

Female servants in the early modern community: a
study of church court depositions from the dioceses of
Exeter and Gloucester, c.1550-1650

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Abstract

This thesis explores the demographic, geographical, economic and social experiences of service for early modern women. Considering service as a holistic experience, it challenges several orthodoxies in existing literature on service, including the typical profile of the female servant, the organisation and structure of service and the experiences of female servants in the early modern community. Using depositional evidence from the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, it calls for a reinterpretation of service, reintegrating female servants into community economies and social networks.

The first section of this thesis provides an outline of the methodology used and, importantly, analyses patterns of litigation and the demographic, social and economic profiles of witnesses and litigants who appeared in the church courts. The second section focuses on demographic and economic patterns of female service, demonstrating the significance of other experiences outside the 'life-cycle' model. It considers the economic conditions in which women entered service and the social backgrounds from which they came. The third section focuses on service as a form of work, unpicking what is meant by 'service', and considering how female servants found employment, how much they were paid and how long they remained with particular employers. The section challenges the traditional gendered dichotomy between service in husbandry and domestic service by analysing the types of work that they undertook. The fourth section considers female service from the perspective of geography and space, examining the distances travelled by female servants to show the varied experiences of mobility in service. The section also explores mobility on a parish level, exploring the spaces and locations in which female servants were described within the depositions to highlight the social and economic presence of these women within community spaces, not just the household. The final section moves away from the historiographical focus upon the relationships that female servants built with members of the household, in which the vulnerability of these women is consistently stressed. This section demonstrates that this was but one experience of service, and instead considers relationships

forged outside the household with neighbours, friends and other community members.

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Abbreviations

DHC	Devon Heritage Centre
GRO	Gloucester Record Office
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
TNA	The National Archives

Note on Conventions

Original spelling, punctuation, capitalization and italics have been maintained throughout the thesis where direct quotation from contemporary manuscript is indicated. The use of j, u and v have been modernised and the archaic letter ‘thorn’ has been transcribed as ‘th’. Standard abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded. First names have been standardised; however, surnames retain their original spelling.

Units of currency and distance have been retained where possible. However, where calculations have been made, or measurements have been estimated from maps, metric units have been employed.

Referencing generally follows the guidelines of the Modern Humanities Research Association Style Guide, with abbreviations employed as above.

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Introduction

In 1568, Joanne Large of Rockbeare in Devon came before the Exeter church court and deposed what she knew of servant Isott Riches:

she sayeth that Isott told [her] that her M[ist]res[s] had betten her ones or twice but Isott told her not for what cause or upon what occasion sayng that she came not to her to be beatyn, nor to be her drudge and that she wolde not tarye long.¹

Detailing not only Isott's treatment but also her expectations of service, this interaction between Isott and her neighbour raises a host of questions concerning the experience of service for women in early modern England. Who were they? What type of work did they do? How long did they remain with particular employers and how flexible were the terms of their contracts of employment? How far did they travel from home? What connections did they establish with the wider communities in which they lived and served?

This thesis departs from the approaches of two significant strands of historiography in which early modern female servants are considered either vulnerable, marginalised members of communities or homogeneous and faceless statistics within models of demographic or social change. Considering service as a holistic experience and using a new methodological approach, this thesis challenges orthodox understandings of service in a number of ways. Explored from demographic, economic, geographical and social perspectives, it calls for a reevaluation of three key aspects of service: the typical profile of the female servant, the organisation and structure of service and the experiences of female servants in the early modern community.

Service was a typical and defining experience of youth in early modern England. Around 60 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds were servants, employed in rural and urban households across the geographical landscape of England.² Yet female servants are both underrepresented and misrepresented within the historiography. Scholarship of service has expanded over the last fifty years due to a growing

¹ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

² Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 3.

enthusiasm for 'history from below'. This has corresponded with an increasing awareness of available sources for studying largely illiterate groups. Yet despite this burgeoning interest in servants, early modern service has been a less well-trodden avenue of historical enquiry, with service between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries receiving more significant attention.³

A social history of service

A prevailing idea that vulnerability and even marginalisation characterised the experiences of female servants is deeply rooted in the historiography. In her 1929 account of the eighteenth-century 'servant problem', Dorothy Marshall outlined the tensions between master and servant:

If we could examine the intimate documents of any age, we should probably find it had its own particular domestic problems, for the relationship of master and servant is never easy to solve with entire satisfaction to both.⁴

Service is presented as a precarious institution in which the master-servant contract consolidated hierarchical relations between rich and poor. Contractually, servants and employers had responsibilities, obligations and duties to one another; yet the tensions depicted in Marshall's work are recounted from the employer's perspective, a common limitation of earlier scholarship. Jean Hecht's 1956 study, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* acknowledges the limitations of such source material as memoirs and letters. However, his assurances that his study is 'by no means a one-sided presentment' of service do little to reassure.⁵

³ For examples of scholarship on service between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, see Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956); Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: at Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Edward Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Social History*, 8 (1983), 201-210; Lucy Delap, *Knowing their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴ Dorothy Marshall, 'The Domestic Servants of the Eighteenth Century', *Economica*, 9 (1929), 15.

⁵ Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*, pp. xi, xii.

The rise of social history from the 1970s upturned new sources for studying groups like servants whose 'voices' were rarely recorded in early modern England.⁶ Records of criminal proceedings, such as court depositions proved fruitful in these studies. James Sharpe notes that quantification of the incidence of crime and punishment of specific social groups became the focus of many historians.⁷ His own work emphasises servant vulnerability in cases of domestic homicide: he shows that in the Essex Assizes between 1560 and 1709, only five out of forty-four people accused of killing servants were convicted.⁸

More recently, social and cultural historians have begun to unpick these sources to uncover public reception of criminal activity and the involvement of community in policing and punishing miscreants. Martin Ingram evaluates the practice of rituals like charivaris and skimmington rides, used to shame and humiliate scolds and other immoral members of communities.⁹ David Underdown's study of the frequency of skimmingtons between 1560 and 1640 suggests there was a 'crisis in gender relations', in which scolds and other disorderly women were increasingly punished, most notably with the cucking-stool.¹⁰ This model of crisis has been firmly rejected by historians, with Laura Gowing arguing that 'gender is always in contest: gender relations seem to be continually negotiated around certain familiar points'.¹¹

Female servants, recorded with relative frequency as defendants, plaintiffs and witnesses in court depositions, are regularly written into a gendered history of disorder and vulnerability. In particular, they are identified as responsible for a high proportion of infanticide charges. Peter Hoffer and N.E.H. Hull note that 74 per cent of defendants indicated that they were servants in seventeenth- and eighteenth-

⁶ Court records do not offer unaltered documentation of the 'voices' of female servants. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.1, the direct speech of a deponent is difficult to differentiate from scribal mediation.

⁷ James Sharpe, 'The History of Crime in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: A Review of the Field', *Social History*, 7 (1982), 187.

⁸ James Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 24 (1981), 39.

⁹ Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture" in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, 105 (1984), 79-113.

¹⁰ David Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in Anthony John Fletcher (ed.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 116-136.

¹¹ Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 28.

century infanticide cases heard in the Old Bailey.¹² Infanticide was a serious crime: the 1624 Infanticide Act imposed the death penalty on anybody found guilty of murdering an infant. The legislation was targeted specifically at unmarried mothers who were burdened with proving that the deceased infant was born alive.¹³ Keith Wrightson's study of the Essex Assizes between 1601 and 1665 shows that while not a common crime, many female servants were tried for infanticide.¹⁴ Gowing's study of infanticide cases recorded in the Northern Circuit Assizes between 1642 and 1680 explores the difficult terrain that unmarried women navigated upon discovery of pregnancy.¹⁵ She notes that 'most of the women accused of murdering their new-borns were servants, living-in, usually in agricultural communities'. These women, economically dependent and unmarried, could offer little monetary support to a child, leading some to commit infanticide.¹⁶

The infrequency with which infanticide cases were heard indicates that this was not a typical experience for women in service. Yet infanticide remains the focus of many historians studying this occupational group. Roger Richardson devotes several pages to discussion of this topic, noting that 'the overwhelming majority (85 per cent) of the sixty-five infanticide cases dealt with on the Northern Assize Circuit between 1720 and 1799 involved maidservants'.¹⁷ Unmarried women who faced social and economic stigmatisation upon the birth of an illegitimate child unsurprisingly comprised a significant majority of the accused. It is therefore equally unsurprising that many of these women were servants, revealing more about the nature of the crime than about service. Infanticide was certainly a tragic outcome of premarital pregnancy; however, it is necessary to place some distance between this relatively uncommon crime and typical experiences of service for women.

¹² Peter C. Hoffer and N. E. H. Hull, *Murdering Mothers: Infanticide in England and New England 1558-1803* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), p. 109.

¹³ Mark Jackson, *New-born Child Murder: Women, Illegitimacy and the Courts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ Between 1601 and 1665, only sixty cases of infanticide were brought before the Essex Assizes. See Keith Wrightson, 'Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England', *Local Population Studies*, 15 (1975), 11, 20-22.

¹⁵ Laura Gowing, 'Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 156 (1997), 87-115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁷ Roger Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 206.

Building upon this narrative of female servant vulnerability, source material has also led historians to focus on sexual relations between master and servant. Church courts in particular frequently cited female servants and their masters to answer charges of illicit sex, particularly when servants became pregnant. Bridget Hill devotes a chapter of her book on eighteenth-century service to the study of the 'sexual vulnerability and sexuality of female domestic servants'. She argues that the organisation of sleeping and working arrangements in the household made female servants particularly susceptible to sexual advances.¹⁸ Ingram shows that in the 1580s, up to 70 per cent of bastardy cases heard in the church courts involved female servants, who 'were in a vulnerable position and were sometimes seduced only after considerable harassment and even the use of force'.¹⁹ More recently, Tim Reinke-Williams notes that 'many masters believed they had the right to have sex with the women whose wages they paid, regardless of whether or not they consented'.²⁰

Despite the frequent appearance of female servants before the courts as defendants in illegitimacy or bastardy cases, illegitimacy rates were extremely low in early modern England. Marjorie McIntosh notes that 'since most young men and women were in service for a period of five to ten years after reaching physical maturity, it is indeed rather puzzling that the illegitimacy rate was so low, in Havering as elsewhere in England'. In Romford (part of Havering manor), only 1.8 per cent of births between 1562 and 1619 were described as illegitimate.²¹ Like infanticide, illegitimacy is overrepresented in the historiography of female service.

Court records offer a new approach to studying female servants. While mediated by legal processes, depositional accounts allow a glimpse into their lived experiences. Yet historians continue to use these records to study service from the perspective of master-servant relations. The female servant is rarely studied in isolation from the household. Bernard Capp's *When Gossips Meet* analyses diaries and conduct

¹⁸ Hill, *Servants*, pp. 44-63, (esp. pp. 44-45).

¹⁹ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 264, 266.

²⁰ Tim Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 77.

²¹ Marjorie K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 68-69.

literature alongside depositional material to demonstrate women's active participation in 'gossip' networks. He outlines the ways in which women sidestepped the 'rules' of their gender and created strategies to negotiate their own power and authority. These women did not necessarily seek to explicitly challenge gender order, but instead navigated patriarchal codes of authority, achieving a sense of autonomy and control in a society that was primarily dominated by men.²² Here, 'patriarchy' refers to social systems that generally place men in a position of power over women. Social order is maintained by female deference to male 'superiors'.

'Patriarchy' has another distinct definition taken from its literal meaning, 'rule of the father'. As 'the father', the male head of the household had dominance over his family in early modern England.²³ Within the historiography of female service, this definition primarily steers the direction of study. In his treatment of female servants, Capp shifts his focus to their relationships with their masters and other members of the household. Capp's aim is not to reinforce the stereotype of the vulnerable servant and he explores the various ways in which patriarchal relationships between master and servant could be experienced.²⁴ Nonetheless, the opportunities that female servants had to seek autonomy and power were both defined and limited by household patriarchy.²⁵ Tim Meldrum's study of London servants between 1660 and 1750 similarly reinvestigates the common trope of the 'vulnerable servant', questioning whether sexual vulnerability can act as a *leitmotif* for all servant experiences.²⁶ Reinke-Williams' *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* also endeavours to present a spectrum of relationships that were forged between master and servant.²⁷ Yet both studies remain resolutely centred on servant experiences within the household.

²² Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²³ For a detailed discussion of the father as 'king' of his household, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 1-2.

²⁴ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 127-129.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²⁶ Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London household* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 103.

²⁷ Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 74.

Court records can provide unique access to contemporary attitudes to society in general and female servants in particular. However, studying female servants within this legal framework can generate distorted conclusions. When viewed alongside representations of female servants in popular ballads, advice literature and other printed material, court records leave the impression that these women were frequently involved in crime, both as perpetrators and victims. In both cases, female servants are assumed to be peripheral, defenceless and weak. This characterisation is unhelpful in understanding the ways in which most women experienced service. What is missing from the picture are female servants as witnesses and confidantes, who were integral to the social and economic fabric of community life.

Demographic perspectives

A second strand of historiography of service emerged from the approach of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Founded in 1964 by Peter Laslett and Tony Wrigley, the key concern of this group is to understand historical demography and past household and social structures primarily through quantitative analysis. Laslett's pioneering work on seventeenth-century household and family structure in the English parishes of Clayworth and Cogenhoe demonstrates the potential of quantitative analysis in studying service. Using household surveys, his work shows that early modern family and household structure was essentially nuclear, but with the additional presence of servants.²⁸ He also traces the geographical mobility of early modern society, revealing that relatively few individuals remained in the same parish for their entire lives. He labels servants as the most mobile occupational group.²⁹

Importantly, Laslett laid out an agenda for further statistical investigation of servants. Ann Kussmaul's work on servants in husbandry is firmly rooted in the methodology of the Cambridge Group. Her study of early modern farm servants in England employs a range of sources including censuses, settlement examinations, parish listings and records of the Spalding Statute sessions. Kussmaul studies service

²⁸ Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-86.

through the lens of its eventual decline, concluding that by the mid-nineteenth century, service in husbandry had collapsed due to a number of factors, including the emergence of capitalist society and industry, larger farm size and population increase.³⁰ She argues that, 'service had been nurtured by an agrarian environment of small farms, labour shortage, and a high age at marriage; it had been enmeshed in a web of social and economic relations. When the environment changed, servants ceased being hired'.³¹

Kusssmaul's identification of change over time is typical of the approach of the Cambridge Group. Female service is often assumed to be homogeneous from the early modern period through to the nineteenth century. It was, however, different in a number of ways. Beyond Kusssmaul's economic explanations of the decline of service, other important changes took place. Household architecture developed over the course of the eighteenth century, moving servants into their own living quarters so that they were no longer co-resident with the family.³² Historians identify a trend of increasing privacy within the family from which the servant was excluded.³³ It is valuable to recognise trends and to understand the chronological context of service; however, it is also important to examine early modern service as an institution in its own right rather than as a precursor to change.

Kusssmaul's study provides both an economic and social history of agricultural service but, as Cissie Fairchilds observes, she 'is more successful with the former than the latter'.³⁴ Kusssmaul uses autobiographical and instructional commentaries to provide context to her statistical approach but achieves little success in providing any real sense of what service in husbandry was actually like. Her examination of the experiences of just one eighteenth-century servant named Joseph Mayett of Buckinghamshire is insufficient in outlining a social history of farm service spanning three centuries.³⁵ Her use of predominantly eighteenth-century evidence also

³⁰ Kusssmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 120-134.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³² Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 27.

³³ Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. 98.

³⁴ Cissie Fairchilds, 'Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England by Ann Kusssmaul: Review', *Journal of Social History*, 17 (1983), 163.

³⁵ Kusssmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 86.

means that her conclusions concerning length of employment and geographical mobility apply only to service in the later early modern period.

McIntosh's work on the royal manor of Havering in Essex between 1500 and 1620, however, demonstrates the potential of applying qualitative and statistical analysis to the study of community life. While numerical analysis of parish registers and lists of communicants forms the backbone of her book, McIntosh's examination of wills and depositions provides a glimpse of the individuals behind the statistics. Identifying service as an occupation in which young people acquired cash and goods to set up future households, McIntosh uses wills as evidence of the type of goods and amount of money Havering servants accumulated; she considers who, upon their deaths, they might bequeath these things to.³⁶ While statistical approaches are valuable in providing evidence of general patterns and trends, they fail to accommodate differences and variations in experiences. McIntosh's work highlights the importance of employing statistical and qualitative analysis in tandem.

Historiographical definitions of service

Inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the ways in which 'service' is defined are apparent across these two broad approaches to studying service. Demographically, female servants are often defined as 'life-cycle' servants, who characteristically left home in their mid-teenage years to work as live-in employees in the homes of other families, before marrying in their mid to late twenties.³⁷ Typically hired on an annual basis, servants were provided with yearly wages, accommodation and other perquisites in exchange for their labour. The conditions of their employment were different to those of labourers or specialist workers who did not board, were paid by the day or task and were not bound by an annual contract. This profile of the typical female servant persists across virtually all studies of service including those by Laslett, McIntosh, Meldrum, Hill and Edward Higgs.³⁸

³⁶ McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 55, 64-65.

³⁷ 'Life-cycle service' was first coined by Peter Laslett in 1977, used to describe a common pattern of service whereby young men and women entered service in order to gain the skills and money required to start their own households upon marriage. See Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*; Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*; Hill, *Servants*, pp. 4-5; Edward Higgs, 'Domestic Service and Household Production', in Angela John (ed.),

Implicit within studies of female service is an assumed homogeneity of their social status and background. Servants were employed by families across the social spectrum but studies of their own social backgrounds are conspicuously absent from the historiography. The ways in which labour was transferred across social categories has received little attention. Evidence of female service is skewed towards those who worked in households of higher status. Hecht's eighteenth-century study focuses primarily on male servants in aristocratic and gentry households.³⁹ Richardson seeks to present 'a socio-cultural history of servants'; however, his evidence of servants' lived experiences is primarily drawn from records of larger, elite households, supplemented by prescriptive evidence from religious tracts, advice literature and pamphlets.⁴⁰ Most recently, Jane Whittle's study of patterns of service uses household accounts of gentry families.⁴¹ Few studies of service in households lower down the social scale exist.

The terms 'domestic servant' or 'household servant' are used regularly in historical scholarship, yet historians rarely consider the implications of using this terminology. Higgs astutely notes that the work of female servants was rarely separate from the economic function of the household.⁴² In less wealthy households that hired just one or two servants, the amount of 'housework' required was limited. Instead, rural female servants were often engaged in agricultural tasks and other work required for the household to function. Prior to 1650, female servants were rarely described as 'domestic servants': in court records, a woman in service was usually recorded as 'maid' or simply 'servant', while Robert Dod and John Cleaver's *A Godlie forme of householde government for the ordering of private families* (1612), employed the term 'maid-servant'.⁴³

The representation of female service as 'domestic work' is not just symptomatic of

Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 137.

³⁹ Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. viii.

⁴¹ Jane Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660', in Jane Whittle (ed.), *Servants in Europe, c.1400-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

⁴² Edward Higgs, 'Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Social History*, 8 (1983), 208.

⁴³ John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government for the Ordering of Private Families* (1612), 381.

changing language and terminology over time. Within the historiography, service in husbandry and 'domestic' service are treated as separate employments, with little recognition that female service often extended beyond domestic boundaries into fields and other spaces. Even in larger, wealthier households, the distinction might be blurred. Carolyn Steedman notes that the late eighteenth-century Somerset farmer, Frances Hamilton, employed the same male servants both as footmen indoors and as farm hands outdoors.⁴⁴ Kussmaul makes a clear distinction between servants in husbandry and domestic servants, arguing that the work of the former was connected with the household's economic production, while domestic servants attended to the personal needs of the family.⁴⁵ Female service was not restricted to tasks exclusively *within* or *for* the home; distinguishing between 'farm' and 'domestic' service does not accurately capture the work of these men and women. Using the prefix 'domestic' to describe female service is misleading and imposes a modern definition in which service is understood as the care of the household. Throughout this thesis, the term 'female servant' is used as a more neutral occupational descriptor that accommodates the varied workload of these women and reflects contemporary understandings and descriptions of those in service.

Definitions of early modern service are partly shaped by geographical factors. Experiences of service were affected by regional and local economies and topographies. The contribution of female servants to agricultural production is characteristic of rural service, while Meldrum's study of London servants notes the importance of their retail activities: he notes that 'Mary Gill was servant to a haberdasher, but spent time in her mistress's booth at Stourbridge Fair in addition to her shop in St. Andrew's Holborn'.⁴⁶ Experiences of London servants were distinct not only from those working in rural communities but also from servants of other urban settlements. The impact of regional variation upon service is often overlooked; historians make the implicit assumption that experiences of service were uniform across early modern England.

⁴⁴ Steedman, *Labours Lost*, p. 75.

⁴⁵ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 154.

Thesis outline

This thesis responds to the limitations of current scholarship of female service. It fundamentally challenges our understanding of patterns of service, showing that many female servants were not life-cycle servants, some stayed in service longer and travelled further than is supposed, and many built lasting relationships within communities. Female servants were not marginalised outsiders whose residence was always fleeting or transitory. Instead they were integral to the functioning of community economies and social networks.

