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DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE HISTORY OF SCHOOLING

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In the late 1960's and early 1970's the educational history of Canada was substantially rewritten. Researchers presented two new arguments. First, the established historiography of school-building in the nineteenth century placed too great an emphasis on the progressive motivations of leaders who promoted construction of universal, tax-supported educational systems. A series of articles and theses suggested that nineteenth century educators were more concerned with order than education, more concerned with social control than social equality. The second new argument presented in these years focussed on the need to expand the traditional purview of educational historians. The real history of schooling was said to extend far beyond the opinions and claims of school promoters themselves. Researchers suggested that while it was important to identify the ambitions and perceptions of educators, it was equally important to examine the reaction of various social groups to these ambitions and to test the validity of educators' perceptions. In this way, the new educational historiography argued not only that it was necessary to re-interpret why large school systems were built in nineteenth century Canada but also that it was crucial to examine the larger implications of these systems.¹

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Thus, the agenda for educational historians came to include pursuit of the following types of questions: who went to school? what was the relationship of factors such as ethnicity and class to educational attitudes and behaviour? how was economic change related to the history of schooling? how was the development of school systems connected to other forms of institutional establishment? and what were the roles of demographic change and new concepts of the family in determining educational growth?

To a significant extent, historians in North America have addressed these questions by systematically examining the experience of specific local communities. Indeed, the rush of local histories which have emerged from theses, dissertations, and monographs in recent years is truly remarkable. Once thought to be the purview of antiquarians and non-academic local historical societies, community studies are now in the forefront of the historical profession's production in both Canada and the United States. At the outset, the community studies which attracted the most attention dealt with urban areas such as Hamilton or Boston. However, local studies of more diverse areas soon followed. Colonial New England came to be seen through the experiences of Andover and Plymouth while New France was probed through the development of Montreal.²

The justification for pursuing local history is based on two convictions. First, the past must be studied at the level of individual experience; we must get to the "nitty-gritty" of historical occurrence. Secondly, there are common denominators of individual experience and by studying one experience, we are, in fact, learning something about every experience; by studying one community, we are learning about all communities. The question, of course, is how do we know what is specific and what is general, what is unique and what is universal.³

In pursuing the question of generality, recent local studies concerned with educational history have made considerable conceptual headway. Preliminary responses to general questions involving the interrelationships of demography, social structure and the history of schooling are now available. Moreover, historians now extend educational concerns far beyond the importance of formal schooling. The study of literacy, for example, has become an important concern, and evidence from local studies has substantially changed the conventional analysis of this variable. Similarly, educational historians are now centrally concerned with the history of the family. Concepts of childhood, the nature of growing-up, and the origins of the "sentimental" family are only a few of the topics now in the mainstream of the historiography of education.

Systematic local histories initially focussed on examination of the manuscript census, but in recent years, this focus has enlarged dramatically. The kind of routinely-generated sources used by historians has broadened and the statistical level of analysis has grown increasingly sophisticated. At the same time, educational researchers have begun the reintegration of quantitative history into the traditional mainstream and the "new social history of education" is less and less identifiable as a complete hybrid. In addition researchers are now examining new kinds of evidence which heretofore have not been associated with conventional historical approaches. Alison Prentice, for example, has considered the role of architecture as an illustration of educational thoughts in nineteenth century Ontario.⁴ Haley Bamman has used maps to establish school-house location and thereby to examine the impact of residential setting on school attendance.⁵ These examples illustrate some of the ways in which historians have redefined the nature of educational research.

Researchers have found that local studies can contribute in a variety of ways to analyses of the history of schooling.

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Systematic local studies offer the opportunity to pursue more rigorously the connection between school building and other aspects of institutional development. Analysis of this connection is crucial to a full understanding of the motivations of school promoters whose efforts were extended by lunatic asylum builders, penitentiary enthusiasts, and reformatory developers. At the local level, the role and interrelationships of these various groups can be specified with precision, and the activity of school promoters can be analytically integrated into the larger phenomenon of institutionalization in the nineteenth century.

A more integrated view of institution builders can be complemented by analysis of school attenders as one component of the new institutional clientele. By examining the life course of specific individuals, at various points in time, educational historians can show the ways in which personal development became increasingly characterized by movement from the ambit of one institution to another. Within such an analysis, the relationship of social class to various institutions can be specified rigorously. The potential of this kind of analysis is suggested by the work of Susan Houston who has suggested that public schooling led to high school for some children while for others it led to the reformatory.⁶ In this context schooling represented a very differentiated experience for individual attenders. This evidence suggests that analysis of schooling should be integrated with an understanding of other institutions and that attendance should be seen as part of the larger phenomenon of institutional participation.

Initially, historians employed the concept of industrialization to explain educational development at the local level. Almost immediately, however, this concept was found to have serious limitations. The first problem was one of definition. What do we mean by industrialization? The problem here is not one of defining changes in technology and the means of

production but rather of specifying the social implications of these changes. How exactly did industrialization inspire school promotion and participation? A second problem concerned chronology. Most school systems in North America were established before any significant industrial development had occurred. Canadian cities in the 1840's were commercial not industrial centres, and a cause-effect relationship between industrialization and the history of schooling could not have been obtained.

