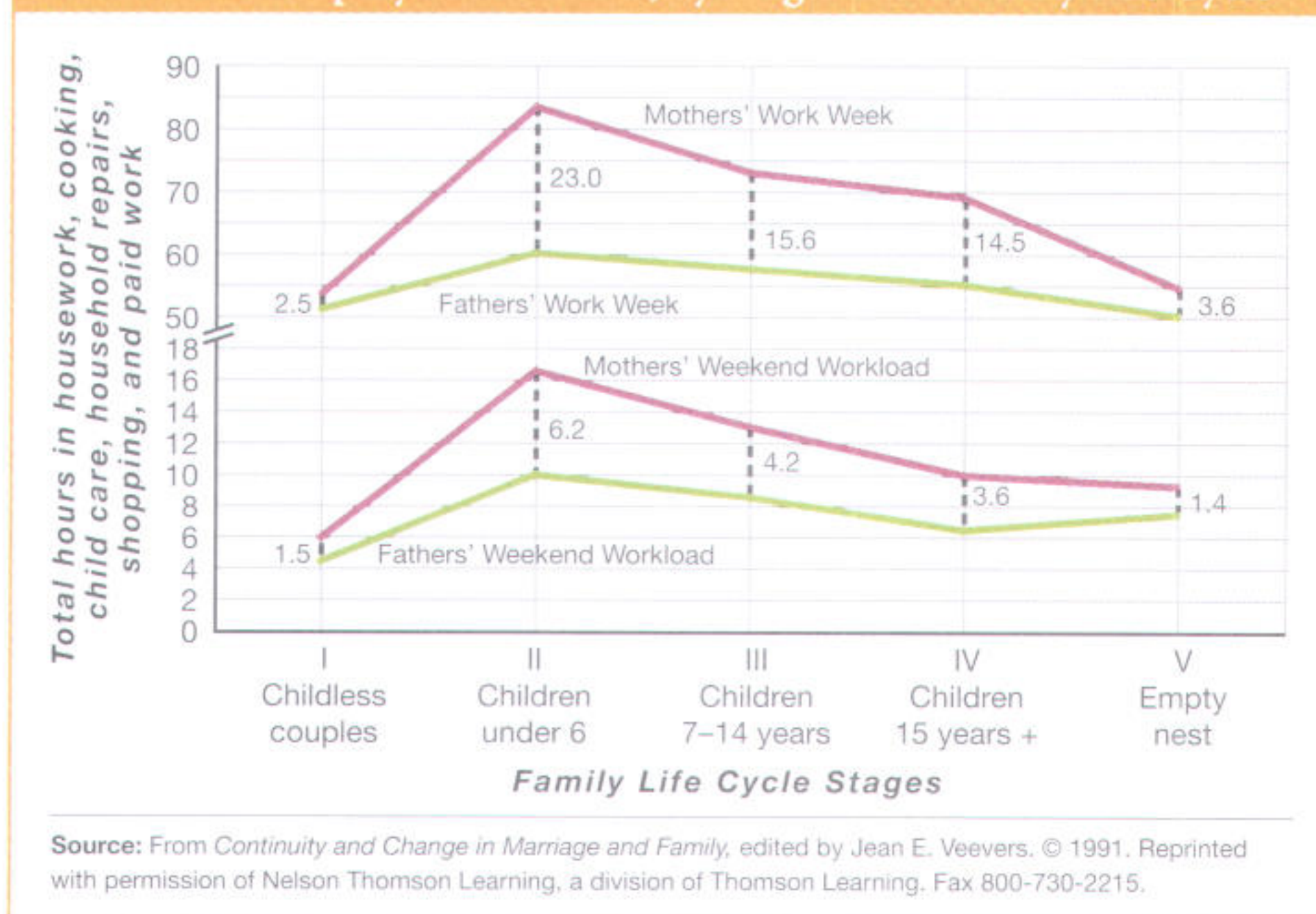


In dual-career families, the time pressures of daily living can be reduced by the higher standard of living that the family can afford.



increased commuting time, or the family to relocate. **Family-work conflict**, in which family responsibilities affect workplace roles, does not significantly affect productivity, perhaps because workers are more focused and efficient on the job (Aryee, 1991), but 80 percent report that they cope with family problems at work or miss time for family reasons (Conway, 1997). Married women who work full time earn only 68 percent of what married men earn, perhaps because they are less likely to relocate or work longer hours to attain the better-paying jobs that single women can (Drolet, 2001). As the trends of an increasing work week, greater competition for jobs, a widening gap between highest and lowest paid, and shorter-term jobs create insecurity in the workplace, men and women in dual-earner families will experience greater stress from their conflicting roles.

**Mean Total Hours in Work Week and Weekend Work for Parents Who Are Employed Full Time, by Stage in the Family Life Cycle**



The social norm of the dual-earner family has focused new attention on the work-family conflict. In the traditional patriarchal model, described by functionalists in the mid-twentieth century, a man's job was his primary role because it provided the economic support for his family. The wife's role was to support her husband's ability to do his job by managing the household and caring for the family. In the dual-earner family, both partners are likely



to bring home work-related stress, yet the demands of managing the household and raising children together may leave less time for the social and emotional support they need. American sociologist Samuel Ayree studied the impact of work-family conflict on men in the United States and in Hong Kong. In his report he explained that because the family is the primary value in the Confucian society of Hong Kong, work-family conflict threatens a man's satisfaction with his family life more than it does for American men (1999). As family becomes a greater priority in the lives of Canadian men and women, both are beginning to negotiate flexibility with their employers to allow them to maintain their family commitments and improve the level of satisfaction with their lives (Ayree, 1997).

## in focus | Study Dispels Myths About Dual-Career Families

by Darryl Grigg and Jennifer Newman

Dual-income families with children are healthy and thriving, according to new research. That, the researchers argue, means the myth of frazzled working-parents farming their love-starved offspring off to day care is just that, a myth. Colorado State University researchers Shelley Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, Scott Ziemba, and Lisa Current studied 47 dual-income couples and presented their findings in the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. The combined incomes ranged from \$34 000 to \$220 000; the working hours, from 40–45 hours a week; and the occupations, from baker and billing clerk to engineer and lawyer.

All the couples studied were competent and creative in meeting work and home responsibilities, and satisfied with their work and home performance. They believed others saw them as skilled in balancing career and family responsibilities. The couples experienced dual earning and parenthood as mostly a positive experience, and had quality and quantity time with their kids. In short, they defied negative clichés of working parents.



In many dual-income families, both parents work hard at their jobs and negotiate with their employers for flexible hours so that they can make their families their highest priority.

That comes as good news to many of our dual-income clients, who grapple with many erroneous stereotypes. Among them:

- Working mothers turn out bad kids.



- Fathers who are job-obsessed ruin their marriages and neglect their children.
- Parents, particularly working mothers, are universally guilt-ridden for working outside the home.

The researchers found the couples they studied tended to use ten strategies in making their family and work decisions.

1. **They put family first.** The couples interviewed said maintaining a commitment to family is the highest priority. They said they do this by creating regular family time, such as pizza night every Friday. They read bed-time stories to their children. They attend their sporting events. Dual-earners in the study sometimes limited their hours, sacrificed career advancement, made career changes or accepted less prestigious positions to keep family number one, the researchers found. For example, one family decided not to support the father through medical school for eight years, due to the strain his absence would place on the children.
2. **They maintain boundaries.** Successful moms and dads reported keeping as much control over their work as they could. They tended not to allow their careers to dictate the pace of their lives. This meant developing a healthy relationship with their employers, negotiating realistic time lines for projects, and separating family from work by limiting overtime or not taking work home.
3. **They are focused at work.** The limits that balanced earners place on their careers seemed not to affect their productivity. One dad reported he and his spouse pulled more than their weight at work. The couples didn't waste time and reported being efficient and focused while on the job. That way, they kept their options open with their employers.
4. **They find work meaningful.** Couples who can find some enjoyment and purpose at work typically

brought energy and enthusiasm into their lives at home, limiting fatigue and burn-out.