Studies of service often rely on several types of sources: Richardson and Capp's analyses of service are built upon evidence from court records, ballads, plays and conduct literature.⁴⁷ Amanda Vickery recommends an intertextual approach to studying the history of women, comparing and contrasting the presentation of their experiences in order to understand difference.⁴⁸ Paul Griffiths similarly notes the importance of 'exploring the points of contact' between sources.⁴⁹ The approach taken in this thesis deviates from this popular methodology. In her review of Capp's *When Gossips Meet*, Gowing suggests that analysing legal accounts alongside prescriptive sources containing the 'largely misogynistic comments of contemporary male authors' makes for 'an awkward blend' in historical narratives.⁵⁰ This thesis demonstrates the fruitfulness of close analysis of church court depositions to fully comprehend their complexities and idiosyncrasies, allowing evidence of female service recorded in these documents to be studied within these unique contexts.

This thesis is divided into five main sections, each containing two chapters. Section 1 outlines this new methodology and demonstrates the value of combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence of service recorded in church court depositions. The second chapter identifies patterns and trends within the courts, examining the geographical distribution of cases across each diocese as well as the

⁴⁷ Richardson, *Household Servants*; Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 127-184.

⁴⁸ Amanda Vickery, 'Historiographical Review: Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 413-414.

⁴⁹ Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 174.

⁵⁰ Laura Gowing, 'Review of *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England*', (2003), <www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/365>, [accessed 07.09.2016].

age, gender, occupation and marital status of those who were recorded as litigants and witnesses.

Section 2 presents new evidence of demographic and economic profiles of female servants, considering the following questions: who were they? How old were they? What backgrounds did they come from? Chapter 2.1 demonstrates that the dominance of the life-cycle model of service within the historiography downplays the significance of other experiences. It therefore considers other social and economic contexts that brought women into service. Chapter 2.2 identifies female servants' social status through occupational descriptors assigned to their parents and to the men they married after they left service. It analyses female servants' self-perceptions of worth that coloured their economic experiences of service.

Section 3 considers what is meant by 'service' as a form of employment and challenges the traditional gendered dichotomy between service in husbandry and domestic service. Chapter 3.1 explores how female servants found employment, how much they were paid, and how long they remained in the service of a particular employer. Chapter 3.2 investigates the type of work that female servants undertook, asking how working experiences of service were shaped by gender as well as the social status and type of household in which they served.

Geographical mobility and space are discussed in Section 4 of the thesis. Chapter 4.1 examines the extent of mobility and the distances travelled by female servants in securing employment across the two dioceses. How common was it for female servants to move away from where they were born? What factors affected mobility and distances travelled? Chapter 4.2 explores mobility *within* the parish, exploring the spaces and locations in which female servants were recorded within the depositions. To what extent did the working and social lives of female servants take place within the household? How mobile were they within the communities in which they lived and how did this affect their experiences of sociability?

The final section (Section 5) situates female servants within the communities in which they lived. Historiography of service focuses on relationships that female servants built with members of the household and highlights the vulnerability of these women under the patriarchy of sexually predatory or abusive employers. This

section moves away from this interpretation; chapter 5.1 analyses the relationships and connections that female servants built outside the household with neighbours and community members. Chapter 5.2 examines the early modern community through the lens of service, assessing how 'inward-looking' early modern communities could be in their treatment of female servants. It explores how connections with communities were maintained by female servants once they left a parish or a position in service with a particular employer.

1. Using church court depositions

The use of ecclesiastical court depositions in studying early modern society has grown significantly over the last thirty years, and their value is now well established. The poor reputation of the 'bawdy court' has been displaced, and its associated records, which were 'apparently packed mainly with sordid details of fornication, adultery, bigamy and other unsavoury peccadilloes of obscure individuals' are frequently used by historians.¹ Moving away from traditional scholarship that presents ecclesiastical courts as intrusive, corrupt institutions 'that were loathed by the 'industrious sort' of people and from which families had 'no privacy', recent work showcases the rich detail that church court depositions provide of the social fabric of early modern communities.² Used extensively in the work of Laura Gowing, Martin Ingram and Andy Wood amongst others, the value of church court depositions lies not only in measuring the effectiveness of ecclesiastical justice, but also in the rich narratives of early modern life that witnesses and litigants constructed.³ While some historians use these records to study the nature of early modern crime or immorality, others unpick the contextual elements of these sources to construct a picture of everyday practices. Amanda Flather's *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* analyses the working and social patterns of litigants and deponents of the Essex church court, while Alexandra Shepard uses church court depositions from across the country in studying early modern masculinity and more recently, worth and credit.⁴

This first chapter of this section outlines the methodology employed in this thesis to study female service as a holistic experience using the depositions of the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter. As part of this

¹ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 3-4.

² Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Secker-Warburg, 1964), p. 314; G. R. Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 14. For arguments against Hill's characterisation of the church courts as corrupt, oppressive institutions, see Ronald A. Marchant, *The Church under the Law: Justice, Administration and Discipline in the Diocese of York, 1560-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

³ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Ingram, *Church Courts*; Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴ Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

methodology, the final chapter summarises the operation of these two courts between 1548 and 1649, analysing the types of cases heard as well as the age, gender, social and occupational profiles of litigants and witnesses, thereby situating female servants within both a legal and social framework.

1.1 Sources and methodologies

The church courts

The church court was a familiar institution of justice to early modern society. Alan Macfarlane suggests that appearing before the church court was a common experience for the people of Earls Colne in Essex.⁵ From studies of church court records of the diocese of Canterbury and the archdeaconry of St Albans between 1300 and 1800, Paul Hair crudely estimates that around 10 per cent of adults appeared as litigants.⁶ This estimation does not account for the numerous witnesses who interacted with the church courts: cases heard in the Gloucester and Exeter courts produced on average 3.7 witnesses.

Church courts mediated a range of disputes concerned with moral and spiritual discipline, giving them, in the words of Martin Ingram, 'a place of the utmost importance in the social fabric'.⁷ Cases heard in the courts were classified as 'office' and 'instance'. Office cases were promoted by the court on the behalf of a cleric or churchwarden against the poor discipline of both clergy and laymen.⁸ Instance cases were disputes between parties, instigated by the offended party or parties. They were more likely to generate depositions than office cases and are therefore the focus of this thesis. Types of cases brought before the courts can be divided into six categories, as shown in table 1.1. To account for significant

⁵ Alan Macfarlane, Sarah Harrison, and Charles Jardine, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 60, 132.

⁶ Paul Hair, *Before the Bawdy Court: Selections from Church Court and other Records Relating to the Correction of Moral Offences in England, Scotland and New England, 1300-1800* (London: Elek, 1972), pp. 24-25. This figure is calculated from an estimated total of between 5 and 9 million cases heard in the church courts and a total population of at least 50 million between 1300 and 1800. The calculation does not seem to account for multiple plaintiffs and defendants in each case, the proportion of office and instance cases produced (with office cases producing defendants only) and changes over time in proportions of cases heard.

⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 3.

⁸ F.S. Hockaday, 'The Consistory Court of the Diocese of Gloucester', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 46 (1924), 198.

variation within these categories, subcategories have been used, referred to throughout this thesis as ‘types of cases’.⁹

Table 1.1. Scope of ecclesiastical justice in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Type of dispute	Type of case
Personal dispute	Assault; debt; testamentary; usury; swearing; defamation.
Religious dispute	Church seating, non-attendance at church, discord; heresy; rejection of communion; witchcraft.
Sexual dispute	Adultery; bridal pregnancy; harbouring a person liable for punishment (usually a pregnant single woman); incest; incontinence; rape.
Taxation	Tithes; church rates.
Matrimonial dispute	Separation; divorce; annulment; bigamy; marriage contracts.
Clerical offence	Simony; absence from church; abuse of the curate.

In theory, the process of producing a case in court was straightforward. Some office cases were raised directly by clergy members or parish officials, while other disciplinary issues came to the attention of the archbishop or archdeacon of the diocese during parish visitations. Upon raising an instance case, aggrieved individuals were required to appoint a proctor who acted on their behalf, issuing a citation for the defendant to appear in court. The motivations that provoked an individual to seek court action in instance cases are complex. As Gowing notes, ‘litigation over sex and marriage did not depend on a consistent, homogeneous morality’.¹⁰ Defending one’s credit, honour and reputation was of paramount importance to early modern society. Individuals who brought cases before the court sometimes sought mediation rather than a verdict. Canon law, predicated

⁹ Only these types of cases produced depositions in the church courts of Gloucester and Exeter. Other types of cases were heard in the courts, including keeping alehouses open during divine service and even disputes relating to shipping. For a full list, see F.S. Hockaday, ‘The Consistory Court of the Diocese of Gloucester’, 198-200.

¹⁰ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 10.

on maintaining spiritual and moral harmony, was not necessarily consistent with the popular morality of parishioners.

Once the defendant was cited to appear before the court, the plaintiff's appointed proctor drew up a libel containing points of contention; the defendant was also given the opportunity to produce their own libel in response. After oaths were sworn and personal responses to the libel were made, witnesses were produced. It was compulsory for cited parties, including witnesses, to appear before the court. Non-appearance was treated as contumacy, for which excommunication was the threatened punishment.¹¹ After witnesses were produced and sworn before the open court, the defendant could raise exceptions to them by arranging for a set of interrogatory articles to be produced, which each witness was required to respond to. Exceptions might be made if a witness was destitute, considered of ill repute or engaged in criminal activity. Relatives of the plaintiff or those of close affinity, such as servants, might also be objected to. Exceptions to servants might contribute to their proportionally low appearance in the depositions of the Gloucester and Exeter courts, although Gowing shows that in London, servants were actually overrepresented in the depositions.¹² Exceptions could lead to a ruling by the judge that the plaintiff had provided no suitable witnesses. Further witnesses might be subsequently produced, meaning that a case could continue several months after it was initiated.¹³

The written records of the examinations of witnesses comprise the majority of church court deposition books.¹⁴ During an examination, each article of the libel was read to the witness and their response recorded in a mixture of vernacular and Latin. These responses were then recited back to the witness and necessary corrections were made before the depositions were passed to the judge, usually the bishop of the diocese. Examinations took place in private, although the formulaic, repetitive elements of depositions as well as directly concurrent responses might suggest that witnesses were present at one another's examinations. In 1551, a Gloucester church court scribe recorded witness Robert

¹¹ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 342-344.

¹² Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 18.

¹³ For a full discussion of the intricacies of the operation of the Gloucester church court, see Hockaday, 'The Consistory Court of the Diocese of Gloucester'.

¹⁴ Some deposition books also contain the personal responses of plaintiffs and defendants and occasionally other church court records are housed within the same volume as the depositions.

Dyer of Withington's responses to his knowledge of the testament of Elizabeth Steynerode. The scribe observed that 'beynge examyned what legacies she made, he annswerethe as Jone Whyfyld did annswere', perhaps suggesting that Robert was present at the making of Joan's deposition.¹⁵ However, statements of this kind might also be interpreted as evidence of scribal shorthand in record-keeping. Christine Churches notes evidence of shorthand patterns in the Court of Chancery depositions, whereby full responses by one witness might be followed by 'he deposeth as above' in subsequent depositions.¹⁶

Each deposition was broadly divided into three parts: the biographical preamble; responses to the libel; and the interrogatory. The preamble recorded biographical details of each witness; these details typically including their age, status, occupation, place of birth, and place and length of residence. Sometimes the length of time that a witness had known the litigants was included. The responses of the witness to the articles of the libel were recorded below the preamble. These narratives contain not only details of the case itself but also glimpses into the working and social lives of witnesses. Many depositions contain just these two elements; however, others, particular those of female witnesses, contain additional responses to interrogatory articles submitted by the defendant. Within these interrogatories, witnesses were sometimes required to clarify elements of their original responses, elaborating on the circumstances in which conflict had arisen between the litigants. They were often asked if they were financially dependent on the plaintiff and provided information about their own economic positions as well as the worth, credibility and social status of other witnesses. Shepard's recent work on worth in early modern England provides extensive analysis of statements of worth usually found in interrogatories.¹⁷

Following the examination of each witness, the judge alone was responsible for issuing a verdict. Court proceedings could be costly: relatively few instance cases reached this stage in the legal process. Instead, resolutions were sought outside the court. For those found guilty by the judge, penance was the usual punishment and was typically undertaken in a public space such as a church or

¹⁵ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1475, Robert Redverne v Henry Stone (1551).

¹⁶ Christine Churches, "'The Most Unconvincing Testimony': The Genesis and Historical Usefulness of the Country Depositions in Chancery", *The Seventeenth Century*, 11 (1996), 220.

¹⁷ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*.

marketplace. In 1562, the following sentence ordered Robert Hoggen to perform public penance in the parish of Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire for getting his servant pregnant:

He shall stand at the time of the gospell when all the congregacion be ther bare footed and bare legged with a white shete aboute him and a white rodde in his hande sayinge these words folowynge good neighboures for as moche as I have offended my lord god firste and you nexte in gettinge Anne Wen with childe I am righte sorie for hit desiring you to beare wytnes with me of the same and to saie with me the lords praier and to praie with me and for me that I may do so no more and so shall saie the lordes praier and the people shall folowe.

Robert's sentence was not carried out; instead, the penance was converted to a monetary fine to be used towards poor relief and for repairs to be made to county highways and bridges.¹⁸ Punishment was relatively infrequent in the church courts. F.D. Price notes that cases heard in the Gloucester court often adjourned and then disappeared altogether. His study indicates the low rate of punishment: between June 1551 and June 1552, for example, only 168 penances were ordered by Bishop Hooper, representing just 32.9 per cent of the 511 cases heard.¹⁹

Reliability

Testimonies were mediated by court clerks and scribes against a backdrop of conflict and tensions amongst plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses. Although individuals were made to swear oaths before the court, this does not confirm the veracity of all witness statements. Barbara Shapiro argues that the institutional requirement to swear an oath should not deter us from questioning witness statements, as criticism of witness perjury increased during the period.²⁰ Some witnesses were perhaps unclear on legal processes. Christopher Branner of Aylesbeare in Devon deposed in 1595 that witness Thomas Downham 'did forswear him self in this matter, and that he would deny it agayne for he sayd

¹⁸ Hockaday, 'The Consistory Court of the Diocese of Gloucester', 219.

¹⁹ F.D. Price, 'The Administration of the Diocese of Gloucester, 1547-1579', (Unpublished Thesis, University of Oxford, 1939), pp. 51-52.

²⁰ Barbara Shapiro, 'Credibility and the Legal Process in Early Modern England: Part One', *Law and Humanities*, 6 (2012), 145-178; Barbara Shapiro, 'Credibility and the Legal Process in Early Modern England: Part Two', *Law and Humanities*, 7 (2013), 41.

that he did not knowe what an othe was'. Christopher claimed that Thomas' ignorance of the meaning of an oath had led him to provide a false testimony.²¹

Many understood their legal rights. In 1582, witness Barbara Toser of Moretonhampstead in Devon was asked whether reports of her illegitimate pregnancy were true. She responded 'that she thinketh she is not bounde to answere to this interrogatorie'.²² Others sought advice on how the church courts operated and subsequently instructed witnesses to give evidence that conformed to the court's requirements. Witnesses were regularly asked to confirm that they had not been instructed how to depose: in 1628, Alice Hall of Lechlade in Gloucestershire stated that

she rode her selfe alone & saieth that neither this respondent nor any witness in this cause rode behinde the said Mr Phippes to Gloucester over any parte of the way.

Alice's response was designed to assure the court that no conference had taken place between the plaintiff and the witnesses.²³ In a 1567 matrimonial dispute, witness and public notary Hugh Osborn of Iddesleigh in Devon deposed that the plaintiff Alice Pawe and her brother-in-law, John Herde had openly discussed court procedures with him as Alice prepared to prove the existence of a matrimonial contract between her and John Brennelcombe. Hugh deposed that he provided counsel, informing them that the words their witness had allegedly heard pass between Alice and John 'were no wordes of matrymonye nether [...] were not good yn Lawe'. He then reported that 'John herd was very Ernest with this deponent [...] to knowe what the wordes shuld be that shuld be perfyte and good'. Hugh provided further guidance, advising that the witnesses 'must egreie [agree] yn one tale and at one tyme, and yn one place'.²⁴ Depositions cannot therefore be taken at face value. In the case of Alice Pawe against John Brennelcombe, the accounts of events given by witnesses were potentially filtered and homogenized before they reached the court.

Depositions formed the backbone of church court litigation and therefore reflect preoccupations with presenting plausible, if not accurate, versions of events.

²¹ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1813, Denys Ellyott v Thomasina Downham (1595).

²² DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1514, Pashowe Ingoram v Edith Tremlet (1582).

²³ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1559, William Phippes v Anne Gearinge (1628).

²⁴ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 782, Alice Pawe v John Brennelcombe (1567).

They should be read as collaborative narratives that were constructed by several historical actors. As Frances Dolan suggests, the deposition

is not the deponent's or the defendant's or the clerk's; it is the church court's. What we have is the narrative produced by this process, but we cannot be sure who contributed what.²⁵

In each deposition, the witness' 'voice' is mediated and controlled by legal frameworks and conventions imposed by the court, proctor and scribe. The articles of the libel provided a structure for the stories that witnesses told; their narratives were restricted by questions considered most pertinent to the case. While Garthine Walker argues that depositions were transcribed 'more or less verbatim', evidence of certain legal conventions suggests otherwise.²⁶ Depositions were transmuted into the third person by scribes ('this deponent sayeth') and legal formulae were inserted where appropriate (such as '*solus cum sola*' and '*nudus cum nuda*', used to describe adulterous couples in bed together). It is likely that particular phrases were supplied to the witness such as 'had the carnall knowledge of' to describe sexual intercourse, and 'in perfect mind and memory' to describe the mental state of testators when making their wills. Gowing suggests that original verbatim phrases used by witnesses were often replaced.²⁷ Conversations with litigants prior to the witness' examination were also likely to have shaped and influenced responses to the prescribed articles. Depositions cannot provide direct access to the voices of women, the poor and other groups who are less frequently represented in early modern sources. Rather, these voices are 'transmitted through the disrupting and often homogenizing process of legal record-keeping'.²⁸

The criminal or immoral context in which individuals appeared before the courts must also be treated carefully. Miranda Chaytor stresses that depositions are 'selective [and] subjective; stories told in the shadow of a specific event'.²⁹ Nonetheless, the deficiencies of the evidence presented within depositions

²⁵ Frances E. Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 121.

²⁶ Garthine Walker, 'Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England', *Gender & History*, 10 (1998), 8.

²⁷ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 46.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁹ Miranda Chaytor, 'Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century', *Gender & History*, 7 (1995), 379.

should not be overemphasised. Day to day experiences recorded incidentally in the depositions were, at least, woven into plausible stories by witnesses. Yet it is also important to understand the specific legal and social contexts in which depositions were produced. Natalie Zemon Davis shows that by privileging the narrative tales or 'fictions of the archives' produced within a legal context as the central point of focus, our understanding of contemporary society and culture is made clearer.³⁰ Depositional evidence of female service, including the relationships they fostered and the activities they undertook, is therefore understood in this thesis as both a product of the court and as a feature of early modern culture.

The dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter

While the last thirty years has witnessed increased scholarship of church court depositions, some geographical regions are better represented in the historiography than others. London consistory court depositions have been particularly well studied, with notable works by Gowing and Peter Earle demonstrating their potential.³¹ Outside the capital, Shepard's study of worth uses depositions from a geographically broad selection of church courts, including Cambridge, Canterbury and York.³² Bernard Capp's deposition-based study of women and neighbourhood in early modern England stretches across the midland and south-eastern counties of the country.³³ The depositions of the South-West of England, and particularly those of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, are less frequently consulted. Notable exceptions include Peter Clark's study of mobility and migration using depositions from the Gloucester court and David Cressy's work on literacy from Exeter court depositions. Neither of these works are concerned with the content of the depositions: Clark furnishes his research on mobility patterns with parish data recorded in the biographical preambles of Gloucestershire court depositions, while Cressy determines the extent of mobility from the incidence of depositional signatures.³⁴

³⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

³¹ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London 1650-1750* (London: Methuen, 1994).

³² Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*.

³³ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*.

³⁴ David Cressy, *Literacy and Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 104-117.

The dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter represent appropriate comparative units of study in terms of scale and population. The diocese of Gloucester, largely coterminous with the county of Gloucestershire as it stands today, represents a medium-sized area of jurisdiction in comparison to the much larger diocese of Exeter which extended across the majority of the counties of Devon and Cornwall.³⁵ The population of the diocese of Gloucester was therefore much smaller: in 1660, Devon and Cornwall's populations had reached 258,587 and 102,892 respectively (amounting to a total diocesan population of 361,479). In the same year, Gloucestershire was home to just 101,256 inhabitants.³⁶ The church courts were responsible for enforcing ecclesiastical law across these populations; only peculiar courts were exempt, as ecclesiastical justice was administered locally in these areas.³⁷

The topographies and economies of these regions were both similar and distinct. This study shows the importance of a regional approach in which variation and similarities between and within rural and urban economies and landscapes are considered. The diocese of Exeter was primarily an area of pastoral farmland and livestock production, containing less productive upland regions in the north and fertile land for corn production in the south.³⁸ Devon's pastoral farming supported a strong textile industry, with cloth production central to the economies of Exeter and large towns like Cullompton and Tiverton.³⁹ The landscape of the diocese of Gloucester supported similar economic activities, with a booming rural clothworking industry in the southeast of the county. Topographically, the county of Gloucestershire contained woodland areas and regions of pastoral farming, with internationally-recognised wool-producing areas in the Cotswolds and the Vale of the Severn.⁴⁰ Tin mining was important to the Cornish economy, while

³⁵ There are a number of parishes on the boundaries that Gloucestershire has either gained from or lost to its neighbouring counties of Somerset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

³⁶ S. N. Broadberry, B. M. S. Campbell, Alexander Klein, Mark Overton, and Bas van Leeuwen, *British Economic Growth, 1270-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 25.

³⁷ R. B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1.

³⁸ M. A. Havinden and R. Stanes, 'Agriculture and Rural Settlement, 1500-1800', in Roger Kain, William Ravenhill, and Helen Jones (eds.), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), p. 281.

³⁹ M. A. Havinden, 'The Woollen, Lime, Tanning and Leather-Working and Paper-Making Industries c.1500-1800', in Roger Kain, William Ravenhill, and Helen Jones (eds.), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), p. 338.

⁴⁰ David Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 25.

coal mining was a significant industry in west Gloucestershire.⁴¹ The diocese of Exeter contained a number of important towns including Exeter, Plymouth, Tiverton and Crediton, the first two appearing within the top nine most populous provincial towns of the country in 1600.⁴² Gloucester was also ranked highly, although the county towns of Tewkesbury, Cirencester and Cheltenham were less important in this period.⁴³ The differences and similarities of the two dioceses allow a comparative study of the experiences of female service along economic, topographical and geographical lines.

Methodologies

Qualitative analysis forms the backbone of most studies in which church court depositions are used. Tim Meldrum applies some statistical analysis of evidence of domestic service recorded in depositions, but largely focuses upon qualitative analysis of life and work within London households.⁴⁴ Flather's work, relying almost exclusively on a qualitative approach to studying Essex court depositions, contributes significantly to our understanding of the spaces in which work, leisure and religion took place in early modern communities.⁴⁵ Yet quantitative analysis of depositions is often overlooked, due to the narrative structure and physical arrangement of depositional evidence. Nonetheless, such evidence can be quantified, as some historians show. Clark's work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mobility analyses data on parishes of birth and residence provided by over 7000 witnesses.⁴⁶ Shepard's work on worth and credit in particular shows the rewards of extracting and organising depositional evidence to undertake quantitative analysis. Adopting both a quantitative and qualitative approach to using depositions, she assesses the economic and cultural patterns of monetary and non-monetary statements of worth.⁴⁷

⁴¹ S. Gerrard, 'The Tin Industry in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Cornwall', in Roger Kain, William Ravenhill, and Helen Jones (eds.), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 330-337; Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 39.

⁴² E.A Wrigley, *People, Cities and Wealth: the Transformation of Traditional Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 160-161.

⁴³ Jonathan Barry, 'South-West', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 74.

⁴⁴ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*.

⁴⁵ Flather, *Gender and Space*.

⁴⁶ Peter Clark, 'Migration in England during the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Past & Present*, 83 (1979), 57-90.

⁴⁷ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*.

The methodology used in this thesis similarly synthesises quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using a mixed-methods framework, the approach to this thesis resembles the 'micro-exemplary' methodology set out by A.W. Carus and Sheilagh Ogilvie, who argue that quantitative and qualitative analysis are mutually indispensable.⁴⁸ In this thesis, depositional evidence forms a 'meta-source' that 'makes it possible to study the wider social and institutional context' in which the female servants identified within the sources lived.⁴⁹ This 'meta-source' methodology is shaped by Keith Wrightson and David Levine's classic study of Terling in Essex, Shepard's recent work on worth and Ogilvie's study of women's work in the Württemberg Black Forest.⁵⁰ This thesis uses depositions as a lens through which to understand holistic experiences of service for early modern women. The institution of the church court and the communities contained within its records provide the context for the research questions asked here of female service.

Although quantification of depositional evidence is not typical, depositions contain data that are frequently quantified in other sources, such as ages, lengths of residence and occupations. The quantification of incidental, narrative evidence such as types of work undertaken by servants or spaces and locations in which they spent time is less typical. Mediation is required; the source must be interpreted to allow particular evidence to be counted and the linguistic challenges this presents are discussed in Chapter 1.2. Nonetheless, quantitative analysis of this kind allows the typicality of particular experiences to be assessed, allowing comparisons to be made across different regions, economies and social structures. In this thesis, qualitative analysis is simultaneously undertaken at every level in understanding the statistics extracted from the depositions. Quantitative analysis is not privileged over qualitative analysis or *vice versa*; rather, the approaches are interdependent.

⁴⁸ A. W. Carus and Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'Turning Qualitative into Quantitative Evidence: A Well-Used Method Made Explicit', *The Economic History Review*, 62 (2009), 894.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 919.

⁵⁰ Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*; Sheilagh C. Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Microsoft Access

Archival study of the depositions of the Gloucester and Exeter church courts has involved the creation of a Microsoft Access dataset capturing 23,026 people appearing in 4385 cases between 1548 and 1649. Table 1.2 shows the volume of data that has been extracted from the depositions. During the period, a total of 21,760 roles (plaintiff, defendant and witness) were assumed by individuals across the two courts. Those who were recorded contextually but were assigned no fixed role in the depositions are also included in the dataset. Litigants and witnesses were occasionally recorded in multiple cases and endeavours have been made to identify these instances and link individuals to multiple cases where possible.

Table 1.2. Litigation, litigants and witnesses recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Cases	1997	45.5	2388	54.5	4385
People	12,157	52.8	10,869	47.2	23,026
Plaintiffs	1969	48.6	2084	51.4	4053
Defendants	2070	46.2	2412	53.8	4482
Witnesses	6804	51.4	6421	48.6	13,225
Female servants	302	59.7	204	40.3	506

Sources: GRO, GDR deposition books and DHC, Chanter deposition books.

Figure 1.1. Basic structure of and information recorded in Microsoft Access database.

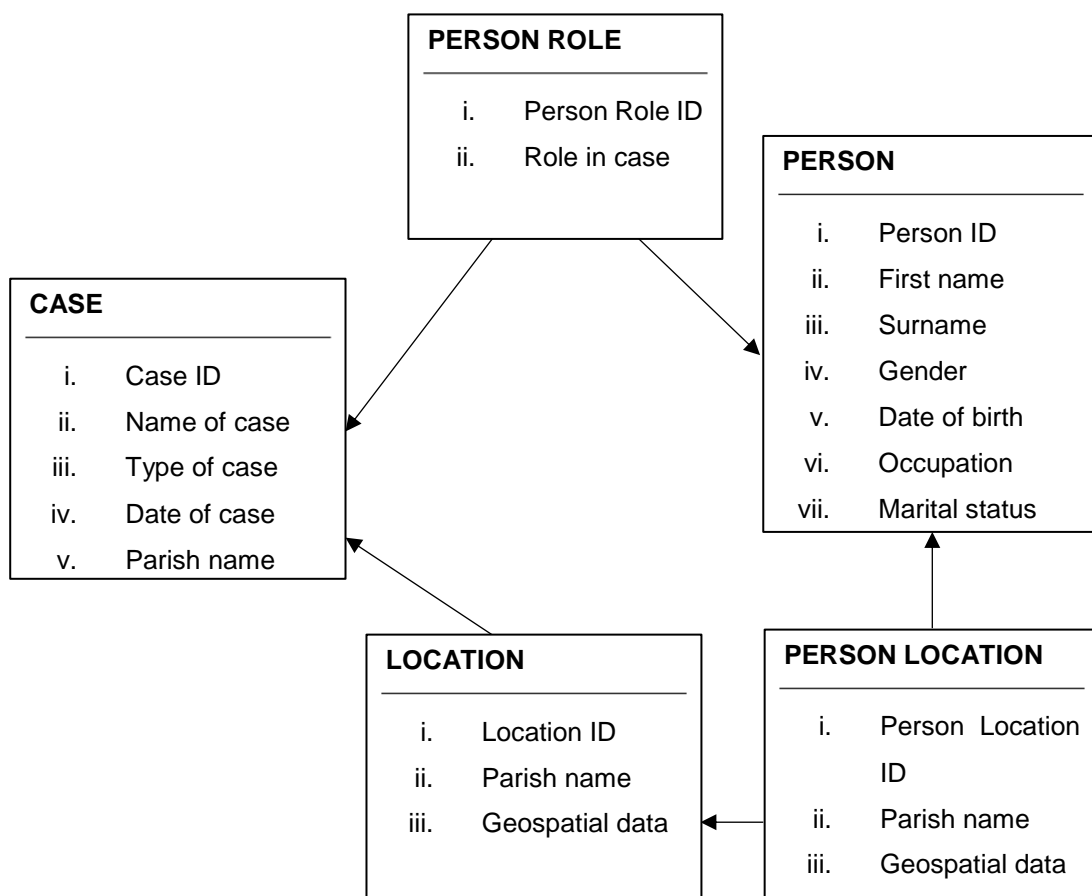


Figure 1.1 summarises the basic data captured within the database. Each case has been assigned an identification number ('Case ID') to which the case name (usually the name of the plaintiff(s) versus the name of the defendant(s)) and the date of examination of the first witness has been linked. The parish associated with each case or its litigant parties has been recorded and linked with geospatial data. Humphrey Southall and Nick Burton's *GIS of the Ancient Parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850* is a georeferenced dataset based on Roger Kain and Richard Oliver's maps of parish boundaries, allowing the distribution of cases across the dioceses to be accurately mapped.⁵¹

Each plaintiff, defendant and witness has been recorded in a 'Person Role' table, which connects individuals listed in the 'Person' table to the case in which they were involved (via the 'Case' table). Where an individual was central to the case but they were not a legal party in the dispute, their role has been recorded as 'contextual'. Each individual's first name, surname, gender, date of birth, occupation and marital status has been recorded in the 'Person' table where this data is available.⁵² Each individual's recorded parish of birth and residence has been georeferenced, and a link between the person and their location has been created using a 'Person Location ID'. As central city parishes, 'Gloucester, College Precincts' and 'Exeter, Castle Yard' have been designated for witnesses who identified only 'Gloucester' or 'Exeter' as their place of birth or residence.⁵³

The database has therefore been designed to record information about all cases and people recorded within the depositions over the century. Data relating to female servants appears as a subset of the larger dataset. This facilitates systematic analysis of the context in which these women were recorded within the depositions, allowing female servant profiles to be analysed against the age, gender and occupational profiles of all litigants and witnesses. The female

⁵¹ Humphrey Southall and Nick Burton, *GIS of the Ancient Parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850*. [data collection]. (2004), UK Data Service. SN: 4828, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4828-1>; Roger Kain and Richard Oliver, *Historic Parishes of England and Wales: an Electronic Map of Boundaries before 1850 with a Gazetteer and Metadata*. [data collection]. (2001), UK Data Service. SN: 4348, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4348-1>.

⁵² A full explanation of how date of birth has been calculated from the data is given on p. 71.

⁵³ While witnesses frequently made reference to parishes, individuals residing in the diocesan capitals often identified only with the city rather than a specific city parish, locating themselves and the case within the 'Citie of Gloucester', for example. See, for instance, GRO, GDR/57, Case 269, Testament of Fulk More (1584).

servant subset (and other subsets) can therefore be both integrated with and isolated from the wider dataset.

Female servant criteria

Determining which women to classify as servants is complicated. While women were rarely assigned occupational descriptors in legal records, church court clerks intermittently recorded 'servant' as an occupational descriptor for witnesses of both sexes. Early modern works on standard practice for legal record-keeping indicate that the term 'servant' was not considered 'a good addition' in legal records for neither men nor women as it does not accurately denote social status.⁵⁴ J.S. Cockburn points out the distinction between servants of different social status, noting that a gentleman's servant was not socially equal to menial servants.⁵⁵ In the same way as they were accountable for the actions, behaviour and welfare of their wives and children, masters were legally responsible for their servants. Jane Whittle's work on sixteenth-century servants brought before the Norfolk Quarter Sessions highlights the legal significance of the omission of occupational descriptors for both male and female servants. Within common law, servants were unaccountable for their actions as legal dependents of their employers. To circumvent this issue of liability, servants were made accountable for their own behaviour in the courts: male servants were described as 'labourers', while female servants were denoted as 'spinsters'.⁵⁶

The occupation 'servant' was recorded inconsistently within the biographical preambles of depositions of both the Gloucester and Exeter courts. Female servants are principally identifiable only through close readings of witnesses' responses to the libel articles, although several late sixteenth-century Gloucestershire deposition books record 'servant' as an occupational descriptor for some female witnesses, sometimes using the Latin terms '*famula*' and (less frequently) '*serviens*'. The word 'wench' was also occasionally used within the depositions, although not necessarily to denote service; it could be used simply

⁵⁴ William West, *The Second Part of Symboleography* (1604), Sect 70, 94v.

⁵⁵ J.S. Cockburn, 'Early-Modern Assize Records as Historical Evidence', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5 (1975), 223.

⁵⁶ Jane Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk, 1440-1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 261.

to refer to a young unmarried woman.⁵⁷ These inconsistencies highlight the impossibility of comparing absolute numbers of servants across the two dioceses. For some scribes, recording a female servant's occupation was considered procedural, whereas for others it was incidental. Silences in the records concerning servant occupational status are telling: perhaps occupational descriptors were considered unnecessary because servants were so ubiquitous. Employment in service may have been implicit in the marital status descriptor 'singlewoman'.

Strict criteria have nonetheless been applied in classifying women as servants. The female servant data subset includes only women who were specifically recorded or described as servants or whose connection with a master or mistress was affirmed. Young unmarried women who were recorded living outside the parental home but were not described as servants are not included. In 1638, Elizabeth Comb of Exeter, for example, testified in a defamation dispute between Jane Comb and Anne Lichfield. Elizabeth defended the validity of her testimony, deposing that 'she liveth in howse with Jane Comb [...] but is no kynne unto her'.⁵⁸ It is likely that Elizabeth was Jane Comb's servant but it is also possible that she was a lodger, and cannot, therefore, conclusively be labelled a servant. In 1565 in the same city, Margaret Heywode deposed that she was 'coming from melking [...] when Mrs hose and [her] uncle being at variance, Mrs called Richarde Gerves knave, cockolld, bullhed and vyle wordes'. The word 'Mrs' is not used here to identify Wilmota Hose as Margaret's female employer (i.e. 'mistress'); other non-servant witnesses referred to Wilmota using the same descriptor. The word 'Mrs' was instead used to acknowledge Wilmota's elevated social status, as Amy Erickson suggests.⁵⁹ In other instances, the word 'mistress' was used to describe female employers. In Otterton in Devon in 1583, servant Joanne Wannell deposed in a tithe dispute that 'she sawe iiii [four] flieces of wooll, one gose, and one pygg paid unto them by her mistris, Alice Morgan alias Wannell'. The use of the possessive pronoun ('*her* mistris') indicates the presence of a servant-employer relationship and Joanne is therefore included within the female servant

⁵⁷ Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 47.

⁵⁸ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2090, Jane Comb v Anne Lichfield (1638).

⁵⁹ DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 662, Richard Gervys v Wilmota Hose (1565); For a full discussion of the usage of the term 'Mrs', see Amy Louise Erickson, 'Mistresses and Marriage: or, a Short History of the Mrs', *History Workshop Journal*, 78 (2014), 52.

data subset.⁶⁰ Contextual reading of all depositions within a case is required to accurately classify women as servants.

The necessary strictness of this criteria means that a proportion of women who may have been employed in service have been excluded from this study. Ann Kusmaul suggests that around 60 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 24 were engaged in service in the early modern period. Her gender ratio of 107 male servants to every 100 female servants indicates that perhaps 48 per cent of women within this age group were in service.⁶¹ The extent to which church court data accurately represents the proportion of female servants working in early modern England can be crudely estimated by comparing the number of female servants identified between the ages of 15 and 24 to the total number of women identified within this age bracket. Within the Gloucester court depositions, 66 of the 223 women (30 per cent) recorded between the ages of 15 and 24 were identified as servants. Of the 186 women in the same age group within the Exeter court depositions, just 43 (23 per cent) were clearly recorded as working in service. These low percentages reflect the challenges of ascertaining absolute numbers using depositions and indicates that *all* female servants who appeared before the courts are probably not captured in the dataset. The additional 7 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds in Gloucestershire who were identified as female servants perhaps reflects the higher incidence of scribes in the Gloucester court recording 'servant' as an occupational descriptor for women rather than any real difference in the incidence of service between the two dioceses.

NVivo

All depositions produced in cases in which female servants are recorded have been fully transcribed. These transcriptions have been coded using NVivo, a software package designed to organise and structure narrative, text-based data for systematic analysis. By coding each deposition, information has been extracted and collated along thematic lines. Examples of themes or 'nodes' created include work activities, length of service, servant wages and statements of worth.⁶² The software therefore allows textual evidence to be organised in a

⁶⁰ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1582, *Sprynt v Thomas Wichalse* (1583).

⁶¹ Kusmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 3-4.

⁶² See Appendix 1 for a full list of 'nodes'.

way that facilitates both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For example, the typicality of particular work activities can be assessed quantitatively by collating all examples of work that female servants were recorded as undertaking under the node 'work activities'. Instances of each type of work can then be counted. The work activities are never divorced from the context in which they were recorded as the software maintains links between the information extracted and the associated deposition. This methodology allows church court depositions to be analysed in a new way, considering how female servants were recorded in the depositions on both micro and macro levels, and placing them within the social, economic and cultural context of the society in which they lived and the institution before which they appeared.

1.2 Patterns in the church courts

Macro-level exploration of the ways in which the church courts operated and the range of people that came before them is important in understanding the legal and social context in which female servants were recorded in the depositions. This chapter analyses the number, types and geographical distribution of cases that the two courts heard over the period. Age, gender, marital status and occupational profiles of litigants and witnesses are also examined in order to understand the economic and social composition of the cross-section of the population who appeared before the courts.

Cases

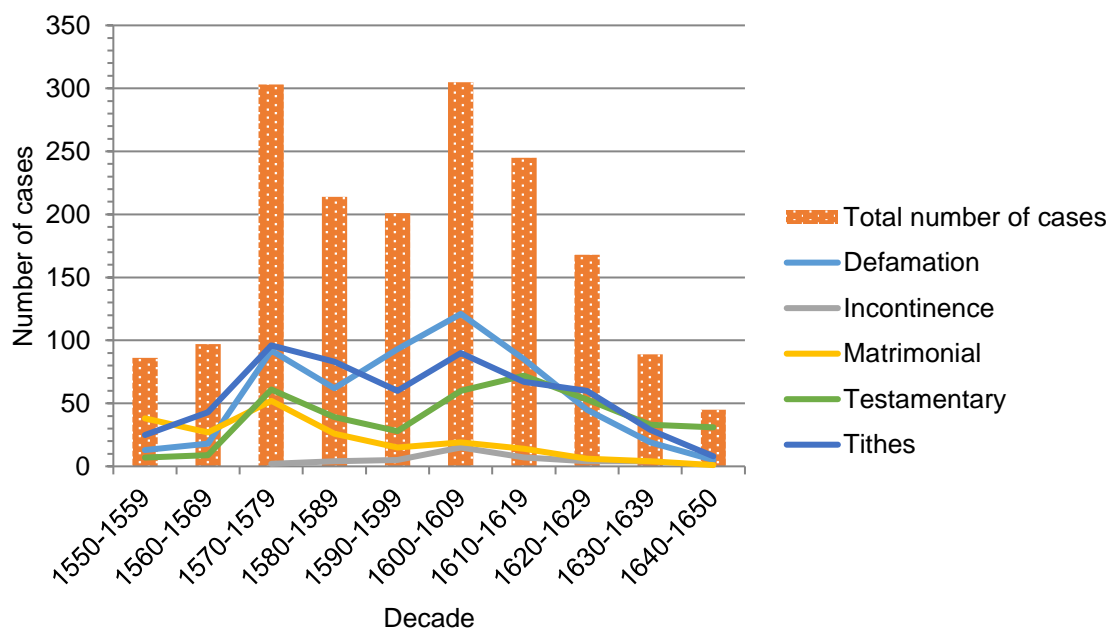
Number and chronological distribution of cases

A more complete set of depositions survive for the Gloucester church court than for its Exeter counterpart. The 31 books of Gloucestershire depositions cover almost the entire period from 1548 to 1649: just 17 years are missing from the dataset. Over the same period, depositions of the diocese of Exeter court are absent for 35 full years, and several years are only partially covered within the 14 deposition books.⁶³ Figures 1.2 and 1.3 show the distribution of cases over each decade of the period. Points of high and low activity can be identified in both courts. Of a total number of 1997 cases heard over the century in the Gloucester court, 303 were heard in the decade 1570-1579 and another 305 in the decade 1600-1609. Around 30 per cent of cases were heard in these two decades alone, while just 4.3 per cent were heard between 1550 and 1559. The Exeter court experienced a high point of activity ten years earlier than the Gloucester court, with 632 cases out of a total of 2388 (26.5 per cent) heard between 1560 and 1569. Few depositions were recorded for the last two decades of the period: only 6 per cent of the total number of cases recorded were produced in the 1630s and 1640s across both courts. Activity within the Exeter court appears to have come to a halt around 1640, due to the civil war two years later; however, a small number of cases continued to be heard within the Gloucester court over the

⁶³ In both sets of depositions, the missing years are largely towards the end of the period, when the courts were disrupted. The missing years for the diocese of Gloucester are: 1556-1559, 1565, 1598, 1599, 1619-1621, 1632-1637, 1642. The missing years for the diocese of Exeter are: 1550-1555, 1573, 1591, 1605, 1610, 1611, 1612, 1621-1633, 1639-1649.

course of the decade. Suspension of the activities of the Gloucester church court was therefore more slowly effected.

