working papers in demography

9. 1978
FRENCH
HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY

CHRISTABEL M. YOUNG

DEPARTMENT OF DEMOGRAPHY, RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, CANBERRA, A.C.T., AUSTRALIA, 2600
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF DEMOGRAPHY

FRENCH HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY

Translated and compiled from studies by French demographers

Christabel M. Young

Working Papers in Demography 9, 1978
INTRODUCTION

This paper summarizes some of the main analyses carried out by French demographers from the Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques (INED), from the information contained in parish records in France during the eighteenth century and from genealogies relating to the Genevan ruling classes and French Canadians. The summary is based largely on my own translation of the various "Cahiers" and articles in Population, published by INED. The studies described are:

i) Genevan genealogies, a study by Louis Henry (1956), of 19 families belonging to the bourgeoisie before the Reformation and their descendants from 1550 to 1899, from "Généalogies genevoises familles à la bourgeoisie avant la Réformation" 1947.

ii) French Canadians, a study by Jacques Henripin (1954), relating to the beginning of the eighteenth century, using a sample of the population from the "Dictionnaire Genealogique". At that time the population was about 15,000.

iii) Crulai, a parish in Normandy, studied by Etienne Gautier and Louis Henry (1958), for the period 1675-1750, by the use of parish registers. The population of Crulai at this time was about 1,000 persons.

iv) Sotteville-les-Rouen, studied by Pierre Girard (1959), for the period 1760-1790.

v) Ingouville, a suburb of Havre, studied by Michel Terrisse (1961) during the period 1730-1790.

vi) Saint Agnac, a village of Morvan, with a population of about 800 from 1730-1793, studied by Jacques Houdaille (1961).

vii) Three villages in the Ile-de-France, Mesnel-Theribus, Beaumont-les-Nonains, with about 400 persons in each, during 1740-1799. This study was done by Jean Ganiage (1963). (Also referred to as Beauvaisis).

viii) Peasant families in the eighteenth century in Bas-Quercy, i.e. Thezel and Saint Sernin, were studied by Pierre Valmary (1965).

Except for the Genevan and French Canadian families, all the studies were directly from parish records, and for the last two some additional information such as electoral lists, lists of confirmations, and a Census
at 1766 were available. (See Figure 1 for the location of the parishes).

The eighteenth century is considered to be the transition period from the ancient to the modern era in France, and this is why a study of that particular time is so important. By the end of that century mortality had begun to decline and limitation of births was no longer exceptional. The first reliable census was not until 1801, and before that time, the parish records were the main source of information regarding vital events and the characteristics of the population. These records were begun in some parishes as early as the fifteenth century under the instructions of bishops, while the first government legislation was the ordinance of Francois 1st in 1539, which prescribed the registration of baptisms and certain categories of deaths. In 1579 this order was extended to marriages, and although some registration of deaths was done during these years, it was not until 1666 that the legislation included burials. The keeping of records was largely inspired by religious and moral considerations; for example, the moral aspect is exemplified by the ordinance of Henri 2nd in 1556 which stated that unmarried women must declare a pregnancy. Registration was later extended to non-Catholics in 1787. Expilly was able to compile records for 16,000 of the 40,000 parishes for two periods at the end of the seventeenth and middle of the eighteenth centuries to assess trends; however, it was not until the eighteenth century that the first real attention was given to registration of vital events in France, much later than the work of the British demographer Graunt in 1662 in England. The concept of mortality and fertility rates became more widely known and parish registers were kept more carefully (see Table 1). Eventually, from 1770 to 1784, information was recorded for the whole of France.

Apart from records of baptisms, marriages and burials, the registers contain further information which enables the researcher to identify each person concerned, and hence reconstitute whole families, but, of course, there are problems of illegibility, loss of records, incompleteness, etc. Until recently, few records had been studied except for the tracing of some notable families, and many such genealogies were unsuitable for demographic study because they often represented atypical families, or else omitted obscure branches of the family or children dying before adulthood. One important exception is the collection of genealogies of the Genevan
Figure 1. Location of the parishes referred to in the paper

- Sotteville-lès-Rouen
- Beauvaisis
- Ile-de-France
- Paris region
- Morvan
- Saint Agnam
- Orne
- Crulai
- Havre
- Ingouville
- Bas-Quercy (near Lot)
- Thezel, Saint Sernin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1668-99 %</th>
<th>1700-36 %</th>
<th>1737-92 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural parishes</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small towns</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-sized towns</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large towns</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All parishes</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Henry (1965)
ruling class, which has been carefully compiled with few omissions. Another is a genealogy of the French Canadian population, the "Dictionnaire Genealogique" compiled by Monsieur Tanguay, after 25 years' work and during numerous trips across Canada, the United States and France. This consists of seven volumes, containing information relating to 1½ million registrations, with an alphabetical list of 400,000 French Canadian families.

