

Implicit Narratives: Textuality in English Historical Demography

E.A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield published, not long ago, the second volume of their magisterial history of English population over three centuries. The first volume had presented aggregative analyses of demographic data collected from 404 parishes, while the second focused on a sample of parishes utilizing the demanding technique of family reconstitution.¹ However much their efforts may have been criticized,² their achievement remains stunning, not only for the complexity of the undertaking (given the often fragile nature of the sources), but equally because of the importance of their main finding, regarding the fall in the mean age at first marriage for both men and women, and its relation to the economic and social modernization of England.

The “mean”, however, is a measure of “central tendency” intended only to offer a summary of the ages at which men and women generally married. No one would deny that notable variation in individual decisions regarding the timing of marriage would accompany the calculation of the mean. But for the Cambridge authors, as social scientists, the central tendency, and that which explains it best, carry the most meaning. Hence for Wrigley and Schofield, the underlying cause of the English demographic revolution, embodied in the fall in the mean age at first marriage, can be found in the growth of per capita real income over the “long eighteenth century,” the result in turn of industrialization.

For micro-historians interested in cultural and social explanations, on the other hand, the “notable variation” found in the calculation of the mean may hold equal or even greater importance. Such variation can give insight into the diversity of individual decisions made by ordinary people that singular attention to the mean cannot. David Levine, for example, has called for greater concentration on the standard deviation or interquartile range, which in his view have been neglected in favor of a focus on the mean despite the fact that “fully a quarter of the population in question married several years earlier than [the mean age at first marriage], while a quarter would have married several years later.” Although economic considerations undoubtedly influenced the timing of many marriages, this broad distribution of marriage ages thus suggests that “it makes much more sense to understand [the timing of marriage] within a specific historical

grid of experience and cultural expectation.”³ More recent studies,⁴ in their distinctive ways, have broadly taken up this call in examining a wide range of demographic behavior.[♦]

This article follows a similar path by exploring the diversity of individual responses to demographic events, as well as the reciprocal effects of these events, as suggested by the family reconstitution data I have compiled for Horsley and Avening parishes, two contiguous rural-industrial Gloucestershire settlements, c. 1700 to 1837, at the center of which lay the dissenting, extra-parochial village of Nailsworth.⁵ In doing so, I have used the family reconstitution forms designed by the Cambridge historical demographers, adjusted however by nominal linkages to both conventional and less conventional sources.

Interestingly, the data, when collected onto family reconstitution forms and examined at the level of their individual components, lend themselves to narrative reconstructions. Even dry forms, through the data fragments they contain, seem to possess an inherent textuality depicting the life choices of individuals or of families. Because such narratives are implicit in the data they may be subject to a degree of interpretation, or “readings.” These readings nevertheless appear compelling, even when interpretive, because they remain anchored in the empirical. Such textuality indeed lends vividness and humanity to the data, while suggesting the complementarity of narrative and quantitative modes of historical analyses.[♥]

[♦] Thus Barry Reay has innovatively contextualized the pattern of illegitimacy. Vann and Eversley found that national differences counted more than religious ones in affecting reproductive behavior. Medick has shown that Laichingen followed a “high pressure” demographic regime in which mortality (in contrast to the “low pressure” English experience) predominated over fertility in driving reproduction, as well as having framed the intense religio-cultural pietism of villagers. Ogilvie has demonstrated that the persistence of guilds in the teeth of a growing world market, and the extension of their authority to rural areas, effectively sustained higher first marriage ages than one would otherwise have anticipated for proto-industrial regions. And Schlumbohm has highlighted the centrality of family structure and landholding to reproductive behavior.

[♥] Narrative and quantitative modes of historical writing have long had a lamentable history of contention between their practitioners, though some appropriately have sought reconciliation or synthesis. See the

I. THE DATA SETS

The process of family reconstitution begins with the transference of names from Anglican parish registers of baptisms, burials and marriages onto pink, green, and white printed slips, respectively. Names from the white slips are first transferred to family reconstitution forms in order to establish all of the marriages that occurred in the locale as a base for further analysis. Names from baptism and burial units are then collated onto the reconstitution forms.⁶ Multiple sources of under-registration can be found,

debate between Lawrence Stone, Eric Hobsbawm and Philip Abrams over the meaning of the “revival of narrative” transpiring among social historians in the 1980s. Social historians had begun increasingly to embrace voluntarist, rather than structuralist modes of analysis, often under the rubric of “empathic history”; this approach stressed the role of the historian as partisan, relied heavily on anecdotal material, while excluding the quantitative with pointed hostility. Its methodological roots might be found in what Carlo Ginzburg has called the “conjectural paradigm of semiotics”; it is enough for historians to observe fragments of the object of inquiry, and to draw thereby a deep impression, grounded in insight and feeling, in order to obtain a proper understanding or conclusion. Such intuitiveness dignifies the particular and the qualitative over samples of repeated observations and quantitative measurement, regarding the latter as heavy-handed or lacking the capacity for “nuance.” (Cf. S.C. Williams, Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c. 1880-c.1939 [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999] for an especially firm recent example of this viewpoint). Roderick Floud lamented this development, specifically among the practitioners of “people’s history” of the *History Workshop* school, and called for an integration of qualitative description and analysis with the use of quantification. In a sense, this call has inspired the aim of this article, namely, to illustrate how forms used for data collection, and therefore regarded as essentially statistical documents, may also possess an “empathic” quality. See L. Stone, “The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History,” Past & Present, 85 (1979), 3-24; E.J. Hobsbawm, “The Revival of Narrative: Some Comments,” Past & Present, 86 (1980), 3-8; P. Abrams, “History, Sociology, Historical Sociology,” Past & Present, 87 (1980), 3-16; Carlo Ginzburg [trans., John and Anne Tedeschi], Clues, Myths and the Historical Method (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), p. 118, 123-24; and Roderick Floud, “Quantitative History and People’s History: Two Methods in Conflict?” Social Science History, 8, 2 (Spring, 1984), pp. 151-68.

