

# Ethnicity and Class, Transitions Over a Decade: Ontario, 1861-1871

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Volume 19, Number 1, 1984

Guelph 1984

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/030920ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/030920ar>

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Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0068-8878 (print)

1712-9109 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Darroch, A. G. & Ornstein, M. (1984). Ethnicity and Class, Transitions Over a Decade: Ontario, 1861-1871. *Historical Papers / Communications historiques*, 19(1), 111-137. <https://doi.org/10.7202/030920ar>

## Article abstract

Following the pathfinding work of Pentland, many 19th century Canadian historians have posited a split labour market in the crucial period between 1850 and 1870. According to this view, the period saw the creation of a landless proletariat, essential to the transformation of the country from an agricultural and commercial to an industrial and capitalist economy. This nascent group was divided along ethnic lines, English and Scottish workers gaining the skilled, and Irish workers the unskilled, jobs. One inference would be that these internal divisions coupled with the high wages paid to the more privileged workers allowed Canada to avoid a large measure of working-class radicalism, while the pool of skilled personnel allowed Canadian industries to avoid the high costs of training. An examination of the 1861 and 1871 censuses in south-central Ontario, however, suggests that immigrant Catholic and Protestant Irish were not concentrated in low-paid industrial work, but in agriculture.

A computer-assisted survey of 10,000 men with known occupations linked between the two censuses provides evidence on a number of questions. The analysis of the data reveals the following differences in the makeup of the male labour force between 1861 and 1871: a) the proportion of Ontario-born rose from 27 percent to 40 percent, while the figures for Irish-born dropped from 24 percent to 15 percent; the proportion of Scottish- and English-born remained virtually the same; b) in occupational terms, there was a shift from labouring to farming and, to a lesser extent, to artisanal and nonmanual professions; the overwhelming majority of farmers (84 percent in 1871) were owners rather than tenants; c) neither religion nor ethnicity determined occupation; except for a concentration of the Irish-born in labouring, the working population does not appear to have been split along either ethnic or religious lines. A relatively high proportion of Ontario-born workers (30 percent in 1861 and 25 percent in 1871) were farmers' sons; d) over the period, differences among national groups in the occupational tables lessened, though Irish Catholics continued to be overrepresented in the labouring category, and English-born in the bourgeois and artisanal occupations. Though there were some occupational specializations among ethnic groups, the concentrations were not sufficiently pronounced to support the view that the working population was deeply split along ethnic lines; e) an analysis of occupation linked with age suggests that there was no movement off the land, and therefore no proletarianization of the population during the 1860s. On the contrary, there was an increase in the proportion of farmers with age, and a decrease in the proportion of labourers. Each occupational group had a distinctive pattern of growth with variations over time; f) record linkage between the two censuses permits some conclusions on the question of occupational persistence. Nearly 90 percent of the farmers in 1861 listed the same profession a decade later, while just over a third of the labourers did the same. Artisans, professionals and merchants/manufacturers, in that order, occupied the middle ground in terms of persistence. Relatively few sons of farmers (7 percent) became either labourers or artisans. The least persistent occupational category was clerical and other nonmanual workers, only 30 percent of whom remained in the same type of work. The evidence suggests a high degree of occupational mobility over time, and an absence of rural depopulation or a crisis of agriculture; g) mobility appears to have been more dependent upon occupation and much less upon age, except for unskilled workers. Mobility was greatest below the age of 25, especially for labourers, but varied less between the ages of 25 and 54. Only artisans show much mobility above the last age. By including ethnicity in the calculations, only one major phenomenon can be identified: Irish-Catholic labourers had a greater tendency to remain in this category over time.

In an era when urban industrialization was gathering momentum, independent commodity production by family farmers also expanded, especially out of labouring and into farming.

# Ethnicity and Class, Transitions Over a Decade: Ontario, 1861-1871\*

A. GORDON DARROCH and MICHAEL ORNSTEIN

## Résumé

*Following the pathfinding work of Pentland, many 19th century Canadian historians have posited a split labour market in the crucial period between 1850 and 1870. According to this view, the period saw the creation of a landless proletariat, essential to the transformation of the country from an agricultural and commercial to an industrial and capitalist economy. This nascent group was divided along ethnic lines, English and Scottish workers gaining the skilled, and Irish workers the unskilled, jobs. One inference would be that these internal divisions coupled with the high wages paid to the more privileged workers allowed Canada to avoid a large measure of working-class radicalism, while the pool of skilled personnel allowed Canadian industries to avoid the high costs of training. An examination of the 1861 and 1871 censuses in south-central Ontario, however, suggests that immigrant Catholic and Protestant Irish were not concentrated in low-paid industrial work, but in agriculture.*

*A computer-assisted survey of 10,000 men with known occupations linked between the two censuses provides evidence on a number of questions. The analysis of the data reveals the following differences in the makeup of the male labour force between 1861 and 1871: a) the proportion of Ontario-born rose from 27 percent to 40 percent, while the figures for Irish-born dropped from 24 percent to 15 percent; the proportion of Scottish- and English-born remained virtually the same; b) in occupational terms, there was a shift from labouring to farming and, to a lesser extent, to artisanal and nonmanual professions; the overwhelming majority of farmers (84 percent in 1871) were owners rather than tenants; c) neither religion nor ethnicity determined occupation; except for a concentration of the Irish-born in labouring, the working population does not appear to have been split along either ethnic or religious lines. A relatively high proportion of Ontario-born workers (30 percent in 1861 and 25 percent in 1871) were farmers' sons; d) over the period, differences among national groups in the occupational tables lessened, though Irish Catholics continued to be overrepresented in the labouring category, and English-born in the bourgeois and artisanal occupations. Though there were some occupational specializations among ethnic groups, the concentrations were not sufficiently pronounced to support the view that the working population was deeply split*

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We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for preparation of the data from the nineteenth century census and for provision of release time to Professor Darroch. The data were prepared by the Institute for Social Research of York University. We thank Pierre Angers and William Bruce for supervising the data collection and Michael Murray, Mirka Ondrack, and John Tibert for programming required for the record linkage. Paul Lachance provided valuable comments on an earlier draft.

*along ethnic lines; e) an analysis of occupation linked with age suggests that there was no movement off the land, and therefore no proletarianization of the population during the 1860s. On the contrary, there was an increase in the proportion of farmers with age, and a decrease in the proportion of labourers. Each occupational group had a distinctive pattern of growth with variations over time; f) record linkage between the two censuses permits some conclusions on the question of occupational persistence. Nearly 90 percent of the farmers in 1861 listed the same profession a decade later, while just over a third of the labourers did the same. Artisans, professionals and merchants/manufacturers, in that order, occupied the middle ground in terms of persistence. Relatively few sons of farmers (7 percent) became either labourers or artisans. The least persistent occupational category was clerical and other nonmanual workers, only 30 percent of whom remained in the same type of work. The evidence suggests a high degree of occupational mobility over time, and an absence of rural depopulation or a crisis of agriculture; g) mobility appears to have been more dependent upon occupation and much less upon age, except for unskilled workers. Mobility was greatest below the age of 25, especially for labourers, but varied less between the ages of 25 and 54. Only artisans show much mobility above the last age. By including ethnicity in the calculations, only one major phenomenon can be identified: Irish-Catholic labourers had a greater tendency to remain in this category over time.*

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*Suite aux travaux pionniers de Pentland, un grand nombre d'historiens canadiens du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle ont postulé l'existence d'un marché du travail partagé pendant la période cruciale s'étendant de 1850 à 1870. D'après cette hypothèse, on assiste à cette époque à la création d'un prolétariat sans terres, élément essentiel à la transformation du pays, d'une économie agricole et commerciale à une économie industrielle et capitaliste. Ce groupe naissant était partagé suivant l'ethnie, les travailleurs Anglais et Ecossais occupant les emplois spécialisés, les Irlandais étant relégués aux emplois non spécialisés. On soutient que ce partage interne, s'ajoutant aux salaires élevés versés aux travailleurs les plus privilégiés, permit au Canada d'éviter en grande partie le radicalisme ouvrier, alors que la réserve de personnel compétent épargna aux industries canadiennes les coûts élevés de la formation. Cependant une étude des recensements de 1861 et 1871 dans le centre-sud de l'Ontario indique que, en majorité, les immigrants irlandais catholiques et protestants travaillaient non pas à des emplois industriels peu rémunérés, mais bien à l'agriculture.*

