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Why Are Young Canadian Men Avoiding the Humanities?

Arjun Deckha

Abstract: Historically, the humanities have been highly respected. Since the mid-20th century, however, these fields of study have experienced an immense decline in undergraduate enrollment. Scholars have identified this trend as a global humanities ‘crisis’ and highlighted the lack of male participation in the fields may be a root cause. In addition, few to no scholarly studies have analyzed this issue in Canada. Through eleven semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study aimed to highlight the primary reasons why Canadian young men are avoiding humanities undergraduate programs. The findings demonstrate that young men do not study the humanities because they are not exposed enough to the fields, are driven by short-term success, and are heavily influenced by stereotypes and their peers. Future studies should consult educators and school boards to allow a stronger application of this research into the educational system and young men’s lives.

Keywords: Humanities, Young Men, Canada, Stereotypes, Crisis, Lack of Exposure

Introduction

Historically, the humanities were highly regarded fields of study. Defined as fields of social science based on humanistic content, the humanities include a wide range of subjects such as language, linguistics, literature, history, and philosophy (Bennett, 3). Moreover, studies have shown that studying the humanities can increase human prosperity and psychological richness, a term that underscores a strong life shaped by learning experiences (Westgate & Oishi, 2). However, there may be a global humanities ‘crisis’ (Ahlburg & Roberts; Hall, 11). In 1966, upwards of 14% of students studying at US institutions pursued humanities degrees. This percentage halved by 2010 to 7%, a clear indication of the fields’ decline (Ahlburg). This rapid decline, which began in the 1960s, is correlated with the lack of male presence in current-day humanities programs (Ahl-

burg & Roberts). In addition, a study analyzing gender disparities in fields of study at Tel Aviv University described the humanities as “the most feminine” field of study with only 23% of individuals in humanities programs being male (Ayalon, 282). In a Canadian context, although Canadian men made up only 43% (931,220) of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in Canada in 2021 (Statista), they made up solely 37.9% (259,235) of those who had completed a humanities bachelor’s degree by 2021, demonstrating their lower rate of enrollment in humanities undergraduate majors in comparison with their female counterparts (Statistics Canada). This disparity between the percentages of male and female humanities majors remains unexplored. Although the global decline of the humanities has been discovered by Ahlburg, and the low rates of male enrollment in the fields are observed by Ayalon (282) and Long (3), a gap remains.

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This study aims to highlight the primary reasons why Canadian young men are avoiding the humanities. It will be conducted through a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with Canadian young men currently enrolled in a non-humanities major Canadian undergraduate program. By emulating the thematic analysis research method of Langhorne (305), this study will observe the primary conceptual themes of the responses. The main question being addressed in the eleven, 30-minute interviews with different young men is: “Why did you choose to not study the humanities?” The primary themes and potential rationale as to why young men are avoiding the humanities will be highlighted through the analysis of quotations. Specific keywords in quotations from various interviews that relate to common themes will be established. Ultimately, it is fundamental to understand why young men are not studying the humanities. Not only do the humanities force individuals to acquire humanistic knowledge, but also teach valuable practical skills that humans can apply their whole lives (Jay, 3). The implications of this research may allow us to improve these low male humanities rates and help us determine how we can get young men to reconnect with the humanities.

Literature Review

The Analysis of Social and Intellectual Factors and Their Correlation with College Major Selection

In Päßler & Hell’s 2012 study, the correlation between college major choice and vocational interests and cognitive abilities in both men and women is analyzed (479–96). This quantitative study was conducted at various German universities with a total of 2,655 participants (482). Päßler and Hell concluded that while career interests and cognitive abilities were both significant factors in the choice of college major for both men and women, the career was prioritized more (487). Men cognitively had more “math-tilted profiles” and thus, were more likely to select a science/engineering college major that led to a professional scientific career (Päßler and Hell 491). Lastly, Päßler and Hell’s data does indicate that only 9.6% of male participants in the study had chosen a humani-

ties major, thus supporting the narrative that young men are often not cognitively strong nor vocationally interested in the humanities (488).

