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English Historical Demography and the Nuptiality Conundrum: New Perspectives

Steven King*

Abstract: In the last decade, nuptiality has been placed at the centre of the English demographic regime in the long eighteenth-century. Proto-industrial areas in particular are increasingly seen to have experienced substantial decline in the female age at first marriage during this period, helping to fuel substantial population growth. This article uses family reconstitution and other data to question the uniformity of this experience and to suggest new avenues of interpretation rather than simply observation. For Calverley in West Yorkshire, England, female marriage ages remained stable throughout the proto-industrialisation process. More significantly, the distribution of marriage ages around the mean was much narrower than similar measures elsewhere. The article suggests that kinship, a deep sentimental and practical attachment to land, and an early retirement system lay behind this experience.

I

In 1981 Tony Wrigley and Roger Schofield's *The population history of England*¹ established nuptiality at the heart of the English demographic system. Using data from twelve family reconstitutions they suggested that female age at first marriage in England declined by roughly three years between the mid

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¹ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981).

seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. The effect of opening up three of the most fertile years of the female reproductive life cycle, combined with small movements in marital fertility and larger rises in illegitimacy, meant that two thirds of English population growth in the period 1650-1830 reflected changes in fertility, leaving a relatively small role for mortality.² In contrast to many of our European neighbours, then, eighteenth-century England had a relatively 'low pressure' nuptiality dominated demographic regime rather than a 'high pressure' mortality dominated system.³ A promise of more detailed local work to follow augured well for English historical demography.

The 1997 publication of new data from the Cambridge Group based upon twenty six family reconstitutions, as well as the reworking of figures for population totals,⁴ assuaged some of the criticism of their 1981 findings and confirmed England as the most demographically distinctive country in Europe.⁵ The centrality of fertility to the English demographic experience was confirmed, even enhanced by the finding that marital fertility rose by roughly 10 per cent between the mid-seventeenth and early nineteenth-centuries. However, age at marriage remained the key demographic variable in this context. For women the average age at first marriage fell from 26 in 1700-09 to 23.1 in 1830-37, while that for men fell from 27.4 to 24.9. During the key period of population take-off after 1750, the decline was more or less constant for men. For women marriage ages remained stationary (at age 24) between 1780 and 1809, but the overall fall in female marriage ages in this period was sufficient to yield a minimum increase of 20 per cent in the number of children born to a women who married at the average age and remained married until the end of her childbearing period. As Goldstone noted of Wrigley and Schofield's 1981 analysis, much of this fall in the female age at marriage is to

² For a concise review of the 1981 findings, see E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, 'English population history from family reconstitution: summary results 1600-1799' *Population Studies* 37 (1983), 157-84.

³ For comparative material see J. Knodel, *Demographic behaviour in the past: a study of 14 German village populations in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century* (Cambridge, 1988).

⁴ See E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Davies, J. E. Oeppen and R. S. Schofield, *English population history from family reconstitution 1580-1837* (Cambridge, 1997). Also, R. S. Schofield, 'British population change 1700-1871' in R. Floud and D. McCloskey (eds), *The economic history of Britain since 1700, volume I* (Cambridge, 1994), 60-95.

⁵ Three of the most piercing critiques were provided by P. Lindert, 'English living standards, population growth and Wrigley and Schofield' *Explorations in Economic History* 20 (1983), 33-64, J. Goldstone, 'The demographic revolution in England: a reexamination' *Population Studies* 40 (1986), 5-34, and P. Razzell (ed), *Essays in English population history* (Chichester, 1994). For an initial response to the critics emphasising that the 1981 volume was an exercise in pushing back methodological boundaries as much as generating concrete results, see R. S. Schofield, 'Through a glass darkly: the Population History of England as an experiment in history' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15 (1985), 571-94.

be explained by a sharp decline in the number and proportion of brides marrying above thirty, and a more than commensurate rise in the number marrying at or around the age of twenty.⁶ The rate of marriage can be less satisfactorily discerned from reconstitution results, but it seems clear that the generation born around 1700 could expect to see roughly eleven per cent of their number unmarried by the time they reached forty-five. This figure had fallen to only five per cent for the generation born at mid-century. Non-marriage then rose more or less consistently, reaching eleven per cent again for the generation born in the early nineteenth-century.⁷ In other words, during the key decades of population explosion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, marriage ages were tumbling and the number of women taken out of the fertility equation by celibacy was at its lowest point.⁸

Moreover, the twenty six reconstitutions suggested some important relationships between socio-economic variables and nuptiality at community level. In terms of the level of marriage ages at any point in time, there was considerable variation. Communities which were to later become rural industrial appear to have started the eighteenth-century with relatively high marriage ages, for instance, while agrarian communities serving large urban areas appear to have had relatively low marriage ages from the same date. By the opening of the nineteenth century the differences in absolute level had narrowed, but even during the period 1800-37 the difference between the lowest and highest female marriage ages was five years. In terms of trend, the fall was faster and further in rural industrial communities and other areas which saw a shake up in the local economy during the course of the eighteenth-century, as Levine had contended in 1977.⁹ Mining areas also appear to have experienced rapidly falling female marriage ages, while decline in rural areas was slower but still pronounced.¹⁰ Yet, with the exception of areas such as Terling, which had been held in the commercial grasp of London for a

⁶ Interestingly, there was an intimate connection between falling female marriage ages and rising marital fertility, with youthful brides having children at a faster rate than older brides. J. Goldstone, 'The demographic'.

⁷ These are 'national' estimates calculated as an adjunct to back projection. At the level of individual reconstitutions, female non-marriage can only be detected very roughly by looking at the numbers of single women buried, while that for men cannot be gauged at all. The figures provide support for David Weir's argument that it was changes in the rate of non-marriage, rather than changes in the ages of those who did marry, which drove population increase between 1700 and 1750. See D. Weir, 'Rather never than late: celibacy and age at marriage in English cohort fertility, 1541-1871' *Journal of Family History* 9 (1984), 340-54.

⁸ E. A. Wrigley et al, *English population*.

⁹ D. Levine, *Family formation in an age of nascent capitalism* (New York, 1977).

¹⁰ M. R. Haines, 'Fertility, nuptiality and occupations: a study of coal mining populations and regions in England and Wales in the mid nineteenth century' in T. R. Rabb and R. Rotberg (eds), *Industrialisation and urbanisation* (Princeton, 1981), 101-36.

considerable time, almost all family reconstitution communities appear to have experienced common downward trends in female marriage ages. By highlighting these broad characteristics Wrigley et al have finally laid to rest many of the quantitative ghosts which have haunted the discipline of English historical demography for decades. While English sources for the study of population pale into insignificance when compared to those in other parts of Europe, the systematic evaluation of reconstitution results together with other advances in the consideration of family history and kinship in England now make it one of the best documented of all European states."

