The Harsh Welcome of an Industrial City: Immigrant Women in Montreal, 1880–1900

DANIELLE GAUVREAU, SHERRY OLSON, & PATRICIA THORNTON*

Over the span 1880 to 1900, Montreal was a city of newcomers, a majority of them women, and most of them arrived before age 30 from Britain, Europe, the United States, or rural counties of Quebec and Ontario. Young people aged 15 to 29 accounted for a third of the population and half of the recorded labour force. The authors' analyses of 1881 census data and a 5 per cent sample for 1901 uncover a wide range of factors affecting life transitions. A substantial increase in participation of young unmarried women in the waged labour force was made possible by shifts in the timing of life transitions: the ages at which girls left school, left home, entered the work force, and married. The schedule was affected by migration, and it differed among the three principal cultural communities — French-speaking Catholic, English-speaking Catholic, and Anglo-Protestant. All three groups of women increased their rates of participation in the labour force, but the distinctions based on cultural affiliation persisted in both the scheduling of life transitions and the kinds of work in which they engaged.

De nombreux immigrants arrivèrent à Montréal durant les dernières décennies du XIX^{e} siècle. Plus de la moitié d'entre eux étaient des femmes et la plupart arrivaient à un âge plutôt jeune, en provenance de la Grande-Bretagne, d'Europe, des États-Unis, ou encore des régions rurales du Québec et de l'Ontario. Les jeunes de 15 à 30 ans représentaient alors le tiers de la population totale et occupaient la moitié de tous les emplois déclarés. Tirant parti des données du recensement de 1881 et d'un échantillon de 5 p. 100 de celui de 1901, ce texte examine les facteurs susceptibles d'influencer le parcours de vie des jeunes Montréalaises à cette époque : âge auquel elles cessent d'aller à l'école, quittent le domicile familial, commencent à

* Danielle Gauvreau is professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University, Sherry Olson in the Department of Geography at McGill University, and Patricia Thornton in the Department of Geography at Concordia University. The authors are grateful for the continued support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, to their research partners in the project *Montréal l'avenir du passé* (MAP), and to exceptionally helpful reviewers of the article.

travailler et se marient. L'expérience migratoire affecte ces trajectoires, qui varient aussi selon la communauté culturelle d'appartenance. Les femmes des trois principaux groupes – franco-catholique, irlandais catholique et anglo-protestant – connaissent toutes une augmentation de leur taux de participation au marché du travail, mais les trajectoires empruntées et le type de travail effectué ne sont pas les mêmes dans tous les groupes.

BETWEEN 1880 and 1900, Montreal was a city of newcomers. A decided majority of them were women, and most had arrived in the city before the age of 30. The arrivals, and the families they raised, were numerous enough to double the size of the urban population. Over the entire 20 years, the age group from 15 to 29 accounted for a third of the population and half of the recorded labour force. As shown in Figure 1, there was a decided bulge of 15-to-29-year-olds. In this age set there were 120 women for every 100 men, and half were in-migrants, born in the Old World, the United States, rural Quebec, or other parts of Canada. They arrived in response to a new phase of industrialization and corporate enterprise. Based on analyses of nominal censuses of 1881 and 1901, our research is directed to uncover differences in the options of young women and men, of migrants and people born in the city. Their numbers in the formal labour market meant that young people had considerable impact as consumers, as an element of public opinion, as a challenge to social control, and, we argue, as agents of change. Since the age set 15 to 29 included a majority of newcomers to the city and all of the new entrants to the labour market, most of them experienced the wrench of a change in their position in a family, coupled with a new job and a geographic move.

A substantial increase in participation of young unmarried women in the wage labour force was made possible by significant changes in the timing of life transitions: the ages at which girls left school, left home, entered the work force, and married. The schedule was affected by migration, whether it was a transatlantic journey or a ferry across the river, and it differed among the three principal cultural communities — French-speaking Catholic (two-thirds by 1901), English-speaking Catholic (10 per cent), and Anglo-Protestant (18 per cent). While the three groups shared the trends toward later marriage for both women and men and greater participation of women in waged work, each community of identity preserved a distinct and coherent model of the life course. These models were shaped by the experiences of migrants and translated as narratives of risk-taking, opportunity, and ambition.

Research Context

The Montreal trends between 1880 and 1900 offer some raw material that bears on challenging issues in social history and historical sociology, and scholars are asking pertinent questions in three areas in particular. First,

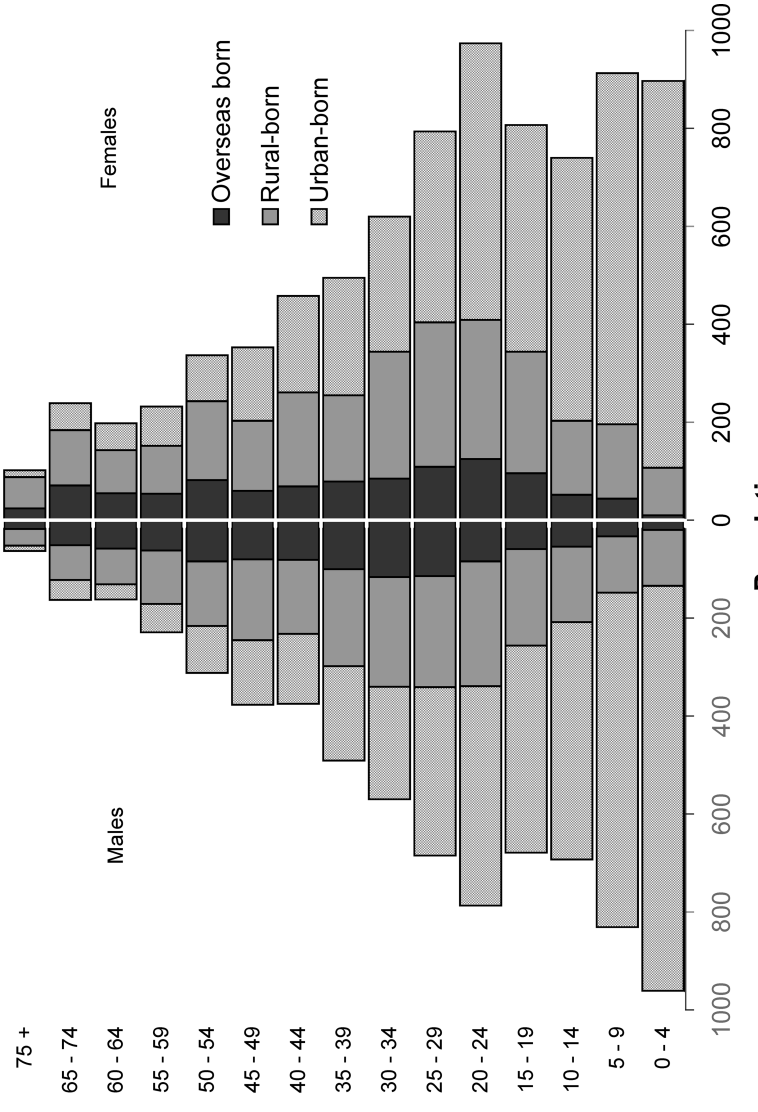

Figure 1: Population of Montreal, 1901, by Age, Sex, and Birthplace.

across North America and Western Europe, a "fertility transition" was initiated in this period, with signs of limitation on births.[1] Postponement of marriage was a prime means of limiting family size and improving the opportunities of children, and emergence of this transition in Montreal directed our attention to the 15-to-29 age group, where we were able to observe the persistence, between 1860 and 1900, of three cultural identities with distinct migrant histories and distinct regimes of family formation.[2]

Second, this was an era of acute racism in Canada, marked by new concepts of "Britishness", systematic importation of strikebreakers, orphans, and servants from Britain, gendered restrictions on immigration from China (male only), contractual exclusion of Jews from certain neighbourhoods and colleges, and virulent debates on immigration policy and on the languages and religious supervision of schooling.[3] In retrospect, economic historians are attempting to appraise levels of exploitation and absorption of immigrant labour. In a market segmented by gender, language, and national origin, what were the returns to literacy and longer schooling or to a command of English, or French, or both? Since Montreal was the nation's most powerful and diversified manufacturing centre, both local and transatlantic migrants competed for jobs. In occupational status and earnings, were immigrants able to achieve parity with the Canadian-born? How did migration affect the wage gap between women and men?[4]

Third, this was a critical period for the way urban life was "problematized." The introduction of electric trams in 1892 created opportunities for lower-density lifestyles, and the marketing of suburban lots set up

1 Ron J. Lesthaeghe, *The Decline of Belgian Fertility, 1800–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); George Alter, "Theories of Fertility Decline: A Non Specialist's Guide to the Current Debate", in J. R. Gillis, L. A. Tilly, and D. Levine, eds., *The European Experience of Declining Fertility: A Quiet Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 13–30.

2 Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, "The Religious Claim on Babies in Nineteenth-century Montreal", in Renzo Derosas and Frans van Poppel, eds., *Religion and the Decline of Fertility in the Western World* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), pp. 207–237; Danielle Gauvreau, Sherry Olson, and Patricia Thornton, "Three Demographic Regimes in an Industrializing City" (poster, International Union for the Study of Population, Tours, July 1, 2005), accessible at http://artsandscience.concordia.ca/GEOG/projects/.