As an alternative explanatory concept, Michael Katz has recently suggested that historians should focus on the emergence of capitalism, specifically wage-labour, as the historical development which led to the building of institutions such as schools.⁷ Katz suggests that the spread of wage-labour which preceded large scale industrialization engendered a new dependent population composed of both the traditionally dependent (those physically and mentally unable) and also an additional group, the economically unproductive. Included in this group were the unemployed, the underemployed, and others who, for whatever reason, could not earn a wage sufficient for their livelihood. At the same time the spread of wage-labour was engendering this new dependent population, it was also undermining the traditional role of the family as the haven for those in need of care. As capitalism separated the place of work from the home and divided family economies into individual wage-earners, the traditional ways of caring for those in need were no longer available. Thus, wage-labour not only increased the dependent population but also destroyed the customary refuge of this population. Families no longer functioned as all-purpose social institutions.

In terms of the history of schooling, Katz's argument suggests that wage-labour "created" the population of eligible school attenders by removing them from participation in family economies, thereby making them part of the dependent

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population by virtue of their age. In turn, these young dependents could not turn to their families for traditional care and custody since the family itself was rapidly changing; parents increasingly went away to work and therefore discontinued the full extent of their familial supervision. Many children and youths were thus economically and socially dislocated, and it was for them that schools were built and it was they who were eligible to attend.

The interconnections between capitalist development, the onset of wage-labour, and educational history have been pursued at the local level by Ian Davey who has not focussed on the changing relationship of parents to children but rather on the changing nature of childhood itself.⁸ Davey has systematically examined the interaction of employment and school attendance patterns, and his most striking findings concern the experience of thirteen to sixteen-year-olds in mid-nineteenth century Hamilton. The attendance pattern of this group between 1851 and 1871 has been described as a bell-shaped curve. In 1851, the proportion of children in the thirteen to sixteen age group who went to school was 27.9 percent; in 1861, this proportion increased to 51.7 percent; and in 1871, it fell to 45.8 percent. Rapid school-building in the 1850's readily explains the dramatic increase in school attendance by 1861 but the subsequent decline during the following decade suggests that other factors must also have been influential. In particular, Davey argues that the extent of employment opportunities for young teenagers determined, at least in part, who went to school. In the 1850's, the primarily commercial city of Hamilton did not need the unskilled labour of youth; by 1871, however, Hamilton had industrialized and young individuals could more easily gain employment. The job market had begun to compete with schools for participation of the young.

Davey further points out, though, that the competition between industry and schools for young teenagers was only a

temporary phenomenon. As industry became less labour-intensive and as labour organization became stronger, young teenagers faced fewer and fewer job opportunities. By the late nineteenth century more of them were going to school, as in the generation of the 1850's. In Davey's analysis, therefore, the nature of available wage-labour and the pace of educational participation were intimately related during the nineteenth century. His evidence suggests that many young teenagers and their parents preferred the classroom to the street but many also preferred employment to the classroom.

The conceptual value of capitalism and specifically wage-labour to analysis of the history of schooling in Canada has not yet been explored in great detail, but even at this stage certain evidence suggests that this explanation will have to be more fully developed to be satisfactory. In particular, some of the patterns of growing-up and of school development discovered in urban centres can similarly be found in more rural areas where wage-labour was not a significant feature of the economy. Two examples concerning the experience of females illustrate these parallel trends: the decline in the population of servants and the increase in the number of female teachers. Historians usually relate experience as a servant to pre-industrial patterns of spending time outside one's own household before marriage.⁹ The breakdown of this pattern is said to have been engendered by changes in the definition of the family, from being an economic unit to becoming a sentimental association. These changes occurred under the impact of capitalism.

In non-urban regions of Ontario, however, the number of servants declined at precisely the same time as in Toronto or Hamilton. In Orillia, for example, a service centre of 1,322 residents in 1871, servants all but disappeared after mid-century. In 1861 there were twenty-five servants and in 1871 there were nine, despite the fact that Orillia's female popula-

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tion (age fourteen to twenty-three) had increased by seventy-eight individuals during the decade.¹⁰ Of course, the Orillia example does not directly show that capitalism was not responsible for the decline in the experience of employment as a servant. The impact of capitalism might be said to have engendered a ripple effect thereby extending its impact far beyond the borders of clearly capitalist centres. Social changes resulting from wage-labour may have permeated even smaller communities where the separation of work from the household was not yet very apparent.

This possibility is pushed to the extreme by the example of two agricultural townships which the writer has been studying. These townships, Alfred and Caledonia, are located in Prescott County, the easternmost county of Ontario. During the mid-nineteenth century, this area was far removed from the social and economic forces of capitalist strongholds such as Toronto, Hamilton, or Montreal. No town of any size developed in Alfred or Caledonia before the end of the century. During the 1850's and 1860's, a few crossroad villages were all that disturbed the isolated log cabins and fields of hay and wheat. The lumber industry attracted sons of Alfred and Caledonia families to work in the shanties during the winter months and sometimes in the sawmills during summer but no outside activity appears to have affected the experience of women. Nonetheless, the number of servants in these townships declined rapidly after mid-century despite rapid population growth. In 1851, there were 18 servants in Alfred and Caledonia and in 1871 there were four.¹¹