II

Yet, *English population history from family reconstitution* also highlights the persistent weaknesses of English historical demography and suggests how much more remains to be done.¹² The issue of how to conceptualise the place of urban demography within a 'national' framework based upon rural areas and small market towns remains to be solved, for instance.¹³ Moreover, while the criticisms of reconstitution techniques advanced by Ruggles can be seen to be flawed, the basic problems of method and representativeness in family reconstitution have not gone away.¹⁴ Twenty six reconstitutions is an

¹² See for instance R. Wall, 'Elderly persons and members of their households in England and Wales from Pre-industrial times to the present' in D. I. Kertzer and P. Laslett (eds), *Aging in the past: demography, society and old age* (Berkeley, 1994), 81-106 and P. Laslett, 'The family as a knot of individual interests' in R. Netting, R. Wilk and J. Arnould (eds), *Households: comparative and historical studies of the family group* (Berkeley, 1984), 353-79, and D. Cressey, 'Kinship and kin interaction in early modern England' *Past and Present* 113 (1986), 38-69.

¹³ See also W. Seccombe, *Weathering the storm: working class families from the industrial revolution to the fertility decline* (London, 1993).

¹⁴ See G. Kearns, 'The urban penalty and the population history of England' in A. Brandstrom and L. G. Tedebrand (eds), *Society, health and population during the demographic transition* (Umea, 1986), 213-36 and N. Goose, 'Urban demography in pre-industrial England: what is to be done?' *Urban History* 21 (1994), 273-84. Also C. Galley, 'A model of early modern urban demography' *Economic History Review* 68 (1995), 448-69.

¹⁵ S. Ruggles, 'Migration, marriage and mortality: correcting sources of bias in English family reconstitutions' *Population Studies* 46 (1992), 507-22 and E. A. Wrigley, 'The effects of migration on the estimation of marriage age in family reconstitution studies' *Population Studies* 48 (1994), 81-97. R. Lesthaeghe, 'On the social control of human reproduction' *Population and Development Review* 6 (1980), 1-29, argues convincingly that the social, cultural, economic and kinship profile of those who left was very different from that of those who remained. In terms of method, reconstructing family trees involves using rules to link events which rely entirely on the demographic logic of the life-cycle itself rather than reference to external sources to justify the link. See S. A. King, 'Lives, life cycles and historical demography: new perspectives' *History and Computing* 8 (1996), 34-62.

impressive feat, but represents a tiny proportion of English communities. Larger populations and key areas such as eighteenth century Lancashire still require much investigation, and communities with very different demographic experiences to the 'national' picture certainly wait to be discovered.¹⁵ On these issues, Wrigley et al provide a well-considered agenda for future research.

In other ways, the development of English historical demography has been less satisfactory. Calls by Bridget Hill and Alison Mackinnon for the motivations of women rather than men to be 'rediscovered' and placed at the centre of the demographic stage were not addressed by Wrigley et al.¹⁶ Indeed, there was no sub-community level analysis of the twenty six reconstitutions which would have allowed precisely this approach to be taken. More widely, English historical demography has stood aloof from the rich literature on continental communities which increasingly stresses the multi-layered interpretation and practice of courtship, marriage, household formation, and household operation.¹⁷ Explaining continuity and change in the English nuptiality regime continues to involve the core assumptions that while co-residence and economic support by close relatives could occur in the short term, the decision to marry was one governed by the basic economic outlook of the couple and informed by the need to achieve economic, and preferably spatial, independence from related households. Anything which either eased the

¹⁵ To some extent these have already begun to emerge. See R. M. Carpenter, 'Peasants and stockingers: socio-economic change in Guthlaxton hundred, Leicestershire, 1700-1851' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1994) who found that female age at marriage in Countesthorpe was low and stable, at around 22.5, 1700-1851 despite the fact that the township was next to Shepshed and had identical economic structures. This reflected 'an established tradition' (194) of early marriage. See also P. G. Spagnoli, 'Population history from parish monographs: the problem of local demographic variations' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1977), 427-52, for sceptical comments on how far the experience of one parish can be used to represent that of another, even when they shared the same basic socio-economic and institutional characteristics.

¹⁶ B. Hill, 'The marriage age of women and the demographers', *History Workshop Journal* 28 (1989), 129-47 and A. Mackinnon, 'Were women present at the demographic transition? Questions from a feminist historian to historical demographers' *Gender and History* 7 (1995), 222-40. See also an important literature on what marriage as a concept meant to local communities in R. M. Smith, 'Marriage processes in the English past: some continuities' in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), *The world we have gained: histories of population and social structure* (Oxford, 1986), 43-99 and D. Lemmings, 'Marriage and the law in the eighteenth century: Hardwick's marriage act of 1753' *Historical Journal* 39 (1996), 339-60.

¹⁷ See for instance the different contributions to *Journal of Family History* 16 (1991) and the various essays in NEHA, *Economic and social history in the Netherlands: family strategies and changing labour relations* (Amsterdam, 1994). Also M. Mitteraur, 'Peasant and non-peasant family forms in relation to the physical environment and the local economy' in R. Rudolph (ed), *The European peasant family: historical studies* (Liverpool, 1994), 26-47.

level of resources needed for household formation, or gave young people more resources earlier in the life-cycle, could facilitate earlier marriage.

And on the face of it, we could easily construct a list of such influences to explain the English nuptiality experience. Labour opportunities arising out of eighteenth-century English proto-industrialisation continue to be associated with the breakdown of traditional community structures, changes in the life-cycle timing of 'independence wages', the provision of active and passive incentives to earlier marriage, and a falling age at marriage.¹⁸ Alternatively, we might draw an association between earlier marriage and more favourable long term trends in real wage levels, or the development of income strands such as supplying the burgeoning eighteenth-century poor law. Indeed, spiralling relief expenditure itself has once again been linked to earlier marriage and higher fertility for the south of England, with the poor law seen as effectively underwriting the demo-economic consequences of early marriage.¹⁹ Or the falling age at marriage might reflect a change in the two central variables of Hajnal's European marriage pattern - the nature of service and inheritance.²⁰ The decline of 'live-in' service in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England may have removed an institutional floor to marriage ages. At the same time, studies of inheritance patterns seem to reveal a gradual eighteenth-century focus of resources onto the nuclear family. Whether or not this reflected a concern to bolster the position of children in the marriage market, the net effect may have been greater certainty of inheritance for those born of parents with wealth to leave, and greater certainty of non-inheritance (and thus less reason to delay marriage) for those whose parents had fewer resources.²¹

These are well rehearsed explanations and some are repeated in Wrigley et al. Deploying them in practice, however, generates three problems. First, in the English context at least there has been little empirical testing and we have only an imperfect knowledge of economic influences on micro decision-making. It is difficult to know how people put together a living, and more difficult to trace changes in the level of resources necessary for a young couple to be economically viable. Nor do we have a well developed idea of what 'leaving' the parental household actually meant in economic and spatial terms. And even if we had better coverage of these issues, the overwhelming problem of

¹⁸ D. Levine, *Family*. However, see also the analysis of the proto-industrial communities of Coton and Winwick in R. Wall, 'Real property, marriage and children: the evidence from four pre-industrial communities' in R. M. Smith (ed), *Land, kinship and life cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), 443-80.

¹⁹ G. R. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor laws* (Cambridge, 1990).

²⁰ See H. J. Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective' in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds), *Population in History* (London, 1965), 103-43, and H. J. Hajnal, 'Two kinds of pre industrial household formation systems' *Population and Development review* 8 (1981), 449-94.