*Une enquête informatisée sur 10,000 hommes couverts par les deux recensements et dont l'emploi est connu, fournit des renseignements sur un certain nombre de questions. L'analyse des données révèle les différences suivantes dans la composition de la population active masculine entre 1861 et 1871: a) la proportion de personnes nées en Ontario passer de 27 à 40 pour cent, alors que le nombre de personnes nées en Irlande*

baisse de 24 à 15 pour cent; la proportion de personnes nées en Ecosse et en Angleterre demeure essentiellement inchangée: b) pour ce qui est des emplois, il y a un mouvement du travail d'ouvriers vers l'agriculture et, dans une moindre mesure, vers les occupations artisanales et non-manuelles; la grande majorité des fermiers (84 pour cent en 1871) est propriétaire et non locataire; c) ni l'ethnicité ni la religion ne déterminaient l'occupation; à l'exception d'une concentration d'Irlandais d'origine dans les milieux ouvriers, la population active ne semble pas avoir été départagée suivant l'ethnicité ou l'appartenance religieuse. Une proportion relativement élevée de travailleurs nés en Ontario (30 pour cent en 1861 et 25 pour cent en 1871) était constituée de fermiers et de leurs fils; d) pendant cette période les différences entre nationalités au sein des groupes occupationnels s'atténuent, quoique les Irlandais catholiques continuent d'être sur-représentés chez les ouvriers, tout comme les Anglais d'origine dans les occupations bourgeoises et artisanales. S'il y a une certaine spécialisation occupationnelle par groupe ethnique, la concentration n'est pas assez prononcée pour appuyer l'hypothèse selon laquelle la population était profondément partagée suivant l'ethnicité; e) une analyse des emplois par groupes d'âge laisse croire qu'il n'y a pas de mouvement d'abandon de l'agriculture et, conséquemment, pas de prolétarianisation de la population au cours des années 1860. Au contraire, il y eu un accroissement de la proportion de fermiers et une diminution de la proportion d'ouvriers. Chaque groupe occupationnel suit un modèle de croissance particulier, avec des variations dans le temps; f) l'établissement de liens entre les données des deux recensements permet certaines conclusions sur la question de la permanence dans l'emploi. Près de 90 pour cent de ceux qui étaient fermiers en 1861 se réclamaient du même groupe occupationnel une décennie plus tard, alors que seulement un tiers des ouvriers faisaient de même. Dans l'ordre, les artisans, les professionnels et les marchands/fabricants se situent au centre de l'échelle pour ce qui est de la permanence. Un nombre relativement peu élevé de fils de fermiers (7 pour cent) sont devenus ouvriers ou artisans. Le groupe occupationnel le moins stable est celui des travailleurs non-manuels, où seulement 30 pour cent ont gardé le même genre d'emploi. Les données indiquent une mobilité occupationnelle assez élevée dans le temps, et l'absence de dépeuplement rural ou d'une crise de l'agriculture; g) sauf pour les travailleurs non-spécialisés, la mobilité semble dépendre plus de l'occupation que de l'âge. Le taux de mobilité est le plus élevé pour les travailleurs âgés de moins de 25 ans, particulièrement chez les ouvriers, alors qu'il est moins prononcé entre 25 et 54 ans. Au delà de cet âge, seuls les artisans ont une certaine mobilité. En tenant compte de l'ethnicité dans les calculs, un seul phénomène important peut être identifié: les ouvriers Irlandais catholiques avaient plus fortement tendance à demeurer dans cette catégorie pendant assez longtemps.

A une époque où l'industrialisation urbaine prenait de l'ampleur, la production indépendante de produits de base pas des familles d'agriculteurs devint également plus courante. La mobilité occupationnelle était généralisée, ce manifestant particulièrement du groupe des ouvriers, vers celui des agriculteurs.

Writing about Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century, Pentland<sup>1</sup> and Johnson<sup>2</sup> emphasized the significance of the creation of a class of wage labourers for capitalist industrialization. In their view, proletarianization was well on its course by the 1870s, both in the cities and countryside. The class transformation was articulated with ethnic divisions within and between social classes. Irish Catholics, in particular, were seen as central to the formation of a nascent working class. In recent years, this view of industrialization has come under some criticism. This paper begins with a discussion of current perspectives on Ontario's industrial development, then addresses these perspectives by presenting the results of an examination of the Ontario census records of 1861 and 1871.

The essential features of Pentland's account of industrialization were set out with unusual clarity and bear repeating.<sup>3</sup> His work is still rightly considered the most incisive account of the conditions surrounding Canada's industrial revolution.<sup>4</sup> According to Pentland, a profound reorganization of its labour force was a prerequisite of the transition from a commercial to an industrial, capitalist economy. The growth of the labour market was fueled by a supply of workers who chose to become wage labourers or who had no other options.<sup>5</sup> Pentland dates the emergence of this labour market near the middle of the nineteenth century; by 1870, he thought, the conditions creating a reserve army of labour had intensified.

The creation of the labour reserve involved a fundamental transformation in the economy. Settlers in Canada West could no longer satisfy their widespread aspirations to become farm proprietors.<sup>6</sup> Pentland argued that the best land in Southern Ontario was filled up by 1850.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent research has refined, but not fundamentally altered, Pentland's view. For example, Johnson emphasized that Wakefield's and Gourlay's theories led to the adoption of land policies that purposely restricted the availability of affordable land; labourers with little capital would thus be encouraged to assume their "rightful" place in the working class.<sup>8</sup> Examining the history of Peel County, Gagan

1. H. Clare Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalist Labour Market in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science*, Vol. 25 (November 1959); *Labour and Capital in Canada 1650-1860* (Toronto, 1981, first published 1960).
2. Leo A. Johnson, "Land Policy, Population Growth and Social Structure in the Home District 1793-1851," *Ontario History*, Vol. 67 (March 1971).
3. Pentland, "The Development," and *Labour and Capital*; Johnson, "Land Policy," and "Independent Commodity Production: Mode of Production or Capitalist Class Formation?" *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 6 (Autumn 1981); Steven Langdon, "The Emergence of the Canadian Working Class Movement, 1845-75," *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 8 (May 1973).
4. Gregory Kealey, "H.C. Pentland and Working Class Studies," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 3 (Spring-Summer 1979), cited by Paul Phillips, "Introduction," in H. Clare Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, pp. v-xvii.
5. Pentland, "The Development," pp. 456-61 and *Labour and Capital*, pp. 109-10, 169-70.
6. Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, p. 109.
7. Pentland, "The Development," p. 459.
8. Johnson, "Land Policy," p. 58.

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has argued that efforts by established farmers to expand their holdings served to further reduce the opportunities of would-be farmers.<sup>9</sup>

A second requirement of the creation of the labour reserve was an additional inflow of both unskilled workers, who became a highly mobile workforce able to take up the heavy, casual work of building the infrastructure required for industrialization, and of skilled workers, who were required in the embryonic, urban factories. Pentland reasoned that between 1840 and 1870 Irish-Catholic immigrants met the requirement for unskilled labour, while English and Scottish artisans became the first skilled wage workers.

Implicit in Pentland's account is the presence of what has been labelled, in recent scholarship, a split labour market. A combination of cultural inclinations, differences in training and skills, and mechanisms of ethnic exclusion restricted Irish-Catholic immigrants to unskilled jobs and provided English and Scottish immigrants with relatively privileged jobs. These ethnic divisions served to increase the accumulation of capital, even if capitalists did not create but opportunistically exploited preexisting differences among ethnic groups. On the one hand, ethnic antagonism contributed to the subordination of workers in the large pool of unskilled labour. On the other hand, skilled labourers, some with experience in factory discipline, became available. Their industrial experience and relatively high wages may have undermined skilled workers' radicalism, while ethnic barriers discouraged them from allying with labourers. Thus, Canadian capitalists were largely able to escape the radicalism of a first generation of industrial workers, just displaced from the land,<sup>10</sup> and capital did not have to bear the costs of training a largely immigrant body of skilled workers.