however, in rural-industrial parishes like those in the Nailsworth valley, because of high geographical mobility and a high incidence of religious nonconformity.⁷ Every effort has therefore been made to find complementary sources that will help fill obvious gaps, such as the 1851 manuscript census returns, or nonconformist burial, birth and marriage records kept privately and thus separately from those of the Church of England.⁸ Figure 1 depicts a sample family reconstitution form that includes data from Baptist sources, such as birth dates of children and the dates of formal conversion to the church.

[fig. 1. Sample FRF]

Horsley's marriage and baptismal registers yielded 3,281 marriages and Avening's 2,041; and until 1837, with the advent of civil registration, these included by law all nonconformist marriages, excepting those of Quakers and Jews. Still, a sizeable number of the reconstitution forms containing these marriages fail to record any listings of baptisms/births and burials. In other words, they remain blank except for the record of the marriage, the result mainly of undocumented out-migration, or of nonconformity,⁹ or of both, although in this capacity they retain some utility for the statistical analysis of migration.¹⁰

The sample of marriages for which baptisms/births, and to a lesser degree burials, have been recorded I have grouped into Anglican and nonconformist categories. Completed Anglican marriages from both parishes, defined broadly by the relative fullness of recorded baptisms and the presence of parental age data, together with completed Baptist marriages, numbered altogether 658 or 12.4 per cent of Horsley and Avening marriages combined.¹¹ A further 855 Anglican and nonconformist marriages from Horsley and Avening contained no parental age data despite the frequent fullness of the number of recorded baptisms/births.¹²

These samples touch several areas of concern to historical demographers, including mortality, birth and fertility, nuptiality and re-marriage, literacy, and migration with its effect on reproduction. Demographers have naturally subdivided these categories further. Thus the rubric of "mortality" may include the incidence of infant, child and adult mortality, while "birth", besides the broad consideration of fertility, may touch on the timing of births (how they were spaced and the impact of external events on their incidence), or on their quality (whether legitimate, pre-nuptial or illegitimate). The "replacement effect" may further establish a statistical link between mortality and birth, insofar as the deaths of infants or small

children often stimulated couples to “replace” them by either conceiving another child immediately, or by recycling the deceased children’s names to their successors.¹³

II. RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND THE FAMILY

This study is concerned, however, with the sample’s qualitative dimension, and here it is possible to disaggregate its constituents further. Thus the religious convictions of the parents (whether or to what degree one or both parents may have seriously embraced evangelicalism) may have crucially influenced the broad pattern of reproduction, while demographic events in turn may have had reciprocal effects on spirituality. Thus among the Shortwood Baptists the likelihood of couples producing an additional birth tended to rise following the formal conversion of either husband or wife, despite obvious variation in the timing of conversions in relation to reproductive ages.¹⁴ Such variation, furthermore, embraced a wide array of experience even within the same category of experience. Thus among Baptist families, in which pluralism of religious affect clearly obtained among the parents, the pattern of such pluralism still varied and seems to have produced diverse consequences. Indeed, among sample Baptist families, one can observe several patterns of pluralism at work.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: Type “A”

One of the more extreme examples of pluralism consisted of families in which one parent remained a full member of the church, having undergone conversion from the time of marriage or before, while the other never became a member nor even a “hearer,” insofar as s/he never made an appearance in the Baptist membership roll and Baptist burial register.¹⁵ William Gill and Esther Gazzard married in 1816.¹⁶ She had become a member at Shortwood on 2 August 1813, nearly a full three years before her marriage, and in 1851 had been listed by the census enumerator as “not able to work.” Her husband, a weaver, never became a Baptist nor a hearer, while only one of their nine children (Matilde) joined Shortwood. Perhaps poverty, combined with the “relatively more secularized culture of the Beer hall” on the one hand, and the domestic focus of chapel life on the other, produced a differential response to religion among the parents that in turn affected the attitudes of their children.¹⁷

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: Type “B”

More intermediate cases consisted of those in which one parent became a full member, while the other assumed the status of hearer, though with varying degrees of apparent attachment to the church.

James Wakefield and Susannah Smith had married in 1819.¹⁸ She joined Shortwood on 25 December 1813, six years before her marriage, while his name appears only in the Baptist burial register, so that at best he retained the status of hearer. The Shortwood community excluded Susannah from membership, however, the very year and month of her marriage, possibly because it disapproved of her choice of partner. Still, it seems likely that given James' burial at Shortwood, both had remained hearers until the church restored her to membership in 1834, though as a widow. James died in 1831, three years after the birth of their last child, so that the marriage had ended prematurely. Until then, the spacing of births (3-2-3-2 years) followed a somewhat normal course, though the delay of three years before the first birth seems unusually long and may have been connected to the marriage's inauspicious start. Susannah's poverty and status as a widow, rather than a heightened religious affect, may have stimulated her need for closer ties to Shortwood and encouraged her reapplication for membership.¹⁹