3 Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), chap. 5; Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in B.C.* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

4 M. Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896–1910", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 26, pp. 517–532; Alan Green and Mary MacKinnon, "The Slow Assimilation of British Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from Montreal and Toronto, 1901", *Explorations in Economic History*, vol. 38 (2001), pp. 315–338; Mary MacKinnon, "Unilingues ou bilingues? Les Montréalais sur le marché du travail en 1901", *L'Actualité économique*, vol. 76, no. 1 (2000), pp. 137–158; Jason Dean, "The Economic Assimilation of Urban Immigrants in Canada during the Wheat Boom Era of 1896–1913" (presentation at the Canadian Economic Association, Halifax, June 2007).

explicit contrasts with risks constructed as "urban": crime, disease, delinquency, depravity, loss of religious and family values, and racial degeneration. Such interpretations stimulated institutional responses to the needs of young migrants, such as expansion of the Young Women's Christian Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Salvation Army, and other shelters, homes, and clubs for working girls.[5] How were young "independents" housed? To what extent were they protected or threatened? Their presence was variously constructed as an immigrant problem, a servant problem, a problem of manhood, a girl problem, or the all-encompassing problem of "the stranger."[6]

In terms of family values, there is the further question of erosion of the family unit as a locus of production. As it was formulated 30 years ago by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, mass employment in factories and shops created the risk of reducing control of parents over their children's decisions, but increased the dependence of the family on outside wage labour to pay for rent and food.[7] More recent work has shown that, for the working class, family remained a strong unit of decision well into the twentieth century. Bettina Bradbury, Michael Anderson, S. J. Kleinberg, and George Alter, looking at six different nineteenth-century cities, have all argued that changes caused tensions between family needs and individual desires, but did not destroy the family economy.[8] Low wages,

5 Explicitly directed to young women immigrants in Montreal were a Girls' Friendly Society, a Women's Protective Immigration Society, a home for Anglican immigrants, Protestant chaplains assigned (from 1883) to meet immigrant ships in the port, and missionaries for rural in-migrants. Cf. Janice Harvey, "La religion, fer de lance de l'aide aux démunis dans la communauté protestante montréalaise au XIX^{e} siècle et au début du XX^{e} siècle", *Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique, Études d'histoire religieuse*, vol. 73 (2007), pp. 7–30; Barbara Roberts, "Sex, Politics and Religion: Controversies in Female Immigration Reform Work in Montreal, 1881–1919", *Atlantis*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 25–38.

6 Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Lykke De la Cour, Cecilia Morgan, and Mariana Valverde, "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth-century Canada", in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 163–191; Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), chap. 1.

7 Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 7.

8 Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993); Michael Anderson, "Marriage Patterns in Victorian Britain: An Analysis Based on Registration District Data for England and Wales, 1861", *Journal of Family History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1976), pp. 55–79; S. J. Kleinberg, "Children's and Mothers' Wage Labor in Three Eastern U.S. Cities, 1880–1920", *Social Science History*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2005), pp. 45–76; George Alter, *Family and the Female Life Course* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). Looking at Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Fall River, Kleinberg points to ethnic attributes and widowhood of mothers as factors shaping the contours of youth participation in the labour force; she notes high levels of economic activity among French Canadian children in particular, offsetting the more precarious and lower wages of the father ("Children's and Mothers' Wage

uncertainty of employment and health, and the absence of state social security meant that it was in the mutual interest of children and parents to work cooperatively.[9] Not even migration broke these bonds entirely. In Betsy Beattie's account of the exodus from the Maritimes to the "Boston States" from 1880 to 1900, a young woman's remittances were an element in the survival strategies of her rural family; and Hilde Bras, using early-twentieth-century data for the Netherlands, provides evidence that a girl's independence was affected by the distance from home and negotiations with her siblings.[10]

Thus "the lens of the family" remains useful, as Tilly and Scott applied it to a sweep of 250 years, but issues of ethnicity and migration were virtually absent from their examination of England and France. In the North American labour force, the ethnic balance shifted with each surge of immigration. Like other cities, Montreal experienced a powerful peak of construction and in-migration in 1886, a severe trough in 1893, and re-acceleration of arrivals at the turn of the century. In Tilly and Scott's three-stage model, Montreal had moved out of the "preindustrial" by 1860 and advanced into the "family wage economy" described by Bradbury. We pick up the story as a third-stage "family consumer economy" was taking shape. The family's "collective commitment to economic survival" is important to understanding the impact of the broader urban economy on decisions about how long to stay in school, when to move into or out of waged work, when to leave home, and when to marry.

Sources and Methods

We made three methodological choices at the outset. First, we chose to work with micro-data, that is, data on individuals and households, and make the attempt at measurement. In view of the new level of digital access to the nominal Census of Canada, we resolved to wring out of this material, so far as we could, the empirical evidence that bears on

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Labor", p. 69). Alter, employing rich longitudinal data for the Belgian town of Verviers, argues that parental control or filial obedience was negotiated, and as much normative as economic.

9 Cf. Jordan Stranger-Ross, Christina Collins, and Mark J. Stern, "Falling Far from the Tree: Transitions to Adulthood and the Social History of Twentieth-century America", *Social Science History*, vol. 29, no. 4 (2005), pp. 625–648.

10 Betsy Beattie, *Obligation and Opportunity: Single Maritime Women in Boston, 1870–1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Hilde Bras, "Maids to the City: Migration Patterns of Female Domestic Servants from the Province of Zeeland, the Netherlands (1850–1950)", *History of the Family*, vol. 8 (2003), pp. 217–246. Irish emigrant women are particularly known for their remittances: cf. Carole Groneman, "Immigrant Women in Mid-nineteenth Century New York : The Irish Women's Experience", *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1978), pp. 255–273; Janet A. Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885–1920* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1989); Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in New Zealand, 1853–1871* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin/New Zealand Historical Branch, 1990).

the cultural differences of migrant families. These families were pressed to make strategic choices, with some degree of consciousness on the part of family members, but from census material alone we cannot demonstrate intentions. We can ask only: what decisive steps had been taken by women of 20, 25, or 30? What niches were they filling in households and in labour markets? In making inferences from collective behaviours, we treat agency as a basic assumption: women, even the youngest, least experienced, and most constrained, were making rational choices; they had a better understanding than we do of the context; and their decisions, taken in the aggregate, are meaningful.[11] Reference to "strategy" might suggest a life plan, and in the nineteenth century a lifetime horizon was implicit in the prevailing ideologies of marriage and learning a trade. But most people, by age 18 or 20, had already observed close at hand the risks of layoff, death, business failure, desertion, or breach of trust, and we therefore emphasize immediacy of expectations. The census snapshots should reflect responses to questions framed, "Will she go to school this year?" "Do we marry this year or next?" or "Can we afford another room?"

A second critical choice was a comparative approach. To interpret the presence of immigrant women, we considered it essential to compare the situations of women and men, long-distance and regional moves, and people who belonged to the several cultural groups. In devising categories for a particular time and place, we had to treat identities as contingent and multi-dimensional, and we assigned multivariate categories consistent with the way culture or race was politically constructed in Montreal at the time, notably the recognition of an "Irish Catholic" community.[12] One of the achievements of a generation of feminist scholarship has been to recognize difference, diversity, and discrimination such that we can begin uncovering collaborations. In the 1880s and 1890s, fewer than 1 per cent of Montrealers lived alone; 2.5 per cent were living in same-sex domestic households (usually a widow and her daughters), and another 2.5 per cent were living in institutions of gender-specific religious orders committed to celibacy. In most households (94 per cent), men and women were living their lives together.

Our third choice was to concentrate on a specific age group, 15 to 29. In that 15-year range, migration was associated with family formation — sometimes delaying it, sometimes undermining it, sometimes precipitating it. Of women who would eventually marry, most did so within that span of

11 See also the outlook of Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, pp. 12–13.

12 See, for example, Henry E. Hale, "Explaining Ethnicity", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4 (May 2004), pp. 458–485. The English-speaking Catholics, here tagged Irish Catholic, included small numbers of Catholics of Scottish and English extraction as well as offspring of mixed marriages since 1760.

years, making the transition from roles as daughters to new roles as wives and mothers. Both the moves and the marriages were associated with transitions in making a living. Close to age 15, give or take two or three years, most girls and boys left school, entered an apprenticeship or clerkship, entered wage labour at least temporarily, or found some alternative source of cash in the informal economy, such as larceny, scavenging, or the sex trades. As a team of social science historians, we attempt to observe an array of transitions. A notion such as the *demographic transition* can be applied to the whole society or to its component social classes and ethnic groups, while the notion of a *life transition*, expressed in terms of the individual, implies role changes that restructured entire households. We chose a specific age-set and time span that would allow us to observe those life transitions: the interdependence of older and younger households, the processes of family formation and break-up, nest-building, and the departure from the nest.

The two prime sources have become available only recently in digital form, a full version of the nominal census for 1881 and a 5-per-cent sample for 1901.[13] The 1881 material is very rich, providing a unique opportunity to consider the entire population: 53,269 individuals in the age set of 15 to 29, including the 32,000 French Canadian, 12,000 Anglo-Protestant, and 9,000 Irish Catholic youth. The census specified religion, language, country of birth, ethnic origin (in the paternal line), and marital status; it reported occupation, literacy, and school attendance.[14] For this reason it is ideal for studying both ethnicity and migration. Among its limitations is the need to infer family relationships.

The 1901 document offers a large array of additional variables: a precise street address and birth date, for newcomers the year of immigration, and for the Canadian-born a distinction between rural or urban birthplace. It suffers much less than the earlier census from age-heaping, and for the first time provides information on earnings of the employed, available for very few countries. A 5-per-cent sample is, however, a severe limitation: 3,000 families in the City of Montreal, 5,233 persons aged 15 to 29. To compensate, we made further soundings for several ethnic communities, and we refer to a "miniature Montreal" where we employed 12 surnames to bring a very small representative sample (0.5 per cent of families)

13 Eric W. Sager, Douglas K. Thompson, and Marc Trottier, *The National Sample of the 1901 Census of Canada: User Guide* (Victoria: University of Victoria, The Canadian Families Project, 1997). We included the City of Montreal and all industrial and suburban districts on the Island of Montreal, and excluded the agricultural villages of Pointe-aux-Trembles, Rivière-des-Prairies, and Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. In both 1881 and 1901, the city population is therefore augmented by about 20 per cent.