5. **They live simply.** Successful dual-earners tended to consciously simplify their lives by limiting anything that ate into family time, especially television, and too many extracurricular activities. Some families cancelled cable; others allowed only two regular commitments of any sort a week. They controlled their spending to avoid working overtime to pay for expensive cars, getaway places, or the latest appliance, clothing, or piece of equipment. They didn't become obsessive about the neatness of their homes.
6. **They are balanced.** Balanced families resisted the urge to allow the pace of life to dictate what happens in the family. Saying no was helpful to dual-earners, as was having a clear sense of priorities, making family number one, and not allowing others to dictate what is important. They didn't try to keep up with the Joneses. They defined success as having a happy family, happy marriage, and happy work life. The couples interviewed for the study tended to refrain from making a good marriage or a lucrative job the sole measure of success. Keeping the bigger picture in mind helped these families remember what was important to them.
7. **They value time.** Dual-earners tend to be very protective of their time, cautiously deciding how to use it and keeping it sacred.
8. **They are partnerships.** Successful families reported making decisions together. Both partners had equal say and each felt respected, appreciated, and supported by the other. Having a foundation of equality in the relationship was essential to a balanced work-family life. One father said parenting involved both earning and caring. He said it wasn't fair for each parent to work at a job, then have



only the mother come home and do all the housework too. Partners in successfully balanced families appreciated what the other did around the house.

9. **They are proud.** The balanced families didn't accept negative stereotypes about themselves just because they both worked outside the home. They believed dual earning was positive for the whole family and did not feel guilty about their family arrangement. Partners in balanced families tended to achieve personal fulfillment through their children, their spouses, and their work. They recognized all these aspects of their lives provided purpose. Some took pride knowing their children would grow up sharing what happens in a home, viewing women as equal, and seeing dads do chores.
10. **They enjoy family time.** Although their lives were busy and demanding, the families enjoyed a lot of play time. They used it to relax, enjoy life, stay connected emotionally, and guard against stress. Spontaneous moments were treasured, like having a family camp-out in the living room with sleeping bags and a fire in the fireplace.

The researchers acknowledged that striking the perfect balance requires work and dedication. We believe the struggle for family-work balance will continue but, at the least, this research can allow working parents to breathe a sigh of relief. ■

**Source:** *Ottawa Citizen*. (2001, Dec. 29). p. H4. Dr. Jennifer Newman and Dr. Darryl Grigg are registered psychologists and directors of Newman & Grigg Psychological and Consulting Services, a Vancouver-based corporate training and development partnership. Identifying information in cases cited has been changed to protect confidentiality.

1. What criteria are used to measure the success of a dual-income parenting lifestyle?
2. What are the negative stereotypes of dual-income parenting, and what behaviour would "defy the negative clichés"?
3. What costs and benefits would you expect to face in a dual-income family?
4. From a functionalist perspective, how is Canadian society changing to support the functioning of dual-income families?
5. Suggest how symbolic interactionism would explain the satisfaction that these families feel with a dual-income lifestyle.

The new role for men who are making a commitment to family life is involved fatherhood (Gerson, 2001). Most involved fathers have working wives, and the remaining few are single fathers. Although some fathers are becoming equal partners in childrearing, 60 percent define themselves as "mother's helper." Men are more likely to choose the tasks they take on than women are, but they are performing more of the housework and child-care tasks than in the past, and are maintaining previous levels of play and nurturing duties (Galinsky, 2000). Men now face the same trade-off that women faced when they became working mothers. The new man and the new woman must choose whether to spend time with their children, at work earning money to support the family, or on leisure activities for themselves. Balancing the long-term and short-term benefits of time used for family, work, and self presents ongoing challenges (Gerson, 2001). Children raised in dual-earner families turn out well, and could make the



“double shift” worthwhile for the current generation (Conway, 1997). These children have less traditional views of male and female roles, which could mean that future generations will have less difficulty adapting to the new family structure. An interesting side effect of the dual-earner family is that men are limiting the size of their families. Whether this is initiated by the wife or the husband, men agree to have fewer children because of the amount of work it takes to raise a child (Gerson, 2001).

From a social exchange perspective, the dual-earner family that has become the social norm for Canadians has costs and benefits for both men and women. The time and money required for raising children when both parents work motivates these couples to have fewer children than families in which the woman stays at home (Gerson, 2001). Men do more housework and report that they have less sex than men whose wives do not work outside the home. Both men and women have less leisure time and have less flexibility in their jobs. However, women report that they find work satisfying. The larger family income combined with the smaller family size provide economic benefits for the family, but the social prestige resulting from larger family income sometimes creates hostility and envy for men whose colleagues’ wives are not employed. Men and women in dual-earner families are generally happy with their choice because it meets their needs. John Conway concludes that men do not miss the power that they had in the patriarchal family model. He speculates that, although men now have to compete with women for jobs and do more work at home, working women improve the family income and reduce the stress on men to be the sole provider (1997).



An increased life expectancy and improved health has resulted in an increase in the age of adults who assume some responsibility for their aging parents.

## Middle Adulthood

The years between 40 and 65 are commonly referred to as “middle adulthood.” In the mid-twentieth century, this stage was called the “launching years” and the “empty nest” because when children left home, the parenting role was complete. For couples who delayed childbearing until their late twenties or early thirties, the trend for young adults to remain at home longer means that their nest may be occupied by grown children until the parents are almost 60. Middle adulthood can be a stable period. The 45- to 54-years age group has the highest average income in Canada, the major responsibilities of raising children are complete, and marriages are over the peak divorce hurdle. The challenges of middle adulthood are the



**Number of Income Recipients and Their Average Income in Constant (1995) Dollars by Sex and Age Groups, for Canada, 1990 and 1995**

Age Groups	Number of Income Recipients				Average Income \$			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	1990	1995	1990	1995	1990	1995	1990	1995
Total –								
Age groups	9 882 395	10 516 805	9 542 490	10 399 955	33 733	31 117	19 630	19 208
15–19 years	621 205	584 530	573 065	542 675	5 370	4 350	4 561	3 813
20–24 years	930 830	916 035	898 630	891 695	16 326	12 433	12 869	9 815
25–34 years	2 346 605	2 191 875	2 173 985	2 088 455	32 464	28 435	21 404	20 161
35–44 years	2 127 875	2 370 835	1 958 430	2 239 760	43 375	38 935	24 835	24 157
45–54 years	1 461 135	1 827 570	1 275 965	1 673 415	46 199	42 787	24 215	24 772
55–64 years	1 142 500	1 211 090	1 006 030	1 113 105	39 026	35 628	18 736	18 078
65–69 years	480 570	519 640	561 520	566 180	30 686	28 540	16 544	16 157
70 years and over	771 675	895 220	1 094 875	1 284 390	25 288	25 140	17 294	17 130

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada web site <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census96/may12/t1.htm>.

