Transition

The VANIER INSTITUTE *of the* FAMILY

Prolonged Parenting

Modern Families

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About the Cover

*Knit Together* by Mary Ellis, Ottawa, Ontario

Knit Together combines imagery of the traditional roles of women, knitting and family care, blurring the lines between the natural and human-made world.

Mary Ellis is a professor of Environment Design at Algonquin College, and the proud new mother of a daughter named Margot.

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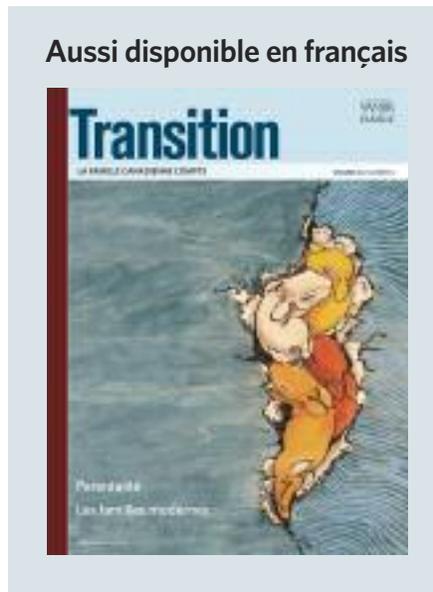
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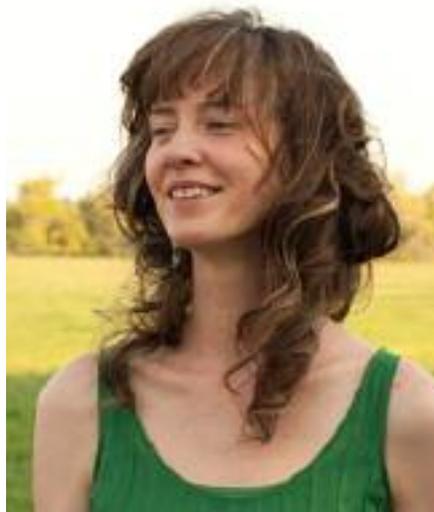
Transition

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From the Editor

Like the shifting sands of the desert, family roles and responsibilities are constantly changing. The winds of situational change alter the landscape and cover the footprints of the previous generation, leaving us to find our own ways over the new dunes of boomerang children, the division of household jobs when both partners work outside the home, technological changes and more. Along the way, we can only hope to find an oasis with a guidepost – and this is the role *Transition* can fulfill for our readers.

Our feature article is "Prolonged Parenting: Extending the Limits of Active Parenting" by Kerry Daly. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of children in their 20s who are staying at home or returning home due to student debt and poor job prospects, among other factors. An examination of current behaviours leads Daly to ask whether prolonged parenting is becoming the new normal.

In "Off the Vanier Bookshelf," Sara MacNaull reviews *Reshaping the Work–Family Debate: Why Men and Class Matter* by Joan C. Williams, which examines the impact of gender, class, politics and public policy on the work–family debate.

There's no denying that modern families are doing what it takes to come up with workable living arrangements. Creativity and flexibility are key to managing relationships that don't necessarily align with conventional definitions. Jenni Tipper explores two distinct trends in "Modern Families, Modern Living Arrangements": couples who are "living apart together" and those who are "living together apart."

What happens when men are given a diagnosis of cancer? In "Coping with Cancer: The Challenges Men Face," Lisa Wenger outlines the patterns that emerged from interviews with 30 men as they dealt with the physical impacts, role disruptions, relational strains and emotional struggles when their lives as strong, independent and productive beings were threatened.

Twentysomething Alena Novoa is a gainfully employed university graduate with an advantageous housing arrangement. She writes about her set-up in "Meet the Roommates: Mom and Dad" and compares her choices with decisions made by her peers.

How couples divide paid and unpaid work is the focus of "Sharing the Double Burden: A New Model of Domestic Happiness." Authors Roderic Beaujot, Zenaida Ravanera and Jianye Liu take a look at how couples are juggling their roles and responsibilities as parents and providers.

In "When Cupboards Are Bare," Nathan Battams takes a look at the factors that contribute to food insecurity and the resultant health issues faced by Canadians as food banks struggle to keep up with demand.

Results from a survey of households this year reveal that almost half owned at least one video game console. From the big bucks involved to the time spent, see this issue's "Facts and Stats" for more on video gaming in Canada.

We hope you enjoy this second issue of the redesigned *Transition* magazine. We look forward to receiving your suggestions and comments. If you have ideas for future issues or would like to submit something you've written, including first-hand perspectives on family-related issues, please write to us at editor@vanierinstitute.ca.

Veronica Schami
Editor

Contents

Modern Family Is...

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Families are the cornerstone of our society. Families are the engine of our economy. Families are at the centre of our hearts.

The word "family" is typically preceded or followed by an adjective or word (e.g. *low-income* family, *working* family, *skip-generation* family or family *law*, family *finances*, family *violence*) without any consideration of what we mean when we say "family."

In its early years, the Vanier Institute sought to understand and focus attention on the interrelated economic, political, social, technological and cultural institutions and practices in which family members seek to fulfill their obligations to one another and to the larger community. This led to an exploration of what "family" is, stretching beyond simply what families look like, and studying families from the perspective of how they function and how they navigate the complex relationships within.

The Vanier Institute defines "family" as any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following: the physical maintenance and care of group members; the addition of new members through procreation or adoption; the socialization of children; social control of family members; the production, consumption, distribution of goods and services; and affective nurturance – love.

