

# Measuring Morals: The Beginnings of the Social Survey Movement in Canada, 1913–1917

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*During the 1910s a series of general surveys was conducted, primarily by an alliance of Methodists and Presbyterians whose primary target was the moral condition of the larger Anglo-Canadian cities. This paper explores the techniques employed and the underlying logic of these investigations by examining the implicit links between the different forms of data collected and published. These links reveal a distinctive construction of “moral danger” organized around the axes of urbanization and immigration viewed through the lens of temperance and an activist Protestantism.*

*Durant les années 1910, une série d'enquêtes générales ont été réalisées, surtout par une alliance de méthodistes et de presbytériens qui s'intéressaient principalement à la condition morale des grandes villes anglo-canadiennes. Le présent article explore les techniques et la logique sous-jacente de ces enquêtes en examinant les liens implicites entre les différents types de données recueillies et publiées. Ces liens révèlent une construction distincte du « risque moral » articulée autour des axes de l'urbanisation et de l'immigration vus par le prisme de la tempérance et d'un protestantisme activiste.*

IN THE EARLY years of the twentieth century North America witnessed an upsurge of attempts to investigate the moral climate. Forms of investigation categorized as “surveys” were the main technique employed, and different forms of surveys were produced in Canada. To what extent can these surveys can be understood as attempts to measure morals? I offer a reading of the Canadian social survey movement, not by asking questions about reformers’ motives, but rather by focusing on the way in which the surveys problematized Canadian social life through the construction of a network of dangers and evils generated by the interaction of urbanism and immigration.

Much of the attention focused on the formation of “the social” during the course of the nineteenth century has emphasized the key role of the emergent

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welfare state in constituting a network of fields through which it could act upon an aggregated population.<sup>1</sup> This line of argument is extended here by the contention that non-state bodies, such as the Canadian survey movement, played a key role in elaborating the elements, schematically represented by urbanism and immigration, that formed the core of the problematization of the social realm.

The Canadian social surveys can be understood through the lens of the idea of “pastoral power” as a form of power focused on ensuring, sustaining, and improving the well-being of the population through attending to the lives of each and every individual. The social survey project was a form of pastoral power that identified social problems in the form of troublesome populations and locations and sought to institute forms of regulation that addressed individuals for their own benefit and for the well-being of the whole.

In Canada projects of moral reform had been initiated from the early days of settlement as a distinctively Protestant tradition. Traditionally these had taken the form of moral exhortation grounded in religious moral codes such as the Ten Commandments. With increasing religious pluralism and secularization, appeal to such unitary codes ceased to have the same effectiveness. The Canadian Presbyterians came increasingly under the influence of “social gospel” theology, which shifted the focus of attention from individual salvation to what may be called moral environmentalism.<sup>2</sup> The task of instilling piety, purity, and probity involved addressing the “social question”, social and economic conditions under which the population lived. Between 1909 and 1911 the Presbyterian Board of Social Service and Evangelism undertook a study of “the city”. The Board’s report argued that the moral condition of the cities was a multidimensional problem having ethical, philanthropic, political, social, and moral aspects. The list of symptoms of immorality reveals the interconnections within a diverse range of moral and social conditions: drinking, gambling, Sabbath desecration, vice, alien races and tongues, housing, sanitation, education, and recreation. The environment of the masses, especially in the expanding urban areas, had to be improved if they were to be Christianized and Canadianized. As the Rev. James A. Macdonald, a leading progressive Presbyterian, expressed it: “The city is the strategic point in the warfare against evil, the storm centre is there; there the fiercest battle waged.”<sup>3</sup>

The social gospel movement increasingly emphasized the link between

1 Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose, “In the Name of Society, or Three Theses on the History of Social Thought”, *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1997), pp. 87–104; Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

2 The social gospel movement became a major influence on Canadian Protestantism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Richard Allen, “The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890–1928”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 49, no. 4 (1968), pp. 381–399; Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Brian J. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875–1915* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988).

3 Quoted in Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, p. 80.

evangelism and social service. The modern scientific investigative techniques of social surveys would discover the facts; these then needed to be presented to the Canadian public; this in turn would result in a changed climate and generate attitudes that would promote policies to eliminate the adverse socio-economic causes. Appropriate legislation would remove the evils from the community and foster harmonious social relations. The strongly moralistic nature of this project is revealed by the legislative programme adopted in 1913 that proposed: raising the age of sexual consent (seduction from 16 to 18 and carnal knowledge from 14 to 16); criminalizing employers who seduced female employees under 21; whipping men who procured girls for immoral purposes; making the prosecution of solicitation by both males and females easier; prohibiting gambling and betting on horse races; criminalizing obscene or blasphemous language in a public place; criminalizing living in adultery or fornication. The furtherance of this comprehensive project for the moralization of urban conditions was what spurred the collaboration between the Methodists and the Presbyterians to undertake a systematic programme of social surveys.

### **Social Surveys and Morals Reports**

Between 1911 and 1915 a series of social surveys was conducted in major cities across Canada. The crucial year was 1913, during which surveys were conducted in Fort William, Hamilton, London, Port Arthur, Regina, Sydney, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. These surveys were carried out as a collaborative project between the “social gospel” wings of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. In 1907 the Presbyterian Rev. John G. Shearer<sup>4</sup> and the Methodist T. A. Moore set up the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada, with Shearer as its secretary, as an umbrella organization to coordinate the moral reform efforts of the Protestant churches, organized labour, and other women’s groups.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the overlapping organizations of the two denominations, they had each developed their own institutional apparatus, the Methodist Department of Temperance and Moral Reform and the Presbyterian Board of Social Service and Evangelism.<sup>6</sup> These two bodies collaborated to organize and carry out surveys coordinated by Walter A. Riddell and A. J. W. Myers. Riddell (1881–1963) is a significant figure; because he was working on his doctorate in sociology at Columbia University, he was regarded as having the relevant expertise to be put in charge in 1913 as Direc-

4 Shearer was a major moral reformer who had come to prominence in the temperance movement. He had been full-time secretary of the Lord’s Day Alliance and had played a key role in securing the passage of the first federal *Sunday Observance Act* in 1906. In 1914 he became the General Secretary of the Social Service Council of Canada, where he continued to press for surveys employing social science methods.

5 The Council changed its name to the Social Service Council of Canada in 1914, a vivid illustration of the transformation of “moral reform” to “social work”.

6 These bodies underwent a series of frequent name changes over the period under investigation, but since the nomenclature used here was in use in 1913, it will be retained for the purposes of this study.

tor of Social Surveys for the Methodist-Presbyterian survey project.

While most of the Canadian surveys were initiated by the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance, by far and away the most important and influential one was the Toronto survey, which came about by a different route.<sup>7</sup> In 1912 the Toronto Vigilance Committee called for measures to prevent young girls from becoming prostitutes. The Methodist-Presbyterian joint board and the Toronto Local Council of Women (TLCW) lobbied the Toronto municipal government to appoint a commission to investigate the “social evil” and the “white slave traffic”. The municipal authorities equivocated, probably as a result of opposition from the police to the survey proposal. The project was galvanized by a lecture tour by William Coote, a leading figure of the British purity movement; he was the secretary of the National Vigilance Association and a dynamic orator from a radical working-class puritan tradition. His visit resulted in the establishment of a National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade in Canada, and by 1913 he had made “white slavery” a major national issue. Unable to secure timely municipal action, the TLCW established its own Survey Committee, and this was sufficient to precipitate the decision to establish an official commission.

