chapter 5

Young Adult Issues and Trends

CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

While reading this chapter, you will:

- analyze changes in labour-force participation, taking into consideration male and female participation rates and the impact of work on socialization
- explain the impact on individual development and decision making of social changes and challenges and life events
- demonstrate an understanding of the effect of various aspects of social systems on individual development
- demonstrate an understanding of research methodologies, appropriate research ethics, and specific theoretical perspectives for conducting primary research
- use appropriate current information technology to access or transmit information
- use current information technology to compile quantitative data and present statistical analyses of data or to develop databases
- identify and respond to the theoretical viewpoints, the thesis, and the supporting arguments of materials found in a variety of secondary sources
- distinguish among, and produce examples of, the following: an essay arguing and defending personal opinion; a reaction paper responding to another person's argument; a research paper reporting on an original investigation
- conduct an independent study of an issue concerning individuals or families in a diverse society, and report the results, using a social science format and documenting sources accurately, using appropriate forms of citation
- produce examples of a research paper reporting on an original investigation

KEY TERMS

discrimination
duty-based moral code
homelessness
homeostasis
individualism
pay equity

RESEARCH SKILLS
- analyzing demographic statistics
- writing a research essay
- identifying theoretical perspectives
- identifying theses

Becoming an adult can be great when all your expectations are met, but it can be challenging when family circumstances and social conditions do not always support the changes that you must make in your life.

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, some of the issues in Canadian society that affect an individual's transition into adulthood will be examined. The current perceptions, opinions, and demographic trends in Canada will be studied, focusing on a few specific changes, challenges, and life events. Various theoretical perspectives will be applied in an attempt to understand how each issue might affect individuals and their families during early adulthood. How the social systems and structures of Canadian society can influence the effects of each issue and provide support for individuals will also be explored. The topics in this chapter might provide interesting opportunities for further independent study.

Early Adulthood

Early adulthood is a period of life that requires individuals to make major changes in role behaviours as they leave youth behind and take on the responsibilities of full participation in society. You have learned that the pattern of adjustment is determined by the interaction of individuals, their families, and the society in which they live. How individuals cope with the challenges of early adulthood depends on several factors. Leonard Pearlin suggested that personal factors, such as personality, family background, and the extent of an individual's coping skills, will determine how an individual faces difficulties. He stressed that whether an individual anticipated a problem was a key factor in the ability to cope with it. He also explained that how a society is organized to provide social support would contribute to how well an individual adjusts (Bee, 1987).

Many of the challenges faced by young adults can be anticipated. Leaving home, forming new relationships, completing post-secondary education, and finding work are part of the normal pattern of life for Canadian men and women. As a result, there are expectations concerning how and when these events will occur. You have learned that these events are happening later than they did in previous generations, but most young Canadians look forward to developing new life structures in their twenties.

However, there have been many changes in Canadian society that have altered the transition to adulthood for the generations that came of age in the late twentieth century. Perhaps the most pervasive is the change in gender roles that has affected the lifestyle decisions of both men and women. Many new Canadians face resocialization into Canadian society at the same time as they are attempting to develop independent life structures as young adults. Economic changes influencing education and employment continue to affect the lifestyle expectations that individuals have and their chances of achieving them.

Some individuals do not make the transition to independent adulthood successfully. For those who delay independence, living at home and continuing to be financially dependent on their parents might be a manageable alternative. However, there are currently two developments that reflect problems that are not being managed. A growing number of young adults in many industrialized countries, including Canada, are homeless, and since 1970, there has been an unprecedented increase in Canada in the number of suicides among youth aged 15 to 29. These issues may reflect how individuals are unable to cope with transitions. However, they also reflect the structure of Canadian society and the social supports available.

by Derek Chezzi
"Over to You" column contributor, *Maclean's*

Despite what you've been told, it's easy to be a kid these days. It's much tougher to be considered an adult. In the 1960s, baby boomers used to say "Don't trust anyone over 30." Today, many boomers, now in their fifties, have a new mantra: "Don't trust anyone *under* 30." At 26, I feel like I'm going on 16, because, at every turn, my generation is treated as too young for serious consideration. How did this happen? And why are you so afraid of us?

Younger generations have always been looked on with suspicion. Today's media coverage offers a few immediate images: either we're making millions building Web sites (or hacking into them), dying from drug overdoses at raves, beating on each other, or threatening drivers with squeegees. Through it all, endless explanations are trotted out: violent video games, the absence of family values, the lack of emotional support. . . . Parents throw their hands up, unable to protect their children from a dangerous world. Lawmakers and enforcers claim young people are out of control. The hand-wringing often ends with attempts to legislate youth culture.

Squeegee "kids" are hardly that: most are in their twenties and some in their thirties. With education costs on the rise and no guarantee of a job that will let you pay back your loan upon graduation, squeegeeing becomes a necessary alternative. But this type of enterprise doesn't wash with some people. In Ontario, squeegee kids are now outlawed.

Much has been made over the alleged dangers of raves—all-night parties attended by teens, twenty-somethings, and fortysomething journalists wanting a scoop. If you've never been to one, they sound scary—rife with stories of drug use. Some people want to ban the party. Reality check: in 1995, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health said there were 804 illicit-drug-related deaths in Canada. In the same year, just over 6500 died from alcohol-related causes and more than 34 000 died of tobacco-related consequences. But no one wants to close down wine and oyster bars, or fully ban smoking.

Many young people in their twenties take temporary jobs while waiting for baby-boomers to retire and free up jobs.

Consider this. Few of us are rich. Many of my graduate friends work in call centres or dispense coffee at the local Starbucks. Those who work in new media take a second job to pay the bills and wind up floating from contract to contract with no security. In another era, we'd be married with a full-time job, a first home, and a child on the way. Today, we wait for people more than twice our age to retire, wiping tables after them in the meantime.

The youth of the 1960s still change the world. Now, forced retirement is a hot-button item because

some people don't want to quit work at 65. Health issues, such as geriatric care and housing, top the nation's agenda. We're left out of the discussion, then told pension and health-care programs won't be around for us when we hit retirement age. Surprise! Boomers will take it all to the grave with them.

I don't want to deny boomers their attempts at feeling young. They're welcome to wear denim and go to a Rolling Stones concert. Considering themselves "hip" is harmless, but it's demeaning to dismiss anyone younger as too immature to shoulder a decent job or take care of ourselves without draconian laws.

You reap what you sow. Treat us like young punks and that's what you get. Given the chance, we're as capable of handling responsibility as previous generations at our age. In the words of geezer rockers The Who: the kids are all right—but we're not kids anymore. ■

Source: *Maclean's* (2000, February 28). p. 8.

1. What is the thesis of Derek Chezzi's essay?
2. What supporting arguments does he present to support his thesis?
3. Does your experience of Canadian society support or refute Chezzi's arguments? Give two or three arguments to support your answer.

Gender Roles

Although the role of women has been changing in North America for over a hundred years, there have been major changes in the last thirty years that have affected how young women and young men prepare for adulthood. The most significant role change is that women are now employed, even when they have children. This role change requires that young women be socialized for employment just as young men have been. It also suggests that a young woman's Dream might incorporate her occupational role in addition to family and community roles (Levinson, 1996). Systems theory suggests that a change in one part of a system will require other parts of the system to adjust in order to maintain **homeostasis**, a state of equilibrium; therefore, as the roles of women change, the roles of men must adjust also. To what extent does Canadian society support the altered roles of women and the resulting changes in the roles of men?

Women now work at paid employment at almost the same rate as men. As a result, the work and family roles have changed for both women and men (Ghalam, 1997). The 1995 General Social Survey found that 86 percent of men and 64 percent of women responded that paid work was important to their personal happiness. Those figures rose to 91 percent of men and 83 percent of women among those aged 15 to 24 (Ghalam, 1997). That same survey found that almost half of both men and women agreed that what women want most

Now that it is recognized that women are as productive as men in the workplace, more women are entering non-traditional occupations.

is a home and children. Although it has always been assumed that men could work and be fathers, 55 percent of those surveyed felt that young children would suffer if both parents worked. Many young women are socialized for employment, but role segregation in the workplace continues despite the evidence that there are few differences between men and women that affect their productivity (Côté & Allahar, 1994).