Figure 1.2. Number of cases recorded in the depositions of the church court of the diocese of Gloucester, 1548-1649.



Sources: GRO, GDR deposition books.

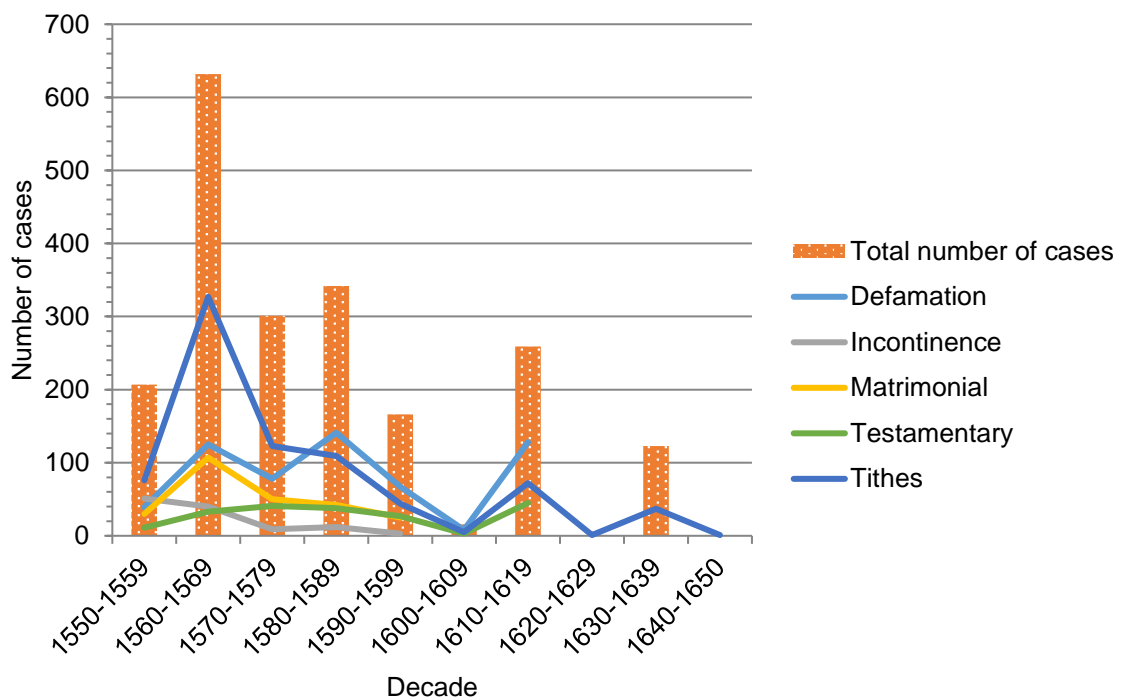
Despite the fact that the period of study is more consistently covered by the Gloucestershire depositions, a larger number of ‘deposition-producing’ cases were recorded in the Exeter court.⁶⁴ Depositions relate to 2388 cases compared to 1997 cases recorded in the Gloucester court depositions. While this is not a substantial difference, per capita calculations using population estimates from 1600 show that the number of cases per capita in Gloucestershire was just over twice the number in Devon and Cornwall.⁶⁵ This partly reflects the fact that

⁶⁴ Deposition books do not record *all* cases brought before the court; rather, they record cases for which witnesses were produced to provide evidence. Between March 1561 and March 1562, for instance, the court books for this year show that 282 office cases *alone* were heard in the Gloucester consistory court (see GRO, GDR/18 and GDR/19); however, not all of these cases produced depositions. Only 16 cases within these years were found in the GDR/17 deposition book for the same period.

⁶⁵ Per capita figures of 0.000232027 and 0.000101463 cases heard for the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter respectively were calculated by taking the total number of cases heard between 1550 and 1650 and estimating the average number of cases per year. The populations of the two

records from the Exeter diocesan court have a lower survival rate. However, it also suggests a greater preoccupation with moral conduct in the diocese of Gloucester and consequently, stronger enforcement of ecclesiastical law. Covering a geographically larger area, the Exeter church court may have struggled to exert its influence over its population, particularly in more remote or peripheral areas.

Figure 1.3. Number of cases recorded in the depositions of the church court of the diocese of Exeter, 1556-1640.



Sources: DHC, Chanter deposition books.

Geographical distribution of cases

The distribution of cases across parishes indicates the extent to which parishioners directly encountered church courts. Witnesses often named the specific parish in which the litigant parties lived and disclosed where they had witnessed disputed incidents or events. This information allows the primary location of a case to be determined.

dioceses in the year 1600 has been used as an average estimate of the population throughout the period: see Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, p. 25.

The data presented in table 1.3 divides the cases along parish boundaries. Cases were produced by a total of 301 Gloucestershire parishes, accounting for 1771 of the 1997 cases recorded in the depositions. Covering a geographically larger area, 459 parishes in the diocese of Exeter accounted for 2032 of the 2388 cases brought to the church court.⁶⁶ Kain and Oliver's map of pre-1850 English parishes suggests that there were 523 parishes in Gloucestershire and 852 parishes in Devon and Cornwall. Just over half of the total number of parishes in each diocese brought at least one deposition-producing case to the court.⁶⁷ Table 1.3 shows that in both dioceses, most parishes produced just one or two cases. In the Gloucester court, 125 parishes raised no more than two disputes each, representing 9.9 per cent of all cases, while 202 Devon and Cornwall parishes collectively produced 14.2 per cent of the total number of cases, each parish again responsible for just one or two. In Gloucestershire, five parishes produced more than thirty cases each, representing 11 per cent of all cases. Comparable numbers of cases were brought to the Exeter court by only two parishes, comprising just 4.2 per cent of all disputes.

Most deposition-producing cases recorded were instance cases raised by individuals rather than parish churchwardens or other ecclesiastical officials. A high number of cases from a parish does not necessarily represent institutional or parochial preoccupation with enforcing moral conduct. Parishes are not uniform in size, population or pattern of settlement. A higher population density or size of parish often accounts for a high number of cases from that parish. In highly-populated parishes, a larger number of individuals were likely to seek ecclesiastical justice.

The Gloucestershire depositions record that Berkeley, Cirencester, Tewkesbury, Cheltenham and Newent produced over 30 cases each. The Exeter depositions show that just Crediton and Chudleigh matched this number of cases. The absence of the diocesan capitals (Gloucester and Exeter) from these lists highlights the deficiencies of measuring case distribution at the parish level. Individual Gloucester and Exeter parishes feature less prominently in the data.

⁶⁶ No information was given to identify the parishes that produced the remaining 226 Gloucester cases and 356 Exeter cases.

⁶⁷ R. J. P. Kain and R. R. Oliver, *Historic Parishes of England and Wales: an Electronic Map of Boundaries before 1850 with a Gazetteer and Metadata*. [data collection]. (2001), UK Data Service. SN: 4348, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4348-1>.

St Nicholas parish in Gloucester brought fourteen cases before the court, the highest number of cases produced by an individual parish in the city of Gloucester. St Nicholas covered an area of just 0.28km², while the parish of Berkeley, which produced fifty-three cases was much larger, comprising six settlements – Alkington, Breadstone, Ham, Hamfellow, Hinton and Stone - and covering a total area of 59.2km².⁶⁸ As a case-producing parish, St Nicholas was more important than it initially appears, producing fifty cases per km², compared to Berkeley which produced just 0.89 cases per km². The higher population density of St Nicholas in comparison to Berkeley highlights the dangers of comparing absolute numbers of cases produced by each parish without considering parish size and composition.

⁶⁸ Samuel Lewis (ed.), *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London: Lewis, 1848), pp. 210-214.

Table 1.3. Distribution of litigation across parishes in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649

Cases produced by an individual parish (N)	Diocese of Gloucester			Diocese of Exeter		
	Parishes (N)	Cases (N)	Proportion of total cases (%)	Parishes (N)	Cases (N)	Proportion of total cases (%)
0	222	0	0.0	393	0	0.0
1 – 2	125	176	9.9	202	288	14.2
3 – 5	73	277	15.6	131	490	24.1
6 – 10	61	462	26.1	97	749	36.9
11 – 20	26	383	21.6	24	349	17.2
21 – 30	11	278	15.7	3	71	3.5
31 – 53	5	195	11	2	85	4.2
Total	523	1771	-	852	2032	-

Notes: This table shows, for instance, that in the diocese of Gloucester, 125 parishes produced between one and two cases, representing 176 cases in total or 9.9 per cent of all cases. In 96 cases, 'Gloucester' was recorded as the primary location of the dispute but no specific parish was given. The same was true for 46 'Exeter' cases. These are not represented in the table.

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Figures 1.4 and 1.5 represent the total number of cases that each parish in the two dioceses produced normalized by parish area. Gloucester and Exeter parishes have been grouped together to provide a better visual demonstration of the high proportions of cases produced by these diocesan capitals. Disputes that took place in Gloucester and Exeter, but for which no specific parish was recorded, have therefore been included in these figures. Comparison of the two maps highlights the different patterns of case production across the two dioceses. In Gloucestershire, a large proportion of cases were concentrated in Gloucester but a high volume of the court's business also stemmed from parishes encircling this urban centre, stretching from Berkeley in the south to Bishop's Cleeve in the north. In the diocese of Exeter, however, cases were more scattered. High volumes of the court's business came from Exeter but the majority of cases were produced by parishes across Devon. Figure 1.5 shows that in relation to the size of the parish, a high proportion of cases were produced in the small but densely populated towns of Dartmouth St. Saviour and Kingsbridge: these two towns produced ten and five cases respectively.⁶⁹ Comparing the proportion of cases each parish produced to their relative sizes and populations therefore brings the importance of particular parishes to the fore.

Considered as cities rather than a disparate collection of small parishes, Gloucester and Exeter are slightly overrepresented in terms of their respective populations; this is particularly the case for Gloucester. Jonathan Barry suggests that by 1660, a quarter of the South-West's population resided within towns.⁷⁰ Exeter was larger than Gloucester: in 1660, its population stood at 11,500, whereas Gloucester was less than half its size, containing 4750 inhabitants.⁷¹ Based on estimated county populations of 1600, around 3 per cent of the diocese of Exeter lived in Exeter itself, and 5 per cent of the population of Gloucestershire lived in Gloucester.⁷² A comparatively high number of cases were produced in

⁶⁹ Dartmouth housed a population of just over 1000 in 1377 and between 3000 and 4000 in 1801, Kingsbridge contained just 608 people in 1801. High population density therefore explains why Dartmouth St. Saviour, as a small town parish produced ten cases while the less densely populated town of Kingsbridge produced five. For population figures, see W. G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), pp. 107, 174, 419.

⁷⁰ Barry, 'The Cambridge Urban History of Britain', p. 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷² Broadberry et al., *British Economic Growth*, p. 25.

each city: 6.2 per cent were produced in Exeter and 8.4 per cent of cases were produced in Gloucester.

Both figures show that parishes on the peripheries of the dioceses brought few or no cases before the court. The diocese of Exeter comprised both Devon and Cornwall; yet less than 16 per cent of the total number of cases heard originated from Cornish parishes. Few Cornish people had any involvement with the church court. This is not unexpected; while litigation fees and expenses were paid by the court in office cases, it was the responsibility of instigating parties to bear charges in instance cases. J.A. Vage suggests that depositions were typically made in person before the Exeter court, proposing that parties and witnesses travelled to the city for their cases to be heard or for their evidence to be recorded.⁷³ However, Price indicates that in Gloucestershire some rural deans took evidence locally. In a 1554 defamation dispute involving inhabitants of Temple Guiting, the rural Dean of Stow examined witnesses and his deputy recorded the acts, while in 1566, the Dean of Dursley heard the deposition of Richard Edwards locally, as Richard 'was afraid to come to Gloucester by reason of his debts'.⁷⁴ Old age or sickness might also prevent a witness from appearing before the church court. In a 1606 testamentary dispute heard in the Gloucester court, Walter Addams, the curate of Eastleach Turville deposed that

John Greene one of the witnesses in this article named is a verie aged man and unable to travell far in this busyness yet he doth often come to his parishe churche to service (his age notwithstanding).⁷⁵

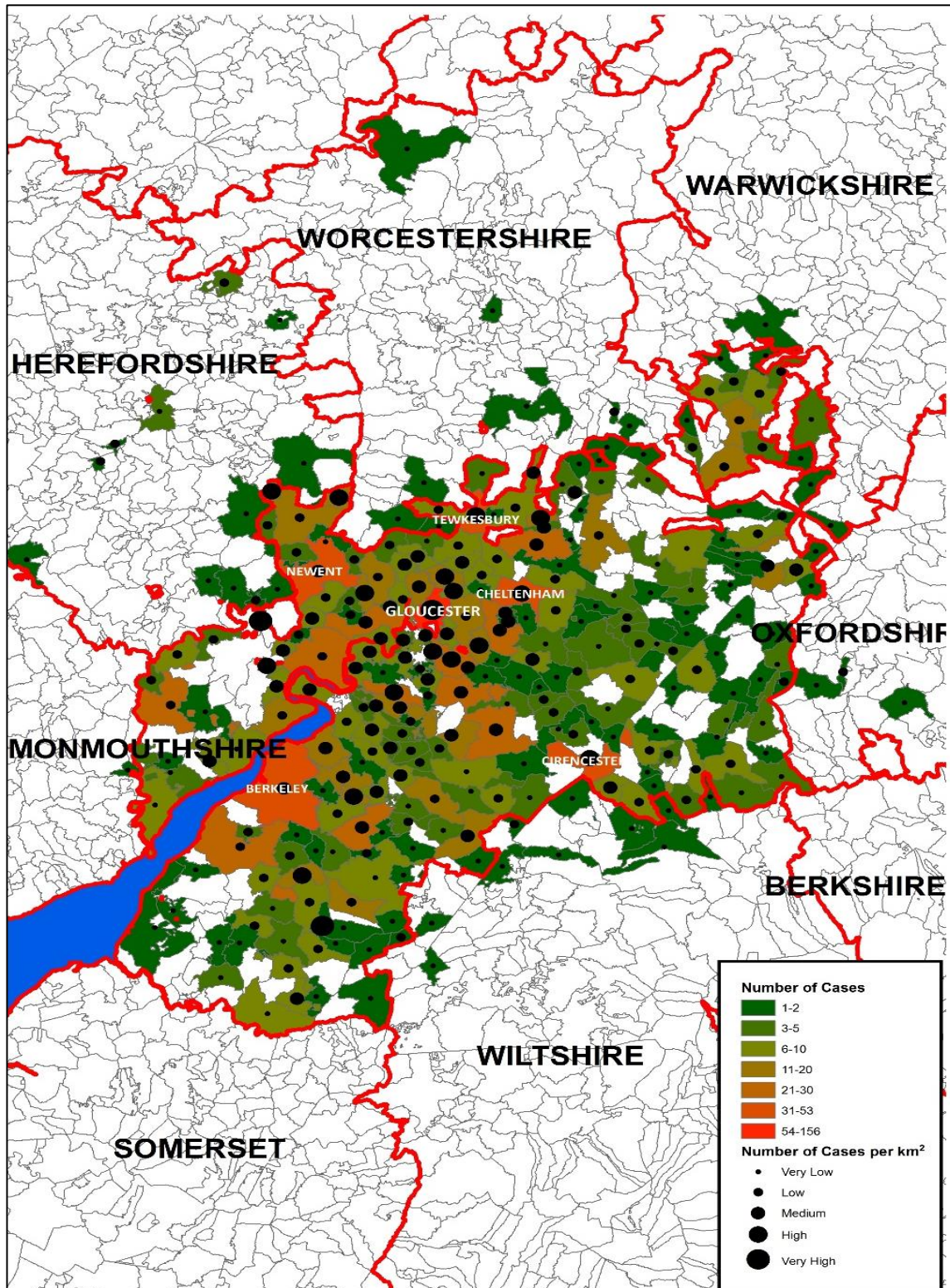
The court was approximately 40 kilometres away from the parish of Eastleach Turville, a considerable distance for an elderly man to travel. The absence of John Greene's deposition within the GDR/100 deposition book suggests that his testimony was taken and recorded locally but has not survived.

⁷³ J. A. Vage, 'The Records of the Bishop of Exeter's Consistory Court, c.1500-1660', *Transactions of the Devon Association*, 114 (1982), 92.

⁷⁴ Price, 'The Administration of the Diocese of Gloucester', p. 224.

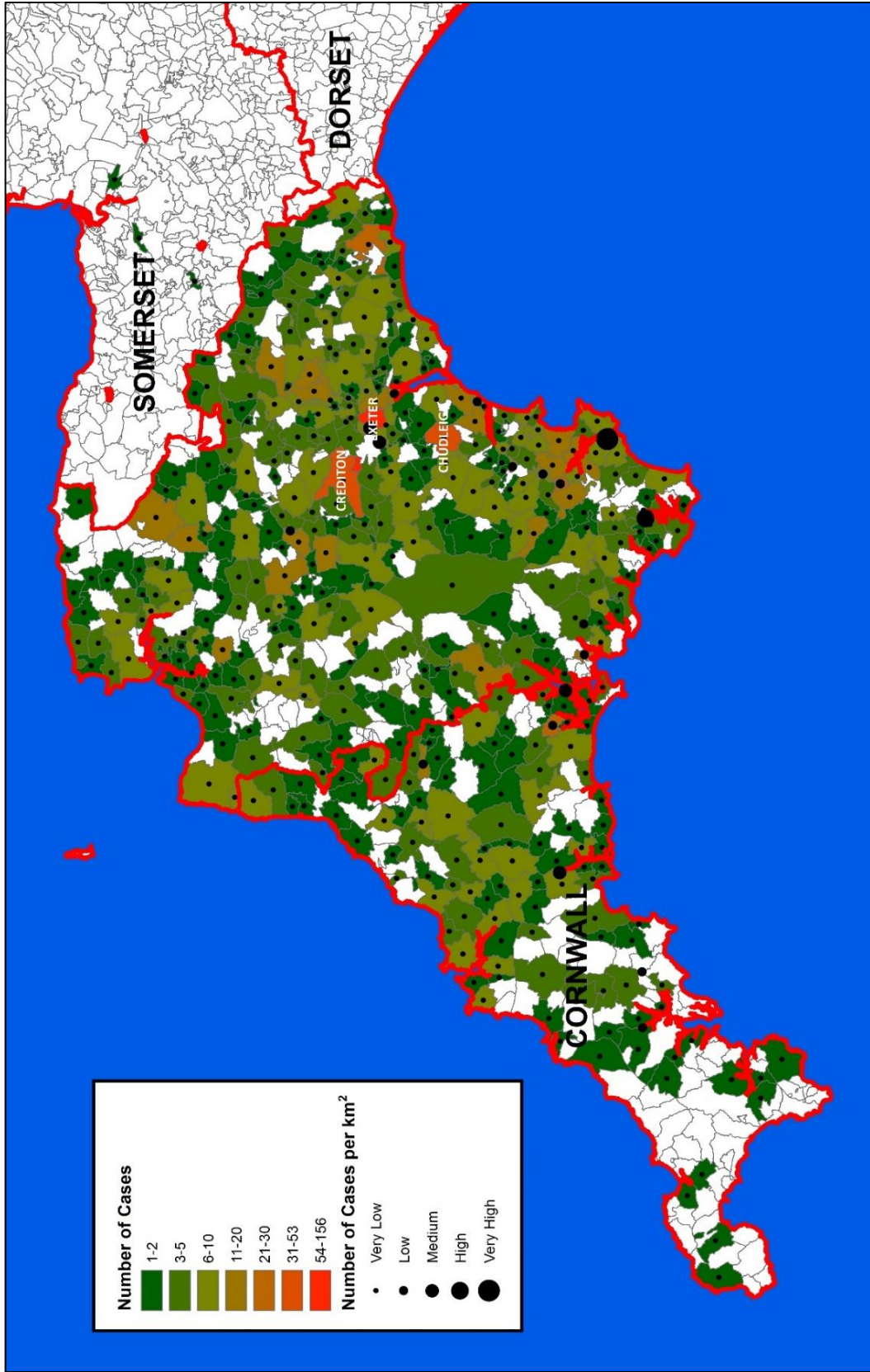
⁷⁵ GRO, GDR/100, Case 602, Arnold Coll and Lewis Jones v Emma Haines and Edward Greene (1606).

