

Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755

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Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755

Until fairly recently historical writing about Acadia has tended to focus on its role in the struggle between France and Britain for possession of the New World. The sudden and violent disruption in 1755 has tended to overshadow the pattern of internal stability and change in Acadian life before the Dispersion. With the publication of Andrew Hill Clark's *Acadia* in 1968 much detailed information on the geographical and economic aspects of life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Acadia became available.¹ We know that the Acadians were mainly farmers, the rich marshland producing fine crops of wheat, rye and peas. They also kept sufficient livestock to be able to export animals, chiefly to New England and Cape Breton.² As the Acadians were free from excessive taxes and did not suffer from a shortage of fertile farmland, they were in general better off than their counterparts in contemporary France.³

Acadian agriculture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was associated with a relatively large-scale migration of the population along the tidal marshes of the Bay of Fundy. Intimately connected with this was the rapid natural increase of the population of Acadia during the period from

1 Andrew Hill Clark, *Acadia: The Geography of Early Nova Scotia to 1760* (Madison, 1968).

2 The *intendant*, Jacques de Meulles, complained in 1685 that most of the trade of the Acadians was done with two Boston merchants. See Lucien Brault, ed., "Relation du Voyage de l'Intendant Jacques de Meulles fait en Acadie entre le 11 Octobre 1685 et le 6 Juillet 1686," *Revue de l'Amérique Française*, II (1948-49), pp. 432-438. For a list of Acadian goods entering Louisbourg in 1740, see Clark, *Acadia*, p. 259.

3 Contemporary visitors remarked on the fertility of the soil and the Acadians' freedom from excessive taxes. See, for example, Villebon's description, quoted in J. C. Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Saint John, 1934), p. 128, and Sieur de Dièreville, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France*, ed. by J. C. Webster (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1933), pp. 70-74. The better living conditions of the Acadian peasants are evident in a lack of famines and a lower death rate. See below, pp. 8-9.

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1650 to 1750. Yet, despite the fact that this increase has long been recognized, no historian has explored the demography of Acadia before the Dispersion. This article will attempt to shed some light on the demography of early Acadia by an examination of some aspects of the population of Port Royal between 1650 and 1755. It is based largely on the parish register of St. Jean Baptiste of Port Royal,⁴ early Acadian census data,⁵ and a recent genealogical history of the Acadians by Bona Arsenault.⁶ The scope of the demographic inquiry was limited by the nature of the information provided in these main sources. Since the increase of the population was regarded as of much greater importance, the registration of deaths was frequently neglected by the parish priests and it was impossible to determine with any accuracy the rate of population increase, mortality or annual fluctuations in the numbers of deaths from the parish register.⁷ However, the sources provide adequate information for a study of population mobility, fertility and seasonal fluctuations in births, deaths and marriages.

Between 1650 and 1750 Port Royal grew from a tiny handful of houses around the fort to a settlement of about 2000 inhabitants.⁸ As the capital and the seat of the French garrison it received most new immigrants.⁹ The parish register of St. Jean Baptiste shows that in almost every second marriage in Port Royal between 1702 and 1714 one of the partners, usually the husband, had been born outside the settlement. Although some of these came from neighbouring Acadian villages, and some from Canada or Cape Breton, the majority immigrated from France.¹⁰ Despite this immigration and the

4 The original parish register [hereafter cited as P. R. register] is in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, and covers the period 1702-1755. It provides the names and dates of births, marriages and deaths of inhabitants of the parish. It also frequently mentions witnesses or godparents of these events, and sometimes birthplace, age at marriage, age at death, literacy and family relationship of couples.

5 Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa [hereafter cited as PAC], MG 1, 22, G. vol. 466, pt.1. Most of these censuses were taken by the French authorities. They usually provide the names of the heads of households and the number of their dependents. Less frequently they give the names and ages of the dependents and the land and livestock each family owned.

6 *Histoire et Généalogie des Acadiens* (2 vols., Québec, 1965).

7 I am working on a detailed genealogy of the Port Royal population which should shed further light on the question of mortality.

8 PAC, MG 1, 22 G. vol. 466, pt. 1. Approx. figures for the total population of Port Royal:1670: 350; 1685: 400; 1700: 500; 1730: 900; 1740: 1400; 1755: 2000.

9 Before French immigration ended with the British conquest of 1710, there was a steady influx of immigrants from the mother country, as one can see from new family names appearing in the censuses taken during the French period. See also Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I, pp. 45-51, and G. Massignon, *Les Parlers Français d'Acadie: Enquête Linguistique* (Paris, 1962).