### **The Survey Movement in the United States**

To appreciate the differences between the Methodist-Presbyterian surveys and the Toronto survey, we must briefly explore parallel developments in the United States. The Toronto survey differs from the other Canadian surveys in that it was closely modelled on the American vice commissions that, starting in New York with the report of the Committee of Fifteen entitled *The Social Evil* (1902),<sup>8</sup> gathered momentum and were conducted in cities, large and small, between 1910 and 1917.<sup>9</sup> Surprisingly, these reports have not as yet received any sustained attention.<sup>10</sup> Their major characteristic is that they were discursively constructed from a mixture of two elements, traditional Protestant moral sermonizing against sin and immorality and primitive “social science” elements for the inscription of evil through statistical data and tables; in combination they formed a project of representing and intervening in the social in which sin and evil had become fused.

A second and parallel tradition in the United States consisted of social surveys that were strongly influenced in their methodology and construction by

7 Toronto Social Survey Commission, *Report of the Social Survey Commission, Toronto, Presented to the City Council, October Fourth, 1915* (Toronto: Carswell, 1915).

8 Committee of Fifteen, *The Social Evil: With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York*, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902).

9 I have identified 39 such reports, but it is likely that there were more. Many big cities carried out ambitious reports (Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia), but so also did much smaller communities such as Elmira (New York), Grand Rapids (Michigan), and Paducah (Kentucky).

10 I have offered an overview of the American vice commissions in chapter 5 of Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); otherwise there have only been studies of individual reports.

an incipient social science tradition. The most important embodiment of this tradition was the Pittsburgh Survey of 1906–1909. Resulting from the intellectual and organizational leadership of Paul U. Kellogg and financed by the Russell Sage Foundation, the survey produced results that were published in five substantial individually authored volumes.<sup>11</sup> After Pittsburgh, Kellogg, along with Shelby Harrison, promoted a social survey movement which produced many hundreds of studies in a similar style.<sup>12</sup> The debate on the significance of the survey movement in the United States has been almost exclusively focused on the question of its contribution to the emergence of sociology as an academic discipline.<sup>13</sup> Studies of the emergence of the social sciences in Canada have taken a similar stance, viewing Canadian sociology through the lens of the dual filiation to Britain and the United States.<sup>14</sup> This is not the place to enter that debate, save to note that it is conducted in conventional linear developmental terms and thus takes modern sociology for granted as its end point.

As a result there has been little interest in the conjunctural relationship between the social survey movement and moral regulation movements of the period. This issue is evidenced in one salient feature of the Pittsburgh survey that has gone unnoticed. Only a few years after the completion of Kellogg's Pittsburgh survey, the city had its own "vice commission" survey conducted by the city's Morals Efficiency Commission. This report made no mention at all of the large-scale earlier survey even though it had created much interest, positive and negative, in the city. In what was perhaps an indirect reference, Seibel's later report insisted that it relied upon personal inquiry by members of the commission rather than the "tales of paid professional investigators".<sup>15</sup> More generally, none of the vice commission reports referred to any "social survey" reports, and the latter occasionally made disparaging com-

11 Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, *Women and the Trades: Pittsburgh, 1907–1908* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1909); Margaret Byington, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910); Crystal Eastman, *Work-Accidents and the Law: The Pittsburgh Survey* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910); John A. Fitch, *The Steel Workers* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910); and Paul U. Kellogg, *et al.*, *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1914).

12 Allen M. Eaton and Shelby M. Harrison, *A Bibliography of Social Surveys: Reports of Fact-Finding Studies made as a Basis for Social Action* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1930).

13 This debate is well represented by Maurine Greenwald and Margo Anderson, eds., *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, and Kathryn K. Sklar, eds., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

14 For example, Marlene G. Shore emphasizes the significance of the Chicago School in *The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago School, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher, eds., *Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Stamford, Conn.: JAI Press, 1999), attach greater importance to the social services movement.

15 George Seibel, *Report and Recommendations of the Morals Efficiency Commission* (Pittsburgh: Morals Efficiency Commission, 1913), p. 1.

ments about the former.

At first sight it appears that there were two quite separate movements, the vice commissions and the social surveys, with neither acknowledging the existence of the other. Such an inference is too easy. While there were real differences, these were more of style than of substance. The social surveys were secular reform projects suspicious of the religious moralizing of the vice commission reports. Both types had an activist orientation intended to stimulate local community action. The Pittsburgh survey pioneered the presentation of findings by touring exhibitions; these used photographs and display boards which summarized the statistical data and were blazoned with reform slogans. It is significant that the Canadian social surveys also mounted such travelling exhibitions, and their displays and placards were identical in design to those used in Pittsburgh. The illustrations accompanying many of the published surveys are reproductions of exhibition placards which combine some simple slogan with a statistical representation. The surveyors could be taken as having formed the view that it was no longer sufficient to denounce sin; it was now necessary to find the means of disseminating representations of evil that underlined the social and individual harm caused.

The common feature of the two traditions is that the social surveys accepted many of the same assumptions as the vice commissions about the manifestations of the immoralities of urban life. Thus Elizabeth Beardsley Butler's book in the Pittsburgh series is a detailed study of pay and conditions of working women. When she turns to examine the social life of working women, she does so in terms that are entirely consistent with the vice reports. She complains that rented accommodation sat side by side with "houses of assignation and other resorts of vice" and, at the same time, argues that commercial recreations (nickelodeons, dance halls, skating rinks) were not inherently bad: "so long as those maintained for profit are the only relief for nervous weariness and the desire for stimulation, we may well reckon leisure a thing spent, not used."<sup>16</sup>

Margaret Byington's study, *Homestead*, focuses on working and home conditions and on the cost of living in Homestead, the Carnegie Steel Corporation's town. When she addresses the moral climate, she has complaints similar to those treated more extensively in the vice commission reports. Two of the four skating rinks were frequented by a "rough crowd". The saloons, which she stresses were not part of the study, were a source of corruption, and the courts failed to exercise proper control. Among the Slav residents she identifies "lodgers" as a serious problem since children "learn evil from the free-spoken men" and reports "gross immorality on the part of some women who keep lodgers".<sup>17</sup>

The two American variants of social investigations help in situating the distinguishing features of the Canadian surveys. The Toronto survey is

<sup>16</sup> Butler, *Women and the Trades*, pp. 321, 333.

<sup>17</sup> Byington, *Homestead*, pp. 112, 148.

firmly in the vice commission tradition; its primary target was commercialized vice to the extent that even the self-standing medical report was almost exclusively concerned, in a strongly moralistic vein, with venereal diseases. In contrast, the Methodist-Presbyterian surveys directed their attention to socio-economic conditions; not all of them even mentioned prostitution and when they did the treatment was cursory.