14 To the initial version of the 1881 database provided by Lisa Dillon, we added missing data on school attendance for two-thirds of Montreal sub-districts.

under continuous observation for the period 1879 to 1901 from parish registers and notarial archives.[15]

In making interpretations of life transitions from cross-sectional data, options are somewhat limited. We tallied by age category and ethnicity the status of individuals: percentage attending school or not, living with their parents or not, single or married, reporting a job or not. Then, following practices of John Modell *et al.* and Kevin Schürer, we compared proportions of the population who, at a given age, had crossed that threshold, and how these proportions differed for 1881 and 1901 in the three cultural communities.[16] In 1881 the proportion of the population who eventually experienced each transition to adulthood differed considerably by gender. Almost all men ultimately entered the work force (95 per cent), married (97 per cent), and established a household independent of their parents (90 per cent); only 35 to 40 per cent of women, at the peak close to age 20, reported having entered waged work, and fewer women ultimately married (90 per cent) or established an independent household (86 per cent).[17]

For all who made those transitions on the road to independence, most did so between the ages of 15 and 29. Most girls (the central 80 per cent) left school between 12 and 18. Of those who entered waged work, 80 per cent did so over the same six-year range. Leaving home and getting married were spread over a much longer period: 14 to 31 for departures, 18 to 33 for marriages. What this tells us is that entering the work force was, as we might expect, closely synchronized with leaving school, and leaving the parental home was generally synchronized with marriage. In between, however, was a period when many young people were at work, but still living with their parents and contributing to the household economy: for girls an average of six years, for boys seven. If we consider the span between leaving home and marrying, girls averaged about three years of relative "independence," boys slightly less.[18]

15 We are in the process of incorporating several additional samples, prepared by Danielle Gauvreau and Peter Gossage, Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, Peter Baskerville and Eric Sager, and Mary MacKinnon. The "miniature" is described by Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, "La croissance naturelle des Montréalais au XIX^{e} siècle", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 191–230.

16 John Modell, Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Theodore Hershberg, "Social Change and Transitions to Adulthood in Historical Perspective", *Journal of Family History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1976), pp. 7–33; Kevin Schürer, "Leaving Home in England and Wales, 1850–1920", in F. Van Poppel, M. Oris, and J. Lee, eds., *The Road to Independence: Leaving Home in Western and Eastern Societies, 16th–20th Centuries* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 33–84.

17 By convention, this is estimated from the proportion of women who married before age 50, with expectation of children.

18 Those estimates are calculated as either the difference between the median age of entering the work force and the median age of leaving the parental home; or the difference between the age of leaving home and the median age of marriage. Given the small sizes of samples for 1901, year-by-year

Silences in the contemporary sources create problems for all of us working on the history of women and immigrants, and it is with respect to the economic activities of women that we must work hardest to wring something out of the census. The new variables for 1901 — weeks worked, earnings, and status as an employer, employee, self-employed, or on "own means" — suggest a more complete picture, and indeed the Census of Canada was more effectively recording male labour than had been done previously, defining it as part of the formal economy that the census was supposed to describe.[19] The census-takers were, however, systematically ignoring a very large and growing informal economy, including cash sales and loans between kin-related households, between generations, and between neighbours. What kinds of transactions are implied, for example, in the case of Emma, a young woman of 20 who headed a household of seven younger brothers and sisters? Her sister Arzélie was a seamstress, two more sisters day workers, the 16-year-old brother a labourer, and the three youngest (ages 13, 10, and 5) in school, while their father, remarried, headed a young family living two blocks away. The census, by under-reporting occupations of single women and widows and ignoring the entrepreneurial activities of married women (presumed to be part-time), systematically understated their contributions to family cash flows. We add a few examples to illustrate the potential of complementary sources like commercial city directories, municipal tax rolls, and notarial acts that offer glimpses of female entreprise.

The Changing Economy of Montreal

Although the revolution of steam and machinery was well advanced by 1880, the urban economy was further transformed over the next 20 years. Our first task is to bring into focus the job markets into which young people were moving and the streams of cash and services that might affect the expectations of the households in which they had been raised and the households they were establishing. These were Montreal's years of grandeur as a city of great wealth founded on the sands of mobile and adaptable "cheap labour." Population leaped in 20 years from 180,000 to 325,000 people. Built on a grander scale, the most modern industrial works of 1900 covered more than a city block: the new gas works, three sugar refineries, the expanded nail factory, the rubber monopoly, the oilcloth factory, four-storey rotary printing presses, six-storey brick shoe factories, massive railway-owned grain elevators erected in 1885 and 1886, and the locomotive and car shops of both the

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estimates are too fine-grained, and comparisons between the two dates are simplified to a threefold typology, explained below.

19 Kris Inwood and Richard Reid, "Gender and Occupational Identity in a Canadian Census", *Historical Methods*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2001), pp. 57–70.

Grand Trunk and the Canadian Pacific railways. Bulky commercial buildings were raised to eight storeys, demanding elevators and steam hoists in their construction and operation and overreaching municipal fire-fighting capacity. The city was studded also by scores of walled, grey-stone compounds of convents, hospitals, and colleges, some housing 500 or 1,000 women, operating industrial laundries, and imposing gender-segregation under the discipline of clock, bell, and curfew.

The increased physical sizes of workplaces mirrored an increase in the capital marshalled to build them and the hierarchy structured to manage their electrified round-the-clock operations. Front-running corporations in 1880 were the Allan Line of steamboats and the Grand Trunk Railway with its thousand employees in the carshops. Their head offices and geographic divisions required several levels of management, from superintendents and inspectors down to dispatchers and foremen.[20] By 1900 a middle management had developed in other firms: street railways and electric power; the insurance companies; printing firms specializing in lithography, bank notes, playing cards, and maps; the post office and customs house; the fast-growing municipal corporation;[21] and the Catholic Church, whose Archdiocese and religious orders managed the principal schools, hospitals, orphanages, nurseries, and reformatories. New routines of registration, statistics, waybills, sureties, insurance policies, death certificates, and construction permits increased the demand for clerks, bookkeepers, and stenographers. Among the earliest uses of the telephone were to connect the head office with the mill, wharf, or warehouse and to connect the hospital with the police station, doctors, and pharmacies. From its introduction in 1879, the number of telephone subscriptions rose in 20 years to 8,252.[22]

Each household was juggling a flow of cash income and a flow of mutual services its members could provide. The cash component was higher in the city than in the countryside: 85 per cent of Montrealers were tenants paying cash for rent as well as fuel and food. In the 1880s and 1890s, substitution of store-bought bread and factory-made clothing for home-made

20 Trunk railways and telegraph companies of the 1850s were models for the new management. Cf. Alfred D. Chandler Jr. with Herman Daems, *Managerial Hierarchies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Robert Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850 to 1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Lewis reports, as an estimate of concentration, that in 1890 the 197 largest firms (14.4 per cent) accounted for 63 per cent of the rental value of commercial space.

21 As an indication of how these changes interacted with the age structure of the labour force, the municipal bureaucracy was unusual in its tendency to hire men rather advanced in age or in a second career, while the banks preferred to hire young. See Michèle Dagenais, *Des pouvoirs et des hommes : l'administration municipale de Montréal, 1900–1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

22 Claire Poitras, *La cité au bout du fil : le téléphone à Montréal de 1879 à 1930* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2000).

was releasing female labour from private dwellings to factories, and the larger stream of cash allowed families to purchase new types of manufactured goods like oilcloth, linoleum, and wallpaper. Since cash flow was intermittent, vulnerable to sickness or injury as well as seasonal and cyclical layoffs, even the most modest family, renting two or three rooms at $40 a year, to manage the cash flow over time, needed to think as capitalists: to make a down payment on furniture, open a savings account, keep up membership in the burial society, or invest a child's claim on a grandparent's $100 estate. Hardest to appraise, and perhaps most important, were the investments a family made in schooling: school fees, shoes, paper, and wages foregone of the order of 50 cents a day.[23]

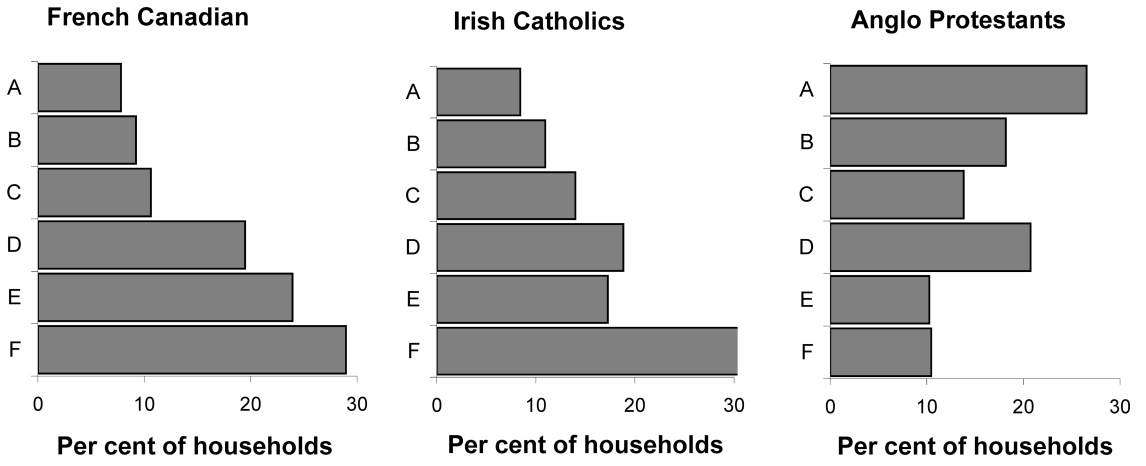
Figure 2, based on household heads in 1881, shows how the population was divided along ethnic and class lines.[24] The French Canadian population was increasing (from 58 to 67 per cent in 1901), the English-speaking groups declining (Protestants from 24 to 18 per cent, Catholics from 17 to 10 per cent), but Anglo-Protestants continued to dominate the sectors that contained high-status jobs and the largest firms, active in interprovincial and international trade. There was a further segmentation between migrants and native-born Montrealers, shown in Table 1, with higher proportions of labourers among those born outside Quebec. Ethnic segmentation of economic roles did not change perceptibly over the 20 years except for rising representation of the younger generation of Irish Catholics in printing and metallurgy, sectors that included the best-paid of working-class jobs, notably printers, lithographers, molders, and pattern-makers.[25]

The large, bureaucratically organized firms notorious for dangerous and exploitive jobs (gendered male) in the rail yards, in sugar refineries, and on the docks offered the best-paid jobs as well (also gendered male), with year-round salaries, re-hires or lifetime jobs, internal ladders of advancement, and opportunities to recruit brothers, sons, and nephews. The new intermediate levels in the hierarchy account for a decided shift between 1880 and 1900 in the distribution of household rents, from a staircase

23 Bradbury, *Working Families*; Peter Baskerville and E. W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and their Families in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

24 Occupational status groups were formed on the basis of median rents of household heads reporting that occupation to the annual municipal tax roll of occupants; Jason Gilliland and Sherry Olson, "Claims on Housing Space in Nineteenth-century Montreal", *Urban History Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1998), pp. 3–16.