10 As in Canada, the French government encouraged soldiers in Acadia to settle in the colony. See, for example, the letter of Grandfontaine, accompanying the census of 1671, quoted in Rameau de Saint Père, *Une Colonie Féodale en Amérique: l'Acadie 1604-1881* (Paris, 1889), I, Appendix, pp. 316-17.

rapid natural increase of the population, Port Royal grew only slightly between 1680 and the turn of the century.¹¹ This was undoubtedly because of the migration of considerable numbers of persons from Port Royal to other Acadian settlements along the shore of the Bay of Fundy; during the 1680's and 1690's the population of Minas and Beaubassin — the two largest settlements founded by descendants of Port Royal settlers — almost quadrupled and the total population of Acadia doubled.¹² By 1700, the population of Minas, a settlement founded in the 1680's, outnumbered that of Port Royal. Port Royal's population grew more rapidly after 1700 but its rate of increase remained below that of most other Acadian settlements.

Throughout the century and a half from the foundation of Port Royal up to the Dispersion there was a steady migration of persons from the settlement. Some of these were newly arrived immigrants, but the majority were Acadians, born and bred in the settlement. This internal migration was not restricted to young unmarried males; whole families sometimes moved to other Acadian settlements. Of 822 men, who lived in Port Royal from its foundation up to 1750, 253 left the parish, mostly for other Acadian settlements. Migration usually occurred between the ages of 24 and 27 years. Looked at in more detail, these figures suggest that migration was not constant throughout the period from 1650 to 1750. Only 21 per cent of the earliest settlers — those born before 1650 — left Port Royal. This percentage doubled for the men born between 1650 and 1659 and reached a peak for men born during the 1660's of whom more than half left Port Royal in their twenties. The peak of migration in the 1680's and 1690's, which involved mainly the 1650-1680 generation, coincided with the foundation of Minas and Beaubassin. After this exodus life in Port Royal became more settled, and migration dwindled to a mere 15 per cent for the 1720-25 generation.¹³

This migration of population from Port Royal cannot have been caused by lack of land, for in the 1680's and 1690's there was still plenty of unoccupied marshland along the Dauphin River. It is likely that many Acadians

11 Census figures are conflicting and some even show a slight decrease of Port Royal's population during these years.

12 See the description of Acadia in 1686 by the Sieur Beaugard and the memoir of 24 September 1688 by Governor Meneval, quoted in Harold A. Innis, ed., *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History, 1497-1783* (Toronto, 1929), pp. 62-65. Between 1685 and 1700 the total population of Acadia increased from about 700 to about 1400, the population of Port Royal from about 400 to about 500, and that of Minas and the other main settlements from about 200 to about 700. PAC, MG 1, 22, G. Vol. 466, pt. 1 and Clark, *Acadia*, chs. 5 and 6.

13 The figures for migration from Port Royal are based mainly on data provided by Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I, pt. 2. The figure 822 includes all males who were born before 1726; those born after that date would not have reached the average age for migration before the Dispersion. The percentages of men who left Port Royal are: men born before 1650:21%; 1650-59:40%; 1660-69:54%; 1670-79:40%; 1680-89:27%; 1690-99:33%; 1700-1709:20%; 1710-19:28%; 1720-25:15%.

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preferred to live out of reach of the authorities, who, although fairly innocuous, attempted to prevent illicit trading with New England. This trade was necessary to the Acadians in order to obtain those goods which they could not produce themselves or import from France; although the Acadians were self sufficient in food supplies, clothing and most agricultural tools, they had to import ironware, salt and luxury articles.¹⁴ They obtained many of their imports from New England, mainly because French goods were not only more expensive but also arrived at infrequent intervals and in insufficient quantities.¹⁵ Another factor in persuading people to leave Port Royal may have been the frequent raids on the capital by pirates or British troops before 1710. Between 1690 and 1710 Port Royal was attacked and partly destroyed by British troops or pirates, twice in 1690, once in 1692 and 1704, and twice in 1707, while Minas suffered only one attack (1704) and Chignecto two (1696, 1704) during this period.¹⁶

There was no consistent pattern of migration within the family but probably the most enterprising sons left Port Royal for other settlements. In Port Royal, a farm usually remained within the same family from generation to generation, and frequently several brothers owned it. They would build their houses close to one another and this group of houses would often bear the name of the family, as, for example, Godets village or Commeaux village. If an aging farmer's land was too small to be split up amongst all his offspring, he might give the whole farm to one son in return for a lifelong pension for himself and his wife, and the remaining sons would have to look for land elsewhere. More frequently, a deceased's land was divided equally among all the sons, in which case — especially in large families — some would sell their shares to their brothers and settle elsewhere.¹⁷ Family considerations do not appear to have played a major part in influencing the choice of a migrant's new residence, and members of the same family settled in different

14 See the letter by Villebon in 1699, quoted in Beamish Murdoch, *A History of Nova Scotia or Acadia* (Halifax, 1865), I, p. 245 and the letter by the Sieur des Goutins of 23 December 1707, quoted in Rameau, *Colonie Féodale*, I, Appendix, p. 341.

