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See table of contents

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"Cradle to Grave: An Examination of Demographic Behaviour on Two British Columbian Frontiers"

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW

Résumé

This paper begins an exploration of British Columbia's historical demography. It assesses rates of nuptiality and marital fertility in two turn-of-the-century cities, Nanaimo and Kamloops. Numerical male dominance is considered, along with the likelihood of high rates of nuptiality on the "frontier." The findings indicate a greater role for non-native women in early far west communities, and a greater range of options outside marriage in some locales. Fertility rates are described as well, revealing connections between natural increase and local economic factors. The study also identifies a large dependent population in the new cities and considers the effects this demographic and cost element would have had on British Columbia life.

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Cet article présente les premiers résultats d'une enquête sur la démographie historique de la Colombie britannique. Il évalue les taux de nuptialité et de fécondité maritale au tournant du siècle dans les deux agglomérations de Nanaimo et de Kamloops. Il s'arrête à la prépondérance numérique des hommes et à la probabilité de taux de nuptialité supérieurs dans les sociétés de la «frontière». Deux phénomènes en particulier retiennent l'attention: le rôle accru des femmes non autochtones dans les jeunes communautés de l'Ouest, de même que l'ouverture de l'éventail des possibilités s'offrant aux femmes en dehors du mariage, dans certaines de ces communautés. De plus, à l'examen des taux de fecondité, on décèle des liens, à l'échelle locale, entre l'accroissement naturel de la population et les conditions de l'économie. L'analyse fait enfin apparaître, au coeur de ces villes, un large groupe de personnes dépendantes dont on tente d'évaluer l'impact sur la démographie et l'économie de la Colombie britannique.

Two of the larger secondary settlements in British Columbia before the Great War were Nanaimo, a coal mining centre on the east coast of Vancouver Island, and Kamloops, a railway town at the hub of a prospecting and ranching district that linked the Okanagan to the Cariboo. Nanaimo was settled from the sea and Kamloops from the platform of a CPR station, a sure sign of dissimilar influences. By the turn of the century these small Victorian colonial cities had begun to develop identifiable demographic characteristics

Research for this paper was supported by Scholarly Activity Grants from the University College of the Cariboo. Assistance in compiling and coding census data was contributed by Sheri Thom and Jeremy Willis.

which were distinctive and important, despite successive immigration waves. Moreover, the economic circumstances of both communities ensured that newcomers were differently selected, the result being two frontier communities quite unlike each other.

Given the obsession with population policy manifested in turn of the century Dominion governments and generations of western "boosters," it is curious that historical demography in the region remains so underdeveloped.[1] No factor so fully fashioned, nor so ably mirrored frontier life as did population change. Influxes of immigrants, however, are only part of the equation, and a preliminary part at that. Immigrants wasted little time before marrying, reproducing, schooling their children, and burying their dead. As one 1979 study put it:

> It is part of the conventional wisdom of our country that we are a nation of immigrants from various lands all over the world. [. . .] However, it should also be noted that most of Canada's population growth is due to the fertility of these immigrants and their descendants, and not to immigration per se.[2]

The image of the west — even of British Columbia — as a grown-ups' frontier in which progressively larger layers are piled upon layer of adult newcomers like an inverted

1. The population history of British Columbia has been largely ignored by social historians over the last 20 years. In 1990 Jean Barman sketched the outlines of British Columbia's demographic history, emphasizing patterns of disruption and transformation. Peter Ward's paper on the settlement of B.C. by newcomers in *The Developing West* drew attention to the extent to which British Columbia stood apart, even from its nearest British North American neighbours. In both cases the larger aggregate picture overwhelms what may be significant conditions at the local level. One study, by Seager and Perry, looked at Nanaimo in the early 1890s, but that work was essentially concerned with community politics, rather than with the social environment itself, despite a nod toward demographic questions. Very recently R.A.J. McDonald published a study of the demographic complexion of what became Vancouver, B.C., one which connects the emergent socioeconomic order in the region with its population history. Otherwise, discussions of population development have generally occurred within the context of ethnic histories. See Jean Barman, "The West Beyond the West: The Demography of Settlement in British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25: 3 (Autumn 1990): 5-18; W. Peter Ward, "Population Growth in Western Canada, 1901-1971," *The Developing West: Essays in Honor of Lewis H. Thomas* (Edmonton, 1983), 155-177, esp. 175, fn.1; Allen Seager and Adele Perry, "Mining the Connections: Structure and Experience in a Nineteenth Century Coalfield," unpublished paper, BC Studies Conference, 1992, Victoria; R.A.J.McDonald, "Lumber Society on the Industrial Frontier, Burrard Inlet, 1863-1886," *Labour/Le Travail* 33 (Spring 1994): 69-96. See also Jeremy Mouat, "Men and Women in Rossland: The Significance of Gender in a Mining Community, 1890-1910," unpublished paper presented to the BC Studies Conference, 1990, Vancouver. Earlier investigations into these issues from a purely statistical perspective include Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ednid Charles, *Census Monograph No.1: The Changing Size of the Family in Canada* (Ottawa, 1948), esp. 8-12.
2. T.R. Balakrishnan, G.E.Ebanks, and C.F.Grindstaff, *Patterns of Fertility in Canada, 1971* (Ottawa, 1979), 24.

pyramid, is pure illusion. Our histories continue to emphasize the arrival and assimilation of adults rather than the rise of what might be called a "native-newcomer" population.[3]

This paper begins a larger exploration of B.C.'s historical demography by assessing rates of nuptiality and marital fertility in two tributary cities at the end of the nineteenth century.[4] The point here is to identify the gender composition of the population, the incidence of marriage on the frontier, and the size of the dependent population.[5] Nanaimo and Kamloops were selected as subject communities because of the starkly different economies on which they were built, because they remained relatively closed off from the larger centres of Vancouver and Victoria, and because, in many ways moreso than the capital or the metropolis, they were typical of the rest of the province. The basis of this study is the rich lode of data contained in the enumerators' manuscripts of 1881, 1891 and 1901. Difficulties in assuring comparability of data, however, has restricted the use of the 1901 material, meaning that 1881 and 1891 are, in this paper, the primary focus. In addition, local parish records and conventional archival resources have been tapped. The two subject communities are briefly described, incidences of nuptiality and fertility are assessed, and the theoretical implications of these findings discussed.