²¹ See for instance J. A. Johnston, 'The family and kin of the Lincolnshire labourer in the eighteenth century' *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 14 (1979), 47-52.

identifying how much choice people had in the marriage market and how they balanced direct and indirect economic influences against questions of feelings, notions of duty and the opinions of others, would remain. Detailed discussion of segmented marriage markets and customary marriage norms by Rosemary O'Day provides a challenge to the notion of choice.²² The rediscovery of English kinship networks, and new work on contemporary meanings of the terms 'friend' and 'family' also raise important questions about the potential role of kin, friends, neighbours and others in the marriage decision and in the emotional and financial support of fledgling households.²³ These issues have yet to be incorporated in a remodelling of English nuptiality explanations.

Second, when implying motivations we have to be precise about exactly what needs explaining. In this case, why female marriage motivations changed in the mid eighteenth century, and why in particular a core of late marrying women disappeared and were replaced by a core of early marrying women. Against this backdrop, it might be misleading to think that balancing economic situation and prospects, the need for long term material security, the demands of parents for a say in the marriage process or for long term nursing and care, the need for love and affection, the desire for independence and the demands of fashion, friendship and work routines was done in the same way or had the same outcomes for all women, let alone for men and women jointly. Indeed, David Levine has explored the relationship between a range of material factors (inheritance, parental survival, birth order and wealth), and marriage ages, finding no relationship and concluding that the exact timing of the marriage decision took place 'for their own reasons'.²⁴ The idea that women in particular 'married when they could not when they should' sums up much of this complexity.²⁵

Third, even if some combination of economic influences could be deployed to explain falling marriage age between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, it is less certain that the same influences would also explain stable or rising ages nationally or at the level of individual

²² R O Day, *The family and family relationships, 1500-1900* (Basingstoke, 1994).

²³ See D. R. Mills, 'The quality of life in Melbourn, Cambs, in the period 1800-50', *International Review of Social History* 23 (1978), 382-104, and D. Cooper and M. Donald, 'Households and 'hidden' kin in early nineteenth-century England: Four case studies in suburban Exeter, 1821-1861', *Continuity and Change* 10 (1995), 257-78. Also N. Tadmor, 'The concept of the household family in eighteenth century England' *Past and Present* 151 (1996), 111-10.

²⁴ D. Levine, 'For their own reasons: individual marriage decisions and family life' *Journal of Family History* 7 (1982), 255-64. In later work, Levine was to refer to a 'consensus' over marriage ages for different occupation and social groups in his proto-industrial community of Shepshed. See D. Levine, 'Proto-industry and demographic upheaval' in D. Levine, L. Page-Moach, L. A. Tilly, J. Modell and E. Pleck (eds), *Essays on the family and historical change* (Arlington, 1986), 9-34.

²⁵ D. Gaunt, D. Levine and E. Moodie, 'The population history of England 1541-1871: a review symposium' *Social History* 8 (1983), 139-68.

communities. English historical demography thus needs to think about a more flexible and wide ranging modelling of marriage motivations in the early modern period as it moves from macro-level observation to micro-level explanation.

This article will contribute to this process. It will draw on nuptiality data from a project to reconstruct the demographic, economic, social, cultural and institutional life of two West Riding proto-industrial townships between 1650-1820. In particular, it will concentrate on the experience of nuptiality in the township of Calverley-cum-Farsley, midway between Leeds and Bradford. A reconstitution for the township (1811 population, 2600) has been linked to poor law records, landholding and cottage surveys, and taxation records, yielding 6400 individual and 1700 enriched family life-cycles upon which to base an analysis of nuptiality. Using this data it will be suggested that declining marriage ages were not a uniform feature of eighteenth century English communities, and that in order to understand marriage motivations we must build upon the explanatory framework offered by Wrigley et al and incorporate questions of social mobility, the provision of nursing care, and sentiments over landholding.

III

The nature of landholding, social structure, and proto-industrial development in the township has been fully explored elsewhere.²⁶ The local economy was intricately connected with the production of woollen cloth organised on an artisan basis. Independence from urban merchants, family based labour and the combination of agriculture and industry at family level were the three key characteristics of this system. Inventories suggest that at least 40 per cent of families had some connection with textile production even before 1750. Thereafter production expanded rapidly, and 70 per cent of occupations in post-1750 sources were linked to the textile industry. However, expansion of production was accompanied by a reorientation of work roles, as the preparatory processes in woollen cloth production were first mechanised, and then largely transferred from the domestic economy. Increasingly, clothiers were obliged to pay for things which previously would have been done by the younger or female members of their own family. This process meant that female work roles had to be modified, with female labour increasingly devoted to production of yarn and other textile products on a commercial putting out basis, or an involvement in petty trading.²⁷

²⁶ S. A. King, 'Calverley und Sowerby. Die protoindustrielle Entwicklung in zwei Gemeinden Yorkshires (1660 bis 1830)' in D. Ebeling and W. Mager (eds), *Protoindustrie in der Region: Europäische Gewerbelandschaften vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld, 1997), 221-54.

²⁷ For more on female work roles, see S. A. King, 'The nature and causes of

The land market in the township was largely leasehold, with the Lord of the Manor owning 80 per cent of all land, which was leased in 'clothier size' plots. By 1700 the average master clothier held between 12-18 acres of land. Even by 1800 the average farm size remained between 12-15 acres. Most families had a realistic chance of holding land for part of their life-cycle, despite a substantial inflation of rents during the course of the mid-to-late eighteenth century and enclosure of the wastes and commons between 1750-1755. In terms of social stratification, 80 per cent of households were among the lower and middling orders when tax, landholding and other status yielding sources are linked together for the late eighteenth century.²⁸ Social climbing and falling in this framework remained very much a reality; it was not uncommon to see the sons and daughters of substantial landholding families falling down the social scale at marriage, while the children of proletarians climbed into independence. Perhaps in part related to this experience, regular payments under the poor relief system in the township were consistently meagre, generally less than 2 shillings per week throughout the eighteenth-century. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that this situation reflected the fact that kin were, and were expected to be, very active in helping individuals and families over life-cycle crises.²⁹

The marriage system in this artisan community was complex. Both male and female age at first marriage (*Figure 1*) were low and relatively stable. The female age at first marriage consistently undercut the lowest national mean, and the high initial ages and substantial eighteenth century falls identified for other proto-industrial areas by Wrigley et al cannot be seen here.³⁰ Moreover, the age range for brides was also very compact; 70 per cent of women ever married in the township fell within the age brackets 15-19 or 20-24 throughout the long eighteenth century. Detailed analysis of the experience of population sub-groups helps to illuminate and expand this broad aggregate picture. *Figure 2* presents male and female ages at first marriage by occupation of groom. While such a measure is an inadequate representation of the considerations affecting female marriage ages, different male occupations appear to have been associated with very different patterns of family economy and can therefore