Even after thorough examination of these townships, the writer still has no idea why the decline in servants found in urban centres can also be found in such rural areas. Initially, the writer had thought that the decline in servants was related to the feminization of the teaching force. During the course of the mid-nineteenth century, the opportunity to be a servant

appears to have been replaced by the opportunity to teach school.¹² In Alfred and Caledonia, however, the decline in the number of servants was not paralleled by such increased feminization. In fact, the teachers in these townships were young single women from the start. Schooling in Alfred and Caledonia was characteristically conducted by five or six young women throughout the 1850-1870 period and inspectors' reports indicate that the individual teachers changed every two to three years, as has been suggested for other parts of Ontario. The important point is that teachers in these townships were young women when there was a significant number of servants and also when the servant experience had all but disappeared. Moreover, the trends in the servant group and in feminization in rural Alfred and Caledonia are precisely those discovered in urban areas where wage-labour had become characteristic.¹³

The study of school attendance is another area which still poses fundamental questions. While research such as Ian Davey's has suggested that wage-labour was an important determinant of schooling in the nineteenth century, other studies have not been as conclusive. In particular, studies which have used multivariate analysis of systematic data have not been able to substantiate a significant causal relationship between industrialization and school attendance. In one of the most statistically sophisticated studies to date, Carl F. Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis conclude that in mid-century New York State, the degree of urbanization or industrialization was not very important in determining levels of school attendance in various areas. Kaestle and Vinovskis reach this conclusion after examining the relationship between patterns of school attendance and variables which estimated cultural composition, degree of urbanization, socio-economic level, and age of the children. The relationships of these variables are examined through regression analysis; surprisingly, no substantial explanation emerges. Kaestle and Vinovskis admit that their analysis

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only "reinforces the historian's humility about how much he can actually explain."¹⁴

Similarly, although Davey's argument is indeed persuasive in the context of Hamilton, his emphasis on the role of employment opportunities in determining teenage school attendance patterns is not readily applicable to evidence from other areas in Ontario. The experience of at least one fully agricultural township in Peel County, for example, suggests that the decline in educational participation of older children by 1871 was not simply urban-based. In Chinquacousy Township, the proportion of children under sixteen who were enrolled in school increased significantly from 1861 to 1871 while the proportion of seventeen to twenty year olds decreased at an equal rate. The increase in attendance for thirteen to sixteen year olds is distinct from the Hamilton evidence but the decline among older children is precisely the same. This pattern can be related to changes in employment opportunities only in the case of males. A significantly greater proportion of seventeen to twenty year old males was employed in 1871 (85.4 percent) than in 1861 (47.2 percent). The labour market can be said to have enticed these youngsters away from the classroom.¹⁵

In contrast, however, fewer female teenagers between seventeen and twenty identified themselves as having occupations in 1871 (4.4 percent) than in 1861 (15.7 percent). This decline paralleled the decline in female school attendance for the same age group. The two trends were not interrelated. Marilyn McIvor explains this evidence without reference to economic change. Rather, she suggests that the trends were the result of a "change in social attitudes" specifically pertaining to a new definition of "school age." This new definition was the result of increased organization of classrooms by grades and a new emphasis on separating young students from the more mature. In this argument, older teenagers stayed away

from public education as the concept of school age children became more "strictly defined."¹⁶ This is a possibility which Davey's analysis did not consider. The implied suggestion is that, in certain situations, promotion of sophisticated educational systems had negative implications for school participation. Attenders became non-attenders under the impact of new classroom organization. Thus, inspectors who lamented low attendance rates were, at least for older teenagers, reaping the fruit of their own educational cultivation. If this fruit were distasteful, they may have had themselves to blame.

At the same time, however, the emergence of a concept of "school-age children" may also relate to the rapid rise of classroom attendance among younger children after the mid-nineteenth century. While discouraging attendance among teenagers, this new concept may have greatly strengthened the association of childhood with formal education. After mid-century, school attendance may have gained a momentum of its own thereby partly explaining the high rates of participation for the seven to twelve year old age group. The identification of these children as being of school-age undoubtedly led to some peer-pressure among parents to send their children to school and among children to join their friends and neighbours in the classroom. This perspective emphasizes that the issue of school attendance includes two distinct questions: who was available to participate? and, once available, why did certain children and not others enroll in school?

The questions of availability and motivation within the school attendance issue suggest that the link between capitalism and educational development must be far more complex than heretofore indicated. One example may be the role of new concepts such as that of school-age children but a more profound factor may be the importance of geographic mobility. In particular, it would seem that geographic mobility was a key intervening variable between wage-labour and the history

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of schooling; and in fact, that migration patterns explain in an important way the educational history of both rural and urban areas, of Hamilton, Toronto, Chinguacousy Township, and Alfred and Caledonia. This analysis is suggested by local studies which have shown that one of the substantial by-products of the spread of wage-labour was a dramatic increase and extension of population movement.¹⁷ Geographic mobility was a dominant characteristic of both farm and factory communities in the nineteenth century. Studies indicate that in most cases only about thirty percent of the population present at one time were still residents as little as ten years later. In recent literature, this transiency is said to have undermined the efforts of school promoters by making regular attendance more difficult and by requiring additional efforts on the part of parents to keep their children enrolled in school. In this analysis, "many young people simply lived too short a time in any one place to attend school very often or very long."¹⁸

However, the negative impact of migration on educational development may have been balanced by the positive impact of schooling on children involved in the migration process. Schools may have provided significant continuity for children whose lives were traumatized by environmental change and whose parents were preoccupied with the search for land or employment and their own adjustment to new circumstances. Classrooms in familiar formats, uniform books and consistent teaching approaches offered important sources of continuity for children whose parents were on the move in response to the vicissitudes of seasonal work and economic depression. Perhaps more importantly, children also had the opportunity by attending school to meet their peers, make friends, and became integrated into new communities. In this way, the common school system helped offset the negative psychological implications of migration.