BACKGROUND

Of the pair, Nanaimo is far better known to historians than Kamloops. Its colourful history of violent and protracted industrial disputes, larger than life characters like the mine-owning Dunsmuir clan, and the town's success as a settlement by the 1870s have attracted both historians and playwrights.[6] The earliest Europeans in the town included miners and their families drawn from colliery villages in the British Isles, a source of labour and settlers that would continue to provide the lion's share of the district's white population. The completion of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway in 1886 spurred on coalfield growth by confirming a market for hard fuel at the southern tip of the Island. The number of colliery employees increased by more than a third from 1887 to the close of 1888; in the same period the number of adult white miners more than doubled from

3. An exception is Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian society: framing the twentieth-century consensus* (Toronto, 1976).
4. Mortality rates and the cultural aspects of death are considered in the author's unpublished paper, "Death Takes A Holiday: An Examination of Demographic Behaviour on Two British Columbian Frontiers," delivered at the 1994 BC Studies Conference in Kelowna.
5. In subsequent studies it will be shown how these early British Columbian generations were of fundamental importance to the creation of provincial society.
6. Recent monographs on the Nanaimo and area coalfield are Eric Newsome, *The Coal Coast: The History of Coal Mining in B.C., 1835-1900* (Victoria, 1989); Lynn Bowen, *Boss Whistle: The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island Remember* (Victoria, 1982) and *Three Dollar Dreams* (Lantzville, B.C., 1987). Theatrical productions include Rod Langley, *The Dunsmuirs: Alone at the Edge* (Vancouver, 1991). See also A.W.Currie, "The Vancouver Coal Mining Company: A Source for Galsworthy's Strife?," *Queen's Quarterly* LXX: 1 (1963): 50-63.

777 to 1,614.[7] As population growth accelerated so did the antipathy between coal miners and colliery owners. Strikes were a common feature of life on the coalfield and it was inevitable that established miners and their families would leave during disputes while new workers arrived to take their place.

Contemporary accounts of Nanaimo set it apart from the general run of mining towns in North America and the British Isles. It was said by one observer to have "little of that sooty, opaque appearance, either physical or moral, so common to the colliery villages of England" and by another it was described as "the brightest, cleanest, sunniest and most cheerful little place imaginable. . . ."[8] It was certainly one of the busiest. Coal exports consistently outstripped the value of British Columbian gold exports and, even in the soft market years of the early 1890s, the local population continued to grow. By 1881 Nanaimo and its surrounding area contained nearly ten thousand souls, 18,229 in 1891, and 27,198 by 1901.[9] The composition was mixed, as it had been since the 1870s, when Chinese miners first worked in mines alongside British, American, Nova Scotian, and aboriginal pitworkers.

The character of the population attracted to the Interior plateau was no less diverse, although the total was much smaller. From 1858 Americans, Europeans of all stripes, Chinese, Canadians, Mexicans, and even Vancouver Islanders clawed their way into the high country in search of gilded fortunes. Farms were established along the banks of the North and South Thompson Rivers in the 1860s, with an eye to capitalizing on the demand created by the gold miners. But the goldrush declined and so, too, did the prospects of local ranchers. The valley's economy was eventually revived by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway along the south shore of the South Thompson River and through the middle of Kamloops — described (by an Irish girl who lived there from 1883 to 1885) as:

> . . . a one street town, Chinese, Indians etc., on the lower side with the Thompson River flowing behind their shacks and the whites on the upper bank. There really seemed to be more stores, hotels and saloons than private dwellings.[10]

Despite incorporation in 1893, economic growth at the end of the century was unspectacular. There was a modest amount of coal mining undertaken in the hills overlooking Kamloops, along the North Thompson, and further south near Quilchena,

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7. British Columbia, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, [hereafter BCSP] 1888, *Report of the Minister of Mines* (Victoria, 1888): 291-292; Idem, 1889 (Victoria 1889): 340-342.
8. H.H. Bancroft, *History of British Columbia, 1792-1887* (San Francisco, 1887), 574; C.F.J. Galloway, *The Call of the West: Letters from British Columbia* (London, 1916), 89-90.
9. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada, 1890-1* (Ottawa, 1892), v.II, table i, 2-5; Idem, *Fourth Census of Canada, 1901* (Ottawa, 1906), v.I, table ix, 2.
10. British Columbia Archives and Record Service [hereafter BCARS], Government Record 2080 (Reel B9771), Mrs. H.M.Dallain, "What I Remembers: Memories of a Pioneer Daughter," British Columbia Centennial "58" Committee, Anthology Material, 22.

but hopes that Kamloops might become "a great smelting centre" were never realized. Nor were there any other key industrial developments.[11] The period from 1886 to 1914 was, however, marked by an increase in cattle and sheep ranching. As early as 1890 it was reckoned by local ranchers that the district contained 30,000 of British Columbia's 80,000 head of beef cattle, more than enough to sustain the entire population of the province.[12]

In spite of a landscape that Robert Service called "weirdly desolate and aridly morose . . . forbidding in its weariness and resigned to ruin," fin-de-siècle Kamloops enjoyed the trappings of a more mature community.[13] The *Inland Sentinel* newspaper was established, the four largest Christian denominations had at least one church apiece in the town, a water works was in operation, and electric lighting — indoors and out — was already the norm.[14] Nevertheless, Kamloops' hinterland relationship with large urban markets, the expense of irrigation in the semi-arid valley bottom, and the increasing redirection of Okanagan and Similkameen trade along a more southerly route, all placed upward limits on the settlement's population growth.[15]

When the last spike was driven, about 125 kilometers east of Kamloops, the population of the town had reached 1300.[16] Soon thereafter, once the surplus railway construction workforce had bled away, the population stabilized at about 1000 whites and a floating Chinese population ranging from 200 to 400; aboriginal numbers by this stage stood at approximately 200.[17] What spared Kamloops the fate of Ashcroft, Clinton and other nineteenth century Interior villages that failed to become twentieth century cities was Kamloops' status as a CPR divisional point. Railway crews and supervisors made their homes in the city and would continue to do so for many years to come, guaranteeing a future to Kamloops in a province already littered with ghost towns.

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11. BCARS, n.a., *Kamloops Mining Camp* (Kamloops, 1897), 8.
12. David Ll. Davies, "Cowtown and Railcity," in Wayne Norton and Wilf Schmidt, (eds.), *Kamloops: One Hundred Years of Community, 1893-1993* (Merritt, 1992), 58-60.
13. Robert Service, *Ploughman of the Moon* (New York, 1945), 302.
14. *Henderson's British Columbia Gazeteer and Directory*, vol. 3, 1891 (Vancouver, 1891), 104-105.
15. Histories of Kamloops include Mary Balf, *Kamloops: A History of the District up to 1914*, 3rd edition (Kamloops, 1989); Ken Favrholdt, *Kamloops: Meeting of the Waters* (Windsor, Ont., 1989); [n.a.], *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire . . . just a little south of Kamloops* (Knutsford, B.C., 1984); and Norton and Schmidt (eds.), *Kamloops: One Hundred Years of Community*.
16. In 1881 Kamloops was included in a larger census sub-district which included all of the communities downstream from the confluence of the Thompson Rivers to the town of Yale. Insofar as there seems to have been little to distinguish between towns like Kamloops and Yale, the whole sub-district has been used to get a sense of what the population structure was like in the closely connected river communities of settlers above Hope. Similarly, Nanaimo dominated the "Vancouver District" throughout the period under study so data from the entire census district has been utilized.
17. This did not include the subordinate settlements at nearby Savona, Chase, Monte Creek, Campbell Creek and in the Nicola Valley to the south.