15 See Talon to Colbert, 11 November 1671, quoted in *ibid.*, I, Appendix, p. 317 and a memoir of 1686 quoted in Innis, *Select Documents*, pp. 55-56.

16 See Quebec Legislature, *Collection de Manuscrits Contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et Autres Documents Historiques Relatifs à la Nouvelle-France* (Quebec, 1884), II, pp. 416-425, 464-67, 477-81, 509.

17 Schedule of Seigniorial rents payable yearly by the inhabitants of Annapolis Royal, 1734, CO 217/7. Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO), and maps of Port Royal of 1710 and 1733, published in William Inglis Morse, ed., *Acadiensis Nova (1598-1779): New and Unpublished Documents and other Data Relating to Acadia* (London, 1935), II, pp. 127-156, Map F. and Captain John Knox, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, ed. by Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1914), I, Appendix. On similar inheritance customs in New France see Robert-Lionel Séguin, *La Civilisation Traditionnelle de l'Habitant au 17^e et 18^e Siècles* (Montreal, 1967), pt. 1, ch. 4.

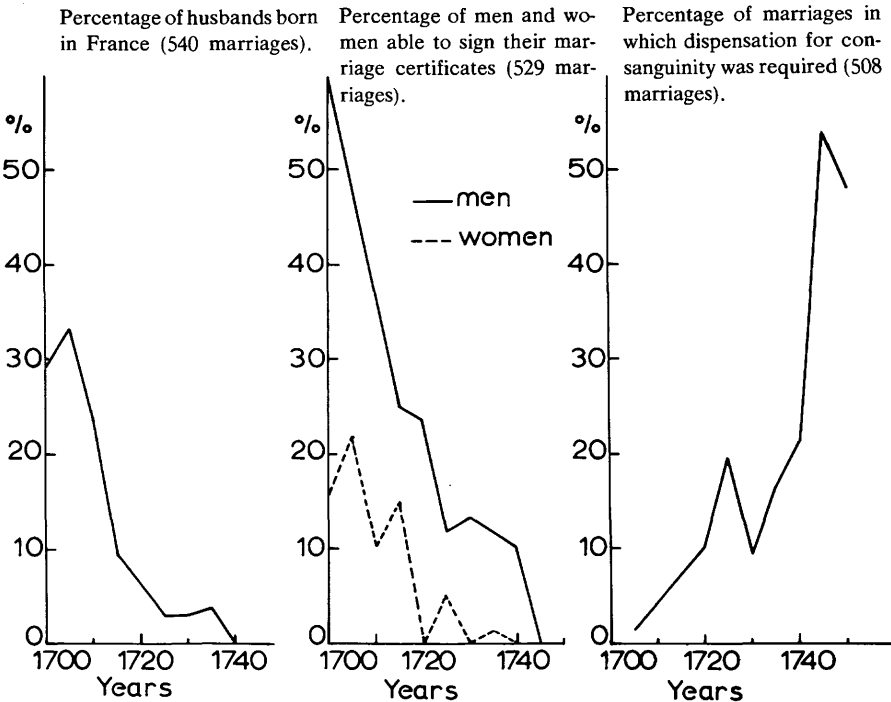
villages along the Bay of Fundy.¹⁸

The high degree of mobility of the population of Port Royal seems to have declined gradually around the turn of the century. This decrease was accelerated by the English conquest of 1710, which meant a total cessation of French immigration. The marriage certificates of the parish register show that in 32 per cent of all marriages in Port Royal between 1705 and 1709 the husband came from France; this percentage fell to 9 in 1715-19, and to 2 in 1725-29.¹⁹ Moreover, although a small amount of migration to other Acadian settlements continued after the British conquest, two other factors indicate that the population of Port Royal was becoming increasingly parochial after 1710. The number of couples marrying who needed dispensation for consanguinity increased, and there was a marked rise in illiteracy between 1710 and the Dispersion.²⁰

18 Conclusion based on data derived from Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I and II. A similar pattern of migration existed in parts of New England. See John Demos, "Notes on Life in Plymouth Colony," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XXII (1965), pp. 264-86.

19 Marriage to men of non-French origin was extremely rare. The parish register mentions only two cases, one involving a Portugese and the other an Irishman.

20 Graph I: *Immigration from France, illiteracy and inbreeding in Port Royal, 1702-1750.*



Source: P.R. register.

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Dispensation for consanguinity was relatively rare until 1720 after which it increased steadily, reaching a peak in the two decades before 1755, when nearly half the marriages in Port Royal were between relatives. These years also saw the only cases of very close relationships, up to second degree consanguinity. This development shows a growing lack of opportunity to marry anyone who was not a second or third cousin, and suggests that the population increase in Port Royal during these years was due almost entirely to natural increase within the parish.