### Other Canadian Surveys

A number of other published reports do not fit the dual model identified above. One example is an inquiry conducted in 1910 by the Social Vice Commission of Winnipeg, chaired by Justice H. A. Robson and appointed by Winnipeg City Council.<sup>18</sup> The inquiry arose from charges made by Dr. John G. Shearer in the Toronto press. Shearer was the joint-secretary of the influential Board of Moral and Social Reform of Canada and a major figure in the social gospel wing of the Presbyterian Church. He charged that the Winnipeg authorities permitted segregated prostitution with 50 “houses” in operation, that the police made no serious attempt to enforce the laws against prostitution, and, more generally, that the whole matter was suggestive of graft.

The report managed to exonerate the city of the general charge of promoting vice, despite the finding that there did exist a policy of toleration and regulation within a restricted area and that the number of houses of vice had increased from 29 to 50. The commission’s obvious reluctance to confront the police directly is evidenced by the conclusion that these conditions did not involve any corruption in the police authority even though the general conditions were a “reproach to any civilized community”.<sup>19</sup>

To complete the account of the social survey reports, two other varieties should be noted. The first was a further instance of the Methodist-Presbyterian collaboration to undertake “rural social surveys”.<sup>20</sup> These surveys were preoccupied with the impact of rural depopulation upon church membership and participation (for example, in Huron County the population had fallen from 64,000 to 39,000 between 1875 and 1913). They were unflinching in their criticism of the passive role of the churches and their ministers, but nevertheless insisted that “the Church is the organization that is best qualified to lead in the rehabilitation of the countryside”.<sup>21</sup> The Swan River survey also castigated those ministers who restricted their role to preaching and

18 Justice H. A. Robson, *Judge Robson on Segregation or Toleration of Vice: Duties of Police Authorities, the Enforcement of Law: Report of the Social Vice Commission Winnipeg, January 11th, 1911* (Toronto: Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada, 1911).

19 Robson, *Judge Robson on Segregation or Toleration of Vice*, p. 12.

20 Rural surveys formed a significant component of the spread of the American social survey tradition and many dozens were published; detailed in Eaton and Harrison, *A Bibliography of Social Surveys*.

21 Cooperating Organizations of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, *The Rural Survey of County of Huron, Ontario* (n.p., 1914), p. 6.

took no interest in such matters as scientific farming, education, or youth recreation. It urged the churches to provide healthy recreations to draw young men away from the pool-rooms.<sup>22</sup>

The final form of moral survey was a series of discrete reports dealing with Montreal; two such reports were private, while two others were conducted by a local "Committee of Sixteen". The two most ambitious of these concerned conditions in Montreal. The sub-title of Herbert Ames's study is *A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal*.<sup>23</sup> It set out to conduct a "sociological" investigation into conditions in working-class Montreal, contrasting "above the hill" and "below the hill". However, there is little indication of method of study; Ames undertook "a house-to-house canvass", but there is no indication whether or not this formed the source of statistical tables reproduced. The most significant form of presentation is the inscription of data on street maps (for example, social composition by percentage of Franco- and Anglo-Canadians, average wages, and average family size, among other factors) to provide a spatial representation of social data. This work is located within the tradition of moral environmentalism as witnessed by the contention that outside privies posed a "danger to public health and morals"; while the health implications of sanitary provisions were well established, there was no attempt to disclose the moral danger.<sup>24</sup>

Hart's report probably had some links to the Methodist-Presbyterian project since he was the secretary of the Joint Committee of Cooperating Churches (all Protestant). This document is typical of a much earlier genre of moral discourse; the text is only very marginally concerned with Montreal with little or no evidence of any "investigation". This work is a classic instance of the moral denunciation; it is full of apocryphal stories "adapted" to Montreal that had previously appeared, for example, in Comstock's polemics from the 1880s and the American "white slavery" tracts of the early twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

The Montreal Committee of Sixteen probably modelled itself on the New York Committee of Fifteen since there were 31, not 16, members. Its first report was concerned with stressing the extent of commercialized vice in the city.<sup>26</sup> The committee, although it reported having employed "investigators", seems to have made no effort to quantify the problem; the only figures given are those for a single year for the number of police raids and the disposition of the court cases that arose. In its other publication the committee repro-

22 Department of Social Service and Evangelism of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, *Swan River Valley, Manitoba: Report of a Rural Survey of the Agricultural, Educational, Social and Religious Life* (n.p., 1914).

23 Herbert B. Ames, *The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal* (Montreal: Bishop Engraving and Printing Co., 1897).

24 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

25 E. I. Hart, *Wake Up, Montreal! Commercial Vice and its Contributors* (Montreal: Witness Press, 1919).

26 Committee of Sixteen, *First Annual Report of the Committee of Sixteen from July 5, 1918 to December 31, 1919* (Montreal: Committee of Sixteen, [1920]).



duced the arguments mobilized against the regulation of prostitution in the British campaign against the *Contagious Diseases Acts* (1864–1869) and by the American vice commissions.<sup>27</sup> The publications of the Montreal Committee, like many such reports, were not so much investigations, but rather reproduced the general case against the regulationist approach to prostitution.

### Reading the Canadian Surveys

The Methodist-Presbyterian surveys provide an ideal opportunity through which to explore the question: How should we read social and morals surveys? We are not assisted by asking why the surveys were conducted. The documents themselves tell us little about the motivations that underlay the project. The motives were further complicated because the minutes and regular reports of the respective departments of the two churches assume the value of the project as a self-evident core element of the social gospel credo. It seems unlikely that they were intended to reproduce anything approaching the ambitious nature of the Pittsburgh survey.<sup>28</sup> The Canadian surveys were so different in scope, scale, and method that they cannot be regarded as attempts to imitate the surveys being conducted south of the border. It should be noted that all the reports were explicitly described as “preliminary,”<sup>29</sup> but, as far as I have been able to establish, no plans were made for carrying out any fuller investigations.

The surveys are also interesting for what they do not say. They tell us surprisingly little about the methods adopted or how the expanded surveys should proceed. Like many reports of the period, they provide little information about sources or how the studies were undertaken. Some reproduce the reports of named municipal or provincial officials, and large portions of the texts give every appearance of being transcriptions of material provided by other unacknowledged officials. The London (Ontario) survey was the most explicit; two “investigators” were imported and 50 local members of the Men’s Federation were involved in the survey.<sup>30</sup> While we have no reason to expect formal methodological statements of statistical sophistication, it should not be forgotten that the work of Booth, Rowntree, and others had been widely publicized.

27 Committee of Sixteen, *Some Facts Regarding Toleration, Regulation, Segregation and Repression of Commercialized Vice* (Montreal: n.p., 1919).

28 The only Canadian survey to refer explicitly to the Pittsburgh survey as part of the survey tradition was that of Sydney (Nova Scotia). Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Sydney, Nova Scotia* (n.p., 1913).

29 The Vancouver report is sub-titled “A Brief Investigation ... Which Indicate the Need of an Intensive Social Survey, the Lines of Which Are Herein Suggested”.