The suggestion that schools helped children integrate themselves into new communities does not imply that the process

of migration disrupted or weakened family ties. Rather, available evidence indicates that families maintained significant cohesion despite mobility. One example of this stability is the experience of French Canadians who migrated to Manchester, New Hampshire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This migration has been studied in detail by Tamara Hareven who has found that family and kinship networks facilitated the migration process and helped maintain continuity and stability in the lives of the individuals involved.¹⁹ Hareven suggests that French Canadians relied on kinship contacts for employment opportunities, for housing in Manchester, and for social interaction. This evidence suggests that the migration process may have even strengthened family ties and increased interdependency among siblings and between parents and children.

In this sense, parents may have sent children to school not because they were anxious to shirk their traditional responsibility but rather because they cared about their young more than parents traditionally had, and they were concerned about the negative implications of geographic mobility and the spread of wage-labour. In the minds of parents, these two features of capitalist society may have represented a double-edged sword. The experience of migration left children in need of extra support from parents, while the separation of the workplace from the home meant that parents, especially fathers, were away from their children for most of at least six days each week and thus less able to provide this extra support. In this context, schools were welcomed for both their custodial function and the continuity which they provided in the lives of children.

In many cases, it should be remembered, parents who wanted to send their children to school were unable to do so. Environmental factors worked against school attendance. Climatic conditions, inadequate roads, and the frequency of

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illness undermined educational participation. Even more influentially, the reality of poverty and material uncertainty meant that many parents could not send their children to school on a regular basis, or, frequently, to enroll them at all.²⁰ The importance of these factors in limiting school attendance is emphasized by the general conclusion that most parents including those within the working-class, wanted their children to go to school.²¹ Local studies indicate that the majority of children had at least some schooling before any compulsory laws were introduced, and certainly before enforcement of these laws was pursued.²² Failure to attend was thus not evidence of resistance to schooling but rather of environmental factors and the material reality of many families in the nineteenth century.

It should be admitted, however, that Leo A. Johnson does not take this position in his study of the County of Ontario. Rather, Johnson argues that many parents did not wish to send their children to school in the mid-nineteenth century not only for economic reasons but also for ideological positions; he concludes that "parents placed a low value on formal education for their children." Johnson supports his conclusion by reference to daily attendance figures which show that only one-third of children five-to-sixteen years old attended school on an average day in 1861 to 1870. However, if many parents were not really interested in schooling for their children, the actual enrollment figures for these years are difficult to explain. In 1861, 85.5 percent of eligible children were enrolled in school; this proportion increased to 89.2 percent in 1870. These figures suggest substantial interest in schooling. Taken together, the proportions enrolled and the rates of daily attendance indicate that, on the one hand, the vast majority of parents desired schooling for their children, but that, on the other, the exigencies of everyday life meant that many children could only attend on an irregular basis.

Accordingly, one of the major questions which remains is why school promotion was paralleled by fairly widespread popular support. Part of the answer to this question is certainly related to the changing ways in which parents viewed their children during the course of the nineteenth century; specifically, to the emergence of an emotionally strong, "sentimental" family. This development was first illustrated by data concerning the residence pattern of teenagers. These data indicate that young people spent more and more of their lives before marriage in the household of their parents. This trend ended what had been for centuries a common phase of growing-up, that is the passage of several years as a boarder in another household. Traditionally, parents had sent their children to live with other families during their teenage years. The complete rationale for this arrangement will probably never be known with certainty but most historians suggest that boarding was related not only to economic considerations but also to a paternalistic impulse among well-established families; to an informal social process designed to equalize family size; and to an inherent desire among teenagers for independence from family attachment.²² During the course of the nineteenth century, these factors gave way to an ideal of close family ties including emotional bonds between parents and children. In this new context many parents, especially from the middle class, discouraged boarding as a life course phase. Local studies agree that, by the 1870's, an increasingly large proportion of individuals spent all their years before marriage with their own families.²³

The systematic evidence from local studies that supports the argument that parents came to view their children differently during the nineteenth century now also includes trends in fertility. Current research suggests that as early as the mid-nineteenth century in Canada and the United States, certain parents began to control their fertility. Initially, this control did not simply take the form of limitation. Mark Stern has

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found, for example, that in Erie County, New York, couples who married later than the average attempted to "catch-up" in terms of child-bearing. These couples, when considered as a group, increased their fertility rate in the early years of marriage so that their ultimate completed average family size was equal to that of earlier-marrying parents. In later decades, however, most parents began to limit the size of their families, and the dominant fertility trend of the nineteenth century increasingly became one of decline.²⁴ In Canada, as elsewhere, this decline was the result of a significant drop in fertility among older women: parents began consciously to limit the size of their families once the desired number of children had been born.²⁵