Families are many things, as unique as the people who comprise them. Families are self-defined, constantly adapting and continually evolving. Families are dynamic, as roles are being regularly redefined and relationships renegotiated over time. Families are built on connections, which can include proximity, biology, finances, responsibilities and/or emotions.

Some families are by *design* – for example, you decide when and how many children to have (or whether to have them at all). Some families are by *choice* – for example, you choose a spouse or partner. You could also choose to identify as a "family of one." Finally, some families are by *default,* that is, you get the siblings you have without choice or design.

As we are now living longer, it is no surprise that we will experience several family situations and experiences in our lifetimes. Despite the fact that families continually impact – and are impacted by – social conditions and economic factors, by and large, they remain highly resilient.

We provide and receive care in various life stages: we experience our first family in childhood; we build "families of choice" in early adulthood; some of us expand our families with children; and we continue to redefine our relationships in our senior years. We may share our households with family members from multiple generations as we assume care for children and parents or grandparents. Or we may experience single-generation households with family-like relationships in early adulthood or the last stages in life.

Even though the context, the language and our understanding of families have changed, the Vanier Institute's *functional* definition has stood the test of time, a definition that is now used in countless family studies textbooks and by community organizations across the country and around the world.

Nora Spinks
Chief Executive Officer

The new normal for prolonged parenting is that parental ties unravel slowly rather than being cut quickly.

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Prolonged Parenting

Extending the Limits of Active Parenting

KERRY DALY

There was a time when entry into parenthood and adulthood was signalled primarily by biological milestones. The act of becoming a parent profoundly changes one's receptivity to being parented; over time, being parented is not only less welcomed, but arguably less important as well. Although most emerging adults do not identify their entry into parenthood as the *core* of their adult identity, many emerging adults who do become parents have indicated that the process of becoming a parent was in fact the key marker that *made* them an adult.[1]

This historical pattern has now changed. Whereas "teenage pregnancy" still occurs, it has decreased steadily over the last three decades, from about 30 births per 1,000 teenage women in 1974 to 12 in 2009.[2] The mean age of mothers at the time

Families, there are more generations "living under one roof" as children in their 20s either stay at or return home as a result of student debt loads, poor employment prospects, larger parental homes and increased cultural diversity. The changes are dramatic: in 1981, 26.9% of young adults aged 20–29 lived in the parental home – a proportion that grew to 42.3% by 2011.[4]

This growth is even more dramatic among 25- to 29-year-olds, for whom the proportion has more than doubled, from 11.3% in 1981 to 25.2% in 2011. Since young women tend to form unions earlier than young men, approximately 47% of men in their 20s lived in the parental home, compared with 38% of women in this age group. The number of Gen Xers (those born in the early 1970s) who return home has *tripled* since the first wave of baby boomers (those born in the early 1950s), from approximately 11% to 30%.[5]

Emerging adulthood equals prolonged parenthood

While the notion of a more slowly emerging adulthood[6] has been the focus of numerous human development studies, less attention has been paid to the impact of these changes on the *parents* of these young adults. "Prolonged parenthood" refers to a period in mid-life when adult children either stay in the family home longer than expected or return after a period of living on their own.[7] The effects are significant: in all aspects of parenting, from provision and instruction to discipline, parents are on the job for a longer period of time, with extended responsibilities that can result in strained and deepened relations with children, increased financial vulnerability due to extended dependence and a loss or modification of some of their own aspirations and goals as adults.

Of course, when considering prolonged parenthood, one can easily argue that parenting is a *lifelong* commitment. The investment at the outset is straightforward – young children are fully dependent beings and there is no choice but to give them the care they need. Nevertheless, the job of parents is to shift this absolute dependence to some measure of independence. It is every parent's evolutionary and generational mandate to prepare their children to take over the reins of their own responsibility and care. And while most parents want to love their children forever, most do not want to actively *parent* them forever. Despite the strong intention to lead their children to independence, for many parents,

> Parents are most effective during emerging adulthood when they talk to their children and do what they can to maintain the relationship while simultaneously granting greater levels of autonomy and forming new boundaries that are based substantially less on parental control.

of delivery was 29.7 years in 2011 – a two-year increase over the past two decades.[3] There now tends to be an increasing separation between our reproductive capacity and transition to parenthood. The surge of hormones during puberty is no longer a sanctioned signal to reproduce, but rather a sexual force to be explored, expressed and reproductively managed for the next 10, 15 and sometimes 20 years of what some perceive as a prolonged period of adolescence.

The resulting absence of parental responsibilities, and consequent lengthening of our period of being parented, has implications for both children and parents. Most significantly, as outlined in the Vanier Institute's December 2012 edition of *Fascinating*

the current normative and economic context may be undermining their best efforts to raise (in a timely way) an independent, responsible adult.

