



# Now What? An Examination of Students Decision-Making for Life After High School

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# High School's Over...

Over **77,000+**  
students in Alberta  
graduated from high school  
in 2020.

(Government of Alberta, 2020).



**1 in 5** Students  
in Alberta students drop  
out of post-secondary  
education (PSE).

(Maclean's Magazine, 2018)

# ...Now What?

Start a program at a university.

Go to a college or a community college.

Attend an institute of technology or science.



Upgrade their marks, or take additional HS classes.

Enter the workforce part- or full-time.

Travel or take a year off to find themselves.

# Cognitive Orientation Theory (COT)

How individuals orient themselves towards environments and regulate their behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2019)



## Autonomy Orientation

behaviour oriented towards personal interests.



## Control Orientation

constraints or prompts regulate an individual's behaviour.



## Impersonal Orientation

the individual perceives their life experiences to be beyond their personal control.

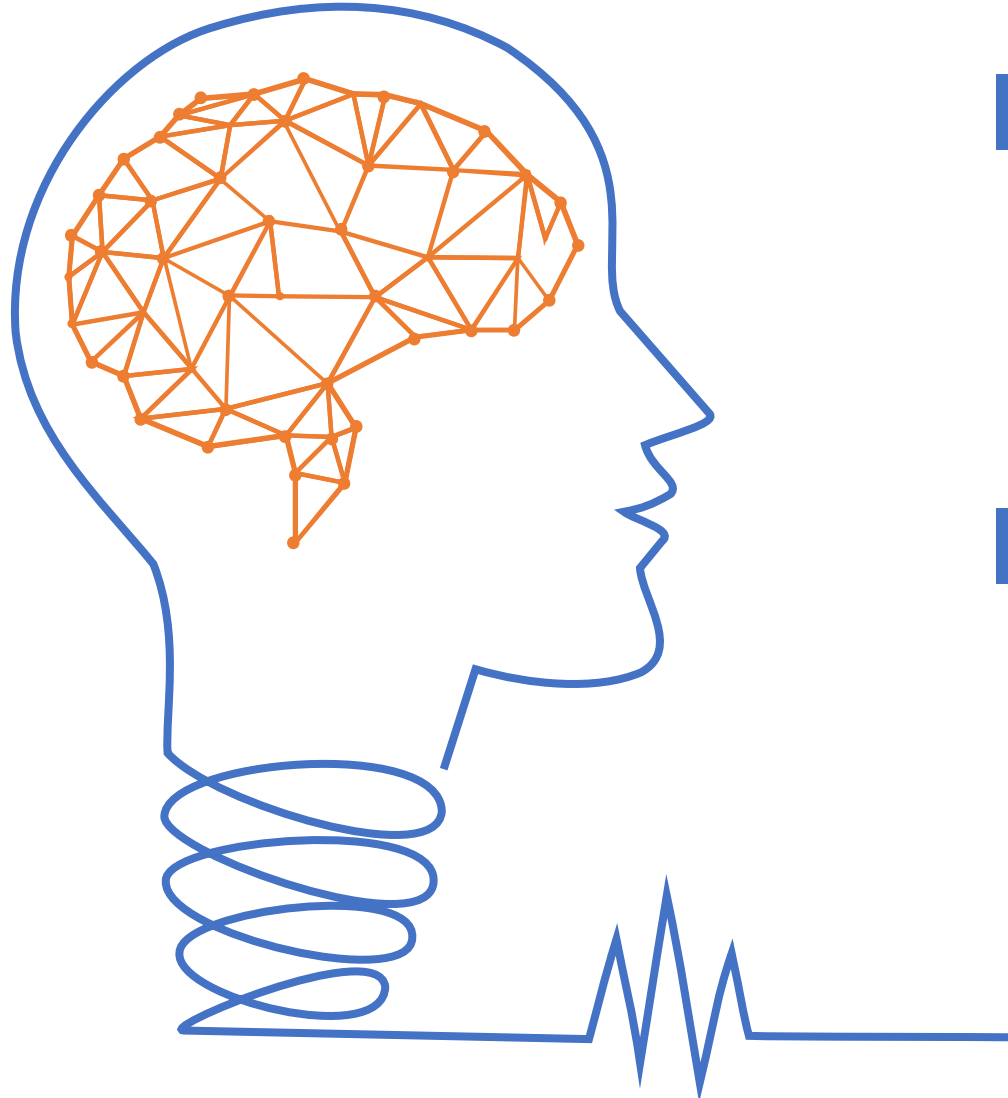
# The Purpose of They Study

First, to investigate *what* decisions students are making for their plans for after high school.



Second, to investigate *how* students are making these decisions from a COT lens.

# Methods



## Participants

237 grade 12 students from several high schools in Western Canada.

Average age was 17.3 years old ( $SD = .64$ )  
51% men, 47% women, 2% other

## Procedures

Online survey during the last semester of grade 12

Students were asked:

- *Do you plan on going to a postsecondary institution after high school?*
- *How did you decide on your plans for after high school?*

# Who are these Students?

**79%**

of students were planning to attend some form of PSE.

**88%**

of students were planning to stay within their home province.



**21%**

of students were not planning to attend PSE the following year.

**40%**

of students were planning to upgrade or take more courses.

**20%**

of students were planning to work part- or full-time.

