# *The Dawn of Canada's Century: Hidden Histories*

edited by Gordon Darroch
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The "hidden histories" evoked in Gordon Darroch's subtitle are those revealed by census micro-data, in particular the five per cent random sample of Canadian dwellings listed in the 1911 manuscript census, as assembled and digitized by the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI) project. Financed by a major infrastructure grant from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, CCRI is a multi-partner, interdisciplinary initiative designed to assemble robust, publicly accessible national samples based on the nominal schedules from the five Canadian censuses taken between 1911 and 1951. "Canada's century," of course, is a reference to Sir Wilfrid Laurier's oft-quoted (and misquoted) claim about Canada's bright twentieth-century future. "Canada has been modest in its history," intoned the prime minister in 1904, "although its history has been heroic in many ways. But its history, in my estimation, is only commencing. It is commencing in this century. The nineteenth century was the century of the United States. *I think we can claim that it is Canada that shall fill the twentieth century*. (Cheers.)"[1]

Whether or not the twentieth century would belong to Canada, the Laurier years (1896 to 1911) were certainly characterized by massive economic, social, and political changes. This was *a nation transformed*, to borrow from the title of an influential survey of the period:[2] *economically*, by a new phase of industrial-capitalist development and by a booming international trade in wheat and other staple commodities; *socially*, by urbanization and its attendant array of challenges and inequalities; *geographically*, by the expansion of prairie agriculture, necessitating the creation of two new provinces in 1905; and *demographically* in several ways, but especially by immigration, which reached levels never imagined during the National Policy years of Sir John A. Macdonald—and which, by expanding the field of immigrant recruitment beyond the traditional British and American sources (although these remained the strongest) into continental Europe, presaged the multicultural Canada of the more recent past.

1. Sir Wilfrid Laurier to the First Annual Banquet of the Canadian Club, Ottawa, 18 January 1904. Transcription online at http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Primeministers/laurier/docs-thecanadaclub.htm, consulted 24 July 2015. Emphasis added.
2. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed*. The Canadian Centenary Series vol. 14 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1974).

Darroch, the distinguished York University sociologist, and the interdisciplinary group of contributors he has assembled,[3] have chosen not so much to challenge this widely accepted meta-narrative as to dig deeply into its tenets and assumptions, in their attempt to unearth some hidden dimensions of this familiar story of transformation at "the dawn of Canada's century." They do so by bringing the full power of the CCRI microdata to bear on a wide range of issues, from the meanings attached to the census-taking exercise itself through more standard demographic analyses of immigration, ethnic and linguistic diversity, urban development, labour force participation, voting patterns, and the position of Aboriginal people in Canada, to the kinds of family- and household-based topics that have animated one important stream of Canadian social history since the 1970s.[4]

At the heart of this enterprise is the 1911 census sample, which was the most recent publicly accessible set of CCRI microdata when this anthology went to press.[5] Almost all of the sixteen chapters make some use of this remarkable data set, which contains detailed information about over 372,000 individuals living in all of Canada's nine provinces and two territories in 1911. Many of them juxtapose the 1911 CCRI sample with other, comparable data sets, including the five per cent sample of the 1901 Canadian census assembled by the Canadian Families Project[6] and the full transcription of the 1881 Canadian census compiled by the Mormons and now housed by the *Projet de recherche en démographie historique* (PRDH) at l'Université de Montréal. Scholars of a less quantitative bent will particularly enjoy another feature of the CCRI's data infrastructure, which is used to good effect by several of the authors in this collection. Known as the "contextual database," this is a collection of contemporary commentaries on the "organization, execution, and reception" of Canada censuses from 1911 to 1951, drawn from both parliamentary debates and from newspapers (almost 170 of them), and yielding some 16,000 individual records.[7]