Katz<sup>11</sup> and his colleagues<sup>12</sup> have lent support to Pentland's view of Irish Catholics. For Hamilton at midcentury, they regard Irish-Catholic heritage as virtually synonymous with membership in the urban proletariat. However, their argument is qualified by the results of our research on the occupational structure of Canada as a whole in 1871. Distinguishing the four provinces (at the time) and urban from rural areas, we found that the Irish Catholics were more likely than other groups to have labouring occupations, but not markedly so. More important, Irish Catholics were engaged in many other occupational pursuits. We concluded that in 1871 the divisions among national groups were not large enough to suggest the presence of a single, national, split labour market.<sup>13</sup> Akenson's study of the Ontario Irish demonstrates deep flaws in Pentland's treatment of the sources of immigrants, in his interpretation of Irish cultural heritage, and in his view

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9. David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto, 1981), ch. 3.

10. Langdon, "The Emergence."

11. Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975).

12. Michael B. Katz, Michael Doucet and Mark Stern, *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

13. A. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure in Canada in 1871: The Vertical Mosaic in Historical Perspective," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 61 (September 1980).

that Irish Catholics were mired, by their conditions and will, in urban labouring.<sup>14</sup> By 1871, like the English and other immigrant groups, a majority of the Catholic and Protestant Irish had established themselves in farming.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to the sources of skilled labour, the role of English and Scottish artisans in Canadian industrialization has received little attention. According to Palmer,<sup>16</sup> the emergence of the nineteenth-century worker's movement in Hamilton was not marked by a significant division between the skilled and unskilled working class culture, much less by deep ethnic differences. Further exploration of this issue is clearly in order.

There is even wider diversity of opinion regarding land policy and accessibility. For example, Russell's study of 15 Ontario townships before 1850 shows that immigrants who did not have their own capital and whose families included few working members required a lifetime of work to clear enough land for a substantial farm.<sup>17</sup> Russell also shows that many immigrants had the required financial or family resources, or could earn sufficient wages, to clear and improve their land in a few years. In southern Ontario, until at least 1840, there was apparently some basis in experience for the strongly individualist belief that "all men have the same/That owns an axe! an' has a strong right arm!"<sup>18</sup>

The findings of Gagan's detailed study of Peel County are somewhat contradictory.<sup>19</sup> In the 1860s efforts by a minority of better-off farmers to ensure landed, family patrimony left the majority of farmers with an acute shortage of good land. This helps to account for the trend to rural depopulation in Peel and a number of other Ontario counties. Yet, Gagan also provides unmistakable evidence that mobility *into* farming was the most common occupational transition for those who remained in Peel County.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Leo Johnson's most recent work has added a note of uncertainty to his earlier emphasis on the impact of Colonial Office land policies in stemming the tide to the land and ensuring the places of "those who would naturally remain labourers."<sup>21</sup> A decade later, Johnson argued that the position of independent commodity producers, both farmers and traditional craftsmen, was actually reinforced and sustained by the balance of class forces at the time.<sup>22</sup> Johnson's latter view corresponds to the cogent argument of Craven and Traves, that there were three major classes in the political arena

14. Donald H. Akenson, "Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish," in *Canadian Papers In Rural History III*, Donald Akenson, ed. (Gananoque, 1982).

15. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

16. Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture In Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal, 1979).

17. Peter A. Russell, "Upper Canada: A Poor Man's Country? Some Statistical Evidence," *Canadian Papers In Rural History III*, Donald H. Akenson, ed. (Gananoque 1982), p. 137.

18. Allen Smith, "The Myth of the Self-Made Man in English Canada, 1850-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 59 (July 1978) citing Crawford, 1884.

19. Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers*.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-12.

21. Johnson, "Land Policy," pp. 58, citing Goderich, 1833.

22. Johnson, "Independent Commodity Production," pp. 108-10.

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by 1870 and long thereafter: the business and industrial class, the working class, and farmers.<sup>23</sup>

The results of the analysis presented in this paper address a number of problems in the historical accounts just presented. First, we seek to identify the main transformations in the class structure of Ontario in the decade between 1861 and 1871. An assessment of the extent of changes in the relative size of class categories (without regard to the histories of the individuals involved), particularly of farmers and of labourers, has an immediate bearing on the issue of whether there was widespread proletarianization in the decade. Changes in class structure also affect the character of individual experience; for example, a finding that farmers and artisans often became labourers would serve as support for a strong version of a proletarianization thesis. If, instead, labourers frequently succeeded in becoming farmers, we would be forced to reconsider major themes in current interpretations of industrialization in Ontario.

Secondly, we address the question of whether class structure and individual experience conformed to ethnic and religious lines. Of course, the central roles of immigration and ethnicity have been recurrent themes in Canadian historical and sociological writing. More generally, religious and ethnic conflict has historically been an expression of conflicts over access to labour markets and the conditions of work.<sup>24</sup> Ethnic and religious diversity and the strength of ethnic communities have been seen as militating against the development of common class experience and consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

In formulating this research, we have drawn mainly on historical accounts of Ontario. The questions we investigate, however, fall squarely within the extensive literature on patterns of social mobility in the nineteenth century. We are aware of the criticisms of mobility studies and of the theoretical underpinnings of much of this research. In particular, mobility studies have often been viewed as a distraction from structural analysis of social classes. Urban historians' initial research on mobility drew on a body of sociological literature that was more concerned with the extent of social mobility and what this implied about the distribution of occupational chances. In our view, mobility issues are a significant element in the discussion of class structure and experience, provided they are set in an appropriate context.

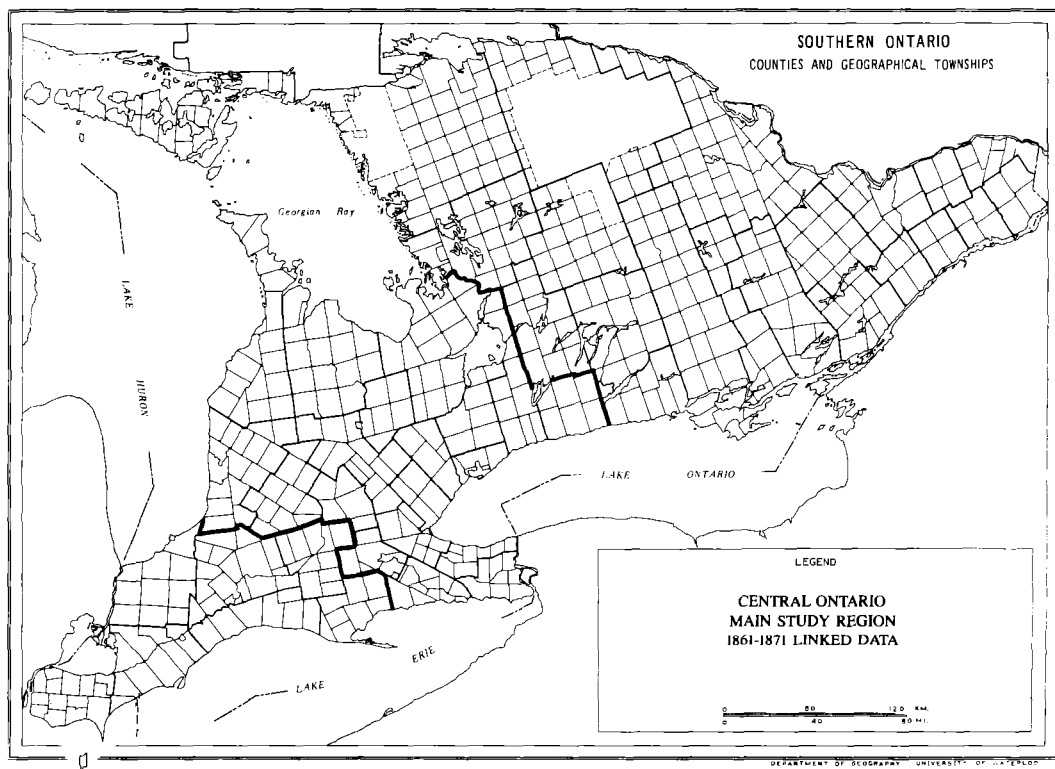
## DATA

The analysis in this paper is based on samples of records drawn from the 1861 and 1871 censuses for Ontario. As Figure 1 shows, the study covered somewhat over half of Ontario; budgetary constraints prevented the inclusion of the areas to the west of London

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23. Paul Craven and Tom Traves, "The Class Politics of the National Policy, 1872-1933," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 14 (Fall 1979).
24. Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labour Market," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 37 (October 1972).
25. Stephen Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (New York, 1964) and Oliver Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago, 1982).