30 Presbyterian Committee on Religious Education, Methodist Department of Temperance and Moral Reform and the Presbyterian Board of Social Service and Evangelism, *The City of London, Ontario: Report of a Limited Survey of Educational, Social and Industrial Life* (London: Men’s Federation of London, 1913).

Some surveys claimed that their inquiries manifested a desire for “civic self-analysis”, which was a prominent theme in Pittsburgh-style investigations in the United States, but the Canadian surveys give little indication of any substantial local involvement. While in Pittsburgh significant efforts had been undertaken to secure the involvement of a variety of local interests and representation, there is no corresponding evidence with respect to the Canadian surveys.<sup>31</sup> It is probable that the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance assumed that it itself “represented” the community or at least its respectable and nativist core. These absences make it possible to approach these documents as “texts” with a minimum of presuppositions. A description of their major features sets the scene for an analysis of the texts.

### **A Description of the Canadian Social Surveys**

The published reports are by no means uniform in content, coverage, or style, but they do share a number of common features.

*Introduction:* The Regina and Vancouver reports are particularly interesting in that they carry identical introductions. The survey project was defined as one of “civic self-analysis”, and this was contrasted with the “muck-raking” of American exposé politics (Riis, Steffens, and others).<sup>32</sup> It was recognized that the Pittsburgh survey “gave a strong impetus to the survey idea”. The survey idea had much to offer Canada: “Indeed, it is likely that in time we shall be so impressed with the necessity of social investigation that each large city will have its bureau of social research making that continuous study which is the only basis for intelligent action for civic betterment.”<sup>33</sup> Only the Regina survey, conducted by J. S. Woodsworth, and the Sydney survey, conducted by Bryce M. Stewart,<sup>34</sup> referred to the populist mode of presentation pioneered by the Pittsburgh survey; the potential role of “civic or social exhibitions” to present graphically, by means of maps, charts, pictures, and models, the conditions discovered was commended, but there is no evidence that such an exhibition was mounted.<sup>35</sup>

*History:* Some surveys start with a brief history of the city in question; this is gleaned from some other publication (for example, the Hamilton survey reproduced a history provided by a local newspaper which is almost

31 An exception is the local investigators recruited to survey the drinking establishments in London, Ontario; it should be noted that the Men’s Federation was a recently formed Methodist-Presbyterian organization.

32 Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890); Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York: Peter Smith, 1904).

33 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Regina* (n.p., 1913), p. 4.

34 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Sydney, Nova Scotia*.

35 The parallel “rural surveys” made use of travelling exhibitions which travelled around the small country towns (for example, the Huron County survey of 1914 and the Swan River Valley survey of 1914).

exclusively a history of the designation of the township and the division and sub-division of lots).<sup>36</sup> Others provided details on the economic history of the city (for example, the Fort William report gave an account of the transition from the early fur trade to the modern granary economy).<sup>37</sup>

*“The field”*: All reports used this term to designate their object of inquiry; it connotes a straightforward identification of the land area under investigation (so many acres) and in some cases both the area and the population size. There was an implicit concern with issues of social-economic progress. In a number of reports the advent of the telephone seems to have been regarded as an index of “modernity”; for example, in Port Arthur by 1913 there were 2,370 telephones of which 1,774 were private.<sup>38</sup>

*Population*: Population was generally given in aggregate, and particular attention was paid to ethnic origin, focusing on the proportions of English-speaking to non-English-speaking, the latter category being employed to designate “immigrants”.<sup>39</sup> Something of the underlying concerns is revealed by the Fort William survey, which expressed concern about “the large number of Ruthenians” even though the statistics reveal only 63.<sup>40</sup> In the Port Arthur survey, illiteracy was reported as highest among southern Europeans, while Finns, Norwegians, and Swedes showed “strong desire to learn English”.<sup>41</sup>

*Economic life*: Most reports gave details of major sources of employment. In the majority of cases there was specific concern with trade union organization. Unionization was referred to in a positive light; but an underlying concern about the links between labour and liquor interests is captured by the frequent inquiry about whether union locals met in premises selling alcohol and whether meetings were held on Sunday.

While unions were viewed positively, socialist propaganda was treated differentially: some reports treated socialism positively while others were more negative. The most explicit reference appears in the Hamilton survey, which noted that immigrants were being “embittered against Canada” because of low wages and poor housing and that “one can scarcely wonder that many of

36 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Hamilton* (n.p., 1913).

37 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Fort William* (n.p., 1913).

38 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Port Arthur* (n.p., 1913).

39 No survey gives any indication of the source of population statistics, but, since there is a general reliance on information provided by the city administrations, it is likely that these are locally generated figures.

40 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Fort William*, p. 8.

41 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Port Arthur*, p. 7.

them accept the teachings of the Russian Socialist organizer who is working among them".<sup>42</sup> In contrast, the Port Arthur report provided a much more sympathetic treatment of socialism, arguing that, if socialists and labour were to unite, their future voting strength would be considerable. The influence of "social gospel" is evident in the argument that the "Socialist cause" had been held back because a "great number of Socialists are free thinkers", but that socialism "should appeal especially to the Christian".<sup>43</sup>

*Municipal administration:* Most reports gave a formal statement of the administrative structure of the municipal government, such as the relationship between mayor, council, and officers, and in some cases some quantification of the tax base of city finances was provided.

*Recreation:* Here there is an interesting bifurcation. On one hand, recreations were viewed as a positive force, while on the other, recreations, particularly commercial recreations, were problematized. In the Port Arthur survey, popular social and cultural recreations were reported: "winter amusements" were listed as skating and snowshoeing; in summer there were football, baseball, boating, tennis, and golfing. Others, in line with American surveys' concern with the benefits of public recreational space, viewed parks and playgrounds as a key index of social progress.

The two particular forms of recreation that elicited concern were commercialized recreation (such as movie theatres and dance halls) and, almost universally, the drinking habits of the working population. The Vancouver survey focused on commercial recreation and expressed concern about theatres and movie-houses, noting that in one theatre the audience was 99 per cent male and had an "atmosphere of an antechamber to darker evils".<sup>44</sup> The pervasive temperance sentiments of the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance led to considerable attention being focused on bars and saloons. With respect to drinking establishments, there is evidence of some direct survey activity. It is significant that five of the surveys investigated the numbers frequenting either saloons or pool-rooms. The Hamilton survey attended to both; a survey was made on a designated evening of pool-rooms and bars. The report hastened to assure its readers that the investigators had remained "just long enough to make the required observations".<sup>45</sup> However, this was deemed long enough to ascertain the numbers present, whether or not they were "intoxicated", the number of minors and females, and the moral tone of the conversation (dis-

42 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Hamilton* (n.p., 1913), p. 13.

43 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Port Arthur*, p. 10.

44 Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, *Vancouver, British Columbia: The Report of a Brief Investigation of Social Conditions in the City Which Indicate the Need of an Intensive Social Survey, the Lines of Which Are Herein Suggested* (n.p., n.d.), p. 12.

45 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Hamilton*, p. 20.

