TITLE

Colonizing the West: characteristics and determinants of household structures among Canada's ethnic groups in 1901

ABSTRACT (200 words)

Canada's population history is inextricably linked with that of its ethnic groups, namely, the Indigenous peoples who first inhabited its territory, and the European immigrants who colonized it. However, the fact that Canada's aboriginal peoples preceded the arrival of the Europeans by thousands of years is often lost in the "saga" of French and British settlement (Boyd, 2015). The study aims at filling this gap by taking advantage of the newly released 100% count for 1901 census. The main research question is: what are the characteristics and determinants of household and family structures among ethnic groups in Western-Canada in 1901?

Settling the Western-Canada created three concurrent population flows: i) Indigenous peoples, being regionally relocated from their native land through treaty-making; ii) Canadian-born immigrants from Eastern Canada; iii) International European immigrants, coming in search for gold and, later for farming opportunities. Results reveal how these flows reconfigured household and family structures to an extent that remained unknown to date because of the lack of appropriate data. Moreover, findings reflect the pace of immigration and Indigenous displacement across Canada. The study would help deepening our understanding of well-documented differences in family dynamics by ethnic origin in contemporary societies (Smock and Schwartz, 2020).

LONG ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Brief history of colonization in Western Canada. French and British colonization of what are now Quebec and Ontario can be traced back to the 16th century. On the contrary, colonization of Western Canada followed a different path than on its eastern seaboard, and European settlements were established there only in the 19th century. Until then, beyond Ontario's Western border laid the vast territory of Rupert's land, an essentially private continental estate of almost 4 million km2 controlled by the Hudson Bay's Company (HBC). The Ojibway, Cree and Sioux were the main Indigenous peoples known to inhabit the region (Morris, 1880: 9). European settlement in the small area around today's Winnipeg begun in 1811, when the Scottish Earl of Selkirk acquired property rights over 300,000 km2 from the HBC with the stipulation "by ten years, to settle within the tract one thousand families" (Morris, 1880: 10). Selkirk's settlement would become known as the Red River Colony (or Assiniboia), and it remained the only non-native (albeit increasingly Métis) settlement on the Northwest Prairies for most of the 19th century. Following a treaty between the Earl of Selkirk and five Indian chiefs in 1817, the Red River Colony indeed quickly expanded from a total population of 2,390 in 1831 to 6,691 in 1856 (Statistics Canada, 2000).

The unexplored demographic history of households and families by ethnic origin. The origins of family demography can be traced back to the studies carried out in the 1950s around the question of the historical appearance and distribution of specific family structures, notably nuclear vis-à-vis extended or complex households. Early debates centering on the response of household structure to industrialization and urbanization (Goode, 1963), the durability of nuclear household formations (Laslett, 1965, 1972, 1983; Hareven, 1994) and the predominance of neolocal household formation (Hajnal, 1982; Reher, 1998; Hartman, 2004; Thornton, 2005) gave way to long-term analyses which interpret household structure in the light of demographic and economic opportunities to form particular households. By taking advantage of U.S. historical census microdata, over the past twenty-five years Steven Ruggles has empirically tested the predictions of social theory and thus gained important insights in the secular transformation of family structures in North America and other Western societies (Ruggles, 1994; 2003; 2007; 2009; 2015). Ruggles' research shows that the nuclear family was already the predominant living arrangement in the U.S. at the turn of the century owing to high mortality and fertility levels which reduced the 'demographic opportunity' for residing in multigenerational families through the limited availability of elderly kin. Analyses of the Canadian census samples for 1901 and 1911 seem to show a similar decline in co-residence (Wargon, 1979; Burke, 2007; Darroch, 2014), particularly intergenerational co-residence of elderly women (Dillon, 2014). Yet, works on the 1901 census of Manitoba suggests that these trends may be biased because census samples overrepresent large households and their complex living arrangements (Trudeau-Laurin et al., 2023). In addition, existing studies cannot fully account for ethnicity because census samples are not representative of specific ethnic groups and Indigenous peoples. These limitations have key implications for understanding household and family dynamics in Western Canada in the late 19th and early 20th century.