De Gioannis’ 2022 logistic regression study analyzes the impact of implicit gender stereotypes on college major selection of Italian students (1093–1112). De Gioannis’ study, seemingly one of the few to do so, acknowledges the lack of attention directed at the poor representation of males in the humanities (1094). Although this specific study found the correlation between implicit gender stereotypes and college major selection to be statistically insignificant, it did find a negative relationship between male gender stereotypes and the selection of humanities majors (De Gioannis 1106). In essence, male gender stereotypes do influence our university field of study. In light of this discovery, De Gioannis confirms that enrollment in a humanities major may not align with current male stereotypes.

In Beutel et al.’s 2019 correlational study, the relationship between undergraduate American men’s adherence to dominant masculine social norms and their choice of college majors was investigated (374–391). In that quantitative study, the primary masculine social norms that were analyzed were “self-reliance, aggression, achievement, attaining status, restricted emotionality, and avoiding the appearance of femininity or homosexuality” (375). The study found that there was a positive correlation between male conformity to masculine social norms and undergraduate field of study. However, more importantly, male adherence to the masculine emotional norm had a strong negative correlation with fields of study such as the humanities and social sciences, suggesting that male social norms are discouraging men from majoring in these academic fields (374).

From these studies, we can conclude that in general, men choose majors that are stereotypically male and STEM-based.

Correlation Analysis of Academic Environments and Behaviours on College Major Selection

In a 2013 quantitative study by Basit Zafar, coursework and parental approval were the primary factors analyzed in the relationship between the differences in the choice of college major for male and female

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Northwestern University sophomores (545–95). Zafar discovered that females select fields of study more passionately than males with a focus on their “tastes” and interests rather than the pecuniary outcomes, which were males’ primary focus (585). The National Association of Colleges and Employers stated in their April 2014 survey that humanities graduates’ starting salaries were the lowest of all fields of study at USD 36,667. Since men are interested in pursuing majors that lead directly to lucrative careers, they are likely not interested in the humanities, as there is less money to be made in comparison with other fields of study.

Similarly, Morgan et al. studied the impact of occupation plans on college major selection for both men and women in a longitudinal study (Morgan et al. 989–1005). Morgan et al. analyzed four main characteristics of occupational plans including goals, coursework, performance, and career paths (1000). Morgan et al. found that young men took 5% more advanced mathematics and STEM courses than women in high school (995). Moreover, men scored on average considerably better than their female counterparts on SAT math sections in high school and were thus following STEM paths more readily, despite having lower GPAs (Morgan et al. 995). This relationship does, however, indicate that in high school, young males are primarily focusing on STEM-related courses, perhaps a reason why they opt out of humanities majors.

In addition, in a correlational analysis study conducted by Anelli and Peri, *The Effects of High School Peers’ Gender on College Major*, another correlational analysis was done on the gender breakdown of one’s high school peers and their college major preference (553–602). In essence, this study had hoped to analyze whether young men in high schools with a higher percentage of males were more likely to select a ‘predominantly male’ field which included economics, business or engineering, and that women in very female environments were more likely to select a ‘predominantly female’ field which included humanities or health sciences (Anelli & Peri 554). In a longitudinal study of nearly 30,000 individuals, Anelli and Peri discovered that young men, in schools with a higher percentage of male students, generally chose a ‘predominantly male’ field (592). This understanding allows us to understand that being in an environment such as a boys’ school does not promote fields of study such as the humanities.

Lastly, qualitative research has been conducted on factors relating to college major choice. For example, in Mullen’s 2014 study, *Gender, Social Background, And The Choice Of College Major In a Liberal Arts Context*, the connection between gender and social background and the choice of college major is sought through 50 semi-structured interviews at a liberal-arts college (289–312). After these interviews were conducted, Ann Mullen came to the consensus that while privileged women at this institution pursued their intellectual curiosities, men were more wary of doing so, and attempted to avoid paths of study that were considered “feminine” such as the humanities and health sciences despite often finding them interesting (307). Ultimately, this conclusion demonstrates that men are still widely interested in the humanities, but are avoiding it due to its apparent femininity.