46 A similar survey was conducted in London, Ontario, on Saturday, November 8, 1912, when the investigators found 561 men in bars (of whom 44 were under age and 195 intoxicated) and 12 women in side rooms. *The City of London, Ontario*, p. 67.

tinguishing between “decent”, “obscene”, and “blasphemous”).<sup>46</sup>

*Crime:* Most reports carried details of data on arrests, summonses, or both (presumably supplied by the police). The problem of crime was exclusively constructed as a concern with the proportion of offences that could be attributed to alcohol. Thus, the Hamilton report calculated that, of 4,602 cases in 1912, 1,891 were liquor cases and a further 640 “may” have been due to drink. In Port Arthur the figures were 2,668 summonses and arrests, 1,692 being alcohol offences, mainly that of being drunk and incapable. Most reports presented an economic quantification of the drink problem in the form of a “Drink Account”, a tactic that had been widely used in Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) campaigns in both the United States and Canada. The account calculated the revenue received from granting licences and wages to bartenders as credit; the debit was the money spent in bars as well as the cost of the arrest, detention, trial, and imprisonment of offenders. These figures always revealed a large “loss” to the community; for example, in London, Ontario, it amounted to \$715,007 for the year 1912–1913.<sup>47</sup>

*Housing:* While there was common concern with overcrowding and poor sanitation in homes of the working-class and immigrants, little effort was made to quantify housing conditions. The reports relied on descriptive examples of overcrowded accommodation.

*Health:* All the reports provided detailed tables of mortality and infant mortality rates. Most carried lengthy but unanalysed lists of the causes of death. The only specific focus of attention in a number of reports was a concern with tuberculosis that “thrives in dark and unventilated homes”.<sup>48</sup>

*Prostitution:* There is a sharp contrast in the attention devoted to “the social evil”. While, as has been noted, prostitution formed the central concern of the Toronto report, only the Port Arthur and Fort William reports paid any attention to prostitution, and they carried identical text covering the “Twin Cities”. Until recently prostitution had been openly tolerated. The usual pattern was the “bawdy house” with only a small number owned by one of the female inmates. The report noted a “hopeful outlook” arising from an unconfirmed report that one “inmate” had committed suicide by poison. Recently the police, particularly in Port Arthur, had adopted a policy for “eradicating this evil” and now claimed that only one such house remained. All inmates had been ordered to leave the bawdy houses. But the report stated that a more stubborn form of the social evil had arisen, in which prostitution was a “family affair” being known to parents or guardians. In the Vancouver report a brief mention in a section headed “political life” reported that the provincial government had failed to act against the “segregated district”.

The Regina report reveals a significant feature about the construction of sexual morality: “There is no open prostitution. The police are vigilant. The blocks are pretty clean, but it is strongly suspected that one or two of the

<sup>47</sup> *The City of London, Ontario*, p. 71.

<sup>48</sup> *Vancouver, British Columbia*, p. 16.

hotels are used as houses of assignation. Attention should be called to the number of young girls who are about the streets and cafes unaccompanied, between eleven and twelve at night.”<sup>49</sup> This reveals that the term “social evil” was often a code for a concern with the regulation of female sexuality and more generally with the regulation of hetero-social space — the mixing of young people in the public spaces of urban areas.<sup>50</sup> This emerges with particular clarity in a contradiction evident in a hesitancy about the desirability of public parks, which was often accompanied by the insistence that they be better supervised or closed after dark. The London report expressed concern about Springbank Park because it was “full of secluded and dark nooks and corners without adequate supervision”.<sup>51</sup>

### Reading the Social Survey Movement

It is practical to avoid asking about the “purposes” or “motives” of the Canadian social survey movement on the grounds that, while the texts disclose legitimacy discourses, there is rarely, if ever, any means of distinguishing between the announced motives and the “real motives” that may be suspected to lurk beneath the surface of the language deployed. Rather, I am concerned to track the way in which — to use Foucault’s terminology — the surveys “problematized” Canadian social life in the early part of the twentieth century. “A problematization is a way in which experience is offered to thought in the form of a problem requiring attention.”<sup>52</sup> The pursuit of the problematizations employed by the social surveyors requires two analytic steps.

First, it is necessary to explore the way in which “the social” domain that formed the object of inquiry of these reports was constructed. I use “social” not as some generic concept that is a simile for society as some unity or totality, typically designating everything that falls within the spatial boundaries of a nation state. Rather, “the social” involves those aspects of human life involved in relations with others that are perceived as being a field that is a potential or suitable object for purposive action or regulation.

Thus in early twentieth-century Canada only certain sectors or segments of the population were constructed as exhibiting the type of problems requiring organized action.<sup>53</sup> Concretely, “the social” referred to two segments, the troublesome poor of the cities and the “immigration flood”. The former were

49 *Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Regina*, p. 33.

50 Alan Hunt, “Regulating Heterosocial Space: Sexual Politics in the Early Twentieth Century”, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2002), pp. 1–34.

51 *The City of London, Ontario*, p. 11.

52 Nikolas Rose and Mariana Valverde, “Governed By Law?”, *Social and Legal Studies*, vol. 7 (1998), p. 573.

53 In some respects the concept “the social” is similar to earlier usage in sociology of the “social problem” except that it refers to a troublesome social category rather than troublesome behaviour. For completeness the concept of “the social” requires the presence of another segment, namely, agents concerned and able to engage in organized action.

viewed as posing a threat of disorder and contagion, moral and medical. Immigrants shared the dangers posed by the poor with the added dimension of their slow rate of “Canadianization”, conceived as a question of language, namely the acquisition of English. Beneath this lay the evocative but illusive notion of “Canadianization”, so deeply embedded in the common sense of the period that its content remained largely unspecified. It is significant that Canadianization functioned as a “floating” signifier: one employed, as occasion demanded, to designate a shifting set of troublesome or worrying attributes. Sometimes it referred to a specific construction of “Christianization”, always distinguished in the first instance from Catholicism, but it also frequently articulated a concern about the religious diversity of the shifting profile of immigration. At other times Canadianization denoted a more dispersed set of social virtues of which the most prominent was the deeply ingrained trope of moral regulation discourses captured by the dichotomy between idleness and work. The charge of idleness was not so much a judgement about the work habits of the new immigrant working class, but rather a marker of cultural distance.

Secondly, problematization needs to be approached comparatively. This requires attention to both what was included and what was excluded in the survey reports and then to the way in which the “social problems” requiring attention were identified. The reports exhibit a shifting focus on a set of social problems of which the most important were urban poverty, rural depopulation, temperance, and prostitution. The targets of Canadian moral regulation discourses were more dispersed than those in the American vice commissions, whose major thrust was the intertwined problems of alcohol and vice. The presence of saloons provided the social space in which prostitution flourished, and the brothels generated the political alliance between liquor and vice interests. This is captured in the central preoccupation with “commercialized vice”.