Parallel with an increase in inbreeding and the end of French immigration into Port Royal there was a marked rise in the rate of illiteracy. Literacy was much higher among new immigrants than among their Acadian descendants at Port Royal. The percentage of men and women able to sign their marriage certificates declined sharply during the first half of the eighteenth century. After 1745 not one man or woman was able to write his or her name on the marriage certificate. Men and women in religious orders had been sent to Acadia to instruct the children of the settlers until 1710, and visitors remarked on the success of these efforts. After the British conquest, the Acadians were allowed religious freedom and their priests were permitted to remain but this generosity did not extend to the religious orders. As parish priests did not undertake the regular instruction of the children, education was discontinued. The sharp rise of illiteracy illustrates the results of this neglect. Literacy in contemporary France was not high, particularly in rural areas, but the illiterate rural population was leavened by a well-educated middle class.²¹ In Acadia after 1710 the Roman Catholic priests were almost the only literate French-speakers and as there was no chance for an Acadian to attain even a minor position in the British government or army without changing his religion, there was little inducement to acquire an education.

On the other hand, English rule after 1710 had no noticeable effects on the Acadians' ability to increase and to spread "themselves over the face of the province . . . like Noah's progeny," as Governor Phillips remarked in 1730.²² The natural increase of the Acadian population was very rapid under both French and English rule. In contrast to contemporary France, where epidemics and harvest failures periodically decimated the population,²³ Acadia was virtually free from "positive checks" to the natural increase of the population. Sometimes, especially when an unusually high tide broke the dykes, food became scarce, but famine never reached serious proportions. Land was abundant and although under British rule in theory no land could be granted to British or French settlers until the province had been surveyed

21 Yves Blayo and Louis Henry, "Données Démographiques sur la Bretagne et l'Anjou de 1740 à 1829," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1967), pp. 127-130.

22 Phillips to Board of Trade, 2 September 1730, PRO, CO 217/5, pt. 2.

23 See, for example, Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730* (Paris, 1960), Cartes et Graphiques, pp. 54-61.

for timber, young Acadians disregarded this law and settled in fertile areas without permission from the Governor.²⁴ Pestilence was virtually unknown, although there were small epidemics in 1709 and 1751. The outbreak of 1709 affected mainly the British prisoners, French privateers and the garrison. It reached a peak in September and claimed about 50 lives. The epidemic of 1751 reached a peak in May, and claimed at least 25 lives among the inhabitants.²⁵ The absence of famines and epidemics was reflected in the lack of sharp fluctuations in the total annual numbers of births, deaths and marriages. During the half century from 1705 to 1755. the total annual number of deaths never outnumbered that of births, so that the population of Port Royal must have been increasing without any serious setbacks up to the Dispersion.²⁶

The Acadians' attitude towards marriage also tended to promote a rapid increase of the population. Celibacy was not regarded as a desirable fate in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Port Royal and virtually all young men and women married.²⁷ The Sieur de Dièreville, a surgeon from France who visited Port Royal at the turn of the century, wrote:

A Father and a Mother do not keep
A nubile daughter long at home, although
She causes them no care, and to their will
Submits in registering her vows. If when
Some tender Suitor comes, to urge his love
His Sweetheart favours him, wedlock
Unites them both and they are free
To populate the World; which is,
Moreover, that which they do best,
And, as their tenderness is never shared,
Between the first transports of ardent Youth
And old age, many a Child's begot.²⁸

Dièreville, accustomed to the rigid class differences of his native country, was astonished that in Port Royal the penchant for matrimony prevailed over class differences when no husband or wife of equal rank could be found.²⁹ Since contraception was not practised in France until the second half of the

24 See Winthrop Pickard Bell, *The "Foreign Protestants" and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: The History of a Piece of Arrested British Colonial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto, 1961), pp. 44-45, 64-83, 328-35.

25 P. R. register.

26 *Ibid.* Even allowing for omissions in the registration of deaths.

27 Based on the evidence for a genealogical history of Port Royal on which I am presently working and on Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I, pt. 2.

28 Dièreville, *Relation of Voyage*, p. 92.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

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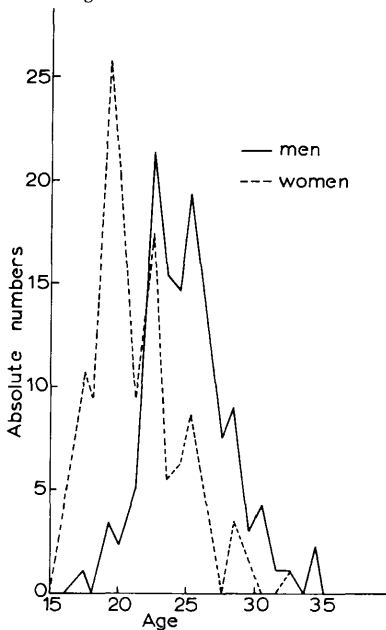
eighteenth century, its absence from Port Royal may be assumed. The average size of Port Royal families and the interval between childbirths are also evidence against the practice of contraception in the period under consideration. The natural increase of the settlement's population depended to a large extent on the age of women at marriage and the percentage of complete families; that is, families which were not disrupted by the death of husband or wife before the onset of the menopause. In complete families women marrying before age 20 had on the average 10.5 children, those marrying between 20 and 24 had 9 children and those marrying between 25 and 29 had 7.5 children. Natural increase also depended on infant mortality and the death rate for children. Neither of these can be determined with any certainty for Port Royal but there are indications that both were lower than in contemporary France where on the average half the children died before

30 Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis*, pp. 39-41.