The time required to accomplish this task has not only lengthened considerably, but the essential goal of the exercise has become less clear. Many parents are experiencing anxiety about their children's accumulated debt, their apparent reluctance and/or inability to get a good job, their disinterest in actively participating in family events and the overall fact that they don't seem to be in a hurry to "get settled." Many parents are also beginning to lose perspective on their *own* developmental journey, including concerns about launching, money and their own freedom to live life in a different way. But, for both emerging adult children and their parents, the one area of common ground seems to be ambivalence about what to expect and confusion about what it means to be an adult living at home.[8]

The focus is often on individual development issues for these young adults: they are hanging on too long, floundering and facing a tough economy that makes it difficult to launch into their own independent lives. This situation has been referred to as "arrested development."[9] Personal responsibility has been reinforced in the popular press with language that emphasizes phrases such as "adultescents" who are "slouching toward adulthood."[10] Media stories often focus on the negative impact of moving home on financial planning and how this affects the ability of parents to save for retirement, frequently referencing how some young adults spend on discretionary items such as cellphones and nights out with apparent disregard for the costs associated with living at home.[11]

Although issues of individual development are important, broader forces are at play. Increased life expectancy has changed the structure of the lifespan and its various stages. Adulthood in particular is longer and more complex, resulting in the lengthening of particular life stages. Parenting practices have changed, as men and women in their 20s and 30s have arguably been the subjects of some of the most intensive and scrutinized parenting practices ever. The proliferation of parenting information through books, the media and the Internet has meant that parenting has been "professionalized" with high expectations for what it means to be a "good parent," raising concerns about parents overinvesting in children, being overinvolved in their schooling and inadvertently fostering an extended relationship of dependency.

For some young adults, this experience may extend reliance on their parents to help them navigate an uncertain future with limited resources. Young adults are much more likely now to attend university, with approximately one-quarter of young men and one-third of young women holding a university degree, resulting in a series of changes that include not only leaving home later, but also forming unions and having children later as well (or not at all).[12] For example, the average age at first marriage in 2004 was 30.5 for men and 28.5 for women; the age during first birth for a woman is now at 29 – significant rises compared to previous generations.[13] Employment prospects for young men and women are also often poorer than expected, resulting in a prolonged period of substantial educational debt and slowed financial independence.

Prolonged parenthood: The new normal?

For young adults, normative changes that remove the stigma and expectation for an early launch, combined with heightened financial pressures, make staying at home a comfortable and pragmatic option. Parents may have a harder time pushing their children out of the nest, given their parental investments and awareness of the financial challenges their children face. Furthermore, whereas the dominant story of young adults staying home tends to focus on how they can take advantage of a good thing, one must also consider the degree to which parents have created dependencies of their *own* as part of this process. Are they reluctant to let go and give them a good push out of the nest?

The idea that active parenting is "prolonged" raises the underlying premise that it is "too long" *in reference to normative expectations.* Inherently normative, studies of lifespan and intergenerational relations are also subject to cultural and historical change. For parents in the prolonged parenting

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This is a time of mixed emotions that can include resentment and delight, letting go and holding on, and exercising authority while opening to a new adult relationship.

phase, their expectations are shaped by their *own* experience of leaving the nest and becoming independent. Accordingly, the nostalgia for a clean break can sometimes give rise to worries about the "lingering on," the return home and the lack of apparent initiative to move on. There is a resulting tendency to uphold a perspective that prolonged parenting is unexpected and surprising when compared to one's own (more rapid) developmental trajectory as a young adult.

Nevertheless, current patterns of behaviour have begun to establish a "new normal" that an adult child returning home has become common, predictable and normative – a model in which parental ties unravel slowly rather than being cut quickly.[14] This emerging norm has resulted in reduced stigma associated with living at home and reinforcement of its acceptance.

Although the literature in this area is limited, there are some interesting trends in the way parents report on their experience of prolonged parenting. The lingering belief that prolonged parenting is itself non-normative can give rise to strained relations simply because of the failure of their adult children to meet expectations for self-sustainability.[15] Specifically, these strained relations can be the result of

compromised plans for the future, a lack of clarity associated with carrying out roles (as both parent and child when the child is an adult), ambiguity with respect to household responsibilities and conflicts with respect to social and practical support.[16] Moving back home or lingering too long at home can also be accompanied by a host of resentments expressed by parents rooted in the exercise of everyday living, such as cleanliness, scheduling, accountability and communication regarding activities, discipline and the use of space.[17]

The ambiguity of the "in-between" status of young adulthood and the associated lack of normative clarity are also reflected in generational differences in views about what it means to become an adult. Whereas traditional criteria for recognizing adulthood have focused on getting married, becoming a parent or purchasing a home, emerging adults do not identify these as necessary aspects of being an adult – until they become a parent themselves.[18, 19] Emerging adults placed emphasis on accepting "responsibility for the consequences of your actions," as a key indicator of adulthood, whereas parents are more likely to emphasize "becoming less self-oriented" by developing greater consideration of others.[20]

Positive aspects of prolonged parenthood

Nevertheless, research suggests that, in general, parents are adapting to these changed living arrangements and reporting positive aspects of parent–child relations with their adult children living at home. While there are typically many points of tension, this is also a time when the parent-child relationship begins to shift from "parent and child" to something that at least approaches "near equals," which includes a different kind of intimacy and the potential for mutual respect.[21]

In particular, parents report higher levels of satisfaction when adult children are more independent, mature and willing to provide support as well as receive it.[22] Research has shown that when young adults demonstrated movement toward independence through activities such as progressing toward an educational degree or contributing financially (e.g. room and board), parents expressed more satisfaction with the relationship.[23] In the same vein, both young adults and parents identified "relational maturity" as the most essential criteria for adulthood[24] with implications for enhancing the positive valence of their own relationship. Furthermore, when children *do* move back into the parental home, one of the keys for a successful transition is the ability of parents to shift from treating their children as adolescents to treating them as adults through their recognition of their children's change in maturity.[25]