Exactly how birth control was practised in Canada will probably never be known although Angus McLaren has shown that some information was indeed available at least to certain social and cultural groups.²⁶ The question of why parents decided to limit their families may be easier to answer. The available evidence agrees that Canada increasingly became a child-centered society in the nineteenth century. Parents began limiting the size of their families in order to be able to focus their time and resources more effectively and thereby ensure a better quality of life for their children. Parents felt they could better provide for a smaller number of children than they could for the traditionally larger families. Neil Sutherland's research on English Canada demonstrates that this new perspective on children engendered new political and social policies and led to new institutional arrangements concerning child-rearing and health care as well as education.²⁷

At the level of the family, the implications of the fertility decline are less clear but a reasonable hypothesis might be one which systematically links family size to school participation. The specific argument would be that increased participation and the fertility decline were both products of the redefinition

of the family as a sentimental association. Under the impact of wage-labour, therefore, parents had fewer children; became more attached to them, and sent them to school more regularly and for longer periods. The new bond between generations led to greater school attendance as parents strove to ensure an improvement in the life-chances of their young. Educational expansion was the result of new parental attitudes toward children and was thus directly related to the origins of the "consensus" on the nature of childhood.

The relationship between fertility and education could be best tested in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century. Evidence from the beginning of this period suggests that initially family size was positively related to school attendance. A greater number of children within a particular family provided a better chance that some of them would go to school. This evidence is explained by the mid-century identification of school attenders as "surplus" children whose labour was not necessary to the family economy.²⁸ In later decades, however, we would not expect to find the same positive correlation between family size and school attendance. Rather, we would expect an inverse relationship. Parents who desired to send their children to school would, at this time, also have been limiting their family size. Thus, birth control and educational interest would be analysed as parallel phenomena. Here, schooling must be defined not only as elementary education but also as high school and ultimately university education. Through this kind of comparison, historians could establish whether or not there were significant interrelationships among the new emotional attachment of parents to children, the fertility decline, and educational expansion.²⁹

An additional way in which fertility has been related to the history of schooling is through consideration of the educational level of parents within various childbearing patterns. Most recent research suggests that educational level and fertil-

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ity rates are inversely related. Illiteracy, for example, is frequently said to explain high fertility rates within certain sectors of "modern" societies such as late nineteenth century Canada and the United States. Low educational levels are considered evidence of a more traditional consciousness which continued to see larger families as the norm. In contrast, educational experience is said to engender a more modern mentality, one which is associated with smaller families pursuing a better quality of life.³⁰ Significantly, however, some historians offer the opposite argument. They suggest that, at least in certain circumstances, fertility rates and educational level are positively correlated. Edward Shorter relates educational experience to the acquisition of a new "sense of self" and therefore to the modern ambition of self-gratification, including sexual fulfillment. Historically, this modern ambition first led to increased illegitimacy as well as larger families. As educated men and women acquired their new "sense of self," they came to see sexual activity in a new light, thereby engendering, as a by-product, increased fertility rates.³¹

The conflicting interpretations of the interrelationship of fertility and parental education are not likely to be reconciled in the near future. Each new local study seems to complicate the debate, and greater clarity has not been produced by the increased number of analyses now available.³² It is significant, however, that among the studies devoted to explaining fertility patterns, the work of educational historians is scarcely present. Demographers, economists, and historians of the family dominate the researchers considering this problem, and it is they who have defined and conceptualized the role of education as an independent variable. Perhaps as a consequence, the rigour with which the influence of education is assessed never matches the care with which these researchers analyse the fertility variable. The nature of educational experience, the length of exposure, the quality of achievement, and the

characteristics of the content are all factors which have not been systematically examined. Similarly, the fertility debate does not reflect recent historiography which suggests that education can be either a progressive or conservative force and perhaps both at different levels. The specific changes in social psychology engendered by educational participation are not at all clear. The historical record suggests that consideration of schooling as an independent variable is indeed a complex matter and one that deserves detailed attention. In this regard, educational historians have not yet fully contributed to analysis of fertility patterns.

Beyond consideration of the implications of exposure to schooling, the question of motivation remains. Why did children go to school? This question brings us back to the need to examine more fully the importance of geographic mobility, particularly in the context of changing attitudes towards children. Analysis of this mobility ties together the phenomena of fertility decline, the new sentimental family, and educational expansion. Specifically, parental concern about the impact of migration makes understandable popular support for public schooling, especially among the groups aimed at by school promoters and among children under the age of thirteen. The poor, the culturally diverse, and the illiterate did not send their children to school to learn habits of regularity and passivity, and eventually to become assimilated; rather, they hoped that schools would aid youth to withstand the psychological upset of migration, to integrate into new neighbourhoods, and to maintain themselves in the absence of the constant supervision which young children had traditionally known.

These motivations explain the age structure of school attendance patterns during the mid-nineteenth century. Canadian evidence shows that by 1871 the seven to twelve year old age group characteristically enrolled in school in both cities and

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rural areas.³³ This group enrolled because it was the young who most needed elements of stability and continuity in their lives. Older children were less affected by the reality of geographic mobility. They were better able to withstand the impact of environmental change and social discontinuity; they were better able to fend for themselves in new settings and to adjust to new circumstances. This argument suggests that while schools were in fact primarily constructed as engines of assimilation, the nature of their actual development was related to popular desires for pluralism. In this sense, educational systems were successfully established despite, rather than because of, the school promoters' pursuit of cultural homogeneity. Parents stood this pursuit on its head and used the new school system for their own reasons and to their own advantage.