The economies of these two middling British Columbia centres, then, were dissimilar. The placer mining and cattle ranching of Kamloops was to Nanaimo's monolithic industrial base what chalk is to cheese. Inevitably, the political economy of each centre was bound to manifest different features. The same was true of their respective populations.[18]

POPULATION PATTERNS

Before 1880, attempts to gather information on British Columbia's population were sporadic, inconsistent and sketchy.[19] From the 1850s the Colonial Office made repeated but unheeded requests that the local administration maintain a register of births, deaths, and marriages. In 1866 a proposal to register marriages, for example, was rejected because it was felt that settlers knew one another's affairs so well it would be redundant.[20] Two years later, Governor Frederick Seymour sourly described what he viewed as the impediments to a vital statistics registry:

> The population is greatly scattered. The majority are Indians whom we could hardly expect to register one of the three great events of their life. Many of the white men are living in a state of concubinage with Indian women far in the Interior. They would hardly come forward to register the birth of some half breed bastard.[21]

On the eve of British Columbia's entry into Confederation, Governor Anthony Musgrave was no less pessimistic. He wrote to the Colonial Office about the difficulties bound to face a proposed vaccination campaign on the Pacific coast, given "the impossibility of establishing any efficient system for the registration of Births in a wild Country like this. . . ."[22] The governors' objections were not tested in the first Dominion census, because British Columbia became a province too late in 1871 to be included.

The first useful registration of the whole population in British Columbia, therefore, was the census of 1881. Although it offers our first window "into the lives of the plain people of the past" in B.C., the census was far from flawless. As has been said of the 1861 New Brunswick census takers, most enumerators did the best they could but "by

18. The relationship between population change and socioeconomic conditions is surveyed in Roderic Beaujot, *Population Change in Canada: The Challenges of Policy Adaptation* (Toronto, 1991), 32, passim.
19. An isolated survey in 1851, for example, showed Nanaimo to have a population of 151 whites, but it indicated little else. Public Record Office [hereafter PRO], Colonial Office Papers 305(6), Letter from James Douglas to Lord John Russell, 21 August 1855.
20. PRO, Colonial Office Papers 60(24), Letter from Henry Pellew Crease, Attorney-General, to the Officer Administering the Government, copy, 28 April 1866.
21. PRO, Colonial Office Papers 60(33), Letter from Frederick Seymour to the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, 11 August 1868.
22. PRO, Colonial Office Papers 60(41), Letter from Governor Anthony Musgrave to the Earl of Kimberley, 14 December 1870.

twentieth-century standards that was not very good."[23] On Vancouver Island in the last quarter of the century the census takers were mostly unprepared and in the course of their duties they encountered difficulties which may have produced statistical inaccuracies.[24] One recruit to the 1891 census recalled his efforts around the coalport of Union Bay: "It took me about a week, doing it all on foot. A horse would have been an encumbrance, as I had to cross fences everywhere and hunt out people in the field."[25] Under these conditions incomplete surveys were inevitable.

As well, the context of the published census in western Canada had a special significance that should not be overlooked. The census was seized upon as a useful tool by community boosters, often with a degree of creative licence. One traveller, writing about Kamloops in 1907, commented that the population "was 2500, 3000 and 5000, according respectively to the census officers, the local inhabitants and the real estate agents."[26] The best resource on historic populations available to historians today thus evolved in an era of cavalier attitudes toward quantitative methods. The census manuscripts can, nonetheless, reveal much.

The societies which emerged in Kamloops and Nanaimo were, in the broadest sense, drawn from comparable sources. The English and Scots were important elements and the Chinese were extremely numerous on both the plateau and the Island. Native populations remained considerable and, in the last decade of the century especially, the presence of "Canadians" and Maritimers became significant. Americans in the high country tended to be drawn from areas other than those which furnished the U.S. element in the coalfield. Appalachian colliers — both Euro- and Afro-Americans — settled at Nanaimo, while midwestern and western ranchers (along with a few Virginians) made their way over land to Kamloops.

Similar recruitment biases were at work among the other immigrant groups as well. The fact that the British Columbian frontier brought together a cosmopolitan populace in heavier concentrations than elsewhere in western Canada naturally attracted comment. Ethnicity, race and nationality were foremost topics among contemporary writers, but

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23. Alan A. Brookes, "'Doing the Best I Can': The Taking of the 1861 New Brunswick Census," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, IX: 17 (May 1976): 90.
24. It is not known at this stage whether the British Columbian enumerators were as "underpaid, badly informed, and often poorly educated" as those in Ontario described by David Gagan in *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto, 1981), 63. See also comments on the use of the Canadian census in Eric W. Sager and Peter Baskerville, "Locating the Unemployed in Urban British Columbia: Evidence from the 1891 Census," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25: 3 (Fall 1990): 39.
25. In this instance the writer was responsible for 1000 individuals. Eric Duncan, *Fifty-seven Years in the Comox Valley* (Courtenay, B.C., 1934), 42-43.
26. Stanton Hope, *Rolling Round The World - For Fun* (London, n.d.) 17, quoted in Wayne Norton, "When the Travellers Come to Town," *Kamloops: One Hundred Years of Community*, 20

they were chiefly anxious about what they viewed as the main demographic disability of these communities: the imbalance between the numbers of men and women.

SEX RATIOS

In 1868 Governor Musgrave described the implications of a 2.77 sex ratio among the white settlers across B.C. as an "evil . . . which does more to retard the advance of the Colony than any other." [27] Even a generation later, the editor of the Williams' B.C. Directory declared the shortage of "help mates for the lonely bachelors" to be the greatest deficiency of Kamloops.[28] John Bensley Thornhill, an English travelogue writer in British Columbia, claimed on the eve of the Great War that "much of the madness in Canada is due to the fact that men, after working hard all day, have none of the comforts of home life, and have to be content with their own thoughts and their own inferior cooking." Thornhill also believed "that unless a man 'packed a woman in with him' he had little chance of succeeding as a farmer" in the Interior.[29]

The surfeit of males was perceived by British Columbia officials as a source of much dissatisfaction in the new settlements, and the cause of many out-migrations among the men. There were fears, sometimes well founded, that an unmarried male population would not sink permanent roots west of the Rockies. Despite the efforts of organizations like the United Englishwomen's Emigration Association and the United British Women's Emigration Association, assisted female emigration to British Columbia did not become significant by any measure until the first years of the twentieth century.[30] The result was a daunting male surplus among the white settlers before the Great War.