Figure 1.4. Map of the diocese of Gloucestershire, representing case-producing parishes also normalised by area of parish, 1548-1649.



Source: As in figure 1.2.

Figure 1.5. Map of the diocese of Exeter, representing case-producing parishes also normalised by area of parish, 1548-1649.



Source: As in figure 1.3

The clustering of cases around diocesan capitals as represented in figure 1.4 nonetheless suggests that the courts were more commonly used by those in close proximity to it, and that local collection of depositions was not routine. Individuals were generally responsible for bringing themselves to court and evidence was only taken locally in exceptional circumstances. The relatively few cases produced by Cornish parishioners (382 out of 2388 heard in the Exeter court over the century) indicate that the lengthy travel and associated high costs of attending the Exeter court were prohibitive to many but justifiable to others who sought ecclesiastical justice.

Distribution of cases was uneven: cases were more frequently produced by parishes surrounding the urban centres of the dioceses, while parishes on the peripheries had little interaction with the courts. The relative size of a parish might determine the number of cases it produced, but population density was most important. Parishes that covered small areas could produce relatively high numbers of cases, their large populations and more highly concentrated living arrangements provoking more recourse to ecclesiastical justice by their inhabitants.

Types of Cases

Not only was church court activity distributed unevenly along geographical lines, depositions from both dioceses also disproportionately represent particular types of disputes. As office cases produced fewer witnesses and therefore depositions, certain types of cases that made up the quotidian business of the courts are underrepresented. Adultery and incontinence cases, for example, were more frequently heard by the courts than the depositions suggest.⁷⁶ However, deposition-producing cases were often lengthier and therefore more time-consuming for the courts. Acting as mediators between litigant parties and examining the witnesses that they produced were probably matters that church court officials spent a significant proportion of their time attending to.

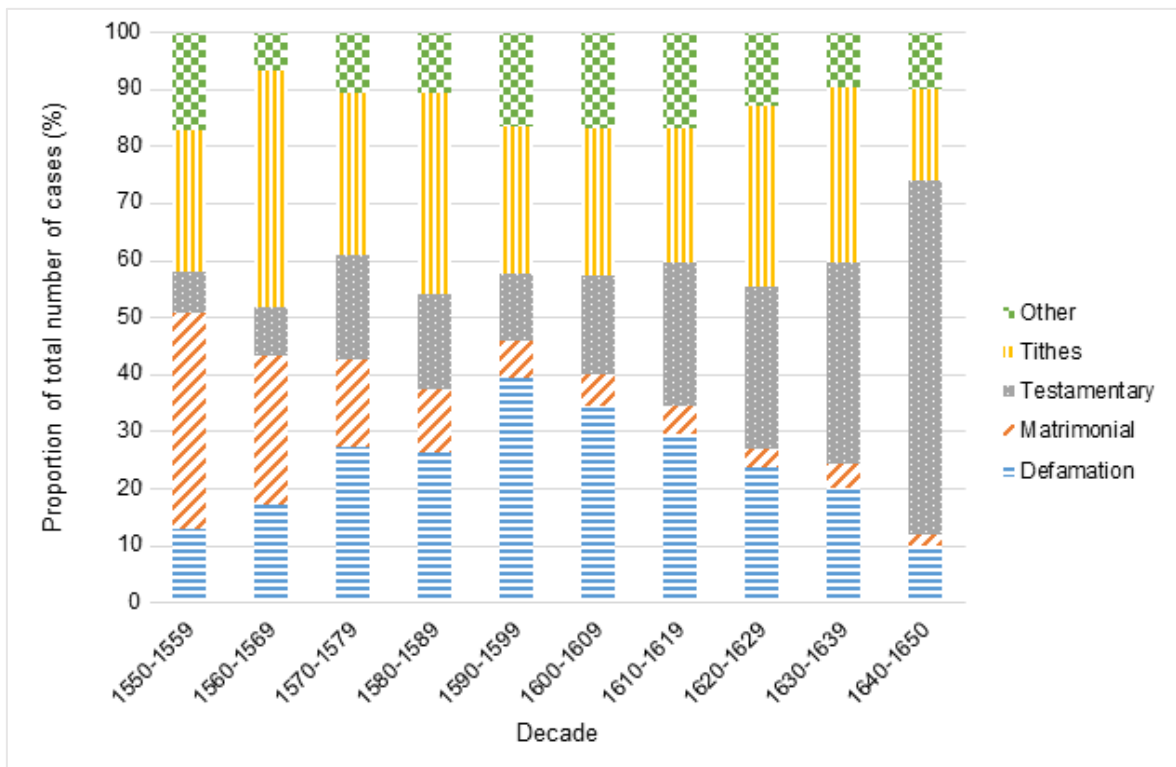
Figures 1.6 and 1.7 show the most frequently heard types of cases that produced depositions: tithe, defamation, matrimonial and testamentary disputes.⁷⁷ Only

⁷⁶ See n.1, p.50.

⁷⁷ The decades 1620-1629 and 1640-1649 have been omitted from figure 2.97 as only two cases (both tithe disputes) were recorded in the deposition books for these decades.

11.2 per cent of Gloucester court cases and 12.8 per cent of Exeter court cases heard throughout the century fell outside these four primary categories. The proportions of these types of cases heard throughout the period were very similar in both courts. Tithes disputes in both courts comprised just under a third of all cases. Tithes were collected as a form of tax to the value of one tenth on income produced by the land and from the produce of livestock grazing on the land.⁷⁸ Great tithes included cereals and pulses, such as wheat, barley, beans and oats. Cheese, wool, milk and bees were generally counted as small tithes. Tithes were paid in kind or sometimes in cash on particular 'reckoning days'. They were traditionally paid to support the clergy; however, the dissolution of the monasteries and subsequent sale of church lands meant that tithes became private property, enjoyed by laymen who purchased the rights from the crown or nobility.⁷⁹

Figure 1.6. Types of cases heard in the church court of the diocese of Gloucester, 1548-1649 (expressed as a percentage of the total number of cases heard).

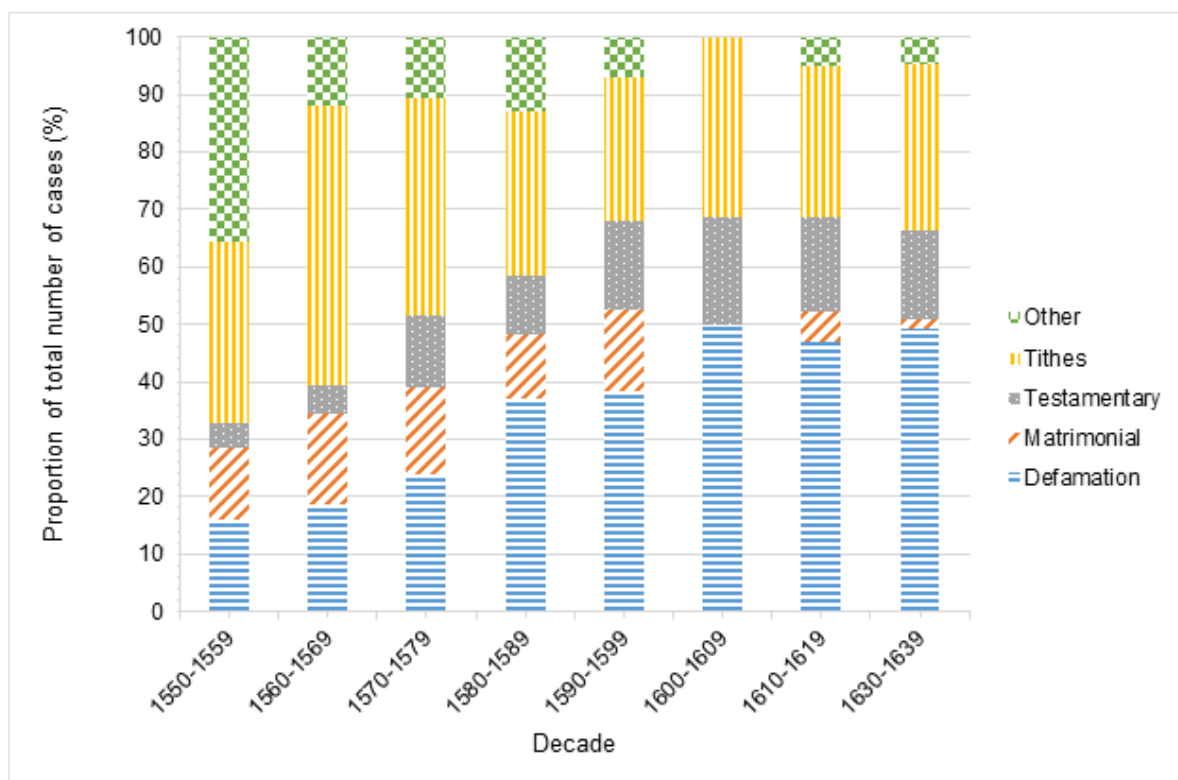


Sources: As in figure 1.2.

⁷⁸ Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 296.

⁷⁹ Joan Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. Vol. 5, 1640-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 389.

Figure 1.7. Types of cases heard in the church court of the diocese of Exeter, 1556-1640 (expressed as a percentage of the total number of cases heard).



Sources: As in figure 1.3.

Brian Outhwaite suggests that the high proportion of tithe disputes heard in early modern church courts was due to changes in land ownership, caused both by the dissolution and inflated agricultural prices that led tithe-owners to become 'discontented with former agreements that had substituted cash payments for payment of tithes in kind'.⁸⁰ Tithing rights and processes could be complex and were often determined by local custom. Tithe disputes heard in the church courts were sometimes raised by disgruntled tithe-owners against parishioners whose payment (or non-payment) of tithes was deemed unsatisfactory. Other disputes were raised over customs of tithe rights. Witnesses were therefore produced to testify their knowledge of parish customs and whether they considered an individual's tithe to have been properly set out or paid. In both courts, the proportion of tithe disputes increased in the decade 1560-1569, comprising 43.8 per cent of cases in the Gloucester court and 48.7 per cent in the Exeter court.

⁸⁰ Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 96.

Ann Tarver suggests that increases in tithe disputes at particular times can be explained by local conditions concerning the passing of land and associated tithes from monastic to lay hands.⁸¹

Figures 1.6 and 1.7 show that testamentary cases, including disputes over the authenticity of wills and non-payment of legacies, appeared more frequently towards the end of the period. The low number of disputes (just fifty cases) heard in the final decade of the period in the Gloucester court indicates that the dramatic increase in testamentary disputes from 7.1 per cent in the 1550s to 62 per cent in the 1640s is surely overinflated; almost two-thirds of the fifty cases heard concerned wills. Nonetheless, in the 1630s, the proportion of this type of case had risen to 35.9 per cent. The same increase is evident but less pronounced in the Exeter court depositions, with testamentary cases comprising just 4.5 per cent of cases in the 1550s compared to 15.6 per cent in the 1630s. This pattern is typical: Ralph Houlbrooke notes a similar increase, suggesting that these disputes were positively received by church courts as they generally took longer to resolve and were therefore relatively profitable.⁸²

The matrimonial disputes represented in figures 1.6 and 1.7 are solely concerned with marriage formation and the authenticity of marriage contracts and betrothals, although other matrimonial cases such as separation of a married couple were recorded in the depositions.⁸³ While the law stipulated that banns should be read and solemnized in church, canon law recognised other forms of marriage contracts; church courts were therefore responsible for establishing whether a union was binding.⁸⁴ Depositions relating to matrimonial disputes generally declined in both courts. This decline is most distinct in Gloucestershire: matrimonial cases decreased from 38.8 per cent in the 1550s to 2 per cent in the 1640s, compared to a decline from 12.3 per cent in the 1550s to 1.6 per cent in the 1630s in the Exeter court. The same pattern of decline is found in Ingram's study of the church courts of the dioceses of Ely, Norwich, Canterbury and York and the archdeaconries of Chichester and Leicester.⁸⁵ Both Houlbrooke and

⁸¹ Anne Tarver, 'The Due Tenth: Problems of the Leicestershire Tithing Process 1560-1640', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 78 (2004), 106.

⁸² Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 65.

⁸³ Separation cases have been included in the category 'Other'.

⁸⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 191-192.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Ingram attribute this decline to the higher profitability of lengthier, more complex disputes such as tithe and testamentary cases.⁸⁶

The main difference between the courts lies in the proportion of defamation disputes heard. Defamation cases generally concerned altercations between neighbours, in which the reputation of at least one of the parties was allegedly impaired. Countersuits in response to these claims of defamation were common; defamation of character fed into the moral economy of creditworthiness, honesty and repute within early modern communities. Being defamed could have both social and economic consequences. Gloucestershire depositions record an increased number of defamation cases up until the late sixteenth century, followed by a gradual decline to roughly the same proportions recorded in the 1550s. The Exeter data documents a similar increase, peaking in the first decade of the seventeenth century. However, no corresponding decline is evident in the depositions: defamation disputes continued to represent around half of all cases heard in the decades 1610-1619 and 1630-1639. Ingram's data corresponds with the pattern found in the Exeter court; he notes that while some defamation disputes were dealt with in common law courts, this did not significantly reduce the number of defamation disputes heard within church courts.⁸⁷ The Gloucester court was perhaps atypical in witnessing a decline in defamation litigation in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Litigants and witnesses

Gender

Church courts were overwhelmingly male-dominated. Those involved in administering justice were men as were the majority of litigants and witnesses who came before the courts. Of the 10,724 plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses recorded in the Gloucester court depositions, 77.6 per cent were men. Male litigants and witnesses similarly comprised 80.3 per cent of the 10,577 people who came before the Exeter court.⁸⁸ Figure 1.8 shows that representation of women was fairly low across all roles in both courts. As litigants, women comprised just 28.7 per cent of defendants recorded in the Gloucester

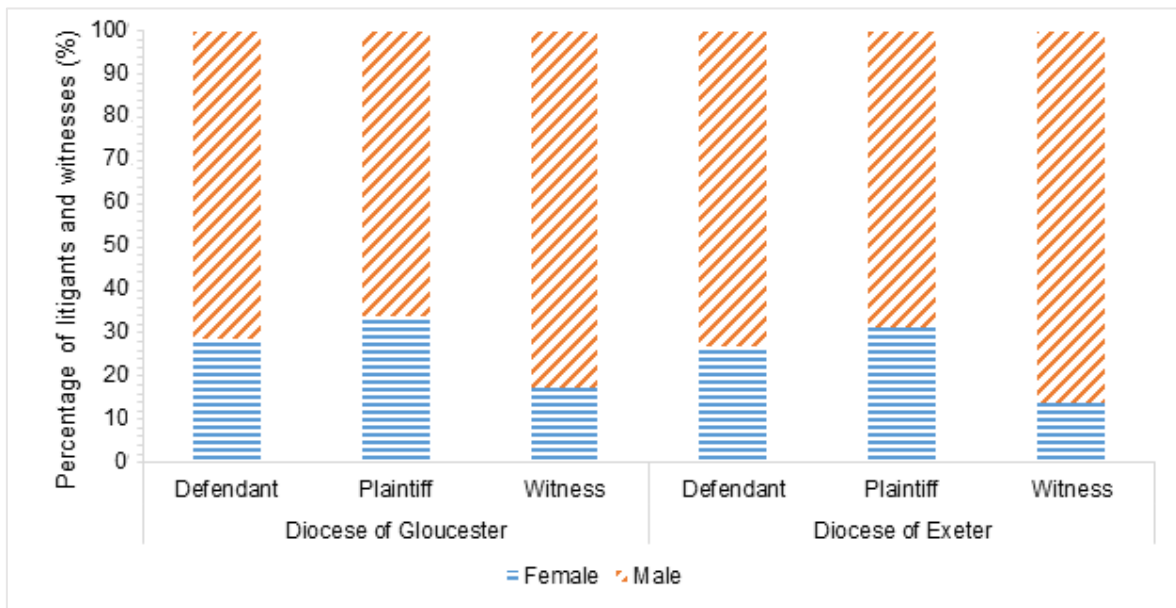
⁸⁶ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 65; Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 296-297.

⁸⁸ This calculation has been made from the total number of plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses brought before the court for whom gender could be identified.

depositions and 34 per cent of plaintiffs. In the Exeter court, they were marginally fewer, representing 26.8 per cent and 31.3 per cent respectively. Men were therefore more likely to produce cases and were more frequently summoned to the courts as defendants.

Figure 1.8. Gender distribution of litigants and witnesses recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Sources: As in table 1.2.

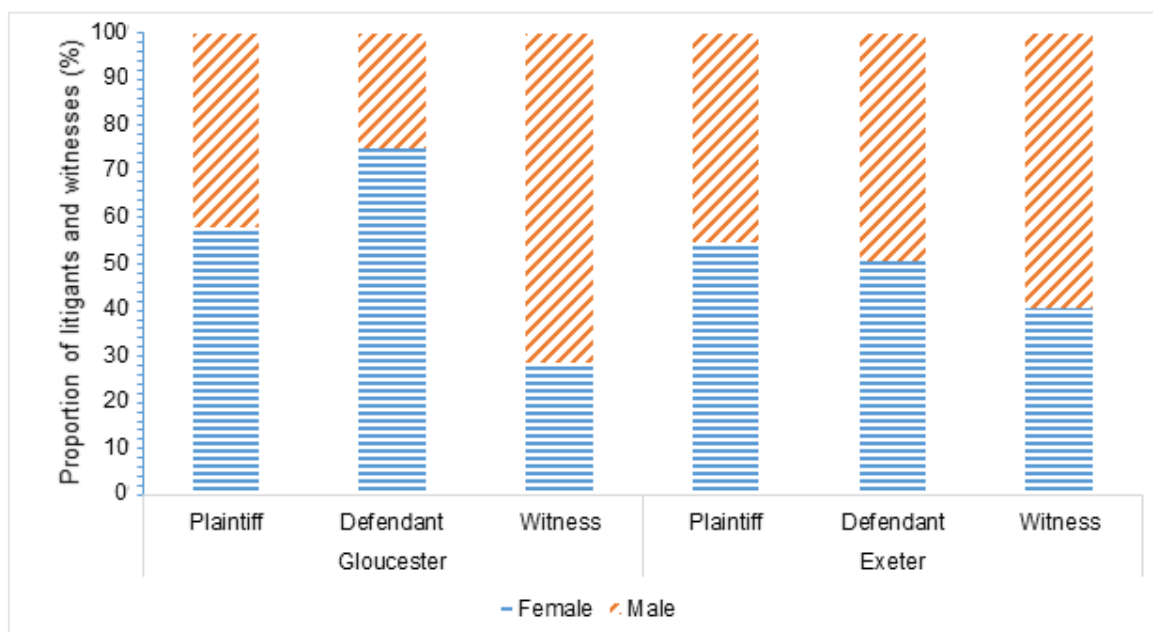
As witnesses, Gloucestershire women were slightly better represented than their Devon and Cornwall counterparts, comprising 17.3 per cent of all witnesses compared to 13.8 per cent. While women, and particularly rural women, were recorded less frequently than men, the *number* of women represented in the depositions is relatively high: 2817 and 2230 women were recorded across the Gloucester and Exeter courts, allowing considerable opportunity to study women's experiences in this period.

Robert Shoemaker and Gowing both note that gender difference in the litigants of the London courts was smaller than in rural courts.⁸⁹ The data presented in

⁸⁹ Robert Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, c.1660-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 215; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp. 13-14.

figure 1.9 confirms that urban female litigants and witnesses were better represented than their rural counterparts. In both courts, but particularly in the Gloucester court, urban women were more frequently recorded as plaintiffs and defendants than men, indicating a difference in the incidence in which urban and rural men and women sought legal action. Women represented just under a third of all witnesses living in Gloucester parishes, and comprised 40.3 per cent of all witnesses residing within the city of Exeter. This data mirrors the gendered patterns of engagement found by Shoemaker and Gowing of rural and urban society with particular courts. In the cities of Gloucester and Exeter, women were equally or more likely to be recorded as plaintiffs and defendants than men. Gender difference of witnesses was more pronounced, although urban female witnesses were nonetheless better represented than their rural counterparts. The data presented in figure 1.8 suggest a marked difference in the interaction of rural and urban men and women with the church courts.

Figure 1.9. Gender distribution of litigants and witnesses from the cities of Gloucester and Exeter, represented in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Sources: As in table 1.2

Unlike women more generally, table 1.4 shows that female servants were infrequently recorded as plaintiffs, probably due to the high cost of producing a case. Female servants who pursued legal proceedings through the church courts were usually financially supported by a family member and came from middling or wealthy backgrounds. In 1556, Anne Collens of Tregony in Cornwall raised a matrimonial suit against Edward Psthawe, with witnesses claiming she was too young to marry. Anne was probably of relatively high birth; her contested husband, Edward, owned a tin mine and her godfather was a knight.⁹⁰ More frequently, female servants were recorded as witnesses. Although they still comprised only a very small proportion of those called upon to provide evidence in the courts, it is significant that they were produced at all. It was important that witnesses should be economically and socially creditworthy; female servants were not always long-term residents of the communities they worked in, and therefore their credibility was not necessarily established.