DATA AND METHODS

The Canadian Peoples (TCP) project has recently made available individual-level records for all enumerated residents of Canada in the 1901 and 1911 censuses. These data create the unique opportunity to study household and family structures and their evolution at the beginning of the 20th century in Western Canada, when it was receiving a "tsunami of immigrants" and more than half a century of assimilation policies implemented by the British Crown were taken over by the newly established Canadian government. This study leverages the TCP datasets to assemble 100% of individual records for Canadians enumerated from 1852 to 1921. The 1901 has been chosen for the analysis because it is the first census of all provinces to have recorded information on dwelling and households, including the relationship to the head of the household[1]. In 1901, enumerators were instructed to measure racial origin of "Indian, Eskimo, Negro, Chinese, Japanese and East Indian" by using the criteria of "colour" (Urquhart and Buckley, 1965: 6). While the paternal line continued to be the determining factor for the transmission of identity for Euro-Canadians, an additional instruction in the 1901 census stipulated that "the children begotten of marriages between whites and any one of the other races will be classed as red, black or yellow" and, from 1911 to 1921, the Indigenous origin was to be traced via the mother. These instructions "brushed aside classifications that signified Métis distinctiveness as a people in favour of a racialized 'Indian-or-white' dichotomy." (Andersen, 2008; 354-355). In contrast with existing census samples, the use of complete-count microdata enable us to view the full range of enumerator-to-respondent interactions inscribed across different census questions, notably the relationship to the head of the household and ethnic origin. The complete-count data also enable us to situate families in their neighborhood context by identifying, via ethnicity and surnames, the network of families enumerated on the same and adjoining pages. Since we use census data, family structure can be studied through the lens of households' living arrangements but, because the 1901 census enumerated dwellings and households, we can capture households' co-residence and their ties. To draw a portrait of family structures by ethnic origin, we apply an innovative methodology that does not impose any a priori classification, and thus captures the diversity of households' living arrangements (Bignami et al., 2023). By applying this methodology, individuals' relationship to the household head are used to identify all living arrangements found in the population and to best distinguish households by the presence of blood relatives.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Table 1 shows the ethnic divide separating households in Canada's Western periphery from the settled regions of Québec and Ontario. In British Columbia, where massive immigration had just begun by the time the census was taken in 1901, 60% and 8% of households had, respectively, a foreign-born and Indigenous head. In Manitoba, 4% of households had an Indigenous head, the corresponding percentage for households with a foreign-born head being 46%. In Québec, only 8% and 1% of households had, respectively, a foreign-born and Indigenous head; in Ontario, the corresponding percentages are 28% and 1%. The largest households are those headed by not Indigenous, not foreign-born in Québec (5.4 persons per household), in line with historical research showing higher fertility among the Catholic, French-speaking population (Gossage and

[1] This was not the case for the first Canadian census that included all provinces, carried out in 1881.

Gavreau, 2007). Almost equally large are Indigenous households found in Manitoba (5.2 persons per household); and Indigenous households are larger than foreign-born and non-Indigenous headed households in British Columbia as well, whereas the reverse is true in Québec and Ontario.

Table 1. Percentage of households and average household size by the ethnic origin of the head: Manitoba, British Columbia, Québec and Ontario, 1901 census

	Percent of households			**Average household size**			
	Foreign-born	Indigenous	Not Indigenous, not foreign-born	Foreign-born	Indigenous	Not Indigenous, not foreign-born	**Number of households**
British Columbia	59	8	32	4.3	4.4	4.3	*34,767*
Manitoba	46	4	50	4.9	5.2	4.9	*49,770*
Ontario	28	1	70	4.6	4.3	4.8	*444,961*
Québec	8	1	91	4.9	4.7	5.4	*289,709*

These striking regional comparisons reflect the pace of immigration and Indigenous displacement across Canada. Drawing a portrait of households' living arrangements across Canada is insightful not only to better understand differentials in household composition by ethnic group, but also to interpret the statistics presented in Table 1. Table 2 thus presents the distribution of households' living arrangements by the ethnic origin of the head. The selected six types of living arrangements are the ones with the highest statistical frequency in the population: i) lone nuclear (couple living with children and no one else); ii) lone couple (couple living with no one else); iii) lone single parent (single parent living with children and no one else); iv) lone person (individual living alone); v) multigenerational (two or more individuals related by blood – siblings or parents/children – living with no one who is not related); vi) other (two or more individuals living together whether related or not, which can include a nuclear family living with boarders, for instance).