25 An apprentice printer might earn $5 to $8 a week, a union journeyman $15 to $16. Testimony on *The Gazette* printing office in Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital in Canada*, vol. 3 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1889), pp. 321–325. The larger share of immigrants in the older generation of Irish contributed to the status difference evident in Table 1. More Irish immigrants arrived in the mid-1880s, more Protestants in the 1890s.



Occupational Status

A Grande bourgeoisie of merchants and manufacturers
B Petite bourgeoisie of professionals
C Clerks and other white collar
D Skilled crafts (moulders, plasterers...)
E Semi-skilled (painters)
F Labourers

Source: Ville de Montréal, taxroll of occupants (taxe locative), June 1880

Figure 2: Occupational Status of Household Heads in Three Cultural Communities, Montreal 1881.

Table 1: Household Heads by Occupational Status and Birthplace, Montreal 1881 (Percentages)

Occupational group	Irish Catholics		Anglo-Protestant	
	Quebec-born	Foreign-born	Quebec-born	Foreign-born
Bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie (groups A and B)	23.3	17.3	49.2	40.3
White-collar and skilled craftsmen (groups C and D)	35.3	30.8	34.1	36.0
Semi- and unskilled labourers (groups E and F)	41.4	51.9	16.7	23.7

Note: For a description of occupational groups, see Figure 2.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada, 1881 (100%).

structure to a continuous gradient,[26] reflecting greater differentiation of skills and step-by-step career paths through the hierarchy. Because these jobs required literacy and were controlled largely by Anglo-Protestants, they exerted a linguistic bias that opened doors to English-speaking Catholics, while hundreds of new jobs as travelling salesmen favoured French Canadians, at a linguistic advantage in the outreach of Montreal firms to Quebec villages and factory towns like Saint-Jérôme, Saint-Hyacinthe, and Hull.

Among women, the numbers of high-grade jobs were increasing much more slowly. Clerical opportunities were still very limited, but some hundreds of new steady jobs were re-gendered female: telephone operator, trained nurse, music teacher, or type writer. Critical steps were taken toward professionalization of nursing and teaching.[27] Several hundred female stenographers are reported in the census, and in 1896 and again in 1902 the Council of Women successfully mobilized to prevent attempts of male stenographers to restore their former monopoly.[28] A large share of women's professional and clerical jobs are hidden within the census listings of female religious orders that operated 65 establishments in 1881,

26 This can best be observed by log transformation of rental values from the municipal *taxe locative* annual series; cf. Gilliland and Olson, "Claims on Housing Space".

27 Kate Boyer, "Re-working Respectability: The Feminisation of Clerical Work and the Politics of Public Virtue in Early 20th-century Montreal", in Tamara Myers *et al.*, eds., *Power, Place and Identity: Historical Studies of Social and Legal Regulation in Quebec* (Montreal: McGill University, Montreal History Group, 1998), pp. 151–168, and "Place and the Politics of Virtue: Clerical Work, Corporate Anxiety, and Changing Meanings of Public Womanhood in Early Twentieth-century Montreal", *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1998), pp. 261–276.

28 Anne-Marie Sicotte, *Marie Gérin-Lajoie, Conquérante de la liberté* (Montreal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 2005), p. 168.

100 in 1901, each with its *Sœur supérieure*. They were managing a resident population of 10,000 — members of the community, novices, servants, patients, penitents, *protégées*, and *élèves pensionnaires* — all of them registered, classified, sheltered by night and deployed by day, supervised, rationed, and costed. Marta Danylewicz has shown the relative attraction of the more specialized jobs within the framework of the religious life,[29] and the 1901 census confirms the rural origins of this highly selected stream of migrants as well as the tendency for rural migrants to occupy the more lowly tasks. The convents, offices, and educational establishments offered opportunities to recruit sisters, daughters, and nieces.

Adaptations of Young Women and Men

As a strategy for adapting to shifts in the economy, the geographic move appealed to young people at a life stage of maturation, independent mobility, sexual experimentation, and search for a partner, and the several cultural communities of Montreal differed in the rates of arrival of newcomers and the distances from which they came. The city captured nearly all the long-distance immigrants to Quebec. The most recent components were Chinese and Italian sojourners and the Russian and Romanian Jews who arrived in the 1890s, together amounting in 1901 to 4 per cent of the urban population.[30] Most started at the bottom of the ladder. Of more than 800 Chinese, all but two were men, three out of five were under 30, and nine out of ten were labourers or laundrymen. Of the Italians, half were in the 15-to-29 age group (60 per cent men), and half were labourers shunted seasonally to railway construction sites. The Jewish immigrants had come largely as families and married young, with few women working for wages and no labourers or servants reported among them. Large contingents in tailoring and retailing were already working their way from peddler and buttonhole-maker into higher categories of sales and manufacture. On the eve of transformation of the sweatshops into factories, Ida Todorofsky, 17, was working as a tailor in her father's shop, lived in an extended family with her parents, an unmarried sister and brother, and the husbands and babies of her two married sisters.

For the three larger cultural communities, about 40 per cent of the population between the ages of 15 and 29 had come from outside Montreal, as shown in Table 2. In 1881 we can distinguish those born outside the province — 30 to 40 per cent of the English-speaking — and only in 1901

29 Marta Danylewicz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840–1920* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987).

30 Bruno Ramirez, "Brief Encounters: Italian Immigrant Workers and the CPR, 1900–1930", *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 17 (Spring 1986), pp. 9–27; Denise Helly, *Les Chinois à Montréal, 1877–1951* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1987); Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester, 1992).

Table 2: Birthplace of Youth (15–29) by Gender and Cultural Community, Montreal 1881 and 1901 (percentages)

	1881			1901		
	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant
Females 15–29						
Born outside Quebec	3	31	40	6	29	36
Born in Quebec	97	69	60	94	71	64
–rural	–	–	–	41	13	13
–urban	–	–	–	53	58	51
Males 15–29						
Born outside Quebec	2	25	41	5	21	42
Born in Quebec	98	75	59	95	79	58
–rural	–	–	–	42	12	8
–urban	–	–	–	53	67	50

Note: Rural or urban birthplace within Quebec available from 1901 data.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada 1881 (100%) and 1901 (CFP 5%).

can we discern the stream of French Canadian migrants from rural places, also about 40 per cent. Whether they came from abroad or from nearby, the women who moved into the city were, as compared with those born in the city, more likely to be working for wages, more likely to occupy low-paid and subaltern jobs, less likely to be in school, and less likely to live with their parents. These are the differentials that demand attention.

As shown in Table 3, within each community of identity, the immigrant woman, young and single, was more likely than a native of the city to be working for wages, and rural origin seems to have had a decisive impact. Immigrants were more likely to occupy jobs in the lowest strata, men as labourers, women as domestic servants.[31] This made possible a degree of upward mobility for those who had been born in the city, and the new jobs with year-round salaries were cornered by city-raised youth. Even within the religious orders, women were recruited primarily from small towns and villages, through schools operated by the order, and transplanted in large

31 Labourers accounted for 11 per cent of Anglo-Protestants born outside Canada (15 years and over) compared with 4 per cent of those born in Canada. The corresponding figures for Irish Catholics are 19 and 13 per cent. French Canadians exhibited the same patterns in relation to internal migration: of those born in rural areas, 17 per cent were labourers, for city-born men, 13 per cent.

Table 3: Labour Force Participation among Young Single Women by Birthplace and Cultural Community, 1881 and 1901 (percentage of women 15–29 employed)

	Montreal 1881			Montreal 1901		
Birthplace	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant
Born outside Quebec	–	47	31	39	53	38
Born in Quebec	28	33	24	–	–	–
–rural	–	–	–	43	53	49
–urban	–	–	–	31	49	30

Note: Rural or urban birthplace available from 1901 data.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada 1881 (100%) and 1901 (CFP 5%).

numbers to Montreal, but the rural women were more likely to remain in subordinate roles of servant or converse, while the leadership drew more heavily from the city-born élite.[32]

The more local off-farm migration was largely French Canadian — in 1901, 40 per cent of those aged 15 to 29 were from the rural environs — and day labourers disproportionately so at 60 per cent. The diversity of urban jobs, as well as the wider-ranging "marriage market", encouraged girls to leave home and move to the city, perpetuating an urban gender imbalance. In the age group from 15 to 29, for 100 women there were only 83 men (1901), as compared with 104 men in the rural environs; the gender imbalance was still more pronounced among Irish Catholics. Of the English-speaking, only a tenth came from the rural environs, a larger share from outside Quebec: 40 per cent of Protestants, one-quarter of Irish Catholics. A majority of them had been born in the old country, the remainder in other Canadian provinces or in the United States. Half of Protestant youth were of English origin, between one-quarter and one-third Scottish, a little less than one-quarter Irish. This rather complex migration picture meant that, for many Montreal young people, the geographic move was part of "leaving home." Of Catholic couples married in the city in 1900, half had parents outside the city. Of all single women aged 15 to 29 and born outside Montreal, one-third were living in households where they had no apparent relationship with the head, a significantly higher percentage than for those born in the city.