The dispersed targets of the Canadian social surveys were such that, while some explicitly addressed the issue of prostitution, others mentioned it only in passing, if at all.<sup>54</sup> The Canadian surveys were characterized by an assortment of themes which dealt broadly with urban social conditions addressed under a dispersed set of headings. These included housing, population, public health, religion, recreation, alcohol, and related topics. It is noticeable that for a centrally coordinated set of surveys they are remarkably different

54 The Winnipeg inquiry, in response to Shearer’s allegations of “tolerated vice”, was exclusively concerned with the link between alcohol and prostitution. This focus was wedded to a concern, more distinctive of American Progressivism than Canadian reform discourses, with “graft” and police corruption. A lengthy session at the Social Service Congress, held in Ottawa in 1914, was devoted to “political purity” debating the corruption that was perceived as characterizing the party system. Social Service Congress, *Report of Addresses and Proceedings* (Toronto: Social Service Council of Canada, 1914). Prostitution was central to the Toronto survey and the Montreal reports and was a significant element in the reports on Fort William and Port Arthur.

in their organization and sequence of topics, even though their treatment exhibits strong continuities. This attests both to the absence of any strategic plan or survey method and to the considerable local autonomy of the individual surveys.

### **Quantifying the Social and the Moral**

The Canadian surveys provide evidence of an emerging attempt to link “numbers” and “morals”. The reports relied almost exclusively on data collected by other agencies. Little or no effort was made to undertake any work on the data so collected. Numbers were treated as if they spoke for themselves; it was assumed that it was sufficient to present some aggregate number for the readers to share the conclusions drawn by the compilers. This evident naivety goes hand in hand with acknowledgement of the British survey pioneers Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree and of Paul Kellogg and the Pittsburgh survey. The reformers were aware of the prestige of such studies, but, rather than employing the techniques of data collection, statistical procedures, and presentation, they seemed content to invoke that authority. The reformers seem to have believed that it was merely necessary to reproduce the data they collected in the appropriate form for the results to speak directly to their audience.

The most distinctive form of presentation, influenced by the Pittsburgh survey, involved mounting public exhibitions of the findings. These exhibitions relied on two specific tactics: the visual representation of numbers and the translation of data into slogans. The visual representation of quantitative data employed three main forms of presentation: the pie chart, the segmented circle which divided some population into segments represented as percentages of the total; bar charts, which similarly represented proportions as vertical blocks; and standard numerical tables quantifying such matters as population increases and mortality rates over time. A further feature was the occasional use of indicative numerical data, the most frequent illustration being the detailing of the number of telephones installed in businesses and private homes as an index of degree of modernization, although this term itself was not used.

The failure to interrogate the numbers collected or to make use of any more sophisticated statistical techniques is all the more strange in light of the fact that Walter A. Riddell had been brought back by Shearer and Moore from his sociology doctorate at Columbia University to direct the surveys. One possible explanation is that, as was frequently stressed in the reports, the surveys were only “preliminary”, intended to identify topics for subsequent detailed surveys. It is more likely that it was taken for granted that numbers and facts spoke for themselves and that this assumption accounts for the primitive nature of these surveys.

Within this frame of reference, social judgements are primarily moral assertions. Thus, to quantify the number of people in saloons or pool-rooms on a single night, without inquiring whether the number might be rising or falling or whether it might be more or less than in some other city, only



makes sense within the moral vision that deems it inherently bad for any number of people to be drinking alcohol. Yet the fact that it was thought necessary to provide numbers is evidence of the prestige of numbers which had been established within the recent past.<sup>55</sup> The function of the numbers and their visual representation served merely to confirm the implicit moral discourse that underlay the text.

The fate of the projected full surveys remains something of a mystery. It is not even certain that the Methodist-Presbyterian organizers regarded the Toronto survey as the first such full survey. Reference to the survey project became displaced by the planning for the Social Service Congress, held in Ottawa in March 1914, and did not reappear after that event. At the Congress, Riddell, the chief coordinator of the surveys, delivered an address in which he described the significance of the survey project: “In discovering and in presenting to the popular mind the collective sins of the community and in bringing the responsibility for these home to the common conscience, the Social Survey has made perhaps its largest contribution.”<sup>56</sup> Only one other speaker mentioned the surveys, however, and then only in the most general terms. The majority of speeches delivered relied on simpler rhetorical forms that gave priority to moralizing discourses that asserted a normative judgement on the wrongness of the prevailing social conditions and then proceeded to propound a vision of what must be done to right that wrong. One rhetorical style did employ numbers in a way that remains common to the reforming impulse that is alive and well today; this technique involved numerical inflation. Dr. Charles Hastings, the Medical Officer of Health for Toronto, sought to demonstrate the importance of “social hygiene” measures to treat venereal diseases by wild inflation of the numbers affected; thus he claimed that 75 per cent of adult males contracted gonorrhoea and 15 per cent syphilis.<sup>57</sup> The logic of such claims is that big numbers confirm a big problem.<sup>58</sup>

In his presentation Riddell stressed the preliminary nature of the eight surveys that had been completed and stated that a further four were to be conducted in the summer of 1914, but these seem never to have been carried out. It seems reasonable to assume that, as for so many other organizations, the portents of the coming world war transformed the social and political

55 It may also be assumed that an educated and concerned audience, which we can presume to be the audience reformers hoped would visit the public exhibition of the data, would be able to read the stylizations of numbers and that such an audience had come to expect numbers as confirmation of the seriousness and accuracy of the undertaking. See Patricia Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

56 W. A. Riddell, “The Value of the Social Survey” in *Social Service Congress*, p. 59.

57 Charles J. Hastings, “The Consequences of Prostitution and Suggested Remedies” in *Social Service Congress*, pp. 208–217.

58 Similar rhetorical tactics are found today among those who seek to focus attention on such issues as sexual harassment and AIDS by techniques that inflate the number of those affected.

agenda. As a consequence the only substantial and lasting manifestation of the Canadian social survey movement was the Toronto Social Survey Commission of 1915.

### **The Toronto Social Survey**

The Toronto survey was conducted after the first wave of Methodist-Presbyterian surveys. It exhibits both significant differences and continuities with the earlier surveys, but its relationship to its predecessors is by no means clear. As noted earlier it came about by a different route, being the only survey which resulted from the demands of a wider social movement than the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance, with important roles being played by the Council of Women, the WCTU, and local reform politicians.

Not only was the Toronto survey the fullest survey undertaken but it was also the most interesting in a number of respects. First, it was the most open of all the surveys in that its conclusions were not foregone. Its terms of reference were to investigate “the white slave traffic, existing vice and social disease”.<sup>59</sup> The question of the existence of white slavery was a highly charged topic; in much contemporary coverage in press and pulpit the issue was presented in a distinctively nationalistic form, alleging that Canadian girls were being snared into prostitution and found themselves in the brothels of Chicago and other American cities. It was therefore of great significance that the Toronto survey concluded that “there has been no positive evidence secured of the existence in Toronto of a system of obtaining and retaining involuntary victims”.<sup>60</sup>

Secondly, the Toronto report was the only one to provide an analysis of prostitution that took account of contemporary trends. The authors were surprised that “the number of houses of ill-fame appeared so small”.<sup>61</sup> They explained the small number of brothels by the growth in the number of houses of assignation and the large number of individual prostitutes using their own accommodation. The report noted an even more recent development, the emergence of massage parlours.<sup>62</sup>

The report is significant in drawing attention to changes in the form of prostitution, from brothels to “self-employed” prostitutes. This led the

<sup>59</sup> *Report of the Social Survey Commission, Toronto*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> The report concluded that massage parlours were houses of prostitution “and worse — the ‘worse’ standing for things abominable and unspeakable, things compared with which ordinary prostitution, as the word is commonly understood, is respectable. It is even impossible to give the details of the treatment given by the women professing to give only legitimate massage to men ... transgresses the bounds of decency” (p. 17). This was the only observation concerning specific sexual practices — it may be inferred that what was so impossible to mention was oral sex.