In summary, by analyzing the different academic environments described in these studies, we can understand the importance of the coursework that individuals take in high school, their career path focus, the gender of their peers, their social background, and most importantly their gender in choosing their college major. From these studies, we can conclude that in general, males are avoiding the humanities and tend to study in predominantly male fields, that is, STEM fields and fields that have higher wages.

Gap Analysis

There exists little research that focuses solely on the reasons why men are avoiding studying the humanities. While certain studies relate the selection of a college major choice to social factors and academic environments, none are centred solely around the humanities. Also, there remains no scholarly consensus as to why men are avoiding studying the humanities in Canada. Moreover, the majority of the studies analyzed in this literature review focus on both women and men, whilst this study focuses solely on young Canadian undergraduate men. In filling this gap we may be able to seek solutions to improve these low male humanities rates in Canada and help us determine how we can get young men to reconnect with the humanities.

Methodology

Overview

This study aimed to highlight the primary reasons why young men are avoiding the humanities in Canada. It was conducted through a qualitative analysis of eleven, 30-minute semi-structured interviews with young men currently enrolled in a non-humanities major Canadian undergraduate program.

The scholarly work that was generated to achieve my project goal was qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews. In these eleven, 30-minute interviews, large and in-depth responses with a considerable amount of information were received. Langhorne (302-317), who also conducted a thematic analysis on the experiences of Southern Ontario high school principals dealing with students' mental health, only interviewed as many as five. However, Mullen's 2014 study, employs both a similar topic and a quantitative analysis sought after 50 semi-structured interviews at a liberal-arts college (289-312). As a result, it was understood that this gap required more than five interviews to fill and thus, it was decided that eleven was reasonable considering the eight-month window to conduct the study.

Sample

The sample size for this study consisted of eleven young men aged 17-25 enrolled at a Canadian university, pursuing a non-humanities degree. To find at least 10 willing individuals who fit this profile, the alumni department at my school, Royal St. George's College was contacted. Through the alumni department at my school, alumni who fit the profile were asked if they were willing to participate in the study or knew another non-RSGC alumni student who fit the profile and would be willing to do so. If they accepted, they would receive an informed consent form that they would have to sign to participate containing background information on the methodology, the risks and benefits of the study, the confidentiality, and their right to withdraw (See Appendix C). This process was successful in initiating the study, although the majority of participants were not sought out in this manner. These eleven interviews were conducted through Zoom.

Finally, responses were anonymized and randomized, and no names were assigned to interviewees when I discussed responses in my findings section. In doing so, personal information was not revealed.

Conducting the Study

Once participants had accepted and signed the consent form (See Appendix C) to participate in the study they were asked six questions over a Zoom call (See Appendix A). Their responses were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed.

While analyzing the interviews, specific keywords within quotations were observed. These quotations were organized into five specific tables based on keywords that reflected common themes (See Appendix B). In doing so, the primary themes and potential rationale as to why young men are avoiding the humanities were highlighted. Following Langhorne's method, these five tables contained at least four quotations from interviews that were deemed as primary conceptual themes (306). These "primary" themes were thus considered significant motives for men's avoidance of humanities disciplines.

Justification

This chosen research method aligns with the research question for numerous reasons. Firstly, this study's research question: "*What are the underlying reasons that young Canadian men currently majoring in a non-humanities field of undergraduate study have decided not to study the humanities?*" challenged a current trend within current Canadian society where few young men are studying humanities majors in university. In doing so, this study sought a theory for this immense disparity, and thus used the grounded theory approach. A grounded theory approach is a form of qualitative research that is based on flexible methodological strategies; the semi-structured interviews that have been conducted will support this approach.

A second reason highlighting this study's methodology's alignment with its research question is that it tried to establish conclusions for the humanities, generally, based on more qualitative content. Had the study been on a topic related to a STEM field of study, a quantitative study may have made more sense contextually, considering that many existing studies in

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STEM are rooted in an analysis of numbers. However, as this study sought out a theory and explored and conducted research on the humanities, a qualitative approach was better suited as it embodied the interpretive turn discussed in the social sciences.