32 Danylewicz, *Taking the Veil*.

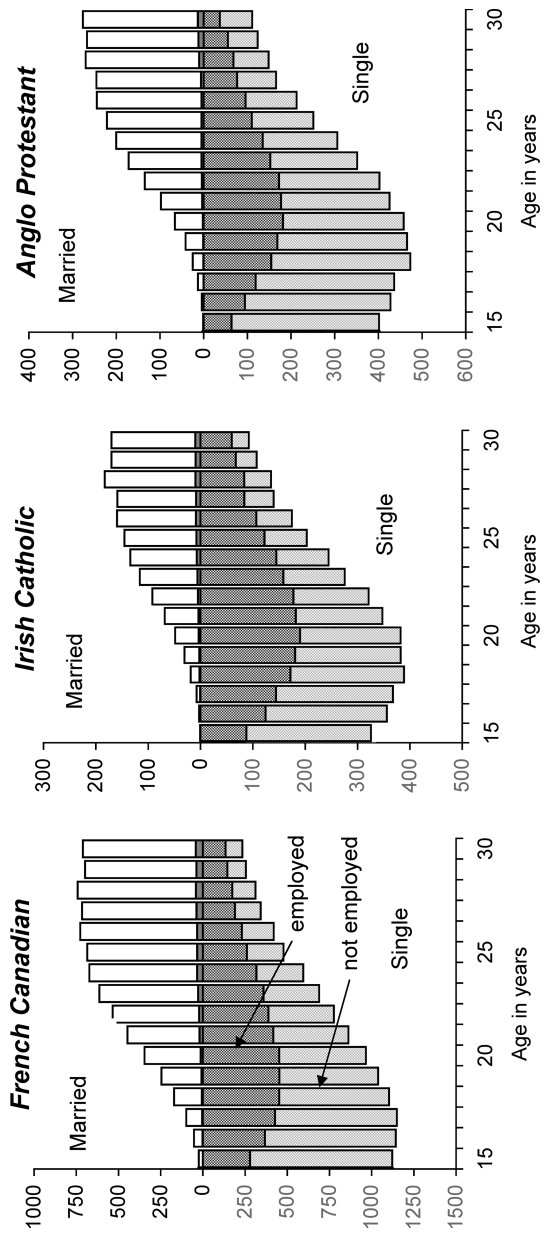
Schooling and Work

Since the census reported occupations for only 3 per cent of married women, what can be inferred from it is a simplified, threefold typology of young women's situations: those who had married; those who, still single, recorded a job outside the home; and the remainder for whom no occupation was specified. Of young single women in 1901, 38 per cent were reporting an occupation, a larger share than in 1881, and this certainly represented a much more dramatic change than that experienced by their male counterparts.[33] Figure 3 shows for 1881 how the proportions were affected by the distinctive schedules of marriage in the three communities. French Canadian girls were on a "fast track," first into waged work and then into marriage. In all three groups, the numbers of single women increased year by year to age 18, and the net gain — necessarily from in-migration — was absorbed in the waged work force, with a preponderance of the older girls among the English-speaking.

Most young women in their teens were still single and declared no occupation, but the size of this group declined over the years from 1881 to 1901. The three-fold typology is displayed for both years in Table 4 (with the largest percentage in each age and cultural set in bold), and we see that, at ages 20 to 24, single women were more likely to be wage-earners, and this was more often the case in 1901. Of Irish Catholic women in this age set, half were single and earning wages in 1901, compared with a smaller share of French Canadian and Protestant women (39 per cent). Nearly 40 per cent of French Canadian women were already married, but this was the case for far fewer Anglo-Protestants and Irish Catholics (20 and 11 per cent respectively). In the 25-to-29 age bracket, married women formed the largest category except among Irish Catholics, half of whom were still single and earning a wage. In the Protestant population, women's transitions to married life were spread over a longer period: as many as 10 per cent married before coming of age at 21, fewer than half before their twenty-sixth birthday. In all three communities, men show the same trend toward later marriage; since they were on average one to two years older than their wives, they reflect the same cultural differentials: in the age category from 25 to 29 in 1901, 62 per cent of French Canadian men and 40 per cent of the two other groups were already married (Table 4).

To what extent was schooling undertaken prior to waged work? Despite the absence of any legal requirement, some experience of schooling was almost universal in Quebec during this period, as shown in Table 5. For

33 By 1881, 95 per cent of working men aged 15 to 29 were already employed outside the home, in offices, factories, dockside hiring gangs, stores, and workshops. The home remained a base of operations for some grocers, doctors and notaries, cab drivers and carters, tavern and restaurant keepers, but the proportions declined even in these occupations.



Note: Age data is smoothed using 5 year running means because of age-heaping.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada, 1881

Figure 3: Marriage and Employment Status of Women by Year of Age (15–29), Montreal, 1881.

Table 4: Marriage and Employment Status by Age and Cultural Community (percentage of age and cultural set in each status)

	15–19 years old			20–24 years old			25–29 years old		
	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant
Females 1881									
Single, no occ.	**57**	**60**	**70**	29	35	**48**	14	19	22
Single, occ.	35	38	27	30	**43**	36	18	28	18
Married	8	2	3	**41**	22	16	**68**	**53**	**60**
Females 1901									
Single, no occ.	**51**	**50**	**68**	23	37	**41**	15	15	20
Single, occ.	47	48	31	**39**	**52**	39	21	**43**	30
Married	2	2	1	38	11	20	**64**	42	**50**
N	508	81	182	555	139	253	483	96	187
Males 1881									
Single, no occ.	30	27	32	7	10	11	3	4	4
Single, occ.	**69**	**72**	**67**	**66**	**78**	**77**	29	46	44
Married	1	1	1	27	12	12	**69**	**50**	**52**
Males 1901									
Single, no occ.	27	23	33	6	9	15	3	2	4
Single, occ.	**72**	**77**	**66**	**71**	**87**	**75**	35	**57**	**54**
Married	1	0	1	23	4	10	**62**	41	42
N	425	89	127	498	75	169	403	79	165

Note: The largest percentage in each age and cultural set is in bold. Single, no occ. = no occupation; single, occ. = single with occupation.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada 1881 (100%) and 1901 (CFP 5%).

Table 5: School Attendance at Ages 7–12 and 15–19 by Gender and Cultural Community, Montreal 1881 and 1901

	1881			1901		
	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant
Percentage of 7–12-year-olds in school						
Females	81	84	81	86	80	86
Males	84	84	85	88	87	84
Percentage of 15–19-year-olds in school						
Females	7	10	19	10	16	21
Males	11	12	15	16	12	22

Source: Nominal Census of Canada 1881 (100%) and 1901 (CFP 5%). The Census of 1881 records whether the person was in school or not. From the Census of 1901, we include those reported in school at least 6 months of the previous 12.

the age group 7 to 12, citywide attendance had reached 83 per cent by 1881 and edged a little higher by 1901. Attendance declined rapidly after age 12, however, and a more telling measure is the percentage of 15-to-19-year-olds still attending. By 1901 longer schooling can be observed in all three cultural communities. About a third of young women aged 15 to 19 without a recorded occupation were still in school, as were half of the young men, representing shares 20 to 30 per cent higher than in 1881. Consistent with our thesis that migrants were coming in at the bottom of the ladder, they were less likely to be attending school, and the differential was greatest for girls: French Canadian girls born in Montreal were twice as likely to be in school as those born in rural communities (12 versus 6 per cent for those aged 15 to 19); Protestant girls were more than twice as likely to be in school (26 versus 10 per cent).

Since 1875 the Protestant School Commission had been operating twin high schools for daughters and sons of the élite, and therefore, in the 15-to-19 age cohort, more Protestants, boys and girls alike, were attending school than French or Irish Catholics. Over the years from 1880 to 1900, more secondary schools were founded: the French-language Jacques-Cartier normal school, a commercial high school, and, in response to pressing demands of Irish lay leaders, an English-language Catholic high school. For girls, the Catholic School Commission offered nothing beyond primary classes and built no schools, relying entirely on rented premises or on the efforts of the Congrégation Notre-Dame, an elite teaching order two centuries old, to create academies for girls.[34]

34 The complexity of the Sisters' contribution to education for girls of various social classes is described by Marie-Paule Malouin, "Les rapports entre l'école privée et l'école publique : l'académie Marie-Rose au 19^{e} siècle", in N. Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont, *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses*

The advance of literacy was associated with new technologies of printing and new styles of journalism, so that wider readership deepened the generation gap in the labour market and in consumer and leisure habits. Directed at those aged 15 to 29 were comic novels, an array of short-lived humorous papers, fund-raising operettas, sheet music, news of cycling clubs for both sexes, serialized novels of local women like Jane Sadlier, and "women's pages" with columns by Joséphine Marchand Dandurand and Robertine Barry ("Françoise"). Despite warnings of the Archbishop against the French Canadian Opera Company, opera was suddenly the rage (1893–1896), and, by the end of 1900, 700 mothers had named their babies Romeo and Juliette. The nuns introduced into their academies secretarial training and stenography. Directed to young women were self-improvement courses like elocution, stenography, accounting, and drama, notably the offerings of the women's auxiliary to the *Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste* at the showpiece auditorium, *le Monument National*, built in 1898. The Local Council of Women was now a federation of 30 associations and obtained the provincial appointment of a woman factory inspector for Montreal. Feminine leadership was highly visible among the French Canadian, Irish, Protestant, and Jewish elites. Although the movement retained a "maternalist" approach and a search for a "Christian feminism," the rhetoric of opportunity was irrepressible.[35]

Work and Marriage

If we assume that most people aged 15 to 29 were, of necessity, making some productive contribution to the economy, the three-fold typology presented in Figure 3 makes it clear that the census was missing most of the cash-generating activities of married women and of two-thirds of the unmarried women. Exploring the neglected informal economy provides

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d'école (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1983), pp. 76–91. See also Mélanie Lanouette, "Penser l'éducation, dire sa culture. Les écoles catholiques anglaises au Québec, 1928–1964" (PhD dissertation, Université Laval, 2004); Roderick MacLeod and Mary Anne Poutanen, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801–1998* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004). On the social gradient in census-reported school attendance, see Kathy Provost, "Blunted Lives of Children" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2006).

35 Karine Hébert, "Une organisation maternaliste au Québec. La fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste et la bataille pour le vote des femmes", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 52, no. 3 (1999), pp. 315–344; Danylewicz, *Taking the Veil*, pp. 175–181; Yolande Pinard, "Les débuts du mouvement des femmes", in M. Lavigne and Y. Pinard, eds., *Les femmes dans la société québécoise* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1977), pp. 61–87; Fernande Roy, *Progrès, harmonie, liberté : le libéralisme des milieux d'affaires francophones de Montréal au tournant du siècle* (Montreal: Boréal, 1988).

some clues to the missing components, and we turn to the city directory to consider female entrepreneurship.

The 232 stall-holders in the public markets were listed in Lovell's commercial city directory and in the city notary's semi-annual leases. The butchers were men, but half of the entrepreneurs in fish, poultry, fruits, and vegetables were women like Julie Vernier, who for half a century after her husband died managed a poultry business in the Central St. Lawrence market. For three-quarters of the women stall-holders of 1881, no occupation was recorded in the census. A comparison of all the fragmentary sources shows that most were in their fifties, disproportionately Irish Catholic, and that they worked long hours (regulated by city ordinance) and lived closer to the market than the men. One-third also kept boarders, and half were living with at least one daughter (age 15 to 29) for whom no occupation was specified. If we assume that all the unmarried daughters were helping in the market stalls, their labour force participation rates matched those of men of the same ages (96 per cent).