The marriage of George King and Margaret Heskins contrasted to the Wakefield's only with respect to the wife's behavior.²⁰ Like James, George had remained a probable hearer. But unlike Susannah, Margaret had gotten baptized at Shortwood eleven years after her marriage (in April 1818) and one year after her last birth, which occurred at age 37, an apparent stoppage that likely resulted from relative infecundity, though as a possibly zealous convert, she may have embraced sexual abstinence as a mark of virtue.²¹ Margaret had indeed exhibited an intense religiosity, leaving Shortwood in 1841 to join the Plymouth Brethren, a stricter and more sectarian group, while her two surviving children, apparently affected by her sense of religious devotion, eventually became members at Shortwood.²²

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: Type "C"

In some cases of "pluralism", both parents actually became members at Shortwood, but at widely different intervals. This differential sometimes indicated that the religious feelings of one partner remained stronger than those of the other throughout marriage. On other occasions it showed that the strength of religious feelings of one partner may instead have lagged behind those of the other over much of the marriage, eventually reaching parity. Still in other cases, the differential might have marked a tepidness of religious conviction in both spouses. And finally it may have pointed to an opposite tendency, in which

the religious convictions of spouses merely assumed different forms as they nevertheless grew stronger over time.

The marriage of John Rudder and Martha Smith reveals the first sort of experience.²³ Martha was baptized at Shortwood two years before her marriage, although John became a member 21 years after it.²⁴ The marriage produced ten children, including two dead infants and one dead child. Three of John's children became baptized at Shortwood between 1839 and 1842, so that his joining as late as he did likely involved considerations of family duty more than religious feeling, while the mother's influence in religious matters seems to have prevailed within her family.

The marriage of Richard Manning to Ruth Barnfield suggests, in contrast, a lag in the growth of religious sentiment between spouses.²⁵ Richard was a weaver, while Ruth worked as a spinner, though in 1851 the census listed her also as both pauper and widow. Together they had had ten children, five of whom died in infancy. Their first child, Ann, was born illegitimately about one month before their marriage, while their second child, Eliza, had been baptized in the Church of England.²⁶

Richard became a member at Shortwood four years after his marriage, following the death of his second child five months earlier, an event that seems likely to have precipitated his formal conversion.²⁷ Hearers might have felt stimulated to formal conversion following the death of an infant or child because they could easily have attributed the cause to their own lack of grace. Believers' baptism in principle conferred grace, or at least coincided with its receipt, which in turn, in the mind of the hearer, might have brought future blessings. Ruth joined 13 years later than her husband, after the death of their penultimate infant, which occurred six months earlier.²⁸ She may have required the experience of four infant deaths to her husband's one to lead her finally to conversion.

In the case of John Roberts and Rebecca Wood, the lag in conversion seems to have marked a tepidness of religious conviction in both spouses.²⁹ Again, both joined Shortwood at widely different intervals: he at age 49, on 6 April 1849, and she seven months before her marriage, on 16 April 1818 at the age of 17. But the church excluded her from membership eight months later, in December 1818, one month following her marriage. Her first child, James, she had baptized in the Church of England on 27 June 1819, the birth clearly having been pre-nuptial and the probable cause of her exclusion from Shortwood. Rebecca's eight other children appear in the Baptist marriage register from 1821, and five

years later, on 8 August 1826, the church restored her to full membership. The records do not clarify her reasons for seeking reinstatement, whether for spiritual or social causes: Did she genuinely repent her “sins,” or had social isolation made her yearn for the life of a community that had sustained her since childhood? Chances were that, given the seriousness of her transgression, her need may have been more social than spiritual. Her husband, a cloth manufacturer, having joined 23 years later and six years after the birth of their last child, may have done so from a sense of family duty rather than a compelling inclination.

Isaac Brinkworth’s marriage to Elizabeth Carter provides a suggestion of yet another variant, in which the religious convictions of spouses took different forms while nevertheless deepening over the life of the marriage.³⁰ Isaac joined Shortwood as a member a full year before his marriage, having been baptized on 20 March 1823, and also regularly attended Sunday services there c. 1851.³¹ Elizabeth, in contrast, became a Shortwood member a full ten years after their marriage, at age 30, and seven years later joined the Wesleyan Methodists. She became a Baptist following the birth of her fifth child out of nine, that is, midway in the reproductive cycle, and became a Methodist in the same year as her penultimate birth (to Ann). Her last child she named significantly JOB, symbolizing perhaps the acquisition of faith following severe trials and one that contrasts notably to the more prosaic naming of her other children. Pleasing her husband may have motivated her first conversion, as family duty may have stimulated both John Rudder’s and John Roberts’; but Elizabeth seems to have undergone her second conversion genuinely to please herself.

III. RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY AND THE “REPLACEMENT EFFECT”

As the case of Richard and Ruth Manning has suggested, demographic episodes like the deaths of infants or children may have led to similar kinds of conversion experience. When combined with religious feeling, these events sometimes produced contrary demographic effects: serving as a spur to further reproduction on the one hand, as in the case of the Mannings, while on the other, acting to dampen a desire for more children as religious faith itself became attenuated.