This demographic feature, however, was not unique to new settlement societies, as heavily male populations were frequently noted in rapidly expanding industrial

27. Great Britain, *Reports on the Present State of Her Majesty's Colonial Possessions, 1868*, Part II (1870): 7-9 [transmitted with *Blue Books* for 1868].
28. R.T. Williams, *The British Columbia Directory, 1882/83* (Victoria, 1883), 293.
29. J.B. Thornhill, *British Columbia in the Making* (London, 1913), 85.
30. Fawcett Library (City of London Polytechnic), *United British Women's Emigration Association Report, 1889-1890* (Winchester, 1891), 8-10; Mrs. Skinner, "In British Columbia," *The Imperial Colonist* II (1905): 67-70. One goldrush era book on the colonies argued vociferously against female emigration assistance: "Altogether it is most heartless to send poor girls out, to starve and become outcasts, in a country where there is neither shelter nor defence" against the "crafty bloodthirsty and implacable savage." How influential works such as this were in conditioning an Imperial view of B.C. is beyond determining. Duncan George Forbes, *British Columbia and Vancouver's Island: Comprising a description of these dependencies* (London, 1863), 70, 378.

communities in Britain in the nineteenth century.[31] (In the Rhondda Valley of South Wales, for example, the ratio of men to women in 1891 was about 1.6:1.) If British women were reluctant to enter local areas with limited economic prospects for their gender, they were no less cautious when it came to sailing to distant colliery villages on the far side of British North America.[32]

Regardless of analogous records from communities in Europe, this phenomenon of a high male:female ratio has come to be regarded as an almost exclusive characteristic of the North American west. Peter Ward embraced this impression when he described pre-Depression British Columbia as a society dominated by "primarily young, single men."[33] Outwardly Kamloops and Nanaimo appear to be consistent with the caricature of "A Man's Province."[34] At their very worst, the ratios run as high as 4:1 in 1881 in the Interior. This is what a glance at the published census would establish.

But this source disguises other characteristics, including a less extreme sex ratio among non-Asian settlers. The Asian population in British Columbia, drawn primarily from peasant communities in southern China, was effectively all male. The number of Chinese women found in any of the census years before the War in either Nanaimo or Kamloops can nearly be counted on the fingers of two hands. Insofar as race formed an effective barrier between Asians and Europeans in B.C., at least so far as marriage was concerned, it would be more appropriate to assess the non-Asian sex ratio.

What these non-Asian figures indicate is a frontier population that was principally male but not overwhelmingly so. Around Nanaimo the ratio of non-Asian males to females in 1881 was as low as 1.20, although by 1891 the gap had widened to 1.98 and

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31. The exclusion of women from underground work in 1842 along with restrictions on the use of children in the pits had the effect of reinforcing the adult male composition of mine labour. The number of other occupational opportunities open to young females in mining communities was limited and in some locales was shrinking. In English mining towns where other occupational niches could be found — as in Wigan, for example — rates of female employment were much higher than in the mono-industrial colliery towns elsewhere. One consequence was that women left the older coalfields and they avoided the newer ones. Ellen Jordan, "Female Unemployment in England and Wales 1851-1911: an examination of the census figures for 15-19 year olds," *Social History* 13: 2 (May 1988): 188. See also Angela John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines* (London, 1984); Edward Higgs, "Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses," *History Workshop* 23 (Spring 1987): 59-80; Marjorie Griffen Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto, 1988), 128-134; W.J. Wise, "Some Notes on the Growth of the Cannock Chase Coalfield," *Geography* XXXVI (November 1951): Part 4, 236-246.
32. E.D. Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys: A Study in Industrial Development, 1800 to the Present Day* (London, 1959), 239.
33. Ward, 170.
34. Robin Fisher, "Matter for Reflection: BC Studies and British Columbia History," *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993-94): 75.

in 1901 was wider still at 2.07. Among the adult population the sex ratio was, however, more badly skewed. In what proved to be the worst year, 1881, there were 589 men and 279 women between 15 and 45 years of age: a ratio of 2.11. The figures for Kamloops were substantially closer and the pattern of increasing maleness was reversed. In 1881 the Sub-District was 80 per cent male; this dropped to 63 per cent in 1891 and 57 per cent in 1901. Without describing household structures in detail, it should suffice to say that all but a tiny number of the women in the two cities lived in family households and not as independent settlers or in groups of unrelated women. Adult women, in sum, represented a more considerable proportion of the non-Asian population than has been recognized in the literature.

NUPTIALITY

The sex ratio in the white adult community was bound to have an impact on aspects of social behaviour, most noticeably on nuptiality.[35] Early first marriages and a high level of female nuptiality overall were two consequences of a high male:female ratio in Nanaimo.[36] This was, incidentally, confirmed by high rates of remarriage among women. Early marriages were also the norm in Kamloops, but a larger proportion of the female population between the ages of 15 and 45 years was unmarried in 1881 and 1891.

In Nanaimo, even in the most disparate years when the sex ratio was running at 2:1, it was still statistically possible for as many as one-in-two of the nineteenth century Vancouver Island miners to have co-resident wives. This was a far sight better than in California's goldfields, where miners were faced with a 9:1 ratio, or in the hardrock towns of Montana, where there were four men for every woman.[37] In fact, almost 40 per cent of the Nanaimo miners found in the 1880/1 manuscript census (and again in 1891) were married. A further 21 per cent of the total were living in family households, either as sons or siblings of other miners, farmers or widows.

These figures are worth sober reflection, given the emphasis in the literature on a male-dominated and potentially explosive workforce in British Columbia mining communities. Twenty-seven years ago Paul Phillips ascribed the propensity to strike in

35. Where there are considerably fewer women than men one can expect a higher rate of marriage among the female population than where there is parity; moreover, one can expect to find an earlier age at first marriage, as men will seek out potential spouses among teenaged women.
36. One Nanaimo area register of marriages enumerated 72 weddings over a decade, eleven of which involved women marrying for the second or third time. United Church Archives (Vancouver) Ladysmith, BC, First United [Presbyterian] Church. Marriage Register, 1904-1919.
37. Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1841-1880* (New York, 1963), 17,40. In a sample of mining camps in Idaho the average female proportion was 26.3 per cent in 1880. Elliot West, "Five Idaho Mining Towns: A Computer Profile," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 73: 3 (July 1982): 110. See also West's relevant work, "Beyond Baby Doe: Child Rearing on the Mining Frontier," in Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (eds.), *The Women's West* (Norman, Okla., 1987), 179-192.

B.C.'s coal towns to "conditions on the frontier" which included "a high proportion of single transient workers" and "limited opportunity for families."[38] The theory assumed that a militant working class appeared in part because unmarried men living in isolated resource-extraction villages had little to lose in mounting confrontations with their employers. The presence of a substantial married population, one which entailed dependent children in large numbers, does not square with those earlier, facile theories of frontier social dynamics.

In and around Kamloops, on the other hand, despite a closer sex ratio, nearly three-quarters of the adult non-Asian population was single in 1881. And of the 165 who were married, forty-five had no co-resident spouse. Ten years later, over 35 per cent of the high country population was married, but fewer than half of the married individuals lived with co-resident spouses. In other words, large numbers of married men without their wives remained a feature of this frontier community, something that was distinct from Nanaimo's record. The practice of sojourning evidently was not isolated to members of the Chinese community. What is more, only 93 of 627 adult non-Asian men in the Kamloops area were married in 1881, a mere 15 per cent.