The preceding explanation of school support, it should be noted, is directly inconsistent with the argument that many parents within disparate cultural groups have historically desired assimilation for their children. In its most recent form, this argument suggests that revisionist historiography has dramatically overstated the elite ambition of cultural homogeneity and has greatly exaggerated the extent to which this ambition was imposed on popular will. In her book *The Revisionists Revisited: A Critique of The Radical Attack on The Schools*, Diane Ravitch criticizes certain historians for not admitting that parents sent their children to school in order to integrate them into the ideal of North American life.³⁴ While Ravitch does not adequately support this criticism, and, on the basis of other historical findings, her emphasis on a popular desire for assimilation can be substantially dismissed, the book exposes the fact that educational historians have not done a good job of addressing the question of educational motivation. Recent research has placed much more emphasis on explaining why children did not go to school than analyzing why substan-

tial numbers often did attend. It is important to recognize that these two questions are quite distinct; they are not two forms of the same consideration. Not all children who were in an economic, social, and residential position to go to school did attend. And some children who were severely disadvantaged did, in fact, participate. Thus, motivational factors must be considered on their own terms, and in this regard the current literature is not well-developed.

The argument that educational expansion was not only directly related to the spread of wage-labour but also indirectly related through the implications of geographic mobility responds significantly to the question of motivation and is consistent with recent demographic and social structural analyses. Two assumptions are particularly relevant: that most individuals and families actively respond to economic opportunity; and that social order is generally preferred to social chaos. In the first instance, local studies of migration patterns, fertility trends, and marriage rates characteristically indicate that individuals positively adjust their behaviour patterns in response to the perception of economic opportunity. The great population turnover of the nineteenth century has been closely related to the search for employment;³⁵ the fertility decline of the same period has been related to recognition of the increasingly delayed transition of children from consumers to producers within the new wage-labour economy;³⁶ and patterns in age-at-marriage have been directly associated with the perception of income possibilities.³⁷ Thus, in terms of the history of schooling, emphasis is well placed on the interrelationships of wage-labour, migration and educational expansion.

Local studies also support the second assumption concerning popular preference for social order. Historians have found that throughout the social structure, people attempt to maintain continuity in their lives and to regulate and enforce norms

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of behaviour. The social phenomena of the charivaris and whitecapping well illustrate this point. In a recent article, Bryan Palmer suggests that these two activities were ritualistic forms of social control used by working class communities to protect their own traditional standards of behaviour.³⁸ Palmer argues that these communities actively sought to preserve their own sense of social order in ways distinct from official direction and, in some cases, antithetical to "bourgeois hegemony." In this analysis, individual communities are attributed with active roles in determining the nature of nineteenth century society, and are shown to have actively contributed to their own sense of social stability and cultural attachment.

Viewed in the context of the ideas which this recent historiography represents, popular support for schooling is increasingly understandable. During the nineteenth century, most parents pursued economic opportunity in an exceedingly mobile and transient society. In this atmosphere of rapid social change, they welcomed the element of stability and continuity which schools offered and which was less and less part of their own lives. As the place of work became distinct from the household in manufacturing and industrial areas, and as farmers bought and sold rural homesteads in hope of economic improvement, families accepted classrooms as partial substitutes for traditional parental supervision and the customary community integration that youngsters had earlier known.

Similarly, it might be suggested that schools which were intended, at least in part, to weaken the connection between children and parents (especially immigrant, poor, and "ignorant" parents) may have inadvertently helped mobile families achieve association with neighbours, and thereby helped them maintain attachment with peers at the community level. Schools were not, in practice, simply agents of assimilation or of "cultural standardization."³⁹ Schools offered, as an unintended consequence, the immediate opportunity for children

of transient families to meet and associate with other children like themselves. This experience reinforced existing values and customs and helped maintain continuity rather than engender assimilation.

The suggestion that common schooling must not be seen only as an assimilative influence is particularly consistent with research undertaken on the Ryerson years in Canada West. In addition to the active role of local community leaders during these years, schools continued to reflect local circumstances as much as they represented the emerging general ideal. This fact is well-illustrated by the variety of languages of instruction used in the new common schools. In various parts of Canada West, schools were legitimately taught in German, Gaelic, and French.⁴⁰ Acceptance of these non-English language schools was the result of what the author has elsewhere suggested was Egerton Ryerson's concept of voluntary assimilation.⁴¹ Ryerson, like many other school promoters of the time, believed that diverse cultural groups would naturally and voluntarily assimilate into British-Canadian society and he did not think that any artificial incentive was necessary to facilitate this assimilation. Ryerson felt that the character and superior nature of British influence was so powerful that disparate cultural groups would freely shed their own cultural heritage when exposed to this influence. Ryerson anticipated that immigrants to Canada West would integrate themselves voluntarily into the predominantly English-speaking society after a certain period of residence. Thus, he consistently followed a sincere policy of toleration which allowed local communities to establish schools in the language of their choice. Ryerson was convinced that the desire for schooling in languages other than English was ephemeral in nature and would not continue once the natural process of assimilation was underway. This attitude meant that when local settlements asked for schools instructed in other languages, the Council of Public Instruction responded with full tolerance.