Anthony Harvey, a farmer, and his wife, Joanna Wilkins, appear to have shared in at least one respect the Mannings’ probable reaction to infant mortality, though unlike them they had become members at Shortwood before the start of their reproductive histories. Anthony had been baptized at Shortwood six years before their marriage, on 15 May 1829, and Joanna became a member two months after it, on 28 May

1835.³² But the church, by vote of the members, eventually removed him from membership, suggesting either his lapse of commitment to the Shortwood community, or an attenuation of religious feeling, induced perhaps by the deaths of his children.[▲] The Shortwood minister, on the other hand, listed Joanna as a regular attender of services c. 1851, implying her continued steadfastness.³³ Of their seven children, two had died: the second at age one in September 1839, the fourth at age three in June 1846. The Harveys replaced the first death immediately with the birth of Sophia the following year, while the second death required no replacement, since a brother had been born a year earlier, in a sense preempting the need for one. The short intervals between infant deaths and their subsequent replacements were common enough. But it seems likely that the particularly short one in this case, as in others among Baptists, received religious sanction in the highly positive value worshippers at Shortwood were taught to attach to the begetting and rearing of children. “What is a child?” the Shortwood minister had queried rhetorically in one sermon, answering, with perhaps a predictable Christian sentiment: “It is a little feeble piece of mortality -- beautiful but frail -- gathering around it the warm affections and indescribable solitudes of the parental bosom.”³⁴

The marriage of Charles Hyde, a land surveyor, and Esther Hyde suggests, in contrast, a response to infant mortality informed by a waning of religious attachment on the part of both spouses.³⁵ The pair had joined Shortwood on the same day (22 March 1814) seven months before their marriage, with Charles’ membership lapsing formally in 1853. But it is likely that the enthusiasm of both had waned by 1837, when three surviving children out of six births received baptism in the Church of England;³⁶ the other births issuing in infant deaths were recorded only in the Baptist burial register.³⁷ The Shortwood Baptists, as Calvinists, believed in the doctrines of “particular election” and believers’ baptism, which denied dead infants and children salvation. The high rate of infant mortality experienced by these parents may have caused them to turn away from Shortwood in dismay, to embrace instead a less rigorous Established Church in matters of salvation, and perhaps to stop reproduction altogether.³⁸ They may have come to feel,

[▲] If so, he may have shared Charles and Esther Hyde’s likely feelings of dismay; see the discussion of their case below.

unlike the Mannings and possibly like Anthony Harvey, that God had abandoned them, despite their own formal election.³⁹

IV. “NORMALITY”: THE ABSENCE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

At the other end of the spectrum, of course, we find the standard-normal Baptist family, in which both parents remained firm members from the time of marriage or before, or from the moment of their conversion which would have occurred at about the same time. Joseph Clissold and Maryann Saunders married at Avening on 22 September 1835, by license rather than by banns, most likely because his family, prominent maltsters and brewers, were among the leaders of Shortwood. Fifteen years following his baptism, he became a deacon of the church; his wife was baptized eight months after her marriage and remained a regular attender of services c. 1851.⁴⁰ The Clissolds bore five children, spaced moderately at 2-3-2-3-2 years, but stopped early when Maryann reached age 34. The decision to stop may have been informed by newly developing middle class values, regarding the desirability of having smaller families. Or it may have resulted from an infant death that preceded the apparent decision to do so, or which may have led to infertility in the woman.

In mild contrast, we find the marriage of Joseph Hillier and Sarah Warner, both of whom got baptized together on 27 September 1806, eight years after their marriage.⁴¹ Their first child was born illegitimate, two years prior to the marriage, on 27 November 1795. They subsequently produced eight additional offspring, three of whom were buried at Shortwood as adults, indicating that they had probably become hearers.⁴² Hillier was evidently a poor man, the Baptist burial register describing him as a “father of a large family needing help.” His marriage clearly differed from Clissold’s in its higher fertility, initial lack of “respectability,” and in his social class. But in form, the two marriages followed the same pattern of parental uniformity of religious conviction and practice.

The marriage of William Walkley, weaver, to Sarah Cook, offers a further variation on the theme of normality.⁴³ Each spouse’s name was recorded only in the Baptist burial register, suggesting that each retained a hearer status throughout their association with Shortwood.⁴⁴ The death of a daughter, Emma, age 20, on 4 April 1857, was also recorded in the Baptist burial register, implying similarly that she of the five children had followed her parents’ example and also remained a hearer.

In the marriage of William Gazzard to Elizabeth Howel, however, we find the complete obverse of normality, inasmuch as both spouses failed to associate themselves formally with Shortwood.⁴⁵ Yet all of their children, including two illegitimate offspring, were found recorded in the Baptist marriage register, very likely because two of them, Maryann and Susan, had chosen to become baptized there. Perhaps the parents had been only occasional hearers, who consequently failed to have themselves buried at Shortwood. Still later, Maryann and Susan joined the stricter, more sectarian Plymouth Brethren,⁴⁶ perhaps in reaction to their parents' apparent laxity in religious matters.

Besides religion, the life experiences related to family life that lend themselves to narrative reconstruction include parental mortality, migration, and illegitimacy.