A separate, relatively large group of female servants were recorded neither as litigants nor witnesses but were referred to contextually by other witnesses. The

⁹⁰ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 50, Anne Collens v Edward Psthawe (1556).

frequency with which they were recorded contextually indicates how ubiquitous servants were within communities. These references were sometimes made incidentally: depositions from a 1568 adultery case heard in the Exeter court record that a servant accompanied defendant Thomasina Towker to Henry Peryam's house and was asked to remove herself from a private conversation between Towker and Peryam.⁹¹

Table 1.4. Female servant litigants and witnesses in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Role in case	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
Plaintiff	33	15.6	25	18.0
Defendant	16	7.6	18	12.9
Witness	162	76.8	96	69.0
Mentioned contextually	106	-	75	-
<i>Total (excl. contextually mentioned servants)</i>	<i>211</i>		<i>139</i>	

Sources: As in table 1.2.

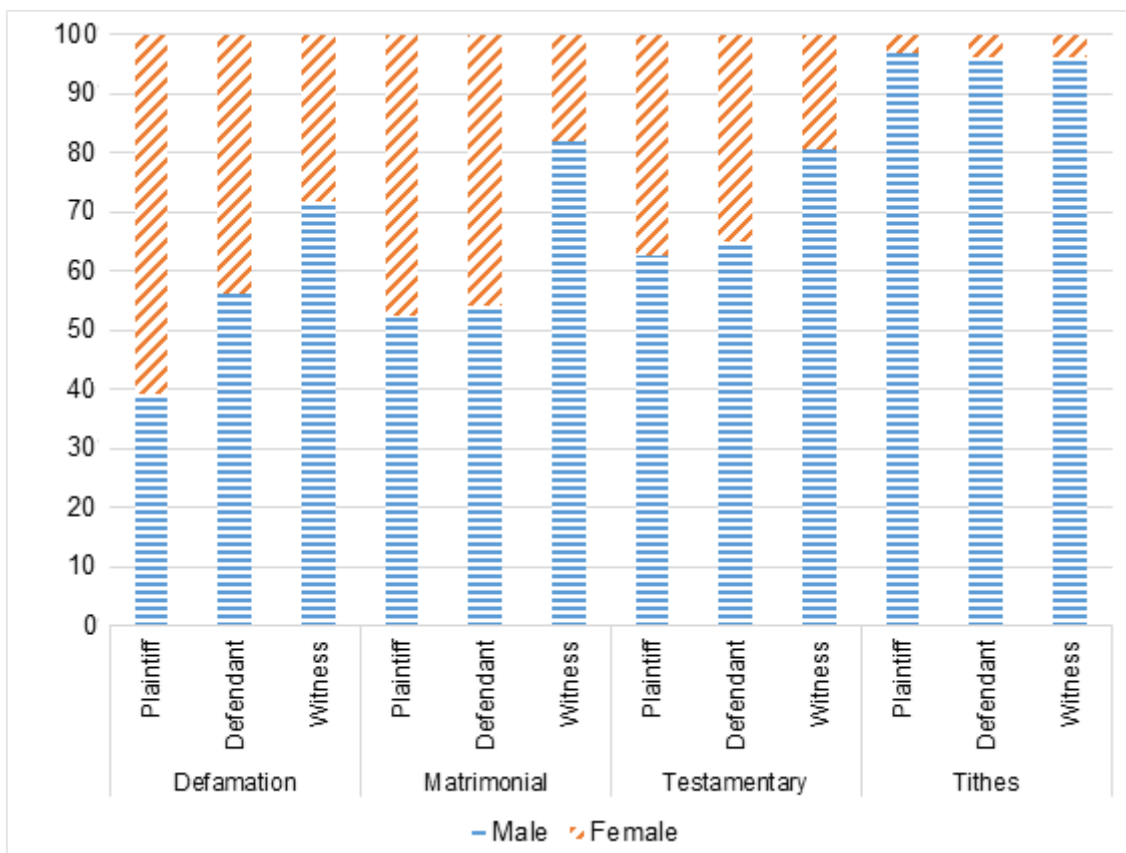
Gender and types of case

Some types of cases invited limited female participation. Figure 1.10 shows the gender distribution of litigants and witnesses involved in the four primary types of case that the church courts heard between 1550 and 1650. Female involvement as litigants was limited in testamentary and tithe disputes where financial recompense or entitlement was disputed. Women represented just 3.3 per cent of plaintiffs and 3.9 per cent of defendants in tithe cases. Tithe ownership was almost exclusively male and so the low proportion of female plaintiffs is unsurprising; ownership of tithes only extended to women when a male owner died and bequeathed the tithes to his widow. Payment of tithes was generally perceived as the responsibility of the head of the household and therefore most

⁹¹ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 898, Office v Thomasina Towker (1568).

defendants were male, although some women were recorded paying tithes. In Hawkesbury in Gloucestershire in 1604, widow Edith Longden deposed that as a servant fifty-five years earlier, ‘by the comandment of her said Mr and dame did bring [...] Cheeses unto hortons church and there left them for the said parson’.⁹² Shepard and Nicola Whyte note that Norfolk women often paid cheese tithes, cheese making being a typically female activity.⁹³

Figure 1.10. Gender distribution across the four primary types of cases heard in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Testamentary disputes were also concerned with property. While inheritance patterns varied across the country, Amy Erickson suggests that most ordinary people privileged their eldest sons in their bequests but not too much; younger sons and daughters were typically given equal provision in the form of moveable

⁹² DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1582, *Sprynt v Thomas Wichalse* (1583).

⁹³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, pp. 222-224; Nicola Whyte, 'Custodians of Memory: Women and Custom in Rural England c. 1550-1700', *Cultural and Social History*, 8 (2011), 156-158.

property rather than land, which was usually reserved for the eldest son.⁹⁴ Under the laws of coverture, goods were bequeathed to married women but passed into their husbands' possession. In 1638, Eustice Peeke of Tavistock in Devon raised a testamentary dispute against William Carew for failing to deliver a feather bed that was bequeathed to his wife Jane by her former mistress. Jane was recorded as a witness, demonstrating other ways that married women might be actively involved in legal proceedings concerning bequests made to them.⁹⁵

By contrast, women were more likely than men to appear as plaintiffs in defamation disputes, representing 60.6 per cent of all plaintiffs. They also comprised 43.8 per cent of individuals summoned to court on charges of defamation. High female participation as litigants in defamation disputes is identified in the London church court by Gowing: by 1633 around 85 per cent of all London defamation cases were instigated by women.⁹⁶ While the London court was unique in this exceptionally high proportion of female litigants in defamation cases, depositions of the Gloucester and Exeter diocesan courts exhibited a more muted but similar pattern.

The proportion of male and female litigants in matrimonial disputes was relatively equal. This trend was not uniform across the country: Ingram notes that male plaintiffs were more numerous in the diocese of Ely, but in Wiltshire, female plaintiffs outnumbered males 'in a ratio of about 3:2' from the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁹⁷ Few matrimonial cases were heard in the Gloucester and Exeter courts in the early seventeenth century; however, figure 1.11 suggests that from 1600, men were only slightly more likely than women to instigate matrimonial litigation in the Gloucester court. Yet plaintiffs who raised matrimonial suits in the Exeter court were overwhelmingly male between 1600 and 1650. As witnesses, women were fewer in number. Men may have been considered more credible witnesses not only in the courts generally but also to marriage contracts specifically, as Gowing suggests.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 77.

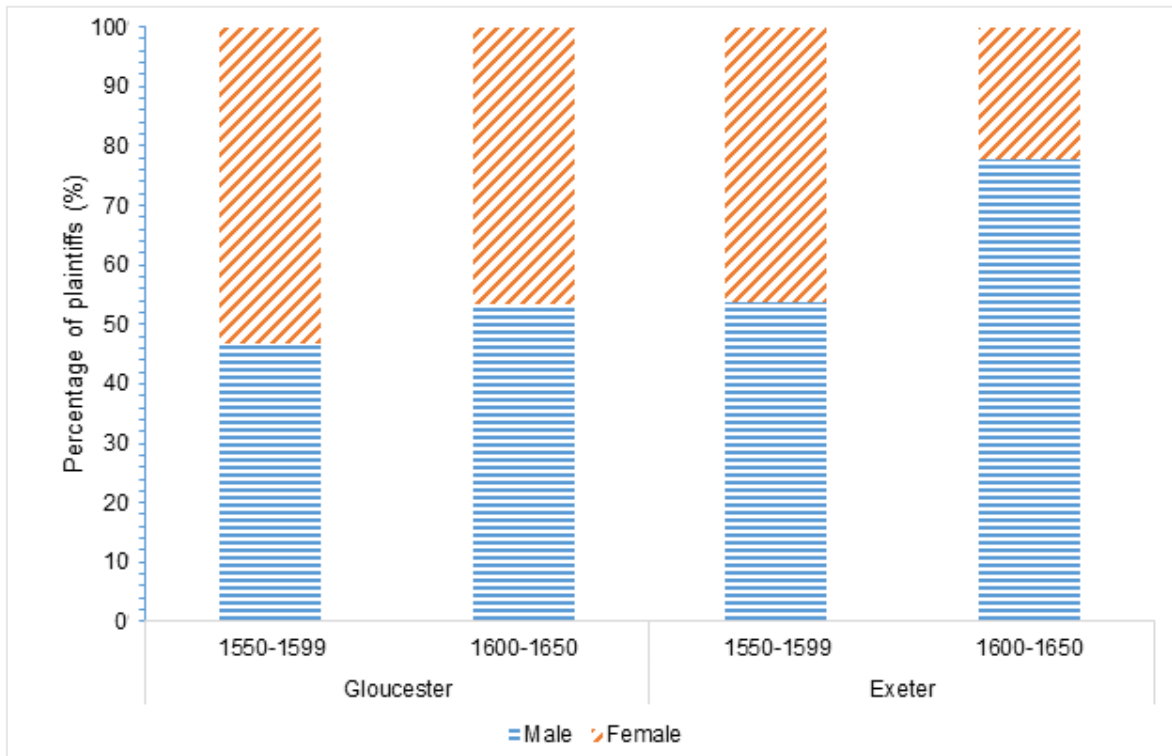
⁹⁵ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638).

⁹⁶ Laura Gowing, 'Language, Power and the Law: Women's Slander Litigation in Early Modern London', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London: UCL Press, 1994), p. 27.

⁹⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 194.

⁹⁸ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 51.

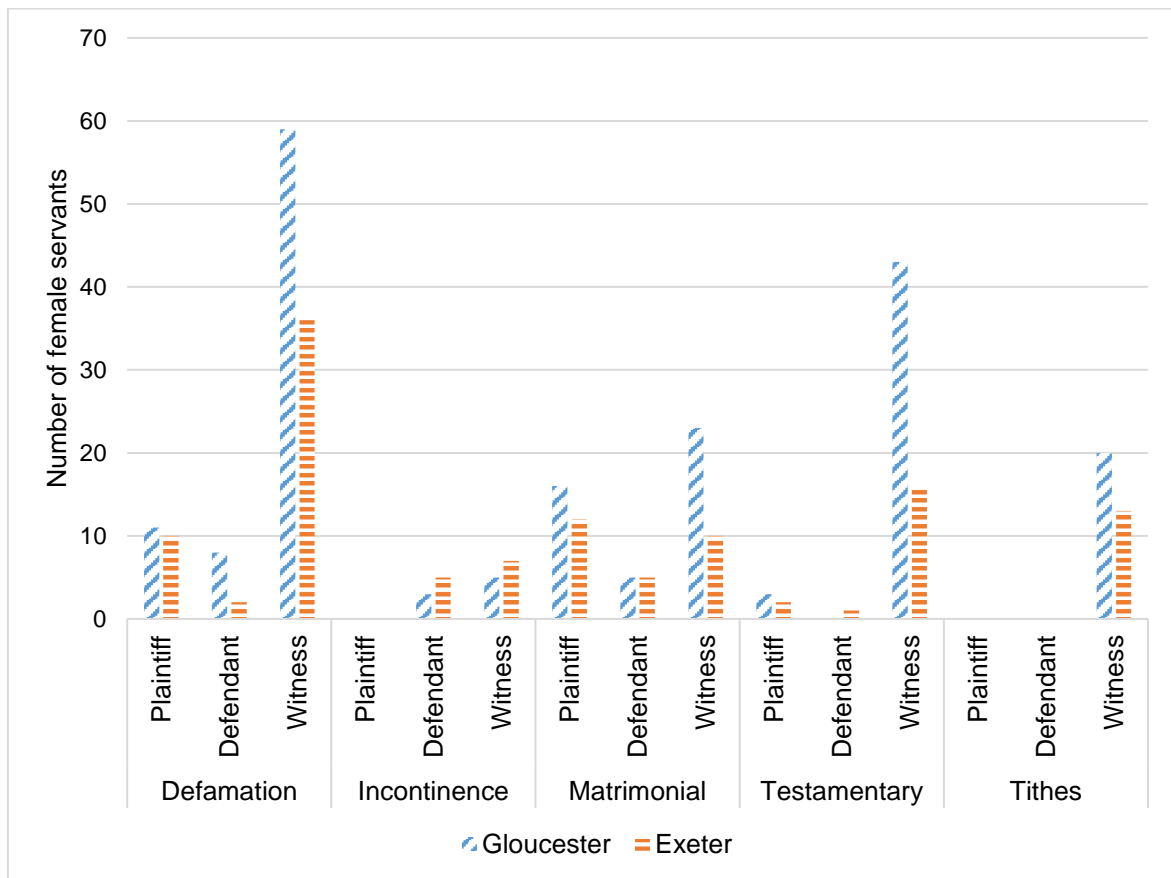
Figure 1.11. Gender distribution of plaintiffs in matrimonial disputes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Sources: As in Table 1.2.

The range of cases that female servants were involved in is represented in figure 1.12. Although they were recorded in almost all types of cases across both courts, they most commonly appeared in defamation, testamentary, matrimonial, tithe and incontinence disputes. Given the high proportion of women involved in defamation suits, it is unsurprising that female servants were most frequently recorded as witnesses in this type of litigation. Their proximity to other women in the early modern community often placed them within direct earshot of defamatory words spoken.

Figure 1.12. Types of cases in which female servants were recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Sources: As in Table 1.2.

As plaintiffs and defendants, they were most numerous in matrimonial disputes, whereby the legitimacy of an alleged betrothal was in question. Most female servants were unmarried and therefore courtship and marriage primarily concerned this occupational group. More female servants were recorded as plaintiffs than as defendants. However, the relatively equal proportions of male and female litigants in matrimonial suits, shown in figure 1.11, suggests that this discrepancy reflects the particular ways in which female service was recorded. Female servants who were recorded as plaintiffs, for example, frequently produced their employers as witnesses. In their depositions, these employer-witnesses often stated this employment relationship with the plaintiff, thereby identifying her as a servant. In 1556, witness Richard Yeat of Woodbury in Devon deposed that he was asked by John Wyllys for permission ‘that he might marye

with *his mayde*.⁹⁹ In 1616, Lawrence Bridger, the rector of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire deposed that 'Elizabeth Tayler [...] was servant & did dwell in howse with this deponent in Slymbridge', Elizabeth having raised a matrimonial case against a suitor named Moses Frape.¹⁰⁰

Few female servants were recorded within tithe disputes despite the high volume of cases recorded in the depositions. Tithe disputes concerned people with land and as servants did not own land, they had no reason to raise tithe disputes against other parties, nor could be cited as defendants. They were occasionally recorded as witnesses, who were asked to affirm parish tithe customs, recall the ways in which tithes were paid historically within a particular parish and describe their knowledge of how tithable produce had been set out or paid. Despite the high mobility of servants in early modern England, servant witnesses demonstrated good awareness of parish tithe customs and peculiarities.¹⁰¹ In 1604, Izoda Brayne, the servant of David Jordan of Yate in Gloucestershire described the value of her employer's hay and the quantity of cows and pigs he owned, deposing that 'she was servant unto the foresaid Jordan in the foresaid yeare and did see the same to be as before she hath deposed'.¹⁰² Familiarity with the farms in which they lived and worked granted female servants access to participation as witnesses in tithe litigation.

The types of cases that female servants were recorded in were therefore not dissimilar to those that brought women more generally to the court. Tithe disputes were typically a male affair, although some women, including servants, offered knowledge of customs and tithing processes as witnesses. Frequent participation in defamation disputes was common to both women generally and female servants specifically, indicating the involvement of women in authorising, monitoring and legitimising an individual's creditworthiness, honour and reputation.

Age

The age of almost every witness was recorded in the biographical preamble to each deposition but was rarely recorded for litigants or those mentioned

⁹⁹ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 72, Margery Awstyn v John Wyllys (1556). Italics my own.

¹⁰⁰ GRO, GDR/127, Case 943, Elizabeth Tayler v Moses Frape (1616).

¹⁰¹ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, pp. 72-74.

¹⁰² GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jordan (1604).

contextually. Age has been recorded in the database as an approximated date of birth: on 22 April 1625, Walter Godfrey of Redmarley on the Gloucestershire-Worcestershire border was recorded as 85 years old. His date of birth has accordingly been calculated as 22 April 1540.¹⁰³ This allows multiple appearances of the same witness across different cases over time to be recorded in a single entry in the database.

Both courts summoned witnesses from across the age spectrum. The youngest witnesses were aged 10 in both the Exeter and Gloucester courts and the oldest witnesses were aged 103 and 100 in the two courts respectively. Witnesses of these ages are not typical; Gowing notes that in London church court depositions, the young were frequently undermined by defendants who suggested that their youth made them less credible witnesses.¹⁰⁴ In early modern England, life expectancy at birth was approximately 37 years, but if an individual lived to the age of 30, they could expect to live until around the age of 60.¹⁰⁵ Centenarians were therefore few in number.

Depositions are full of impressions of age-appropriate behaviour for young people. Witnesses produced on the behalf of Anne Collens of Tregony in Cornwall complained in 1556 that her marriage to Edward Pasthawe was 'no lawfull marriage because she was so yong and litill and not xiii [13] yeres of age'.¹⁰⁶ In a 1606 testamentary dispute concerning the administration of the will of Alice Smith of Bishop's Cleeve in Gloucestershire, Thomas Fowler described the poor treatment of Alice's children, Katherine and Alice, deposing that

the sayde children beinge none of age to be placed abroade to learne breedinge in the worlde were suffred to goe att theyre owne pleasures verye idelye without anye regard or oversight.¹⁰⁷

Age was important in early modern society in determining appropriate behaviour at each life-cycle stage.

¹⁰³ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1143, Giles Turner v Jane Cooper (1625).

¹⁰⁴ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁵ See E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: a Reconstruction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 528, 250. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw large degrees of fluctuation in life expectancy due to mortality crises in several decades and so these averages over the century are crude estimates.

¹⁰⁶ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 50, Anne Collens v Edward Pasthawe (1556).

¹⁰⁷ GRO, GDR/100, Case 593, Richard Yarneton v Thomas Smithe (1606).

Ages recorded in depositions cannot be assumed to be precise. In his study of late medieval Essex, Lawrence Poos notes 'a disproportionate number of witnesses giving their ages as integral multiples of five or ten years', and characterises the phenomena as 'age heaping'.¹⁰⁸ In his study of a 1597 list of the Ipswich poor, Keith Thomas notes that 'age 60' was recorded more frequently than ages between 51 and 59.¹⁰⁹ Ages seem to have been rounded more frequently for those in the later stages of life. Shepard and Judith Spicksley observe that 'once a person approached the age of 40, decadal thresholds became more significant than an exact year count, whereas (especially amongst men) relative youth was reckoned more precisely'.¹¹⁰ Age was more carefully recorded when legal and economic maturity was unclear: in 1624, Thomas Griffin of Cheltenham was recorded as age 20 and a half, indicating his legal minority by six months.¹¹¹

Examples of such precision are rare. Table 1.5 shows the proportion of each number recorded as the final digit of all ages given in the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions. Decadal thresholds were clearly important; almost half of the ages recorded ended in 'nought'. Thomas suggests that 'six' was the second most common number recorded as the final digit of ages in early modern records, which he attributes to 'duodecimal thinking' (i.e. twelve pence in a shilling).¹¹² In Gloucester and Exeter court depositions, other numbers were almost as prominent: the number 'four' appeared as the final digit slightly more frequently than 'six' in the Gloucester court depositions. More striking are the few ages recorded ending in 'one' and 'nine', suggesting that a high proportion of liminal ages were rounded to decadal thresholds.

Table 1.5. Distribution of the final digit of ages recorded in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

¹⁰⁸ L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death, Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 193.

¹⁰⁹ Keith Thomas, 'Numeracy in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), 126.

