

THE CONCEPT OF TOTAL HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM

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1. Introduction

The teaching of history in Canadian schools has become in recent years an increasingly complicated and, in principle at least, a much more interesting matter than it had been for the last century. This development has come about largely because policies of required textbooks have been officially abandoned in favour of the more flexible concept of general guidelines of instruction. The new guidelines make it clear that history should be more than the textbook study of great men and events. This policy change is illustrated by the *Intermediate History Guidelines* published by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. According to these guidelines, history students in the seventh and eight grades examine "The Story of Canada and Canadians" by focussing on the following topics: Canada's original peoples; life in New France; life in Upper Canada; the opening of the west; the United Empire Loyalists and the American Revolution; the Rebellions: 1837, 1870, 1885; Confederation; and Social Reform: trade unionism and women's suffrage. Students in grades nine and ten learn about "Contemporary Canadian and World

Concerns" and "Canada's Multicultural Heritage" by discussing government and law, English-French relations, Canadian-American relations, and other issues of concern to the world.

The Intermediate Guidelines encourage the study of these topics through investigation rather than memorization, thereby implying that genuine historical research is possible in the classroom. The historical learning is designed to be accomplished through a series of stages. Students begin at the definition stage in which they raise questions and select ideas of greater or lesser significance and identify their own objectives. Students then proceed to the investigation stage in which research is planned and carried out either on a group basis or individually. The last stage entails both the communication of findings and an attempt at synthesis in which the student arrives at reasonable but tentative conclusions and perceives an overall view of the questions posed in the definition stage.

In response to these guidelines concerning genuine historical research, the Canadian Social History Project has put effort into promoting the use of quantitative methods in the classroom. The central technique we have recommended is the reproduction of some sort of potentially countable or quantifiable file of information covering a large (or better still, a complete) portion of the population of a nineteenth century town or village —

zniak, "Nineteenth Century Household
n Southern Michigan and Minnesota",
ewsletter of the Minnesota Social History
ecember, 1979), 1-24.

on guide has been designed for all the
rds. The guide answers routine questions
have about the census data or the IBC.
are a guide for the students during the
process. Due to space limitations
are used on the IBC's, the guide
ne abbreviation and gives further
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r IBC II also designates spaces on the
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transcribing the data will use the spaces
ond to the guide. Copies of the
guides are available from the authors.

room uses of counting card sets may be
following: Ian Winchester and Penelope
ords of the Past: A Way to Study
tory", *Orbit 31*, 7 (February, 1976), 3-7;
nd Ian Winchester, "Local Studies in the
New Method for Historical Analysis,"
ial History Project, Ontario Institute for
ducation, (September, 1975); Mai-Liis
ichael, "A Guide to the Study of
lass in Ontario's Past", Canadian Social
ect, Ontario Institute for Studies in
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preferably one's own. Usually, the most readily available sources of this kind are street directories, assessment rolls, and census enumerations. The method of encoding and reproducing the information should be such that a class of 20 or 30 could divide up the questions and counting tasks and combine the results.¹

Heretofore, this technique has not been widely used. We have found that the quantitative strategy — which is exceedingly simple in theory — presupposes a considerable historical sophistication on the part of the class as well as the teacher. Since our object was to provide insight into genuine historical research and to make history meaningful in the classroom, we found ourselves perpetrating a kind of fraud because we assumed too much in the way of historical sophistication from an ordinary intermediate or even senior class. Some teachers found they had to give a very comprehensive preparation by way of outlining in an ordinary way the history of their town or community and the forces which had impinged on it throughout its history. They found that the better prepared the students were in history on the grand scale, the better able they were to appreciate the methods and results of the quantitative approach for studying their local community. Our root conclusion is that the kinds of questions and answers potentially available using quantifiable sources is very limited if these are the only source of the questions and the only source of the answers.