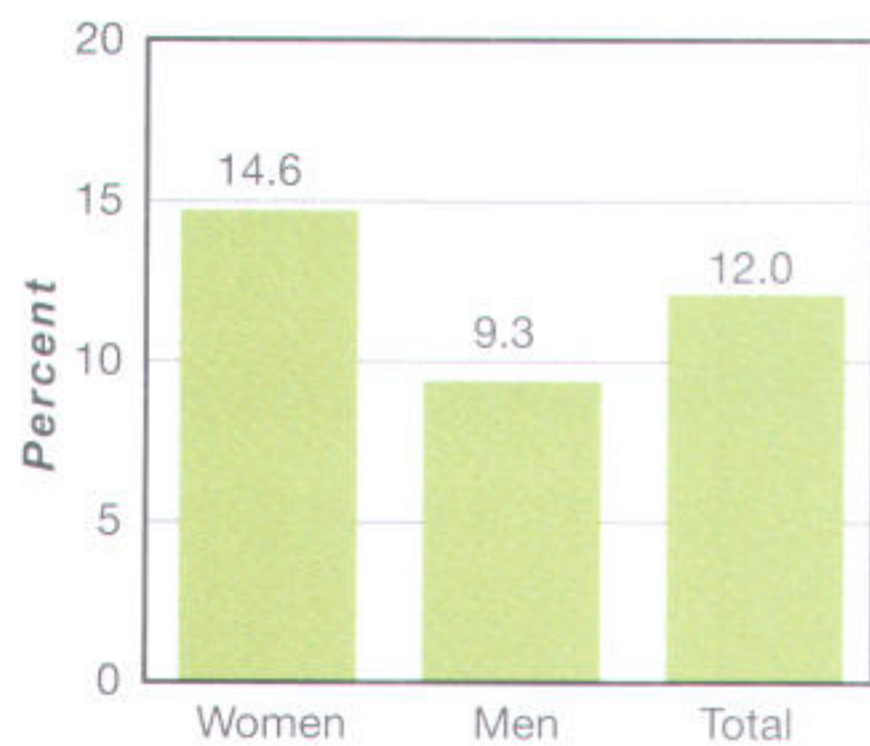
couple's adjustment in their relationship to adult children, assuming care for their parents, taking on a grandparenting role, and planning for and adjusting to retirement from the workplace.

## Family Responsibilities

Relationships within families change in middle adulthood. As children are launched from the family to begin independent lives in their own households, the family contracts. However, the extended family network may actually become closer. A major role of women in midlife is that of **kin-keeper**, a cross-cultural expectation that women will organize family events and maintain contact with family members. Among middle-aged women in Canada, 57 per cent report that they are responsible for organizing family life (McDaniels, 2001). However, as women take on broader roles in the workplace and the community, their traditional role as kin-keeper may be affected. Men may take on some of these responsibilities as part of the changing role they play when their wives are working. In addition, sibling relationships become closer in middle adulthood, perhaps because those who have reached midlife



### Percentage of People Aged 25–54 Providing Both Unpaid Child Care and Care Assistance to a Senior, 1996



Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada web site [http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/Family/pdf/ch3\\_10e.pdf](http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/Family/pdf/ch3_10e.pdf).

no longer feel the need to compete (Nett, 1988). An increasing number of adults are providing some care to older family members, from performing errands and chores to providing full-time care within the extended family.

Women in midlife shoulder most of the burden of caring for older parents who become physically dependent on others. Most Canadians say that they would prefer not to be cared for by their families if physical care becomes necessary, but sometimes their financial situation leaves no other option (McDaniel, 2001). Social policies in Canada assume that the family will take care of its older members in the same way that they take care of other dependents. Reducing the length of hospital stays and sending people home to be cared for decreases the costs to the health care system but increases the costs to individuals who provide the care (McDaniel, 1998). Because of the improved health life

### in focus | The Traditional Italian *Sistemazione*

Franc Sturino interviewed 92 Italian immigrants in the mid-1970s who had emigrated to Toronto between 1947 and 1967. All were from peasant family backgrounds, having originated from farming families in rural parts of Calabria. All would have worked in the agricultural sector if they had remained in Italy, but all those interviewed settled into urban Toronto and found employment in trades and businesses associated with a large urban Canadian community, usually with the help of their sponsors. The purpose of Sturino's study was to examine the organization of the family system as it was in Italy to the roles and organization of the family system as it developed in Canada.

In rural Calabria, in the middle part of the last century, the expectation was that the father's role was that of provider and the mother was expected to be



The Italian tradition of *sistemazione* ensured that young couples had the resources they needed to raise a family.



homemaker. Men worked the family holding and laboured co-operatively with their kinfolk when major tasks, such as harvesting, had to be completed. Marriage was seen as a rite of passage into adulthood. It was expected that the family assets or wealth were to be used by the parents to provide all of their children of both genders with the material resources necessary to establish their independence as adults. As such, under the traditional expectation called *sistemazione*, the family wealth was viewed as a communal asset and the father's role was to hold it in trust for the benefit of other family members. A father who allowed the family wealth to decline was, therefore, viewed as being irresponsible and unworthy by the community.

Sturino found that family roles in Canada were much the same as they were in rural Italy. The father remained the principle, if not sole, provider, and the mother was again expected to run the family home and to raise the children. Often, the Italian-Canadian woman worked outside the family home, but her earnings were always considered secondary to that of her husband. Interestingly, Sturino found that home ownership replaced the owning and working of land to ensure the status and dominance of the father in the family system. Finally, like in Italy, children were expected to show respect for their parents and to live with them until they were married. Once again, marriage was seen as the real transition into adulthood by most people in the community.

In his study, Sturino identified a system or expectation of the society that he called *sistemazione*. By this, he meant that it was the duty of the father and mother to successfully marry off each of their children and to provide them with the material resources that they needed to establish a separate household independent from their parents. Because Italians use

a bilateral kinship system, the expectation was that part of the family assets would be provided to the newly married son or daughter to help them at this time. In rural Italy, *sistemazione* meant that a son would receive some land and a daughter was provided with a dowry and trousseau. In Toronto, the system continued but in a slightly different form. For the newly married man, a substantial cash gift replaced the endowment of land, whereas the newly married women received a dowry and trousseau that included modern electrical conveniences. Parents also bought furniture and major appliances for both sexes. Finally, if the family was wealthy enough, parents of either the bride or the groom or both sets of parents together would simply purchase a house for the newly married couple to discharge their obligation. Families who could not afford this would give cash or lend money to the couple so that they could afford a house, or they might have the couple live with them so that they could save the money necessary to purchase a house. This custom prevailed because the expectation of the Italian-Canadian family was that the family's wealth was held in common and that it would be transferred to family members at such time that they had most need, and not transferred at the death of the parents in the form of an inheritance. ■

**Source:** Franc Sturino, "Family and Kin Cohesion Among Southern Italian Immigrants in Toronto," in K. Ishwaran (ed.), *Canadian Families: Ethnic Variations*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1980. Reproduced with permission of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

1. What is the meaning of *sistemazione*?
2. How is *sistemazione* different from or similar to the expectations concerning family wealth in your culture?
3. What are the costs and benefits of *sistemazione*?
4. If all Canadian families practised *sistemazione*, what changes in financial planning would be required?



expectancy of older Canadians, their physical dependency often coincides with the retirement of their caregivers. In some cases, women take early retirement to be available to care for a parent. Currently, social policies consider the effects on those who require care but not on those who provide it. Although family care can be both socially and financially beneficial for seniors, loss of employment, increase in part-time work, or early retirement can have long-term effects on the middle-aged caregiver's income and pension, which could prove costly (McDaniel, 2001).

## Grandparenting

In the nineteenth century, few people had grandparents. The role of grandparent developed in the twentieth century, when couples had children while they were young, when their children married younger and had children even earlier than their parents did, and when people lived longer. Most children today have contact with at least one grandparent, and some children have great-grandparents. Grandparenting is taken on voluntarily and has no defined responsibilities. Since many Canadians now become grandparents in their forties or fifties, grandparents are younger, are probably working, and are living active, independent lives (McPherson, 1991). Although one in five

children have no contact with a grandparent, 40 percent see them at least once a month (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). How grandparents interact with their grandchildren depends on how close they live to them, the age of the children, the extent to which the parents facilitate the relationship between their children and the grandparents, and the grandparents' lifestyle (McPherson, 1991).