Figure 1



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and much of Eastern Ontario. The sample design was intended to maximize the proportion of individuals for whom records from both the 1861 and 1871 census listings would be available. The first step in the design involved randomly selecting a sample of Soundex codes from the universe of all Soundex phonetic codes; of course, the Soundex procedure assigns a code to every surname.<sup>26</sup> In both 1861 and 1871, all the personal census records (in the designated region of Ontario) were scanned. When a household that included anyone whose surname had a Soundex code among those randomly selected was encountered in the census manuscript, all the information listed *for every member of that household* was transcribed into machine-readable form. The transcription procedure provided for the exact preservation of all the original data, including full names and occupations. Even though the scanning and entry of data from the 1861 and 1871 census microfilms took place separately, the sampling procedure permitted linking the records of individuals present in both censuses.

Two records from 1861 and 1871 could be assumed to refer to the same person only if a number of conditions were met:

- a. he or she must have been living in the part of Ontario designated for the study in both 1861 and 1871;
- b. he or she must be enumerated by the census takers in both years;
- c. his or her name must not have changed completely in the decade (so women who married could not be traced in this study);
- d. the recording of the person's name and age in the two census manuscripts must have been sufficiently accurate and legible to permit them to be linked;
- e. our coders must have identified the individuals as having a surname that fell among those selected; and
- f. the two records must be identified as referring to the same person, despite the numerous small inconsistencies in ages and the spelling of names.

An error at any stage would result in the failure to create a linked record. Since fewer than 10 percent of the women in each year had any occupation listed in the census manuscript, our analysis is restricted to men located in the 1861 and/or 1871 censuses.

The linkage between the 1861 and 1871 census records was carried out manually on the basis of surnames, first names, ages, birthplaces, and the composition of the household in which each person lived (including the names, ages, and birthplaces of every household member). Because occupational change was a central focus of this study, occupations were not employed in establishing links between the 1861 and 1871 records. To have used occupations for linkage would have increased the accuracy of the linkage, but at the cost of biasing the sample by preferentially selecting individuals whose occupations did not change during the decade (since the "use" of occupations could only amount to increasing the likelihood of a match when the 1861 and 1871 occupations coincided).

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26. A. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, *Canadian Historical Mobility Project, Appendices to a Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council*, unpublished ms. (October, 1978).

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The data management and initial sorting of the personal records were carried out by computer. Of the approximately 100,000 individual records transcribed about 65,000 were eligible for linkage; the remaining 35,000 records pertain to people whose own surnames did not qualify them for inclusion in the sample, but who lived in households including at least one person with an eligible surname. Because of our interest in the study of household composition and because data on other household members would prove valuable in the record linkage procedure the database included information about every person in a household containing at least one person with a selected surname.

Our analysis employs a classification of occupations designed to measure social class. This is not entirely satisfactory and in future analysis we intend to supplement the results in this paper with data from the agricultural censuses for 1861 and 1871 and the manufacturing census of 1871, which have also been coded for this project. The occupational classes employed here were developed in the course of our earlier work with the 1871 census.<sup>27</sup> The classification explicitly avoids ranking occupations in terms of prestige or status.

An important difference between the 1861 and 1871 censuses created some difficulty in comparisons between the two years. In 1861 the instructions to the enumerators required that the sons of farmers who worked on their fathers' farms be listed as "labourers," whereas in 1871 the sons of farmers were listed as farmers. As the data below will show, in 1871 sons of farmers were also much less likely to have any occupation listed. Because of this change in the treatment of farmers' sons, unadjusted data on occupational changes in the decade would have dramatically inflated levels of mobility between labouring and farming. We have compensated for the change, in the census procedures by showing both the original and reclassified occupational data. The reclassification includes a new, artificial category of "farmer's sons," that contains all male children who lived in the farm households of their fathers and who were listed as either farmers or labourers in the census manuscript. The reclassification was made on the basis of an automated classification of the records for all persons in a household.<sup>28</sup> McCallum has previously commented on this difference between the occupational classifications and on the results of a similar correction to the aggregate data.<sup>29</sup> Without individual data of the type available in this study, it is very difficult to compensate for the difference in the 1861 and 1871 occupational recording procedures.

The last row of Tables 1a and 1b gives the adjusted and unadjusted occupational distributions. In the 1861 manuscripts, 37.4 percent of the men were listed as labourers and 36.0 percent as farmers; the corresponding figures for 1871 were 18.6 percent and 50.5 percent. After the adjustment, the distributions come much closer into line. The

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27. Darroch and Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure."

28. A. Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, "The Complexity of Households: Regional Patterns and Regional Economies," *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 9 (Summer 1984).

29. John McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings: Agricultural and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario until 1870* (Toronto, 1980).

**Table 1a**  
**Occupation in 1861 by Place of Birth by Religion for Men**

		Percentage Distribution of Occupations										Number of Cases
Place of Birth	Religion	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Original Classification		With Farmer's Sons Reclassified			
							Farmer	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer	Total	
Ontario	Protestant	3.5	2.2	2.0	14.0	46.7	31.7	23.8	23.4	31.2	100.1	2236
	Catholic	4.1	2.0	1.2	11.8	49.4	31.4	26.5	11.0	43.3	100.1	245
Quebec	Protestant	6.5	1.6	4.8	24.2	41.1	21.8	36.3	20.2	6.4	100.0	124
	Catholic	3.3	1.7	0.0	20.0	55.0	20.0	53.4	18.3	3.3	100.0	60
Maritimes	Protestant	3.3	3.7	1.1	14.1	42.2	35.7	22.1	23.1	32.7	100.1	462
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.3	29.7	51.4	18.9	29.7	100.0	37
U.S.	Protestant	10.3	5.6	2.7	22.9	28.8	29.8	26.5	28.8	3.3	100.0	302
	Catholic	0.0	10.0	0.0	20.0	40.0	30.0	30.0	0.0	40.0	100.0	10
England	Protestant	7.8	4.0	2.0	24.0	31.0	31.2	26.6	30.3	5.3	100.0	1390
	Catholic	0.0	9.1	9.1	0.0	27.3	54.6	27.3	54.6	0.0	100.1	11
Scotland	Protestant	4.7	3.3	2.0	17.4	28.3	44.3	22.0	42.1	8.5	100.0	1659
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6	61.4	25.0	52.3	22.7	11.4	100.0	44
Ireland	Protestant	5.5	2.9	1.4	14.3	28.7	47.2	23.5	46.1	6.3	100.0	1471
	Catholic	3.4	1.2	0.9	13.9	53.0	27.6	48.7	26.2	5.7	100.0	770
Other Europe	Protestant	3.3	2.3	0.7	28.4	31.7	33.6	29.0	33.0	3.3	100.0	303
	Catholic	2.1	4.2	2.1	21.1	30.5	40.0	29.5	40.0	1.0	100.0	95
All other	Protestant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	14.3	28.6	57.1	0.0	28.6	0.0	28.5	100.0	7
Not Given, Illegible	Protestant	4.2	8.3	4.2	19.4	34.7	29.2	26.4	29.2	8.3	100.0	72
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	8.3	16.7	66.7	8.3	58.4	8.3	8.3	100.0	12
Total		4.9	2.9	1.8	17.1	37.4	36.0	26.9	31.8	14.7	100.0	9310

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**Table 1b**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Place of Birth by Religion for Men**