So our problem became again: How can we promote genuine historical research? Our ambition was still to find a way to teach history in the classroom which would be investigative and would employ quantitative methods as a natural part of the research. Toward this end, the work of the Project pursued what historians have named the concept of "total history." The following discussion attempts to convey by way of introduction, what we intend by "total history" and why we think it is important for history instruction in the classroom.² Our example concerns the study of Orillia, Ontario in the nineteenth century and is intended to illustrate how an intermediate history class

might engage in genuine historical research using quantitative methods.

II. Choosing a Research Focus

Why did the Social History Project select Orillia, Ontario as a research focus? In terms of the Intermediate Guidelines, what was our thinking during the "definition stage"? In one sense, there is no such thing as a representative community just as in anatomy there is no such thing as a representative male or female. In the case of anatomy all humans are alike, all males are alike and all females are alike in certain respects. Similarly, all communities, villages, towns or cities are alike in certain respects. Thus, unless one has special reasons for excluding a particular example, any example will serve for the purposes of illustration. On the other hand, just as in anatomy all individual humans are different from all other individual humans, so all human communities are individual as well. Since any community will illustrate the respects in which communities are alike and no other community will illustrate the respects in which a particular community is unique, all communities can be legitimate objects of classroom study. And this is especially so if one is concerned primarily to introduce quantitative methods as a dimension of historical research. In this context, we reasoned that the best community we could initially use for applying the concept of total history would be Orillia. Orillia is the real counterpart to a mythical Ontario town called Mariposa. Mariposa is very well known to Canadian school children because of the writings of Stephen Leacock, the Canadian humourist whose characterizations of the community are part of the English curriculum in Canadian schools from about the sixth grade.³

Mariposa/Orillia, besides permitting us to bring to bear literature in the support of history, has other convenient features. The town was built on a long-standing Indian village and when the village was first established the Indians were moved across the lake. So in studying Orillia we can also study Indians and white-men. Furthermore, Orillia produced a number of notable authors, artists

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and politicians both male and female — some
of whom characterized in some detail the early
days, painted the Indians and the pioneering
communities. Orillia also produced champion
athletes including a world champion oarsman
whose great grandson is presently
commissioner of the Canadian Football
League. Fortunately, we can consider these
aspects of Orillia's history with considerable
support from newspapers published in the
community at a very early stage of
development.

It was also important that a couple of
railroads passed through and occasionally
even stopped in Orillia as early as the 1850's.
Given the railroads, Orillia had pretensions, at
least temporarily, as a world supplier of
packed pork and carriages. Moreover, at the
turn of the century, the town actually had a
factory making automobiles, a development
from its two early carriage-making factories.
And as if that were not enough, Orillia was
early blessed (because of political
connections) with an insane asylum which,
along with a heavy tourist trade (it is situated
on a beautiful lake perfect for winter and
summer recreation) has been a chief source of
employment for over a century. So, as you
can see, in the respects in which any place is
like any other place, Orillia is satisfactory.
And in the ways in which places are unique,
Orillia is also satisfactory.

III. Illustrating the Concept of Total History

Our idea is a very simple one. We believe that
Orillia (or any place else) can be used to
illustrate all of the things which the Ministry
of Education says should be taught in a
discovery fashion. For example, we can very
easily talk about life in Upper Canada, about
the opening of the west, about the United
Empire Loyalists in Ontario, about the impact
of the American Revolution (actually Orillia
will not do here directly, but indirectly it will),
about the attitude of the town to the various
rebellions, Confederation, and the Boer War,
and the attitude and actions of the town with
respect to the issues of women's suffrage,
trade unionism, government and law,
English-French relations, Canadian-American
relations and indeed, to all other issues of

world concern. The community can be used to
illustrate the impact of immigration policy,
educational policy, taxation policy, and on
and on. Furthermore, by integrating
quantitative sources into the midst of other
sources, we can illustrate in ways we could not
otherwise, the impact of regional, national
and international events on a specific
microcosm. One can illustrate, for example,
such things as increases in Irish-born people to
the community during and after the potato-
famine, or increases in American-born people
when land was easier to obtain in Ontario
than in the neighbouring states. In this
context, "total history" concerns the ways in
which historians can examine any community
in order to study the full range of historical
experience. For us, this concept suggests how
teachers can encourage genuine research in the
classroom using both qualitative and
quantitative sources.