Findings

Throughout the eleven semi-structured interviews that were conducted, five specific themes were identified regarding the lack of male participation in Canadian humanities programs. The first major theme was the lack of understanding of the field of humanities. There are two primary topics which highlight this lack of understanding which include the mislabelling of humanities fields and the admission of a poor understanding of the humanities. Firstly, as mentioned, the humanities are fields of social science based on “humanistic content,” including subjects such as language, linguistics, literature, history, and philosophy (Bennett, 3). However, throughout eleven interviews, when asked question four (see Appendix A): *What is your understanding of the humanities?* an interviewee mislabelled a subject as humanities when answering the question. One indicated that their “Religions of East Asia” course was part of the humanities. Secondly, on three occasions, participants openly expressed their lack of understanding of the humanities as a field of study. For example, one interviewee said, “I would say I have a poor understanding of this concept and struggle.” Others honestly admitted that they didn’t “know a lot about the humanities” largely because they “branched off from the humanities” at a pre-mature stage in their schooling.

A second theme that emerged through these interviews was that men felt that they were more career-oriented and prioritized financial security more than their female counterparts; in doing so, they expressed that they felt a lack of direction on humanities paths. In terms of humanities’ lack of career options, individuals expressed that there were “not many career options I see with a humanities degree.” Moreover, one student expressed that with “business schools or engineering schools” they will have ready access to job opportunities and internships, but with the humanities, everything felt “a little more uncertain.” In addition, an interviewee explained that “people have a

fear of not being able to support themselves with that (humanities) degree.” These ideas are connected with the existing perception that humanities graduates do indeed have lower-paying starting jobs than business and engineering graduates. One interviewee explicitly stated that they avoided the humanities as “there’s this kind of perception where humanities majors don’t lead to high-paying jobs, and I want to make money.” This was an important finding, as it was evidence of what another participant had mentioned that “girls don’t care as much about making a lot of money” and that the young men were more interested in the “financial incentive.” Ultimately, it was very clear that young men were more financially driven through these interviews and, thus, sought out fields like engineering and business which led to a more defined and financially secure career path.

A third theme that emerged throughout the study was the lack of interest in and exposure to humanities subjects. Throughout this study, it was clear that the majority of participants had not developed a strong interest in the humanities for numerous reasons. Whilst money played an important role in the lack of interest, interviewees expressed a variety of reasons, which focused especially on their various depictions of what a humanities major consisted of. While many participants simply stated their lack of interest, one noted that their disinterest was because they felt that the humanities was not “intellectually stimulating.” Moreover, other students indicated that they simply lacked interest in the humanities because they “didn’t find too much creativity” in the humanities. Also, two participants who had admitted a poor understanding of the humanities described that their lack of connection to the humanities was because they had either “branched off from the humanities paths pretty early” or had taken very few humanities courses in high school “So that’s English and History. I don’t know any other humanities courses I would have taken.” From these various interviews, it can then be concluded that due to the lack of exposure to humanities, students did not develop a strong interest.

The fourth primary conceptual theme that emanated from these interviews regarding the lack of male participation in Canadian humanities programs was gender stereotypes. Participants mentioned both male stereotypes and described the common perception of the humanities as a female field of study. In

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terms of male stereotypes, one participant explained that throughout his experiences he noticed that: “science courses were way heavier with boys and same in math courses; the boys seem to prefer math more than girls for whatever reason.” Another male stereotype was described in response to the question “Why do you think fewer young men pursue humanities majors in Canada?” when an interviewee stated that: “using like male stereotypes, those guys are going to be like the providers of the family, right (sic)? So, it’s like it’s important. Money is going to be important for them, right?” By implying that men still felt a responsibility to be a primary provider in a family, this interviewee showcased how this duty may be at the foundation of the male gravitation towards university programs that lead them towards career paths that they perceive to be more lucrative. In addition, the consensus of the humanities as a stereotypically female-dominated field of study was further explored throughout the eleven semi-structured interviews. For example, one participant explained that he thought the perception of the humanities as a feminine field of study was a result of “a cultural thing” where boys are “told from a young age that it’s more of a female-dominated major”, “and then they never look into it.” A second interviewee alluded to a similar theory which he described as “a feedback loop going on, where there are a bunch of women in humanities right now. And because that would be so much of a disjoint, people would see it as more of a women’s program.” These approaches may suggest that young men are branching off from the humanities at a young age as a result of the stigma that may be bestowed upon the field of study.