Of the 972 women who paid for a listing in Lovell's, Table 6 shows how many were shopkeepers engaged in sales or crafts in which the clients were also women: baby clothes, ladies' underwear, or goods made from feathers, flowers, and women's hair. The census rarely reported their activities, but their households were exceptional with respect to the proportion headed by a woman (one-third), the low rents, the number "married" with no husband present, daughters from 15 to 29 who did not report occupations, and groups of three, four, or five sisters reported as seamstresses. In other words, like Julie, most were women supporting families. Unadvertised and more fragile were operations like that of Widow Sénécal who was dislodged from a small dwelling with a large yard where she and her sister did laundry to support her eight children.

For others between 15 and 29 who reported no occupation, the family situation was decisive: girls living with a widowed father showed much lower participation in the wage labour force in 1881 (fewer than one-quarter), pressed into domestic service in their homes. The trend was similar in 1901; a girl living with her mother only was three times as likely to be bringing home a wage as a girl living with her father only.[36] Some hundreds can be presumed unfit for work, like Emma Radford, who died of tuberculosis the week following the census of 1881, eldest daughter of a widow; the entire family were immigrants from England. In a 12-month span, 117 other young women and 87 young men

36 Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861–91", *Labour/ Le Travail*, vol. 15 (Fall 1984), pp. 9–46; Peter Baskerville, "Familiar Strangers: Urban Families with Boarders in Canada, 1901", *Social Science History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2001), pp. 321–346.

Table 6: Women's Occupations Reported in Lovell 1881

Hospitality	
Boarding house	73
Saloon	14
Hotel or eating house	9
Fashion	
Dressmaker	312
Seamstress	53
Tailoress	24
Milliner	77
Furrier	10
Baby linen, ladies & children's underclothing, stays	7
Dry goods and patterns	8
Fancy goods	30
Food retail	
Fruits and/or vegetables	47
Grocery	46
Fish and poultry	2
Confectionary	5
Other retailing	
Merchant, dealer, or trader	20
Tinware, lamps, crockery	4
Tobacconist	8
Second-hand clothes, machines	3
Pawnbroker	2
Health services	
Midwife	21
Sick nurse	13
Ladies' doctress, female physician	3
Educational services	
School teacher	36
Teacher music, singing, piano, harp	29
Young ladies' educational establishment	22
Preparatory class for little boys	2
Librarian	1
Social services	
Matron/directoress	12
Other crafts and services	
Upholsteress	1
Dyer, feather cleaner	1
Ladies' hairdresser or hair work	2
Willow worker	1
Artist, encasing flowers in wax	2
Caretaker	4
Day labour	
Laundress	29
Charwoman	22
Total	972

Source: *Lovell's Montreal Directory of 1880–81. . .corrected to June 11th 1880* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1880).

(between the ages of 15 and 29) died from the same cause, a disease that undermined vigour and earning power on average six months prior to death. Bridget Doheney, 28, was the eldest in a household of four brothers and sisters, all born in Ireland. Christina Bowden, an immigrant from Scotland, was left at 23 with a two-year-old, and Malvina Laporte, widowed at 28, had been living with two younger sisters; her death from TB left them responsible for her children, 4, 8, and 10 years old.

In 600 households that lodged at least three boarders in 1881, half were headed by women, a third by widows. In only one case out of six did the census-taker identify a boardinghouse keeper. Many more women kept one or two boarders, and a few achieved a larger scale of enterprise, like Eulalie Blouin, who with rented furniture was managing in 1891 a ground-floor barroom and six guest rooms upstairs. Over the 20 years, there was a substantial leap in the number of large boardinghouses (from 20 to 25 persons), characterized by a greater diversity of gender, age, language, and religion. The boardinghouse was the first stop for a large share of newcomers to the city, 55 per cent of them in the age range 15 to 29, and their adaptations to city life were affected by exposure to norms and practices of their peers — fellow boarders as well as siblings and workmates.

Leaving home provided a wide range of short-term experiences, with greater independence and greater vulnerability. In 1881 a majority of young women were still under household governance, either working in their own homes, helping their mothers or married sisters, or serving in the homes of others. Domestic service made up a quarter of jobs reported for French Canadian women, half for Irish Catholics, and two-thirds for Anglo Protestants (Table 7). By 1901, however, the share of servants among reported female jobs had fallen substantially, especially for Irish Catholics (decline of 55 per cent) and the oldest subset (ages 25 to 29). The refinements of the census of 1901 make it plain that the gap was filled by migrants who, whether they came from the countryside or from abroad, were more likely to work as servants than the city-born. Among Protestant girls, domestic service was more common among the youngest immigrants (ages 15 to 19); a large contingent of serving girls of Scottish origin attests to the presence of wealthy Scots to employ them and, in fact, systematic channels for promoting the stream of migration for service.[37]

In 1901 three-quarters of waged women were in occupations other than domestic service; they were moving into growth sectors of the economy.

37 On servants, see Marilyn Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991); Harvey, "La religion"; and, for broader context, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, ed., *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity: Understanding the Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th–21st Centuries* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

Table 7: Domestic Servants as a Percentage of Young Employed Single Women by Age Group, Birthplace, and Cultural Community, Montreal 1881 and 1901

	1881			1901		
	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant	French Canadian	Irish Catholic	Anglo-Protestant
Age groups						
15–19	25	48	59	21	21	38
20–24	30	56	65	23	26	42
25–29	25	61	63	19	23	25
Birthplace						
Born outside Quebec	–	74	69	–	40	49
Born in Quebec	27	42	57	–	–	–
–rural	–	–	–	27	29	46
–urban	–	–	–	17	14	15

Notes: French Canadian population born outside Quebec is too small. Rural or urban birthplace available from 1901 data.
Source: Nominal Census of Canada 1881 (100%) and 1901 (CFP 5%).

French Canadian women were much more likely to be working outside the domestic setting, as seamstresses, dressmakers, and milliners (one-third) or as operatives in cigar or shoe factories, cotton mills, bookbinderies, or type foundries: 45 per cent of Anglo-Protestant women, as compared with one-third of Irish and one-fifth of Protestant women, held professional, managerial, and white-collar jobs. Irish Catholics can be situated between the two groups: as likely as French Canadians to be dressmakers, much less likely to be working in factories, more likely to hold white-collar jobs. Among both Irish Catholic and Protestant women, the proportion in white-collar jobs increased with age. The labour force was not only gendered but segmented by ethnicity and date of arrival.

When Wages and Migrants Matter

Since the census of 1901 for the first time reports earnings, we turn now to a more explicit analysis of the cash contributions of young women and men to the family economy. Because the self-employed were not required to report income, nor profits or rents, we cannot see the entire cash flow, notably in the wealthiest households, but for working-class families earnings are reasonably complete.[38] The analysis is organized to demonstrate

38 Eric W. Sager, "National Data on Working-class Earnings: The 1901 Census of Canada", *Historical Methods*, vol. 33, no. 4 (2000), pp. 235–242. Response rates vary by occupational category, always at

two points: first, the trends in participation rates and the kinds of jobs reported by women make sense in terms of the wage incentives; second, the wage structure was affected by the high rates of in-migration. As we can still observe today, the jobs in a fast-growing metropolis attracted newcomers to such an extent that the supply of workers damped the wages they could command.[39]

It is no surprise to find that men at any age earned higher wages than women and that the wages of both increased with age and experience, but the differentials of gender, age, and skills were nuanced by differences of supply and demand. If we compare the younger set (15 to 19) with the older set (25 to 29), men's earnings doubled while women's earnings increased only by half. Among the youngest, French Canadian girls appear better-paid than others, as shown in Figure 4. They shared with their brothers the jobs in the cotton and silk mills, where they were subject to piecework, fines, capricious layoffs, and, like 17-year-old Eliza Elder, to industrial accidents: her right hand was mutilated by a machine in the box factory.[40] Protestants started low, the youngest as servants or apprentices, but saw greater advancement with age. Extravagant incomes were reported by a singer, a designer, and a gymnast, but in general the ceiling on women's wages was very low: Nurse Boyd, a responsible and independent visiting nurse employed by the Montreal Diet Dispensary, earned $300 a year, the same as the men in the Chinese laundries and the Italian navvies who worked only six months.

The wage gap between women and men widened dramatically with age (Figure 4): French Canadian girls at age 15 to 19 were earning three-quarters of what their brothers earned, at age 20 to 24 two-thirds; after that, the ratio plummeted to 40 per cent (median earnings of those with jobs) and, as a result, modified the relative appeal of waged work and marriage.[41] It is

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least 80 per cent (p. 236), and self-reported information poses additional problems. Following the strategy of Green and MacKinnon ("The Slow Assimilation", p. 324), we standardized monthly earnings to take into account the number of months an individual was employed, and, in compiling group averages and household earnings, we excluded cases in which someone reporting an occupation did not report income.

39 Roma Dauphin, *Économie du Québec, une économie à la remorque de ses groupes* (Laval: Beauchemin, 1994); Abdurrahman Aydemir and George J. Borjas, "A Comparative Analysis of the Labor Market Impact of International Migration: Canada, Mexico, and the United States", National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 12327 (June 2006), available as Statistics Canada, *Update on Family and Labour Studies*, publication 89–001–XWE (Winter 2007), or accessible at http://papers.nber.org/papers/w12327.

40 *La Patrie*, May 20, 1881.

41 Other sources pertaining to the 1880s mention that an apprentice cigar-maker 14 or 15 years old, male or female, might earn $1 a week the first year, $2 the second, $3 the third, and $4 the fourth, approaching two-thirds of a labourer's yearly wage (for example, Acts of Durand for employment by the Goulet brothers cigar makers, April 15, 1882; May 11, 1882). An experienced woman worker, even at age 30, was not likely to exceed the wage of that apprentice.