Style matters

Parenting style also affects how parents and emerging adults experience their time together. One of the least adaptive approaches to parenting during emerging adulthood involved high control and low responsiveness.[26] Efforts on the part of parents to apply excessive control at a time when their emerging adult child wishes to exert his or her own independence is likely to result in reduced satisfaction and increased conflict in the relationship. As the authors suggest, even disengagement or lack of involvement may serve to be a more adaptive parenting approach given the developmental importance of sought-after independence. If there is advice to be given in what is usually a complicated relationship, the authors summarize by suggesting that "parents are most effective during emerging adulthood when they talk to their children and do what they can to maintain the relationship while simultaneously granting greater levels of autonomy and forming new boundaries that are based substantially less on parental control."[27]

In the same way that emerging adults are "in between" a variety of statuses and roles in their lives, so too are parents "in between" the intensity of parenting adolescents and a period of anticipated empty nest. This is a time of mixed emotions that can include resentment and delight, letting go and holding on, and exercising authority while opening to a new adult relationship. In the end, prolonged parenting presents both challenges and benefits, and is part of the ever-changing family dynamics.

Kerry Daly is a Professor at the University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, and a member of the Vanier Alumni Network.

[1] J.J. Arnett (2000), "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens Through the Twenties," *American Psychologist*, 55: 469–480.

[2] HRSDC, *Indicators of Well-being in Canada*, http://bit.ly/13k4VLN.

[3] Statistics Canada (2013), Table 102-4504 – Mean Age of Mother at Time of Delivery (Live Births), Canada, Provinces and Territories, Annual (Years), CANSIM (database), http://bit.ly/15O3ng7.

[4] Statistics Canada (2012), http://bit.ly/VcjsWX.

[5] P. Beaupré, P. Turcotte and A. Milan (2006), "Junior Comes Back Home: Trends and Predictors of Returning to the Parental Home," *Canadian Social Trends*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11-008 (Winter): 28–34.

[6] J.J. Arnett (2004), *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[7] N.M. Putney and V.L. Bengston (2002), "Families, Intergenerational Relationships, and Kinkeeping in Midlife," *Handbook of Midlife Development*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

[8] L.J. Nelson, L.M. Padilla-Walker, J. Carroll, S. Madsen, C. Barry and S. Badger (2007), "'If You Want Me to Treat You Like an Adult, Start Acting Like One!' Comparing the Criteria That Emerging Adults and Their Parents Have for Adulthood," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21, No. 4: 665–674.

[9] J.E. Côté (2000), *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, New York: New York University Press.

[10] Sally Koslow (2012), *Slouching Toward Adulthood: Observations from the Not-So-Empty Nest*, New York: Viking Press.

[11] G. Marr (2012), "Moving Back Home and Still Not Saving," *Financial Post online*, October 6, 2012, http://bit.ly/Q18UXF.

[12] The Vanier Institute of the Family (2010), *Families Count IV: Profiling Canadian Families,* Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Beaupré, Turcotte and Milan.

[15] Putney and Bengston.

[16] Beaupré, Turcotte and Milan.

[17] Arnett (2004).

[18] Arnett (2000).

[19] Nelson et al.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Arnett (2004).

[22] Beaupré, Turcotte and Milan.

[23] W.S. Aquilino (1996), "The Returning Adult Child and Parental Experience at Midlife," in C. Ryff, M. Mallick Seltzer (Eds.), *The Parental Experience in Midlife*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[24] Nelson et al.

[25] Arnett (2004).

[26] L.J. Nelson, L.M. Padilla-Walker, K.J. Christensen, C. Evans and J.S. Carroll (2011), *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 40: 730–743.

[27] Ibid.

OFF THE VANIER BOOKSHELF

Reshaping the Work–Family Debate: Why Men and Class Matter

Joan C. Williams. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010.

SARA MACNAULL

How to effectively manage work and family continues to be a topic of conversation among individuals, within families and with employers. Both men and women have multiple responsibilities at work, at home and in their communities. The media, however, often paints a very particular picture of what both men and women do differently when striving to achieve some sort of work–family balance.

Reshaping the Work–Family Debate: Why Men and Class Matter focuses on work–family issues in the United States, examining how gender and class are important aspects of the debate, and seeks to build bridges between the interdisciplinary components, mainstream discourse and the specialized field of work–family studies.

Joan C. Williams, a distinguished law professor at the University of California, argues that work–family issues in the United States reflect a fundamental economic problem: today's workplace is designed for the 1960s workforce. This discrepancy is fuelled by social norms, old-fashioned and rigid definitions of masculinity and the resulting gender pressures experienced by men. The ability to fulfill perceived expectations of manliness (i.e. being the breadwinner to support a family) is linked to both gender and class, affecting the ways that men and women navigate work and family.

Reshaping the Work–Family Debate is divided into three parts, examining the intersection of gender, class and the work–family debate. The first part explores the unspoken framework that shapes discussions, especially in the media. This section argues that the language used to describe women who "opt out" of the workforce and leave behind a successful career to raise a family is gravely inaccurate. This inaccuracy, according to Williams, further demonstrates the need for reframing the way we talk about gender, a topic further explored in the second part of the book. By examining both masculine and feminine roles in the workplace and within the family, the author argues that traditional roles and gender bias norms push women
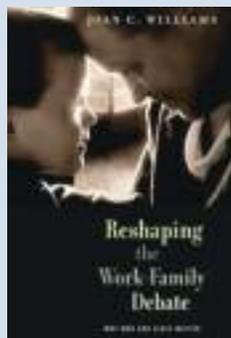
> Williams presents thought-provoking arguments and contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding work–family conflict.

out of good jobs (as opposed to "opting out") and also push men out of caregiving. The third part of the book focuses on how class fits into the discussion and why it should be equally considered when looking for solutions on how to reduce work–family conflict. Williams argues that public policy failures are responsible for much of the work–family conflict in the United States. She concludes that the dominance of the business elite has prohibited the implementation of valuable family supports found in numerous other countries (e.g. maternity leave).