Although grandparenting is a new family role, many expectations for the role have developed. Since grandparents usually do not live with their grandchildren and have intermittent contact with them, grandparents rarely have a major role in raising them, but they can serve an important role in the socialization of their grandchildren. Grandparents provide a valuable role as family historian, linking children with their family, ethnic, and cultural past. In particular, they might help adolescents who are



As parents delay having children until they are older, the role of grandparents is changing. Grandparents can be the family historians who pass on the family mythology.



forming an identity to place themselves in an ancestral context. Grandparents serve as role models for older adulthood and may counteract the stereotypical images of later life. They may act as mentors who are experienced in life transitions, and as the ultimate support person for crises or transitions within the family. Grandparents with enough money often provide gifts of luxuries (Wilcoxin, 1991). Individuals develop their own roles as grandparents since they are free of any defined roles based on gender or age.

Grandparenting is a reciprocal relationship that satisfies the needs of the older generation. Grandparents might receive more affection and recognition from their grandchildren than they did from their children because they are free of the obligation to be a disciplinarian. On the other hand, there is some potential for problems. The desire to become grandparents sometimes motivates parents to put pressure on their children to have children of their own (Wilcoxin, 1991). If grandparents and grandchildren form a cross-generational alliance when there is conflict between parent and child, they can interfere with the parent's ability to raise his or her children independently (Wilcoxin, 1991). As children get older, they generally have less contact with their grandparents, especially during adolescence. The grandparents' decreased contact with their children or grandchildren does not appear to affect feelings of loneliness or life satisfaction for them in later life, perhaps because they volunteer for the role of grandparents as much as they need to, to meet their own needs (Dulude, 1991).

## Retirement

Retirement is another twentieth-century development resulting from the increase in life expectancy. **Retirement** is defined as voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from the workplace. Since the age of retirement is 65 in Canada, it has also served as an informal rite of passage into later life for people. However, the age of retirement has been declining rapidly, so that by 1995, 60 percent of men retired early (Carey, 1995). David Teffler, the author of *50+ Survival Guide*, suggests that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are only three phases to life: the first is spent preparing for adulthood, the second is spent working, and the third is spent in retirement (1998). As life expectancy increases and the age at retirement decreases, Canadians will spend more of their life span not working.

Retirement is promoted as the “golden years,” in which working people are rewarded for years of labour by having years of leisure. For a society, mandatory retirement ensured that older workers left the workplace so that middle-aged workers could take their place and vacate entry-level positions



intended for young adults. When the older generation is smaller than the successive generations, as was the case in the 1970s and 1980s, retirement eases the intergenerational conflict for job opportunities (McPherson, 1991). Also, when workers are paid more for their seniority, early retirement can reduce the labour costs for employers. Retirement as the norm for adults in their late fifties or early sixties raises some stereotypes about the productivity of older workers, and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find jobs. However, research on the workplace roles of middle-aged adults suggests that they exhibit more productivity, less absenteeism, and greater participation (McPherson, 1990). Early-retirement plans were implemented in the 1990s to enable the large baby-boom generation to move into senior positions and give the smaller baby-bust generation some mobility. It is anticipated that, in the twenty-first century, companies will continue to encourage the baby boomers to retire early to make room at the bottom of the career ladder for the larger echo-boom generation that is entering the workplace.

At retirement, individuals experience a dramatic change in lifestyle and a reduced income. Social policies attempt to reduce the financial hardship of retirement. In 1927, the Canadian government introduced means-tested pensions for those who were 65 and who qualified as low income. This program evolved into the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). The Canada and Quebec Pension Plans (CPP/QPP), formerly called Old Age Security, were introduced in 1966 and began paying full benefits to the cohort who turned 65 in 1976.



Financial planning in middle adulthood can ensure that people's retirement income is sufficient to enable them to maintain their lifestyle.

All working Canadians are required to pay CPP/QPP premiums and receive a pension based on total earnings when they reach 65 years. In addition, private occupational pension plans provide a retirement income for about 40 percent of Canadians who were employed. Individuals are also encouraged to invest money in Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs), investment funds that are tax-sheltered until they are withdrawn for income, usually in retirement. The income available for retirement depends on total employment earnings, the availability of occupational pension plans, and the success of investments.

Retirement incomes are improving. Many of today's seniors lived in a traditional patriarchal family structure. Since women were less likely to be employed, most had no occupational pensions



### Changes in Income by Source and Income Quintile, Population 65+, 1980–1990

Quintile*	Disposable Income (minus taxes)	Employment	Private Pension	Other Market Income	OAS**/GIS	CPP/QPP	Other Transfers	Taxes
<b>Bottom</b>								
1980	8 805	124	233	665	6 433	666	720	35
1990	11 573	111	217	604	8 435	1 513	943	250
<b>Change</b>	2 768	-13	-16	-61	2 002	847	223	215
<b>Second</b>								
1980	12 485	436	684	1 764	7 432	1 362	856	50
1990	15 188	452	996	1 955	7 686	3 452	935	289
<b>Change</b>	2 703	16	312	191	254	2 090	79	239
<b>Third</b>								
1980	16 334	2 535	1 774	3 299	6 159	2 078	858	369
1990	19 074	2 073	2 066	3 903	6 031	4 233	1 082	1 314
<b>Change</b>	2 740	-462	1 292	604	-128	2 155	224	945
<b>Fourth</b>								
1980	23 672	7 468	3 614	6 580	5 027	2 053	744	1 814
1990	25 812	5 929	5 776	6 671	5 422	4 640	1 064	3 689
<b>Change</b>	2 140	-1 539	2 162	91	395	2 587	320	1 875
<b>Top</b>								
1980	42 389	19 990	6 939	16 104	4 668	2 325	627	8 265
1990	42 719	13 706	11 612	17 545	5 236	4 748	1 110	11 238
<b>Change</b>	330	-6 284	4 673	1 441	568	2 423	483	2 973

\* Quintile means 20 percent, so "bottom quintile" represents the lowest 20 percent of income earners.

\*\* OAS is Old Age Security, which was replaced by the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan.

**Note:** RRSP income is included with private pensions.

**Source:** John Myles, *The Maturation of Canada's Retirement Income System: Income Levels, Income Inequality and Low Income Among the Elderly*, Statistics Canada and Florida State University. Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series*, Catalogue 11F0018MPE, No. 147.

or CPP/QPP contributions and, consequently, were dependent on their husbands. However, women who had been employed had pensions to increase the family income. The parents of the baby-boom generation had less financial hardship than previous cohorts did, because they were more likely to have had steady employment income, private pensions, and investments in RRSPs. Concerns about the size of the baby-boom generation and its impact on the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans developed in the 1980s. As a result, the CPP/QPP premiums were increased by the federal government to generate more revenue to pay the pensions. However, fewer younger men and women have occupational pension plans, perhaps because of the decline in stable,



#### web connection

[www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12](http://www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12)

To learn about changing middle and later life in Canada, go to the web site above for *Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society* to see where to go next.



unionized employment. This could affect retirement income if it is not offset by the pressure for individuals to invest independently for their retirement, using RRSPs. Preparing for retirement income is now considered to be a long-term financial responsibility that should be undertaken by individuals in early adulthood.

## The Roles of Seniors in Canada

“Old age” is currently defined as beginning at age 65, the retirement age. There are more seniors in Canada than ever before (Statistics Canada, 1997). People aged 65 and older are currently 12.2 percent of the Canadian population, compared with 11.6 percent in 1991, and 8.1 percent in 1971. In 1996, Canadians aged 65 could expect to live an average of another 18.1 years, and even longer in urban areas (Statistics Canada, Health Indicators). This is longer than the average life expectancy they had at birth, because life expectancy increases as individuals age and survive the peak times of morbidity, which are infancy and adolescence. Women continue to have a longer life expectancy than men, although the gap in life expectancy is narrowing from 7.1 years in 1981 to 5.5 years in 1998 (Statistics Canada, 2001). With two decades or more to go, seniors are questioning whether the “golden years of leisure” are a full-enough life.