Percentage Distribution of Occupations												
Place of Birth	Religion	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Original Classification		With Farmer's Sons Reclassified			Number of Cases
							Farmer	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer	Total	
Ontario	Protestant	5.4	3.4	3.3	16.6	15.8	55.5	14.6	30.8	25.9	100.0	3798
	Catholic	4.6	1.2	4.0	19.9	26.0	44.3	22.6	20.2	27.5	100.0	327
Quebec	Protestant	10.1	8.1	1.0	19.2	14.1	47.5	14.1	31.3	16.2	100.0	99
	Catholic	4.6	0.0	3.0	40.9	22.7	28.8	22.7	24.2	4.6	100.0	66
Maritimes	Protestant	6.0	6.0	2.6	23.1	16.1	46.2	16.2	31.6	14.5	100.0	117
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	27.3	63.6	27.3	54.5	9.1	100.0	11
U.S.	Protestant	11.9	5.5	3.0	29.7	21.2	28.8	20.7	26.3	3.0	100.1	236
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	4.8	23.8	28.6	42.9	23.8	19.1	28.6	100.0	21
England	Protestant	6.9	3.5	2.4	29.5	21.8	35.9	21.7	32.9	3.1	100.1	1531
	Catholic	0.0	11.8	0.0	35.3	35.3	17.7	35.3	17.7	0.0	100.0	17
Scotland	Protestant	4.8	3.9	2.4	16.1	14.1	58.7	13.4	51.8	7.6	100.0	1610
	Catholic	2.4	0.0	2.4	4.8	38.1	52.4	30.9	42.9	16.7	99.9	42
Ireland	Protestant	5.7	3.4	2.0	15.3	15.8	57.8	15.6	53.8	4.2	100.0	1345
	Catholic	5.2	1.7	1.8	14.9	40.6	35.8	40.6	34.6	1.2	100.0	598
Other Europe	Protestant	5.9	3.5	0.3	27.6	16.6	46.2	16.2	43.1	3.5	100.1	290
	Catholic	6.7	6.7	1.3	21.3	18.7	45.3	17.3	44.0	2.7	100.0	75
All other	Protestant	0.0	25.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	100.0	4
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	1
Not Given, Illegible	Protestant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0	60.0	40.0	40.0	20.0	100.0	5
	Catholic	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	2
Total		5.7	3.4	2.6	19.2	18.6	50.5	17.8	37.7	13.5	100.0	10195

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percentages of farmers become, respectively, 31.8 and 37.7 and of farmers' sons, 14.7 and 13.5. The percentages of labourers are reduced to 26.9 and 17.8 percent.

Place of birth and nationality are theoretically distinct, but only in 1871 is it possible to distinguish them; the 1871 manuscripts included separate columns for place of birth, nationality and religion. As used by scholars, "Irish Catholics" potentially include both immigrants and the native-born, but in 1861 our analysis is restricted to the immigrants. Tables 1a and 1b examine the relationship between occupation and place of birth and religion in 1861 and 1871. Table 2 examines the relationship between occupation and nationality and religion for 1871. In the census records nationality is understood as passing through the male line.

Protestants and Catholics account for more than 99 percent of the population in 1861 and 1871; hence religion is divided into these two categories. The very small proportions outside these major groups are included with the Protestants, who could more accurately be labelled "non-Catholics." For convenience they are referred to as Protestants in the analysis.

## RESULTS

As Table 1a indicates, the population in 1861 consisted mainly of people born in Ontario, Ireland, Scotland, and England who made up, respectively, 27, 24, 18 and 15 percent of the population. Ten years later, a substantially larger proportion of the population, 40 percent, were Ontario-born. The proportion of Irish-born had fallen substantially, to 15 percent, while the proportions of Scottish and English-born were not substantially changed. In 1861, about 5 percent of the sample were Maritime-born, 4 percent were from continental Europe, and 3 percent were from the U.S. A decade later the proportion of Maritimers had fallen to just over 1 percent, but the proportions in the other groups were not very different.

There was a very strong relationship between place of birth and religion. In both years, only about 10 percent of the Ontario-born were Catholic while in 1861 immigrants from Ireland were 66 percent Catholic and in 1871, 61 percent were Catholic. About one-third of the men born in Quebec and one-quarter of those born in continental Europe were Catholic, but the people with other birthplaces were very largely non-Catholic. The percentage of Catholics in the samples fell from 14 to 11 between 1861 and 1871, probably as a result of reduced Irish immigration.

A comparison of the adjusted occupational distributions shows something of a shift from labouring to farming and, to a smaller extent, to artisanal and nonmanual occupations between 1861 and 1871. The proportion of people in petty bourgeois pursuits, in independent commodity production on farms and in businesses, thus increased over the decade. The artisan category includes some wage-workers, but the prevalence of agriculture and the widespread distribution of artisans in many small towns and villages suggests that most were independent producers. Future analysis of the manufacturing records will address this point more directly. Some of the farmers were tenants and not

owners, but the aggregate census shows that tenants were a distinct minority of all farmers in the province in 1871 (16 percent) and thereafter. There may have been an increase in the 1861-71 decade, but the increase is very unlikely to have been great enough to account for the movement into farming.

### **Place of Birth and Religious Differences in Occupations**

Two features of Tables 1a and 1b are most striking. First, there is no single, dramatic difference in the occupational distributions of the people with different birthplaces or between Catholics and others; no one group is concentrated primarily or exclusively in one sector of the economy. Second, between 1861 and 1871 the proportion of labourers declined and the proportions in farming and the other occupational categories increased. These patterns prevail for all but two small groups: U.S.-born non-Catholics and English-born Catholics (for the latter only 17 cases are included in the sample). Pentland, whose reading drew largely on urban sources regarding the "Irish problem," and Katz, whose data are entirely from the city of Hamilton, both emphasize the uniqueness of Irish Catholics. As Akenson<sup>30</sup> and our earlier work<sup>31</sup> have suggested, the occupational experience of Irish Catholics is only to a degree different from that of other groups in the population. This suggests, but does not establish conclusively, that occupational differences may be the result of differences in the time of immigration of the various groups and the state of the economy faced by arriving immigrants, rather than the results of cultural predispositions or systematic segregation.

In both years Irish Catholics were about 25 percent more likely to work as labourers (or in other low-skill jobs) than other groups. Surprisingly, the Scottish-, Maritime-, and Quebec-born Catholics were even more likely than Irish-born Catholics to work as labourers. If there was a structural division in the labour force, these data suggest that it separated Catholics from Protestants, not Irish Catholics from all others. Nevertheless, the Irish-born Catholics were the most visible, single Catholic group in Ontario; they comprised about 60 percent of all the Catholics in 1861 and just over half of all Catholics in 1871. It is also apparent that Protestant Irish-born immigrants resemble the other Protestant groups. Ontario-born Catholics are only about 10 percent more likely than Protestants to work as labourers. These additional results further specify our initial conclusion: the experience of Irish-born Catholics was quite similar to that of other Catholic immigrants to Ontario.

The transition from labouring into farming between 1861 and 1871 affected the Irish and other Catholic groups almost as much as the non-Catholic groups. The percentage of Irish Catholics in labouring declined by 8 percent, which is well within the range (4 percent to 9 percent) of the decline observed for the Irish, English, Scottish, and native-born groups. Moreover, the decline in the proportion of Irish-Catholic labourers was balanced by an increase in the proportion of farmers.

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30. Akenson, "Ontario."

31. Darroch and Omstein, "Ethnicity and Occupational Structure."

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The U.S.-born Protestants were exceptional. In 1861, they were more heavily concentrated than any other group in merchant and manufacturing occupations and in the "other nonmanual" category, which includes mostly clerks. By 1871, nearly a fifth of U.S.-born Protestants were in nonmanual occupations and one-eighth were merchants, manufacturers, or in related occupations. Only non-Catholics from Quebec were in a similarly privileged position. To a greater extent than for other groups, the move to Ontario by non-Catholic Americans and Quebecers appears to have involved a decision to seek out a community in which to operate a business. Still, the distinctiveness of these two groups, as for the Irish Catholics, is only relative. The extent of geographic mobility of the specific groups will be examined in a further analysis of our data.