Even more puzzling and of far greater demographic significance is the discovery that, quite unlike Nanaimo's adult women (who reached nuptiality levels of as much as 93 per cent in 1891[39]) the female population of Kamloops between the ages of 15 and 40 years of age was well divided between single and married women. Only 62 per cent were married in 1881 and this figure actually fell in 1891 to 58 per cent. Even in the cohort most likely to be married — the 25 to 34 year-olds — just 56 per cent were married in 1881, rising to a more respectable 79 per cent in 1891. The pressures which an agricultural economy put upon couples to postpone marriage until some degree of security had been acheived were clearly evident in Kamloops, which lacked the superior wages for young men observed in Nanaimo.[40]

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38. Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1967). While the "isolated mass" proposed by Kerr and Siegel has been critiqued and dismissed by a number of labour historians, it remains the case that geographic isolation from the larger commercial and political centre (Victoria) was an undeniable part of the Vancouver Island miners' experience. On the other hand no attempt has been made, prior to the present one, to critique the assumption made in the isolation model that extreme sex ratios were unavoidable and played a crucial role in setting the sociopolitical tone of such places. See Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, "The Interindustry Propensity to Strike — an International Comparison," in Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin, Arthur M. Ross (eds.), *Industrial Conflict* (London, 1954), 189-212; Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (Cambridge, 1974), 387-395; Ian McKay, "Coal Miners and the Longue Duree," *Labour/Le Travail* 20 (Fall 1987): 222-223.
39. This figure refers to the proportion of Nanaimo women, aged 25-34 years, who were listed as married in the census in 1891.
40. John Douglas Belshaw, "The Standard of Living of British Miners on Vancouver Island, 1848-1900," *BC Studies* 84 (Winter 1989-90): 37-64.

The ranchland and goldfield world of the Thompson Valleys, a metaphor for independent production, welcomed families, though not as aggressively as Nanaimo. As a prescient example of boosterism claimed of Kamloops in 1887:

> ... the growth of the place is not marked by that feverish excitement and that nervousness which are so characteristic of many western towns. It is rather the growth of a place to which people come with the intention of remaining — of settling down and working for and obtaining a respectable living.[41]

A slower pace of growth based on marginal agriculture, high-risk prospecting, and small-town commerce, would typify the high country hub town.

These were qualities which would reduce the viability of early and widespread marriages. Economic necessity, moreover, encouraged Kamloopsian women to seek careers of their own. The 1891 census found fifty-two women working in specified occupations (see Table 1), including fourteen sex trade workers euphemistically described as "dressmakers."[42] Although a recent retrospective of the work of the Victoria photographer Hannah Maynard described her as "an anomaly as a professional woman photographer," she had two female contemporaries in Kamloops in the 1890s.[43] The heterogeneity of early British Columbian "frontier" demography was, thus, related to variations in the marketplace.

Another aspect of nuptiality is the age at first marriage. It is widely assumed that in communities where a high male: female ratio prevails, the age at first marriage will drop among the female population.[44] The census enumerators' books do not provide specific information on age at marriage but enough data is given to permit some assessment of nuptiality. By taking the age of married white mothers under 35 in 1881 and subtracting the age of their eldest co-resident child an estimate can be made of probable age at marriage or, more cautiously, the woman's age at the time of her first surviving live birth. The same calculation can be performed to reveal age at first marriage among men. This approach is flawed insofar as it cannot take account of early miscarriages, nor can it include the death of offspring through accidental causes or childhood illness before the census. Having said that, however, these difficulties would tend only to overestimate the age of local women at the time of marriage, something which merely reinforces the conclusions reached here.[45] In Kamloops, aboriginal women (whether married to native

41. BCARS, *The Colonist [Victoria] Holiday Number*, 1887, 14.
42. This curiousity of the 1891 Census was drawn to my attention by Dr. Patrick Dunae.
43. Emily Carr College of Art & Design, *The Photographs of Hannah Maynard: 19th century portraits* (Vancouvern 1992); Wilf Schmidt, "Mary Spencer: Kamloops Photographer 1899-1909," in Norton and Schmidt, *Kamloops*, 41.
44. An excellent recent work in this area is Dov Friedlander, "The British Depression and Nuptiality: 1873-1896," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXIII: 1 (Summer 1992): 19-37.
45. For a discussion of this type of method see John Demos, "Families in Colonial Bristol, Rhode

Table 1:
Occupations of Kamloops Women, 1891

Description	Numbers so occupied
Baker	1
Farmer	1
Hotel Keeper	1
Merchant	1
Music Teacher	1
General Store Clerk	2
Milliner	2
Waitress	2
Cook	3
Nun/Nun Supervisor	3
Nurse	3
Tailor	3
Teacher/School Matron	3
Packer	3
Dressmaker/Prostitute	9
Servant	14
Women with specified occupations	52

(Source: Canada, Census Enumerators' Manuscript, 1891.)

or non-native men) appear on average to have had their first-born at the age of 18.[46] Non-native women, however, were 22.21 years old on average at first birth. These figures suggest an age at first marriage around 21.5 for non-aboriginal women and around 17.33 for native women, assuming that none of these women were pregnant on their wedding day.[47] Church registers corroborate this evidence. The median age at first marriage of Methodist women married in Kamloops between 1891 and 1904 was 19 years; for men it was 27 years. In the decade that followed, Methodist women and men wedded at slightly more advanced ages, 23.66 and 29.78 years respectively. Among the Anglican women first married in Kamloops from 1885 to 1888, the average age was 22.09 years; the cohort wedded between 1892 and 1901 was slightly younger, 21.96 years.[48] From 1904 to 1912 age at first marriage for Anglican women climbed to an average of 25.62. The average age for Anglican men at marriage was 34.16 (1885-1888), 26.96 among those married between 1892 and 1901, and 30.14 from 1904 to 1912. These samples are small[49], so

Island: An Exercise in Historical Demography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXV (1963): 102-103.

46. Catholic Church Archives, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Kamloops, Marriage Registers, 1880–1920.
47. Instances can be discerned from these records of weddings which took place after a pregnancy had begun, but there is every indication that these were exceptional in the extreme.
48. Anglican Archives, Cariboo Diocese [Kamloops], Register of Marriages, 1884-1912. The Cariboo Diocese was created in 1912; before that time Kamloops was included in the Columbia/New Westminster Diocese.
49. The samples of age at first marriage includes 90 records for men and 89 for women over the

caution must be exercised in reaching conclusions, but the trend towards later marriages among every denomination after 1900 appears to have been very strong. The age of Kamloopsian men at first marriage is also worth emphasizing for being comparatively high.