V. OTHER LIFE EXPERIENCES

i. Parental Mortality

Maternal mortality during childbirth occurred often enough to have made women at the time of delivery fear for their lives and their families' futures.⁴⁷ Of course the deaths of fathers likewise left families bereft. Thomas Tranter, weaver, had married Mary Gilman on 26 December 1774, and together they created a family of seven children.⁴⁸ But at age 41, on 27 April 1795, Mary died. Her death probably resulted from complications issuing from the birth of her last child, Ann, who had died a month earlier on 22 March at the age of one month. Again, Joseph Barnfield, laborer, got married, at age 43, to Mary Smith who was thirteen years his junior.⁴⁹ Together they produced four children, the last, William, dying on 20 May 1786, a month after his baptism. The baptismal register listed Joseph as a "widower," a status confirmed by the entry for his wife's burial, on 4 April 1786, 16 days prior to son William's baptism. Both women had died toward the end of their reproductive cycles, so that while complications in the birth process may have primarily been responsible for each death, their relatively advanced ages may also have contributed. John Hill's marriage to Betty Young, to cite an instance of paternal mortality, ended with his death after 19 years.⁵⁰ The marriage had produced only three children spaced 15 and then four years apart. The 15 year gap might have been caused by the non-registration of stillborn infants, though the spacing of four years between the last two births may imply relative infecundity; then again, this pattern may have been an early example of fertility control within marriage. The father's death, having occurred four years

after the last birth, nevertheless suggests a completed family history, with due parental attention to the baptizing of surviving children having been paid.⁵¹

ii. Migration

Because of the censoring effect it often produced, migration also left a number of sample families who appear to have had a notably low number of births. Indeed, since family reconstitution focuses on the stationary population of a parish, the extent of migration normally can only be inferred.⁵² But through sample Baptist families, in which the church roll documented the movement of members, some appreciation of the effects of migration on family completeness and stability becomes possible.

Typically, the censoring effect renders incomplete what otherwise would have been a completed family. Richard Cox married Mary Ann Baxter in 1825, a year and a half before his conversion.⁵³ They had three children in normal succession (2-2-3 years), with the last recorded in 1832.⁵⁴ The Baptist church roll registered Cox's "dismissal" to New South Wales c. 1840, although he probably migrated not long after the birth of his third child; it was common for members to migrate and subsequently to request a formal transfer to a Baptist church near their new homes, one they might have been attending in any case for some time. Still, some migrant families appear much more completed than others, as a result of the comparative lateness of their departures. John Hillier married Priscilla Fry four years before his conversion, and they had six children together at reasonably normal intervals.⁵⁵ John had been baptized into the Church of England as an infant on 10 April 1796, and was 24 years old at marriage and 44 when the Shortwood church dismissed him to Australia c. June 1840, four years after the birth of his last recorded child.⁵⁶ If his wife had been about the same age, then Ann, born in 1836, would have probably been their last child, so that migration in this case would not have produced a censoring effect. Nor was this pattern unusual: William Gazzard and Ann Prout, married in 1819 and both converts to Shortwood, were dismissed to New South Wales in 1839, three years after the birth of their sixth and last recorded child.⁵⁷

Because the incidence of migration described here comes from family reconstitution data, one cannot directly detect the bias that Ruggles, employing a simulation technique, believed he had found in the Cambridge Group samples, an alleged bias resulting from the migration of *unmarried* individuals. But as he seems to have concluded, and as Wrigley has also observed, this must in any case have been negligible.⁵⁸

iii. Illegitimacy

The analysis of illegitimacy is less intractable. Nationally, illegitimacy rose rapidly after 1760 as a partial consequence of the growth in common law marriages. Indeed, “the increase in the number of women with multiple bastard births in the late eighteenth century,” Gillis concluded, “was something new.” And by the late nineteenth century, illegitimacy generally may have become a cultural norm in typical rural communities.⁵⁹

Illegitimacy among sample Baptists confined itself only to the pre-conversion state and when occurring among married women was invariably pre-nuptial in character.⁶⁰ Anglican illegitimacy, however, might assume other, less conventional forms. Widows were known to have conceived illegitimate births, and on occasion, the marriage of virtual children took place, most likely under duress, in order to legitimate their illegitimate offspring.

Edward Harvey, weaver, had married Love Walkley in 1754 at age 32 and died ten years later almost to the month; the marriage produced three children, the last baptized in the parish church in 1761.⁶¹ A fourth child, Rosannah, was buried 27 April 1775, although the vicar had failed to record a corresponding baptism. Possibly this child had been born legitimately in the interval between 1761 and her father’s death in 1764 but remained unbaptized, because of her mother’s special degree of laxity, until her own death in 1775. But it seems at least as likely that she had been born illegitimately a decade after Edward Harvey’s death, not only because a delayed baptism would have already been peculiarly long, but equally because the vicar, in what seems a wry double entendre, noted next to her name: “daughter of love.” In a similar case, Hannah Nichols had married Charles Herbert at Horsley in 1746 (FRF 1160), but the marriage ended seven years later with his death, having produced two children. The first died in infancy eight days after his baptism; the second bearing the same name of Thomas survived to age 69. A son, William, was baptized in 1755, two years after his father’s death, though this could have been a delayed legitimate baptism. But a daughter, Hannah, was buried in 1756, very likely as an infant, with a note in the burial register identifying her simply as “the daughter of Hannah Herbert, widow.” Still later, in 1759, another daughter named Hannah was baptized, evidently as a replacement of the previous Hannah, with the name of the father not offered.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find the marriage of Thomas Knight, age 22, to Sarah Cole, age 13. Their first two children had been baptized two months after the wedding, but a note in the register indicated that they had been born illegitimately, in March 1790, when their mother was only age twelve. The mother's extreme youth, combined with the birth of illegitimate twins, had very likely compelled the marriage. Similarly, Thomas Matthews had married Anne Knight when she was 13.5 years old, undoubtedly because of a pre-nuptial pregnancy; she went on to give birth to five more children, dying 1.5 years after her last delivery, at age 27. Such youthful marriages naturally required parental consent; in the marriage of Robert Evans to Elisabeth Bousher, the vicar indeed had registered the comment: "consent of the parents [given]." ⁶²