Williams presents various thought-provoking arguments and contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding work–family conflict by reframing how we conceptualize the initial work–family debate through gender, class, politics and public policy. *Reshaping the Work–Family Debate* is ideally suited for employers, human resource professionals and scholars interested in workplace polices, the changing workforce and family-friendly work environments.

Sara MacNaull is responsible for Networks, Projects and Special Events at the Vanier Institute of the Family.

To order: Harvard University Press, http://bit.ly/19Lw55n

LIVING APART TOGETHER | LIVING TOGETHER APART

Modern Families, Modern Living Arrangements

JENNI TIPPER

"It's complicated!" There's no denying that modern families are doing what it takes to come up with workable living arrangements. Creativity and flexibility are key to managing relationships that don't necessarily align with conventional definitions. Here we examine two contemporary trends: couples who are "living apart together" and those who are "living together apart."

A sizeable minority of Canadians (7%) over the age of 20 is part of an LAT couple.

MODERN FAMILIES, MODERN LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Part 1: Living Apart Together

JENNI TIPPER

Living together has long been the hallmark of a stable, committed relationship. Historically, marriage was the only gateway to legitimacy for a couple seeking a life together under one roof. It wasn't until the 1960s that non-marital cohabitation emerged as a new social institution, blowing the doors off marriage as the essential precursor to sharing an address.

More recently, the boundaries of a committed relationship have expanded beyond the "one roof" limit to include couples sharing a relationship, but not a home and often not even a city. These couples are part of a new phenomenon called "living apart together" (LAT). Unlike their contemporary cousins "the commuter couples" (who have one main household in common and one or both commute long distances so they are apart for a period of time such as weekdays and together on weekends), members of an LAT couple reside in separate households entirely.

A sizeable minority of Canadians (7%) over the age of 20 is part of an LAT couple.[1] LATs defy narrow description. They are spread across all social and age groups, but are largely the purview of youth: nearly 1 in 3 young adults aged 20 to 24 (31%) claim to be in an LAT.

Fewer older adults pursue LAT relationships (5% among those aged 30 to 39 and to 2% among those 70 and over), but those who do enjoy them for longer. The average duration of an LAT couple is 2.3 years among young adults, compared with 3.8 years among those age 40 to 49 and 7.5 years among those 60 and over.

The reasons LAT relationships form help to explain their relative longevity. Being part of an LAT couple as a young adult is largely a function of circumstances (going away to university/college), financial necessity (living with parents) and social expectation (don't "settle down" too soon). The motivations driving older

couples to establish LAT relationships are more complex. For many, it is a matter of choice enabled by financial security and fuelled by individuality.

Some couples simply don't want to live together: it could be that neither wants to move or that the benefits of having private, personal time and space outweigh any of the costs associated with regularly sharing space in two different homes. In some cases, it is employment that keeps couples living in separate locations or the presence of children from a previous relationship. And in others, it may be past relationship experiences that drive the desire to maintain spatial autonomy.

As LAT relationships continue to trend as a "viable choice," some of the stigma that older women, in particular, experience around living alone may ease. Given the tendency to equate relationship status with living arrangements, it is easy to conflate being single in relationship terms, being single in residential terms and being alone in life. As LAT couples are showing, living alone does not necessarily mean being lonely, isolated or disengaged. Nor does it reflect an inability or unwillingness to "commit" to a partner.

In reality, 46% of surveyed Canadians living in an LAT relationship reported living in the same neighbourhood as their spouse[2] and wouldn't have it any other way.

Jenni Tipper is a senior researcher at the Vanier Institute of the Family.

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[1] Statistics Canada (2013), *Living Apart Together* by Martin Turcotte, http://bit.ly/10bGi78.

[2] Statistics Canada (2011), "Table 7: Distribution of Persons in an Intimate Relationship, Whose Partners Live in a Different Household, by Place of Residence of the Spouse, Canada, 2011," 2011 General Social Survey: *Overview of Families in Canada*, catalogue no. 89-650-XWE, http://bit.ly/1bbXXBk.

MODERN FAMILIES, MODERN LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Part 2: Living Together Apart

JENNI TIPPER

Anyone who has ever shared a bedroom or a bathroom knows that family living arrangements are complex and often require creativity, flexibility and a leap of faith from everyone involved. This is particularly true of families rebuilding after separation or divorce.

When families with children separate, critical questions arise around who will make decisions on behalf of the children (legal custody), where those children will live (physical custody) and how they will split their time with their parents (physical custody and access). Most families work out these details without actively engaging the family court system.