Occupational segregation by sex is almost universal, but the classification of jobs as male or female and the wage differential vary (Wilson, 1991). A hundred years ago, any jobs that required the use of machines were men's jobs, including those requiring the use of the typewriter! By the 1950s, job classification reflected the roles of men and women as defined by functionalists. As a result, women worked in the so-called helping jobs, such as clerical, nursing, and teaching occupations. Legislation dating back to the 1960s in Canada requires that men and women doing the same job for the same employer must be paid the same wages. The 1977 Human Rights Act forbids **discrimination** in hiring; for example, by defining the gender, race, or religion of suitable employees. However, since men continue to outnumber women in all of the highly paid occupations and women dominate the poorly paid occupations, the rate of pay for an occupation, regardless of the qualifications required, appears to reflect the ratio of men to women (Phillips & Phillips, 1993). **Pay equity** laws, which require employers to assess the relative value of work so that work of equal value is paid the same, might eliminate any discrimination on the basis of gender. Since pay equity laws have not been enacted in Canada because employers believe that the costs would not be feasible, the solution has been to encourage young women to enter the so-called non-traditional but better-paying occupations.
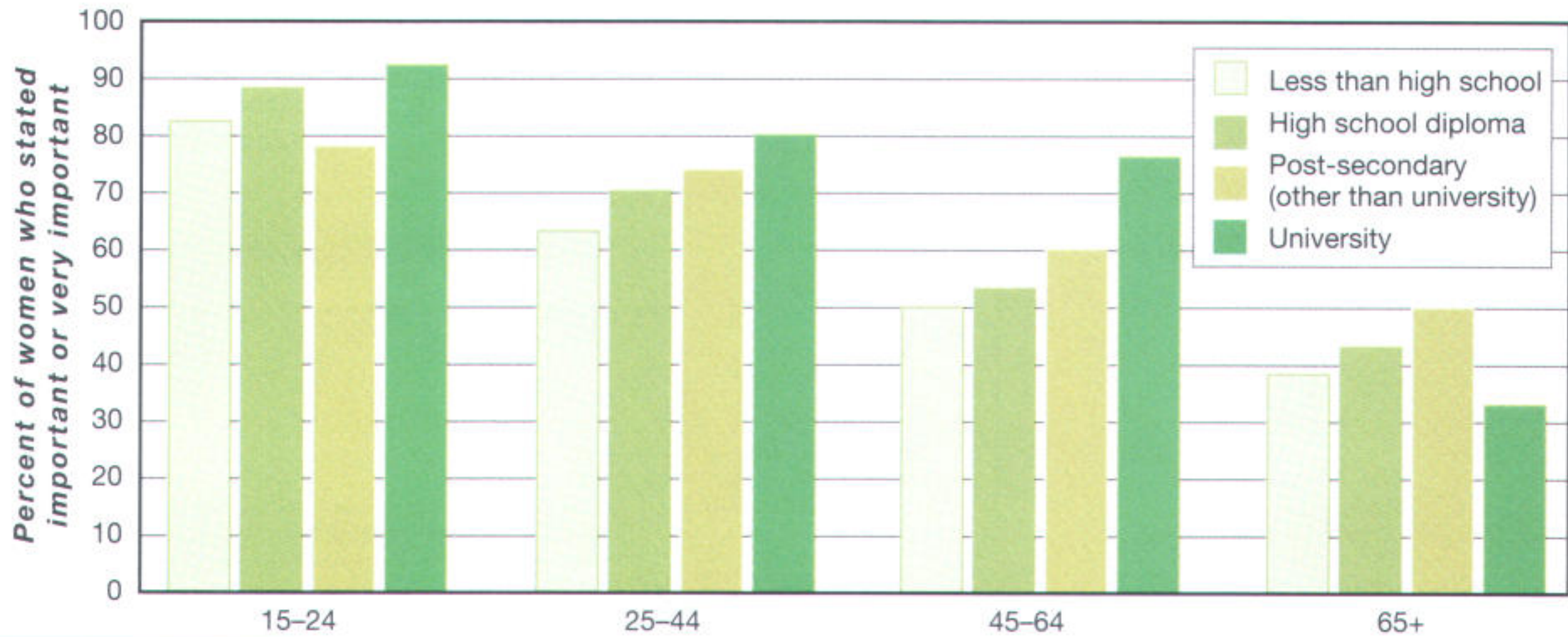
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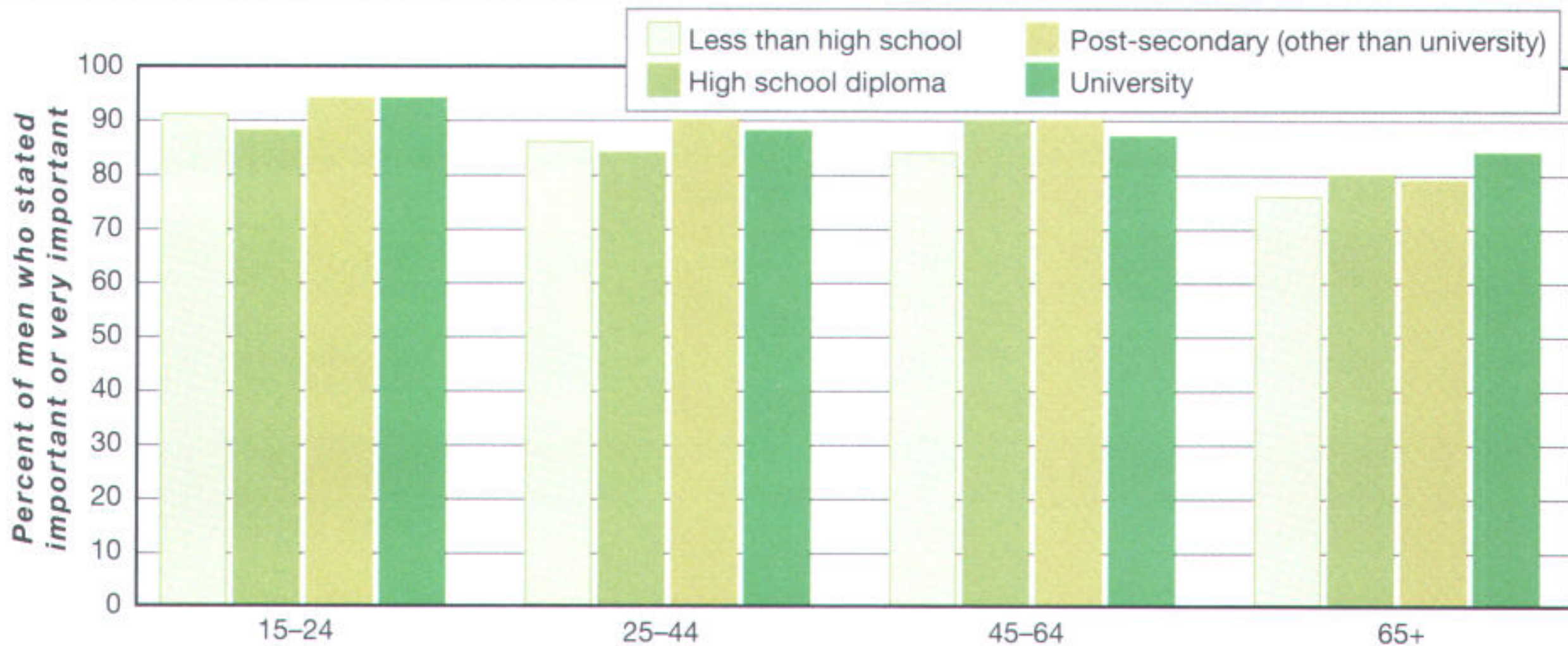www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12

To learn about changing roles of women and men in Canada, go to the web site above for *Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society* to see where to go next.

Age Affects Women's Belief That Being Able to Take a Paying Job Is Important to Happiness

Legend:
- Less than high school
- High school diploma
- Post-secondary (other than university)
- University

Y-axis: Percent of women who stated important or very important (0–100)
X-axis: 15–24, 25–44, 45–64, 65+

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends—Autumn 1997*, Catalogue 11-008, Issue No. 46, page 15.

Men's Belief That Being Able to Take a Paying Job Is Important to Happiness Is Consistent Across Age Groups and Education Levels

Legend:
- Less than high school
- High school diploma
- Post-secondary (other than university)
- University

Y-axis: Percent of men who stated important or very important (0–100)
X-axis: 15–24, 25–44, 45–64, 65+

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends—Autumn 1997*, Catalogue 11-008, Issue No. 46, page 15.

1. Trace the changes in women's attitudes toward work.
2. Develop a hypothesis that could be investigated concerning the changes in women's attitudes toward work. Explain how you could test the hypothesis.
3. How has the power balance changed in relationships now that more women are working?
4. How have men's and women's roles changed?

by John Pitchko
"Minus 20" column contributor, *Regina Leader Post*

It is a known fact that Canadian women earn less than Canadian men do. This reality, which naturally seems unfair to women, has been a fact for many years. In the last few decades, the women's movement has fought against injustices in salaries. Currently, it is illegal to pay a woman less than a man if they are doing substantially the same work for the same organization, firm, or company. However, the new trend enveloped by the women's movement is "equal pay for work of equal value," which is also known as pay equity.

The current argument by women's groups is that equalization of salaries should not be restricted just to men and women doing the same job in the same company. Instead, they say it should extend among companies in the international market. Pay equity means that if a man and a woman are essentially doing the same job, they should earn the same wage.

In order for pay equity to occur, occupations and jobs need to be compared, so an evaluation takes place—usually through a job-to-job comparison or a proportional value comparison. External companies or government agencies given this task use a point system for job evaluation. Some factors are further broken down to identify specific qualities, such as labour separated into physical and mental effort. The points are tabulated and used to compare different jobs in the market. Using the points system, equivalent jobs are compared and solutions are hopefully found. If two jobs have a similar point value, duties, and responsibilities, they are usually said to be of equal value. In such a case, the arbitrator or employer solves any discrepancies in the salary or wage. Although this practice is becoming increasingly common in the market, women's groups are pushing to back pay equity with laws.

There are several flaws, however, to the pay equity system. The points system used to evaluate jobs does not assess every aspect of a job. Some aspects, such as risk, popularity, and employer, are not factored into the point system. Certainly, a job with higher risk would pay more than a safer job. An unpopular job would likely pay more than a popular job because of the smaller number of workers interested in it. And finally, a person employed by a private company would likely earn more than a civil servant because of the strict budgets imposed by public employers. As a result, many differences in pay are the result of factors not considered by a normal evaluation.

A second fault with pay equity is the increased spending an employer must allocate to wage increases. If pay equity were made into law, businesses all across Canada would be suddenly forced to increase the salaries of some employees. A salary increase for many workers could cause a company to have financial problems or maybe even go out of business. It becomes especially worrisome when employers are forced to pay an average additional $10 000 per qualified employee.