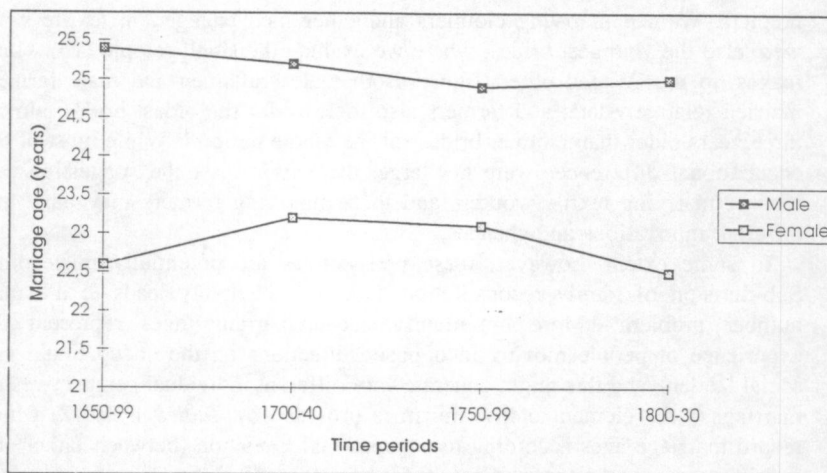
demographic change in an industrialising township: Calverley 1680-1820' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1993).

²⁸ See P. Hudson, 'Proto-industrialization: the case of the West Riding wool textile industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981), 34-61.

²⁹ S. A. King, 'Reconstructing lives: The poor, poor relief and welfare in a rural industrial community 1650-1830', *Social History* 22 (1997), 318-38.

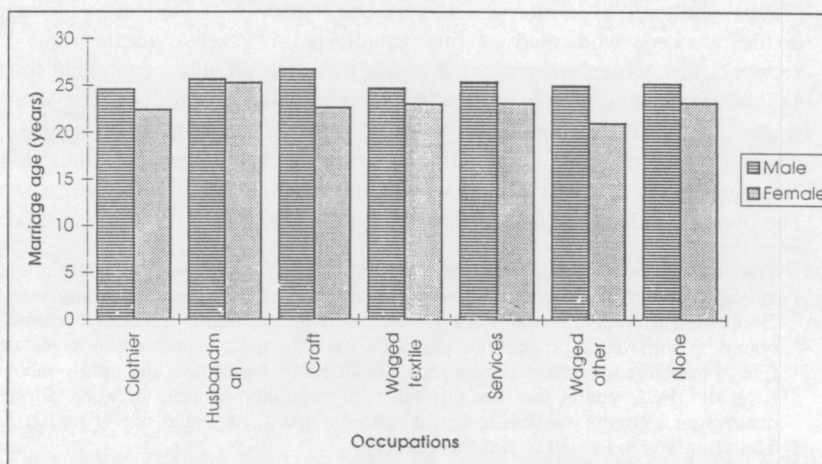
³⁰ There is no evidence that this picture is simply a smokescreen, masking the fact that the implications of proto-industrial development for nuptiality had already worked through the demographic system prior to 1650. While it did have ancient roots in the township, the expansion of woollen cloth production in a truly proto-industrial sense was a phenomenon of the mid-to-late eighteenth-century. See H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries from the earliest times up to the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1920).

Figure 1: Age at first marriage in Calverley-cum-Farsley, 1650-1830.



Source: Family Reconstitution. Based on the experiences of 650 female and 683 male marriage partners.

Figure 2: Age at first marriage by occupation of groom in Calverley-cum-Farsley, 1650-1830.



Source: Family Reconstitution. Variation over time was too small to be worth showing. Sample size, 1216 marriage partners.

shed some light on this point of interest.³¹ Male clothiers and proletarianised textile workers were the earliest marrying grooms, as proto-industrial theory predicts. Women marrying clothiers and other men engaged in textile work were also the youngest brides, where we exclude the small sample (13) which makes up the 'Waged other' figure. Both male craftsmen and male farmers married relatively late, and farmers also took by far the oldest brides, almost three years older than clothier brides for the whole period.³² While most of the occupational differences were not large, there is at least the suggestion that women marrying textile workers and those marrying farmers may have had different motivations and chances.

To some extent, however, these perspectives are potentially misleading. Sub-division of family reconstitution data sets inevitably leads to a 'small number problem'. More importantly, mean marriage ages represent the experience of people moving in opposite directions on the occupational and social ladders, and this might generate very different individual perspectives on marriage.³³ An element of dynamism is provided by *Tables 1 and 2*, which record marriage ages according to occupational transition (between father and son for grooms and father and groom for brides) at marriage. Once again, this is an unsatisfactory way of approaching female marriage ages, but one necessitated by poor recording of female occupations in all English sources during this period. For all of its limitations, the approach is enlightening. Thus, while farmers appear to take the oldest brides, the mean age masks two very distinct experiences; the daughters of farmers who went on to marry farmers married early (mean 22.3 years), while the daughters of other occupational groups who married farmers did so very late (mean 27.2). Daughters of waged textile workers who married into established clothier dynasties and kin networks also experienced a small age at marriage premium compared to the daughters of clothiers who went on to marry clothiers themselves. The sons of waged textile workers who experienced upward occupational mobility at marriage had this similarly reflected in a marriage age premium when compared to the sons of clothiers who themselves went on to become clothiers. The opposite side of the coin is that the daughters and sons of clothiers sinking

³¹ Thus, the wives of fanners and larger landholding clothiers appear to underpin wider attempts at petty production and service provision, while women marrying smaller clothiers and waged textile workers were tied into a family economy intimately bound up with textile production, and there is at least some evidence that wives were free to take in contract work from larger clothiers to supplement the family income.

³² R. Wall, 'Real' found that the difference in nuptiality patterns between different occupational groups was less in age at marriage than the age and rate of remarriage. The sample is too small to test this reliably.

³³ Certainly P. Bourdieu, 'Marriage strategies as strategies of social reproduction' in R. Forster and O. Ranum (eds), *Family and society* (Baltimore, 1976), 117-14, found that the degree of expected and actual movement on the economic and social scale at marriage was vital in shaping the attitude to marriage partners, the timing of marriage and the cost of household formation.

Table 1: Female marriage ages according to economic transition at marriage, 1700-1820.

Father	Groom						
	Clothier	Farmer	Craft	Service	Waged Text	Waged Oth	None
Clothier	22.1	26.8	22.4	22.8	21.5	21.4	22.0
Farmer	22.6	22.3	-	23.0	23.8	-	-
Craft	23.0	-	22.7	-	22.9	-	23.3
Services	22.4	27.4	-	23.2	23.0	22.0	-
Waged Text	23.0	28.8	23.0	23.3	22.7	20.9	-
Waged Oth.	22.4	-	-	-	21.8	21.3	23.5
None	22.9	29	22.5	-	-	-	22.6

Source: Family Reconstitution. Transitions where there were less than six cases (-) have been ignored. Total cases 573.

Table 2: Male marriage ages according to economic transition at marriage, 1700-1820.