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has described, in *qualitative* terms, some of the elements affecting, and in turn affected by, the broad pattern of reproduction among families from Gloucestershire's Nailsworth valley c. 1700-1837. Chief among them has been the experience of religion, particularly among members and associates of the Shortwood Baptist Church. Parental and infant mortality, especially with reference to the "replacement effect," migration, and illegitimacy have also been scrutinized with the aim of accenting the particularity of individual experience. Indeed, one main purpose of this study has been to emphasize the diversity of human engagement with demographic events, in a manner that highlights the complexity of individual motives. Such motives have been inferred, by and large, from a "reading" of family reconstitution forms, items normally used for mere data collection, but which individually acquire a textual dimension as the details of family reproductive life get recorded onto them. Indeed, these motives, because of the inarticulateness of their bearers, become revealed by the patterns that inscribed themselves on family reconstitution forms. Another main purpose of this study, therefore, has been to emphasize the textuality of such statistical documents through which narratives implicit in the data, though articulated technically without "voice," might be brought to the foreground and "read" accordingly.

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¹ E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, The population history of England 1541-1871: a reconstruction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen, and R.S.

Schofield, English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

² See, for instance, Peter H. Lindert, “English living standards, population growth and Wrigley-Schofield,” Explorations in Economic History, 20 (1983), pp. 131-55; and more recently, Peter Razell, “The growth of population in eighteenth-century England: a critical reappraisal,” Journal of Economic History, 53 m(1993), pp. 743-71. For a reply to Razzell’s more fundamental challenge, see Wrigley, et. al., English Population History, pp. 98-110.

³ David Levine, Reproducing Families: the political economy of English population history (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 116-118. Cf. Bridget Hill, “The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers,” History Workshop Journal, 28 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 129-30; and more recently, Pat Hudson and Steve King, “Two textile townships, c. 166-1820: a comparative demographic analysis,” Economic History Review, LIII, 4 (Nov 2000), pp. 706-741.

⁴ Cf. David Levine and Keith Wrightson, The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Richard Vann & D.E.C. Eversley, Friends in Life and Death: the British and Irish Quakers in the demographic transition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Barry Reay, Microhistories: Demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Juergen Schlumbohm, Lebenslaufe, Familien, Hoefe: die Bauern und Herrleute des Osnabruueckischen (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994); Hans Medick, Weben und Uberleben in Laichingen 1650-1900: Lokalgeschichte als Allgemeine Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996); Sheilagh Ogilvie, State Corporatism in Proto-industry: the Wurtmeberg Black Forest 1580-1797 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Barbagli and David I. Kertzer, eds., The History of the European Family, Vol. I: Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁵ This effort at family reconstitution builds on earlier work. For an aggregative analysis of demographic data from the same locale, see Albion M. Urdank, Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale: Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, 1780-1865 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), ch. 5; and for a partial study

of reconstituted Baptist families, see Albion M. Urdank, "Religion and Reproduction among English Dissenters: Gloucestershire Baptists in the Demographic Revolution," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 33, 3 (July 1991), pp. 511-527.

⁶ See E.A. Wrigley, An Introduction to English historical demography from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century (London, 1966) for the definitive step-by-step account of the process of family reconstitution.

⁷ See note 2 above for a current debate over the reliability of Anglican parish registers; see too Wrigley, et. al., English Population History, Part I (Chs 1-4) for a comprehensive appraisal of the utility of the sources and ways of addressing their problems; cf. David Levine, "The reliability of parochial registration and the representativeness of family reconstitution," Population Studies, 30 (1976), pp. 107-22.

⁸ Nominal linkage to the 1851 census, the most common undertaken in historical demographic studies, made possible the partial recovery of age and occupational data, as well as the identification of births not found in the parochial records. But for the Baptist families in the sample, I could go further by establishing ties to chapel marriage and burials registers, membership rolls and in some instances to lists recording members' frequency of attendance at chapel services. For further discussion of these sources and their linkages, see Urdank, "Religion and Reproduction," pp. 515-521

⁹ Unlike marriage, nonconformists were not required by law to baptize their children nor bury their dead at the parish church. The degree of under-registration in parish registers due to nonconformity, although extensive, can nevertheless be overstated. The Congregationalist minister at Forest Green, John Gyles, for instance, baptized his child, Maria, August 16, 1704, at Horsley's parish church, the vicar noting "n.b. Forest Green Congregationalists": Glos. Record Office (Henceforth GRO) P181/IN1/2. Since Congregationalists, unlike Baptists, practiced infant baptism, some like revd. Gyles may have felt no difficulty turning to the parish church for the performance of this rite, though they probably did so inconsistently. But compare the marriages, which were required by law, of Edwin Lockier, Abraham Flint, Thomas Flint Jr, John Heskins Jr and Sr., and Joseph Blackwell, deacons at the Shortwood Baptist Church (respectively in the Horsley parish marriage register: 19 Apr 1835; 21 Nov 1816; 22 May 1799; 12 Aug

1802; 26 Dec 1755; 1 Feb 1820). All except Lockier and Heskins, the elder, married by license instead of banns, and none of course had their children baptized at the parish.

¹⁰ See David Souden, "Movers and Stayers in Family Reconstitution Populations," Local Population Studies, 33 (1984), pp. 11-28; idem., "Pre-industrial English Local Migration Fields," D. Phil thesis, Cambridge University, 1981. Cf. K.D.M. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), esp. ch 1, for analyses of in-migration.