The lifestyles of older people in Canada reflect those they had earlier in their lives. Currently in Canada, most older families are aged patriarchal families in which most women had little work experience and therefore have little independent pension now (McPherson, 1990; Dulude, 1991). As a result, older couples continue to live on a one-pension income, while younger families are requiring two incomes. Also, economic problems are greater for widowed or divorced women than for men. Their concerns about income are greater, because there are more older women. The prospects for the baby-boom generation in old age look better because the women married men who were closer in age, had fewer children that kept them out of the workplace, entered the work force and received pensions of their own, and got improved incomes in better jobs (Dulude, 1991). Men’s health is better than women’s in old age, perhaps because they have someone to look after them and women don’t, because they are likely to be widowed, but more recent cohorts of men and women have been healthier (Dulude, 1991). The declining gender difference in life expectancy and in the age at marriage could mean that seniors will be more likely to live as couples with two-pension incomes.

The majority of seniors are financially independent, not destitute, dependent, or lonely. They are dependent on government transfers, such as the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan and Guaranteed Income Supplement, for

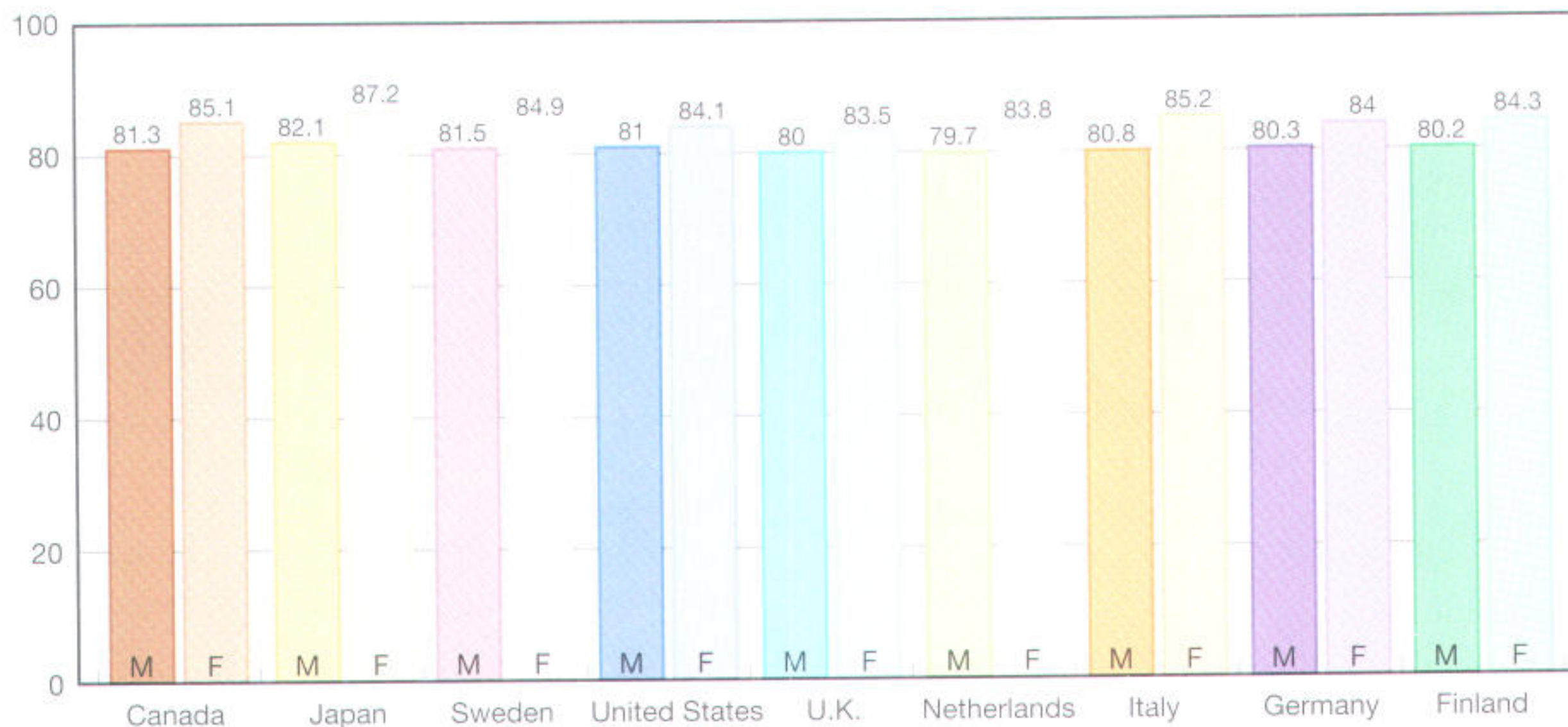
*“Age only matters  
when one is aging.  
Now that I have  
arrived at a great  
age, I might just as  
well be twenty.”*

—Pablo Picasso



## Growing Old in Canada

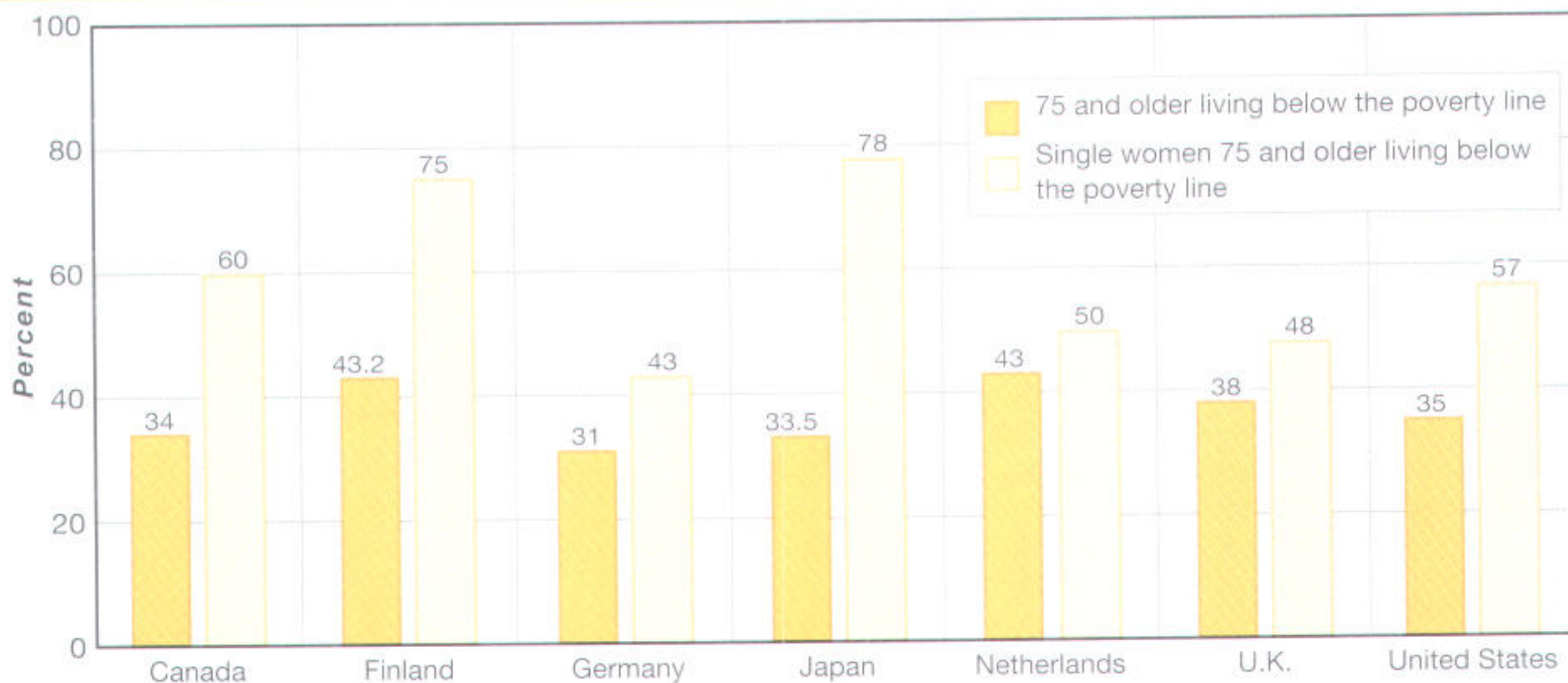
Life expectancy: Canada is near the top in life expectancy for those who reach age 65



Source: *The Toronto Star*, (2001, June 16), using data from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; Statistics Canada; Canadian Institute of Health Information.