In Canada, nearly 1.2 million kids live with divorced or separated parents. Almost three-quarters (70%) of these children spend most of their time living with their mothers, 1 in 6 live primarily with their fathers and less than 1 in 10 divide their time equally between the two homes.[1]

From a gender perspective, these arrangements appear out of step with modern family dynamics. The majority of today's parents, regardless of marital status, blend paid work with raising children. More than two-thirds (69%) of mothers with children under the age of 2 and 84% of those with kids over 6 are in the paid labour market.[2] Increasingly, women in dual-earner families are outearning their male partners (29%).[3]

Fathers are more involved than ever before in housework, caregiving and raising kids. More men are taking advantage of parental leave benefits (9% in 2004 vs. 13% in 2009), particularly in Quebec, where uptake of the Parental Insurance Program (five weeks of leave just for fathers) rose from 22% in 2004 to 79% in 2009.

Many families aren't waiting for the law to catch up with these new realities, especially in the wake of separation and divorce. Some are turning convention on its head and adapting new and creative living arrangements in the face of change. In her book *Reconcilable Differences: Marriages End. Families Don't*, Cate Cochran explores life when couples call it quits, reminding us that there is no one family model.[4]

Among the arrangements families are making, "living together apart" (LTA) is growing in popularity. Being part of an LTA household means that parents and children continue to live together under the same roof (maybe even with new partners) with some combination of shared and discrete space. This could mean Mom and the kids living downstairs and Dad living upstairs, with the kids moving freely in between. In others, it means building or adapting a house so that each parent has a self-contained "home within a home," connected by common space (such as the children's bedrooms) to facilitate the children's movement between each "home," according to a set schedule.

Whether by necessity or design, living in an LTA family offers parents and children a means of balancing the desire for proximity, connectivity and financial security with the privacy and space needed to move forward in a new and supportive way.

Jenni Tipper is a senior researcher at the Vanier Institute of the Family.

In Canada, nearly 1.2 million kids live with divorced or separated parents.

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[1] Statistics Canada (2012), *Distribution of Separated or Divorced Parents, by Primary Residence of Their Children, Canada, 2011*, http://bit.ly/17vVieg.

[2] Nathan Battams (2013), *The Economic Well-Being of Women in Canada*, Ottawa: Vanier Institute of the Family, http://bit.ly/1dyWgyD.

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Men in relationships often enlist partners and, sometimes, adult children in efforts to learn about their disease.

Coping with Cancer
The Challenges Men Face

LISA M. WENGER

Men are often described as reluctant help-seekers. This broad characterization is, in part, reflected in research highlighting men's relatively lower rates of medical services use for physical or mental health symptoms. However, as researchers examine men's help-seeking, the picture becomes far more complex, particularly in the context of diagnosed illness. When faced with evidence of disease, hesitancy around clinical engagement is often set aside as men recognize that medical care is necessary and responsible.

Interested in how men navigate help-seeking after a cancer diagnosis, the author met with 30 men diagnosed with a variety of cancers. Over these interviews, patterns emerged that provided insight into how men manage cancer's challenges, including physical impacts, role disruptions, relational strains and emotional struggles.

Consistent with research describing serious or chronic illness as a "biographical disruption," the men detailed how cancer threatened a familiar self, including a way of life defined by strength, independence and the ability to serve as a productive force in their families, workplaces and communities. In response to these threats, many of the men engaged two aligned, yet distinct, strategies for accessing support: help-seeking with a strong back and help-seeking with a soft front. *(The metaphor of strong backs/soft fronts comes from the work of Buddhist teacher and anthropologist Roshi Joan Halifax.)*

The first process (*strong backs*) focused on resisting loss and change as men built their cognitive and physical resources through information gathering and lifestyle shifts. Drawing on a variety of supports, including clinicians and cancer peers, men in relationships often enlisted partners and, sometimes, adult children in efforts to learn about their disease and make dietary- or fitness-related shifts. Recognizing their family as people who cared about them and who were a natural part of this experience, these help requests were often indirect. Additionally, many men noted how family proactively offered support; the men often did not need to request this help.

The second process of help-seeking (*soft fronts*) tended to be more challenging. Focused on acknowledging and adapting to enduring changes levelled by cancer, men often described struggles to solicit help to work through their distress and make sense of their "new normal." Many turned to partners for assistance, describing how they had "few secrets" from each other. However, some men feared that the intensity of their emotional pain might be too much for loved ones or worried that family members were ill-equipped to provide necessary help. Likewise, family members could struggle to offer support. As the men described, some family appeared uncomfortable with emotion-focused discussions and/or emphasized the need for the men to "fight" or stay "tough." These dynamics complicated already difficult conversations about sadness, fear and loss. In this context, some men turned to friends, therapists or cancer peers, valuing the distance or common experience, while others tried to manage their struggles alone.

Both strong backs and soft fronts have value. However, for men in Western society, masculine expectations of control, self-reliance and emotional reservation can emphasize the former and complicate the latter, a challenge emphasized by cultural narratives of cancer as a "battle." As evident in this research, as these dynamics play out in the context of the family, there are important implications for how men work with loved ones to manage the challenges of cancer.

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It would be a lie to say I haven't felt a bit of social pressure to move out.

A personal point of view...

Meet the Roommates: Mom and Dad

ALENA NOVOA

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I've always had difficulty with change, but my 20s have been a particularly unsettling phase for me – one that has presented a challenging learning curve. The transition from student to "Now what?" after I graduated from university set me off into a mini quarter-life crisis. I was forced to re-evaluate my goals, redefine my identity and adapt to a new chapter as a quasi-grown-up.