Father	Groom						
	Clothier	Farmer	Craft	Service	Waged Text	Waged Oth	None
Clothier	24.4	25.3	25.7	25.0	23.5	24.0	26.0
Farmer	25.0	25.9	28.3	25.7	26.0	-	-
Craftsman	25.2	-	27.0	26.0	24.5	-	-
Services	24.0	25.2	26.4	25.0	25.3	25.9	24.1
Waged Text	25.3	26.0	27.0	25.7	24.9	-	25.3
Waged Oth.	25.7	-	-	25.5	25.0	25.2	-
None	-	26.3	26.4	-	-	24.9	25.1

Source: Family Reconstitution. Transitions where there were less than six cases (-) have been ignored. Total cases 664.

Table 3: Female age at first marriage according to social status transition (Parental status at marriage vs the category of the first status indicator for the couple after marriage), 1700-1820.

Father	Groom					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	22.4	22.5	23.2	23.0	23.5	-
1	22.7	22.2	23.3	23.6	22.9	-
2	22.1	22.4	23.0	23.2	23.4	23.8
3	23.0	23.0	22.6	22.5	23.0	23.4
4	22.6	22.0	22.4	22.0	23.2	23.2
5	22.9	21.6	22.0	22.3	21.4	21.2

Source: Family Reconstitution. Social status indicators:

- 0: Social status indeterminate
- 1: Life-long proletarians
- 2: Marginal proletarians
- 3: Small producers
- 4: Middling producers and landholders
- 5: Substantial producers and landholders

For the determination of social status divisions using landholding and tax data, ascriptions in newspapers and other sources, see S.A.King, 'The nature'.

down the occupational scale married very early indeed. *Tables 3 and 4* take the analysis a step further and trace female and male (first) marriage ages according to social status transition (father-son for grooms and father-groom for brides) at marriage. For men, and to a lesser degree for women, falling down the social as well as occupational scale at marriage was associated (and partly intercorrelated) with youthful marriage. Retention of parental status or climbing was also, if less consistently, linked to higher marriage ages for both sexes. At family level, these tables translate into a situation where siblings might marry at very different ages depending on whether they were climbing or descending the social ladder.

This is just one small study and cannot therefore be generalised. However, it does serve to suggest three things. First, that the English nuptial experience was probably less uniform than some commentaries imply. Second, that there is much to be learned about the mechanics of nuptiality by deconstructing community level statistics. And third, that when we do look at sub-groups issues of occupation, mobility, and perceptions of status become more important than macro-theories allow. This is precisely what O'Day, Hill and others were highlighting in their calls for a new look at nuptiality regimes in the English context.

IV

Explaining a nuptiality pattern which has little in common with either other proto-industrial areas or the national picture is rather more difficult than observing it. Two of the usual avenues for exploring nuptiality motivations have limited explanatory power in this framework. First, household economics. A crude longitudinal analysis of the likely costs of household formation for textile producers in the township can be seen in *Figure 3*, which covers rent, fuel, textile-making equipment, and household goods. The gross costs (ie uncorrected for inflation) rise significantly over the eighteenth century, such that a couple keeping the same social status as their parents might be expected to need the equivalent of £7-£8 if they were to be regarded as economically and spatially independent at marriage. This amount would be a little lower for those falling down the social scale, and rather more for those climbing. These figures make no allowance for land other than a small garden, and almost certainly understate the true cost of household formation at a level which was customary in the local community. To balance such expenditure, it is difficult to see where a young couple would get this level of resources either in the run up to marriage or its immediate aftermath. Opportunities for domestic, industrial or agricultural service before marriage were remarkably limited in the township, parish and local country.³⁴ For those who could find opportunities,

³⁴ Elsewhere I have argued that English proto-industrial families redistributed young

Table 4: Male age at first marriage according to social status transition (Parental status at marriage vs the category of the first status indicator for the couple after marriage), 1700-1820.

Father	Groom					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	25.8	25.5	23.9	25.0	26.5	26.0
1	24.0	25.2	25.3	25.9	27.2	-
2	26.1	24.4	25.0	26.2	26.4	27.8
3	25.0	25.0	24.6	25.5	25.6	26.0
4	25.9	26.0	24.4	24.0	25.2	25.0
5	25.9	26.6	23.0	24.3	23.6	25.4

Source: Family Reconstitution. Social status indicators:

- 0: Social status indeterminate
- 1: Life-long proletarians
- 2: Marginal proletarians
- 3: Small producers
- 4: Middling producers and landholders
- 5: Substantial producers and landholders

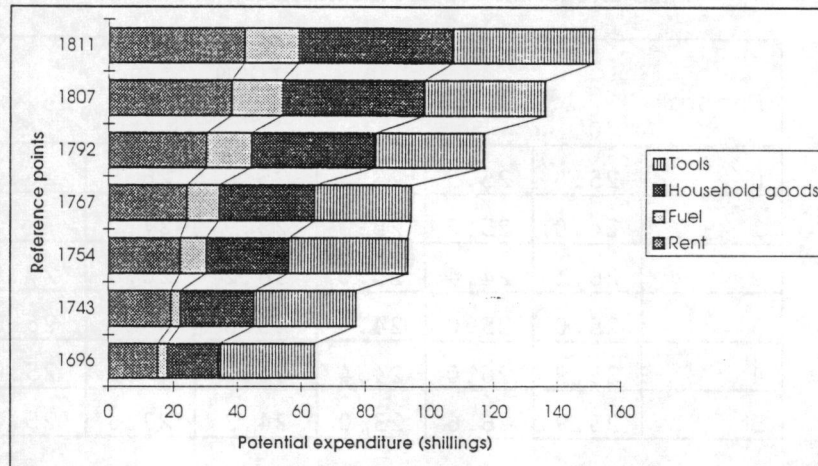
For the determination of social status divisions using landholding and tax data, ascriptions in newspapers and other sources, see S.A.King, 'The nature'.

wage levels are unclear. Joseph Rogerson paid fullers at his mill in the nearby township of Bramley eighteen shillings per week by the early nineteenth-century, but industrial labourers were rather less well paid on twelve shillings per week.³⁵ The wages of journeymen were rarely set down, and even at the time of the 1806 enquiry into the state of the woollen industry, positions

labour around an unstable household system, rather than let it leave. See S. A. King, 'The house that David Levine built: English proto-industrialisation and the unstable family' *History of the Family* (forthcoming).

³⁵ E. Hargrave and W. B. Crump (eds). *The diary of Joseph Rogerson, fulling miller of Bramley 1812-1814* (Leeds, 1935).

Figure 3: Likely costs of household formation for textile producing families retaining social status of their families.



Source: S.A.King, 'Nature'.

of this sort were not common, with most production, according to the witnesses still conducted on a family basis. For those who remained in the parental household economy until much nearer marriage, the possibilities of accumulation were even less certain. While Wrightson believes that youths became progressively more involved in family decision making with age and over time, Bourdieu claims that few children would know the extent of family finances in the run up to marriage. This may have been especially true in places such as Calverley-cum-Farsley, where land, the most obvious and tenable symbol of family finances, was often rented rather than owned.³⁶ Here, as elsewhere, it seems likely that saving for marriage would not have yielded much in the way of monetary resources either for men or women.³⁷

Economic prospects at the outset of a union did not inspire confidence in the ability to meet these potential bills either. Food and raw materials could theoretically be obtained on credit of varying terms from one week to two years plus, but degrees of accessibility depended upon occupation, age, reputation

³⁶ P. Bourdieu, 'Marriage', and K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The experience of authority in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), 10-46. Also the discussion of autobiographical evidence by D. Vincent, *Bread, knowledge and freedom: a study of nineteenth century working class autobiography* (London, 1981).