The "grand feature" of history which the
following example discusses concerns the
impact of economic development on social
mobility. In other words, has the growth of
commercial and industrial sophistication
helped or hindered the ability of Canadians to
improve their social status as they grow
older? This question is meaningful in the
Orillia example in the sense that the
community's civic leaders enthusiastically
welcomed the town's economic growth and
development throughout the nineteenth
century. They anticipated that Orillia would
someday rival the status of southern Ontario's
well-established cities. In these years, Orillia's
development was determined by the town's
role as a commercial centre. This role
expanded as settlement in Simcoe County
increased, and although Orillia's population
of 629 in 1861 represented only a small
fraction of cities like Hamilton and Toronto,
the town was indeed growing rapidly. This
rapid growth and a belief that the railroad
would facilitate further settlement and
economic expansion exhilarated Orillia's civic
leaders. Their enthusiasm for the town's
maturation as a commercial center was
unqualified, and they heralded the prospect of
urbanization with unquestioning glee.

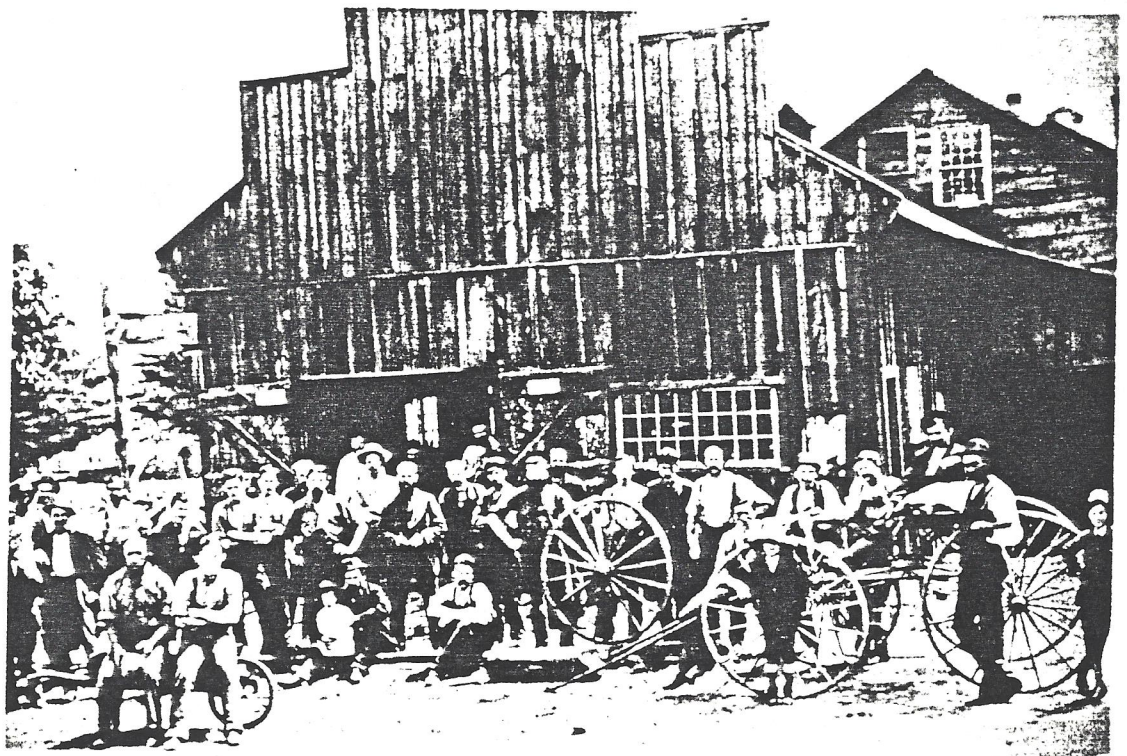
Recently, however, scholars have suggested