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As anticipated, most of the local variations of the common school ideal did, in fact, increasingly disappear during the course of the nineteenth century. The number of German language and Gaelic schools was not significant by the end of the century, and they were no longer the concern of educational policy-makers. What is significant, however, is that common schooling cannot be held responsible for the integration into Ontario society of the groups which initially supported these variations. Obviously, schooling in a foreign language cannot be seen as a direct force of assimilation. Of course, it might be argued that habits of punctuality and passiveness which school promoters like Ryerson held so dear could be taught in any language and in a variety of formats. In this sense, even local variations of the common school ideal could be powerful agents of homogeneity. This possibility cannot yet be discounted but until we can show that the substance of schooling was similar to the norm for those cultural groups which initially maintained their own schools and then abandoned them, we should not necessarily portray schooling as only an assimilating force. Local circumstances must always be taken into account.

The importance of local circumstances and the active role of individuals in adapting educational imperatives to meet their own needs is further suggested by research the writer has undertaken on the origins of the French language controversy in Ontario. The goal of this research has been to relate the social evolution of French Canadian communities to the late nineteenth century controversy surrounding the language of instruction in local schools. Unlike the experience of German language and Gaelic schools, French language schools continued to flourish in eastern Ontario. The writer's findings indicate that throughout the nineteenth century, many of these local schools contributed to French Canadian cultural stability rather than to assimilation. For the most part, classrooms were

instructed in French by French Canadian teachers; textbooks were those used in Quebec; and children went to school only when attendance was in harmony with family responsibilities. These patterns continued even after 1885 when the policy of voluntary assimilation was partly abandoned in favour of new regulations requiring closer conformity to the Ontario ideal. More significantly still, the patterns of local intervention and control continued when outright imposition of the ideal became official policy in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴²

Evidence of continued local input to the process of school-building also suggests that further research is needed concerning the shift from voluntarism to state sponsorship. Often a solid conceptual boundary is drawn between the nature of schooling before educational systems were established and the character of classrooms that were part of a larger institutional structure. Does this boundary actually exist in the chronological development of local areas? Was there an immediate and substantial difference as a result of the new school promotion? The answer to these questions is probably quite complex. The connection, however, between early sporadic and haphazard educational development and the spread of publicly organized school systems may not be as fragile as currently thought. While the emergence of systems of public education represented the creation of a new social institution, the contemporary implications of this development may have been less resounding than the long range results. The establishment of educational systems may not have immediately overwhelmed the ways in which formal education was viewed at the local level. Schooling may have continued to be considered as relevant or irrelevant, on the basis of personal imperatives and individual circumstances. This possibility is certainly consistent with experience of rural schools in Ontario during the nineteenth century. In the early decades, local groups spontaneously organized classrooms in many rural areas; on the eve of

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system-building, each community of the hinterland characteristically supported at least one school. Of course, most rural children did not attend school and only a few received any significant amount of formal education. The establishment of public education as an institution added important changes to this pattern, and many more youths went to class. The children of farmers and rural operatives, however, continued to function primarily within families and regular school attendance in rural areas continued to be of secondary importance. In this sense, the emergence of a system of public education did not have all-encompassing implications for the lives of these children; there was not total discontinuity between the period before the 1840's and the decades thereafter.⁴³

Thus, evidence from local studies suggests that educational historians must guard against overemphasis on the influence and control of school promoters. The population at whom schools were directed should not be seen as passive or acquiescent. The question of who welcomed schools and why they did so has not yet been fully answered but the findings now available demonstrate that educational development was characterized by significant local input and flavoured by local circumstances. Parents encouraged or discouraged school promotion according to their own circumstances and apparently without first regard for the exhortation of public leaders. Parents sent their children to school and kept them within the family unit partly in response to their own situations and not simply in reaction to the dictates of those like Egerton Ryerson.

While substantial progress has been made in the past fifteen years, the research basis of Canadian educational history remains incomplete. Refinement and perhaps refutation of the preceding discussion awaits evidence from local studies of more geographically diversified areas and more chronologically distinct periods.⁴⁴ Educational historians must indeed be

tired of learning about south central Ontario in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, one general conclusion should stand the test of further research: specifically, that the history of education cannot simply be viewed as the imposition of schools on powerless and passive populations, no more than it should ever have been presented as evidence of liberal and democratic progress. The complete history of public schooling is not only the history of subordination and victimization. Rather, local studies suggest that the educational history of Canada is the history of local adaptation and intervention, and of social interaction as much as it is of social control and assimilation. It is the history of unintended consequences as much as it is the history of fulfilled ambitions. Viewed in this way, educational history will continue to inspire what is among the most exciting of current historical writing.

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¹ John Shiry, "Mass Values and System Outputs: A Critique of an Assumption of Socialization Theory," in Jon H. Pammett and Michael S. Whittington, *Foundations of Political Culture*, p. 51.

Demography, Social Structure and the History of Schooling.

The writer thanks David Levine, Susan Houston and Peter Baskerville for their helpful comments and Robert Stamp for his encouragement.