The figures from Nanaimo identify a different experience. There, women married earlier on the whole, and they continued to do so into the twentieth century. This probably reflects a disposition toward early marriages among mining populations in Britain, a practice that was transferred to Vancouver Island by immigrants.[50] The average age at first marriage among colliers' wives in Britain in the 1880s was 22.46 years; on Vancouver Island the average age of women married to miners at first birth was 20.7 years. Even in the Black Country, whence many of the Nanaimo miners originated, the average age of miners' wives at the birth of the oldest co-resident child in 1851 was 25.84 years.[51] The average age of non-mining males in Nanaimo at the birth of their eldest child was 29.9; for miners, the average age is 27.5.[52]

Again, church registers substantiate these estimates. Marriage records maintained by St.Paul's Anglican Church at Nanaimo from 1862 to 1879 — for many years the only protestant church in the area — disclose that coalfield women were marrying very young. Of seventeen weddings for which the bride's age is given, in only ten were the women 18 years of age or older. Two brides are listed as 15 at the time of their weddings. Two of the British women on the marriage register indicate the social norms: a 16 year-old from Dudley was the first woman to be married in the church and her footsteps to the alter were traced a few months later by a 17 year-old girl from the same Black Country town. Apart from one exceptionally mature case — a 42 year-old bachelor miner who married a 42 year-old spinster teacher from Norfolk in 1878 — the oldest bride in the record is 22.[53] Marriage registers for Ladysmith's Presbyterian Church in the early twentieth century contain similar figures.[54]

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period 1885-1888 and 1904-1912.

50. See R.B. Outhwaite, "Age at First Marriage in England from the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, XXIII (1973): 55-70.
51. Ruth M. Crofts, "Madeley: A Mining Community in the Third Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," (M.A. thesis, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 1983), 33.
52. One historical case study maintains that late marriages can be attributed almost entirely to poor farming conditions and local economic difficulties but in that instance both men and women married late. The exceptional thing about the Vancouver Island mining community is that only the men married late. See Robert E. Bieder, "Kinship as a Factor in Migration," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* XXXV: 3 (1973): 426-439.
53. Archives of the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia, Text 330, Box 8, St. Paul's Nanaimo, 1861-1881.
54. United Church Archives (Vancouver), Ladysmith Presbyterian Church.

For Nanaimo's female cohorts, then, early marriages were the general rule and no doubt the primary cause of high fertility levels (see below). Men in the district, however, married later in life and were nearly 30 years old before they saw their first child. These facts suggest that the selection process for emigrants from the British Isles may have produced an overrepresentation of older husbands, men who stayed single longer and saved the large sums of money necessary to emigrate.

As for the marrying habits of British Columbia women, colonial conditions may have had some bearing. One feature of frontier nuptiality that has been observed in other areas of recent European settlement is the tendency of locally born women to marry earlier than immigrant women.[55] Setting aside, for the moment, marriages involving aboriginal women, the Euro-Canadian women of the Nanaimo area who were born in British Columbia married considerably earlier than their immigrant neighbours. The same held for British Columbia-born white women in the Thompson Valleys. In the 1890s, for example, there was one case of a British Columbian woman in Kamloops marrying at 14 (her sister married shortly thereafter at 16 years). Although none married younger than 16 years in the 1904-1913 cohort, the British Columbians continued to anchor the range of figures. This was especially noticeable among "half-breed" women in 1901, who tended to have their first child a full year earlier than their wholly European sisters. The youngest brides in church records in the Interior, however, were consistently B.C.-born, regardless of ancestry.

In short, then, the settlers of these two towns were united in a pattern of early marriages but parted company on the frequency of nuptiality among women. Marriage came early and to virtually all of the women in Nanaimo, while Kamloopsian women stayed unwed for somewhat longer, perhaps permanently. Cultural as well as demographic pressures to marry were evidently less intense in the Thompson Valleys; alternately, the community may have attracted a slightly older population of unmarried women whose presence at the census affects the statistics.

Both possibilities were embodied in the experience of female school teachers who arrived in the Interior at ages ranging from 20 to 28. The Anglican Bishop at New Westminster recruited instructors for Kamloops but the English or Eastern Canadian women were "so soon married that the Bishop was always sending for a new one."[56] At the turn of the century, the "young school teachers were very much in demand [at dances] and never lacked for partners. Most of them ended up as ranchers' wives."[57] One of the most precious accounts of catch up nuptiality has been left by a Nova Scotian woman

55. See, for example, Russell R. Menard and Lorena S. Walsh, *The Demography of Somerset Country, Maryland: A Progress Report* (Chicago: Newberry Papers in Family and Community History, #81-2, 1981), 18-21. This trend is, however, reversed in the Mennonite communities studies by Royden K. Loewen. See *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Toronto, 1993), 229-230.
56. BCARS, GR 2080 (Reel B9771), Dallain, "What I Remember," op.cit., 24.
57. M.E. Armstrong, "Country Dances," *Okanagan History* 49 (1985): 160.

who took up a teaching post at Lower Nicola and Quilchena in 1888. Annie McQueen was in the district for no more than four months before she became the object of at least two suitors' attentions. Marking her first New Year's Eve in British Columbia, she wrote home, teasing her mother about her prospects: ". . . what would you say if I told you that by-and-by I was going to marry a B.C. businessman, one who is nice, steady, clever and wealthy into the bargain? Mind, I don't say that this is the case, but what would you say if it were?"[58] Within a year she was wed.

It is impossible at this stage to say whether single women turned their demographic deficit to good use in the British Columbian west. Among those who took their nuptials at Nanaimo, miners' daughters favoured miners' sons and so benefitted little if at all socially from being "exceedingly scarce."[59] Of the twenty-six miners' daughters married in the Presbyterian church at nearby Ladysmith from 1904 to 1915, all but four married miners.[60] At Kamloops, the records of the Anglican church suggest that, down to 1902, farmers' daughters and farmers' sons were a likely coupling, but there were even more daughters of ranchers and farmers who married merchants, clerics, or artisans.[61] This small sample can scarcely be used to determine whether or not upward social mobility was the goal and achievement of Kamloopsian women.[62] After all, many of the local farmers were also engaged in retailing, milling and other activities that brought them into town to do far more than simply trade farm surpluses.

Because informal social sanctions forbade marriages between Asian men and Euro-Canadian women, it is worth noting tangentially that liaisons were established between at least a handful of Chinese men and aboriginal women. Chow Bing Yit, a '49er who made his way to the Fraser River goldrush and a commercial career in Yale, married a daughter of Tsah'kwah'lait'sa [sic], a Chilliwack tribal chieftain. This integration of Asian and Amerindian households continued through two subsequent generations. Notwithstanding the profound fecundity of Chow Bing Yit and his heirs, it is impossible at this stage to say how common Asian-Aboriginal marriages of this kind were overall.[63]

FERTILITY

It was anticipated that, regardless of respective nuptiality rates in Kamloops and Nanaimo, a pronounced variation would appear in calculations of community fertility. This is because of the high proportion of coalminers in the Nanaimo population,

58. BCARS, Add Mss 860, McQueen Family Papers. Letter from Annie McQueen to her Mother, 7 January 1888.
59. PRO, Colonial Office Papers 60, Crease to the Officer Administering the Government.
60. Ladysmith Presbyterian Church.
61. Anglican Archives, Cariboo Diocese.
62. The sample size is described in fn. 48, above.
63. Charles Lee Jr., "Two Chinese Families of the British Columbia Interior: A short history of the family of Charles Lee of Kamloops and of his wife Jessie Hing," unpublished paper in the author's collection, courtesy of Ms. Rose DeLap.