<sup>63</sup> The “charity girls” being those who engaged in sexual relations after participating in some form of heterosocial activity involving entertainment and “treats”. See Kathy Peiss, “‘Charity Girls’ and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880–1920” in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 51–73.

authors to focus attention on “casual prostitution” and “charity girls”.<sup>63</sup> Such immorality “invades offices, shops” and “lurks” in amusement parks, skating rinks, and dance halls. What was regarded as particularly significant was that those so engaged were “not a segregated and despised class”.<sup>64</sup> As many commentators have noted, this move widens the scope of the moral regulation project to encompass the whole field of female sexual conduct. But there was a paradox in the report’s treatment: it was attentive to the changing forms of sexual conduct of the young. This in turn led to a preoccupation with the wider field of the recreation of young working-class women. Yet, despite their self-proclaimed commitment to a scientific method, the authors made no attempt to quantify these changes. The decline in the number of brothels was merely asserted, as was the rise in the number of houses of assignation. There was no attention to whether there was more or less prostitution or to the number of massage parlours. Similarly, there was no interest in the spatial location of prostitution in the community.<sup>65</sup> These omissions stemmed not only from the lack of any rigorous or systematic mode of inquiry, but also from the radical change of focus to the broader field of inquiry of the “girl problem”.<sup>66</sup> The report thus came to focus on the question of why young women became sexually promiscuous and resorted to prostitution. This issue had preoccupied the moral reform movement since the rise of organized opposition to prostitution in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The question was perplexing because it was framed within the long-established vision of female sexuality, which held that any sexual interest or activity outside marriage was regarded as inimicable to the very nature of womanhood.

The Toronto report reworked the themes which had dominated the numerous American vice commission reports without adding significantly to them. The major figuration of the report was the “woman adrift” who lived independently, unsupported and unsupervised by family, community, or church; these absences or vacuums were seen as drawing the young woman into vice. It is important to note that it was her leisure rather than her work that was major object of concern. The nature of her work stripped her of the modesty that was the primary protection against sexual vulnerability and preserved female chastity. This vulnerability was amplified by the pervasive discursive construction of female sexuality; while naturally innocent, women were viewed as inherently vain, attracted to finery and to the search for pleasures. This vision of femininity, when combined with the recognition

64 *Report of the Social Survey Commission, Toronto*, p. 13.

65 Only in the Vancouver report was there any attention paid to changes in the spatial distribution of prostitution; both prostitution and liquor were linked to the presence of an Asian immigrant quarter.

66 Carolyn Strange, “From Modern Babylon to a City Upon a Hill: The Toronto Social Survey Commission of 1915 and the Search for Sexual Order in the City” in Roger Hall *et al.*, eds., *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario’s History* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1988), pp. 255–277, and *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

that the city offered them only dreary low-paid jobs, rendered women as always in danger of corruption and seduction and thus as potential carriers of social and moral degeneration.

Thus the Toronto report addressed, as had many of the American vice commissions, the vexed problem of the low pay received by the majority of young urban working women. The Toronto report found that insufficient wages were a significant cause of the lapse into prostitution, but, while many of the American vice commissions engaged in detailed, if not necessarily systematic, empirical study of female wages, the Toronto survey merely pronounced that wages were too low. The authors drew back from a radical critique of employers. Low wages were, the report insisted, “not the only or indeed the chief cause”.<sup>67</sup> The logic of this conclusion was that, since the majority of young women on low wages did not engage in prostitution, poor wages could not be the “cause” of the “fall” of those who did lapse. The report recommended a minimum wage law, but, as if to confirm that the problem was not just a matter of wages, it proposed that all large employers of young women should appoint someone to be responsible for the social and moral well-being of their employees.

Having thus addressed the economic dimension, the report devoted most of its attention to the recreational activities of young women. It reported on dance halls, skating rinks, movie houses, vaudeville, and other commercial entertainments. With respect to the dance halls, the report deplored the unregulated and unsupervised contact between young men and women and denounced “the free and promiscuous intercourse of the sexes in public dances”. In a similar vein, skating rinks were condemned on the grounds that they “furnish opportunities for promiscuous acquaintance and are extensively used as rendezvous for immoral purposes”. The conception of the proper relations between young men and women is revealed in the observation that “young girls enter into conversations with strangers at public rinks, and make free with young men to whom they have not been introduced”.<sup>68</sup> Yet no detailed investigation was undertaken of youth recreation. The knowledge relied upon was the common-sense understandings of respectable society which “knew” that such things went on and that they were wrong.

### **Problematizing the Social, Constructing Pastoral Power**

How should the Canadian social surveys be understood? At first sight they could well be viewed as incomplete and insubstantial attempts to problematize the intersection of social and moral problems; moreover, the endeavour was abandoned as the Great War spread its shadow across the world and was never to be revived in the postwar period. It is important to avoid making unwarranted claims about the significance of this aborted project. Yet it had

<sup>67</sup> *Report of the Social Survey Commission, Toronto*, p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

a significance that needs to be retrieved.

The proponents of the survey movement grasped the central importance of the necessity for society to seek to know itself and that the means to that end was to apply “science”. Yet, in identifying the objective, they were unable to fulfil it because of the extent to which they were locked into a taken-for-granted knowledge of the very object, “society”, which they sought to know. The best that they were able to achieve was to advance a classificatory scheme into which that knowledge was to be framed. Hence they produced a classificatory scheme which presumed a set of given boundaries between government, administration, economic conditions, social conditions, and moral conditions.

Furthermore, the goal that “society should know itself” was an activity that was discursively constructed so as to be undertaken by the voluntary organizations of moral reform. It is interesting to note that no calls were made on the state for official investigations to be conducted; indeed, there was very little discussion of the role of either federal or provincial institutions. The state seems to enter their conception of how social problems were to be addressed as the legislative agency, to pass the laws that inquiry revealed as necessary. There are always problems in speculation about the explanation of absences, but it is probable that the religious origins of Canadian moral reform operated within the parameters of social gospel theology, which stressed that the church was centrally concerned not just with the spiritual domain, but with the social realm. I will return to this issue in arguing that the social survey project can best be understood as a form of pastoral power.

Nikolas Rose’s description of moral technologies captures the techniques employed by the Canadian surveys:

Figures, charts, maps, vivid descriptions of social explorers showed how coextensive were the topographies of class, occupation, morality, criminality and disease. Thus the space of the town became intelligible in new ways, in the spatial imagination produced by all those who thought that in order to govern relations between people more effectively one had first to inscribe them. One sees, in short, a multiplication of “laboratories of conduct” in which were performed a whole variety of ethical experiments on human beings.<sup>69</sup>

The Canadian surveys never succeeded in achieving the final stage described by Rose, however, in that they failed to generate the “laboratories of conduct”. Why was this? In part it was because of the contingent circumstances of the outbreak of war, but more fatal was the reformers’ emerging realization that, in the face of religious, cultural, and political diversity, their advocacy was impeded by their own narrow theological frame of reference within

<sup>69</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 104–105.

which these inquiries were undertaken.