A final major theme that arose from this thematic analysis was that young men are deterred from studying the humanities because they perceive that it is a simpler degree and that acceptance into a humanities program is less of an achievement than others. Interviewees noted that they felt that “humanities degrees are also perceived to be like really easy.” In addition, one interviewee explicitly stated that a humanities degree is “almost a waste of time” and expressed his uncertainty about the education within the field: “I don’t feel like they’re learning.” Furthermore, one participant expressed that, at his university, individuals enrolled in business and engineering programs “see themselves as superior to [those in] humanities programs.” From this, we can deduce that young men

have a demoralizing view of the humanities as they see little value in the learning process and feel that it is an inferior field of study.

Throughout the interviews, five major conceptual themes emerged regarding the lack of Canadian male participation in humanities fields of study. These themes have emerged through the various unique perspectives of eleven young men who are currently enrolled in non-humanities undergraduate programs. These men indicated that the lack of career options and financial security, the gender stereotypes, their lack of understanding and exposure, and the general menial impression were all significant factors in the absence of men in Canadian undergraduate humanities programs.

Discussion

The five themes discovered through this study regarding the field of the humanities connect to a common theme of ignorance. From these responses, it was evident that individuals did not have strong access to discover the humanities and were therefore either expressing their lack of understanding or interest, had poor misconceptions regarding the field such as simplicity and a lack of career options, or were simply driven by stereotypes and their peers.

The Lack of Understanding of the Humanities Rooted in Poor Exposure and Interest

The first and third themes which emerged through the research regarding a weak understanding of the humanities and a lack of exposure and interest are connected (See Appendix B). These themes are associated with each other as they both involve reflecting on past decisions that participants had made in their lives. Participants demonstrated a substandard understanding of the humanities likely because they had branched off early from its subjects and thus were disinterested in them or had little opportunity to pursue them. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that young men were choosing to pursue a STEM or business-based postsecondary education as they had been introduced to its various aspects and had devel-

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oped an interest in some subject. This finding has also been presented in two existing studies.

Firstly, Päßler & Hell's 2012 study showcased that men, cognitively, had more math-tilted profiles and thus, were more likely to select a science/engineering college major (491). Päßler & Hell concluded that young men are often not cognitively strong in the humanities and thus not vocationally interested in them (488). Similarly, Morgan et al. established a relationship that in high school, young males are primarily focusing on STEM-related courses as they generally scored higher on STEM-based subjects like mathematics, and thus are more likely to diverge from humanities subjects altogether (995). This existing research primarily analyzed the relationship between the academic strength of young men and their chosen career path. It established that young men become disinterested in humanities subjects because their strengths lie elsewhere, most commonly in STEM. As a result, they do not pursue the humanities and can develop only a basic understanding of its field.

Young Men Driven by Short-Term Success

Upon analyzing the various interviews, there were two primary themes where young men were framing their understanding of the humanities based on connections with various individuals. These themes – such as humanities as a field of study that leads to poorer paying career options and an inferior education – are solely based on the participants' perception and are not demonstrably objective (See Appendix B).

Firstly, the emergence of the theme that men feel that humanities lead to financially weaker career options is present in pre-existing research. For example, Zafar's 2013 study found that males focus overtly on pecuniary outcomes and avoided the humanities (585). After investigating other existing studies, the idea that humanities' future career options are poorer was falsified. The NACE stated in their April 2014 survey that the humanities starting salary was the lowest of all fields of study at USD 36,667. In addition, male humanities majors' starting salaries five years post-graduation were below CAD 50,000 in 2020, less than half that of those who had completed petroleum and nuclear engineering degrees, for example (Frenette & Handler). However, a similar 2014 study conducted by Humphreys and Kelly indicated that by ages 55-

60, liberal arts graduates, which include humanities scholars, could earn approximately USD 60,000 annually, \$2000 more than those with other professional degrees (31). This highlights the impatience to young men of their choice of career and undergraduate major.