³⁷ See S. A. King, 'The pinch of chance? Paths to household formation in early modern England' *International Review of Social History* (forthcoming). Also D. Vincent, *Bread*.

and migratory status. Some household goods would presumably have been provided by relatives at marriage, and it is probable that some of the more expensive textile equipment could have been borrowed. However, against this we have to balance the fact that textile families were embroiled in a complex set of localised power relationships, with ongoing struggles on the income and expenditure front between clothiers and landlords, clothiers and merchants, service providers and clothiers, specialist production households and clothiers, and clothiers and local elites via mechanisms like the poor law. The outcome of this was uncertainty of gross and net income from month-to-month and year-to-year. If we assume that the average newly established couple would be able to produce one piece of cloth per week and that the wife (at least up till 1755) was able to garner some income from the commons and other forms of petty production, then it is likely that average family income would not be more than sixteen shillings per week during the first year of marriage, perhaps less given the degree of pre-nuptial pregnancy which developed in the township during the eighteenth-century.³⁸ The ongoing costs of everyday life and the household production process, combined with a growing burden of dependency in the initial parts of the childbearing life cycle, would seem likely to have swallowed up at least this amount, if not more. Such modelling is of course crude, but even if approximately right, it suggests that we should question whether many households in the township ever met the ideal of independent economic status either at formation or over the initial years of the family life cycle. A wide ranging debate about pauper marriages in the late eighteenth century press and pamphlet literature on the poor law, suggests that households elsewhere suffered from similar problems of viability. Against this backdrop it may have made sense to marry early anyway to at least start on the road towards the ultimate aim of dual occupation independent production.³⁹ The idea that progressive eighteenth century marginalisation for southern agricultural labourers may have left equally little to lose by earlier marriage is also familiar. What is certainly true is that in Calverley-cum-Farsley the forces which shaped 'economic outlook' in early adulthood were simply too complicated to evaluate in terms of a relationship between an abstract such as 'economic independence' and the decision on who to marry, when to marry or whether to marry at all.

The second broad macro-explanation of marriage motivations which lacks wide explanatory power is inheritance. In an inheritance system where the vast majority of landed resources were rented rather than owned - as in Calverley-cum-Farsley - no systematic relationship between inheritance at

³⁸ Reported in P. Hudson and S. A. King, 'A sense of place: industrialising townships in eighteenth century Yorkshire' in R. Leboutte (ed), *Proto-industrialisation: recent research and new perspectives* (Geneva, 1996), 181-210.

³⁹ For a similar situation in France, see L. S. Struminger, 'The artisan family: traditions and transitions in nineteenth century Lyon' *Journal of Family History* 2 (1977), 211-22.

parental death and marriage of the inheritors in the reconstitution could be traced for either sex. It is rather easier to speculate on a link between marriage and ante-mortem asset disposal. Thus, in the will of Francis Knowles (1708), Lionel the eldest son received just forty shillings, by virtue of already having received £88 and land at an earlier stage of the life cycle. His marriage was celebrated in 1702 (at age 24), and the suggestion is that parental ceding of some wealth to the eldest son helped him to marry or supported a fledgling household depending upon when the transfer took place. This is just one detailed example to illustrate the wider point that 38 per cent of wills in the township suggest some economic power had been devolved prior to death.⁴⁰ Actual or expected inheritance might thus provide a key to why marginal households were formed and how they were sustained. However, a regular flow of resources between the generations to aid household formation cannot have been a major explanation for low and stable ages at marriage. Lionel Knowles's brother, Abraham, received £70, a loom, some chests and some bedding from his father's will. He married in 1703 without apparently getting anything in the way of ante-mortem asset disposal, but at a similar age to his brother.⁴¹ More importantly, the family reconstitution suggests that 36 per cent of household heads who left wills only had female children alive at their death. Analyzing these wills reveals no ante-mortem disposal at all. The intergenerational passage of formal wealth may thus have oiled the wheels of the marriage market, but it must have been just one of a wider set of influences which informed the decision of who and when to marry, particularly for women. Data from this project can help to begin the task of reconstructing the patchwork.

V

In this context, the words of Joseph Lawson, an 1880's commentator looking back at his 1820's childhood in the parish, have some currency. He claimed that,

The honeymoon is spent at home, in both bride and bridegroom working to buy a little furniture for housekeeping, very few people being able to furnish when they wed, but mostly live for some time with the girl's father. We speak ... now of the bulk of the working people in Pudsey at that time.⁴²

⁴⁰ The will of Francis Knowles, Borthwick Institute, York.

⁴¹ For discussion of the relative inheritance chances of different siblings, see S. Staves, 'Resentment or resignation? dividing the spoils among daughters and younger sons' in J. Brewer and S. Staves (eds), *Early modern conceptions of property* (London, 1995), 194-218.

⁴² J. Lawson, *Letters to the young on progress in Pudsey during the last sixty years* (Sussex, 1978 Repr.), 38.

Earlier in his book, Lawson claimed that,

Married women with all their little gossip are very useful in getting the lads and lasses together. They plead their cause and help them to overcome many difficulties. They have a larger experience than the young folks and perform both for them and society at large, very important and beneficial service. They invite the opposite sexes to tea sometimes and speak a good word for their favourites. In fact, it may be said, and said truly, that a very large share of the courting is done by the married women, and even the old women do a large amount of work of this sort, for we know cases where matters of courtship have been made smooth and agreeable by the wise and shrewd diplomacy of some old woman.⁴³

There are potentially many ways to read Lawson, but the idea that parents, kin and neighbours may all have been instrumental in shaping marriage behaviour at two levels - providing resources prior to and after marriage, and supporting the courtship process - is an attractive one. The depth of kinship in Calverley-cum-Farsley would certainly have facilitated active kin involvement, with up to four fifths of native marriage partners related to at least one other family in the township throughout the eighteenth century. Beyond this observation it is difficult to go. Lawson himself testified to deep neighbourhood and friendship networks in the parish, and even in the early eighteenth century the range of local lending and borrowing arrangements demonstrated by inventories is impressive. Concrete evidence of either economic support between households or proactive involvement of kin and others in the courtship process is elusive, however, and necessitates a more indirect approach. Thus, the fact that parents in particular were key players in the drama of marriage over and above simple provision of resources is suggested by disaggregating marriage age according to whether one or both parents were dead at the time of the marriage of their offspring. *Table 5* deals with the marriage age experience of children from families where the parents either left no will or engaged in no pre-mortem asset disposal. From this sample, children both of whose parents were dead at marriage tended to marry later, just over one and a half years in the case of males and over two years in the case of females, than those who had both parents alive. The effect was less dramatic if one parent survived until child marriage, but still seems to have involved a marriage penalty.⁴⁴ Again,

⁴³ Lawson, *Ibid*, 34.