## Growing Old in Canada

Poverty: Seniors in Canada are, on average, better off financially than those in most other countries, measured by the percentage living below the poverty line



Source: *The Toronto Star*, (2001, June 16), using data from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; Statistics Canada; Canadian Institute of Health Information.



## in focus | Dr. Susan A. McDaniel, Sociologist

Susan McDaniel was born in New York City in 1946. She completed a B.A. at The University of Massachusetts, an M.A. at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and came to Canada to complete a Ph.D. at the University of Alberta in 1977. She has taught sociology at the University of Waterloo and the University of Alberta.

Throughout her career, Dr. McDaniel has focused on the sociology of the family and has an impressive list of over 150 publications, including research articles, essays, and scholarly books. Much of her research over the last quarter-century has examined the relationship between Canada's aging population and social policy in Canada. A common theme in her work is the ways that generations support one another and, in particular, the role of older people in the family. She has been a frequent speaker at national and international conferences on the family. She was a speaker at the United Nations Closing Conference for The International Year of the Family. In 1994, she was appointed to the Expert Task Force on Women & Social Security.

Dr. McDaniel does not subscribe to the view of an aging population being a drain on younger generations. In a 1998 essay in *Policy Options* (p. 38), she concludes:

It does seem, however, that familial transfers tend, as they have historically, to be from elders to children for the most part, rather than from children to elders. The degree to which elders,

Susan McDaniel is a professor of sociology and a prominent Canadian researcher on the impact of social policy on families.



as a function of cohort, historical accident, or long-held values, continue to support their children well into adulthood and sometimes into the children's retirement, remains one of the gifts of families to public policy. In this sense as well as others, intergenerational sharing promotes social cohesion rather than promoting tensions, as mutual reciprocal obligations cement social solidarity and continuity from one generation to the next.

Susan McDaniel combines research with an active teaching career that earned her the Award for Teaching Excellence for the Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta, in 1994. She finds time to maintain a family life with her common-law partner, and for various leisure activities centred on the outdoors: hiking, wildlife observation, and photography. However, she lists "sociology" as her first interest. She says of herself, "Sociology is more than what I do; it defines what I am. My success as a sociologist is attributable to my boundless curiosity about the social world." ■

their income, but other sources, such as occupational pension plans and Registered Retirement Savings Plans, are increasing in value (Carey, 1999; Myles, 2000). Transfers of financial support within the family continue to flow from the older generation to the younger generation, as seniors provide



## Living Arrangements of Seniors, 1991



**Notes:** "In private households" refers to a person who occupies a private dwelling. "Collective households" refers to a person who occupies a collective dwelling, such as a home for the aged, nursing home, or hospital.  
**Source:** Prepared by Centre for International Statistics, Vanier Institute of the Family, *Profiling Canada's Families*, 1994.

financial help with buying homes, child care, assistance with tuition costs, and eventually inheritance (Nett, 1993; McDaniel, 2001). Forty percent of seniors also provide assistance to their families in the form of household help, transportation, or health care (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994).

Most seniors in Canada are living independently in their own homes, and the proportion is increasing (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). Only 3 percent of Canadian families are extended families. The majority of three-generation households are immigrant families from cultures with a tradition of extended families or result from family reunification (Che-Alford & Hamm, 1999). Seniors do not want to live with children, preferring independent homes or an institution close to their children. Older people who live with their families are those who are in the poorest health (Dulude, 1991). However, the extended



by C. F. Stuart-Russell

After some careful thought on two years of life in a seniors' building, I have found that psychologically, it is too damaging. As seniors in a new and beautiful building, we started out right. We organized and formed a residents' association. A few—too few and always the same few—ran a raft of weekly events. Some of the activities met with success, like bingo and anything to do with food—potluck dinners, Canada Day barbecues, hot lunches, and Christmas dinners. But at weekly events, attendance was disappointing. And not because people did not want to come. Human beings tend to be creatures of habit. Most seniors become more rigidly so. I noted the same few always turned out for the same weekly events. The people who came to the coffee mornings did not attend the cards-and-games evening. Those interested in crafts did not show for the dancing and social. The social people did not take in the movie. It was impossible to get the people to change. They pursued what they liked and would not try anything new. Unfortunately, with so few participants—some 15 out of close to 200 residents—it was too much to expect the volunteers to sacrifice their personal activities every week. Consequently, regular activities were virtually cancelled. Not that this was so derogatory in itself. A new approach by the residents' association committee could possibly correct the regular activities problem. But the committee cannot correct the difficulty in getting the resident seniors to come downstairs in large numbers for a particular event.

Elderly people get sick, many regularly and on a daily basis. Today they feel great. Tomorrow—a fall, arthritis, chest, leg, or arm pains—it's crisis time.



The author of this article believes that there shouldn't be seniors-only residences, but a mixture of all different age groups, to provide enduring relationships for older people.

Then often by the following week—sometimes even the next day—they are feeling fine again. And it is this “no mix” arrangement—all being seniors in one building—which is all wrong. Seniors do not want too many babies around, but a variety of age groups from the early 20s (even the odd couple with a child) and up would be more beneficial than our building's current seniors-only arrangement. And the reason it is damaging? People who are not “family” become friends. The tragedy is friends move into one's life



and touch it deeply. You hear the fears and the anguish and the sorrows. And then friends die and the ache that lingers becomes as powerful as when a family member passes on. But unlike family, where deaths are hopefully spaced out over time, death in my seniors-only building strikes as many as three or five times in a single week. “The wise man seeks death all his life and therefore death is not terrible to him,” Socrates wrote. But in a seniors-only building, when too many of one’s new friends die so regularly and quickly, the reminder of death might not be terrible, but it is psychologically very, very depressing.

A better mix of all age groups in such residences would be more uplifting and probably quite rewarding.

Just watching young people makes even the very elderly feel much less old. ■

Source: *The Toronto Star*. (1995, January 31).

1. What living arrangements are preferred by older Canadians?
2. What are the costs and benefits of living in a seniors-only community?
3. Apply the functionalist perspective to suggest why the problems identified in this article occur.
4. What living arrangements would you like your parents or guardians to have when they are older? How should a family system be structured so that goal will be attainable?