Yet, in another sense, we should perhaps concede that the Canadian survey movement achieved the major elements of the necessary transformation. By the time Canada became immersed in the radically different preoccupations of war, the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance had already laid the basis for the break with theologically grounded moral regulation. The framework within which the surveys were undertaken was already well on the way to a shift to a model that today we would term "social work" and that reformers had begun to call "social service". This mutation is evidenced in the bewildering change of nomenclature of their organizational apparatus. The Presbyterian Church of Canada established a Department of Temperance and Other Moral and Social Reforms in 1907, which was quickly renamed the Board of Social and Moral Reform (1908); this became the Board of Moral and Social Reform and Evangelism in 1910 and finally the Board of Social Service and Evangelism in 1911. In a similar progression the Methodist Church of Canada's Department of Temperance, Prohibition and Moral Reform, established in 1902, changed to the Department of Social Service and Evangelism in 1914 and to the Department of Evangelism and Social Service in 1918.

This shift in the episteme of Canadian moral regulation was epitomized by the Social Service Congress of 1914. The sequence of sessions gave priority to "The Church" in the first, but this was followed by sessions on "Industrial Life and Labor", "Child Welfare", "The Problem of the City", "The Problem of the Country", "Commercialized Vice and the White Slave Trade", "Immigration and the Humanization of Religion", "Political Purity", and finally "Temperance". The secularization was most clearly marked by the significant role given both in the agenda and on the platform to the "Trades and Labor Congress" and the "Dominion Grange and Farmers' Association". The policy statement adopted also reflected the new reconfiguration of the project of "social service". Its main elements established a commitment to a more equitable distribution of wealth, the abolition of poverty, protection of childhood, protection of the physical and moral health of women in industry, industrial accident compensation, conciliation and arbitration in labour disputes, proper housing, adequate care of dependent and defective persons, the reclamation of criminals, wholesome recreation, and the protection of society against contagious diseases.

These concerns constitute what Pierre Bourdieu has described as "pre-constructed objects of inquiry" that are generated by self-evident and taken-for-granted "social problems". These more or less arbitrarily defined social categories, such as "youth" and "immigrants", are taken as natural objects. Bourdieu makes the point that "the preconstructed is everywhere"; the self-evident character of these objects of inquiry stems from the fit between objective structures and subjective categories formed within the prevailing cultural knowledge in a way that shields them from being questioned. Thus these categories form the perspective that brings certain questions into focus,

but excludes others. “Social science is always prone to receive from the social world it studies the *issues* that it poses about the world. Each society, at each moment, elaborates a body of *social problems* taken to be legitimate, worthy of being debated, of being made public.”<sup>70</sup>

I suggest that we can best grasp the distinctive features of the categories which permeate the Canadian social surveys by viewing them through the lens of Michel Foucault’s concept of “pastoral power”. This concept first enters his work as a direct application of the Christian pastoral ministry which lays down a host of rules for individual conduct. Foucault then expands it by drawing on the metaphor at the heart of the Christian pastoral ideal, that of the shepherd and the flock. The shepherd takes care of the individuals within the flock to protect the flock as a whole.<sup>71</sup> He argues that the conception expanded its scope, moving beyond the religious sphere and playing an increasingly important role in civil society. “Pastoral power” is an “individualizing power”: “[I]f the state is the political form of a centralized and centralizing power, let us call pastorship the individualizing power.”<sup>72</sup> “Pastoral governance” became absorbed into governmental techniques during the eighteenth century and remains an important technique of regulation down to the present. Pastoral power is directed to ensuring, sustaining, and improving the lives of each and every one. Foucault was concerned with the aggregation of people, conceived as a population, by means of focusing on the care of individuals. Thus the growth of public health systems is pastoral in that caring for the health of individuals prevents the spread of contagious diseases to the population as a whole; pastoral power involves the use of techniques for the governance of others.

The social survey project was a form of pastoral power that identified social problems and, in particular, troublesome populations and sought to devise means of regulation that addressed individuals, both for their own sake and for the well-being of the whole. The language of pastoralism came easily to activists in the social gospel movement; the church as shepherd and the congregation as flock was a familiar imagery. But the social gospel effected a significant discursive shift. The “flock” was no longer the church congregation, but was the growing population outside the immediate reach of the church. To envisage how the working poor and the recently arrived immigrants, who made up an increasing proportion of the working poor, might be reached entailed a further significant shift. It was no longer the church as an institutional power with a natural right to govern, but rather the

70 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Practice of Reflexive Sociology” in Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, eds., *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 236.

71 The concern for each and for all is captured in Foucault’s essay “Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of ‘Political Reason’ ” in S. McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), pp. 223–254.

72 Michel Foucault, “Politics and Reason” in L. D. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 60.

congregation of the church, led by its pastorate, that had to reach out to the working poor. Translated into social terms it was the respectable classes, whose respectability was confirmed by their participation in and through the church, that must attend to the needs of the working poor.

The pastoral role of the respectable classes was conceived through the joint feature captured in the organizational linkage of the Methodist-Presbyterian alliance of “evangelism” and “social service”. The radicalism of the active proponents of the social survey project was expressed in a growing concern about the withdrawal of the respectable classes from the inner city to what would only later come to be called the suburbs. The radicals were disheartened when the building of new churches in middle-class residential areas took priority over the provision of funds for the “domestic missionary” work in the inner city. Indeed, the term domestic missionary, sometimes seen as going hand-in-hand with overseas missions, but all too often as an alternative, captures the essence of the new form of pastoral power which they sought to promote.

The epitome of the pastoral relationship was the ideal of “home visits” by the respectable classes to the homes of the needy. The same sentiment underlay the popularity of “rescue homes” run by respectable ladies for young women who had strayed from the path of sexual respectability. The home visit took organizational form in the “case method”, which fuelled the transition from nineteenth-century philanthropy to twentieth-century social work. The aim was to identify the specific needs of individuals and families; meeting these needs took an economic form of directed aid that contrasted with the directionless charity of an earlier period. Increasing emphasis was placed upon offering advice about how the poor should live. This frequently took very specific forms that included advice about how to cook “cheap, nourishing meals” and about the sleeping arrangements in the typically crowded homes of the poor. In the articulation of these endeavours there was a complex interconnection between the direct governance of others and the incitement of others to engage in their own self-governance. Mothers were to be made responsible for feeding their children and for protecting their sexual safety, and fathers were to be responsible for earning and handing over a wage to sustain the family and ensuring the education of their children.

The project of the social survey movement, partial and incomplete though it was, stands as testimony to the emergence of a new configuration of social power. The project of the surveys was committed to scientific modes of inquiry, but unable to realize their application. It was, as a result, unable to yield the specific forms of knowledge needed to inform the attempt to create a pastoral mode of governance by the respectable classes over the aggregated mass of the working poor.