31 Of 2113 children born between 1610 and 1725 in Port Royal 71 per cent lived at least until their twentieth birthday. Of the remaining 29 per cent not all would have died as in many cases no death is recorded and parents may have returned to France in 1710 or left for other Acadian settlements. P. R. register.

32 The average and modal ages at first marriage for women in contemporary northern France were 25 and 23 respectively. See Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis*, graph 1 and p. 32, and Blayo and Henry, "*Données Démographiques sur la Bretagne et l'Anjou de 1740 à 1829*," pp. 118-119.

33 Graph II: *Age at first marriage, 1725-1739.*



The age of a person at marriage appears regularly in the parish register only between 1725 and 1739, i.e. for 133 marriages. See P.R. register.

age twenty.³⁰ In Port Royal about three quarters of the children born reached adulthood.³¹ These lower death rates for infants and children in Port Royal would also explain the rapid increase of the settlement's population which could not be explained by the higher birth rate alone.

As Dièreville observed in 1699, Acadian parents encouraged early marriages; the brides were on the average three to four years younger than in contemporary France.³² In Port Royal, men were on the average 26 years old and women 21 at first marriage. The modal age was 24 for men and 20 for women.³³ This preference for early marriage at Port Royal may have been connected with the priest's vigilance over the behaviour of his charges. More likely, however, it was related mainly to economic factors, particularly the abundance of fertile marshland, which enabled young men to become independent of their parents at a relatively early age.

Women not only married young but bore children regularly up to 40 years of age and over. Dièreville observed that "in almost every family five or six Children are to be found, & often many more; the swarming of Brats is a sight to behold; although no Pilgrimages are made here, as elsewhere, in order to obtain them, they follow one another closely, & appear to be almost all of the same age."³⁴ His estimate was very close to the truth. Family reconstruction, based on the parish register of St. Jean Baptiste, shows that the 295 couples who married in Port Royal between 1702 and 1730 had on the average close to seven children.³⁵ Although many families had up to ten children, very few had more than fourteen, or on the average a child every two years during the time when the woman was capable of conception. About eight per cent of the couples appear to have had no children; not all of these, however, were infertile as some couples would have left Port Royal soon after their marriage.³⁶

34 Dièreville, *Relation of Voyage*, p. 93.

35 Family reconstruction, or the reconstruction of demographic family history using the marriage, birth and death certificates of parish registers, is based here on the method introduced by Michel Fleury and Louis Henry in their *Nouveau Manuel de Dépouillement et d'Exploitation de l'Etat Civil Ancien* (Paris, 1965). Port Royal couples had 6.75 children on the average. This figure is higher than in contemporary Canada where Jacques Henripin, *La Population Canadienne au Début du XVIII^e Siècle. Nuptialité, Fécondité, Mortalité Infantile* (Paris, 1954), p. 50, calculates 5.65 as the average number of children per family. Henripin based his study on Tanguay's "genealogical dictionary" of the French Canadians. My experience with Arsenault's *Généalogie* leads me to believe that genealogical accounts may not record all childbirths (particularly females) in a community, which suggests that the Canadian birth rate was in reality higher than Henripin reckoned.

36 Table I: *Number of children per family in Port Royal, 1703-1755.*

Number of children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Number of families	23	16	8	28	19	20	15	23	31	29	31	19	18	7	6	1	—	1

Source: P. R. Register.

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The Port Royal register provides the ages of women at marriage in 111 cases between 1702 and 1730. Unfortunately in 22 of these cases we lack the other data necessary to determine whether the woman's marriage was complete. Of the remaining cases 71 marriages were complete and 18 incomplete. On the average a complete family had 9.5 children, an incomplete family 5.5 children.³⁷ Since, on the average, a complete family had 4 children more than an incomplete family, the percentage of complete families during the period from 1655 to 1755 had important implications for the natural increase of the population. Of the 89 families between 1702 and 1730 on which sufficient data exist to determine whether or not they were complete, 18 or about 20 per cent were incomplete. This percentage is substantiated by marriage certificates between 1655 and 1755 which reveal that every tenth man married a second time. Since roughly equal numbers of women remarried, this suggests that on the average every fifth marriage was incomplete.