Secondly, the perception held by young men that humanities programs provide inferior education is another form of ignorance. According to Cohen's 2009 article, the humanities are a field of study that prepares us for personal growth and integration into a democracy rather than just vocational training. In addition, studying the humanities can increase human prosperity and psychological richness (Westgate & Oishi, 2). Rather than teaching humans solely to work a job, the humanities teach us how to live. The participants of this study who exhibited a belief that a humanities education was lesser and/or lacked financially strong career options, solely considered short-term success as high value.

Young Men Driven by Gender Stereotypes

The final concept that may be responsible for the male avoidance of the humanities is gender stereotypes. The male stereotypes consisted of the attraction to scientific and mathematical fields and the responsibility to be a primary provider in a family and thus gravitate towards university programs that lead them towards career paths that they perceive to be more lucrative (See Appendix B). Pre-existing research expresses similar findings. In De Gioannis' 2022 logistic regression study, male stereotypes did affect college major choice; there was a negative correlation between male stereotypes and the male selection of humanities majors (1106). In addition, when in male environments, young men generally chose a 'predominantly male' field (Anelli & Peri, 592). Throughout my research, I also discovered that many of my participants did mention the common stereotype of the humanities as a "female" field of study and how this may have negatively affected their choice to pursue a career in the humanities. This idea is presented in Mullen's 2014 study, *Gender, Social Background, And the Choice Of College Major In a Liberal Arts Context* where she concludes that men attempted to avoid paths of study that were considered "feminine," such as the humanities and health sciences, even if they

found them interesting (307).

Ultimately, young Canadian men are discouraged from engaging in the humanities for numerous reasons. Firstly, as young men score lower on tests in humanities' subjects, they separate themselves from the field prematurely and thus cannot develop a strong understanding or sustained interest. In addition, they are overly influenced by gender stereotypes and short-term pecuniary outcomes with their college major selection and minimize the value that their education can provide them within their life.

To reduce young men's ignorance of Canadian undergraduate humanities programs, high schools should offer a larger variety of humanities courses and cater them more to a male audience through more qualitative approaches. In addition, many individuals choose courses in high schools based on the prerequisites for their desired university program and a high school diploma. Currently, in Ontario, Canada, few humanities credits are needed to graduate, with only three excluding English; they include one in credit Canadian history, French as a second language, and in the performing arts (Ontario Ministry of Education). If universities made high school courses in the humanities a prerequisite for most undergraduate study, the humanities would be able to expand their reach to more individuals, including young men.

Limitations

The sample size of eleven in this study is in accordance with present scholarly work; however, a larger sample may yield stronger conclusions. Although the participants underwent lengthy semi-structured interviews, similar qualitative studies such as Mullen's 2014 Study (293-317) had upwards of 60 participants. In addition, my sample could have been more diverse. Although participants attended universities in many Canadian provinces, they had all completed high school in Ontario, all at private institutions. As a result, parental influence may have been especially strong since parents have invested a lot of money in paying for private education. Seeking out more participants with schooling experiences in various provinces may have provided this study with different insights.

Conclusion

This study helps provide reasoning to understand the lack of male participation in humanities, especially in Canada. Through a qualitative thematic analysis consisting of eleven, 30-minute semi-structured interviews with young men currently enrolled in a non-humanities major Canadian undergraduate program, five conceptual themes were established. These five themes form three firm conclusions which include that individuals did not have a large exposure to discover the humanities and were therefore either expressing their lack of understanding or interest, had poor misconceptions regarding the field such as simplicity and a lack of career options, or were simply driven by stereotypes. Existing research supports these conclusions, especially the impact that gender stereotypes can have on college major choice.

Future studies should consider focusing more on addressing the limitations and finding more definitive solutions. Although a sample size of eleven was large enough to find five significant themes, a more diverse sample size would ensure the discovery of many more reasons for the male decline in Canadian humanities programs. In addition, examining and researching solutions to mitigate this humanities crisis through the consultation of educators and school boards would allow for a stronger application of this research into the educational system and young men's lives.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- What is the current undergraduate university program that you have chosen?
- What were the various influences on your decision to choose this field of study? (This can include parents, peers, etc.)
- How did your school environment support you with your applications to university? (I.e., Guidance Counsellor Support; availability of prerequisite courses; career-related events; etc.)
- What is your understanding of the humanities?
- What are the various reasons that led you to not choose a humanities major?
- Why do you think fewer young men pursue humanities majors in Canada?