Table 2. Percentage of households by living arrangement and the ethnic origin of the head: Manitoba, British Columbia, Québec and Ontario, 1901 census

	Foreign-born	Indigenous	Not Indigenous, not foreign-born	Total
		BRITISH COLUMBIA		
Number of households	*20,656*	*2,856*	*11,255*	*34,767*
Lone nuclear	28.8	41.3	33.1	31.2
Lone couple	8.5	17.7	8.9	9.4
Lone single parent	4.1	5.3	3.7	4.1
Lone person	17.3	7.9	14.6	15.7
Multigenerational	7.8	20.9	11.0	9.9
Other	31.9	5.3	27.5	28.3
		MANITOBA		
Number of households	*22,714*	*2,167*	*24,889*	*49,770*
Lone nuclear	47.3	50.3	40.0	43.8
Lone couple	7.7	7.7	6.7	7.2
Lone single parent	4.9	8.9	4.3	4.8
Lone person	9.4	6.4	11.2	10.2
Multigenerational	11.8	18.9	14.1	13.2
Other	18.7	7.2	23.4	20.5
		ONTARIO		
Number of households	*126,730*	*5,829*	*312,402*	*444,961*
Lone nuclear	44.4	44.9	47.4	46.5
Lone couple	10.1	11.3	9.2	9.5
Lone single parent	10.8	10.7	6.3	7.6
Lone person	5.3	9.2	3.9	4.4

Multigenerational	15.2	15.5	17.7	17.0
Other	13.2	6.9	14.3	13.9
		QUÉBEC		
Number of households	*23,141*	*2,143*	*264,425*	*289,709*
Lone nuclear	44.5	53.1	53.6	52.8
Lone couple	10.8	12.2	10.1	10.2
Lone single parent	7.4	7.0	5.7	5.9
Lone person	3.7	4.2	3.5	3.5
Multigenerational	7.8	20.9	11.0	9.9
Other	17.9	6.7	9.6	10.2

Across provinces, the lone nuclear family emerges as the dominant living arrangement regardless of ethnicity except for British Columbia, where other types of living arrangements (most often including boarders) are the most prevalent. For non-Indigenous peoples, our results are in line with the fact that colonization had revolved around the settlement of nuclear families. Indeed, we find the highest percentage of lone nuclear families and lone couples in Québec, followed by Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia. Surprisingly, however, in Western Canada, the lone nuclear family is the most prevalent when the household head is Indigenous.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

Differences in family structure and dynamics by ethnic origin are well-documented in contemporary societies (Smock and Schwartz, 2020). Historical data can help us understand how these differences arose, since the household is the central historical site of the mediation between individual experiences and structural change (Darroch, 2014). It is through their household and family experiences that people make sense of and respond to changes in the larger socio-economic and political formations that surround them. Regional comparisons of the proportion of households headed by foreign-born, Indigenous or other Canadian born between Québec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia reflect the pace of immigration and Indigenous displacement across Canada at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the portrait of living arrangements by the ethnic origin of the household head raises questions about how Indigenous peoples were counted, which are not new. It is well-established that the study of household and families via historical censuses poses problems of definition. Enumerators who encountered polygamous households, matrilocal female-headed families, the presence of half siblings or a mix of kin and non-kin or distinct dwelling structures may or may not have inscribed these features in the preconceived format of the census. The vocabulary used by particular tribes to describe family relationships may not have translated well to census English or French, kin and non-kin residents may have been conflated, honour relationships and customary adoptions left unrecognized, and seasonal variations may have gone unobserved (Shoemaker 1991: 331; Shoemaker 1992: 7; Hamilton, 2007: 74-75). The lack of trust was also a problem, as Indigenous peoples may have worried that given information would be used against them. Indigenous families may have specifically minimized the reporting of children to the DIA representatives, who often administered the census, and who were also responsible for the removal of children to residential schools (Hamilton, 2007). The lack of trust could also come from, or be amplified by the language barrier, making difficult the achievement of the census purpose (Hamilton, 2007). In light of these considerations, our findings would make a contribution to begin better understanding historical censuses as colonial settler instruments.

REFERENCES

Andersen, C. 2008. “From nation to population: the rationalisation of ‘Métis’ in the Canadian census,” Nations and nationalism 14(2): 347-358.

Bignami, S., and C.O. Simard. 2020. “Indigenous Families and Households in Canada: A Tale of Statistical Disadvantage,” Canadian Studies in Population 47(1-2): 119-130.

Bignami, S., V. Boulet and C.O. Simard. 2023. “A new methodological approach to study household structure from census and survey data,” Sociological Methods and Research 52(2) https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124120986192

Boyd, M. 2015. “Ethnicity and Race in Canada: Past and Present,” in: R. Saenz et al. (eds), The International Handbook on the Demography of Race, Springer.

Burke, S.D.A. 2007. “Transitions in Household and Family Structure: Canada in 1901 and 1991,” in: E.W. Sager, E.W. and P. Baskerville (eds.), Household counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901, Toronto, University of Toronto Press; pp. 17-58.