¹¹⁰ Alexandra Shepard and Judith Spicksley, 'Worth, Age, and Social Status in Early Modern England', *The Economic History Review*, 64 (2011), 498.

¹¹¹ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1126, *Mary Pie v Mary Higges* (1624).

¹¹² Thomas, 'Numeracy', 126.

Final digit of recorded age	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
0	2962	44.9	3017	48.1
1	266	4.0	155	2.5
2	429	6.5	430	6.9
3	377	5.7	328	5.2
4	574	8.7	490	7.8
5	422	6.4	476	7.6
6	558	8.5	530	8.4
7	306	4.6	253	4.0
8	490	7.4	449	7.2
9	206	3.1	145	2.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>6590</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>6273</i>	<i>-</i>

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Discrepancies in the recording of age are found in the depositions. Thomas Clotworthy of South Tawton in Devon was recorded as a witness in the Exeter court twice over the course of his lifetime, in 1561 and in 1566. His place and length of residence as well as his connection to the litigants confirm his reappearance at the court; however, his recorded age in his second deposition (38) is inconsistent with the first (36), disagreeing with the approximated date of birth assigned in his first appearance by three years.¹¹³ Whether this discrepancy is indicative of lack of numeracy or lack of importance placed on accounting for one's age is unclear. It could also be attributed to poor record keeping: in 1617, Isabel Whattcott was recorded as 60 years old at the time of her examination. However, her interrogatory recorded that 'she knoweth not the daie and yeare of her birth'.¹¹⁴ Ages recorded in church court depositions cannot always be

¹¹³ DHC, Chanter 855a and 856, Case 402, Thomas Clotworthy v Eliza Hatche (1561); DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 676, Case 676, Thomas Clotworthy v Anthony Clotworthy (1566).

¹¹⁴ GRO, GDR/127, Case 983, Thomas Horton v Edward Tomlyns (1617).

assumed to be precise, but instead should be taken as indicative of an individual's stage within the life cycle.

General trends can therefore be identified. The average age of witnesses who appeared before the church courts was relatively high: the average age of female witnesses was 39 and 37 in the Gloucester and Exeter courts respectively. Male witnesses were slightly older, with an average age of 46 in the Gloucester court and 44 in the Exeter court. Age distribution across the two courts indicates that Devon and Cornwall witnesses were slightly younger than their Gloucestershire counterparts, while female witnesses were characteristically seven years younger than male witnesses. Perceptions of age operated along gendered lines in the courts; Gowing notes that while men acquired status and authority as they aged, older women could be perceived as 'a source of trouble'.¹¹⁵ Marital status was also important; being married was a hallmark of authority within a community, particularly for women as is discussed below.

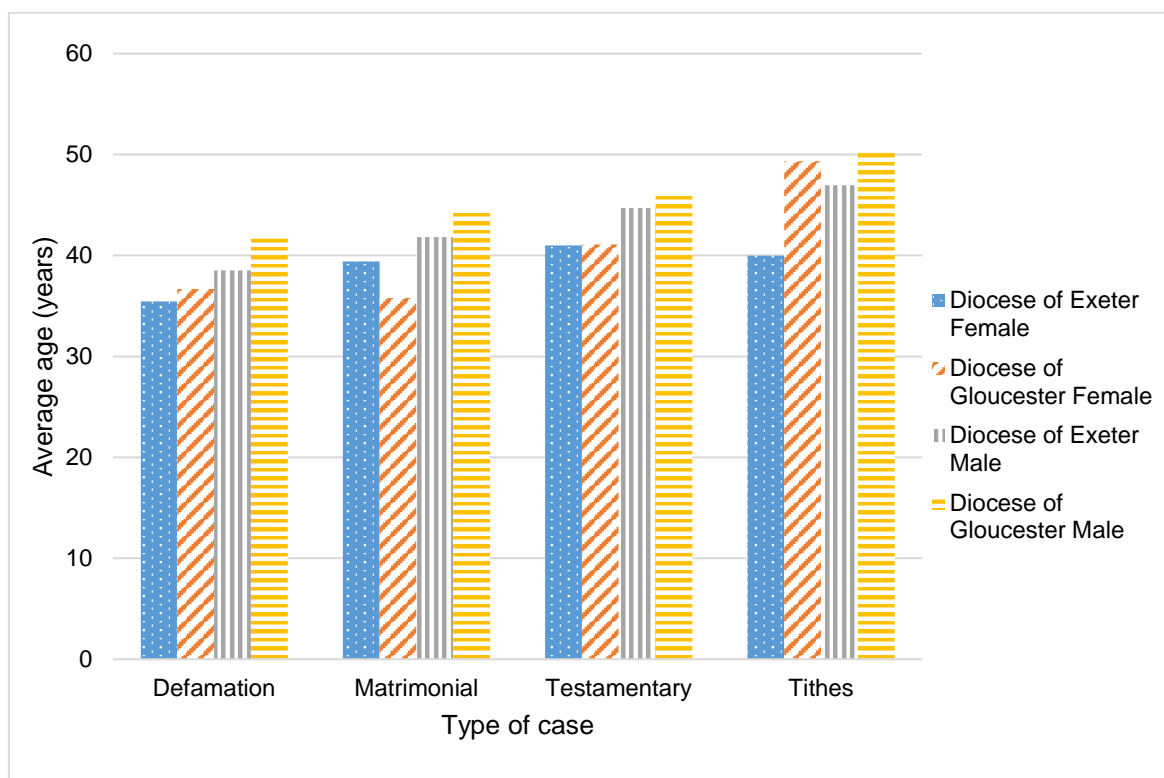
Figure 1.13 shows that the average age of witnesses varied according to case type. Similar patterns are found in both courts.¹¹⁶ Across both genders, the average age of witnesses produced in tithe disputes was generally higher than in other types of cases. Tithe disputes were centred on landholding and also relied on a knowledge of parish customs and traditions. This frequently brought a parish's older inhabitants to the courts. In 1586, John Wade, a 43-year-old husbandman of Rockhampton in Gloucestershire testified that 'he hard old men of the parishe of Rockhampton that were then Lx [60] years of age report & affirme that such was their custome time out of minde'.¹¹⁷ Disagreements over what produce was tithable or which parish a particular parcel of land was situated within required witnesses who had lived within a parish for a long time, held land there and were generally older to relate to the court their understanding of the customs of that parish.

¹¹⁵ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 50.

¹¹⁶ Some minor anomalies can be seen in the data, such as the nine-year difference between female witnesses produced in the Gloucester and Exeter court to provide testimonies in tithe disputes. Witnesses appearing before the Exeter court were generally younger than their Gloucester counterparts and therefore such anomalies do not detract from the overall trends in the data.

¹¹⁷ GRO, GDR/65, Case 426, John Smith v John Welcock (1586).

Figure 1.13. Average age of witnesses produced in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (by gender and type of case).



Sources: As in Table 1.2.

In defamation and matrimonial disputes, the average age of both male and female witnesses was lower. In matrimonial disputes, this reflects the relative youth of litigants in these cases. Ingram suggests that the majority of plaintiffs were bachelors and spinsters, mostly in their twenties and early thirties.¹¹⁸ As Diana O'Hara suggests, witnesses to betrothals might be a mixture of younger people who were friends of the couple and senior members of the community whose authority and social standing determined their presence.¹¹⁹ Witnesses were therefore drawn from a wide pool of individuals across generations.

Figure 1.13 highlights a key challenge in using church court depositions to study female servants. The average age of witnesses was high for both men and women because fewer young people, who comprised the largest proportion of servants, were produced as witnesses. The female servants recorded in the

¹¹⁸ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 194.

¹¹⁹ Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 38.

depositions are therefore in themselves noteworthy and highlight the somewhat exceptional circumstances under which a female servant was produced as a witness.

Marital status

While occupational descriptors were recorded for almost all male witnesses who came before the courts, this information is generally not available for their female counterparts.¹²⁰ Conversely, while women were instead identified by their marital status, men's marital status was rarely recorded. Table 1.6 shows that in both courts, marital status was unspecified almost invariably for men. Only contextual reading of the depositions provides occasional references to their marital status. Yet for women, depositions provide an indication of their involvement in the church courts at different stages of the life cycle.

¹²⁰ As shown above, service was sometimes an exception to this.

Table 1.6. Marital status recorded in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

<i>Female marital status</i>						
	Witness		Defendant		Plaintiff	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Diocese of Gloucester						
Married	608	63.9	178	70.9	221	78.4
Unmarried	172	18.1	2	0.8	8	2.8
Widow	171	18.0	71	28.3	53	18.8
Unspecified	221	-	325	-	369	-
<i>Total (excl. unspecified)</i>	<i>951</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>282</i>	<i>-</i>
Diocese of Exeter						
Married	213	80.1	77	77.8	68	93.2
Unmarried	3	1.1	3	3.0	0	0.0
Widow	50	18.8	19	19.2	5	6.8
Unspecified	621	-	505	-	523	-
<i>Total (excl. unspecified)</i>	<i>266</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Male marital status</i>						
	Witness		Defendant		Plaintiff	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Diocese of Gloucester						
Married	215	99.5	140	97.2	119	96.0
Widower	1	0.5	4	2.8	5	4.0
Unspecified	5410	-	1289	-	1141	-
<i>Total (excl. unspecified)</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>-</i>
Diocese of Exeter						
Married	39	100.0	26	100.0	27	100.0
Widower	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unspecified	5492	-	1624	-	1283	-
<i>Total (excl. unspecified)</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>-</i>

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Only the marital status of witnesses was systematically recorded. The marital status of female litigants can sometimes be identified contextually; however, as table 1.6 indicates, it was unspecified for most. A married woman was typically denoted as 'the wife of' followed by a brief description of her husband's name, place of residence and, particularly in the Gloucester court, his occupation. For example, witness Edith Bateman was described in 1558 as the 'wife of Rowland Bateman of Swimbridge in Exeter diocese', while in 1629, Anne Fisher was described as the 'wife of John Fisher of the parish of Elmstone Hardwick in the diocese of Gloucester, yeoman'.¹²¹

Unmarried women were also recorded slightly differently in the depositions of the two courts. The terms 'singlewoman' and sometimes 'spinster' were commonly used in the Gloucestershire depositions to denote an unmarried woman.¹²² These marital status descriptors are almost entirely missing from the Exeter church court records. The word '*virgo*', the Latin form of 'virgin' had a similar meaning but was used to describe the single status of just a handful of female witnesses recorded in the Exeter court depositions. In two separate disputes heard in 1576 in the Exeter court, witnesses Honor Tylor of Musbury and Agnes Butte of Crediton were described as '*virgo*'.¹²³ This marital descriptor was therefore probably adopted only by a particular scribe recording witness examinations in that specific year.

Gloucester court clerks provided further details of the single status of a woman. In addition to using the standard descriptors of 'singlewoman' and 'spinster', many women were described as 'the daughter of'. In 1588, 19-year-old Anne Mawnsell was described as the 'daughter of William Mawnsell of Over Guiting in the county of Gloucestershire, husbandman'. She was not described as a servant; the link created between Anne and her father in the biographical preamble to her deposition indicates her economic dependence upon him.¹²⁴ From 1611, this type of description disappeared from common usage in the Gloucester court and the terms 'singlewoman' and 'spinster' were invariably

¹²¹ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 234, Roger Arkyson v Katherine Tanner (1558); GRO, GDR/168, Case 1599, John Greaves jun v Charles Cartwright (1629).

¹²² John Minsheu, *Ductor in Linguas* (1617).

¹²³ DHC, Chanter, 859, Case 1269, Peter Tuchen v Diophila Robinson (1576); DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1227, Richard Lane v Katherine Barrye (1576).

¹²⁴ GRO, GDR/65, Case 465, Elizabeth Wollams v Anne White (1588)

used. Parents were not referred to at all in biographical preambles to Exeter court depositions.

The marital status of some female witnesses was unrecorded, particularly in the Exeter court depositions. Labelled as 'unspecified', only 14.7 per cent were assigned no marital status descriptor in the Gloucester court, compared to almost three-quarters of those recorded in the Exeter depositions. Isolating these women from the dataset and basing the total survey size on the number of female witnesses for whom marital status was recorded shows that married women comprised the largest proportion of female witnesses in both courts. They represented 80.1 per cent and 63.9 per cent of female witnesses in the Exeter and Gloucester courts respectively. The high incidence of married women appearing before the courts as witnesses is not unexpected; the high average age of female witnesses discussed above shows that women in the later stages of the life cycle were better represented in court. Widows, who represented a smaller group than unmarried women within society, comprised a larger proportion of litigants and witnesses than unmarried women across both courts.

As they were typically unmarried, female servants were again relatively exceptional in their appearance before the church courts. Only three female servants across both courts were identified as married, making them unexceptional as female witnesses, but exceptional by virtue of their occupation.

Social Status and Occupation

In place of marital status descriptors, men who appeared as witnesses before the church courts were more frequently assigned occupational status descriptors. These descriptors were often an assessment of an individual's social status rather than an accurate description of his livelihood.¹²⁵ In her study of church court depositions, Shepard notes the difficulties of relying on occupational descriptors when comparing them to the work individuals were recorded as undertaking using a 'verb-oriented' approach.¹²⁶ Even occupational descriptors

¹²⁵ Margaret Pelling, 'Old Age, Poverty, and Disability in Early Modern Norwich: Work, Remarriage, and Other Expedients', in Margaret Pelling and R. M. Smith (eds.), *Life, Death and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 173.

¹²⁶ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 149-150. The 'verb oriented' approach is discussed in detail on p. 187; see Rosemarie Fiebranz, Erik Lindberg, Jonas Lindström, and Maria Ågren, 'Making Verbs Count: the Research Project 'Gender and Work' and its Methodology', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 59 (2011), 273-293; Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living*.

that denoted economic activity did not necessarily reflect *current* engagement with that activity. Witness William Seveye of Stokeinteignhead in Devon, was described in 1569 as a mariner at the age of 78.¹²⁷ Richard Wall of Upton St Leonard in Gloucestershire was accorded the occupation 'husbandman' when his appearance at the age of 97 as a witness was recorded in the Gloucester court.¹²⁸ As men of advanced age who had far exceeded life expectancy for this period, it is unlikely that they were actively engaged in these occupations. Margaret Pelling notes that occupational descriptors were often retained amongst poorer older men, even when they were no longer working in these occupations.¹²⁹ Descriptors could therefore represent former occupations and were used as benchmarks of social status later in life.

The rigidity of occupational descriptors also prevents multiple occupations from being formally recorded. In 1562, Thomas Morfield of Petrockstowe in Devon was recorded as a defendant in the Exeter court depositions. Witnesses described him as a weaver of woollen cloth; however, one witness added that Thomas lived with his mother and sometimes 'dothe her husbandrye', indicating his engagement in two different economic activities.¹³⁰ William Mark of St Issey in Cornwall appeared as a witness in two 1559 defamation disputes. His interrogatory responses revealed that he was a tailor but 'sometymes when he lackethe worke he gothe to husbandrie'.¹³¹ William's multiple forms of employment demonstrate the inflexibility of occupational descriptors in recording temporary, variable or unpredictable patterns of work.

Despite these problems, occupational descriptors provide a broad overview of the social structure of society. As Shepard suggests, they 'nevertheless afford an overview of the social reach of the overall data set'.¹³² Occupational data collected from the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions is represented in table 1.7. The data has been classified using the following occupational categories: yeoman and farmers; husbandmen; labourers; cloth and leather workers; smiths, makers and building workers; service trades; animal keepers; mariners and

¹²⁷ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 960, Thomas Yonge v William Fox (1569).

¹²⁸ GRO, GDR/57, Case 255, Nicholas Lewes and George Turner v Humfrey Roberts (1584).

¹²⁹ Pelling, 'Old Age, Poverty, and Disability', p. 82.

¹³⁰ DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 442, Philip Denys v Thomas Morfield (1562).

¹³¹ DHC, Chanter 855 Case 263, Lucas Betty v Elena Payne (1559) and Case 272, Lucas Bettye v Richard Bennett (1559).

¹³² Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 19.

fishermen; clerics; and gentlemen.¹³³ The few women for whom occupation was recorded, have been isolated from these categories in order to make the data comparable with other studies.

Mirroring Shepard's findings from her study of occupations recorded in other ecclesiastical courts, husbandmen represented the most frequently recorded occupational group in the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions, comprising 32.1 per cent and 29 per cent of all male occupations respectively.¹³⁴ Those working in the cloth and leather trade comprised 16.2 of all male occupations recorded in the Gloucester diocesan court, and was the second most frequently recorded occupation. Weavers and broadweavers alone comprised just over 6 per cent of all occupations listed.¹³⁵ The high incidence of clothworking occupations amongst the Gloucester court witnesses reflects the importance of the clothworking industry in parts of the diocese: a clothworking trade triangle can be drawn between Painswick, Cirencester and Wotton-under-Edge.¹³⁶ By contrast, clerics made up the second most frequently recorded occupational category in the Exeter court depositions, representing 19.4 per cent of all occupations. In Gloucestershire, just 7.5 per cent of occupations recorded were clerical, although clerics were probably overrepresented in both sets of data due to their affiliation with the church and by extension, the church courts.

¹³³ See Appendix 3 (p. 356) for a table of the full occupational data and a breakdown of each occupational category.

¹³⁴ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 19.

¹³⁵ See Appendix 3 (p. 356).

¹³⁶ Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, pp. 27-28.

Table 1.7. Occupational/social structures represented in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649, wills heard in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1653-1660, and the 1608 Gloucester muster survey.

	<i>Male occupations</i>											
	Diocese of Gloucester			Diocese of Exeter			Gloucester Muster			Gloucester (PCC)		
	Church Court	Church Court	Church Court	Church Court	Church Court	Survey	Survey	Survey	1653-1660	1653-1660	Devon and Cornwall (PCC)	
1548-1649	1548-1649	1548-1649	1548-1649	1548-1649	1608	1608	1608	1653-1660	1653-1660	1653-1660	1653-1660	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Husbandmen	1693	32.1	552	29	3774	30.3	103	10.8	386	16.3		
Cloth and leather	852	16.2	230	12.1	3627	29.1	126	13.3	259	10.9		
Yeoman and farmers	835	15.8	182	9.6	929	7.5	437	46	987	41.6		
Gentlemen	440	8.3	184	9.7	430	3.5	71	7.5	279	11.8		
Clerics	398	7.5	369	19.4	3	0.02	29	3.1	65	2.7		
Service trades (not servants)	351	6.7	91	4.8	1003	8.1	100	10.5	171	7.2		
Servants	168	3.2	144	7.6	2617	21	0	0.0	3	0.1		
Smiths, makers and building	311	5.9	69	3.6	1520	12.2	58	6.1	114	4.8		
Labourers	158	3.0	51	2.7	1998	16.1	4	0.4	18	0.8		
Mariners and fishermen	42	0.8	29	1.5	221	1.8	3	0.3	82	3.5		
Animal keepers	25	0.5	1	0.05	100	0.8	0	0	8	0.3		
Total	5273	-	1902	-	12448	-	950	-	2372	-	-	-

Sources: GRO, GDR depositions books and DHC, Chanter deposition books; National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills, 1653-1660; and '1608 Gloucester Muster Survey' in A. J. Tawney and R. H. Tawney, 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 5 (1934), 59-62.

Occupations were not always consistently recorded in the two courts. No clear distinctions were made between 'farmer', 'yeoman' and 'husbandman' in the depositions. Sometimes the Latin term '*agricola*' was used, providing little indication of the level of social status this term conferred upon its recipient. Male servants were also sometimes recorded as husbandmen. In the Gloucester court depositions in particular, several male witnesses were recorded as husbandmen, while a detailed reading of the deposition reveals their employment in service, presumably in husbandry. Occupational descriptors therefore overlook contractual conditions of employment. Preference has therefore been given to recording these men as 'servants' where this information is available, although even with this adjustment, many male servants are almost certainly invisible in the depositions and therefore underrepresented. The misrepresentation of male servants as husbandmen in the Gloucester court explains why servants accounted for just 3.2 per cent of all male occupations, compared to 7.6 per cent in the Exeter court.

To what extent do the occupations recorded in the church court depositions represent the breadth of economic activity that the male populations of Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall were engaged in? Comparisons can be made with other sources: occupational descriptors were recorded in the wills of 1313 Gloucestershire testators and 3128 Devon and Cornwall testators, made between 1653 and 1660. During this seven-year period, all wills and administrations were proved within the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.¹³⁷ Occupational structure was unlikely to have significantly changed in this decade from the preceding century and therefore occupations recorded in the wills provide a good comparative dataset. Although no similar data is available for Devon and Cornwall, male occupations recorded in the 1608 Gloucester muster rolls for the county have also been consulted as an additional source for occupational structure. These records list the occupations of men between the ages of 20 and 60 who were considered fit to bear arms.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Using the National Archives Discovery search function, it has therefore been possible to collate occupational data from the wills made and proven in this court during the seven-year period.

¹³⁸ A full list of male occupations listed in the 1608 Muster Roll is printed in A. J. Tawney and R. H. Tawney, 'An Occupational Census of the Seventeenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 5 (1934), 59-62.