On the other hand, there are several positive reasons to have pay equity. First, women who earn more money have more disposable income. They are thus able to make a better contribution to the economy. Perhaps more importantly, single mothers could provide a better lifestyle for themselves and their children. They would be able to pay for childcare, extended education, and extracurricular activities for themselves or

their children. They could also benefit from being able to make long-term financial investments, such as retirement plans and personal savings.

Pay equity also benefits employers as well as employees. Companies that adhere to pay equity guidelines and laws have better employee policies and public representation. Because these companies are trying to create equality in the workplace, their employment policies are superior to other companies not incorporating pay equity. As a result, companies with pay equity can expect to attract and keep the most qualified and diverse employees. In addition, these companies have higher employee morale and a positive working environment.

In my personal opinion, however, forced pay equity is currently not a sensible economic idea. If companies throughout Canada were forced to incorporate a pay equity system, unnecessary chaos would be created and firms in both the private and public sectors would have to divert millions of dollars into restructuring their individual pay systems. Enormous and inefficient bureaucracies would need to be created and maintained in order to ensure that pay equality is established. Not only do such bureaucracies cost money, but if an unresolvable conflict ever arose among an employee, employer, and a pay equity commission, an intense, lengthy, and costly legal struggle might take place. In addition, the sheer cost of balancing wages and salaries could destroy companies. Smaller companies and companies struggling to survive would be hard hit by sudden and expansive

wage increases. Consequently, these businesses might be forced to go out of business, possibly crippling local, national, and/or international economies. Organizations in the public sector would face rising costs with already-dwindling budgets. By creating more money for wage increases, government and public sector corporations would need to either slash their budgets and expenditures or raise taxes, both causing public outcry.

Currently, pay equity does not appear to be a beneficial economic policy. Even though the benefits of improved morale and public relations would result from pay equity, the cost of disrupting an entire economy is far too great. In the future, after more consideration and revision has been given to current pay equity beliefs and practices, a more sensible form of pay equilibrium may be produced which would better integrate with the economy. At present, however, no matter how noble the idea of pay equity is, it is not feasible economically. ■

Source: *Regina Leader Post*. (2001, September 10). p. A7.

1. What is John Pitchko's thesis?
2. Identify the theoretical perspective(s) that he used in his analysis.
3. How successful has he been in supporting his thesis?
4. How has he dealt with the arguments that are counter to his thesis?
5. What further evidence is required to determine whether pay equity should be implemented, in your opinion?

Average Earnings

Number and average earnings of full-year, full-time workers in the 25 highest-paying occupations, by sex, Canada, 1995

	Number of Earners			Average Earnings ($)		
	Both Sexes	Men	Women	Both Sexes	Men	Women
Total—25 highest-paying occupations[1]	368 325	287 955	80 365	80 206	86 139	58 943
Judges	1 765	1 360	405	126 246	128 791	117 707
Specialist physicians	12 560	9 345	3 220	123 976	137 019	86 086
General practitioners and family physicians	21 670	16 055	5 615	107 620	116 750	81 512
Dentists	8 530	6 995	1 535	102 433	109 187	71 587
Senior managers—goods production, utilities, transportation and construction	35 510	32 625	2 880	99 360	102 971	58 463
Senior managers—financial, communications carriers, and other business services	23 055	19 190	3 860	99 117	104 715	71 270
Lawyers and Québec notaries	44 385	32 305	12 080	81 617	89 353	60 930
Senior managers—trade, broadcasting and other services	28 665	24 610	4 060	79 200	84 237	48 651
Primary production managers (except agriculture)	7 075	6 670	405	76 701	78 421	48 479
Securities agents, investment dealers, and traders	14 520	9 640	4 880	75 911	90 391	47 323
Petroleum engineers	2 765	2 585	180	72 543	73 657	56 506
Chiropractors	2 370	2 000	370	68 808	71 032	56 764
Engineering, science, and architecture managers	17 835	16 165	1 665	68 235	69 792	53 138
University professors	31 395	23 210	8 190	68 195	72 532	55 909
Senior managers—health, education, social and community services, and membership organizations	8 025	4 410	3 615	68 187	78 012	56 190
Air pilots, flight engineers, and flying instructors	7 490	7 290	195	67 581	68 219	43 991
Geologists, geochemists, and geophysicists	4 935	4 375	555	66 210	68 116	51 151
Utilities managers	6 645	5 955	690	64 816	66 239	52 564
School principals and administrators of elementary and secondary education	23 000	14 700	8 300	64 513	66 837	60 394
Optometrists	2 045	1 285	760	64 419	73 920	48 337
Insurance, real estate, and financial brokerage managers	22 835	15 135	7 700	64 197	73 419	46 070
Commissioned police officers	3 680	3 345	335	63 518	64 865	50 011
Senior government managers and officials	15 655	10 690	4 965	63 195	69 477	49 667
Supervisors, mining and quarrying	4 425	4 375	0	62 537	62 768	0
Information systems and data processing managers	17 490	13 640	3 855	62 387	64 999	53 140

[1] Although athletes were in the 25 highest-paying occupations, their very small numbers rendered their income statistics unreliable. Hence the individuals in these occupations were excluded from this table.

Number and average earnings of full-year, full-time workers in the 25 lowest-paying occupations, by sex, Canada, 1995

	Number of Earners			Average Earnings ($)		
	Both Sexes	Men	Women	Both Sexes	Men	Women
Total—25 lowest-paying occupations[1]	567 765	179 950	387 810	17 729	20 238	16 564
Inspectors and testers, fabric, fur, leather products manufacturing	1 860	400	1 455	20 001	25 396	18 507
Light duty cleaners	46 875	15 330	31 535	19 991	23 829	18 125
Early childhood educators and assistants	32 480	1 105	31 375	19 772	25 074	19 586
Pet groomers and animal care workers	4 175	1 370	2 805	19 716	24 467	17 398
Taxi and limousine drivers and chauffeurs	16 695	15 720	980	19 664	19 845	16 756
Visiting homemakers, housekeepers, and related occupations	22 775	2 175	20 600	19 607	24 751	19 063
Hotel front desk clerks	7 660	2 760	4 900	19 220	20 364	18 575
Cooks	68 775	38 025	30 755	19 054	20 224	17 607
Maitres d'hôtel and hosts/hostesses	4 590	965	3 620	18 873	24 649	17 336
Kitchen and food service helpers	24 825	9 385	15 440	18 799	17 320	19 697
Hairstylists and barbers	43 120	10 835	32 280	18 292	22 867	16 755
Painters, sculptors, and other visual artists	4 405	2 595	1 810	18 188	20 421	14 982
Tailors, dressmakers, furriers, and milliners	8 855	1 865	6 990	17 850	24 686	16 025
General farm workers	42 925	27 365	15 560	17 756	19 990	13 825
Estheticians, electrologists, and related occupations	6 845	245	6 600	17 658	22 889	17 462
Sewing machine operators	30 235	2 490	27 750	17 613	20 664	17 340
Cashiers	56 140	9 025	47 110	17 553	20 557	16 977
Ironing, pressing, and finishing occupations	3 370	990	2 375	17 322	19 297	16 499
Artisans and craftspersons	5 880	2 840	3 040	16 943	20 555	13 565
Bartenders	15 570	7 080	8 495	16 740	18 899	14 940
Harvesting labourers	1 130	525	605	16 426	18 683	14 465
Service station attendants	10 800	8 630	2 175	16 203	16 520	14 947
Food service counter attendants and food preparers	22 225	5 550	16 680	15 487	17 912	14 681
Food and beverage servers	50 190	11 940	38 250	14 891	18 192	13 861
Babysitters, nannies, and parents' helpers	35 365	740	34 625	12 713	15 106	12 662

[1] Although trappers and hunters were in the 25 lowest-paying occupations, their very small numbers rendered their income statistics unreliable. Hence the individuals in these occupations were excluded from this table.

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *The Daily*, May 12, 1998, Catalogue 11-001, page 13.

1. In which occupations do men outnumber women, and women outnumber men?
2. In which occupations do women earn more on average than men?
3. How can the difference in earnings between men and women in the same occupations be explained?

Women now graduate from high school, college, and university at higher rates than men do, but they are still underrepresented in careers that are well paid. Educational programs across Canada that have focused on encouraging girls to study math and science have had some success. However, studies show that although they can do well in these subjects, girls are not as interested in them as boys are. Women also have different expectations of work than men do. Although both men and women place great importance on their jobs being interesting, women place more value on the implicit rewards of competence and people-oriented goals, whereas men place higher value on extrinsic rewards such as high pay and status (Bibby, 2001; Morgan, 2001). These results suggest that men outnumber women in math and science careers because women do not find them as interesting as careers in education and social services, for example. These differences correspond to the research on female development that suggests that women are more likely to form an identity through their relationships with others rather than through their individual accomplishments (Gilligan, 1993).

Characteristics of "a Good Job"

Percent Indicating "Very Important"	Nationally	Males	Females
The work is interesting.	86%	84%	87%
It gives me a feeling of accomplishment.	76	70	81
There is a chance for advancement.	68	70	66
It pays well.	66	72	60
Other people are friendly and helpful.	63	59	67
It adds something to other people's lives.	59	53	64
There is little chance of being laid off.	57	60	55
It allows me to make most of the decisions myself.	49	53	45

Source: From *Canada's Teens: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow.* Copyright © 2001 by Reginald W. Bibby. Reproduced by permission of Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

1. Compare the expectations of males and females.
2. This survey gathered the opinions of 15- to 19-year-old Canadians. How might the results differ for those aged 19–24 years?