After an average widowhood of 3.5 to 4.5 years for men and 3 to 4 years for women most widowers and widows remarried.³⁸ It is impossible to calculate the exact percentage who remarried, but the figure must have been fairly high since second marriages even among older people were regarded as quite usual. Of the cases in which age and marital status at death are mentioned in the parish register, not one woman under 45 was a widow, and no man under 55 a widower.³⁹ In 833 marriages in Port Royal between 1650 and 1755 86 men married for a second time; thus every tenth man would have lost his first wife and married again.⁴⁰ The figures for women are less reliable, but it seems that second marriages were less frequent among them.⁴¹ Most bachelors preferred to marry a spinster, while widowers chose with

37 An incomplete family is one where one of the partners died before the woman reached 45. In families where the data were insufficient to determine completeness, the average number of children was less than six. While in complete families a couple on the average lived together for 22 years up to the birth of their last child, the average for incomplete families was only 12. See P. R. register.

38 As the date of death is not always known, the time which elapsed between the birth of the last child by the previous wife or husband and the date of the second marriage has also been used as a rough guide to the length of time between marriages. This averages 5 years for both men and women. Where dates are certain, men remarried after an average interval of 3.5 years, women after 3 years. P. R. register and Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I, pt. 2.

39 The figures are more reliable for women than for men, because the death certificates mention marital status of women in about 80 per cent of the cases, while they frequently omit to mention the marital status of men.

40 Based on data derived from Arsenault, *Généalogie*, I, pt. 2. The figure of 833 includes all cases of men, born up to and including 1725, who married in Port Royal.

41 Life expectancy was generally lower for women while they could bear children than for men, but higher afterwards. Thus, many women who lost their husbands were past the age where remarriage was common.

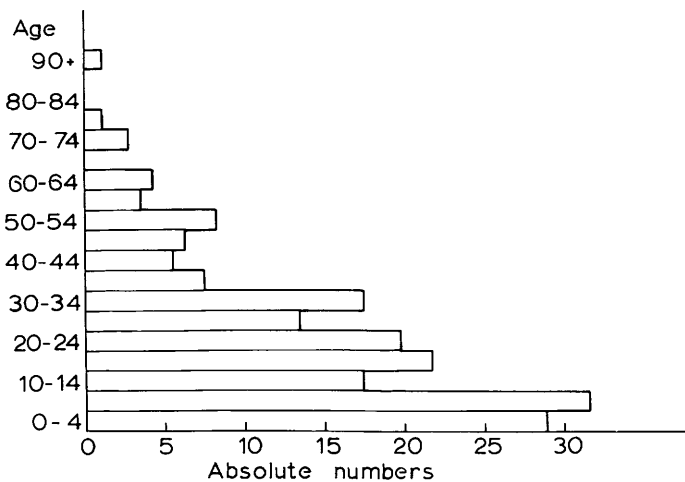
equal frequency to marry a spinster or a widow as their second wife. The pattern for spinsters and widows was similar. The choice seems to have depended less on the marital status of the man or woman, than on the age. Marriages between men and women of greatly different ages were uncommon, as were marriages between a younger man and a woman a few years older.⁴² In a society where everybody knew everybody else, such as that of Port Royal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, social pressure would have prevented any variations from this pattern.

As would be expected in a society where early marriages and numerous families were the rule, the population of Port Royal contained a high percentage of very young persons.⁴³ In 1671 more than half the male population was under twenty years of age and only a small percentage over 35.⁴⁴ Since most immigrants were adults, the virtual end of immigration in 1710 must have resulted in an even higher percentage of young persons in Port Royal in the eighteenth century. An analysis of the 71 complete families between 1702 and 1730 suggests that most of the children in Port Royal were born when their mothers were between the ages of 25 and 35 years. Of the total of 696

42 Between 1702 and 1755 there were only two marriages in which the age difference between the partners was more than 10 years and only three cases where the woman was older than the man. P. R. register.

43 The parish register records the births of 997 boys and 928 girls between 1702 and 1735. This, as well as the fact that 1.7 per cent of all recorded births were of twins indicates that the parish priests were not negligent in the registration of births. Henripin, *La Population Canadienne au Début du XVIII^e Siècle*, p. 55 figured the same percentage of twin births for Canada.

44 Graph III: *Age distribution of male population at Port Royal in 1671.*



See the census of 1671 by Grandfontaine, published in Rameau, *Colonie Féodale*, I, Appendix, pp. 124-26.