Finally, an examination of proportions of workers identified as farmers' sons is instructive. In both years, large percentages of the Ontario-born were farmers' sons: over 30 percent in 1861 and 25 percent in 1871. With the exception of Maritimers in 1861, the non-Ontario groups had relatively small proportions of farmers' sons. These occupational differences no doubt reflect ethnic and religious group differences in age composition and, potentially, fertility. This finding is significant in view of the argument that the ability of a family to clear land was heavily dependent on the number of able bodied persons in the household. Gagan<sup>32</sup> and Russell<sup>33</sup> have noted that the availability of this additional family labour played a key role in establishing farm proprietorship and patrimony in this era.

### Nationality and Occupation

Table 2 shows the differences among nationalities, preserving the religious distinction for the Irish, in 1871. The Irish were the largest ethnic group in Ontario, comprising about 36 percent of the men with occupations listed. The number of Irish Protestants was approximately equal to the number of English and Scottish people; each group was about 27 percent of the total. The only other group of significant size, comprising just over 7 percent, was of German origin. The occupational differences in this table and, in particular, the distinctiveness of the Irish Catholics, are smaller than those observed for place of birth and religion in Tables 1a and 1b. The differences between groups declined and a greater proportion of all the groups come to be native-born.

While their occupational profiles differ, again each ethnic group is distributed across all the occupational categories (except the very small "all other" and "not given" categories). In Breton's terms, this suggests that the major ethnic groups were "institutionally complete," so that immigrants could seek work, lodging, credit, and other forms of aid from their own group.<sup>34</sup> There is now considerable documentation of the

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32. Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers*, p. 91.

33. Russell, "Upper Canada."

34. Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and The Personal Relations of Immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14 (September 1964).



**Table 2**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Nationality for Men**

Nationality	Percentage Distribution of Occupations										Number of Cases
	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Original Classification		With Farmer's Sons Reclassified			
						Farmer	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer	Total	
French	3.7	4.8	2.1	22.3	25.5	41.5	25.5	35.1	6.4	100.1	188
English	6.8	4.0	3.3	25.2	19.4	41.2	19.0	31.9	9.7	99.9	2762
Scottish	5.5	3.9	2.9	16.8	14.6	56.3	13.9	40.9	16.1	100.0	2732
Irish Protestant	4.9	3.4	2.3	15.5	14.8	59.1	13.8	43.0	17.1	100.0	2716
Irish Catholic	5.3	1.4	2.7	16.8	35.8	38.0	34.6	28.7	10.5	100.0	903
German	6.3	2.3	0.7	21.6	17.9	51.2	16.8	40.5	11.8	100.0	727
Other European	8.7	2.9	1.5	23.2	27.6	36.2	26.1	29.0	8.7	100.1	69
All Other	3.9	0.0	0.0	10.3	37.2	48.7	37.2	37.2	11.5	100.1	78
Not Given	5.0	5.0	5.0	25.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	0.0	100.0	20

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presence of ethnic networks and communities in the nineteenth century which could function in this way.<sup>35</sup>

The English ethnic group was strongly represented in the merchant and manufacturing and other nonmanual groups and among the artisans; about 40 percent lived on farms, of which three-quarters were farmers and one-quarter farm sons. Approximately one in five English working men were employed in labouring. Thus, English workers were by no means exempted from the lowest position in the occupational structure.

The Scottish and Irish Protestants were quite similar in occupational composition. They included fewer artisans than the English (about 16 percent, versus 25 percent) and more farmers (about 40 percent farmers and 16 percent farm sons, versus 32 percent farmers and 10 percent farm sons for the English). The Irish Catholics were similar to the Scottish and Irish Protestant groups, except for the important difference of having some 20 percent more labourers and nearly 20 percent fewer farmers and farm sons. The occupational distribution of the Germans was midway between the English and the Scottish.

The differences among ethnic groups correspond to conventional wisdom in some respects, especially with regard to the over-representation of Irish Catholics in labouring and the tendency for the English-born to be concentrated in bourgeois and artisanal occupations. But our results also qualify some other elements of current historical views. The Irish Catholics were certainly not confined to one or a few occupational niches and many had taken up farming. Indeed, Irish Catholics were as likely to be farmers in 1871 as were men of English origin and were somewhat more likely to be farming than any native-born group. The data also suggest some more minor qualifications of conventional views. Immigrants from Scotland were apparently no more likely to be artisans or skilled workers, for example, than Irish Protestants, and somewhat less likely to be either artisans or merchants and manufacturers than the English or the Germans.

These tables reveal that there was some occupational specialization among ethnic groups, but the specialization was not sufficiently pronounced to support the view that the working population was deeply split along ethnic lines. At least, the magnitudes of the differences among ethnic groups were too small to suggest that presence of the occupational segmentation one would expect to find with, say, gender or racial differences, in either the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

### Age and Occupation

The relationship between age and occupation in 1861 and in 1871 is of intrinsic interest

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35. Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971), Ch. 8; John Bodnar, Michael Weber and Roger Simon, "Migration, Kinship and Urban Adjustment: Blacks and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1930," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 66 (December 1979); Ross McCormack, "Cloth Caps and Jobs: The Ethnicity of English Immigrants in Canada, 1900-1914," in *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada*, Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, eds. (Toronto, 1981).

**Table 3**  
**Occupation in 1861 and 1871 by Age for Men**

Percentage Distribution of Occupations												
Year	Age	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Original Classification		With Farmer's Sons Reclassified			Number of Cases
							Farmer	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer	Total	
1861	Less than 15	2.8	0.7	0.6	8.5	55.9	31.5	27.0	4.4	56.0	100.0	855
	15-24	1.6	2.3	3.0	17.4	63.7	12.0	36.1	7.9	31.7	100.0	2226
	25-34	6.5	3.5	2.3	20.1	32.5	35.1	27.9	33.0	6.7	100.0	2338
	35-44	8.1	3.7	1.3	17.9	21.9	47.1	21.6	46.3	1.1	100.0	1711
	45-54	6.1	3.9	0.4	18.9	19.1	51.6	19.0	51.6	0.1	100.0	1152
	55-64	2.7	1.9	0.8	13.6	21.2	59.9	21.0	59.8	0.3	100.1	671
	65 or more	3.9	2.8	2.0	12.9	25.5	52.9	24.9	52.9	0.6	100.0	357
1871	Less than 15	1.0	0.0	4.2	28.1	37.5	29.2	36.5	2.1	28.1	100.0	96
	15-24	2.9	2.4	4.8	19.7	22.4	47.8	20.2	11.0	39.0	100.0	2757
	25-34	7.7	4.7	2.5	19.3	17.4	48.4	16.9	38.5	10.4	100.0	2411
	35-44	7.8	3.7	1.7	21.7	18.5	46.6	18.3	45.6	1.2	100.0	2088
	45-54	7.1	3.5	1.0	18.0	15.5	55.0	15.5	54.8	0.2	100.1	1417
	55-64	4.5	3.4	1.5	15.4	15.2	60.0	15.2	60.0	0.0	100.0	888
	65 or more	2.4	2.8	1.3	13.9	15.2	64.3	15.2	64.3	0.0	99.9	538

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and also serves to introduce the subsequent analysis of the occupations of men traced from the 1861 to the 1871 census. There is a strong, but almost never justified, temptation to analyze age by occupation data in terms of mobility. In a largely immigrant population, mobility patterns are not in a "steady state." Therefore no inference of mobility may be drawn from age differences in occupation.

A comparison of the two panels in Table 3, for 1861 and 1871, shows that the difference in recording the occupations of farmers' sons was not the only one that resulted from the differences in enumeration procedures. Although the 1871 data include somewhat more records, there were about nine times as many individuals under the age of 15 with occupations in 1861 as in 1871. Not surprisingly, in 1861, 56 percent of the men under 15 who had occupations were the sons of farmers.