Appendix B: Thematic Tables

Theme: Poor understanding of the field of humanities and its specific fields	
<p>Keyword/term</p> <p>A field/course was mislabeled as a humanity (key words can include: “law”, “music”, “performing art”, “religion/religious studies”)</p> <p>Admission of a poor understanding for the humanities (i.e., “don’t know”, “poor understanding”)</p> <p>(When asked: What is your understanding of the humanities?)</p>	<p>Mislabelling</p> <p>“I’m not sure if languages are humanities but I think they are because I’m taking a few humanities courses this semester, including religions of East Asia.</p> <p>Admission of a Lack of Understanding</p> <p>“I would say I have a poor understanding of this concept and struggle.”</p> <p>Honestly, I don’t know, again, because as I sort of branched off from the humanities, these paths pretty early, I never looked into them.</p> <p>“No, I don’t know a lot about the humanities to be honest.”</p>

WHY ARE YOUNG CANADIAN MEN AVOIDING THE HUMANITIES?

Theme: Career-Oriented and Financial Security

<p>Keyword/term</p> <p>Lack of career options and internships in the humanities</p> <p>Money and Financial</p>	<p>Lack of career options in the humanities</p> <p>“It’s honestly like, I don’t really like it, just there’s not many career options I see with a humanities degree.</p> <p>“I just didn’t, I just didn’t see any career options...I just didn’t really find anything I was very interested in, in humanities.”</p> <p>“So, for places like business schools, or engineering schools a lot more there’s a bit more of an idea of like, okay, I’ll have these job opportunities and I’ll get to take these internships I get to do these and they’ll know what’s going to happen after, but if you go into humanities -- if you decide to stay humanities -- it might be a little more uncertain.”</p> <p>“I think it has something to do with people not knowing what you can do with a degree in humanities and not knowing what you can do also like I feel a lot of people have fear of not being able to support themselves with that degree.”</p> <p>“So, when people see University as a means to get a job so it’s always like it’s a lot more focused on what degree do I get to work where originally they’re meant to simply further your education and your interest so I think that big shift is a big reason for the decline we’re seeing humanities, I guess.”</p> <p>Money and Financial Security</p> <p>“Those guys are going to be like the providers of the family, right? So, it’s like it’s important. Money is going to be important for them, right?”</p> <p>“But I also think there’s this kind of perception where humanities majors don’t lead to high paying jobs, and I want to make money so I was just never like leaning in that direction.”</p> <p>“But I think people are looking for that security a lot more now financially, as opposed to taking courses in the humanities that might interest them or might lead to other career paths that they haven’t discovered yet.”</p> <p>“I feel like my guess would be a financial incentive. I feel like from the humanities girls that I’ve talked to, they don’t care as much about making a lot of money.”</p> <p>“And just like the nature of men and women, women may pursue what is interesting to them. More so than men and men may pursue what they deem to be the best path to earning more.”</p>
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WHY ARE YOUNG CANADIAN MEN AVOIDING THE HUMANITIES?

Theme: Lack of Exposure and General Interest	
<p>Keyword/term</p> <p>Lack of Exposure</p> <p>General Lack of Interest</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lack of Exposure</p> <p>“So that’s English and History. I don’t know any other humanities courses I would have taken.”</p> <p>“I’m not sure on the specifics of what the degrees really entail, or sort of their pathways or prerequisites because again, like I, I decided pretty early that I want to think of sciences and math. So, my understanding of them is pretty shallow.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General Lack of Interest</p> <p>“I just didn’t find the humanities like that intellectually stimulating.”</p> <p>“And I think things like business or hard sciences or engineering, definitely draw out that competitiveness a little bit better than the humanities would be my perspective.”</p> <p>“But I never saw myself doing that sort of career, I don’t really want to do that sort of stuff.”</p> <p>“There’s never really an interest for me to go into something that included a lot of writing and a lot of reading where I found that, for me, it was more kind of speaking and connecting with people on a more personal level.”</p> <p>Well, I guess the reason is I didn’t find too much creativity in humanities, I guess. Or at least my experience of it, what I do like history and things like that is mostly just kind of reciting facts and things like that and like dates.”</p>

WHY ARE YOUNG CANADIAN MEN AVOIDING THE HUMANITIES?