Despite the changes in education and career planning, men and women are choosing different paths in early adulthood because they have different interests. It is not clear why girls and boys grow up with different expectations in life. Some people suggest that differences are innate; that is, girls are biologically programmed to reason differently from boys, so women have different motivation from men (Gilligan, 1993). Functionalists suggest that the differences in interests and motivation are formed through socialization so that men and women can perform appropriate gender roles in society (Mandell, 1993). Symbolic interactionists explain that children are influenced by the role models they observe in the media and in daily experience more than by the guidance they receive from their parents and teachers. Consequently, children see themselves in traditional gender roles even when they have been taught that they have broader options (Wilson, 1991). During adolescence, there is an intensification of gender identification as individuals seek an identity, so feedback from peers also contributes to narrow gender identity and the gender-based aspirations of young men and women (Côté & Allahar, 1994). Since the 1970s, educational developments have focused on encouraging girls to consider non-traditional subjects leading to wider career and family options. The work patterns evident in the late 1990s suggest that these programs have been quite successful, but that women still earn less than men.

point of view | Where Are the Boys?

by Garth Holloway
Social and Global Studies Department Head
Earl Haig Secondary School, Toronto

You have seen the statistics for the academic success of girls in Canada's high schools, colleges, and universities compared to those of boys. Are there other areas in which girls show more involvement and success that contribute to their achievement at university? Let's look at one high school's leadership development programs to see if there was a gender difference as well.

Earl Haig Secondary School in Toronto is a large academic school of approximately 2500 students. It is

The Yearbook Committee for Earl Haig Secondary School, 2001–2002.

known across the city for the students' enthusiastic involvement in the school's extensive extracurricular program. Like most secondary schools, Earl Haig has an elected Student Council. Although more girls run for election to the 14 positions, students usually elect a balance of boys and girls.

Because of its large size, Earl Haig also has a Leadership Council that organizes and runs events and programs for students both within the school and in the larger community. For example, this council is responsible for a peer-helping program, a school-wide tutoring service, a reading program in local elementary schools, an orientation program in the Fall for Grade 9 students, and for helping out at Parents' Nights and special events throughout the year. Involvement in this leadership program is voluntary, but candidates who apply for executive positions are interviewed by a combination of out-going executive members and teachers.

The Leadership Council is divided into four key committees headed by co-chairs. In the academic year 2001–2002, only two of the eight co-chairs were boys. Of the approximately 125 active members of these four committees, only 40 are boys.

Similar gender differences are found in other organizations at Earl Haig. The yearbook committee at the school, which annually produces a 216-page yearbook called *The Delphian*, has a staff of three senior editors and 24 sectional editors. Of the 27 positions,

19 are held by girls. A large part of the leadership development program at the school is an annual school trip, primarily for Grade 11 students, to Greece and Italy, which has run for 18 years. In the past few years, school employees have noticed more and more girls and fewer boys are participating. The March 2002 trip had 83 girls and only 27 boys!

Finally, a look at the school's sports programs yields similar results. There are as many girls' teams as boys' teams with about equal involvement of both genders. However, the Athletic Council of 15 members has only three boys.

Extensive research tells us that involvement in a school's extracurricular program will more likely lead to future academic success as well as professional and social happiness (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Parents know this, as do high school students. So, where are the boys? ■

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1. Think about the extracurricular and leadership development programs at your school. Is the gender involvement similar to that of Earl Haig?
2. Why do you think boys are less involved at Earl Haig? What do you think the boys are doing while the girls participate in extracurricular activities and voluntary work?
3. Should something be done to re-involve the boys? What action would you suggest?
4. Do you believe this is a positive or a negative trend? Why?

Cultural Conflict

The major challenges of early adulthood identified by researchers are to form an identity, a tentative adult life structure, and intimate relationships. You have seen that for Canadians and Americans, an identity is an image of self as an independent individual. Young adults expect to live out their "Dream" by

When children attend school and are socialized into new cultures, seeds of conflict with the traditional family culture may be sown.

pursuing their occupational goals, leaving home, and, perhaps, finding a partner. Perhaps this should be called the North American Dream, because young adults in other cultures might not have the same expectations.

Identity, as defined by Erikson, is founded on **individualism**, a social philosophy that emphasizes independence and self-reliance and that favours the free action of individuals. During the second half of the twentieth century, individualism changed the way that people perceived their lifestyles and their roles in the family and in society (Glossop, 1999). However, in Eastern cultures, identity is based on duty and obligation, first to family, and then to society. A **duty-based moral code** encourages individuals to consider the expectations of family more than personal considerations when making important decisions.

Romola Dugsin's (2001) study of young adults living in immigrant East Indian families found that conflict arose when children approached adulthood. Using a symbolic interactionist perspective, she asked the participants to describe their experience. Both men and women felt pressure from their parents to excel at school and in an occupation, but they were expected to assume traditional gender roles within the family. They perceived their families as closely intertwined, with an emphasis on duty and obligation to parents, family, and extended family. The expectation that they would respect the wishes of their elders limited their ability to communicate openly about their individual goals. Dugsin concluded that these East Indian immigrants were most likely to develop a life structure that was consistent with their East Indian values if they were first able to develop self-esteem inside the family by feeling accepted, nurtured, and respected as an individual.

The children of immigrants are more likely to become assimilated into Canadian culture than their parents are because they go to school, where the major activity is socialization. Canadian-born and immigrant children participate in the same reflective activities and observe the same role models as they form their individual identities and acquire their values. Canadian schools emphasize independence, individual accomplishment, co-operation, the expression of personal opinions, and responsible decision making. These qualities form the basis of identity and an adult life structure as expected in Canada, but they might not reflect the expectations of some families from other countries.

by Romola Dugsin, Ph.D. Candidate,
Center for Humanistic Studies, Detroit, Michigan

RESEARCH QUESTION

What causes conflict in East Indian families with young adult children living in North America, and how can the families be healed?

HYPOTHESIS

There was no hypothesis because the Grounded Theory Method was used, a specific analytical approach in which no hypothesis is stated prior to the researcher's development of an explanation from the data.

RESEARCH METHOD

Using qualitative analysis, the researcher, Romola Dugsin, analyzed the results of six open-ended interviews with second-generation East Indian immigrants. The subjects were between the ages of 24 and 36, three were male, three were female, two lived in the United States, and four lived in Canada.

RESULTS

• Cultural conflict results from expectations concerning being East Indian, education and success, family ties, parental control, and dating and marriage.

• Subjects reported loneliness, pain, lying or rebellion, or acceptance in response to the conflict.

• Family healing methods include communicating openly with parents, seeking therapy in areas of anger and self-esteem, and finding support outside of the family.

CONCLUSION

The strong sense of obligation to family ties and traditional East Indian values can present conflict in the process of individuation and separation from the family of origin for second-generation immigrants. ■

Source: *Family Process.* (2001, Summer). 233–241.

The emphasis on duty and obligation to the family of origin is found in many cultures in Canada, and could result in some difficulty for young adults attempting to develop an individualistic life structure. Leonard Pearlin suggested that specific characteristics, such as race and family background, influence the direction that individuals take in life. He also suggested that the availability of social support networks, such as school, could assist youth in making the transition (Bee, 1987). Immigrant families and their adult children, as well as the children of families in religious groups such as the Mennonites and the Hutterites, with their values, face additional challenges in the transition to adulthood if there are conflicting cultural values. However, some people question whether the individualism that has become the dominant philosophy in North America is beneficial to individuals, their families, or Canadian society (Glossop, 1999).

by Dr. Arnold Rincover

Psychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Toronto

Many immigrant families are torn apart when children embrace the new Western culture while parents cling to the old culture. It doesn't matter whether you are of Asian, Spanish, Indian, African, Italian, Russian, Arabic, or any other descent, you need to prepare yourself for some tough times down the road. Problems may begin to crop up virtually anywhere— a child doesn't want to wear the turban or the sari, wants to date, celebrate Christmas, sleep over at a friend's house, speak English at home, use slang expressions that parents find offensive.

Mai Lee was 16 years old and she was walking on air—the "man of her dreams" just asked her out on her first date. Her parents, however, were Asian immigrants and they didn't feel she should be dating until she was 19. They wanted her to focus solely on school. So, Mai Lee started to see her prince on the sly. Her parents found out and it almost destroyed the family. The parents were devastated that she would lie and defy them. They threatened to throw her out of the house if she ever talked to this boy or disobeyed them again. There were daily eruptions at home until they learned to avoid each other. Both Mai Lee and her parents thought they were right, that the other was rigid. Neither even considered the possibility that they were wrong, that the other person's argument had some merit (or was even rational), that there was a compromise to be made.

Sometimes the upheaval in immigrant families is not from the kids. Perhaps women didn't work outside the home in the "old country" and now Mom has to work for the family to survive. Dad feels incompetent. Mom may even make more money than him, which

Many immigrant families experience conflict when the children go against the parents' wishes.

further destroys his self-esteem. In these cases, fathers often resort to alcohol or withdraw from the family.

Many children of immigrant families are eventually referred to a psychologist because the child is showing behavioural problems or depression. Yet, there is no way to treat those behavioural problems or that depression unless the family problem is addressed. Enter family therapy.

The brokering of two cultures means that both the child and the parents must learn to appreciate each other's point of view . . . and compromise. It must heighten the child's understanding of the family's roots. This may mean the child attends religious services, celebrates holidays, conforms to dress and other rituals at certain times that are important to the parents. The child may take religious classes, attend social functions which have an ethnic flavour. It may also mean that the child cannot do everything that his or her (Western) friends do.