¹ Two collaborative efforts significantly reflected and contributed to the revision of Canadian educational history: J. D. Wilson, R. M. Stamp and L.-P. Audet, *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1970); and the special issue of the *History of Education Quarterly* (Fall, 1972) entitled "Education and Social Change in English-speaking Canada," edited by Michael B. Katz. For a survey of historiography up to the early 1970's, see Alan Child, "The History of Canadian Education: A Bibliography," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* (November, 1971). The new intellectual rigour sought by some Canadian educational historians was voiced by J. Donald Wilson in "Canadian Historiography," *History of Education Quarterly* (Spring, 1969). Studies completed in the 1970's are critically assessed and placed in context by J. Donald Wilson, "Historiographical Perspectives on Canadian Educational History: A Review Essay," *The Journal of Educational Thought*, XI (1977).

² Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Philip J. Greven Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Louise Dechêne, *Habitants et Marchands de Montréal au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris and Montréal: Plon, 1974). Two local studies employ aggregate level data in the context of traditional sources: Leo A. Johnson's *History of the County of Ontario 1615-1875* (Whitby, Ontario: County of Ontario, 1973) and his *History of Guelph 1827-1927* (Guelph, Ontario: Guelph Historical Society, 1977). Major projects based on routinely-generated sources include the Peel County History Project under David Gagan, the Groupe de recherche sur la société Montréalaise au XIXe siècle under P.-A. Linteau and J.-C. Robert, and the Saguenay regional study under Gérard Bouchard.

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³Stephen Leacock was perhaps one of the most enthusiastic early promoters of local history and his justification remains persuasive. In addressing the Canadian Historical Association, he remarked that "I value none the less the great historical epics of a Macaulay or a Gibbon. But I find myself drawn more and more to the charm and meaning of the history of little places. Who lived here first? Who first set the stones that lay beneath the simple frame of that loghouse? How did life feel for these first-comers? . . . For after all, the life of the individual has in its silent passage to the end the same infinite mystery and the same unfathomed meaning as the life of a nation." Quoted in Edgar A. Collard, *Montreal* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1976).

⁴Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

⁵Haley P. Bamman, "Patterns of School Attendance in Toronto, 1844-1878: Some Spatial Considerations," *History of Education Quarterly* (Fall, 1972). An example of the rural experience is included in Chad M. Gaffield, "Cultural Identity: The Franco-Ontarians and Schooling in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," paper presented to the annual meeting of The History of Education Society, 1977.

⁶Susan Houston, "The Victorian Origins of Juvenile Delinquency," *History of Education Quarterly* (Fall, 1972). J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones correctly note that the relationship between reformatories and the lower classes has not yet been systematically demonstrated; see "The 'New' History of Canadian Education," *History of Education Quarterly* (Fall, 1976). For a comparative essay review of the relationships of institutional development to the process of growing-up, see Patricia T. Rooke, "The 'Child-Institutionalized' in Canada, Britain and the United States: A Trans-Atlantic Perspective," *The Journal of Educational Thought* (Aug., 1977). The nature of institutionalization in Canada remains largely unexplored especially outside the educational realm; one exception is D. Francis, "The Development of the Lunatic Asylum in the Maritime Provinces," *Acadiensis* (Spring, 1977). A good bibliography of basic references to the history of social welfare institutions in the United States is included in the footnotes of Namil S. Zainaldin, "Asylum and Society: An Approach to Industrial Change," *Journal of Social History* (Fall, 1979).

⁷Michael B. Katz, "Origins of the Institutional State," *Marxist Perspectives* (Winter, 1978). For a critical discussion of social control theory, see David C. Jones, "The Maleficent Obsession: Social Control and the

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Schools," *The Journal of Educational Thought* (April, 1978). For an exceedingly ambitious comparative approach, see Alan Pomfret, "Comparative Historical School Change Newfoundland, southern Ontario, and New England," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, IV (3), 1979.

⁸Ian Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891," University of Toronto, Ph.D. thesis, 1975. Also, see Frank Denton and Peter George, "Socio-Economic Influences on School Attendance: A Study of a Canadian County in 1871," *History of Education Quarterly* (Fall, 1974). For a specific look at rural society, see Chad Gaffield, "Schooling, The Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth Century Ontario," in Joy Parr, ed., *Essays in the History of Canadian Childhood*, forthcoming.

⁹Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1965); Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernization of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976); Leonore Davidoff, "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England," *Journal of Social History* (Summer, 1974); Patricia Branca, "A New Perspective on Women's Work: A Comparative Typology," *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 1975). Marilyn Barber is currently researching certain aspects of the servant experience in early twentieth century Canada.

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¹¹Chad Gaffield, "Cultural Challenge in Eastern Ontario: Land, Family, and Education in The Nineteenth Century," University of Toronto, Ph.D. thesis, 1978.

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¹⁴Carl Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis, "Quantification, Urbanization, and The History of Education: An Analysis of the Determinants of School-

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⁴¹ Gaffield, "Cultural Challenge," chapter one.

⁴² Gaffield, "Cultural Challenge," chapter two. This evidence is consistent with recent work which agrees that individual community figures played an important role in interpreting, applying and instigating educational policy in Canada West/Ontario. Trustees, for example, helped engender the feminization of the teaching force by following their own priorities rather than the initial guidelines for the hiring of instructors; see Alison Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching in British North America and Canada, 1850-1875," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* (May, 1975). For related evidence of local input, see R. D. Gidney and D. A. Lawr's three articles: "Egerton Ryerson and The Origins of the Ontario Secondary School," *Canadian Historical Review* (December,

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