Nonetheless, I feel somewhat reassured by a statistic I came across in the *Financial Post* that indicates I am a fortunate exception to the norm: "The average university student leaves campus with close to $28,000 in debt, and takes an average of 14 years to pay it off based on an average starting salary of $39,523."[1] I managed to graduate without any debt and found a job in my field, which I have held for over a year now.

Having endured many unknowns and uncertainties during this period, the one thing I knew for sure was that I wanted to avoid debt at all cost, even if this meant doing things differently from my peers. Many of my friends who, like me, have taken the first steps on their career paths have already moved out of their parents' homes. I, however, have made it a goal to save enough to invest in my own property. Until that time comes, I have chosen to continue living with my parents.

My mindset has perhaps been influenced by my father, who owns several properties that he rents out to university students. Over time, I have developed an aversion to the concept of renting. Spending money every month on something that a stranger will benefit from, rather than saving or investing that money, seems ridiculous. Of course, I am lucky enough to have the option to still live at home, thanks in part to the good relationships I cultivate with both my parents.

Living at home has its challenges, especially when your parents are divorced. Since I work in downtown Montreal, I stay at my father's nearby condo during the week. I visit my mother in the suburbs most weekends. Commuting between my two homes is not always an easy task. I often equate my life to that of a nomad. Most people I know have personalized their rooms to create their own private sanctuary. I've never really felt compelled to do the same in either home, perhaps because I am never in one place long enough to make the effort. As a person gets older, the need for privacy becomes stronger and territorial instincts kick in. It would be a lie to say I haven't felt a bit of social pressure to move out, as I watch my friends venture one by one out of their parents' homes. But, of course, most of them are renting…

Despite all this, I still feel I've made the right decision to stay at home. This past year has been a lesson in patience, as I figured out that nothing stays the same. To face this reality, I practise how to stop worrying and how to live in the moment and accept that there will always be unknowns in life. I am grateful for the support and unconditional love of my parents. Needless to say, I still dream of the day that I will have my own place to decorate and personalize.

Alena Novoa has a B.A. in Communication Studies from Concordia University. She lives in Montreal and works as a media planner at an advertising agency.

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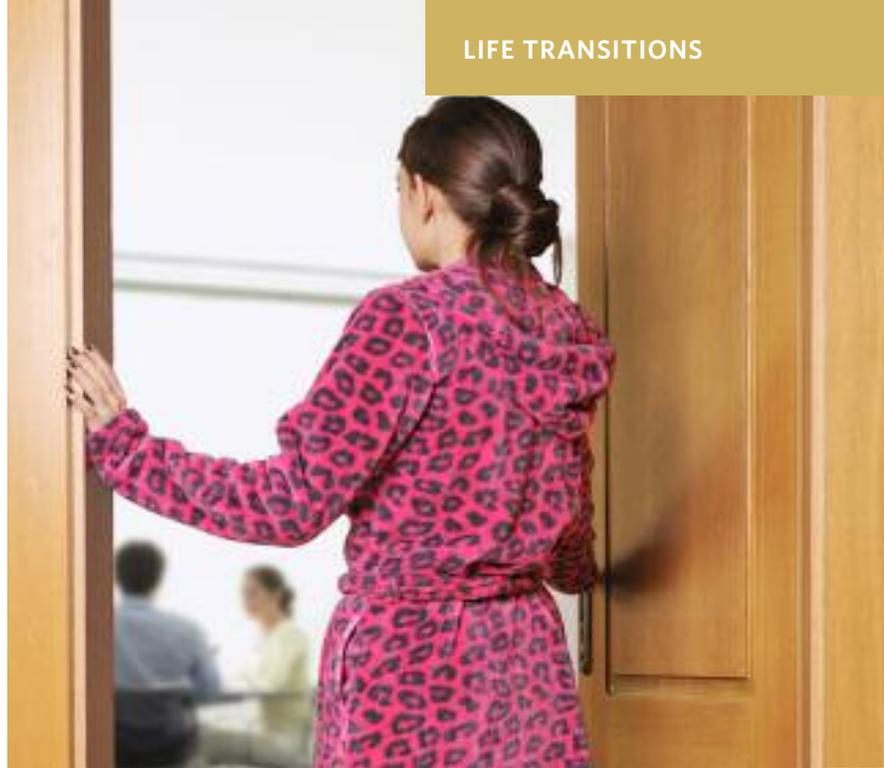
Sharing the Double Burden

A New Model of Domestic Happiness

RODERIC BEAUJOT, ZENAIDA RAVANERA AND JIANYE LIU

At some point, most Canadian families feel crunched for time, trying to fit busy schedules into 24-hour days. Managing paid and unpaid work, caregiving and community responsibilities often leaves little time for much else. The "double burden" of simultaneously handling work and home life has traditionally been shouldered by women and mothers, but a growing number of men are engaging in regular household and caregiving activities. Consequently, a new "shared double burden" model of work is emerging, one in which men and women are juggling in a more harmonious fashion.

The tension between caring and earning is a useful entry point for the study of contemporary family life, in general, and of healthy, happy relationships, in particular. By looking at the results of Statistics Canada's time use surveys, we can see the shifting patterns in how men and women divide paid and unpaid work.

The trend over the last 25 years has been one of gender convergence. In 1986, the average "total productive activity" time (time spent in paid work, education and unpaid work) among 25- to 54-year-olds was 8.3 hours for men and 8.1 hours for women. By 2005, the average for both men and women was 8.8 hours.[1] In that same year, women and men also averaged almost the same amount of time per day with family (3.5 hours and 3.4 hours, respectively).[2] In a comparison of twenty-something Gen Xers (born 1969–1978) and Ys (born 1981–1990), Marshall found that younger wives were spending slightly less total time in paid work (48% vs. 47%) and notably less doing housework (59% vs. 53%).[3]

What on the surface appears like parity, however, belies the different *ways* individual couples sort activities. Our own research in this area points to five distinct models of work division (see sidebar).