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children borne by these 71 women, only 50 births occurred before age 20 or after age 44.⁴⁵ The age specific fertility, or the average number of children born to women in the same age-group, shows a sharp decrease with a vancing age.⁴⁶ Though fertility declined with age, the effects of this were partly offset by a close relationship between fertility and the duration of marriage. Women marrying later tended to have their first child more quickly and to continue bearing children for a longer period than those marrying earlier.⁴⁷ Women marrying before age 25 would usually bear their last child before they reached age 45, while women marrying later would frequently bear children up to 50 years of age. As it is unlikely that this is connected with any kind of family planning, it suggests that the women marrying earlier aged more quickly through frequent child-bearing, and consequently became either physically or psychologically unable to conceive at as high an age as women marrying later.⁴⁸

The average interval between marriage and the birth of the first child was close to 15 months in Port Royal. The influence of the Catholic Church on the life of the Acadians is reflected in the virtual absence of pre-marital conceptions. Almost all the children of the 71 complete families between 1702 and 1730 were born 9 months or more after marriage. There was one single exception of 8 months. Only 0.6 per cent of all births between 1702 and 1755 were illegitimate according to the parish register, even if one includes all cases where it was not expressly stated that the child was illegiti-

45 26 of these women married between the ages of 16 and 19, 34 between the ages of 20 and 24, and 11 between age 25 and 29. All were married before 30 years of age.

46 Table II: *Age-specific fertility of women in Port Royal, 1702-1755.*

Age of women	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Absolute number of births	25	113	158	150	134	92	24
Women-years	41	220	325	355	355	350	335
Number of births per 1000 women	609	513	486	423	377	263	71

Source: P. R. Register. (Women-years is the total number of years during which the women in each age group could bear children.)

47 Table III: *Age-specific fertility of women in Port Royal according to their age at marriage, 1702-55.* (Number of births per thousand women.)

Age at marriage	Age of women at childbirth						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
15-19	609	446	454	415	408	223	46
20-24	-	611	464	429	370	270	53
25-29	-	-	800	418	327	309	163

Source: P. R. Register

48 A comparison with contemporary France shows that fertility at Port Royal was comparable to the highest rates of fertility found in a few areas in France. See Marcel Lachiver, "La Population de Meulan (Yvelines) du XVII^e au XIX^e Siècles," (Etude de démographie historique, thèse de 3^e cycle, Nanterre, 1968), discussed by J. Dupaquier in *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1968), pp. 195-203.

mate, but where the child bore the family name of the mother and no father was mentioned. Most of the illegitimate births occurred in the period shortly before 1710, and were probably related to the presence of the French garrison. The interval between subsequent births increased slowly, from 22 months between the first and second child to intervals varying between 27 and 30 months for fourth and later children.⁴⁹ In large families, children were usually born at average intervals of about two years, while less fertile couples had their children at intervals of three years or longer and frequently had their last child at an earlier age than couples of higher fertility. The death of an infant generally shortened the interval between consecutive births. While the average interval between births was 28.11 months, women whose infant died — usually before the age of three months — bore their next child after an average interval of only 23.2 months. This suggests that breast feeding must have been an important factor in delaying conception.

The strong influence of the Church is also evident in the virtual absence of marriages during the times of Lent and Advent. The other major influences affecting seasonable fluctuations in marriages, conceptions and deaths in Port Royal between 1702 and 1755 were the seasonal pattern of the economy and variations in the climate.⁵⁰ During April and May when the crops were planted, and again during September and October when the harvest was brought in, there were few marriages. Autumn and winter, from October to February with the exception of Advent, were the most popular seasons for marriages. During these months cold weather and short days confined people to their houses and left them more time for social activity in general.⁵¹

The pattern of first conceptions closely followed that of marriages.⁵² Most first conceptions, as most marriages, occurred during the winter months, but conceptions did not fall off during Advent. There were very few first conceptions during the months of June, August and September. The season-

49 Table IV: *Interval between births in Port Royal, 1702-55* (in months).

Interval between marriage and first child and consecutive children	age of women at marriage			number of cases	
	16-19	20-24	25-29	all	
1st	15.65	15.23	11.73	14.74	62
2nd	22.30	23.15	22.55	22.74	58
3rd	25.00	25.07	30.00	25.81	58
4th	25.71	28.46	36.25	28.55	55
5th	27.65	28.10	28.11	27.93	61
6th	27.52	28.58	29.33	28.33	61
7th	28.60	29.97	39.80	30.37	54
8th	30.89	30.67	-	30.76	42
9th	29.80	28.00	-	28.79	34
10th	30.07	30.10	-	30.08	24