The ultimate aim of the group of French demographers involved in the historical demography project, was to collect enough information from the parish registers to give an indication of the demographic trends in the whole of France in these early years. Because of the restrictions of time and money, it was obviously not possible to study every parish, but, instead the research was to be based on a small sample of parishes, carefully selected in order that the information gave a faithful image of France. A sample was eventually selected from the 38,000 "communes" in 1954 (or the 40,000 parishes in the eighteenth century) and included all the large cities - Paris, Lyon, Nice, Marseilles, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Rouen, Lille and Strasbourg. One in five of the average sized villages was included, one in ten of the smaller villages, and one in 100 of the other "communes".

Rather than attempting to compile all the data before a final analysis (which would take a great many years), instead, the work was fragmented and each small area analysis is being published soon after it is completed.

THE PARISH RECORDS

As an example of the procedure adopted in assembling and listing the data from the parish records prior to analysis the main steps used for the parish registers in Crulai are described.

1. **Baptisms** were first recorded in 1604. The first "acte" to be registered was a baptism on the 18th September 1604 and it was preceded by a note of the vicar, Messine Thomas Girard, saying that he had summarised a quantity of paper found in the vestry of the church, and constituted a register from 1604 to 1611. Unfortunately there were several gaps in many of the registers, such as pages missing, or even "actes" for two or three months lost. The information recorded was:

- date of baptism
- Christian name and surname of child
Christian name of father

Christian names and surnames of the godmothers and godfathers.

It was not until 1655 that the identity of the mother was also recorded. In about 1750 additional information was noted:

- date of birth - this was always the preceding day or the day of the baptism
- place of residence and profession of the father
- Christian name and maiden name of mother
- professions and parishes of the godparents, and their relationship to the child
- the name and qualification of the officiating priest.

The age of the father appeared in 1796, of the mother in 1799, and of the witnesses in 1796.

2. Marriages were first recorded in 1650 in this parish, when the only information collected was:

- date of marriage
- Christian names and surnames of spouses
- Christian names of the fathers of the spouses
- Christian names and surnames of the witnesses
- the name of the celebrating priest.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the acts also frequently showed:

- date and place of the betrothal or engagement (this was a religious ceremony held in a church)
- date and place of the three obligatory announcements of the marriage (i.e. banns)
- the age of the spouses
- their place of birth and place of living if outside the parish
- profession of the husband
- profession and place of residence of the fathers of the spouses
- Christian names and surnames of mothers of the spouses
- relationship of the witnesses with the spouses, their place of residence and occasionally their profession.

After 1792, the date and place of birth of the spouses,
- date and place of death of their fathers and mothers
- and age and profession of the witnesses were also recorded.
3. Burials were not registered in Crulai until 1676, and the only information recorded was:

- date of the burial
- the name of the official
- Christian name, surname, and an approximate age of the deceased. (There was a noticeable tendency to round off ages).

If the deceased was a child the parents were indicated, or if a married or widowed woman, the name of the husband was mentioned.

After 1792 the person who had certified the death was named; or else the persons who had accompanied the mayor to the house of the deceased to assure him of the reality of the death were named.

**PROCESSING THE DATA**

The information contained in the Crulai parish registers consisted of 6,734 births during 194 years, 1,229 marriages in 152 years, and 3,676 deaths in 125 years, and these were summarised in four stages:

i) Chronological summary

ii) Summary by family name

iii) Summary by family units

iv) Index of each individual family, leading to marriage cards and birth cards.

Family names recurred frequently, and this made it easier to summarise the data. For example, among the 6,734 births occurring between 1604 to 1800, 3,343 were from only ten different family names. The name occurring most frequently was Marais (one out of seven), but, of which there is only one remaining family in 1954. Altogether there were 104 different family names.

1. **Chronological Summary**

This summary lists each birth, marriage and death according to the date of occurrence, with all the relevant information alongside, i.e.:

i) Day of the month of the birth or death

ii) Day of the month of the act of baptism, marriage or death

iii) Month

iv) Nature of the act (baptism, marriage or death)
v) Christian names and surname of the child baptised, of the deceased or of the spouse, plus any additional information

vi) Age (for marriages and deaths)

vii) Christian name of father

viii) Profession of father

ix) Place of residence of father

x) Christian name and maiden name of mother

xi) Name of official performing the ceremony

xii) Witnesses, godparents, profession, age and residence.

2. **Summary by family name**

The next stage was a listing of all births according to family name, and with information concerning the destiny of the child (i.e. marriage and/or death). The information listed was:

i) Christian name of the child

ii) Christian name of the father, with profession and residence

iii) Christian name and maiden name of mother

iv) Date of birth of child

v) Dates of marriage and names of spouse

vi) Date of death

vii) Age at death.