Among couples where neither partner is a full-time student nor retired, the traditional division of work is still the most prevalent, but it is a pattern in decline. In 1992, 44% of couples were "complementary-traditional" couples, but this had dropped to 33% by 2005. The proportion of women living in the "women's double

Definitions of models of the division of earning and caring activities

Complementary-traditional: Wife is doing more unpaid work and husband more paid work.

Complementary-gender-reversed: Husband is doing more unpaid work and wife more paid work.

Women's double burden: Wife is doing the same amount of, or more, paid work and more unpaid work.

Men's double burden: Husband is doing the same amount of, or more, paid work and more unpaid work.

Shared roles: Wife and husband are doing the same amount of unpaid work.

burden" model remained stable at 27% between 1992 and 2005. "Men's double burden" couples increased from 6% in 1992 to 11% in 2005, as did the "complementary-gender-reversed," from 2% to 3% in the same time period. Couples identifying in the "shared roles" category showed the largest increase, from 23% in 1992 to 27% in 2005.

For couples seeking greater equity in their roles as parents and providers, the "shared role" model provides the greatest balance in paid and unpaid work. Indeed, this division of paid and unpaid work is being adopted by a growing number of Canadian couples, and, with increasingly equitable parental supports and shifting attitudes about gender roles, it is becoming the new norm.

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When Cupboards Are Bare

Food Insecurity and Public Health

NATHAN BATTAMS

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Food security is an issue that is deeply intertwined with the economic well-being of families. It is a serious social, economic and public health concern, felt not only by the estimated 3.9 million Canadians who live in households that reported experiencing some level of food insecurity in 2011, but also by the communities in which they live.[1] When families face obstacles in securing the quantity and quality of meals they need to thrive, it becomes all the harder for them to be healthy and live productive, happy lives.

When the Canadian Medical Association recently consulted Canadians about public health issues in a series of town hall meetings, food insecurity was identified as one of the main social determinants of health.[2] Without a stable and healthy food supply, people are more likely to develop a range of health issues, such as heart disease, diabetes, stress and even food allergies.[3]

Since the beginning of the 2008 economic recession, families have increasingly depended on food banks and other community supports for essential support securing the quantity and quality of food they need. The number of people who accessed food banks across the country in March 2013 was 23% higher than in 2008, and half were families with children.[4]

Food banks and community supports were never intended to be permanent *solutions* to food insecurity. Many organizations providing food to families are feeling the pressure resulting from the economic downturn. Faced with increased demand, some food banks have had to reduce the assistance they provide – a reality with serious consequences for the health and well-being of Canadian families.

While there are multiple contributing factors to food insecurity, including geographic isolation, food literacy and transportation issues, economic insecurity is at the heart of the matter. Families can't eat when they don't have the power to buy. People who face disproportionately high levels of poverty, such as

> While there are multiple contributing factors to food insecurity, including geographic isolation, food literacy and transportation issues, economic insecurity is at the heart of the matter.

lone-parent mothers and Aboriginal people, therefore also experience higher levels of food insecurity.

Food bank users typically live with limited financial resources, living in poverty and experiencing social inequality.[5] This is reflected in patterns of food bank use: half of households who accessed food banks in March 2013 relied on social assistance as their primary source of income.[6]

Whether it begins with improving the health or increasing the wealth of Canadians, access to the quality and quantity of food we need is essential for living well and reaching our full potential.

Nathan Battams is a researcher and writer at the Vanier Institute of the Family.

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FACTS AND STATS

Video Gaming in Canada

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48% Proportion of surveyed Canadian households that reported having at least one video game console in the household in 2013[1]

36 Average age of surveyed Canadians who reported in 2013 that they play video games[2]

77.6M Number of video games for various gaming devices sold between September 2011 and February 2012 in Canada – a 46% growth in sales[3]

$2.3B Amount of money in GDP generated by the Canadian video game industry in 2012[4]

64% & 35% Proportion of Canadian men and women surveyed in 2013, respectively, who reported that they play video games[5]

37% & 9% Proportion of surveyed Canadian boys and girls, respectively, in grades 7–12 who reported in 2011 that they play video games "daily or almost daily"[6]

31% & 6% Proportion of Canadians surveyed in 2013 who reported that they play 1–3 hours and 21+ hours per week, respectively, playing video games[7]

108 min. & 140 min. Average amount of time spent playing video games per day by Canadians (who reported that they play video games) in 1998 and 2010, respectively[8]

10% Proportion of surveyed Canadians in grades 7–12 who reported in 2011 that they "do not play video games"[9]

60% Proportion of smartphone/tablet owners who reported in 2012 that they play games on their devices (71% youth, 47% parents)[10]

57%, 36% & 27% Proportion of Internet users aged 16–24, 25–44 and 65 and older, respectively, in Canada who reported playing online games in 2012[11]

[1] CBC News (2010), "Profile of a Canadian Gamer," http://bit.ly/khgj87.

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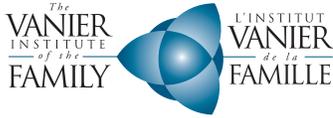
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