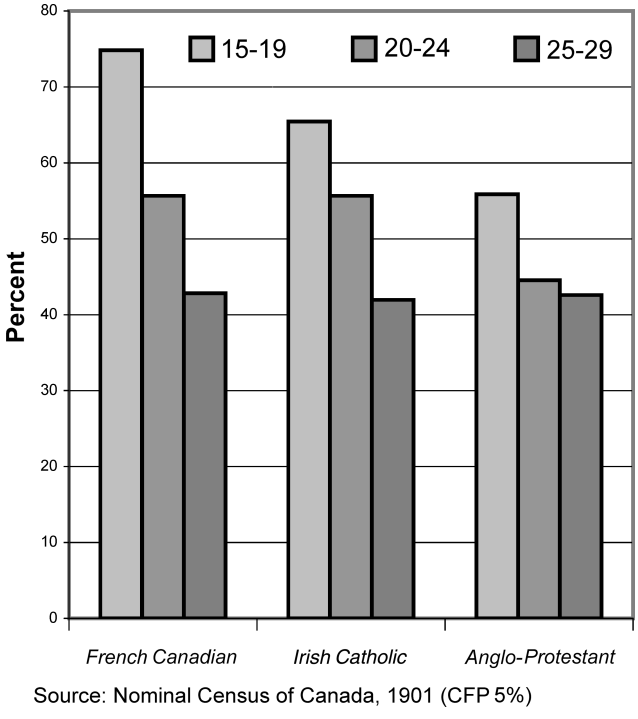


Figure 4: Female Earnings as a Percentage of Male Earnings, Montreal 1901.

possible that the French Canadian girl, had she stayed in the work force, might have seen her salary and prospects improve, like Florentine Bélanger, 24, who managed the millinery shop where her three sisters were employed. As Florentine looked around at her peers, however, the predominant model favoured early marriage.

The economic and social advantages of postponing marriage are easier to observe for men but affected both sexes. As shown in Figure 5, men of higher occupational status stayed single longer; Figure 6, comparing the earnings of male white-collar workers with labourers at various ages, reflects the expectations for lifetime incomes of the families they would found.[42] An intercultural difference remains: at a given age and status,

42 For households headed by a married labourer, rent distributions for 1880 show no elasticity with age, while in higher-status occupations, rents — and presumably incomes — continued to rise with age. Green and MacKinnon, from wages reported in the census of 1901, were able to pinpoint the early course of earnings among the unmarried: a steep rise with each year of age to about 25, flat thereafter ("The Slow Assimilation"). This meant that at age 25 the workingman was likely to achieve a "family wage", and his aspirations were moulded accordingly.

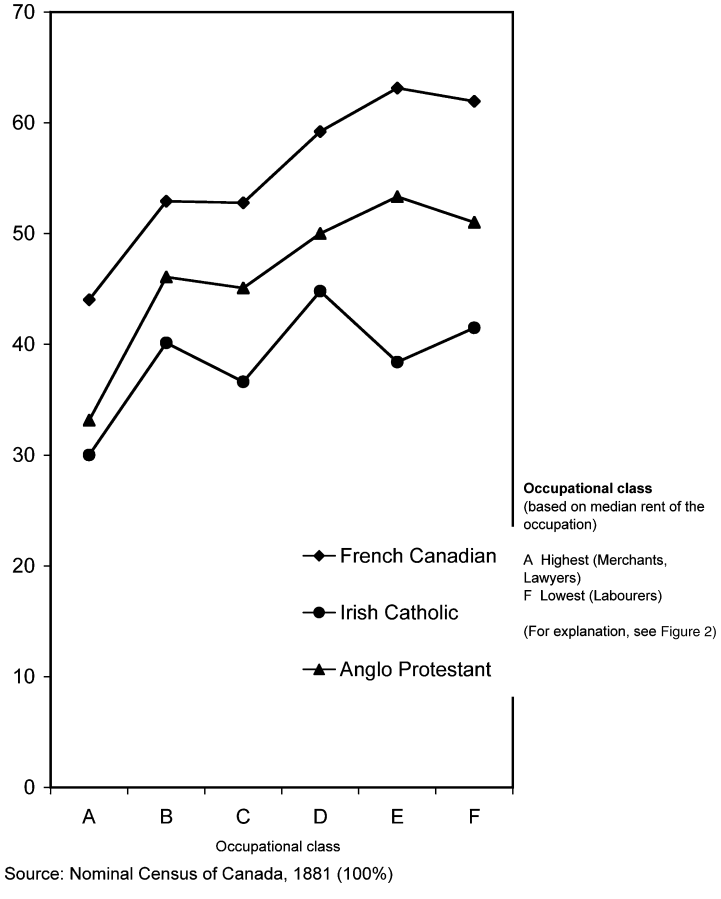
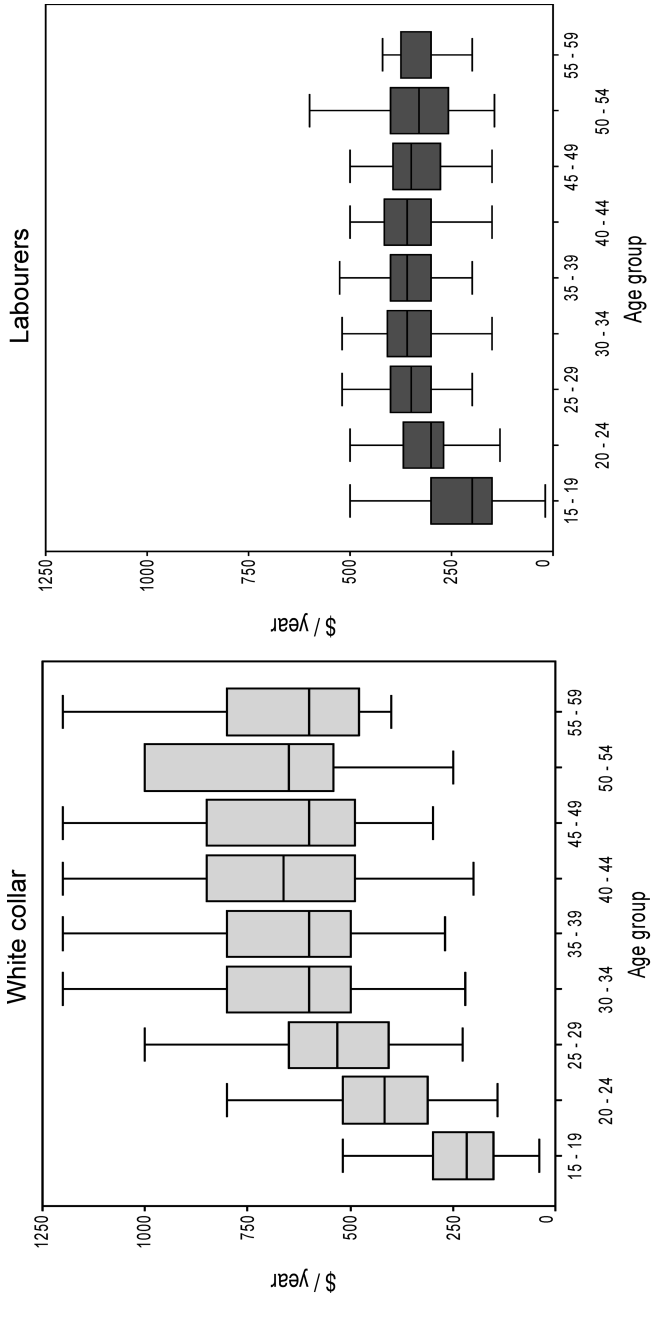


Figure 5: Nuptiality (per cent married) among Men 20–29 by Occupational Class and Cultural Group, Montreal 1881.

Irish Catholic couples were more likely to wait.[43] From the woman's point of view, moving to the city and postponing the choice of a partner was therefore a strategy that might enable "marrying up," securing an urban lifestyle, finding a partner with a year-round salary and enough savings to start married life with a factory-made "bedroom sett" and the lace curtains that signalled respectability.

The situation of school teachers offers an example of the way economic motives, migration rates, and attitudes to gender and religion were laced

43 In the age cohort of 25 to 29, fewer than 47 per cent of Irish Catholic men in the highest status group were married and 69 per cent in the lowest (labourers), as compared with 58 and 83 per cent of Protestant men.



Source: Nominal Census of Canada, 1901 CFP 5%

Figure 6: Mean Yearly Earnings of Male White-collar Workers and Labourers by Age Group, Montreal 1901.

together in a "moral economy." The Protestant School Commission paid female teachers up to $400 a year, while the Catholic School Commission paid its male lay teachers $200 (median) and its female lay teachers $100, comparable to the take-home pay of a housemaid. It preferred to rely on the brothers and nuns. In 1881 the Commission spent $16 per pupil a year for operation of the elite boys' school, $12 for the five other boys' schools run by lay teachers, $2.19 for girls' schools operated by lay teachers, and $1.63 for girls' schools run by the nuns. The Archbishop favoured the use of religious orders, and the mayor and city council acknowledged that their objective was to prevent any increase in the school tax. The tax revenue, allocated by religion of the property owner, yielded for the Catholic board $2.12 per Catholic child and for the Protestant board $5.36 per Protestant child.[44] The cut-rate policy with its gendered impact was facilitated by the steady recruitment of rural migrants, especially women, into the city and into the religious orders.

Ambitions and Responses within Cultural Communities

Despite many contradictions, the respective strategies of young people in the three communities were responsive to the options available. French Canadian girls, having worked in a factory for a few years, moved rapidly into marriage, often bringing into the partnership a sewing-machine, with expectations of home-based entrepreneurship.[45] In the Protestant community, young women were arriving to fill, for a portion of their life-cycle, the ranks of servants in wealthy households where Canadian-born daughters did not need to work. Those from artisanal and white-collar backgrounds found professions such as teaching, nursing, and stenography sufficiently attractive to keep them single well into their late twenties, while the young men were pursuing a higher education and reaching a middle-class income. Among Irish Catholics, a prominent feature of the model was the accommodation of women to more prolonged single status and wage work. Longer residence of children with their parents maximized income in their families of origin. Irish

44 Robert Gagnon, *Histoire de la Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal* (Montreal: Boréal, 1996), pp. 73–79; Marta Danylewicz and Alison Prentice, "Teachers, Gender and Bureaucratizing School Systems in Nineteenth Century Montreal and Toronto", *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (Spring 1984), pp. 75–100; Marta Danylewicz, "Sexes et classes sociales dans l'enseignement : le cas de Montréal à la fin du 19^{e} siècle", in Fahmy-Eid and Dumont, eds., *Maîtresses de maison*.