Also added is the date of death of the father and mother when known.

3. **Summary by conjugal group**

With the information summarised by family name, it was then possible to proceed to the reconstitution of family groups, which summarises the parents' marriage, the births of the child, and the dates of death of the parents.

i) Number of the family

ii) Filiation of the husband - two numbers - the first giving the family of his parents, the second his rank among the children

iii) Christian names of the husband, and below, the date of death

iv) Christian name and maiden name of his wife, with year of death

v) Profession of husband

vi) Place of residence

vii) Year of marriage
viii) Years of birth of the children, with Christian
ix) names.
x)

4. **Index of families**

Finally 600 of the most complete families from 1674–1742 were chosen and an index card for each of these was prepared showing all the relevant information regarding that family.

In addition there was a card for each marriage showing an identification number of the marriage, the names of the man and woman concerned, the date and rank of marriage, and ages at marriage, ages at death, end of the union, number of children born, number of children dying under one year, duration of widowhood. Similarly, a card was made for each birth, showing rank of birth, date of birth, age of mother at the birth, intervals since the preceding birth and before the next, destiny of the child (i.e. marriage, death), age at death or end of the period of observation.

**Mortality**

One often reads of the disastrous epidemics and famines which ravaged the population of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Henry (1953) describes one of the worst of these, which occurred in 1693–94, when the number of deaths recorded were several times greater than in a normal year. The effect of a poor harvest in 1693 was worsened by the high price of grain. Then followed an outbreak of smallpox, which affected first the poorer classes and then spread to the richer folk. A secondary effect was a reduction in the number of marriages and births, since smallpox frequently caused spontaneous abortion or the death of pregnant women. It seems that lack of food, high prices, and a severe winter, combined with an epidemic brought the highest mortality, rather than a "pure epidemic".

In Crulai the number of deaths rose above 50 per year in 1693–94, 1701, 1709, 1735, 1739, 1743, 1747, 1761, 1764 and 1796. In both 1693 and 1709 a crop failure was followed by a very severe winter. The high mortality in 1765 was due to an epidemic of miliary fever, which was endemic from March to June, and affected mainly adults — of 67 deaths, 44 were to persons aged 20 to 69 years. The 1761 peak appears to have been due to an infantile epidemic disease because during the year 44 children aged 1 to 9 years died in a village that contained about 220 children of these ages.
Another example of the severe increases in mortality is in the three villages of Ile-de-France. Normally, during the seventeenth century there were, on average, as many, or more births than burials, but during the last ten years of the century, the balance was greatly disturbed. Storms in June 1693 ruined the crops, thus bringing famine, and coupled with a very severe winter and an epidemic, resulted in the number of deaths being several times the number of baptisms. Overall, there were 220 deaths in the 12 months compared with 24 births.

In general, mortality seems to have been very high, with an average expectation of life at birth of about 25 years for both males and females, while for those who had survived to age 20 years the mean age at death was around 50 years for each sex. Infant mortality was exceptionally high, mainly because of difficulties during the confinement, and diarrhoeal infections, and sickly children and twins had little chance of surviving. Records from Beauvaisis show that 63 per cent of twins died during their first year. From age 1 to 10 years the principal fear was smallpox, but there were also many deaths from measles, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, and influenza. Shortages of food, poor sanitary conditions and lack of proper care of the sick meant that the contagion quickly swept through families. Deaths of women often seem to be the result of difficult confinements - this is evident from the frequent coincidence of baptisms and burials in the parish registers, and, of course, in the most difficult of confinements, the burials of both the mother and child appear together in the registers. Confinements were usually at home with the help of neighbours or a midwife, with little hygiene observed, and no expert help was available for difficult cases. In general, the mortality of adults does not seem to have been affected quite as much by epidemics as that of children. Records from the villages in Ile-de-France indicate that approximately equal proportions of husbands and wives became widowed - in 54 per cent of marriages the husband died first, and in 46 per cent the wife died first. (Compare this with current conditions where approximately two-thirds of the husbands die first). Deaths of old people were most frequent in autumn and winter, while for persons aged 20-50 years the distribution was fairly regular throughout the year. A comparison of survival values for some of the parishes is given in Table 2.

The most extensive information regarding mortality during these early years is that regarding the ancient Genevan ruling classes. In the oldest generation
### Table 2. Survivors per 1,000 births

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See references listed on page

### Table 3. Expectation of life of Geneva ruling classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation born in</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600-49</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650-99</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-49</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-99</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-49</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-99</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-49</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Henry (1956)
for which the information is available, i.e. those born between 1600-49, the expectation of life was about 32 years, with one-fifth to one-quarter of the children dying before attaining one year of age, and 45 per cent to 50 per cent of children dying before reaching adulthood. Although this represents heavy mortality by modern standards, nevertheless at that time this life expectancy was about 5 or 6 years higher than for most populations in France. Apparently the well-to-do families escaped some of the severity of the mortality prevailing at that time, probably because the effect of the epidemics was worst when associated with a shortage of food.

A decline in mortality was observed for generations born since 1700 with a corresponding increase in expectation of life to 42 years. This decline was greatest for children and for women in the age range 30 to 40 years; for the remainder of the population the change was slower and very slight up to the end of the nineteenth century. (It was not until the twentieth century that adult mortality was appreciably reduced). Initially mortality of females was higher or about the same as for males but by the generations of 1650-99 they had attained an advantage. Expectation of life continued to improve for each successive generation; thus the generation of the second half of the eighteenth century experienced an average expectation of life of 47 to 48 years, the generation of the first half of the nineteenth century about 52 years, the generation of the second half about 58 years, and that of the generation of the first half of the twentieth century would be about 65 years (see Table 3).

The study of the mortality of the Genevan families also serves to refute some of the early theories that the last-born child experienced a higher mortality than its older siblings, and that a higher rate of mortality was experienced by the women who had had the most children. It was found that the survival of children to twenty years of age was barely less for the last-born than for the first-born among generations born before 1650, and for later generations their chances of survival were actually higher, because often the last-born was a replacement for what was previously the last-born. It was also found that women dying before the age of 45 years were not more fertile than those surviving. Although women having a large number of children were more often exposed to the considerable risk of death at each confinement, mortality before the age of 45 years was not only due to this but also to illnesses which would have affected most the women who
were less robust or in poor health. Thus physical deficiencies were at
the same time the cause of lower fertility and higher mortality, and therefore the
more fertile women had a lighter mortality, which would have been even lighter
if they had voluntarily had less children. Hence a reduction in fertility
could well have been a factor influencing the decline in female mortality in
later years.

NURSERIES

It was a common practice in eighteenth century France to place infants in
the charge of a wet-nurse in the rural parishes either by the well-to-do
families who considered it fashionable and convenient to have their infants
cared for in this manner, or by the large hospitals in Paris which farmed
out foundlings to nurses in the country. It was also considered that the
rural parishes were far healthier than the crowded conditions in Paris and
therefore the babies would also have a greater chance of surviving in such
surroundings.

Certainly the available data on the relative expectations of life in Paris
and the rural parishes supports this hypothesis. Expectation of life at
birth in Paris around the beginning of the eighteenth century was 23.5 years,
whereas in some of the coastal parishes it was around 37 years and in the
Cévennes and the Bas Languedoc it was more than 41 years. Crulai had values
a little lower than these, but certainly well above the figure for Paris.

The presence of "nourrissons" - as these babies were termed - in the
parishes was detected from records of some of their deaths in the parish
registers. At Crulai, there were about 190 such deaths recorded between
1716-1801, most of these children having come from Paris. Presumably the
number of children actually cared for in this parish was several times this
number. At Saint Agnac, also, there are records from about 1780 of deaths
of children placed in nurseries. Again it is impossible to calculate the
number of such children ever cared for in this way, and, as with Crulai,
they seem to have come mainly from Paris. In the three parishes in Beauvaisis
the first death identified as being a "nourrisson" was in 1674, although
unusual surnames of children dying in the parish 20 or 30 years previously
indicated that these might also have been "nourrissons". Almost all the
"nourrissons" in Beauvaisis originated from about 33 parishes in Paris.
It seems that the women of the village travelled, often by foot, to Paris, a distance of 40 miles from Beauvaisis, to present themselves to the bureau of nurses and receive a child for nursing. The practice of nursing in this parish was widespread, except among the well-to-do families, and, of course, a source of income to the poorer families.

Apparently the babies were taken to the country a few days after birth and remained there until they were five or six years old. Evidence for this comes from the records of deaths of these children; one-fifth of these were recorded to children aged under one month, 30 per cent were to those aged one year, with the remaining deaths to children aged up to three years.

Although one would expect that a woman would tend to take a child to nurse from Paris as a substitute for a child of her own that had died, this was seldom the case. In 95 per cent of the observed cases the woman's last-born child was still alive, and on average about 8½ months older than the nourrisson. Such a difference in age was necessary so that the mother's own child was old enough to survive without its mother during the time it took her to travel to Paris to fetch the other baby.

The presence of "nourrissons" is not only of social interest but also of relevance demographically with regard to the fecundity of nursing mothers and the spacing of births.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, partly as a result of the decline in the occurrence of severe epidemics, particularly smallpox, the advantage of the country gradually diminished. Furthermore, the practice of placing children in nurseries was condemned by several learned physicians and eventually the custom was discontinued.

NUPTIALITY

1. Proportions ever marrying

Ideally the best measure of nuptiality of a population is by construction of a nuptiality table. Obviously, in studies from parish records with limited information regarding the age structure of the base population this is not possible. However, some measure of marriage patterns and the frequency of celibacy can be deduced from the proportion of the unmarried population above a certain age, e.g. 45 or 50 years. Even then, many of the parish records were deficient in that conjugal condition at death was not stated;
however from the assumption that deaths to persons aged 45 years and over where no children were mentioned were to single persons, the proportion of single among all persons dying at these ages could be determined.

Nuptiality in most rural parishes seems to have been higher than it is in France today. Thus at Sotteville only 6.7 per cent of women were single above the age of 45 years, at Saint Agnacm 6.3 per cent of women and 10.1 per cent of men, while at the three parishes in Beauvaisis 8–10 per cent of women had remained single. However there is evidence of lower nuptiality in Thezel-Saint Sernin, where 13–17 per cent of women were unmarried above the age of 50 years, and in Paris at the beginning of the eighteenth century where the proportion was 15 per cent for women and 20 per cent for men. In France in 1962 about 10 per cent of women were single at age 45 years.

There are also additional factors to be considered, such as the number of single girls who migrated to other villages to work as servants, or to go into a convent.

2. Age at marriage

Average age at marriage in most of the parishes is shown on Table 4. The figures contradict the popular opinion that women in those days married in their teens. Very few women married before the age of 20 years, one in 12 according to the data for the three parishes of Beauvaisis. Many of the early marriages were precipitated by the advent of war and the desire of young men to escape conscription through marriage.

3. Widowhood and remarriage

The actual number of marriages was even higher than is indicated by the proportions remaining single at advanced ages due to the high rate of widowhood (a consequence of the high mortality at those times) - and to the high rate of remarriage of these widowed persons, often because of the need to find a replacement to help care for the children of the previous marriage. Generally, the duration of widowhood was much shorter for males than for females. Thus, at Sotteville, among 22 remarrriages of widowers, 14 occurred within a year of widowhood, whereas the reverse pattern was true for females; of 18 remarrriages of widows 13 took place more than a year after widowhood. Numerous remarrriages (one in five of all marriages) were recorded at Saint Agnacm, with one record of an old man aged 71 years marrying for the fourth
time. The mean duration of a marriage in this parish was found to be just over 15 years. In the three parishes of Beauvaisis it was usual for widowers to remarry within one year of the death of their wife, whereas remarriage of widows depended largely on their age. Data on remarriages at Thezel-Saint Sernin indicated that almost one-half of the men who remarried did so within the first eight months following widowhood, and many within the first five months. From the figures for the French Canadians 64 per cent of marriages were terminated by death before the women attained the age of 50 years, more than half of which were a result of her own death. The duration of widowhood before remarriage was relatively short, i.e. an average of about two years for men and three years for women, and on an average there were 1.22 marriages per married man. Divorce is rarely mentioned.

4. Seasonality

The seasonality of marriages is interesting in that it illustrates the strict observance of religious prohibitions against marriage in Lent and Advent and also the importance of the activities associated with the harvest. Thus, there are almost no marriages in March (Lent) and December (Advent) and very few in September, the month of the hardest work in the fields. The greatest number of marriages was observed in January, often a month of special feasts, and large numbers also in February and November. A small peak is sometimes observed in July, the month preceding the period of hard work in the fields. The seasonal effect on marriages seems to have declined with increasing civilisation so that in France today Lent is still strongly observed, but Advent hardly at all, the marriages in the summer are few, except for June.

5. Origin of spouse

Information regarding the origin of the participants in the unions provides some idea of the extent of migration between parishes and the customs associated with marriage in the husband's or wife's parish. At Crulai a marriage could only be celebrated in the parish if one of the participants was a member of that parish. Since it was usual for the couple to settle in the village where the husband had lived, the marriage usually took place in his parish. Sixty-two per cent of the men married in Crulai were born in Crulai, compared with 45 per cent of the women. Altogether 90 per cent of the persons marrying in Crulai came from a distance of less than 5 kilometres. The Ingouville parish records indicate a greater degree of migration, mainly from along the coastline or along the valley of the Seine; of 157 unions
Table 4.  **Mean age at first marriage**  
(years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Spinsters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crulai</td>
<td>1670-1789</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sotteville</td>
<td>1760-90</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Agnam</td>
<td>1730-93</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parishes of Beauvaisis</td>
<td>1740-99</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thezel-Saint Sernin</td>
<td>1740-90</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See references listed on page 1.

Table 5.  **Mean age at first marriage of the ruling classes of Geneva**  
(years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation born in</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Spinsters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1550-99</td>
<td>27.2 ± 1.2</td>
<td>21.4 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600-49</td>
<td>29.1 ± 1.0</td>
<td>24.6 ± 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650-99</td>
<td>32.6 ± 1.3</td>
<td>25.7 ± 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-49</td>
<td>31.9 ± 1.5</td>
<td>26.3 ± 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-99</td>
<td>31.5 ± 1.7</td>
<td>24.0 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-49</td>
<td>29.4 ± 1.4</td>
<td>22.7 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-99</td>
<td>29.2 ± 1.2</td>
<td>24.7 ± 0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Henry (1956)
only 57 males and 29 females were born in the parish. In Saint Agnain only 33 per cent of the persons marrying were born in the parish. Contrary to the custom observed at Crulai, at Thezel-Saint Sernin and in the three parishes in Beauvaisis marriages were celebrated more frequently in the woman's parish, although remarriages occurred more frequently at the man's parish. Thus, in Beauvaisis, 52 per cent men and 95 per cent women were married in the parish in which they were born.

6. "Crisis" of nuptiality in Geneva

Of special interest is the change in marriage patterns experienced by the families in the ruling classes in Geneva in the eighteenth century. For generations born in 1550-99 the nuptiality was high with only 5 per cent of women remaining single and their average age at marriage scarcely 22 years. The generation of 1600-49 began to show evidence of slightly later age of marriage and a higher incidence of celibacy. This developed eventually into a situation where 25 per cent of the women of the generation born in 1650-99 and 30 per cent of the generation born in 1700-49 were unmarried at 50 years of age. The change was also reflected in an increase in the average age of marriage of about 4 years. The peak of the crisis seems to have culminated in the experience of the generation of 1700-49, and the trend was reversed for those born in 1750-99. This "crisis" in nuptiality has generally been attributed to the emigration of young men from Geneva. Due to the rapid growth of the population at that time it was difficult for these young noblemen to find themselves a post in Geneva worthy of their rank. So the solution was to emigrate, and this frequently led to their marriage with a foreigner. To aggravate the lack of sufficient suitors for the women of Geneva, female mortality was decreasing at a faster rate than was male mortality. This reduced the incidence of widowhood for men, and thereby further reduced the chance of remarriage of these young women. Obviously, even though it might have eased the situation these families of the ruling classes could not allow their daughters to marry men of lower rank (see Table 5).

FERTILITY

1. Spacing of children and completed family size

One of the main purposes in the study of the demography of the seventeenth and eighteenth century populations of France was to detect changes in the pattern of fertility which would point to the beginning of family limitation.
In most of the parishes studied birth control was unknown or little practised, so that the duration of marriage or the number of children born had little influence on the probability of a woman having another child. Thus a woman's fertility was simply a function of her age, and, for completed families, the age of mothers at the birth of their last child was an indication of the end of their fertile period. This age was found to be usually between 37 and 42 years, although there are some records of women having their last child beyond the age of 50 years. Sterility, extremely difficult to measure, was thought to be around 3 per cent at age 25 years, and 40 per cent by age 40 years. More measurable was the pattern of subfecundity - of the order of 10 per cent below age 30 years in Crulai, 20 per cent at age 35 years, over 50 per cent at age 40 years, and unity at age 45.

Spacing of births appears to have been at fairly regular intervals, with these intervals gradually increasing with increasing age (see Table 6). Thus, before age 30 years a woman would have two or three children for each five years of marriage, from ages 30-34 years the maximum number was two, and virtually no children were born in the 40-44 and 45-49 year age groups. There seems to be no obvious reason for the relatively wide intervals between higher order births in Crulai. A common observation from the records of these parishes was that the mean interval between successive births was four or five months shorter when the previous child had died.

An interesting variation in the spacing of births is observed among the families from the Genevan ruling classes. Fertility appears to be higher, and the spacing of births is closer, for the 1600-49 cohort in comparison with the earlier cohort 1550-99. One suggestion is that, because of the war with Savoie, it would not have been as possible to put the children in the nurseries outside Geneva during the earlier period. Therefore breastfeeding would have been more common, and hence birth intervals longer during that time. However, this was obviously not the full explanation, because the intervals were found to be longer in the later period even when the child had died.

Age-specific marital fertility rates of the women in the parishes and in French Canada and the Genevan ruling classes are shown in Table 7. Under the type of fertility observed in the parishes the size of the completed family was closely related to the woman's age at marriage i.e., the younger the age at marriage the larger would be the size of the completed family.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of woman (years)</th>
<th>Canada marriages 1700-1729</th>
<th>Crulai marriages 1674-1742</th>
<th>Ingouville marriages 1730-1770</th>
<th>Saint Agnam 1730-93</th>
<th>Thezel Saint Sernin 1740-90</th>
<th>Ruling classes of Geneva</th>
<th>Parishes of Beauvaisis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husband born before 1650</td>
<td>Husband born 1700-99</td>
<td>Husband born 1800-99</td>
<td>Women married before 1780</td>
<td>Women married after 1780</td>
<td>France 1963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45+</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See references listed on page 1.
Thus at Crulai, if women were married at 20 years (and survived to the end of the fertile period) the modal number of children was 8 to 10, if married at 25 years this number was 6 or 7, and at 30 years the modal number of children born was about 4 or 5. Despite the relatively high rates experienced in these parishes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries family size was seldom as high as the fertility rates suggest. Although one hears so much about the large families of the past, it must be remembered that only the households where both spouses survived to the end of the childbearing years had many children. Furthermore marriages seldom occurred before the 20-24 age group, and relatively large numbers of women married at even later ages.

For example, in Crulai the mean number of children per union was close to four, while the mean number of children per woman married at 25 years was about six. The difference between the two figures is explained by the premature dissolution of marriages by the death of a spouse, and the relatively large number of remarriages, which are usually less fertile because the woman is older. In this parish about one-quarter of the marriages lasted less than ten years before one spouse died, and in Saint Agnam the mean duration of marriage was 15 years. The necessary condition for more than ten children was an early age at marriage, and either twins or close spacing of births. Thus the average size of families was more of the order of five children, of whom one would die in infancy, and scarcely three would survive to adolescence.

2. French Canadian families

A similar situation occurred among the French Canadian families. The relatively late age at marriage is indicated by the fact that 18 per cent married above age 30 years, and 10 per cent above age 35 years. Although the sum of the marital age-specific fertility rates for Canada gives a value of 13.27 children, this was encountered only if a woman had married at age 15 years and did not die or become widowed before she was age 50 years. Accordingly the average size of a family was actually found to be 5.65 children, or 8.39 for completed families (i.e. both spouse survived) and 4.41 for incomplete families. In fact 45 per cent of all families, and 17 per cent of complete families, had 0-4 children. The average age of mothers at the birth of the last child among complete families was 41 years, while among incomplete families it was 31 years.

The French Canadian population in the eighteenth century differed very much
from the resident population in France. At that time there was economic expansion, large-scale immigration, the advantage of space, and conditions generally conducive to development. Marriage was encouraged, and so was the production of large families. An incentive to early marriage was the payment of 20 livres to boys marrying before the age to 20 years and to girls marrying before the age of 16 years. (However there does not seem to be much evidence of many marriages taking place at these ages). A father with ten children received a pension of 300 livres per year, while one with twelve would receive a pension of 400 livres per year. As is evident from Table 7, Canada's fertility rates were considerably higher than those in the parishes in France. The birth rate in Canada during the eighteenth century was around 55 births per 1000, compared with a rate of 39 per 1000 for France at that time (and a rate of around 15 per 1000 in the 1960s). This was approaching what was considered to be the maximum physiologically possible, and, despite the high mortality, would have been sufficient to double the population in 20-25 years. The only parish in France, in this collection of studies, which indicated a level of fertility approaching that was the labouring classes of Ingouville.

3. Decline in fertility

One of the most interesting findings from these studies was the evidence of a decline in fertility in the three villages in Ile-de-France towards the end of the eighteenth century; couples married after 1780 no longer had the fertility of the previous generation, as Table 7 shows. The differences between women married before and those married after 1780 were most pronounced after the fifth or sixth year of marriage, and the mean number of children born decreased from 6.7 to 5.3, with a corresponding decline in the age of the mother at the birth of the last child.

Of note also are the lower age-specific marital fertility rates at all ages in Thezel and Saint Sernin. This can be interpreted either as a forerunner of the decline in fertility in the south west of France in the nineteenth century, or as a particular case of a variation in the level of natural fecundity. An argument against the former conclusion is that normally a decline in fertility is observed first and mainly in the older age groups leaving the rates at the younger ages unchanged.

A decline in fertility is, of course, clearly indicated for the generations born since 1700 among the ruling classes of Geneva. This was associated with
### Table 7. Mean interval between births (months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish or Population group</th>
<th>Marriage to 1st birth</th>
<th>1st to 2nd</th>
<th>2nd to 3rd</th>
<th>3rd to 4th</th>
<th>4th to 5th</th>
<th>3rd before last to 2nd before</th>
<th>2nd before last to 1st before</th>
<th>1st before last to 1st before</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva (generations before 1650)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crulai - all families</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- complete families</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sotteville - 8+*</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Agnam</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thél Saint Sernin - 8+*</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Number of children

Source: See references listed on page 1.
the change in nuptiality patterns, already described, the decline in mortality, and the rapid population growth. In such a society there would have been a determined effort to maintain a dominant position and the risk of losing this would have accelerated an awareness of the implications of a high rate of population growth and translated it into a deliberate action to limit family size.

For generations born since 1700, families with six to eight children were rare, while families with only one or two or without children altogether were quite common, and the most frequently encountered family size was three to five children. The decrease in the number of children per marriage was also accompanied by a change in the duration of the childbearing stage; previously, among women married at 20-24 years the average interval between the birth of the first and the last child was 16 years, whereas in these later generations the interval was reduced to an average of 9.5 years. This was also accompanied by a lowering of the mean age of the mother at the birth of the last child. Although there was still little change in the interval between marriage and the first birth and between the first and second births, there was evidence that succeeding intervals were definitely longer.

Overall, family limitation seems to have been restricted to a decrease in the size of families, wider spacing of higher order births, and a lowering of age of the mother at the last birth, but there is no evidence of the postponement of the first birth that is frequently observed in contemporary society. Geneva was unique among other European populations in that the lowering of nuptiality occurred simultaneously with the reduction in fertility.

4. Prenuptial and ex-nuptial confinements

Illegitimate births seem to have been relatively uncommon in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. In Crulai and Ile-de-France only about 0.5-0.9 per cent of births were in that category, and in French Canada the proportion was only 0.8-0.9 per cent, compared with a value of about 6 per cent in France in the 1960s. Although illegitimacy was the exception, first births frequently occurred within the first eight months of marriage. Under the prevailing social customs there was strong pressure for the parents to regularize the marriage before the child was born. In Crulai and Thézel-Saint Sernin prenuptial conceptions constituted about 3-5 per cent of all first births, in French Canada and Saint Agnann about 9 per cent, in Ingouville and Beauvaisis
about 15 per cent, 17 per cent in Ile-de-France, while in Sotteville, representing a rather different type of community (mainly workers and artisans) the proportion was about 30 per cent.

In Crulai 41 per cent of first births occurred within the first year of marriage, while among women marrying at ages 20–29 years the proportion was 50 per cent. The values were observed to be rather higher at Sotteville, where approximately 59 per cent of first births occurred before the first anniversary of marriage.

5. Seasonality

The peak in conceptions occurred in June, with relatively high levels in the surrounding months, May, July and August, i.e. the months of good weather. A fall is observed in September, October, November and December, another peak in January, with fewer again in February and March (see Figure 2). Records for the parishes of Bas-Quercy show a drop in the number of conceptions occurring during Lent, which is not observed to the same extent in the other studies. Seasonality appears to decrease with an increasing level of civilisation.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

1. Level of education

Some indication of level of education attained can be deduced from the presence of signatures on official forms. In Crulai, the proportion of men able to sign their name increased from around 30 per cent in 1680 to 60 per cent in 1780. Literacy among females was less than 10 per cent until 1740, but then increased relatively rapidly to around 40 per cent in 40 years; this seems to be related to the presence of a girls' school in or near Crulai from about 1730.

Also, in the three villages in Ile-de-France during the period 1740-1759 40 per cent of the men and 80 per cent of the women were illiterate, but by the end of the century 80 per cent of the men and 25 per cent of the women could sign their names. Although there were schools in the parish, it was rather less common for girls to attend.

2. Mobility

As stated in the section on nuptiality, the origin of the bride and bridegroom in the marriage records is a useful indication of mobility between parishes and the custom of marrying in the husband's or the wife's parish.
Figure 2. Seasonal movement in vital events, Crulaï

BIRTHS

MARRIAGES

DEATHS

- 17th c.
- 18th c.

- 1690-1739
- 1740-1789

Source: Gautier and Henry (1958)
In general, each village had a relationship with other parishes, and each family had relatives in other localities.

The presence of unusual surnames in other parts of the registers also supports the impression of movement between parishes. In Bas-Quercy there are many instances of nomadic families whose stay in the parish is brief. Examples of the mobile members of the population in the Ile-de-France are the grain-carters, the pedlar of laces, the nurse travelling to fetch an infant, the young girl placed in domestic service in another village, the widow returning to her original parish. Overall, seasonal migration seems to have been relatively unimportant.

At Saint Agnam, there were instances of deaths of children being recorded in the same parish that their parents were living, but their births were recorded in another parish. Apparently when a newly-born infant was in danger of dying, the inhabitants of distant hamlets applied to the curate in the nearest village to baptize their child without regard to the limits of their own parish.

CONCLUSION

Obviously a great many problems are encountered in the extraction and eventual analysis of the information in the parish registers. The researcher has to cope with omissions, lost documents, illegibility, changes of name, rounding of ages (particularly for burials of old persons), the mobility of the population. Nevertheless, through careful sorting of the information, and where possible, independent checks (for example, it was possible to check the coverage of births in Thezel and Saint Sernin from records of confirmations), it is possible to gain some insight into the lifestyle and pattern of demographic events in these early times.

The studies are valuable because they involved the development of the methodology of data extraction and reconstitution of families; also the analysis points to the fallacy of some of the earlier theories, particularly those regarding family size and marriage patterns, and to the relative diversity in the experience between different localities.
REFERENCES