specifically miners from Britain. Nineteenth century British colliers, it has been observed in a variety of studies, sustained high rates of fertility. While self-imposed family size limitation affected most of the British working class in the second half of the century, miners continued to produce large families.[64] Estimates vary widely but there is a consensus that miners on average fathered one more child than did husbands in other occupational categories, although colliers were not the only "notoriously prolific section of the population."[65]

Explanations are easy to find. Rates of nuptiality among British miners were characteristically high and colliers tended to marry younger than other working class males because of relatively high earning power at an early age.[66] Likewise, coalfield women in Britain were usually married before their counterparts in other industrial and non-industrial areas and there was a high incidence of marriage overall.[67] And the mining industry itself encouraged large families by providing work for the sons of miners and, through them, a means to achieving some measure of household economic security. Given the number of young wives at Nanaimo, one would naturally anticipate a higher fertility rate on Vancouver Island than in the Old Country's coalfields. Indeed, the *Victoria Colonist* in the early 1870s commended Nanaimoites for their evidently exceptional fertility:

> [The] ladies of Nanaimo are determined to hold the foremost rank in reproductiveness and are furnishing more liege subjects for Her Majesty than any other locality in the Colony of equal population. By rapid home production we may be at last independent of immigration.[68]

If this suggests the survival of pre-emigration values and social behaviour, other measures of fertility seal the case.

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64. P.E.H. Hair, "Children in Society," in Theo Barker and Michael Drake (eds.), *Population and Society in Britain, 1850-1980* (London, 1982), 40-41. See also T.H.C. Stevenson, "The Fertility of Various Social Classes in England and Wales from the Middle of the Nineteenth Century to 1911," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* LXXXIII (1920): 420-432.
65. Arthur Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester, 1964), 56-57; John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980), 121-123; Dov Friedlander, "Demographic Patterns and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Coal-mining Population in England and Wales in the Nineteenth Century," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* XXII: 1 (October 1973): 43; D. Glass, *Population Policies and Movements in Europe* (Oxford, 1940), 69; Michael Haines, "Fertility, Nuptiality, and Occupation: A Study of Coal Mining Population and Regions in England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* VIII: 2 (Autumn 1977): 253, 256.
66. Haines, 271-272; Friedlander, 40.
67. R.I. Woods and P.R.A. Hinde, "Nuptiality and Age at Marriage in Nineteenth Century England," *Journal of Family History* X: 2 (Summer 1980): 134.
68. Quoted in Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams*, 133.

Around Nanaimo the ratio of children under five years of age to women from 15 to 45 years for the non-aboriginal/non-Asian population was 633 children per 1000 females in 1881.[69] Comparable fertility figures from the American Pacific northwest show that the Nanaimo and Wellington area was slightly above the average for the region — Washington State had a ratio of 591 per thousand and there were 623 children per 1000 women in Oregon.[70] In Victoria around the same time the figure was much lower, only 348 per 1000 women. Marital fertility (i.e., the ratio of infants to married women) in Nanaimo was, naturally, higher: in 1881 there were 1038 under-fives for every thousand married women, 677 in 1891.

Regardless of the British miners factor in Nanaimo, the coalfield fertility rate was surpassed initially by the Interior plateau communities. There the ratio stood at 991 children per 1000 women aged 15-45 in 1881, but this fell to 534 per thousand in 1891. Marital fertility rates, because of the higher proportion of unwed women in Kamloops, were more extreme. In 1881 there were 1569 infants per thousand married women, although this too fell in 1891, to 680 per thousand. This change reflects a post-CPR increase in the number of women in the region relative to the number of children, not a sudden decline in the infant population. Presumably the availability of land and the utility of children in an agriculturally based economy were key factors in the Thompson Valleys.

This Malthusian equation had its limitations, however, as successive generations of settlers in the Kamloops area encountered difficulties with the finite carrying capacity of the semi-arid landscape.[71] Sheep, horse, or cattle ranching necessarily took precedence over crop farming because of soil quality, climate, and market considerations. But ranching requires large tracts of land in order to succeed commercially. The implications of these facts could be seen in the nearby Lac Du Bois settlement where, in the 1920s, nearly three dozen families were homesteading on the plateau overlooking Kamloops; by 1970 the entirety of this spread was in the hands of three large ranch interests. In fact, some of the early twentieth century farmers and their families were driven off the plateau by starvation before the 1930s.[72] Despite the apparent hardship that some early settlers endured, Kamloops witnessed positive demographic processes among those who acquired good bottom land and for those whose wages were secure and plentiful. As

69. Canada Census, 1880/1. For a range of quantitative approaches to fertility measurement see J. Dennis Willigan and Katherine A. Lynch, *Sources and Methods of Historical Demography* (London, 1982), 102-103.
70. Jim Potter, "The Growth of Population in America, 1700-1860," in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (London, 1965), 674-675.
71. A critique of the perceived link between fertility and areas of new farm settlement is made in R.M. McInnis, "Childbearing and Land Availability: Some Evidence from Individual Household Data," in Ronald Demos Lee (ed.), *Population Patterns in the Past*, (London 1977), 201-227.
72. Roland Neave, "History of Settlement in the Lac Du Bois Basin, 1840-1970: A Study in Sequent Occupance," *B.C. Perspectives* (February 1972): 21.

Donald Eversley observed nearly 30 years ago, "Ample food could scarcely fail to have beneficial effects on marriage, fertility and mortality . . . ."[73]

High levels of fertility dictated certain social obligations and duties. The proportion of the two populations which was dependent ran as high as in more mature settlements, in spite of the near total absence of elderly cohorts. Even in 1881 nearly 22 per cent of the population around Kamloops was under 16 years of age. Their proportion of the total population would rise to approximately 36 per cent in 1891 and 40 per cent in 1901. Dependents who were neither Asian nor described as native constituted 28.6 per cent of the non-native, non-Asian population in 1881, so the experience of having children and providing for children would have been a familiar one across this area of new settlement. And in this respect Kamloops was bettered by Nanaimo. There, children under 15 and men and women over 60 together comprised almost 40 per cent of the total in 1881. The level of dependency was comparable to the figure of 45 per cent found in the Black Country mining town of Madeley in the same year.[74] There is a falling off in dependence rates over the next twenty years but in 1901 the level in Nanaimo was still above 35 per cent.[75] High fertility rates thus translated into high dependency rates, although these figures were no doubt inflated by the arrival of families from points east. The key here is to take note of the presence of large numbers of children in a region defined in the literature — historic or otherwise — by its adult maleness.[76]

CONCLUSION

In the 1980s labour historians turned a critical eye on the frontierist theories held by Phillips, David Bercuson and others.[77] Nonetheless, the demographic premiss suggested by earlier historians has only recently been challenged.[78] What this study contributes is an insight into the ways in which the British Columbian frontier was populated and ways in which the frontier was demographically heterogeneous. The