that the growth of towns into cities in nineteenth-century Canada was, at best, a mixed blessing. In studying the city of Hamilton, Michael Katz has argued that urbanization through commercial and industrial development increased social and economic inequality by creating a rigid social structure which tolerated instances of individual mobility but which insured the existence of certain disadvantaged groups. This analysis suggests that although the general standard of living may have risen slightly, social boundaries became more clearly defined and the distribution of wealth became increasingly uneven.⁵

At first glance, all this appears to be heady stuff for intermediate-level classroom investigation. The whole notion of social mobility is undoubtedly more associated with university sociology courses than with history programs in the schools. However, this association may have more to do with tradition than with careful consideration of the intellectual abilities of students at various stages in the educational system. Why, for example, have we usually assumed that young

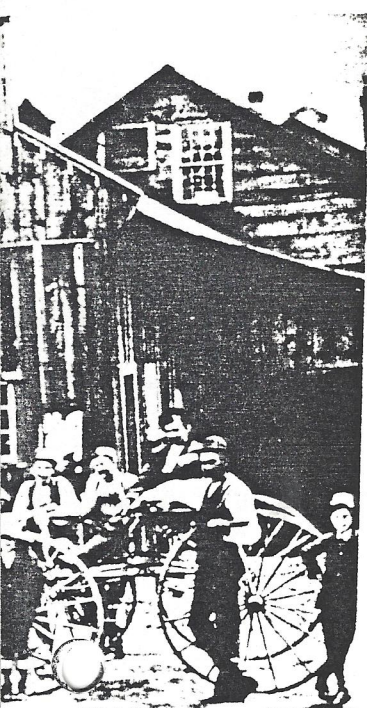
history students are able to understand fully topics such as political administration, constitutional reform, and military affairs? These kinds of topics traditionally dominate textbooks even at the most introductory level but their complexity and distance from the reality of students undoubtedly help explain why memorization of names and dates is often all that teachers can anticipate. Can young students be really expected to understand the nuances of political intrigue, the subtleties of constitutional debate, or the killing and maiming of military combat? Without a familiar point of reference, students simply attempt to memorize the chronology and relevant "facts" of such topics, a process which is agonizing at worst and dull at best.

Fortunately, the promotion of investigation rather than rote by the Ministry's History Guidelines suggests at least by implication that topics such as social mobility are indeed appropriate for young history students. Such topics can be addressed in terms familiar to these students and can be considered within the specified themes of the guidelines, including, for example, life in Upper Canada.



Ramsay's Carriage Works, Orillia, Ontario

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In order to demonstrate this possibility in a "total historical way," we have attempted to integrate visual sources with evidence from the manuscript census. As with all nineteenth-century communities in Ontario, a wide variety of prints and early photographs from Orillia have survived in personal collections, town libraries, and county archives. To illustrate how these visual sources can be used to address a theme such as social mobility, let us consider a nineteenth-century photograph of Ramsay's Carriage Works. In this photograph (reproduced on page 162), the workers of the blacksmith's shop are grouped together. Undoubtedly, they represent many levels of skill and ability ranging from inexperienced labourers to highly trained artisans. But in contrast to many nineteenth-century photographs in which the subjects appear very carefully posed in accordance with a certain hierarchy of importance, the Ramsay workers seem to have positioned themselves randomly. The occupational diversity of employees at the Carriage Works does not appear to have engendered a social system in which special deference always had to be given to the most skilled workers. Even on the occasion of a formal company photograph, the employees seem to have indiscriminately chosen their places.