# How did you decide on your plans for after high school?



Autonomy



Control



Impersonal

**65.1%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

*“Interest in the medical field; love of science.”*

**36.2%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

*“I want to work on a cruise ship”*



# How did you decide on your plans for after high school?



Autonomy



Control



Impersonal

**81.1%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

**91.5%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

# How did you decide on your plans for after high school?



Autonomy



Control



Impersonal

**6.5%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

*“Not sure what I am doing... I am going into it blindly.”*

**27.7%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

*“I have decided to take a year off because I am unsure what I want to do when I ‘grow up’.”*

# Control Orientation

## Competence

**20%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

**47%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

## External Factors

**15%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

**28%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

## Relationships

**31%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

**14%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

## Future Considerations

**34%** of Students Planning to attend PSE.

**11%** of Students not Planning to attend PSE.

# Discussion



Examine how local colleges/universities are interacting with prospective Albertan students.



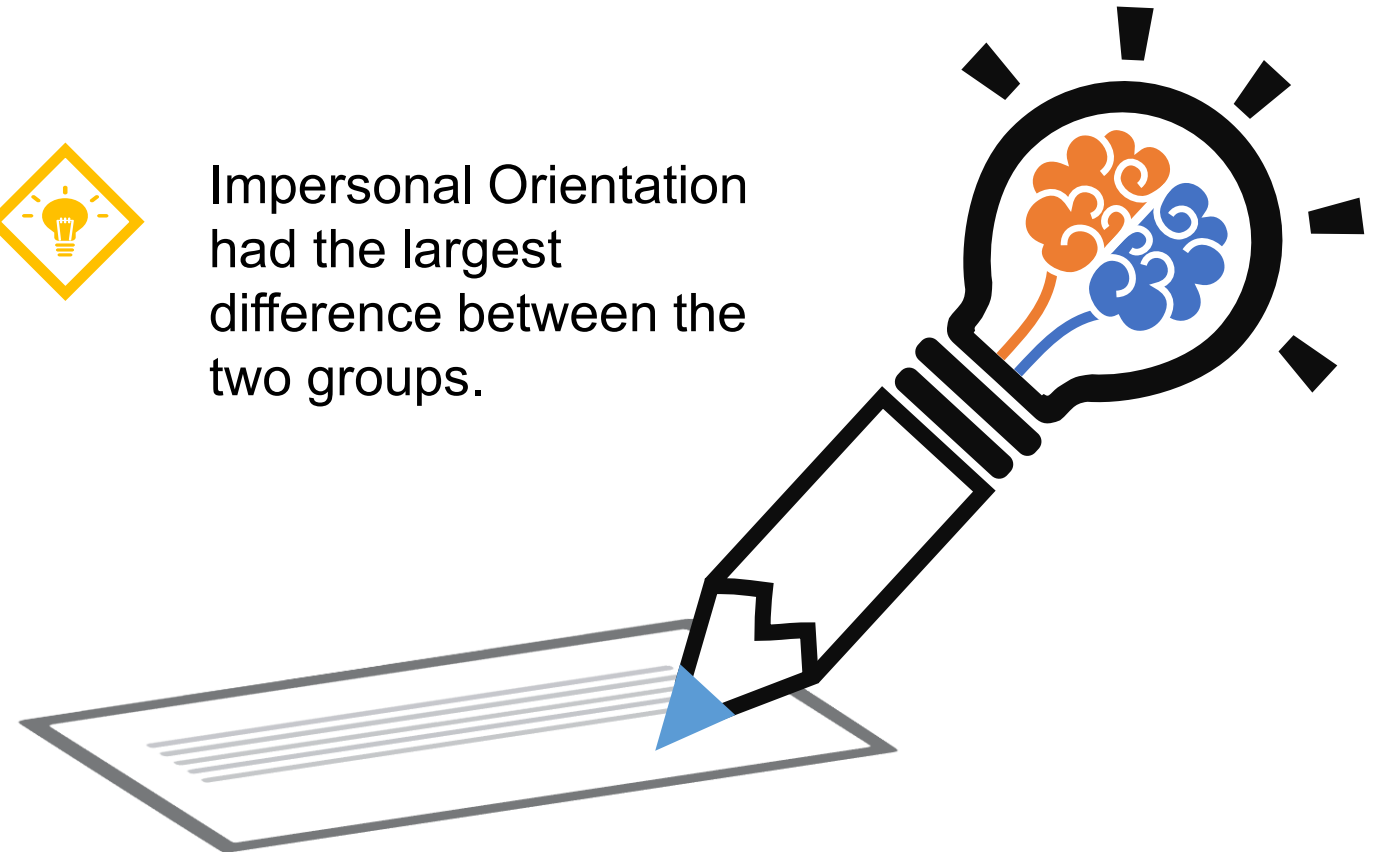
Our participants identified several important individuals when it came to their decision-making.

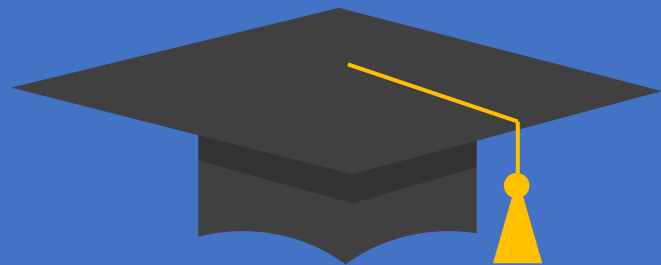


Control orientation comments were the most common type of reason given by participants.



Impersonal Orientation had the largest difference between the two groups.





THANK YOU 

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