For the parents, there is often much to be done. We [family therapists] must first encourage them to take English courses, so they can participate in their new culture—without some command of English, they'll miss out on their own children's development. We encourage the parents to negotiate with their children. They must understand that it would be quite cruel to tell a child he or she can't date when all his or her friends are dating. It will destroy the parents' relationship with that child. If the concern is

schoolwork or safety, then those should be conditions upon which dating will be allowed. If parents think the child is too immature, then the child should be told how to demonstrate more maturity. If parents wish to chaperone the young person until the age of 18, so be it. They shouldn't say "NO," but "when" or "how."

For families who have immigrated to Canada, it is important to understand that such conflicts are inevitable. It is often essential to get an outside professional to help. ■

1. What is Dr. Rincover's thesis, and what arguments does he present to support it?
2. What are the benefits and/or drawbacks for young adults of abandoning the values of their traditional families?
3. What might be the consequences of following Dr. Rincover's advice?
4. Should schools support youth in rebelling against their parents' traditional values? Why or why not?

case study | Sanjay's Quest for Independence

Sanjay Wadhera is a 26-year-old Canadian whose family emigrated to Canada from India the year before he was born. He has an older sister, Geeta, and an older brother, Ameet, who were five and two respectively when the family arrived in Canada. His father, a professional engineer, and his mother, a secondary school teacher, both left good jobs with secure futures to move to Canada, where they felt their children would have more opportunities and more freedom. His family settled originally in Winnipeg, where an uncle and his family were already living. Sanjay's father soon started a research job with a large international electronics firm. Sanjay was born the next year.

When Sanjay was four, his father was transferred to the Toronto area, a move that pleased his parents because of the much larger Hindu community that lived there and because of the less extreme winters of southern Ontario. The family settled in Mississauga, where houses were more affordable and within easy commuting distance to his father's job.

Things went very well for the Wadhera family, and they were able to purchase a larger home in a new subdivision in Burlington. To help pay for the home,

Sanjay and his parents had conflicting values and goals.

and because the children were now much older and less dependent, Sanjay's mother opened a small day care, which she has operated out of the basement of her home ever since. Unfortunately, Sanjay's father lost his engineering job in 1990 when his firm downsized as a result of an economic recession. After spending 18 months unsuccessfully looking for jobs in his field, Sanjay's father eventually bought a convenience store in a new plaza in Burlington. Sanjay's parents have expected that both he and his brother work in the family store on weekends and during the summers to save the family from having to hire part-time employees. The store has provided the Wadheras with a steady family income.

Sanjay is very proud of his parents' accomplishments and hard work, and he particularly respects the strength

and commitment that they have shown for the family. However, he has found himself in continual conflict with them over the past few years about his future career and the kind of life that he wants to live as an adult. This conflict started while he was in high school, where he played football and baseball for the school teams. His parents wanted him to help out at the store after school. In his final year of high school, Sanjay argued with his parents over his choice of university. Ameet attended McMaster University and continued to live in his parents' home and work part-time in the family business. Most of Sanjay's friends were applying to Queen's, Western, and Waterloo universities and were anticipating the next year of living in residence and being "out on their own." Sanjay's choice of majoring in Economics at Queen's University did not make his parents happy, since they could not understand why he would want to be so far away from home.

Paying for university was another source of conflict for Sanjay and his parents. Because most of the Wadheras' financial resources were tied up in the convenience store, Sanjay was dependent on government assistance. He knew that he would have a substantial student debt at the end of his undergraduate program and wanted to work at a summer job that would reduce the size of his student loan each year. However, his parents needed him to work in the store in the summers and argued that if he was so concerned about his debt, then he could transfer to a closer university to which he could commute from their Burlington home.

Another problem between Sanjay and his parents was his choice of friends. The family's entire social life revolved around the activities of the temple that they attended and the large Hindu community to which they belonged. They expected Sanjay to participate in these activities, just as Geeta and Ameet had done. Sanjay preferred the company and activities of his more culturally diverse high school friends. When Sanjay met Emma Johnson during his first year at Queen's, she was initially welcomed into his parents' home. However, when his parents realized that Sanjay and Emma's relationship went beyond friendship, they told him that he was no longer allowed to see her. Sanjay continued to date Emma, deceiving his parents, often with the help of Ameet and Geeta.

During his third year at Queen's, Sanjay began to realize that his chances of employment at graduation would be greater if he acquired some related summer work experience. A number of Toronto companies visited Queen's to interview for summer positions, and Sanjay and many of his classmates applied. He was interviewed by several companies and was offered positions with two of them. However, he was unable to accept either position because his father was planning to travel to India in the spring to visit family and to help expedite the move of Sanjay's grandmother to Burlington. By this time Ameet had graduated from McMaster and had started a full-time job in the accounting department of a small company in Oakville, so Sanjay was needed to run the store while his father was away. ∎
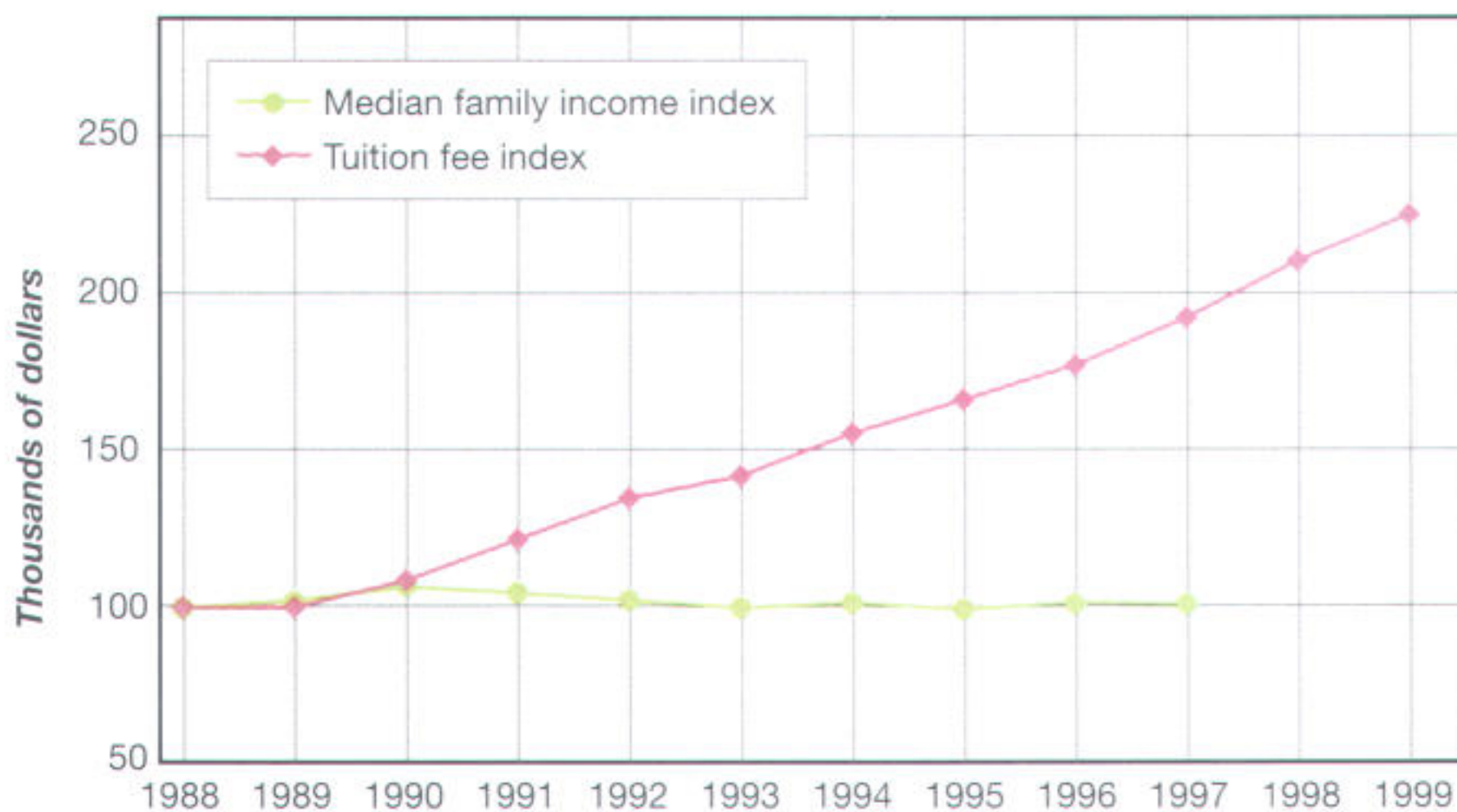
1. What factors in Sanjay's family background are influencing his individuation?
2. Suggest how Sanjay's socialization has resulted in a conflict between Canadian and East Indian values.
3. Compare Sanjay's transition to adulthood with that of Colleen's in Chapter 3, page 71, and Ian's in Chapter 4, page 120.
4. What life structure does Sanjay appear to be attempting to build for himself?
5. Using social exchange theory, assess the costs and benefits of the decisions that Sanjay faced. What choices do you think he should have made?

The Costs of Education

Most young Canadians expect to attend post-secondary education when they complete high school to prepare for a career, but also to experience the particular extension of youth culture that attending college or university can provide (Moffat, 1993). For many high school students, going to college or university is the goal, not acquiring the education, because their occupational plans are not yet formed. Unlike high school in Canada, post-secondary education is subsidized, but not free. Students must pay tuition, purchase books, pay for their activities, and, unless they live near a college or university, pay for room and board. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many families are concerned about the increasing costs of tuition.