Darroch has organized these sixteen essays into five thematic sections. Part I features a pair of introductions: a general one by the editor that draws in interesting ways on translation theory and frames the census—and even more, the CCRI sample, as "the outcome of successive acts of translation" (p. 6)—and a more technical one by Byron Moldofsky, which outlines the CCRI's approach to geo-coding census information, including the choice of the census subdistrict as the basic spatial unit available for the location, analysis, and mapping of these microdata. Part II focuses on "Canadian Diversities" and is comprised, appropriately, of four rather diverse essays: Evelyn Ruppert's analysis of the "Infrastructure of Census Taking" in 1911, with its refreshing emphasis on the technologies and the people involved in preparing the census (beginning with Minister of Agriculture Sydney Fisher, who was apparently counted twice); Adam J. Green's discussion of the debate over why "Canadian" was not accepted by census takers as an acceptable response to their question about "racial or tribal

3. At least five disciplines are represented by the twenty-four authors of the sixteen essays collected here: history, sociology, geography, economics, and demography.
4. See, for instance, the pioneering studies by Michael Katz and Bettina Bradbury: M.B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-nineteenth-century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1975; B. Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1993).
5. The 1921 manuscript census, and hence the CCRI's four per cent sample, became available for public consultation in 2013, after the expiry of the 92-year moratorium mandated by federal law.
6. This was a team based at the University of Victoria that included Darroch and several other contributors to this volume, namely Chad Gaffield, Lisa Dillon, Danielle Gauvreau, Eric W. Sager, and Peter Baskerville. For a similar anthology based on the Canadian Families Project, see Sager and Baskerville (eds.) *Household Counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2007).
7. The contextual database is available on-line at https://ccri.library.ualberta.ca/en1911census/contextual/index.html (consulted 27 July 2015).

origins"; an exploration, co-authored by Chad Gaffield, Moldofsky, and Katharine Rollwagen, of the way the language question was posed and interpreted in 1911—so ambiguously, it turns out, that census officials chose to suppress the results rather than risk fuelling linguistic tensions; and Gustave Goldman's disarmingly straightforward account of Canada's Aboriginal people in 1911, which uses the same language variables discussed in the previous chapter to explore, among other topics, "linguistic assimilation" among First Nations people, many of whom had been exposed to the trauma of residential schools.

Part III is framed around the theme of "Social Spaces [and] Historical Places," but the three essays collected here are also united by a methodology, as each author seeks to draw meaningful inferences from multivariate analyses based on at least two sets of census microdata, including from 1911. Hence Darroch uses multinomial logistic regression to tease out the relative impact of independent variables such as birthplace (foreign-born versus Canadian-born) and region on household structure, with special attention to extended-family households and those sheltering non-kin co-residents. Lisa Dillon focuses, as in her earlier work, on the elderly, in a context here where intergenerational cooperation and co-residence are expected to have been in decline. She finds only subtle changes, however, between 1901 and 1911, but with some strong regional variations, particularly in the probability that an elderly woman might head her own household, which was significantly higher in Ontario than elsewhere. For their part, Danielle Gauvreau and Patricia Thornton offer a detailed analysis of the ethnic diversity in Quebec in 1881 and 1911—demonstrating the inadequacy of some well-worn clichés around both French-Canadian "homogeneity" and the proverbial "two solitudes"—while carefully situating various derived measures of ethnoreligious segregation and mixing at several levels, including, most interestingly, the household. From these "places and spaces" the discussion turns in Part IV (somewhat confusingly at first brush) to "Locales in Transition" (for these are nothing if not places and spaces!), with three essays focusing on specific communities, all located east of the Ottawa River. These are:

1. A general portrait of Trois-Rivières and its population at the dawn of the century, drawn by Claude Bellavance and France Normand from their 100 per cent samples of the local population at every census date from 1852 through 1911 (the potential thus offered for testing the smaller samples collected by the CFP and CCRI is not wasted);
2. An intriguing examination by Terry Quinlan and Sean Cadigan of district-by-district voting patterns in the 1948 referendums on Confederation—as correlated with data from the 1945 Newfoundland census[8] and with additional attention to the 1911 census returns for St. George's Bay—that exemplifies "the changing, more Canadian-oriented nature of the population overall" (p. 314) and, therefore, the regional patterns of support for Confederation in 1948; and
3. A detailed study by Marc St-Hilaire, Laurent Richard, and Richard Marcoux of a cohort of about 1,500 children, located in the 1871 manuscript census for Quebec City and then traced through four subsequent census returns, all the way to 1911—within a life-course perspective and with particular emphasis on the factors associated with an individual's likelihood of leaving the community from one census date to another. The most salient factor, as it turns out, was *ethno-religious identity*, as Irish Catholics in particular—their traditional sources of employment on the waterfront in serious decline—left the city in droves, contributing to what these authors call its "French-Canadianization."