The occupational distribution did vary with age. Most striking was the increase in the proportion of farmers with age. Summing the figures for farmers and farmers' sons in 1861, the percentage of farmers increased from about 40 percent for 15 to 34 year olds to about 60 percent for 55 to 64 year olds. Above age 64, the proportion in farming declined by 7 percent. In 1871, the relationship between age and the proportion in farming is also positive, but not as strong as in 1861.

These results do not suggest a decline in farming during the decade of the study. Although there may have been strong signs of the beginnings of industrialization in parts of Ontario, in no general sense could Ontario be said to have witnessed widespread proletarianization. Between 1861 and 1871 there was an increase, rather than a decline, in the numbers of landed family producers. These data do not tell us anything about the size or condition of the farms, a topic we shall consider in a future analysis. Still, if the conditions of farms underwent a drastic decline it seems likely that people would be forced off the land into wage work and there is no sign of such a trend.

Labouring declined with age, from somewhere near a third (excluding farmers' sons) of the youngest men to about a fifth of prime age men in 1861 and a sixth in 1871. The obvious question is whether labourers were "trapped" in labouring occupations when they were young or whether a large proportion of workers were labourers at some point in their lives, then went on to other occupations. The data in Table 4, below, address this question. Whatever the long-term tendency towards deskilling or industrialization, these data show that sheer labouring declined over the decade.

The proportion of merchants and manufacturers grew until the 35 to 44 year age category, then declined markedly in the higher age groups. The professional category shows a similar peak, in the 45 to 54 year age group in 1861 and in the 25 to 34 age group in 1871. The proportion of men working in other nonmanual occupations reached a much earlier peak, in the 15 to 24 age group, a fact which suggests that these jobs were frequently stepping-stones to other occupations. Finally, the proportions of workers in artisanal occupations were relatively uniform across age groups until about age 50 and then declined.

**Table 4a**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Occupation in 1861 for Men**

Occupation in 1861	Percentage Distribution of Occupations in 1871							Number with occup- ations in Census of 1871	Percen- tage with occup- ations in Census of 1871	Total Number in 1861
	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Farmer	Total			
Not present	5.2	3.9	3.3	20.5	21.5	45.8	100.2	6729	—	—
Merchant, etc.	54.0	2.5	4.9	17.8	6.1	14.7	100.0	163	36.1	2.2 452
Professional	12.4	59.3	2.5	8.6	2.5	14.8	100.1	81	29.6	2.2 270
Other nonmanual	27.7	17.0	29.8	4.3	8.5	12.8	100.1	47	28.5	1.8 165
Artisan	8.4	1.7	1.3	65.3	7.9	15.4	100.0	533	33.5	1.8 1591
Labourer	4.3	1.6	1.3	10.9	26.2	55.7	100.0	1107	31.8	3.2 3484
Farmer	2.1	0.3	0.1	4.8	6.5	86.2	100.0	1535	45.9	4.3 3348
Total, for men with occupations in 1861	6.8	2.7	1.4	16.7	12.9	59.6	100.1	3466	37.2	3.3 9310

**Table 4b**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Occupation in 1861, Differentiating Farmers' Sons for Men**

Occupation in 1861	Percentage Distribution of Occupations in 1871							Number with occup- ations in Census of 1871	Percentage with occup- ations in Census of 1871	Percen- tage present in 1871, with no occup- ation	Total Number in 1861
	Merchant etc.	Profess- ional	Other Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Farmer	Farmer's Son				
Not present	5.2	3.9	3.3	20.5	20.5	30.0	16.8	100.2	6729	—	—
Merchant, etc.	53.4	2.5	4.9	17.8	6.1	14.7	0.0	100.0	163	36.1	2.2
Professional	12.4	59.3	2.5	8.6	2.5	14.8	0.0	100.1	81	29.6	2.2
Other nonmanual	27.7	17.0	29.8	4.3	8.5	10.6	2.1	100.0	47	28.5	1.8
Artisan	8.4	1.7	1.3	65.3	7.9	14.5	0.9	100.0	553	33.5	1.8
Labourer	4.3	1.1	1.4	13.6	36.3	39.7	3.6	100.0	705	28.1	2.1
Farmer	2.3	0.4	0.1	4.3	6.1	86.4	0.6	100.0	1406	47.5	2.2
Farmer's son	3.2	1.9	0.9	7.2	6.8	39.9	40.1	100.0	531	38.9	10.1
Total, for men with occupations in 1861	6.8	2.7	1.4	16.7	12.6	52.7	7.3	100.0	3466	37.2	3.3

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In sum, these data indicate that older men were very much more likely to be farmers than their juniors. Of course, no direct inference to individual mobility patterns may be drawn from the cross-sectional results, since such a large proportion of the labour force was immigrant. We can conclude that there was no widespread tendency for people to be forced off the land during this period of early industrialization in Ontario. Compensating for the systematic increase in the proportion of farmers with increasing age was a decline in the proportion of labourers. There were also very orderly life-cycle patterns for bourgeois occupations and clerical work, with peaks around the middle and younger ages, respectively.

### Occupational Transitions

The discussion above raises a number of questions that are best answered with data linking records from the two years. Tables 4a and 4b give these results, for the original and modified occupational categorizations. In this paper our focus is on the linked sample, not on persistence and outmigration. Thus the data are uncorrected for mortality and other factors that decrease the linkage rates, such as census underenumeration. The percentages of men in the major occupational groups in 1861 census who are traced to 1871 are shown in the third column from the right. In addition to the 37.2 percent of 1861 workers with occupations in 1871, 3.3 percent were traced to 1871 but had no occupation listed in that year. Corrected for mortality, we would have a linkage rate for men with census occupations in 1861 of about 45 percent. A comparison between the top and bottom rows of Tables 4a and 4b shows the difference in the 1871 occupational distributions of men not present and present in 1861. About 53 percent of the men present in 1861 were farmers in 1871, and another 7.3 percent were farmer's sons; the corresponding values for men who appeared only in 1871 were 30 and 16.8 percent. The men first located in 1871 are a combination of in-migrants, who were less likely to be farmers than men present in 1861, and the children of parents living in the region, who were too young to have occupations in 1861.

Taking the original census occupational listings in Table 4a, just over a quarter of the 1861 labourers remained in labouring jobs a decade later; a much larger proportion, 56 percent, became farmers. The reclassification of occupations in Table 4b alters these proportions considerably: 36.3 percent of labourers in 1861 remained in that occupational category, 39.7 percent became farmers, and another 13.6 percent became artisans. Again, these figures certainly do not suggest a major decline of agriculture or widespread proletarianization in the decade of the study. The amount of movement out of labouring and into farming and artisanal occupations is especially surprising, since this transition crosses the divide between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. The addition of our data on farm size and production and on manufacturing will permit some definition of how many farmers and artisans were independent commodity producers or were actually tenants (in 1871) or wage workers.

Even more striking is the finding that nearly 90 percent of the farmers in 1861 remained in that occupation a decade later. Next most stable, in order, were the artisans, professionals, and merchants and manufacturers; the occupational persistence rates were

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65, 59 and 53 percent, respectively. The difference in the rates of occupational stability between farmers and these other groups is noteworthy. The category of farmers' sons in 1861 was also relatively stable: about 40 percent of them became farmers and 40 percent remained farmers' sons. Considering that many farmers had more than one son, these figures suggest that farmers, as a class, were very effective in preserving their patrimony. This is not to suggest that farmers' sons who became farmers during the decade were direct inheritors of land. On the contrary, most would be working new property, as the high level of persistence of farmers requires. Most striking is the finding that a remarkably small number of farmers' sons, only 17 percent, were reduced to labouring, and another 7 percent became artisans.

The most fluid occupational group was the "other nonmanual" category, which included clerical and related occupations. Only 30 percent remained in that category for a decade. Nearly 30 percent became merchants or manufacturers, 17 percent became professionals, 11 percent became farmers, and 8.5 percent became labourers. These figures suggest that clerks and men in similar occupations were often in transition towards destinations in business and the professions.

In sum, although the farmers were an exception, there was a surprising degree of occupational mobility between 1861 and 1871. There was simply no evidence of distinct barriers between the working class and petty bourgeois occupations or more generally between manual and nonmanual work. Moreover, there was no evidence of rural depopulation or of a crisis in agriculture. The data in hand do not tell the whole story of course, but they do raise central questions on each of these counts.