Similarly, the workers' outfits do not show much diversity. In looking at the photograph, it is impossible to distinguish visually the more highly paid skilled workers from the low wage day labourers. From another source, we have been able to identify the most important worker as being the bearded gentleman standing just left of center; he was Mr. Ramsay, himself. But no indication of special status is provided in the actual photograph. Ramsay is closely surrounded by his own employees, all of whom are similarly dressed.

Examined in this way, the photograph suggests that occupational diversity did not engender rigid social stratification. The image of Ramsay's Carriage Works is one of social proximity rather than social distance. In the context of our interest in mobility, two important and related questions arise from consideration of this photograph; what was

the nature of occupational structure (the variety and type of designations) in Orillia and how was age associated with this structure? For example, did individuals characteristically change jobs at specific points in their lives? Were certain kinds of jobs associated with certain age-groups?

These questions can be addressed for a community such as Orillia by drawing upon the collective efforts of any class of twenty or thirty students. The first step for the students should be to compile information on occupations in Orillia from a source such as the manuscript census. If the Orillia census of 1861 were chosen, students would find a large variety of distinct occupational titles. In fact, there are fifty-five different designations such as carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, and labourers. Obviously, the number and character of these occupational titles are too cumbersome for a class of students to analyse directly. One method which we have used for grouping the various titles is to distribute them among the following five categories: professional/proprietor, white collar/small merchant, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled. These categories are intended to reflect, at least in general terms, the hierarchy of social and economic features of occupations in nineteenth-century society. For the Orillia example of 1861, the titles distribute themselves as shown in Table 1. At this point, students can clearly see that workers in even a small community like Orillia were spread throughout the occupational spectrum.

Table 1:
Male Occupational Structure, Orillia, 1861

<i>Occupational Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
professional/proprietor	22 (14.0%)
small merchants/white collar	43 (26.1%)
artisan	47 (29.9%)
semi-skilled	18 (11.5%)
unskilled	29 (18.5%)

Source: Manuscript census of Canada, for Orillia, 1861

The second major question suggested by the photograph of Ramsay's Carriage Works

concerned the importance of age to occupational level. In the context of evidence from the manuscript census, students might examine whether or not each occupational category reflected the existence of important social divisions. Or does it appear that Orillia was a fluid community in which individuals improved their occupational status by acquiring skill and experience as they grew older? This question can be pursued by considering a representative age of each member of the five occupational categories. The task for this consideration is to identify the average age of members within each category.

The students' computation for Orillia in 1861 should produce the results specified in Table 2. Significantly, the average ages of the various occupational categories are quite different and do suggest an important trend. In general, average age rose significantly with each occupational category. The professionals and large proprietors of Orillia were mature men in 1861 while semi-skilled and unskilled workers represented a younger generation. Even artisans were, on the average, more than a decade older than their semi-skilled counterparts. This evidence demonstrates that at the time of the 1861 enumeration in Orillia, there was a marked association between age and occupational level for the male labour force.

Table 2: Male Occupational Structure by Mean Age, Orillia, 1861

<i>Occupational Category</i>	<i>Mean Age</i>
professional/proprietor	45.3
small merchant/white collar	39.6
artisan	37.3
semi-skilled	26.6
unskilled	29.7

Source: Manuscript census of Canada for Orillia, 1861

At this point, the investigation stage of the historical project is complete, and students should turn to the task of synthesis by attempting to reach conclusions based on the evidence they have considered. In general,

such conclusions will be in the form of new hypotheses or possible explanations rather than definitive statements. In the Orillia example, a possible hypothesis might be that age was indeed a crucial factor in determining employment experience. Both the visual evidence and the census information suggest that there may have been a developmental occupational cycle in which individuals spent time as unskilled or semi-skilled workers while learning a specific trade or acquiring enough capital to become a local merchant. In this sense, Orillia of 1861 might have been, at least in some respects, a socially mobile community. This hypothesis would be consistent with the implications of Michael Katz' study of Hamilton and his conclusion concerning the interrelationship of urban growth and increased social stratification. According to these findings, we would expect to find more evidence of occupational advancement in the small community of Orillia than in the major city of Hamilton.