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73. D.E.C. Eversley, "Population, Economy and Society," in Glass and Eversley, *Population in History*, 63.
74. Crofts, 31.
75. Canada, *Census 1901*.
76. The Kamloops-based novel, *Caprice*, makes ironic use of a female protagonist while poking fun at the whole "duster" genre, but it still conforms to (and in its own way perpetuates) the stereotypical masculine view of the far west. George Bowering, *Caprice* (Markham, Ont., 1988).
77. An example of this revisionist approach can be found in Jeremy Mouat, "The Genesis of Western Exceptionalism: British Columbia's Hard-Rock Miners, 1895-1903," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXI: 3 (September 1990): 318-319.
78. Newsome notes that the early Fort Rupert community had "a maturity and balance seldom found in a pioneer settlement on a distant frontier." He does not, however, consider the implications of that demographic pattern, nor how it changed. *The Coal Coast*, 45. A more considered beginning is made in Allen Seager, "Miners" Struggles in Western Canada: Class, Community, and the Labour Movement, 1890-1930," in *Class, Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada, 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1989), 160-198.

long-standing impression that the coalfield population of Vancouver Island was simply young, male, single and disaffected must be discarded. Likewise the raw image of the Interior as a burly settlement frontier of men must be modified. In the latter region unmarried adult women were plentiful in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the parameters of their lives and lifecycles obviously defined by elements additional to, or exclusive of, marriage.

As for the political implications of earlier characterizations of the "frontier," the truth is that married men with large numbers of dependents had more at stake and thus more to fight for. As E.H. Hunt writes, "To study labour history some knowledge of population history is essential, for nothing else, except perhaps industrialization so fundamentally shaped working-class existence."[79] In the case of British Columbia, putting women, children and old people back into the history of B.C.'s common people would constitute an important first step. Although the focus of the present examination has been kept purposely narrow — addressing only basic questions associated with fertility and nuptiality — in these fundamental aspects of social history one can identify three primary features of life in the Interior and on the Vancouver Island coalfield .

First, a moderate male:female ratio on the B.C. frontier could be hidden by the presence of large numbers of non-European males. For Asians there was no escaping the fact that women were few and far between in their community; the Euro-Canadian component, however, manifested much more modest gender ratios. If the Chinese and Euro-Canadian communities gave each other a wide berth from day to day, then the fact of statistically extreme sex ratios might not have felt so excessive to the non-Asian population, regardless of what appeared in published travelogues.

Second, marriage (especially among women) was more common and occured at an earlier age in Nanaimo than Kamloops. This fact reflects the integrity of a transplanted colliery town culture at Nanaimo. But it must be emphasized that earlier thresholds in the female life course in the colliery town were not simply a function of attracting young and energetic pioneers. Rather, it points to the genuine social and cultural differences that existed within thriving British Columbia communities.

Third, with respect to fertility, the two communities' patterns were clearly linked to varying rates of female nuptiality and early female marriages.[80] Nanaimo's legacy of collier fertility rates was a factor, but so was the apparent propensity of Kamloopsian women to postpone marriage. Such an option would have been officialy inconceivable on Vancouver Island. State interests and those of local capitalists were, on this score at least, mutually compatible. From the 1860s on the colonial administration sought to establish a loyal presence on the island which would brake American expansion; mineowners had a crying need for skilled workers whose efficiency in the early stages

79. E.H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), 32.
80. See Jacques Henripin, *Trends and Factors of Fertility in Canada* (Ottawa, 1972), 24-28.

of mine development would quickly repay the cost of their recruitment.[81] Both the colonial/provincial government and the first wave of mine operators favoured families to single men because families were thought more likely to "sink roots," and boys were welcomed as another part of the wage-labour workforce. It was, then, a frontier founded on the promise of natural increase. By contrast, the sovereignty of the Interior was never so much in question as it was on midcentury Vancouver Island. Fears of U.S. expansionism had dimmed by the 1880s, and there were no private sector advocates of immigrant family recruitment to parallel those at Nanaimo, Ladysmith and Cumberland. Land ownership in Kamloops would prove as stabilizing as marriage, it was reckoned.

With this information in mind, the orthodoxy about B.C.'s frontier political and social milieux must also be reassessed. The presence rather than the absence of families must be integrated into explanations for the efflorescence of organisations like the Knights of Labor or the railway workers' unions; the story of the growth of urban/town amenities must integrate the concerns of women, who were more likely to be found in regionally influential towns like Kamloops than out on the range. There is, as well, the hoary image of the Canadian frontier as one in which violence and conflict was less common than in the American West. Insofar as there is any truth to this perception of the "counter-frontier," to what extent was it due to demographic conditions?[82] Granted that unmarried men — of whom there were a great number in British Columbia — perhaps had less at stake and may have been more willing to mobilize against mine operators and railway bosses; but it was the population of married men, their wives, and their offspring who nurtured community associations, friendly societies, and even early trade unions in nineteenth century British Columbia.

Moreover, the figures outlined here have implications for gender history. There has been, for over a generation now, a call for a clearer understanding of the historic experience of women in Canada. This has been followed more recently in British Columbia by an insistence that the predominantly male aspects of the province's frontier phase ought to be recognized.[83] Agreed, on both counts, and close demographic studies of individual communities in the province can reveal much. More than that, population studies allow us to test the widely circulated published descriptions of the west, accounts which were composed most often by gentlemen like Lieutenant R. C. Mayne and

81. Carlos Schwantes, *Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism and Reform in Washington and British Columbia 1885-1917* (Seattle, 1979), 10-14; Glynn Barratt, *Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1890* (Vancouver, 1983); Peter Guy Silverman, "A History of the Militia and Defences of British Columbia, 1871-1914,'(M.A. Thesis, UBC, 1956); British Parliamentary Papers, 1871, XLVII, *Reports of Colonial Possessions*, Part II, 7.
82. Barry Gough, "The Character of the British Columbia Frontier," *BC Studies* 32 (Winter 1976-77): 28-40.
83. Fisher, "Matter for Reflection.'

Dr. Cheadle.[84] Men were more numerous but, more to the point, they were more visible to everyone save the census-taker. And if women were less frequently observed by travel writers and others in search of the bold and mythical frontier, so too were children. The role of the earliest generations of "British Columbians" — that is, non-aboriginals who knew no other home — must be more fully probed. Natural increase dwelt in the shadow of immigration, but high fertility rates guaranteed a rising provincial cohort whose experience and emergent culture awaits its historian. Surely no other 25 per cent of the population has been so badly served.

Dr. J.S. Helmcken, colonial politician, physician and sometime prophet, said in 1871 that he and his contemporaries in B.C. would learn to be Canadians from their children. The perceptive doctor ought now be gently turned on his head: historians of the westernmost province will learn what it was like to be British Columbians from those generations that followed Helmcken's. It is within the lives of those British Columbians, those "native-newcomers," whose cradles and graves lay within the same province that we will discern the genesis of values, perceptions, and prejudices which distinguishes the regions of B.C. from one another and the province as a whole from its neighbours.

84. R.C. Mayne, *Four Years in Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (London 1862); John Gellner, (ed.), *Cheadle's Journal, being the Account of the First Journey across Canada undertaken for pleasure only, by Dr. Cheadle and Lord Milton, 1862/1863* (Toronto: Baxter Publishing, n.d.).