The belief that the costs are too high might discourage some young people from pursuing the education they need to achieve their goals. A 2001 survey of high school graduates in Alberta revealed that 70 percent agreed that the total cost could serve as a barrier to pursuing post-secondary education, and 66 percent thought that the tuition cost would be a barrier. In the same survey, the respondents overestimated the tuition cost by $2000, an error of over 50 percent (Holubitsky, 2001). However, tuition costs in Canada did double between 1988 and 1999, during a decade in which family incomes did not increase, so families have reasons to be concerned about paying for education.

Indices of Median Family Income and Average Tuition Fees
in undergraduate arts programs, Canada, 1988 to 1999, in constant 1999 dollars

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Education Indicators in Canada*, "Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999," Catalogue 81-582, February 2000, page 69.
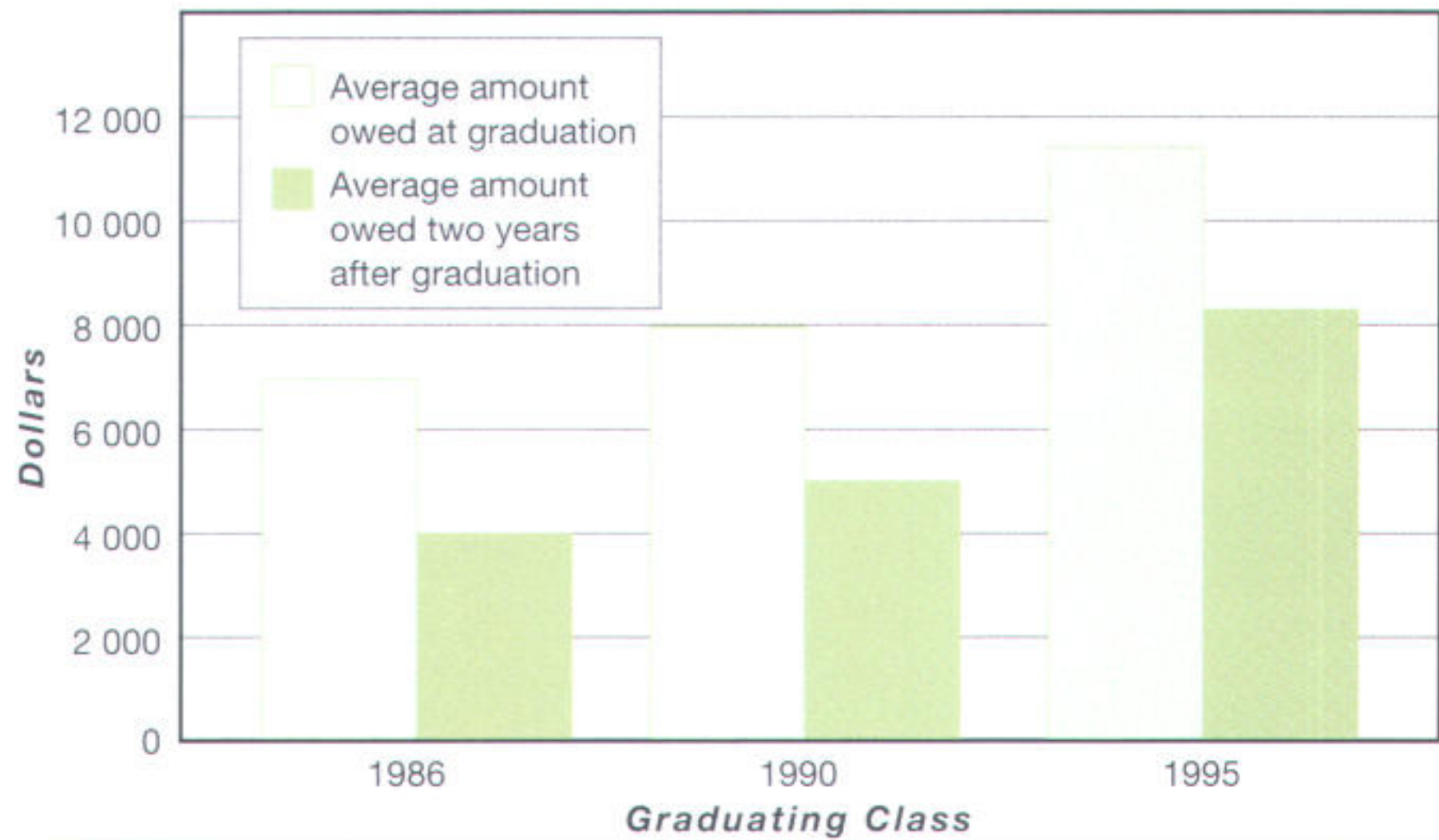
Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Education Indicators in Canada*, "Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999," Catalogue 81-582, February 2000, page 68.

1. What does constant dollars mean, and why are they used for comparison?
2. What factors would influence the impact that rising tuition costs would have on families of students entering post-secondary education?

Many parents have high expectations that their children will attend post-secondary education when they finish high school, but few anticipate the real costs.

Although 87 percent of Canadian parents hope that their children will attend post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2001), they wonder if they will be able to afford to pay for it. The results of the 1999 Survey of Approaches to Educational Planning found that 41 percent of families were saving for their children's education. However, the amount of money saved, a median amount of $3000 for all children under 18, fell very short of the actual costs of tuition. Almost all parents expected that their children would work while at college or university, and 70 percent expected that their children would work part-time during high school to save for their education. Many parents also expected that their children would require a student loan.

Parents have high expectations for their children's education, but students wonder whether the increased earning potential when they graduate will justify the expense. They fear that

they will graduate with large debts that might affect their flexibility to search for jobs that suit their interests, or their freedom to consider other options when they graduate. In 1998, the average student who had taken loans graduated with a $12 000 debt that they were able to reduce by 25 percent within two years (Statistics Canada, 1999). David Stager, a professor of economics at the University of Toronto, used a costs and benefits analysis to study the effects of education on income. He calculated that the costs of education, including tuition fees, room and board, and the forgone income, earn an after-tax return of 13.8 percent for men and 17.6 percent for women in additional income after graduation (Theobald, 1997). Although the debt might be unsettling for graduates just starting out in their occupation, as the wage gap between high school graduates and college and university graduates widens, the cost of education becomes a better investment.

Rates of Return

Annual after-tax rate of return for a university education, Ontario, 1990

Bachelor Degree Programs	Males	Females
Humanities, Fine Arts	7.3%	14.8%
Social Sciences	12.8	17.0
Commerce	16.2	21.8
Biological Sciences	6.8	15.0
Maths, Physical Sciences	15.1	21.2
Health Professions	14.9	21.0
Engineering	16.0	19.8
Law	15.0	16.0
Medicine	20.8	19.7
All Bachelor and First Professional Degree Programs	13.8%	17.6%

Note: Social Sciences excludes Commerce, Social Work, and Law. Health Professions include Nursing, Pharmacy, and Rehabilitation Medicine.

Source: David Stager, Retired Professor of Economics, University of Toronto.

1. Which programs provide the best return on financial investment for men and for women?
2. What factors would affect the rate of return?
3. Why is the rate of return higher for women than for men?

Family income can influence the career expectations of young people. Although students identify similar career aspirations regardless of gender, race, or family background, family income can affect whether students expect

to achieve their goals. Individuals from lower-income families can qualify for student loans, which can mean that they will graduate with a much larger debt than individuals from higher-income families will. Some people argue that a well-educated population benefits a society so it should pay for education through taxation. In some industrialized countries, such as the United Kingdom, post-secondary education at public institutions is free for students because it is completely subsidized by the government in the same way that public elementary and secondary education is in Canada. Others argue that educated people benefit from an increased income and should, therefore, pay for their own education. In Canada, students pay tuition fees that, in some provinces, vary according to the earning potential of graduates. The tuition is government-subsidized, but a higher family income increases the chances of students attending college or, to a greater extent, university, so that they can achieve a higher future income also. However, in the future, if tuition continues to increase, post-secondary education may be affordable only to the upper-middle class of Canadian society.

point of view | Levelling the Playing Field

by Robert J. Birgeneau
President, University of Toronto

In the summer of 2001 the presidents of 28 leading universities and colleges in the United States, including such august institutions as Yale, Stanford, Notre Dame, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the University of Chicago, recommitted their institutions to providing need-based financial assistance alone. They also endorsed a set of common standards for assessing a family's ability to pay for undergraduate education. In so doing, they in effect created a common front against the practice of competitive bidding for students. Most important, they guaranteed that qualified students from the poorest families could have access to the very best in undergraduate education. This continuing commitment to need-based, as opposed to merit-based, aid is both courageous and admirably idealistic.

You might ask what the situation is in Ontario, and at the University of Toronto. In fact, we are

proud that U of T has made a significant commitment to need-based financial student aid. In 1998 the university made a bold guarantee that no student would be prevented from coming to our university, or from finishing a degree, for want of financial assistance.

About three-quarters of the financial support we offer undergraduates, about $23 million annually, is awarded primarily on the basis of need, and this figure has more than doubled since 1997–1998. What's more, the university gives entering students an assurance that they will not be met with unanticipated tuition hikes. When there is a gap between an undergraduate's assessed need and the maximum loan allowed under the Ontario Student Aid Program (OSAP), U of T will cover the shortfall through a non-repayable grant. All of this is possible only because of our own major investment in student aid, the support of government, and the continuing generosity of our friends—especially our alumni and alumnae.

Nevertheless, there are still inequities. On the one hand, it is very important that OSAP loans make it

possible for even the poorest students to attend university. However, these same students then may graduate with quite large debts. Fortunately, their numbers are small. Still, it is unfair that students from well-off families graduate debt-free while those whose families struggle financially graduate with OSAP debts as large as $28 000.