⁴⁴ D. Scott-Smith, 'Parental power and marriage patterns : an analysis of historical trends in Hingham Massachusetts' *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973), 419-28, suggests that in pre-1750 Hingham Massachusetts parental death lead to earlier marriage because parents had much to lose in an economic sense by the marriage of their children and hence tried to hang on to them. R. Wall, 'Leaving' however traces the depletion of the size of the resident child group in a number of socio-economic contexts in England and finds little evidence of a sustained desire to hang on to children in this manner. The apparent circularity in our table which centres on the fact that earlier marryers would face lower risks of both parents dying becomes

there are a number of ways to interpret this evidence, but one is that, as Lawson discerned, parents were the key to obtaining marriage contacts and a trade, so that the beneficial effects of inheritance (if any) on marriage eligibility were more than offset by greater difficulty moving within the marriage pool where parents died.⁴⁵ Female marriage strategies would seem to have been particularly linked with parental survival, and it is notable that women with dead parents demonstrated a disproportionate tendency to marry farmers in the township.⁴⁶

A further influence tending towards low and stable marriage ages in Calverley-cum-Farsley is in part related to the latter point, and centres around the speed at which households released young people for marriage. Richard Wall has provided considerable evidence of the timetable for young people leaving households in early modern England, but the picture is much clearer for men than for women and much clearer for agrarian than proto-industrial communities.⁴⁷ In crude terms, it might be argued that certain types of household economy - for instance those dependent upon proto-industry organised along putting out lines or agrarian families which used only family labour - had an incentive to delay departure (and hence marriage) for a core of offspring who might compensate for declining parental efficiency. Equally, some types of production - proto-industry in particular - has often been seen as providing children with an opportunity to escape sooner than might otherwise have been the case, providing incentives for earlier marriage. The debate over these issues will be familiar. But there is a further aspect of child release which has been imperfectly considered. This was the duty of care for old parents, or for sick (not necessarily co-resident) kin, which task census returns,

insignificant once we take account of the ages at which parents died in relation to the age at marriage of their children.

⁴⁵ L. Tilly, 'Linen was their life: family survival strategies and the parent child relationship in nineteenth-century France' in H. Medick and D. Sabean (eds), *Interest and emotion: essays on the study of family and kinship* (Cambridge, 1991), 300-16, suggests that the very fact that children stayed to marry in a place in the first place says something about the closeness of the relationship between that child and its parents, as opposed to the perhaps weaker relationship of those who left. Such a stance is more difficult to sustain given evidence that simple problems of distance were not sufficient to block close kinship ties in early modern England. See R. Trumbach, 'Kinship and marriage in early modern France and England: four books' *Annals of Scholarship* 2 (1981), 113-28.

⁴⁶ In terms of wider modelling, it would not be a giant speculative leap to suggest that the extent and functionality of kinship can also help to explain rising or falling marriage ages elsewhere. This might be especially true where what we are trying to explain is female nuptiality in a situation where the public persona of young women looked rather different to that of young men. Thus, the development of more dense kinship networks would tend towards lower female marriage ages through more, and more certain, courtship opportunities. A dilution of kinship would help to slow declining marriage ages or even put them into reverse.

⁴⁷ See for instance R. Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England' *Continuity and Change* 2 (1987), 77-102.

Table 5: Male and female first marriage ages according to whether parents were alive or dead, 1700-1820.

No.	<u>FEMALE</u>		Parental Status	Mean	<u>MALES</u>	
	Std.D	Mean			Std.D	No.
233	3.5	22.1	Both Parents Alive	23.9	3.2	213
141	2.9	24.2	Both Parents Dead	25.6	4.0	179
97	3.0	22.8	Mother Dead	24.9	4.2	103
91	3.3	22.9	Father Dead	25.0	3.2	95
28	2.0	21.5	No Parental Death	23.6	3.7	30

Source: Family Reconstitution.

autobiographies, diaries and other data show to have fallen disproportionately to women. These duties could affect marriage ages in three potential ways. First, the sickness of a family member could end a current courtship. Second, long term sickness could lead to the postponement of serious courtship until late in the marriage age spectrum. Both influences lead to later marriage. Third, in some cases sickness could be so long term and repetitive, or old age so prolonged, that the opportunity of marriage was lost altogether.⁴⁸ In Calverley-cum-Farsley, two things perhaps worked to control the effect of illness and dependency on marriage ages from an early date. First, we could argue that kinship opportunities allowed the spreading of care and hence the burden did not fall so exclusively on female children. Second, we could argue that while the poor law was parsimonious, it did not stint on medical relief even in the early eighteenth century. This too may have reduced pressure on women to postpone marriage when confronted by sick kin. Issues of retirement and provision of care in old age are considered below. Poor law data can also be used to test these influences. Thus, *Figure 4* divides the eighteenth century into five sub-periods and contrasts the age at first marriage of female children in families which received long term of periodic poor relief for reasons of sickness, with the marriage ages of female children from families who never got poor relief of any sort.⁴⁹ The differences appear substantial and while there is scope for different interpretations of this data, *Figure 4* probably does go some way to proving that institutional provision of sickness relief freed young women who might otherwise have been expected to postpone or cancel marriage plans.⁵⁰

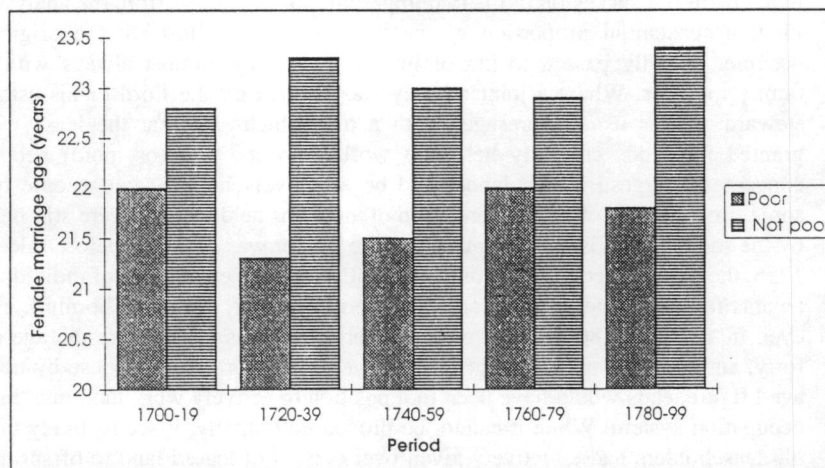
A final aspect of intergenerational relationships also contributes to our understanding of nuptiality in Calverley-cum-Farsley and elsewhere. *Figure 5*

⁴⁸ Hence we can address the rate and age of marriage as parts of the same argument, as Levine suggested should be done. See D. Levine, 'Asymmetrical, non linear population dynamics' in R. Leboutte (ed), *Proto-industrialisation*, 93-106.

⁴⁹ Migrants were excluded from this analysis for reasons explored more fully in S. A. King, 'Migrants on the margin ? Mobility, integration and dual occupation production in West Yorkshire, 1650-1820' *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997), 304-26.. Families who received sickness relief for the first time after all female children were dead, married or might reasonably be supposed to have migrated, were also excluded.