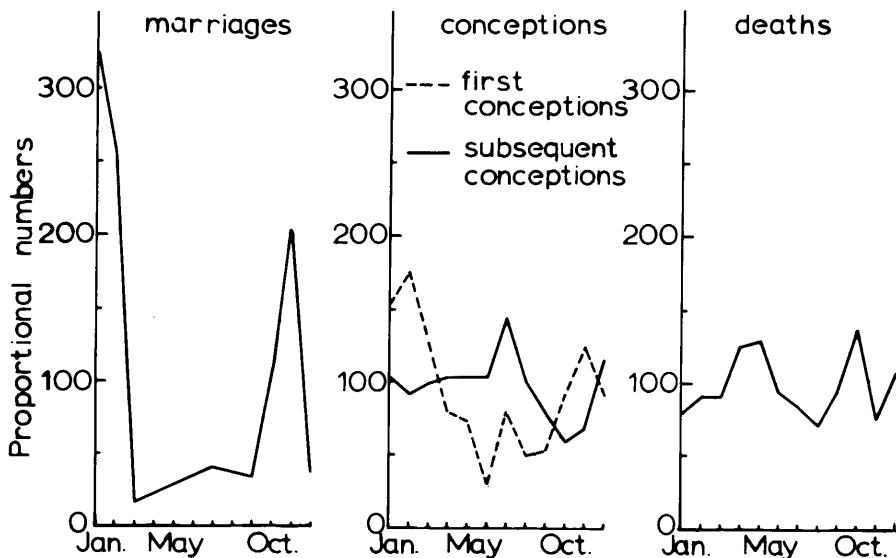
Source: P. R. Register

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able movements in second and subsequent conceptions showed less pronounced fluctuations than those in first conceptions. In contrast to marriages and first conceptions, most second and later conceptions occurred during the summer months, with a peak in July. Autumn and winter, when first conceptions were most frequent, saw only a small percentage of later conceptions. It is difficult to say exactly why this pattern existed — it was common not only in Canada, but also in contemporary France.⁵³

The pattern of seasonable movements in deaths should be interpreted with caution as figures for the mortality of infants and children are frequently omitted from the parish register and the seasonable movement of mortality

50 Graph IV: *Seasonable fluctuations in marriages, conceptions and deaths in Port Royal, 1702-1755* (proportional numbers).



Source: P. R. register.

51 Contemporaries remarked that the Acadians worked hard during seed time and harvest time, and when necessary on the dykes, but that they had nearly half the year "to spend in Entertainments and Frolicking, of which they were very fond. . . . And altho' they were quite illiterate seldom any of them remained long silent in Company never seeming to be at a loss for a Subject of Discourse." Account of Acadians and Indian Tribes of Nova Scotia drawn up for Dr. Brown by an old settler in Nova Scotia, Collection of Dr. A. Brown relating to Nova Scotia, British Museum, Add. MS. 19071, pp. 260-63.

52 This is also an indication of the accuracy of the parish register of Port Royal.

53 The French Canadian demographer Henripin related the rising and falling curve of conceptions to seasonal temperature changes. It is likely that the same relationship obtained in Port Royal. See Henripin, *La Population Canadienne au Début du XVIII^e Siècle*, pp. 122-23 and Blayo and Henry, "Données Démographiques sur la Bretagne et l'Anjou de 1740 à 1829," pp. 106-107.

for the entire population is heavily weighted by adult mortality.⁵⁴ Spring and autumn, when temperature changes were most severe, were the seasons when colds and epidemics most easily spread. These are also the months of heaviest adult mortality. Infant mortality, if it could be shown, would probably be highest in summer and winter, due to extreme cold in the winter and the occupation of women in the fields during the summer months.⁵⁵

This study of fertility, mobility and seasonal fluctuations in births, deaths, and marriages at Port Royal suggests that the demographic pattern of life in Port Royal was similar to that of the inhabitants of contemporary French Canada. While seasonal fluctuations in the patterns of births, deaths and marriages were similar to those observed in contemporary societies in France and North America, other Acadian demographic developments differed from those of most areas in contemporary France in several important respects. In Port Royal the average age at marriage was lower and families were larger than in France. Whereas in France land was relatively scarce and taxes high, in Acadia the abundance of fertile marshland and low taxation encouraged early marriage and large families. There is also strong evidence to suggest that the death rates for infants and children in Port Royal were considerably lower than death rates for the corresponding groups in contemporary France. In the virtual absence of "positive checks" to the growth of the population, the combination of these natural factors resulted in an extremely rapid increase in the Port Royal population between 1650 and 1750. This increase would have been even higher had not considerable numbers of persons migrated from Port Royal to other Acadian settlements.

Despite the conquest of 1710 the Acadians retained their cultural unity, language and religion. This was perhaps not surprising since they greatly outnumbered the British in Acadia between 1710 and 1755. But the cessation of French immigration and the decline in the mobility of the population meant that the Acadians at Port Royal became increasingly parochial and that inbreeding reached serious proportions in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Illiteracy also rose sharply with the expulsion of the religious orders and the absence of any inducement to acquire an education. The lack of opportunities to gain positions in the administration of the colony increased the Acadians' tendency to concentrate virtually all their energies within the twin ambits of the Church and economy. Their estrangement from political life and their rapid increase in numbers sealed the Acadians' fate, for British authorities in Nova Scotia grew increasingly alarmed over their position in the midst of a growing enemy population during a time of war against France.

54 Of the total of 414 recorded deaths only 100 concern infants and children.

55 At least this was the case in contemporary France. See, for example, Paul Galliano, "La Mortalité Infantile dans le Banlieu Sud de Paris à la Fin du XVIII^e Siècle (1774-1794)," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1966), pp. 139-177.