¹¹ Horsley marriages yielded a sample of 276 Anglican marriages and Avening yielded a sample of 278 more Anglican marriages. Baptist marriages, overwhelmingly from Horsley though occasionally from contiguous Minchinhampton, numbered 134, and of these 104 remained complete. Baptist marriages were more plentiful and far more complete than those of the Congregationalists; the latter numbered 55, contained no age data for parents and far fewer recorded birth per family unit, and therefore could not be used. Because the Shortwood Baptist church so dominated the locale, however, we can treat the Baptist sample as a surrogate for local nonconformist marriages and births generally.

¹² The breakdown consists of 343 Horsley Anglican marriages, 478 Avening Anglican marriages, 11 Baptist and 23 Congregationalist marriages for which no age data could be obtained for either parent, despite the fullness of the number of recorded births. Among Baptist families an additional 19 remained incomplete because of the recorded migration of the family. With a plausible method of estimating missing age data for both parents, one could create a larger, comparative sample of 1,513 families or 28.0 per cent of Horsley and Avening marriages combined. Still, a 12.4 per cent sample size seems not unreasonable.

¹³ E.g., FRF 0723: 11 April 1803, Horsley Philip Dyer to Martha Tranter. After the pre-nuptial birth of Elizabeth, three "Philips" were born in succession. The first died in 1811 at the age of 5; the second was baptized a year later, but he died in 1818 at age 6. The third Philip was baptized six months after the second's death. He clearly had been on the way and was subsequently named for the deceased second Philip. Compare FRF 1280: 5 Jan 1760, Horsley, William Howell to Ann Taylor. Their marriage had produced seven children, including a pre-nuptial birth. Their first William was born Dec 1764 and died four

years to the month. The second William, evidently on the way, was baptized a month after his brother's death, but died seven months later. The third William was born four years later in Dec 1772 and survived until the age of 49. Or compare FRF 0193: 20 Sept 1765, Horsley, Thomas Bown (Broadweaver, pauper) to Susannah Cook. Their marriage produced ten children. A William born in Apr 1777 died in Oct 1780. Two female births interceded (1779 and 1781) until the birth of another William in 1783.

¹⁴ Urdank, "Religion and Reproduction," pp. 521-524.

¹⁵ Ibid., 514, 520-522. "Hearers" merely attended services and may or may not have eventually become full members. Their status as "hearer" is implied by their presence in the Baptist burial register and their simultaneous absence from the church membership roll. When their names make no appearance in either document, they are treated as having been neither hearers nor members, but average members of the Anglican laity or possibly of other nonconformist churches.

¹⁶ FRF 0954 Horsley, 10 June 1816.

¹⁷ Among nonconformists, women tended to outnumber men at chapel by a ratio of 3:2. See Mark Smith, Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth 1740-1865 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 133; cf. Urdank, Religion and Society, p. 287.

¹⁸ FRF 0954 Horsley 23 Feb 1819.

¹⁹ Susanna was listed as a pauper in the 1851 census, while her two daughters, Hannah and Elizabeth, were enumerated, respectively, as "pauper and washerwoman" and "servant." This pattern of reapplication for membership was certainly common among local Quakers; see Urdank, Religion and Society, pp. 256-272.

²⁰ FRF 1454 Horsley 14 June 1807.

²¹ Married at age 27, her first of three births occurred six years later, indicating possible infecundity, while her second died in infancy. Still, she may have been inclined toward sexual abstinence as a personal preference, which her later conversion may easily have legitimated. For the connection between religious enthusiasm and sexual abstinence, see Henry Abelove, "The Sexual Politics of Early Wesleyan Methodism," in James Obelkevich, et. al., Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics, and Patriarchy

(London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 86-89; and Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men and Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (1988), passim.

²² G.R.O D2424/3, “Shortwood Baptist Church Roll”: Hannah, #1270 and Joseph #1382.

²³ FRF 0007, Minchinhampton 23 Feb 1819.

²⁴ G.R.O. D2424/3, Shortwood church roll: Martha, #911, 28 Apr 1817; John #1540. 3 June 1840.

²⁵ FRF 1598, Horsley, 8 March 1818.

²⁶ Ann was baptized in Horsley’s parish church on 28 June 1818 and Eliza on 27 Aug 1820.

²⁷ Although Eliza had been baptized in the Church of England, her death was recorded in the Baptist burial register (13 Dec 1821); another Eliza “replaced” her 1824 and seems to have survived infancy. Thus by the date of the infant’s death, Richard had very likely become a hearer at Shortwood, and shortly thereafter, on 24 May 1822, he completed the transition to full membership through formal conversion.

²⁸ Ruth’s conversion took place on 12 March 1836, the death of the penultimate infant on 27 Sept 1835.

²⁹ FRF 1981, Horsley, 3 Nov 1818.

³⁰ FRF 0247 Horsley, 1 July 1824.

³¹ GRO D2424/6, “Abstract of Members from the Church Roll,” with a note on their attendance.

³² FRF 1135, Horsley, 18 March 1835.

³³ GRO D2424/6, “Abstract of Members from the Church Roll,” with a note on their attendance.

³⁴ See Urdank, “Religion and Reproduction,” pp. 525-26, esp. note 32, citing the sermons of Thomas Fox Newman. Yet one might also imagine how this sentiment could produce a different effect, namely, the refusal to “replace” a dead infant who had become valued for its own individuality; see Linda Pollock, Forgotten Children, passim for the continuity of this attitude over a broad historical period.