8. These scholars benefit from the fact that the pre-Confederation Newfoundland enumerations are not subject to the same 92-year blackout as the post-1921 Canadian censuses.

The anthology closes with a series of four essays (Part V) grouped around the theme "Markets and Mobility: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender"—and once again, the 1911 CCRI census sample is in the spotlight. In their chapter, Kris Inwood, the late Mary McKinnon, and Chris Minns offer a new analysis of labour market dynamics in the two decades from 1891 to 1911, with special emphasis on immigration, education, and language; there is an interesting discussion here of the educational and career attainments of Ontario anglophones versus Quebec francophones, for instance, with the benefit of the data on wages and earnings first collected for the 1901 and 1911 censuses. Sociologists Charles Jones and Stella Park then approach the 1911 census with a view towards unpacking the data it contains on what they call "ancestral origins" (this the "racial or tribal origins" census question that was critiqued so thoroughly by Green in an earlier chapter) and their relationship to employment and earnings—as mediated most significantly by geography, since wages were significantly higher in the west than anywhere else in Canada. Eric W. Sager adds social class to this mix, as is possible given the presence of questions about each individual's relationship to the means of production (employee, employer, or working on own account) on the 1901 and 1911 enumerations. Based in part on his detailed study of immigrant and ethnic dispersal and clustering in the industrial community of Hamilton, Ontario, Sager concludes that "class and gender were fundamental to the material condition of both immigrants and people born in Canada in a way that ethnicity was not" (p. 499), and thereby creates something of a dissonance with the previous chapter and its strong emphasis on "ancestral origins." Peter Baskerville, finally, moves the discussion in a new direction by focusing on the questions about life insurance that were asked, for the first and only time, in 1911 and which reveal a strong pattern whereby French-Canadian parents in Quebec, including members of the working class, were much more likely than others to take out life insurance policies on their *children*. Whether this was simply a practical response to the high mortality risks associated with infancy and childhood in urban Quebec (a decent burial cost money, after all) or something more profoundly cultural, associated with changing attitudes toward the value of children's lives (as Viviana Zelizer has argued for the United States) is a fascinating question, and one that the author explores with his accustomed energy and rigour.

Globally, this is a useful and well-conceived collection that has been skillfully edited by Darroch and nicely packaged by McGill-Queen's University Press. There is a recurrent and necessary emphasis on the key dimensions of Canadian diversity in the 20th century as they were taking shape in its opening decades. The questions of "race," ethnicity, religion, and language, as well as the distinction between immigrants and those born on Canadian soil, are especially salient and powerful, and they are approached here from many different and generally complementary angles. Demographers, sociologists, geographers, and others steeped in social-science methods will certainly appreciate the strong emphasis on census microdata and the multivariate analyses they allow (ten of the sixteen chapters feature regression models of one kind or another). Some of my fellow historians and our students—who are, it would seem, increasingly allergic to numbers and statistics, since the spread of post-structuralism and related approaches in the 1990s—may find this somewhat daunting. They might therefore choose to overlook this detailed and sophisticated empirical study of Canadian society at the dawn of "our" century, as revealed primarily through the census-taking project of the federal state, and "translated" for research purposes into a coherent, usable, and publicly accessible sample by the CCRI team. But they will run a significant risk if they do: ignoring not just some of the "hidden histories" that underlie the ambitious nation-building project of the Laurier years, but also some valuable and unexpected insights into the very fabric of 20th-century society, with all its new layers and complexities, as it was emerging in this formative period of Canadian history.