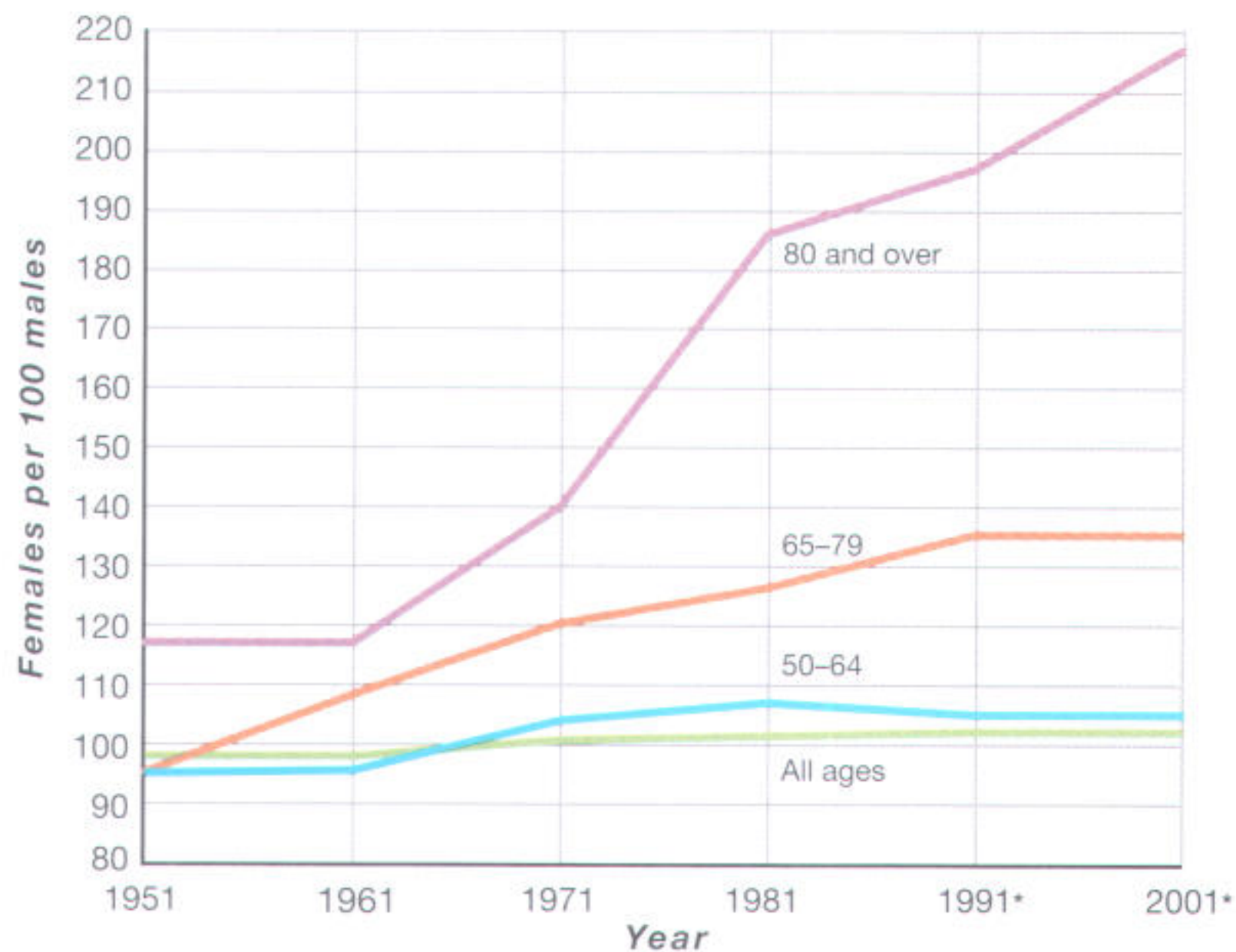
family is twice as likely to provide health-related support not for the oldest member of the family, but for a disabled child or parent (Che-Alford & Hamm, 1999). In the last decades of the twentieth century, new institutions of care and health monitoring technology were developed that enable older people to combine independent living with the required health care support (Bangston & deTerre, 1991).

## Bereavement

Marriage is much more likely to be dissolved by death in old age, not by divorce. The death of a spouse is the most stressful and disruptive event in life. Post-retirement marriages are happier, perhaps the happiest since the time of being newlyweds (Dulude, 1991). This may be because older people are better at resolving problems (Dym & Glenn, 1993). Another theory suggests that senior couples are tough marriage survivors (Dulude, 1991). Because women have traditionally married men who are several years older, and because the life expectancy of men is shorter by several years, women are more likely than men to be widowed (Dulude, 1991). Women will probably spend their final years alone, while men are likely to die with a wife and family around them. In 1988, fewer than 40 percent of older women were currently



### The Ratio of Females to Males in Selected Age Groups, Canada, 1951–2001



\*The "High-growth" scenario here, in fact, is based on a growth rate just above replacement level. This is a much lower rate of growth than occurred in Canada during the Depression years.

**Source:** Reprinted with permission from McDaniel (1986, p. 109).

**Original Source:** Canada. 1983. *Fact Book on Aging in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, p. 21. Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 2002.

married. About 10 percent of women remarry, but widowers have twice the chance of remarrying (Boyd, 1988).

Men have more difficulty adjusting to the death of their spouse than women do. Men tend to have a greater dependence on their wives for meeting their needs. Traditionally, they have had fewer close friends and depend on their partners for companionship. Women, as the kin-keepers, have more actively maintained family ties and have closer relationships with their children and friends. Men may have difficulty maintaining these ties. They have performed fewer household skills in the past, so the loss of their wives has a greater impact on their lifestyles. Men are more likely to seek another marriage partner when they are widowed. However, there is a high suicide rate among recently bereaved men (Dulude, 1991).