³⁵ FRF 1196, Horsley, 9 August 1815.

³⁶ The parish register, interestingly, in this case gave the full dates of birth of the second, fourth and fifth children who received baptism on 12 March 1837; 1 Nov 1817 (Jane); 1 May 1821 (Charles Edwin); and 1 Feb 1831 (Mary).

³⁷ Shortwood Baptist Burial Register, in the possession of Mrs B. Mills, Newmarket House, Nailsworth, Stroud, Gloucestershire: 9 July 1816, 21 Dec 181, and 28 March 1834.

³⁸ The mother was age 41 at her last confinement and probably capable of another, although this age was also a reasonable one at which a woman might naturally cease reproduction.

³⁹ As Calvinists, the Shortwood Baptists also adhered to the doctrine of Assurance, whereby the Elect could not fall from grace; but in practice the “saints” often suffered anxiety about the true status of their spiritual condition. Compare the Revd. Thomas Fox Newman’s persistent anxiety, which he confided to his diary, in Urdank, Religion and Society, p. 406, n.43.

⁴⁰ FRF 0342, Avening, 22 Sept 1835; GRO D2424/3, “Shortwood Baptist Church Roll, 1732-1865,”: He was baptized in August 1830 (#1223) and became a deacon in 1845; and GRO D2424/6, “Abstract of Members from the Church Roll,” with a note on their attendance.

⁴¹ FRF 0620, Avening, 9 September 1797.

⁴² Shortwood Baptist Burial Register: George, 23 Feb 1833, age 23; Charles, 29 Nov 1863, age 49; and Susan, 30 Jan 1847, age 31.

⁴³ FRF 2389, Horsley, 3 February 1825.

⁴⁴ Burial of William: 2 February 1872, age 91; burial of Sarah, 29 December 1864, age 63.

⁴⁵ FRF 0941, Minchinhampton, 1 August 1811.

⁴⁶ GRO D2424/3, “Shortwood Baptist Church Roll, 1732-1865,” : Maryann # 1406, 3 Dec 1835, and Susan, #1410, the same date. Both joined the Plymouth Brethren c. 1843.

⁴⁷ Cf. Alan MacFarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a seventeenth century clergyman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 84-85.

⁴⁸ FRF 2311, Horsley, 26 December 1774.

⁴⁹ FRF 0145 , Horsley, 19 May 1776.

⁵⁰ FRF 1204, Horsley, 6 January 1739/40.

⁵¹ The last child was born 1 July 1759 and John Hill died 9 May 1762.

⁵² See Steven Ruggles, “Migration, Marriage and Mortality: correcting sources of bias in English family reconstitution,” *Population Studies*, 46 (1992), pp. 507-22; cf. E.A. Wrigley, “The effect of migration on the estimation of marriage age in family reconstitution studies,” *Population Studies*, 48 (1994), pp. 81-97.

⁵³ FRF 0555, Horsley, 27 October 1825. G.R.O. D2424/3: Baptized at Shortwood 15 March 1827, # 1152. His wife, however, was not a member, possibly a hearer, though her migration obviously precludes her appearance in the Baptist burial register..

⁵⁴ Sarah, born 1 June 1827; Mary Ann, born 9 July 1829; and Ellen, born 25 March 1832.

⁵⁵ FRF 1223, Horsley, 1 June 1820; GRO D2424/3: He was baptized into Shortwood on 22 July 1824, # 1121. His wife was not a member, but like Betty Young (see above n. 53) may very well have been a hearer. Their children included: William (b. 17 August 1823); George (b. 28 March 1825); Jane (b. 9 July 1828); Fanny (b. 3 Oct 1830); Thomas (b. 2 November 1833); and Ann (b. 26 March 1836).

⁵⁶ His father was John Hillier (Sr), who had been baptized into Shortwood the same day as his son (member #1120), and his mother was Ann Bowen; see FRF 1220.

⁵⁷ FRF 0943, Horsley, 21 October 1819; GRO D2424/3: Ann was baptized into Shortwood 28 November 1816 (member #889), three years before the marriage, while William was baptized there six years after it, on 19 May 1826 (member #1133).

⁵⁸ See above, note 52.

⁵⁹ John Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British marriages 1600-present* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 111, 127-28; cf. Peter Laslett, *Family life and elicited love in earlier generations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 102-155; Reay, *Microhistories*, ch 7; J. Robbins, “Prenuptial pregnancy in a rural area of Devonshire in the mid-nineteenth century: Colyton, 1851-1881,” *Continuity and Change*, 1, (1986).

⁶⁰ Compare the example above (n. 29) of Rebecca Wood Roberts whom the Shortwood Baptists expelled a month after her marriage to an Anglican, most likely because of her pre-nuptial pregnancy.

⁶¹ FRF 1119, Horsley, 19 August 1754. Edward Harvey died 30 July 1764. His baptized children included: Thomas, born c. 1756, baptized 10 Feb 1760; Mary baptized 10 Feb 1760; and Isaac, baptized 25 Dec 1761.

⁶² FRF 1466, marriage of Thomas Knight to Sarah Cole, Horsley, 9 February 1791; FRF 0834, marriage of Robert Evans to Elisabeth Bousher, Horsley, 20 April 1814; and FRF 1609, Horsley, 31 Jul 1743, the marriage of Thomas Matthews to Anne Knight.