Darroch, G. 2014. “Household Experiences in Canada’s Early Twentieth-Century Transformation,” in: G. Darroch (ed.), The Dawn of Canada’s Century, Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press; pp. 149-190.

Dillon, L. 2014. “Aging and Social reproduction in Canada: 1901-11,” in: G. Darroch (ed.), The Dawn of Canada’s Century, Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press; pp. 191-227.

Dunn, W. and L. West. 2011. “British Columbia joins Confederation.” Canada: A Country by Consent. Artistic Productions Limited. http://canadahistoryproject.ca/1840/1840-03-war-1812.html

Gossage, P. and D. Gavreau. 2007. “Canadian Fertility in 1901: A bird’s eye view,” in: E.W. Sager, E.W. and P. Baskerville (eds.), Household counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901, Toronto, University of Toronto Press; pp. 59-109.

Hajnal, J. 1982. “Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system,” Population and Development Review 8: 449–494.

Hamilton, M. 2007. “ ‘Anyone not on the list might as well be dead’: Aboriginal Peoples and the Censuses of Canada, 1851-1916,” Journal of the Canadian Historical Association 18(1): 57-79.

Hareven, T.K. 1994. “Aging and generational relations: A historical and life course perspective,” Annual Review of Sociology 20: 437–461.

Hartman, M.S. 2004. The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hawes, J.M. and E.I. Nybakken. 1991. “The Study of the American Family,” in: J.M. Hawes and E.I. Nybakken (eds.), American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook, New York: Greenwood Press; pp. 3-14.

Laslett, P. 1965. The World We Have Lost. London: Methuen.

Laslett, P. 1972. “Introduction: The history of the family,” in: P. Laslett and R. Wall (eds.), Household and Family in Past Time, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; pp. 1–89.

Laslett, P. 1983 “Family and household as work group and kin group: Areas of traditional Europe compared,” in: R. Wall and J. Robin (eds.), Family Forms in Historic Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; pp. 513–563.

McInnis, M. 2000. “Canada’s Population in the Twentieth Century,” in Haines and Steckel, eds., A Population History of North America, Cambridge University Press.

Morris, A. 1880. The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories.

Reher, D.S. 1998. “Family ties in Western Europe: Persistent contrasts,” Population and Development Review 24: 203–234.

Ruggles, S. 1994. “The Transformation of American Family Structure,” American Historical Review 99(1): 103-128.

Ruggles, S. (2003). “Multigenerational families in nineteenth-century America,” Continuity and Change, 18, 139–165.

Ruggles, S. 2007. “The Decline of Intergenerational Coresidence in the United States, 1850-2000,” American Sociological Review 72: 969-989.

Ruggles S. 2009. “Reconsidering the northwest European family system: Living arrangements of the aged in comparative historical perspective,” Population and Development Review 35: 249–273.

Ruggles, S. 2015. “Patriarchy, Power and Pay: The Transformation of American Families, 1800-2015,” Demography 52(6): 1797-1823.

Ruppert, E.S. 2014. “Infrastructures of Census Taking,” in: G. Darroch (ed.), The Dawn of Canada’s Century, Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press; pp. 51-70.

Shoemaker, N. 1991. “Native American Families,” in H.M. Hawes and E.I. Nybakken (eds.), American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook, New York, NY: Greenwood press.

Shoemaker, N. 1992. "The Census as Civilizer: American Indian Household Structure in the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Censuses," Historical Methods 25 (1992), 4-11.

Statistics Canada. 2000. Censuses of Canada 1665 to 1871. Catalogue no. 98-187-X. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-187-x/98-187-x2000001-eng.htm

Tascherau Mamers, D. 2017. Settler Colonial Ways of Seeing: Documentary Governance of Indigenous Life in Canada and its Disruption. London: University of Western Ontario.

Thornton, A. 2005. Reading History Sideways: The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Develop-mental Paradigm on Family Life. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Trudeau-Laurin, L. S. Bignami, L. Dillon, K. Inwood, et al. 2023. “Using the TCP data to study Indigenous households’ living arrangements at the turn of the 20th century: challenges and opportunities,” Historical Methodology, submitted for publication.

Urquhart, M.C., and K.A.H. Buckley, eds. (1965). Historical Statistics of Canada. Toronto: Cambridge Universty Press.

Wargon, S.T. 1979. Canadian Households and Families: Recent Demographic Trends. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 99-753E.