I should emphasize that the issue here is not tuition. Our tuitions in Ontario are modest when compared with expected income gains due to a university education, or with university tuitions in many other countries, including our neighbour to the south. Further, our tuition in undergraduate arts and science, corrected for inflation, has actually been decreasing over the past several years.

How do we level the playing field? I believe that the entire Ontario university system needs to move toward a predominantly need-based undergraduate financial-aid system. Further, to the extent that we retain merit-based aid, the size of the scholarship should be based on financial need. This is already the case for several programs including the province's Aiming for the Top Scholarships and our own University of Toronto National Scholarship Program, including the Bank of Montreal scholarships. The current practice by some Ontario universities of "bidding" for the students with the top high school grades is, at best, wasteful of our limited resources for financial aid.

It would be difficult for any university in Ontario to make the transition to need-based aid unilaterally. It must happen system-wide. Students should attend the university that best meets their educational goals, rather than the one that appears to be most advantageous financially. I call on my fellow Ontario university presidents to join me in emulating the 28 U.S. presidents who have taken a huge step toward levelling the playing field for all students. ■

Source: *Uni5versity of Toronto Magazine.* (2001, Autumn). p. 5.

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1. What is Dr. Birgeneau's thesis and theoretical perspective?
2. What arguments does he present to support his thesis?
3. What conflicting viewpoints does he counter?
4. Would you like to see the proposals suggested by Dr. Birgeneau implemented at all Canadian universities and colleges? Why or why not?

Homeless Youth

The picture of **homelessness** is changing in Canada, reflecting differences in the economy and the social support networks since the 1980s. Homelessness is defined as having no fixed place to sleep at night. The homeless include people staying in motels until their money runs out, those staying with friends, those staying in shelters, and those sleeping outside or in whatever space they can find to protect them from the weather. There have always been homeless people, but the number has been growing in industrialized nations to an extent that The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee calls homelessness a national disaster (TDRC, 2001).

The homeless are those who sleep in shelters, doorways, and stairwells, but also include those who stay with friends and in motels because they have nowhere else to go.

It is difficult to determine the number of people who are homeless. Estimates are based on the number of people who stay in shelters and who use soup kitchens. The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force determined that almost 26 000 people used the shelter system in Toronto in 1996, and estimated that the number of homeless youth had increased by 80 percent to 28 percent of hostel users between 1992 and 1998 (City of Toronto, 2001). The Montréal Public Health Department estimates that there are 4000 to 5000 homeless youth in Montréal (Ward, 1999). Authorities estimate that there are 100 homeless youth in Halifax (McLaughlin, 2001). Homeless people migrate to the larger cities—47 percent of shelter-users in Toronto came from outside the city (City of Toronto, 2001). Clearly, homeless young adults who beg for change on street corners are the tip of the iceberg.

point of view | Notion of Homeless Youth Raises Some Questions

by Ross Nightingale
"Letters to the Editor" Contributor,
The London Free Press

I suffer from a generation gap when I read the word "homeless." I picture elderly people who haven't the education or health to hold a job. The men are unshaven, poorly dressed, sleep on the street, or live in wooded areas. The women are poorly dressed and push all their belongings in a shopping cart.

The pictures I see today depict the homeless as well-educated, well-dressed, articulate young people between the ages of 19 and 25. This brings many questions to mind:

- Where do they obtain money? They cannot draw welfare as they have no address. Do they work, but don't have a starting salary to afford the lifestyle to which they would like to be accustomed? Are they lobbying for subsidized housing so they will have an address and be able to apply for welfare?
- Why can't they use existing facilities we provide? Is it that they do not like the surroundings or the rules and regulations?
- My generation started on small salaries (34 cents an hour) and improved our standard of living over the years as our income increased. Do the homeless regard this as foolish and suggest we should have been lobbying for government assistance?
- Do these homeless not have parents or relatives who would gladly supply accommodation? Or would there be rules and regulations to such an arrangement?

If unemployment is the problem, I suggest activists and civic bodies spend their time placing these young people in jobs, instead of concentrating on government subsidies. I also suggest the activists, civic bodies, and the newspaper profile the people involved to provide answers to these questions so we "oldies" can get hep to the modern thinking. ■

1. What is Ross Nightingale's thesis?
2. How does he support his point of view?
3. What further information would you require to determine whether Nightingale's thesis is accurate? How could you acquire that information?

The causes of homelessness fall into three broad categories (NCH, 1999). The first category for youth leaving home stems from disruptive family conditions that make living on the street seem like a better alternative. These may range from physical, psychological, or sexual abuse to neglect or abandonment. A 1992 study in Ottawa-Carleton found that 75 percent of street youth reported being victims of abuse (Casavant, 1999). Some youths leave home when neither parent wants custody of them after a marriage breakdown. Others leave to escape parental restrictions that they consider to be too harsh (Deziel, 1999). The second category for homelessness is residential instability. An American study estimates that 20 percent of homeless youth had been in foster care before they moved to the streets. Over 50 000 young Canadians run away from home each year. Police report that 90 percent of runaways return home within 60 days, but most of the remaining 10 percent become homeless. The third category of homeless youth are those who leave home to work and live independently but become homeless when they are unable to move back home after suffering a financial crisis. For most homeless youth, returning to their parents is not a realistic option.

Being homeless presents so many challenges for youth that they generally live day-to-day, unable to develop plans for forming a productive life structure. Although some homeless youth are employed, most depend on begging or illegal means, such as selling drugs or sex, to earn enough money to cover their basic needs. The health of homeless youth is compromised by their high-risk lifestyle. They are more likely to suffer from infections, malnutrition, and sexually transmitted diseases (Casavant, 1999). Since an estimated 40 percent are users of intravenous drugs, and many are working in the sex trade, the rate of HIV-related health problems is higher. The rates of psychological and psychiatric disorders are also very high. Doctors in Montréal report that street youth have a mortality rate 13 times higher than other youth, and that the high rate of drug use is a coping strategy for dealing with the pain in their lives (Ward, 1999).

web connection

www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12

To learn about the support available for homeless youth in Canada, go to the web site above for *Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society* to see where to go next.

"The mark of a great society is how well they care for their most disadvantaged."

— Samuel Johnson

Services such as food and emergency medical treatment are available to help individuals cope with the symptoms of homelessness, but long-term assistance is needed to resocialize them for a productive life.

The consequences of homelessness for those who should be making a transition to adulthood are extreme. Most homeless youth left a family life that was disrupted. Some of them were moved by child protection authorities to live in foster care, but most chose to leave abusive home environments themselves. Their education has been disrupted, and the prospects of returning to school while they live on the streets are negligible. About 45 percent are working, but at low-paying, transient jobs (Casavant, 1999). Most homeless youth have limited knowledge and skills and report low self-esteem. The lack of competence and control over their life circumstances probably results in role confusion because they have not formed an identity. Although many street youth describe lofty goals of getting good jobs and leading happy family lives rather than the hopelessness of their real lives, their dreams do not reflect their limited resources.

The problem of homelessness is as difficult to solve as it is to define. The long-term solution is more challenging because there is no consensus on the social conditions that allow homelessness to increase. Some people accuse the homeless of creating their own problems by abusing drugs or alcohol and consequently squandering their money so they cannot afford housing. Others assume that homeless youth have chosen street life because they are unable to conform to the rules of their families or other accommodations. These arguments reflect a functionalist perspective, because they suggest that homelessness is a failure of socialization.

Social activists use a conflict perspective to argue that a decline in stable employment opportunities for those with few skills has reduced the ability of many people to afford housing. They also suggest that the increasing cost of housing forces people down the housing chain into cheaper housing so that those with the lowest incomes are squeezed out onto the streets. They propose that homelessness is an indicator of the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada. Until programs that respond to any of these theories are established to prevent homelessness, many governmental and non-profit organizations are working to alleviate the immediate needs of the homeless, especially for youth, so that they can begin to become self-reliant.

Suicide

When individuals choose to end their lives, family and friends are left to grieve. Family and friends feel saddened by their loss, but also confused and angry as they seek reasons for the suicide. Many feel guilty about whether they could have prevented the death. However, the causes of suicide remain a mystery. Suicide occurs in all societies, but the rates differ significantly from country to country. Percentages for males are higher than those for females in all countries. Suicide raises both ethical and practical questions: Is suicide normal? Is suicide wrong? Can suicide be prevented?

Suicide is a relatively rare cause of death, but it has increased in Canada in the past few decades. Approximately 3500 Canadians die from suicide each year, accounting for 2 percent of all deaths (Ungar, 2001). The actual number of suicides and attempted suicides is difficult to determine because many suspicious accidents, such as vehicle collisions, drug overdoses, and falls are reported as accidents, not as suicides. However, it is estimated that there are 20 to 40 attempts for every successful suicide (Conway, 1997). Men are four times more likely to commit suicide, but the lower rate for women could reflect the fact that they choose less lethal methods, such as drugs and poisons, so there is a greater chance of being saved. According to the World Health Organization, Canada's suicide rate is in the lower third of those for 20 Western industrialized nations, but higher than that of the United States.

Suicide Rates Per 100 000 in Canada and the United States in 1990

	5–14	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
Canada								
Men	1.2	24.6	29.6	26.7	23.4	22.6	20.7	32.4
Women	0.4	3.9	6.4	9.0	6.9	5.4	5.9	4.2
United States								
Men	1.1	22.0	24.8	23.9	23.2	25.7	32.2	57.9
Women	0.4	3.9	5.6	6.8	6.9	7.3	6.7	6.0

Source: Hollinger, Paul C. et al. (1994). *Suicide and Homicide Among Adolescents*. New York: The Guilford Press, pp. 88–89.