45 Between French Canadians and others, the gap in age at marriage remained as large, so that reproductive investment differed, highest for French Canadians, lowest for Irish Catholics. Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, "A Deadly Discrimination among Montreal Infants, 1860–1900", *Continuity and Change*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2001), pp. 95–135.

families could count on up to ten years with multiple earners,[46] and the collective commitment reached higher than mere economic survival, as we see in the Kenny family: the parents had been born in Ireland; of eight children ranging in age from 18 to 30 (four born in the United States and four in Montreal), all could read, and the two youngest (twin girl and boy) were still students at 18. The father was a carpenter, but each of his five working children in 1900 earned more than he did, including Mary the dressmaker and Catherine the milliner. Whose earnings were ensuring the future of the twins? In such a situation, how did the older couple frame the tale and how did the young people interpret the narrative? Collectively, the collaborative strategy was successful in allowing the Irish Catholics in Montreal to advance in the social and economic hierarchy, as reflected in their ability to rent larger dwellings in better neighbourhoods.[47]

In all three cultural groups, the increased percentage of single women declaring an occupation at a given age reflects a more pressing need for cash in the consumer economy. Over the 20 years, the decline in the proportion married before age 30 enlarged the pool available for waged work (Table 4) and, together with the continuing arrivals, held down the wages they could command. The combined effects generated a substantially larger share of young women remaining in the labour force: 10 per cent more at ages 20 to 24, 15 per cent more at ages 25 to 29 (relative to 1881). Migrant streams from villages of Quebec or Ontario satisfied urban demand for female domestic servants, so that a larger share of factory, sales, and white-collar jobs shifted to city-raised young women, and households could obtain a larger flow of cash from their wage-earning children or young lodgers.

Analysis of the 1881 and 1901 censuses has uncovered for a major North American city a wide range of factors affecting life transitions in the context of rising industrial capitalism. We have seen evidence of all the factors identified by users of European population registers: schooling, wealth, timing of marriage, the needs of a widowed parent, and long-distance opportunities for domestic service. In Montreal, however, where we can distinguish the behaviours of three distinct communities, none of those factors seemed to override cultural affiliation. Each of the three communities presented its young people with an ideal model for the life course. Over 20 years, young people in all three communities

46 Because domestic servants were usually fed and housed, the take-home wage (ca $100) favoured remittance or savings, and Irish Catholic spinsters were noted for legacies to nephews for schooling, enrolments in the savings bank, and their donations to finish the Cathedral and pay off the debt of St. Patrick's Church.

47 Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, "The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community in Nineteenth-century Montreal", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 35, no. 70 (November 2002), pp. 333–362.

showed some adaptation to the new economy, notably by staying longer in school, postponing marriage, and moving into sectors of expanding opportunities. Women made a more dramatic adaptation by moving earlier to the city, working longer outside the home (before marriage), and increasing their participation in the cash economy. Yet the evidence from the census shows, for each community, the persistence of a different schedule of life transitions into work and family formation.

As a production concern, each household possessed a mix of assets in the labour market, what economists think of as factors of production. The balance was affected by the mix of age and gender. Optimal strategies for increasing cash flow demanded more of some factors, such as reading, writing, bookkeeping, or speaking two languages. In 1881 each community possessed, in aggregate, a characteristic portfolio of financial assets and social capital. French Canadians, for example, were able to mobilize a more extended network of kin,[48] while newlywed immigrants like Timothy and Celina Lenahan were scrimping to bring a widowed mother from Ireland. Families in the three communities were equally likely to hold a piece of property, but Anglo-Protestants held properties worth twice as much and were twice as likely to hold more than one property.[49] With the wider choice of schooling and heavier investment in their offspring, each group was garnering particular factors of production.

Embedded in the same fast-growth urban economy, the three communities differed, as we have shown, in the pace of the life-course. Their differences provide insights into cultural and moral factors that continued to play a powerful role in family formation. Despite an invasive rhetoric of individual achievement that elicited responses from all three groups of youth, their ambitions remained harnessed to the collective strategies of their families. The Halls were a family who improved their situation over the 20-year span: Methodists from England who immigrated as singles in the 1850s and 1860s. In 1881 the father was a labourer, they were renting a three-room dwelling near the railway shops in the Point, and the mother, in addition to her six children, kept three boarders. Twenty years later, Mr. Hall, at 67, was still working for the railway; he

48 For evidence of the networking value of boarders and extended family, see Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City: Middle-Class Homes of Industrial Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970). In his data for Venice, Derosas was able to show that the size of the social network facilitated marriages and that migration into the city reduced the size of this network and the ease with which people could find partners and employment. See Renzo Derosas, "A Family Affair: Marriage, Mobility and Living Arrangements in Nineteenth-century Venice, 1850–1869", in van Poppel *et al.*, eds., *The Road to Independence*, pp. 143–196.

49 Of Protestant owners, 64 per cent held more than one property (counted as recorded in the tax roll), compared with only 30 per cent of Irish Catholic or French Canadian owners.

held a responsible job as storekeeper but earned little more than a labourer ($350). His oldest son had become a physician; not yet married at 28, he reported an income of $2,500 and was listed by the census-taker as head of household. They now occupied a seven-room dwelling and kept no boarders; Emma, at 20, was still in school, presumably aiming at a position as a teacher or stenographer.

We have no systematic information about the share youth could save or spend on themselves, and there is no evidence that Montreal women, including the Irish, were opting more heavily for lifetime celibacy. Is it possible, however, that a woman gainfully employed and earning a reasonable income might not be in a hurry to marry? Who were the eight young women, all with different names, living at the same location, or the twelve French Canadian *couturières* in their early twenties? Who was the woman who, at 25, was living alone with no reported occupation? Was she enjoying the independence that her earnings allowed? Had she inherited the dwelling? Or was she supported in ways she chose not to mention? Given the legal power of the *paterfamilias* in Quebec civil law, a woman living outside the parental home would experience a degree of economic and social independence that was unthinkable in a rural setting, and the size of the window differed among cultural groups. French Canadian girls on average experienced a shorter span of independence (2.2 years), 1.5 to 2 years fewer than English-speaking girls, while Irish Catholic girls experienced the longest average period of independence at 4.2 years. We might reverse the line of argument, however. It is possible that the woman who remained single after her 25th birthday did so out of necessity: she had no father or brother to rely on, or her parent(s) depended on her income. Our samples included young women responding in both of these ways.

Domestic service, as well as boarding and prostitution, created situations that challenged cultural values, and we have seen already the higher proportions of in-migrant women in domestic service. Of three women working for the Lawrence family in 1901, Jessie Sheppard, 19, was a Protestant born in Newfoundland; Caroline Desmarais, 30, a French Canadian; and Annie Fould, 24, an English-speaking Catholic born in Montreal with no relatives but an older brother boarding nearby. The employer of the three young women was a Presbyterian born in England who had married a woman of Catholic faith and English parentage. With eight children at home, they lived in a 14-room mansion and owned 16 other houses. The interplay of domestic circumstance with labour force options was thus redistributing young people into jobs that exposed them to other values and aspirations. As in certain British, Dutch, and Scandinavian traditions of life-cycle service, this was an important educational mechanism, affording exposure to modern and "citified" patterns of consumption and competition. In Montreal, Irish Catholic women were more likely than others to enter such a mixed

cultural setting and to spend more years there;[50] in 1901 half were working in Protestant households, more of them lived as boarders or worked for hotels, and more of them entered mixed marriages, suggesting that some Irish youth were adopting models for upward mobility and including Anglo-Protestants in their reference group for a desired living standard.

Because moral authority was rooted in culture, the cultural diversity of Montreal offers some insights into the interactions between distinctive cultural expectations and economic pressures on the family. As we have seen, cultural attitudes and norms made good economic sense, and the investment horizons of the group were nourished by differential rewards. But the persistence of cultural patterns argues the continued importance of culturally prescribed norms. The high and rising rates of participation in the labour force among migrant women, both local and long-distance, testify to their ambitions. Confined by the fierce competition of other migrants and the pressures of gender discrimination in wages, many endured subordinate positions as servants and factory operatives, but held high expectations for their children, who internalized the revolution of ambition promoted in schoolbooks and popular literature. By bringing to bear migrant histories and the cultural expectations based on them, we obtain a firmer idea of the tight integration between individual and family ambitions.

All of these questions cry out for alternative research strategies, both quantitative and qualitative. In addition to the nominal census databases we have employed for 1881 and 1901, scholars anticipate access this year to expanded digital samples for 1901, a 10-per-cent sample for 1891, a decennial suite of 5-per-cent samples for the entire twentieth century, and comparative databases for other countries.[51] In the increased stream of cash into the family economy, the wage structure, as we have seen, provided incentives to women to migrate, to stay longer at waged labour, and to seek new kinds of jobs. Wage options affected the structure of households and the timing of family formation. The feedback effects of migration rates on wage rates merit application of the tools of the economic historian.

In the use of rich qualitative sources, the digital census will be especially valuable for grounding and calibrating small samples. Our soundings have suggested a need to address the roles of brothers and sisters, to appraise the living standards of successive generations, and to seek evidence of

50 In 1881, 96 per cent of French Canadians aged 15 to 29 were living in households of the same affiliation, compared with 93 per cent of Protestants, but only 78 per cent of Irish Catholics.

51 See, for 1881, http://www.prdh.umontreal.ca; for 1891, http://www.census1891.ca/; for 1901, the Canadian Families Project, http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/cfp/; for the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure 1911–1951, http://www.canada.uottawa.ca/ccri/; and for links to other nations, the North Atlantic Population Project, http://www.nappdata.org/napp/.

new ambitions from symbolic and material culture, the rhetoric of fashion and advertising. Grounding in a census will allow scholars with a great variety of objectives and research approaches to contextualize the women they meet in other places and other sources — news items, case records of courts, hospitals, and prisons, registers of schools and shelters, and, in Quebec, the extensive notarial repertories of marriage contracts, wills, leases, and purchases of property. Such sources will shed greater light on the expectations and narratives that nourished the actions we have tallied.