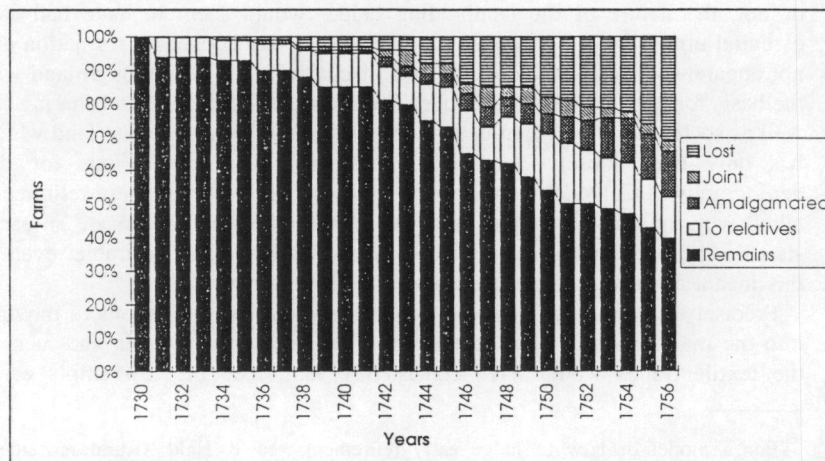
⁵⁰ A combination of kinship and poor law support for the old and sick could also help to explain a wider conundrum - the loss of a late marrying and rise of an early marrying generation between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth century. Thus, if we argue that medical poor relief became more accessible and generous over time, especially in the southern parishes which form the bedrock of the national analysis, the disappearance of a core of late marryers might become more understandable. More parsimonious attitudes towards such relief might in turn push up relief by forcing female children back into longer term care arrangements. There is not yet enough detailed work on the extent of kinship to place it adequately in this model, but where poor relief and wider kinship can be seen to bolster each other the burden of dependency on young women must have been considerably eased. See S. A. King, 'The house'.

Figure 4: Female marriage ages for the children of families getting and not getting Medical relief, 1700-99.



Source: Family Reconstitution. Poor law data, West Yorkshire Archive Service (Leeds), 'Calverley poor law books'.

Figure 5: Fate of farms recorded in the 1730 survey of the Manor of Calverley.



Source: S.A.King, 'Nature'.

uses leases, estate surveys and manorial rolls linked to the demographic templates generated by family reconstitution, to trace the fate of farms recorded in the manorial survey of 1730. Two important points emerge from the analysis. First, a substantial proportion of the land which was 'lost' to the original occupier actually passed to kin or into joint tenancy, almost always with a family member. Where a joint tenancy was granted by the Lord or his estate steward, it was usually presaged with a text which said that the lease was granted for lands currently held and worked by the two (or more) people concerned, suggesting that land could be effectively held by two people for some time. Second, well over one third of all farms held in 1730 were still held by the same person in 1755. By the time the Manor was surveyed before sale in 1755, the surveyor could draw on a substantial body of experience of individual tenants to provide detailed histories for the new owner, Thomas Thornhill. Yet even in 1730 over 80 per cent of the cohort of tenants were above the age of forty, and it seems unlikely that twenty five years later many of these by now aged figureheads would have been in a position to actively work land in a dual occupation system. While it cannot be proved definitively, it seems likely that old leaseholders had effectively given over control of leased land to offspring, continuing to trade on their reputation in issues such as lease renewal and extension. Individual leases which formalised long practised joint tenancies or which covered the amalgamation of plots held by one person and others nominally held by another party but worked by the applicant, are thus probably the tip of the iceberg of a range of other informal arrangements in this sphere.

Whether these features amount to a thoroughgoing system of early retirement or not, the nature of the landholding ladder would seem to have had two essential effects." One is economic, in the sense that household formation did not apparently involve the need to own or control land, even though land was the basis for long term independence. The second effect is that land sharing (as well as social mobility) generated a degree of cultural attachment to land which has only been loosely appreciated thus far.⁵² The implications for the demography of Calverley-cum-Farsley are complex. Expectations of retirement allied with the kinship support reviewed above may well have made an early start on the proto-industrial family economy ladder highly desirable, even if this meant downward social mobility in the short term.

Precisely because they were not proletarians and had aspirations to moving into the mainstream of dual occupation production, then, women and men in the textile trades would have consistently reinforced the township's early

⁵¹ For a model of how to judge early retirement, see T. Held, 'Rural retirement arrangements in seventeenth to nineteenth century Austria: a cross community analysis' *Journal of Family History* 7 (1982), 227-54.

⁵² For instance F. Hendrickx, 'From weavers to workers: demographic implications of an economic transformation in Twente (the Netherlands) in the nineteenth century' *Continuity and Change* 8 (1994), 321-55.

marriage regime.⁵³ Within this framework, 16 per cent of all eighteenth century families in the township would have had no close male relative, so that early retirement could only be achieved by creating new kin networks via (early) marriage of female children. In this sense, it is surely no accident that almost all of the men under thirty who appeared in Baines's directory of 1822 for the township of Calverley-cum-Farsley were related by blood or marriage to other more senior household heads in the township and directory ? Indeed, the development of occupational dynasties continually reinforced by marriage and often stretching over both community and social borders was part of the wider experience of West Riding proto-industrial communities.⁵⁴

VI

Much more could have been done here to elaborate and analyze the demographic experience of Calverley-cum-Farsley in the light of new national approaches. Enough has been done however to draw a three clear conclusions. First, marriage ages in Calverley-cum-Farsley were low and stable, suggesting that the uniformity of English nuptial patterns should not be set in stone. Second, while the work of Wrigley et al has established a firm bedrock of inter-communal analysis, the explanation rather than the observation of demographic patterns requires detailed intra-community analysis. When we undertake this level of analysis, questions of differences in nuptiality according to occupations and social status take on some importance. Grand theories of demographic change simply will not do in explaining such experiences and shaping the wider research agenda. Third, and related to this point, marriage ages in Calverley-cum-Farsley were so low that ownership (if not control) of real property was at low levels for most of those marrying, whether they were falling or climbing on the social scale. Delving into the marriage motivations which underlay this marriage pattern raises important questions about how far couples balanced economic prospects, about the importance of institutional structures (such as the poor law) to the local nuptiality regime, about the importance of social mobility for marriage ages, and about the distinctive

⁵³ Those with simpler family economies and less opportunity for land sharing - for instance the farmers of the township - had a rather more conventional experience of marriage ages.

⁵⁴ P. Hudson and S. A. King, 'A sense'. The wider relevance of this experience is difficult to pin down. In many rural communities dispossession rather than aspiration may have helped to generate change in nuptiality. If however we frame the analysis slightly differently and concentrate not on land but on the issue of how intergenerational relationships changed over time and the longevity of traditional demographic and behavioral patterns - there may yet be scope for explaining why we observe such significant differences between the level of marriage ages in the different communities which make up the 'national sample'.

motivations or constraints on motivations which shaped when, where and at what age women married. As Sabeian has noted of European communities, the path to economic independence was a long one, and if this is true then motivations for marriage are much more complex than we have allowed."

⁴⁴ D. Sabeian, *Property, production and family in Neckerhausen 1700-1870* (London, 1990).