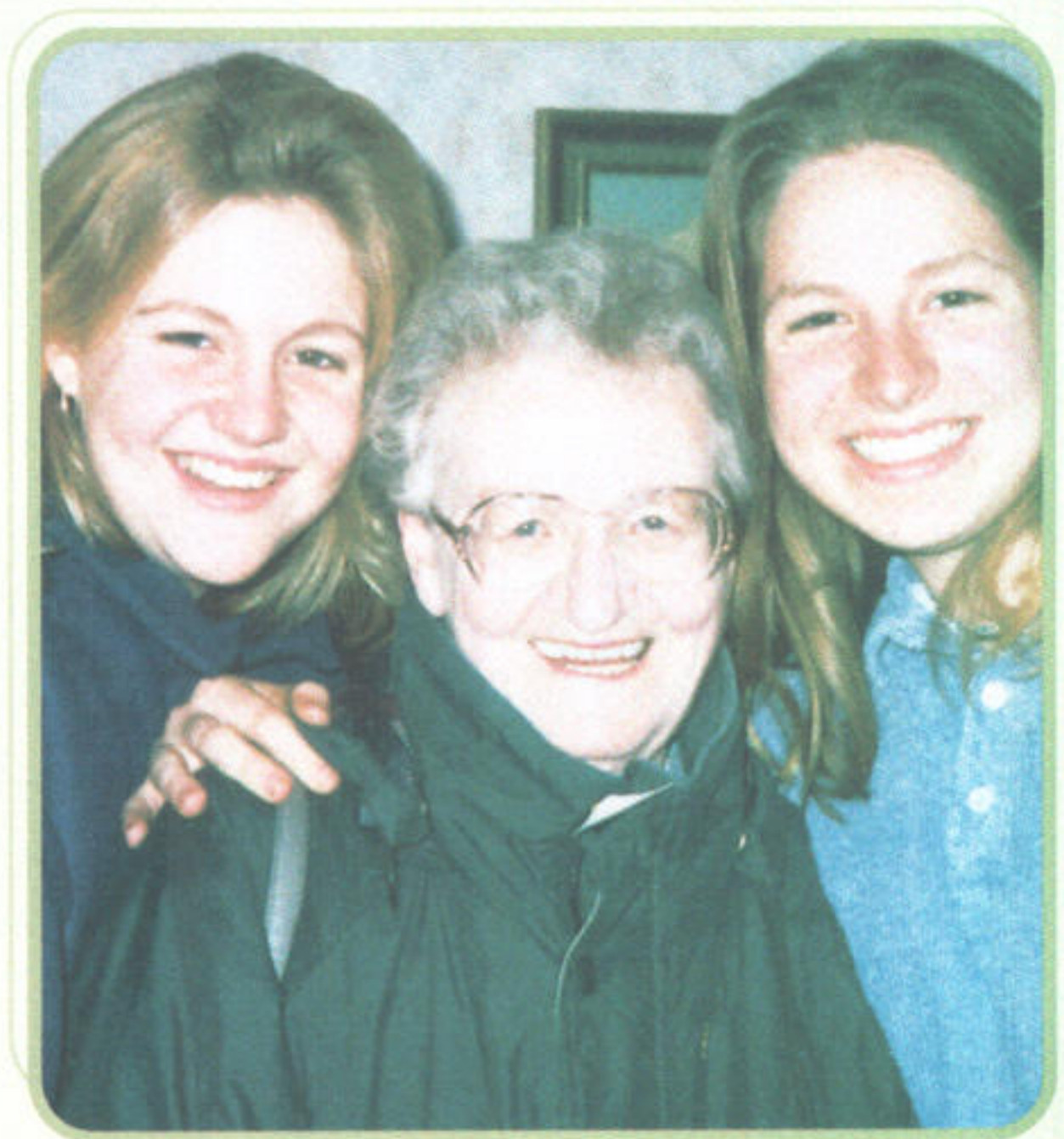


The older a woman is when her husband dies, the more likely she is to live alone. Three-quarters of Canada's older widows are living on their own, but few of them report being lonely (Carey, 1999). Women are less likely to remarry than men, and they are usually unwilling to live with someone else, perhaps because the challenge of negotiating a domestic relationship is not worth the benefits. Most older women today left home before they were 25, married, had children, stayed married for an average of 39 years, and were widowed at an average age of 63. Many women have strong social support networks. They maintain close ties with their children and surviving siblings. Widows have friends and neighbours for company, but see less of couples and more of other women (Carey, 1999). Contrary to concerns about those who live alone, victimization declines with age (McPherson, 1990).

### case study | Margaret's Lifetime of Memories

Margaret Johnson was born Margaret Lancaster in England in 1921. Her father was a grocery store manager. When Margaret's mother died in 1926, her father remarried and she was raised by a stepmother. Her childhood was a happy one, and she did all the things that English schoolgirls were able to do growing up in the 1920s and 1930s. Margaret was a good athlete and developed a life-long interest in sports. She became a very accomplished tennis player and was an excellent forward on her town's youth field hockey team. Her stepmother died when Margaret was 14, and her life took a new direction. Once again her father remarried, this time to a woman with whom Margaret had difficulty relating. Not able to get along with her father's new wife, she eventually moved in with her Aunt Beatrice and her aunt's two best friends. It was while living with them that Margaret met her husband, Ted.

Ted had enlisted in the Canadian Air Force in 1939 and had been sent to England shortly after



Margaret and her granddaughters share a close relationship.



basic training. He was stationed at a nearby air base and had been brought to Margaret's twenty-first birthday party by a mutual friend. Their romance developed quickly, but the difficulties in wartime England meant that the time they spent together was short and intermittent. Margaret knew that marrying Ted would mean she would have to move to Canada, and the thought of leaving her family and friends made the decision difficult, but eventually she agreed to do so. Soon after she and Ted were married in 1945, Margaret travelled by ship to Halifax and was one of thousands of new Canadian "war brides." Some of the other women on the ship became her lifelong friends, although they settled in communities across the country.

Margaret and Ted had two sons—John, born in 1945, and Grant, born in 1950. They bought a house in the west end of Toronto, near Ted's parents. Although they experienced some financial difficulties, especially when Ted lost his job during the recession of 1957, their life together was a happy one. Ted did not earn a high income, so Margaret worked part-time as a church secretary once her sons were in school. She and Ted had an active social life, primarily centred around his family, outdoor recreation such as hiking and camping, and the activities of raising their two sons. When Ted died of cancer in 1971, Margaret began to work full time and continued to do so until she retired at age 65. Although she was only 49 when she was widowed, Margaret never remarried. The next phase of her life centred around her job, her female friends, and her family.

As a widow, Margaret found the adjustment difficult. She missed the companionship of Ted as well as the social life that they enjoyed together as a couple. She found herself spending more and more time with single women and other widows. Since Margaret was

able to manage her finances with the help of her son as she grew older, she found that she was able to indulge in some of her lifelong interests, including music, theatre, sports, and travelling. Every year she has travelled with different friends to different destinations in North America and Europe. Her social life in Toronto has been very active, since she lawn bowls every day during the summer months and goes regularly to the symphony, to the theatre, and to as many Blue Jays games as she can.

Margaret has also taken pleasure in her growing family. Both of her sons married and had children. She has enjoyed being a mother-in-law and a grandmother. Because her sons also live in Toronto, Margaret has spent a lot of time with Grant's family and has an active and warm relationship with his three children. She never said no when Grant or Pamela asked if she could babysit, especially when the children were sick. She attended their games when they were on school teams, and often took them on excursions. Today, she continues to be an important part of her adult grandchildren's lives, particularly with Emma and Colleen, whom she enjoys visiting and telling stories of her life and of their father's life when he was growing up. She has become the family archivist and has written about her life as a girl in England and the early years of her life with Ted. She e-mails Emma, Colleen, and Andy regularly now that she is an "on-line grannie."

Now in her eighties, Margaret continues to be active. She cherishes her independence and still lives in the house that she and Ted bought so many years ago, although she finds that she has become more dependent on her two sons to do some of the routine chores and maintenance that come with being a homeowner. She often gets frustrated now that her body will not allow her to do all the things that she



would like it to, but she still keeps up all her activities with the “girls.” As her circle of friends becomes smaller as she ages, Margaret is enjoying keeping track of her expanding family more and more. As the matriarch of the Johnson clan, she can’t wait for the first great-grandchild to be born! ■

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1. How has Margaret’s role in her family changed as she has grown older?

2. Using the perspective of symbolic interactionism, suggest how factors in Margaret’s earlier life have affected her desire to live independently as an older woman.
3. What is the basis of Margaret’s relationship with her grandchildren? Redraw the genogram in Chapter 2 to depict the nature of these relationships.
4. Predict the effect on the Johnson family if Margaret were to move in with them. Redraw the genogram to illustrate the possible changes in the family system.



# chapter 12 Review and Apply

## Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry

1. Distinguish between work-family conflict and family-work conflict, and summarize the effect that each has on dual-earner families.
2. How has women's employment affected family life at the following stages?
  - family with young children
  - midlife
  - the empty nest
  - retirement
  - later life
3. How has the increasing life expectancy of Canadians over the last 150 years changed family relationships?
4. Why are seniors less likely to be poor now than 50 years ago?
5. Why is it difficult to predict what life will be like for future generations based on the experience of earlier cohorts?

## Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry Communication

6. Have fathers benefited or suffered from their wives' working outside the home? Using the social exchange theory, write an essay supporting your opinion on the impact of dual-earner families on fathers.
7. Collect advertising images that reflect aging in later adulthood. Write a critique of the advertisers' perceptions, and speculate on the impact they have on the lives of older Canadians.
8. Examine the graph Cohort Differences and the Aging Process, on page 387. Design a graph that displays the life course of Canadians against the major social and political events of the twentieth century.



9. Using data from the table Changes in Income by Source and Income Quintile, Population 65+, 1980–1990, on page 403, design a chart to compare the percentage of income derived from each source in 1980 and 1990 for each quintile.
10. Conduct a survey to compare where older Canadians would prefer to live, with where their adult children would prefer them to live. Compare the data with the Living Arrangements of Seniors, 1991 chart on page 407, and present your data in a chart in which you predict the living arrangements of seniors in 2010.



# chapter 13

## Adult Life and Theories of Aging

### KEY TERMS

activity theory of aging  
despair  
generativity  
gerotranscendence  
integrity  
midlife transition  
non-event  
orderly change model  
phases  
psychological clock  
seasons  
social construction theory  
stability template model  
stagnation  
theory of random change  
wisdom

### CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

While reading this chapter, you will:

- describe the development of individuals at different stages of life, drawing on a variety of developmental theories
- analyze several viewpoints on similarities and differences in male and female development and on the impact of those differences on the roles individuals play
- evaluate emerging research and theories explaining the developmental tasks of individuals at various stages of life
- summarize current research on factors influencing satisfaction within enduring couple relationships
- analyze the division of responsibility for childrearing and socialization, and the interaction of caregivers
- identify and respond to the theoretical viewpoints, thesis, and supporting arguments of materials found in a variety of secondary sources