Theme: Gender Stereotypes

<p>Keyword/term</p> <p>Stigma/ Female Dominant</p> <p>Male Stereotypes</p>	<p>Stigma/ Female Dominant</p> <p>“I think it might be a cultural thing. My inclination is that there might be a bit of a stigma around humanities, where, because it’s more dominant, and more female dominated. Guys will just see that as like, oh, maybe it’s not the right thing for me. And then they never look into it. And so, they’re kind of told from a young age that it’s more of a female dominated major.”</p> <p>“I think there’s probably a self-fulfilling prophecy or like a feedback loop going on, where there are a bunch of women in humanities right now. And because that would be so much of a disjoint, people would see it as more of a women’s program, and then it would kind of go and if you don’t see it as a women’s program, only good women are gonna go there. And then it kind of keeps on spiraling.”</p> <p>Male Stereotypes</p> <p>“So if it’s, if it’s using that idea, like it’s the idea that using like male stereotypes, those guys are going to be like the providers of the family, right? So, it’s like it’s important. Money is going to be important for them, right? So, if I were to give an honest answer, I would say that’s probably why.”</p> <p>“Like science courses were way more heavy with boys and same and in math courses the boys seem to prefer math [more than] girls for whatever reason.”</p>
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WHY ARE YOUNG CANADIAN MEN AVOIDING THE HUMANITIES?

Theme: Humanities As An Inferior Program

<p>Keyword/term</p> <p>Easy field of study</p> <p>Lack of an achievement</p>	<p>Easy field of study</p> <p>“Um, I wouldn’t really say I think I’ve sort of expressed everything I would say, just humanities degrees are also perceived to be like really easy.”</p> <p>“And at some point, it’s almost a waste of time, a little bit like I guarantee like they can get like good marks and stuff, but I don’t feel like they’re learning like I don’t maybe they are.”</p> <p>“They don’t have midterms; they just have to write essays like it’s perceived to be like a really easy degree.”</p> <p>Lack of an achievement</p> <p>“To a lot of people, like a business program or an engineering program, or like a medical school. Like a lot of people in those programs see themselves as superior to humanities programs, especially for example, like queens here.”</p> <p>(University Name Has Been Anonymized)</p>
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Appendix C: Consent Form

Royal St. George's - Research Ethics Review
Application Form

Consent to Participate in Interview-Based Study

Title: What are the reasons that young Canadian men currently majoring in a non-humanities field of undergraduate study have decided not to study the humanities?

Researcher

Arjun Deckha
120 Howland Ave, Toronto, ON M5R 3B5
Royal St. George's College
647-554-9537
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Description:

Interviewees will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes, where they will be asked numerous questions on the study. Prior to the interview, there will be an extensive process where I will have to communicate with them via email. Interviewees will be sent a list of possible times to ensure that they can adequately participate. From this point onwards, they will be sent a zoom invitation. Interviews will occur between Monday, January 16th, 2023 and Monday February 13th, 2023.

Risks and Benefits:

Subjects may become emotionally uncomfortable as they will be asked questions based on the choices they made upon selecting their undergraduate field of study; this could be a sensitive subject.

Subjects may or may not find this experience fulfilling depending on how they value reflecting on these past choices.

Confidentiality:

For this study all names of individuals will be anonymized throughout the study to protect their identities and to ensure ethical practices.

Right to Withdraw:

In signing this form, you acknowledge that you will be able to withdraw from participating in this study at any time.

ERB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Royal St. George's College Ethics Review Board (ERB).

Statement of Consent:

I have read, understood, and accept all of the information as stated above. I have been given a copy of this form. I have been allowed to ask questions, and those questions have been answered. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant:

Adapted from Emily Lott, Chestatee High School, Gainesville, GA, and the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics

