

DO MARRIAGE HORIZONS ACCURATELY MEASURE MIGRATION? A TEST CASE FROM STANHOPE PARISH, COUNTY DURHAM

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Introduction

Anglican marriage registers have been widely used to provide systematic evidence of personal mobility and of marital contact between parishes.¹ Such analysis rests either on the belief that the distance between bride and groom's residence immediately prior to marriage is a reliable indication of mobility, or on the assumption that the marriage registers record places of origin, so that movement between birth and marriage can accurately be computed. More recently, attention has been drawn to the very informative baptismal registers which occur in some parts of the country in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.² These registers contain details of the parents' birthplace or the place of residence of the infants' grand-parents, and so may be used to estimate migration from one generation to the next as well as movement associated with marriage. Whether marriage registers or baptismal registers are used to supply the details, two facets of marital migration can be distinguished: the proportion of endogamous marriages on the one hand, and the distance, direction or precise locality of migration by the exogamous marriage partners on the other. These two components are equivalent to Perry's 'two spatial patterns, that of isolation and that of connection ...'.³ The purpose of this paper is to test the reliability of marriage registers as sources of data on the amount of parish endogamy and exogamy, by comparing the birthplace of parents in the baptismal register with their stated place of residence when they appeared as bride and groom in the marriage registers of Stanhope parish, County Durham. Like almost all the parishes in County Durham the large Weardale parish of Stanhope has baptismal registers for 1798-1812 which are very detailed; the form of register used at this time gives not only the father's occupation and the mother's maiden name but also the parish of nativity of both parents.

It is worthy of note that Bishop Barrington asked for baptismal registers to be annotated with the place of birth of the parents of a child baptised, not simply for the place of residence of the child's grandparents to be recorded. His letter of 1797 to Middleton in Teesdale parish, for example, makes this intention clear. The bishop states that 'mentioning the places

of nativity of the Parents, though attended with some little trouble, may at a future time be attended with beneficial effect. Without such information many are the cases where the descent of families cannot now be traced.' This seems to stand in contrast to Archbishop Markham's directive which had caused the form of Yorkshire baptism registers to be changed after 1777. Holderness⁵ gives an example from Saxton in Elmet, Yorkshire, of what 'at best a baptismal entry according to [the] new formula might reveal':

'Rebecca, 1st dau. of Robert Westwood of Saxton, Taylor, son of Thomas Westwood of Kelfield, Husbandman, by Rebecca his wife, dau. of John Pallister of Stillingfleet, Farmer (and) Frances, dau. of Isaac Cawthorne of Miclefield, Labr by Elizabeth his wife, daughter of Samuel Goodall of Milford, Collier, (born) May 30; (bapt.) June 5.'

The following example from Hart parish shows the difference in extent and in nature from the above of information given about the parents in Barrington's annotated County Durham baptismal registers:

'William Dobson labourer native of Ellington Northumberland by his wife Jane Whittington native of Norton'.

The Yorkshire registers give more genealogical depth, but they retain the marriage registers' ambiguous use of the attribution 'of' this or that parish.

Methods and results

In the baptismal registers 1798-1812, that is for the whole period when Barrington's request was in force, the 587 couples registered as parents who could be cross-referenced to the Stanhope marriage registers were used to estimate the proportion of parents not born in Stanhope. These couples were then located in the marriage registers 1795-1812 and analysed in order to determine the proportion stating themselves not to be resident in the parish at marriage. An example of such a cross-referenced marriage and baptism follows:

Stanhope Marriage register, 1803

Anthony Dent and Sara Heatherington both of this Parish were married in this church by Banns this 20th Day of August 1803 by me G. Langhom curate.

This marriage was solemnized between us

(sgd) Anthony Dent
The mark of Sarah Heatherington

in the presence of

Francis Brown
Isabella (illegible).

Stanhope Baptism register, 1804

	Birth	Baptism	
William Dent	24.11.1803	Jan'y 29	1st son of Anthony Dent of Stanhope, miner native of the P. of Romalldkirk, Yorkshire by his wife Sarah Heatherington native of the P. of Alston Cumberland.

The collated results for men and women are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Place of residence of 1174 marriage partners recorded 1795-1812 cross-referenced to baptismal register 1798-1812

Place of residence	men		=587	women		=587
	Stanhope	not Stanhope		Stanhope	not Stanhope	
	575 (98%)	12 (2%)		581 (99%)	6 (1%)	

These results may be contrasted with those obtained from the baptismal register for the period 1798-1812 (Table 2).

Table 2. Place of origin of 1174 parents recorded in baptismal register 1798-1812 and cross-referenced to marriage register 1795-1812

Place of origin	men		=587	women		=587
	Stanhope	not Stanhope		Stanhope	not Stanhope	
	481 (82%)	106 (18%)		487 (83%)	100 (17%)	

Comparing figures of non-resident marriage partners in Table 1 with those in Table 2 (1.5% and 17.5%) it is clear that marriage registers underestimate personal mobility of both men and women and the comparison suggests that their interpretation as indicators of parish of origin rather than residence will be misleading. There is no difference in the behaviour of the sexes either in the percentage of migrants or the degree to which marriage registers underestimate migration ($\chi^2_1 = 1.54, p > .2$). Taking men and women separately only 11% of all immigrant men and 6% of all immigrant women are recorded as non-resident in the marriage register. To what extent this degree of underestimation may be variable can be determined only by reference to a wide range of parishes.

Discussion

The above results seem to present a coherent picture, but there is a further complication to which we must draw attention. The 587 couples in the marriage register cross-referenced to the baptismal register are not

the only people who were married in Stanhope between 1795 and 1812. In addition there are 208 couples who for one reason or another do not appear cross-referenced in the baptismal register (Table 3).

Table 3. Place of residence of 416 marriage partners recorded 1795-1812 not cross-referenced to baptismal register 1798-1812

Place of residence	men		women	
	Stanhope	not Stanhope	Stanhope	not Stanhope
	156 (75%)	52 (25%)	206 (99%)	2 (1%)
	=208		=208	

These figures indicate a different proportion of non-residents recorded from the 587 examined earlier (Table 1) and in particular a significantly increased proportion of male non-residents.

It may be that these 208 couples 'lost' between the marriage register and the baptismal register were childless, through death or infertility, or that they resided in Stanhope and baptised their children elsewhere or they may have gone to live in another parish. The first explanation seems unlikely in view of the large numbers involved, and the implied bias of infertility toward marriages with bridegrooms not resident in Stanhope. The second explanation likewise fails to predict the high frequency of non-resident grooms, nor is there any evidence of sufficient brides not born in Stanhope who might wish to return home to baptise their children. The third situation seems the most probable, and accords with the idea that after marriage in the bride's parish a newly wed couple would often take up residence in the groom's parish.

Whilst no single explanation need occur to the exclusion of all others, for simplicity we assume here that only the last has happened. On this view fifty-two men who claim not to be Stanhope residents at the time of marriage left the parish soon afterwards. By comparison only two women who claim not to be resident at the time do not subsequently baptise their children in Stanhope.

Thus by analysing the 208 couples who do not appear cross-referenced to the baptismal register two further factors emerge. The first is that here men and women differ markedly in their migration behaviour. The second is that grooms who claim not to be Stanhope residents are not likely to return to Stanhope after marriage.

It may be the case that whereas men from elsewhere who intended to live in Stanhope after marriage often claimed to be (and may in fact be) Stanhope residents, men born elsewhere who knew they would not live in Stanhope after marriage made no such claim. To this extent the declared place of residence considered as an indicator of movement is misleading.

This paper has shown that marriage horizons should not be taken at face value as indicators of personal mobility. Whether or not they may still be useful by providing reliable underestimates of either men's or women's migration can only be ascertained by comparative study. The complica-

ations mentioned above in discussion suggest at least that there will be no simple applicable multiplier. However, we are reluctant to urge the abnegation of so extensive and beguiling an archive without further struggle, even though the present evidence seems clearly to indicate that the direct interpretation of marriage horizons as migration is simply no longer credible.

NOTES

1. See for example
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2. T. J. Falla, 'Further material for eighteenth-century mobility', **Local Population Studies**, no. 26, 1981, p. 46.
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M. Long and B. Maltby, 'Personal mobility in three West Riding parishes 1777-1812', **Local Population Studies**, no. 24, 1980, pp. 13-25.
3. P. J. Perry, 'Working-class isolation and mobility in rural Dorset 1837-1926: a study of marriage distances', **Trans. Inst. Brit. Geog.**, vol. XLV, 1969, pp. 121-41.
4. Letter of explanation from Bishop Barrington dated 30.9.1797. Durham County Record Office, Middleton-in-Teesdale parish register. D/Ph. 189.30.
5. Holderness, p. 451.

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