1. Compare the suicide rates for men and for women in Canada and the United States.
2. Suggest reasons for the differences in the suicide rates for women and for men.
3. What social conditions might account for the differences in the suicide rates of young men, aged 15 to 24, between Canada and the United States?

The grief that people feel over the loss of a friend or family member who has chosen suicide is complicated by feelings of guilt that the death might have been prevented, and anger toward the person for causing such hurt.

The reasons why individuals choose to end their lives by committing suicide remain unclear. Those who attempt suicide say that they suffer unbearable psychological pain and feel a sense of hopelessness. Factors that are associated with suicide include psychological problems, the suicide of a friend or family member, breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, drug and alcohol abuse, separation from a parent because of death or divorce, and physical or sexual abuse (Conway, 1997). These are events that occur in the lives of many people, yet most can cope with them and do not take their own lives. The difference for people who commit suicide appears to be the hopelessness that arises from perceiving a lack of control (Sakinofsky, 1998).

Emile Durkheim, who is considered to be one of the fathers of sociology, published *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* in 1897, and sociologists still consider it to be the classic study of suicide. Durkheim explained that the fact that suicide rates vary from society to society and that the rates are higher for men than for women suggests that suicide has a social cause. His idea was that suicides increase when expectations, not needs, are not met. The factors that are associated with suicide are fairly common, yet it is not the people who suffer the worst hardships that choose to die. Therefore, Durkheim explained, those who expected more will experience a greater lack of control in a crisis (Durkheim, 1951). Since identity, as described by Erikson, includes the ability to realistically assess one's place in society and to feel a sense of control, suicide results, perhaps, from a failure to form an identity. Durkheim (1951) explained the lower suicide rate for women with the reason that women have had lower expectations for their roles in society, so they are less likely to feel that these have not been met. Since women form their identity through relationships with others, they are more likely to seek support from others, so the suicide rate for women will be lower (Conway, 1997). Durkheim (1951) wrote that social causes, such as economic loss, depend on the extent to which the society encourages individuals to have realistic expectations and provides opportunities for them to have control over whether their expectations are met.

Because suicide results from a decision, there have been various civil and religious attempts to prevent individuals from making that decision. Some societies, such as those based on traditional Roman Catholic beliefs, treat suicide as a sin in a religious context. Others treat suicide as a criminal act. Until

Section 213 was removed from the Criminal Code of Canada in 1972, attempted suicide was punishable by imprisonment for six months or by a fine (Leenars et al., 1998). Another reason for suicide is a mental illness that prevents an individual from making a rational decision. These explanations reflect a functionalist perspective, because they all describe suicide as abnormal behaviour that destabilizes the society.

point of view | Aboriginal Groups Warn of Suicide Crisis

by Louise Elliott
Canadian Press

A youth suicide epidemic in Ontario's North has spread to reserves formerly unaffected by the crisis, as this year's toll threatens to become the worst on record. With 16 suicides on 49 northern reserves as of July 30, 2001, this year's toll could end above the record 26 suicides across Northern Ontario last year, leaders and experts warned yesterday.

"It's been the worst year to date in a six-month period," said Arnold Devlin, mental health supervisor at Dilico, an Aboriginal peoples mental health agency in Thunder Bay. "It speaks to the need for a region-wide suicide protocol." Such a protocol, which would include programs for crisis response, counselling, media strategies, and prevention, is even more critical after suicides this year in areas previously untouched by the crisis, Devlin said. "People weren't prepared for it," he said of a suicide in Pelican Falls High School in Sioux Lookout, which is attended by Aboriginal children from across the North. "That spurred a whole series of resignations."

Media attention has focused recently on Pikangikum First Nation, where seven young people have died since January. There were eight suicides in total at Pikangikum last year, mainly by young girls. But the problem is region-wide, and it's also worse than statistics suggest, said Stan Beardy, grand chief

A suicide epidemic in Ontario's North highlighted the need for suicide prevention and education strategies.

of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. Beardy said the recorded suicide rate is lower than the actual rate because some die after being flown from communities to emergency wards, where their deaths are often not recorded as suicides. The trend seen last year of younger people and more women committing suicide has continued this year, Beardy added. The average age for boys killing themselves is now about 15, he said, down from the late teens and early twenties of five years ago. Devlin said this year's rate could easily surpass last year's total of 26 suicides—the worst total on record. This is not the first time alarm has been raised over the issue. A 1995 report, for instance, said suicide accounted for one-third of all registered deaths among Aboriginal youths.

Beardy accused Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault of contributing little assistance while fanning the flames of the crisis with talk about opening up the Indian Act whether Aboriginal peoples want to or not. "Nault is going around the country telling people

how much money is being wasted on Native people" while there were 28 suicides in Nault's riding last year, he said. Nault recently handed Pikangikum's finances over to a third-party manager, even though the community has never run a deficit. Nault has said one reason for handing over the reserve's finances is concern about the high suicide rate. Pikangikum's leaders accused Nault last week of pressuring them to drop their constitutional challenge against his department, to stop talking to the media, and to hire only Indian Affairs workers. Renewed talks with the federal and provincial governments about resource development in the North offer the only long-term hope for battling the suicide epidemic, Beardy said, because jobs and a land base will give young people a sense of purpose now lacking in a region with 80 percent unemployment. "That's one of the problems with Nault's plan (to open up the Indian Act): There is no mention regarding financing our own activities," he said.

Suicide prevention and education strategies are also essential, he added. "It would provide more awareness to help people deal with their everyday frustrations."

But an intergovernmental committee on youth suicide is now making progress toward better management of the crisis, committee members say. Federal, provincial, and Aboriginal government ministries are now trying to improve interdepartmental communication and service co-ordination, said Carol Rowlands, a spokesperson for Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. But Beardy said adequate funding is still required. A mental health policy was submitted to Health Canada about a year ago, but has received no official ratification, he said. ■

Source: *Toronto Star.* (2001, July 31).

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1. What factors in Ontario's northern communities might act as social causes for suicide?
2. How might a symbolic interactionist explain the high suicide rate on northern reserves?
3. In addition to suicide prevention and education strategies, what actions would you recommend?
4. What might account for the higher suicide rate among girls in this community, a trend that is different from the national statistics?

Symbolic interactionists would describe suicide as resulting from individuals' perceptions of their situation and their ability to control their lives. This perspective would help to explain why some individuals choose suicide when most individuals in the same situation do not. A century after Durkheim completed his extensive sociological study, the causes of suicide are no clearer. Menno Boldt, a Canadian psychologist who worked in suicide prevention in Alberta, reached this conclusion (1998, p. 17):

People kill themselves because they find their life intolerable, and because they believe their future holds no hope for improvement. If we want to be effective in suicide-prevention, we must do more than merely prevent people from killing themselves. We must act to make every life tolerable. We must act to change the coercive circumstances in the lives of individuals that impel them to seek an escape from life. In short, we must treat suicide prevention as a cause—the cause of enhancing human lives. This implies a need for a deep personal commitment to the promotion of the values of humanity and human dignity in our society.

developing your research skills | Writing a Research Essay

A research essay is a paper that presents an argument based on research in the social sciences. You will read them frequently in the media and as part of your studies, and you will write them after conducting your own investigations. In a research essay, the results of an investigation are presented in a thesis that proposes the key understanding of the topic from a theoretical perspective. The thesis would then be supported with selected arguments that relate the evidence to the thesis.

Title

In the title, identify the main idea of your paper and suggest your theoretical perspective.

Introduction

In the introduction, state your thesis, define your terms and your theoretical perspective, and introduce your supporting arguments.

Discussion

In the discussion, present the arguments derived from analyzing the results of your research from your theoretical perspective, and outline the implications ofthe results.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, briefly restate your thesis and your strongest arguments.

References

In a research essay, include citations to inform the reader where you found the information. In a formal essay, use in-text citations, like those used in this text, to refer the reader to the references at the end of the paper, which acknowledge all the sources. Use the American Psychological Association (APA) style in the social sciences. However, when writing a personal research essay—for example, for publication in magazines or newspapers—omit formal citations and consider using quotations instead. ■

Knowledge/Understanding   Communication

1. Identify the arguments that have been used to explain why women earn less than men, and suggest what evidence exists to support each argument.

2. Distinguish between individualism and a duty-based moral code. Explain which philosophy most resembles the expectations of your parents.

3. According to the research, how do Canadian parents expect the costs of post-secondary education to be paid? Compare the results with the expectations of your family.

4. List the major causes of homelessness and suggest how each would affect the formation of an identity for a young person.

5. What social conditions might be a factor in suicide? Why do they only affect some people?

Knowledge/Understanding   Communication   Thinking/Inquiry

6. Select one of the essays from this chapter and write a personal essay in which you respond to the author using the same theoretical perspective that he or she did. Identify the perspective, state your response as a thesis, and include additional information from the text to support your arguments.

7. Select an essay from this chapter and write a response in the form of a letter to the editor, using a different theoretical perspective than in the essay. Identify the essayist's and your theoretical perspective.

Knowledge/Understanding   Communication   Thinking/Inquiry   Application

8. Select an issue examined in this chapter and develop a hypothesis concerning a possible action for Canadian society to take. Use the Web Connections to conduct research about the current situation, and form an opinion about what steps should be taken. Present and support your opinion orally as part of a town hall debate about the role of your community.

9. For one of the issues examined in this chapter, develop a hypothesis explaining the impact of it on one aspect of the transition to adulthood. Conduct an investigation using the Web Connections and other secondary sources. Present the results of your investigation as a formal research essay.

10. Identify another issue that is currently affecting the transition to adulthood. Conduct an information search to find a variety of viewpoints on the impact of the issue.