### **Age and Nationality Differences in Occupational Transitions**

Table 5 shows the 1861 to 1871 occupational transitions for five age groups. In order to avoid sparse distributions in these tables, age is divided into only five categories. The five age groups prove to be quite similar. In each age group, the labourers are the most mobile and farmers are the least mobile; the artisans are nearly as likely as the farmers to retain their occupations.

The most important change in occupational transitions with age involved the occupational category containing labourers and workers in similarly unskilled occupations. The ability to escape from labouring rapidly declined with age: only 21 percent of labourers under 25 in 1861 were still labourers in 1871, 43 percent of labourers between 25 and 34 remained in labouring, and the percentage rises to about 50 percent after age 35. The age pattern is different for artisans, with a peak in occupational retention of about 70 percent for artisans between 25 to 54 years. Only about half the artisans below the age of 25 or over 55 remained in that category over the ten years, with the younger ones moving first towards nonmanual occupations, then into farming, and labouring. Artisans over the age of 55 more often moved into farming and labouring.

These data suggest that occupational experience may be divided into three age ranges. Mobility was greatest below the age of 25, particularly for labourers; mobility



**Table 5**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Occupation in 1861 by Age in 1861 for Men**

Age in 1861	Occupation in 1861	Occupation in 1871 (Percentage Distribution)						Number of Cases
		Non-manual	Artisan	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer	Total	
Less than 25	Nonmanual	70	14	0	14	2	100	43
	Artisan	20	48	12	14	5	99	99
	Labourer	10	20	21	41	8	100	282
	Farmer	6	5	6	78	4	101	77
	Son of Farmer	6	7	7	35	45	100	56
25-34	Nonmanual	65	11	9	16	0	101	103
	Artisan	11	67	6	16	0	100	195
	Labourer	5	12	43	39	1	100	204
	Farmer	4	6	7	83	1	101	369
	Son of Farmer	8	10	8	63	11	100	62
35-44	Nonmanual	66	15	6	13	0	100	82
	Artisan	9	75	7	9	0	100	122
	Labourer	3	6	48	44	0	101	107
	Farmer	3	3	7	86	0	99	450
	Son of Farmer	0	0	0	100	0	100	10
45-54	Nonmanual	69	12	4	16	0	101	51
	Artisan	10	71	6	13	0	100	84
	Labourer	4	10	52	34	0	100	71
	Farmer	2	4	4	91	0	101	319
	Son of Farmer	0	0	0	100	0	100	1
55 or more	Nonmanual	75	25	0	0	0	100	12
	Artisan	3	52	18	27	0	100	33
	Labourer	7	7	51	34	0	100	41
	Farmer	1	4	7	88	0	100	191
	Son of Farmer	0	0	0	100	0	100	2

**Table 6**  
**Occupation in 1871 by Occupation in 1861 by Ethnicity in 1861 for Men**

Nationality in 1861	Occupation in 1861	Occupation in 1871 (Percentage Distribution)					Total	Number of Cases
		Non- manual	Artisan	Labourer	Farmer	Son of Farmer		
English	Nonmanual	70	15	8	8	0	101	103
	Artisan	13	69	6	11	1	100	179
	Labourer	8	21	35	35	2	101	194
	Farmer	5	4	6	85	0	100	335
	Son of Farmer	11	9	4	55	21	100	113
Scottish	Nonmanual	66	9	3	21	1	100	77
	Artisan	10	65	9	16	0	100	139
	Labourer	2	12	34	48	5	101	164
	Farmer	2	5	5	87	1	100	393
	Son of Farmer	4	8	8	35	46	101	168
Irish- Protestant	Nonmanual	63	16	7	14	0	100	73
	Artisan	9	66	4	20	1	100	104
	Labourer	12	15	23	45	6	101	172
	Farmer	2	3	5	89	1	100	439
	Son of Farmer	7	4	5	37	48	101	180
Irish- Catholic	Nonmanual	67	6	6	22	0	101	18
	Artisan	9	60	23	9	0	101	35
	Labourer	7	8	60	25	1	101	114
	Farmer	1	0	12	87	0	100	92
	Son of Farmer	3	12	9	12	64	100	33
German	Nonmanual	83	8	0	8	0	99	12
	Artisan	15	60	2	18	5	100	55
	Labourer	0	6	42	47	6	101	36
	Farmer	4	8	7	79	2	100	107
	Son of Farmer	3	7	10	66	14	100	29

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was lowest and does not vary much over the range of ages 25 and 54; and after age 54 there was an increase in occupational changes among artisans — presumably associated with retirement.

Table 6 differentiates the population by ethnicity. For all groups, including the Irish Catholics, farming was a very stable pursuit; 80 percent or more remained in that category over the decade. Similarly, there was little variation among ethnic groups in the stability of the nonmanual and artisan categories. There was only one important national difference: Irish Catholics who were labourers in 1861 were very likely to remain in that category a decade later. Fully 60 percent of the Irish Catholic labourers of 1861 were labourers in 1871, compared to 42 percent of the Germans, 35 percent of the English, 34 percent of the Scottish, and 23 percent of the Irish Protestants. Even with the sons of farmers excluded, as in this table, mobility out of labouring was largely into farming. Nearly half the Scottish, Irish Protestant, and German labourers (in 1861) were farmers in 1871, as were about one third of the English and one quarter of the Irish-Catholic labourers. Again, the experience of Irish Catholics distinguishes them. Irish Catholics were unique in this period, but at the same time they were rapidly becoming and remaining farmers. Thus, the patterns of "ethnic" occupational transitions might be expected to converge with time. These findings further support Akenson's view that the timing of immigration and the earlier phase of the movement from urban points of disembarkation to villages and rural areas might have been the key factor accounting for the main difference between Irish Catholics in 1871 and other ethnic populations.<sup>36</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This study of central Ontario reveals a considerable shift in occupational patterns of the male labour force between 1861 and 1871. In the period when we have the lucky convergence between rich census data and important historical changes, the peculiar differences in enumeration procedures make it impossible to sort out the changes in the main occupational groups, farmers and labourers. Only the availability of descriptions of entire households provides the capacity to reclassify individuals on the basis of household relations allowing us to surmount the difficulty created by the fact that in the 1861, but not in 1871, the sons of farmers were enumerated as labourers.

Tracing the individuals between 1861 and 1871 shows that there was a very great deal of individual occupational mobility. The main structural shifts were out of labouring and toward farming. For all the ethnic groups and all the age cohorts, the main transitions were into farming. In an era when there were also clear signs of early industrialization, there was certainly no broad trend toward proletarianization: there was still accessible land for farming throughout the region. These findings suggest the need to refine our view of the institutional changes brought about by early capitalist industrialization in central Canada. As Gagan<sup>37</sup> found in Peel County (which lies at the southern edge of the region we studied), for a great many people the "promise of Canadian life" was

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36. Akenson, "Ontario," p. 238.

37. Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers*, p. 111.

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expressed in a single-minded pursuit of farming. Thus did independent commodity production by family farmers expand rapidly at the same time that urban commercialization and industrialization were gathering early momentum.<sup>38</sup>

A second, unmistakable feature of economic life in this decade was the fluidity of the occupational structure: individuals often changed occupations and moved between larger occupational categories, with little regard for class or status barriers. The most important mobility was out of labouring and into farming, but men also moved into and out of virtually every other type of work, from nonpropertied to propertied, from manual to nonmanual, from unskilled to skilled, and back.

There was visible occupational specialization of ethnic groups, but, with one exception, the differences could not be called serious cleavages. Only the Irish Catholics were much overrepresented in one kind of work, labouring, and they experienced greater difficulty than other ethnic groups in moving into other occupations during the decade. Yet the rates and patterns of mobility suggest that the timing of immigration and hence the still largely urban, residence of Irish Catholics were at least partly responsible for their position, rather than institutionalized processes of ethnic concentration and exclusion.

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38. Katz, *The People*; Gregory Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1867-1892* (Toronto, 1980).