Of course, the possibility of social mobility in Orillia should remain only a tentative hypothesis at this stage of classroom activity. A series of other questions must now be considered. For example, did the relationship of age to occupation still exist in the 1871 census enumeration? In fact, students will find that it did not and thus they should consider whether the expanding community of Orillia which had grown dramatically during the decade was becoming more like urban Hamilton. Was occupational advancement less likely at the outset of the 1870's than it had been ten years earlier? Was Orillia becoming a stratified society? Or, on the other hand, should the hypothesis concerning social mobility in 1861 be reconsidered? What other explanations would account for the strong relationship between age and occupation at that time? In terms of this question, students might consider, for example, the possibility that the early growth of Orillia simply attracted older established skilled workers and professionals as well as younger labourers. The age distribution of this settlement pattern would give the appearance in the census of a developmental pattern when, in fact, none may have existed. Perhaps no significant

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group of individuals in Orillia actually did advance in occupational terms even in the years surrounding 1861. This possibility could be pursued by bringing together the records of individuals listed in both the 1861 and 1871 enumerations.⁶ In this way, students could examine the occupational careers of individual Orillia residents for the 1861-1871 period and, as a result, generate more refined hypotheses concerning the question of social mobility.

In addition to further examination of the census, history classes could also study other photographs in order to better establish a visual image of Orillia society in the nineteenth-century. Is the photograph of Ramsay's Carriage Works representative? How does it compare with other photographs of business enterprises in Orillia? These are only some of the many questions which young history students could consider and thereby push onward the work of historical investigation.⁷

IV. Conclusion

In the preceding discussion, we have only briefly indicated one possible way of introducing the concept of total history in the classroom. Our illustration shows how apparently unrelated sources such as a photograph and the manuscript census can be used to extend our historical knowledge. But it is only that, an historical illustration. It should be remembered that the use of photographs in conjunction with quantitative evidence is a new research and teaching strategy that is continuing to develop and is itself only one possibility for classroom investigation in a total historical way. Quantitative methods can be used to pursue questions raised through other techniques such as oral history as well as through the more traditional sources of newspapers and diaries.

In imaginatively using these sources, one can easily see how history students could systematically investigate such diverse topics as the development of local sports groups or the establishment of theatre and arts associations. Who played on the local hockey team? Who sponsored such teams? What was

the composition of the town band? The questions are endless. And, most importantly, the potential historical sources are also limited only by the students' imaginations. In this sense, the task of total history is never completed. By studying quantitative sources in conjunction with other evidence, we think that young history students will not only begin to grasp the concept of total history but will also be engaging in genuine historical research in the classroom. □

Notes

1. For a brief introduction to this approach, see Ian Winchester and Penelope Davey, "Records of the Past: A Way to Study Canadian History," *Orbit*, Vol. 7, No. 1, February, 1976.
2. The historiographic context of our thinking is best represented by the work of the French historians who seek to analyse specific historical circumstances from a wide variety of perspectives including demographic, economic, political, geographic and ideological. Thus far, one of the most successful studies which employs this approach, often called the *Annales* method, is Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou*, Paris, 1974.
3. Stephen Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, McClelland and Stewart, 1958.
4. For a fuller discussion of this concept, see Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966, esp. Chapter 1.
5. Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975.
6. For a guide to the method of record linkage, see Appendix Three of *The People of Hamilton, op. cit.*, and Ian Winchester, "The Linkage of Historical Records by Man and Computer: Techniques and Problems", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1, 1, 1970.
7. For a more detailed discussion of certain aspects of Orillia's social structure in 1861 and 1871, see Chad Gaffield and David Levine, "Dependency and Adolescence on the Canadian Frontier: Orillia, Ontario in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *History of Education Quarterly*, Spring, 1978.

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