Occupational groups with lower earning potential such as labourers and husbandmen are often underrepresented in wills. Courts frequently came under attack for charging high fees for the administration of wills and those working in lower paid occupations often had little wealth or estate to bequeath upon their deaths.¹³⁹ Nigel Goose's work on early modern Cambridge wills shows that labourers made up just 4 per cent of his sample, while around 27 per cent of people recorded in a 1620s census were described as labourers.¹⁴⁰ Gloucester's 1608 muster rolls act as a good benchmark: labourers comprised 16.1 per cent of all occupations listed but represented just 0.3 per cent of Gloucestershire will-makers. Similarly, just 10.8 per cent of Gloucestershire wills and 16 per cent of Devon and Cornwall wills were made by husbandmen, while 30.3 per cent of men declared fit to bear arms in the county of Gloucestershire worked in this type of employment, matching the proportion of husbandmen recorded in church court depositions. These differences can be attributed to the biases of the source material, as church court depositions and muster rolls were more likely to capture those at the lower levels of society.

Nonetheless, data collected from wills show that the occupational structures of the two dioceses had many similarities. In both dioceses, yeoman and farmers comprised a large proportion of male occupations. Yet neither the Gloucester nor Exeter church court datasets record such high proportions of yeomen appearing before the courts. In the Exeter court, just 9.6 per cent of men were recorded as yeomen. Yeomen represented a high proportion of Devon society in the early modern period; however, the occupational descriptor 'yeoman' may have been omitted by court clerks due to the fact that men of this occupation were so commonplace.¹⁴¹ Many men whose occupations were unspecified in the biographical preambles to their depositions may have been yeomen. The term 'yeoman' also appears to have been used to denote a range of occupations relating to land and husbandry, therefore representing individuals across the spectrum of social status. Rather than being recorded as yeomen, they may have

¹³⁹ Tom Arkell, 'The Probate Process', in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans, and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2000), p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Nigel Goose, 'Economic and Social Aspects of Provincial Towns: a Comparative Study of Cambridge, Colchester and Reading, c.1500-1700', (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1984), pp. 99-100.

¹⁴¹ Hoskins, *Devon*, pp. 79-80.

been assigned a different occupational descriptor in the Exeter church court such as 'husbandman' or 'gentleman'. While yeomen, of higher status and wealth, are more likely to be overrepresented in the PCC will data, it is nonetheless probable that the proportion of recorded yeomen was unrepresentatively low in the church court depositions of both dioceses.

Those in the cloth and leather trades represented a slightly larger proportion of Gloucestershire will-makers than those in the diocese of Exeter. Clothworking activity was important in some parts of Devon; however, data from the wills sample and the church courts reflect the booming clothworking trade of south Gloucestershire. Clothworking occupations in the 1608 muster rolls represent an even higher proportion of all recorded occupations, comprising nearly 30 per cent.

Finally, only a handful of servants proved wills in the PCC across both dioceses. No servants were recorded in the Gloucestershire data and only three appeared in the will data for Devon and Cornwall. Servants in the 1608 Gloucester muster rolls represented just over one-fifth of all occupations recorded. A.J. and R.H. Tawney note that three-quarters of these male servants were employed in agriculture and service of the gentry.¹⁴² The high proportion of servants recorded in the muster rolls suggests that they were underrecorded and therefore underrepresented in church court depositions.

Depositional evidence only occasionally captures the lowest levels of society but nonetheless offers a window into the lived experiences of a relatively broad cross-section of society. Occupations that are typically associated with 'middling' status seem to be most accurately represented. Those associated with higher wealth and social status are represented with more frequency in the data collected from the PCC wills, while the 1608 muster roll record higher proportions of labourers and servants. A higher proportion of lower status occupational groups are recorded in church court depositions compared to in probate documents; however, muster rolls suggest that they nonetheless remain underrepresented. At the other end of the spectrum, yeomen were also perhaps underrepresented in the depositions. This does not necessarily mean that they did not appear

¹⁴² Tawney and Tawney, 'An Occupational Census', 48.

regularly before the courts; rather, the ambiguities of the term 'yeoman' and the inconsistency with which it was used by church court clerks is brought to the fore.

Conclusions

Social, economic and geographical patterns of cases and people produced in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter have important implications for studying the female servants who were also recorded in the depositions. In both courts, geographical distribution of cases shows that people from parishes in or around urban centres were more likely to produce cases. Women in these urban areas were also better represented as litigants and witnesses, particularly in defamation cases. Within this geographical context, urban female servants too may have been more likely to have appeared before the church courts; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.1. Rural female servants are of course in no way absent from this study; rather, the geographical distribution of cases over areas of different economies and topographies allows rural and urban female servants to be studied comparatively.

A typical witness was male, around the age of 45 and of middling social status. Female witnesses were usually married. Female servants recorded in the depositions are therefore atypical as witnesses. Yet the social and economic profiles of other witnesses could determine the types of women in service who appeared before the courts as well as their experiences. The type of household in which she served and the ages of her employers could shape and define the experience of a female servant. Fewer servants were recorded working for labourers than for gentry by virtue of the fact that fewer labourers were recorded in the courts. The parameters of who was considered an acceptable or appropriate witness could determine the type of female servants recorded. While the broad spectrum of witness profiles means that a range of experiences are represented in the depositions, it is important to consider these experiences within the context of the patterns of litigation, litigants and witnesses that are visible in these courts.

2. Demography and social status: characterising the female servant

Female servants in early modern England are consistently studied as a homogeneous demographic and economic group. Aged between 15 and 24, the female servant is frequently characterised according to her employer's social and economic status, with service perceived as a vertical institution that permeated the social system from top to bottom.¹ Yet the identity of the female servant, her experience of service and her interactions with community and working life were fundamentally shaped and influenced by age, life-cycle stage and economic and social background. This section challenges current understandings of the demographic, social and economic profiles of women working in service. The first chapter exposes the limitations of characterising service as a 'life-cycle' experience for women, demonstrating the wide age range of female servants, and presenting a less prescriptive array of circumstances in which women entered and left service. The second chapter explores socio-economic backgrounds and levels of wealth of female servants in order to understand the range of experiences of service that women across the social spectrum had.

2.1 Age and life-cycle stage of female servants

The demographic structure of early modern England was youthful in comparison to today. Tony Wrigley and Roger Schofield calculate that in the middle of the sixteenth century, just over half the population was under the age of 25 and only around 8 per cent were over 60.² Service was a characteristic experience of youth, an institution in which a high proportion of young people were employed. Peter Laslett estimates that in Ealing in 1599, around a quarter of the population worked in service.³ Ealing was not wholly representative of the country's servant population, with its relatively high number of wealthy households probably

¹ See Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 34; McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 53-54; Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. 64; Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 22.

² Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*, p. 216. Peter Laslett's work based on the Ealing census of 1599 has suggested some regional variation, with only 4.5 per cent of the 427 inhabitants falling into this age category. See Laslett, p. 188.

³ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, pp. 32-33.

employing higher than average numbers of servants.⁴ However, Paul Griffiths notes that servants nonetheless represented the 'largest single body in the workforce'.⁵

The transition from childhood to youth has been closely linked with entry into service, while an individual's exit from service frequently coincided with marriage. Studies of service typically focus upon those between the ages of 15 and 24. Tim Meldrum observes that over 75 per cent of female servants in post-Restoration London were under 30, 'confirm[ing] that domestic service was generally a life-cycle occupation, particularly for women'.⁶ Ann Kussmaul defines servants as 'youths hired into the families of their employers'.⁷ Her estimation that around 60 per cent of those aged between 15 and 24 worked in service further underscores her focus upon this section of the servant population.⁸

Economic and social conditions influenced the age at which a family considered it appropriate for a child to leave home. Children from poorer households could place a strain on the family economy and might be sent out from the age of 7 into service or pauper apprenticeship.⁹ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos indicates that young men from more affluent backgrounds also left home early, boarding out from childhood before entering service or attending university.¹⁰ Physical maturity may have also influenced the age at which a child departed from the family home. Joyce Burnette suggests that in the nineteenth century, differences in strength even between those of the same gender led to differences in pay: physical strength determined employment.¹¹ Kussmaul notes that some agricultural tasks required certain levels of physical strength or maturity, and

⁴ For an analysis of the Ealing census, see Jane Whittle, 'Housewives and Servants in Rural England, 1440-1650: Evidence of Women's Work from Probate Documents', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (2005), 57.

⁵ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 7.

⁶ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 16-17.

⁷ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: the Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 213.

¹⁰ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 54-59.

¹¹ Joyce Burnette, 'An Investigation of the Female-Male Wage Gap during the Industrial Revolution in Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 50 (1997), 274.

therefore suggests that 'there was no fixed age at which children left home to become servants'.¹²

Marriage patterns are used to explain why individuals left service. John Hajnal's influential work suggests that a late age of first marriage (above the age of 24) for both men and women is symptomatic of a European marriage pattern; leaving home and entering service in their mid-teens allowed young people to save up money to later establish their own households.¹³ Marriage was often perceived as the desired outcome of service. Keith Wrightson indicates that 'as they reached their 20s [servants] had the chance to look out for opportunities for permanent settlement and marriage'.¹⁴ Jeremy Goldberg adds that 'life-cycle service can be seen as an integral part of the social arrangements which underlie the marriage regime'.¹⁵

Early modern service is mapped onto these life-cycle stages using data on servants' ages. Records of age are rare in parish listings: Laslett notes that parish registers and household lists or censuses for the period do not frequently record age.¹⁶ Nonetheless, three key studies that use available parish data stress the importance of service as a stage in the life cycle between childhood and marriage. Laslett notes that the age at which an individual entered service varied according to gender. His dataset of six parish registers from 1599 to 1796 shows that the highest percentage of male servants were between the ages of 15 and 19 (35 per cent), while the highest percentage of female servants were aged 20 to 24 (representing 40 per cent).¹⁷ Marjorie McIntosh refers to the 1599 Ealing census, restating Laslett's findings from this parish register, but also adds limited data on age in service from the manor of Havering in Essex. The scattered evidence for the manor includes the age of death of servants who died of unnatural causes and the age of arrival of the parish's immigrants, many of whom

¹² Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 70.

¹³ John Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 132.

¹⁴ Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 85.

¹⁵ P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, Migration, Servanthood and Life-Cycle in Yorkshire Towns of the Later Middle Ages: Some York Cause Paper Evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 1 (1986), 141-142.

¹⁶ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, pp. 28, n.8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

were servants.¹⁸ McIntosh reaffirms the typicality of life-cycle service, although she notes that entry into service 'might occur anytime between the ages of 10 and 20 years, the younger levels found primarily among poor children'.¹⁹ Kussmaul's significant work on servants in husbandry also finds consensus with Laslett and McIntosh's conclusions. She too refers to the same set of parish listings as Laslett, but adds her own data from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlement examinations, noting that girls and boys tended to enter service between the ages of 13 and 16.²⁰ Studies of age and service in early modern England have therefore relied on the 1599 Ealing census, or are based on data for later centuries.

Church court depositions offer a new perspective to studying servant ages, allowing age in service to be derived in a number of ways. Where a female witness worked in service at the time of her examination, her age was typically recorded. In Upton Pyne in Devon, the biographical preamble to the 1582 deposition of Dorothy Inell recorded the following information:

Dorothea Inell of Upton Pyne servant of the said Kelwaye age 24.²¹

Where a female witness had worked as a servant some time before her examination, her age in service has been calculated accordingly: Elizabeth Robins appeared as a witness before the court in 1612. She was 24 years old and married to Nicholas Robins of Nailsworth in Gloucestershire. She deposed that 'some yeere and a halfe agoe the tyme more certen shee cannot sett downe, shee this examine [was] dwellinge as a servant with Marie Webb'. Her deposition further recorded that she had worked in Mary Webb's service for one year. From this information, it can be calculated that she was in service at the age of 22.²²

This methodology extends the 'snapshot' evidence of servant ages found in parish listings. Depositions sometimes provide evidence of experiences over time and where a servant stated her age at the time of examination and deposed

¹⁸ Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Servants and the Household Unit in an Elizabethan English Community', *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984), 11.

¹⁹ McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 53-54.

²⁰ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 70-72.

²¹ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1189, Office v Nicholas Kelway (1582).

²² GRO, GDR/114, Case 875, Anne Frigg v Mary Webb (1612).

that she had worked in service for a number of years, *all ages* at which she had worked in service have been calculated. Joanne Drinckwater of Cheltenham in Gloucestershire was 26 years old at the time of her examination in 1611 and deposed that she had served Thomas and Elizabeth Mathewe for ten years. She had worked in their service between the ages of 16 and 26; accordingly, all ages between this range are recorded in the female servant age dataset.²³ The dataset created is therefore unique insofar as it records *all* known ages in service. While the data presented here do not accurately pinpoint each individual's age of entry into or exit from service, the methodology broadens the dataset significantly.

Chapter 1.2 shows that the average age of a female witness was around 38. Younger women were less frequently cited as witnesses in the church courts. Older female servants were therefore more likely to be recorded than their younger counterparts. The methodology used here addresses this issue in part: by including *all* ages at which women were recorded working in service, and therefore incorporating 'remembered' ages in service, some balance is restored to the data. Importantly, while older servants may have been more frequently recorded in church court depositions, this nonetheless serves as a reminder that the life-cycle model cannot account for *all* experiences of service and requires some revision.

Within the Gloucester court depositions, 365 ages in service were recorded compared to 255 ages of women in service in the Exeter court depositions. Figure 2.1 shows the dominance of the traditional life-cycle pattern of service: 54.7 per cent of recorded ages in service were between 15 and 24. Over half of the servant ages recorded were therefore within this demographic group.

While the life-cycle model clearly accounts for a large proportion of women's experiences of service, a significant proportion of recorded ages fell outside this bracket. Table 2.1 shows the distribution of female servant ages by diocese: 47.4 per cent and 42.4 per cent of ages in service recorded in the Gloucester and Exeter courts respectively were below 15 or above 24. A relatively significant proportion of women in service were between 25 and 30. The women in this group may be interpreted as protracted life-cycle servants, with some women marrying slightly later. Figure 2.1 shows a gradual decline in the number of

²³ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

servants recorded between these ages. From the age of 30, there was a considerable drop in the number of female servants; however, a steady stream of women continued to work in service up to the age of 40. Between the ages of 40 and 60, the number of female servants recorded declined, with almost no women recorded in service in their 50s. Those below the age of 15 represented a small proportion, comprising just 3.3 per cent in the Gloucester court compared to 9.4 per cent in the Exeter court.

Table 2.1. Age distribution of female servant witnesses recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Age group	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
7 - 14	12	3.3	24	9.4
15 - 24	192	52.6	147	57.6
25 - 30	96	26.3	38	14.9
31 - 40	43	11.8	33	12.9
41 - 60	22	6.0	13	5.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>365</i>		<i>255</i>	

Sources: As in table 1.2.

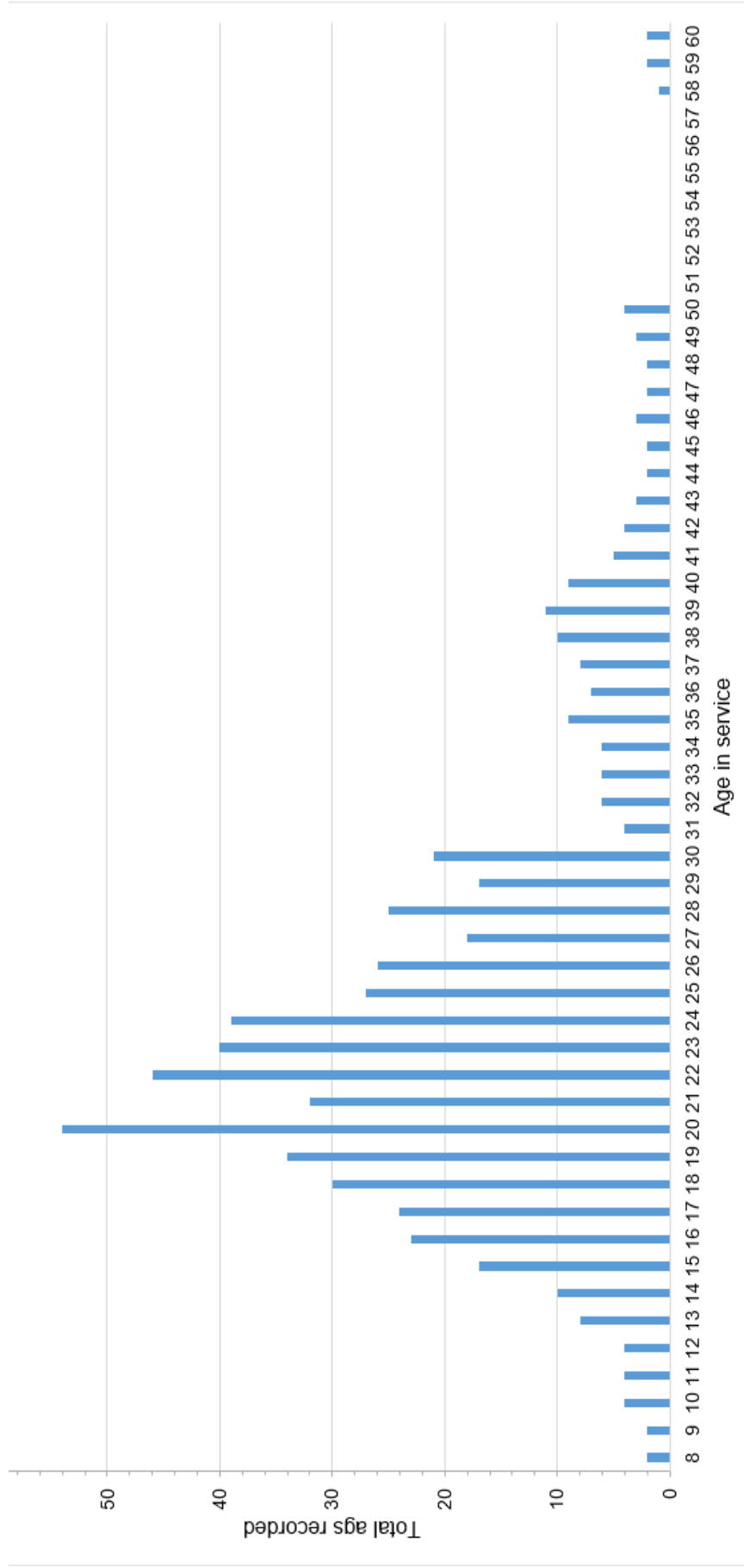
Some differences are found between the two courts. Female servants entered and exited service earlier in the diocese of Exeter: a higher proportion of servants below the age of 15 were recorded. Significantly, there were fewer female servants aged between 25 and 30 recorded in the Exeter court than in the Gloucester court. Regional variation in age of marriage does not immediately explain this. While his study of regional differences in age of marriage includes no Gloucestershire parishes, Wrigley shows that between 1560 and 1646, the mean age of marriage in Colyton in Devon was 27 for women, slightly higher than

the national average.²⁴ If Colyton is taken as a proxy for Devon, it might be expected that a higher proportion of women would still have been in service between the ages of 25 and 30 in the county. Colyton, however, was not necessarily representative of demographic structure across Devon.²⁵ Age of marriage data is therefore inadequate in explaining these regional differences.

²⁴ E. A. Wrigley, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', *The Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), 86.

²⁵ Colyton was relatively unique in its pattern of marriage; Pamela Sharpe notes that the sex ratio of four women for every three men limited marriage in the parish, with many unmarried women in the seventeenth-century and many who married at a later age. Pamela Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices in Colyton, 1598-1830', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991), 258.

Figure 2.1. Distribution of all ages at which women were recorded in service in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Sources: As in table 1.2.

Stages in the life-cycle

Female life-cycle stages are often categorised according to a tripartite model – virginity, marriage and widowhood.²⁶ The five age groupings presented in table 2.1 map roughly onto this model, with some refinements: childhood (7-14); youth (15-24); courtship and marriage (25-30), marriage (31-40), and marriage and widowhood (41-60).²⁷ The following discussions in this chapter consider the varied experiences of service for women whose lives fit this model, as well as those who deviated from these typical life-cycle stages. To understand the limitations of the life-cycle model of service, it is necessary to first turn to the premises that it rests upon.

Childhood

The age structure of service suggests that most female servants identified in church court depositions entered service to learn the skills needed to run a household and to acquire the capital and goods required to build a marital home. The life-cycle servant, aged between 15 and 24, entered service at the beginning of her youth. Griffiths suggests that although youth was not an instantaneous transition from childhood, 'it began around the age of leaving home for the first time and the start of puberty (around age fourteen)'.²⁸ Entry into service marked a significant change in lifestyle for the early modern child, moving out of the family home to work for and live with a substitute family who may have been neighbours or complete strangers. Children entering service were integrated into new communities and family economies, marking a change in geographical, economic and social experiences for young people.

Social status and family circumstances influenced both the age at which a girl left home and her destination.²⁹ The precise age at which girls entered service is not explicitly represented in figure 2.1 but can be inferred from the data. In 1630, a

²⁶ See Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 4; Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 78.

²⁷ The boundaries of these groupings are not distinct; while those between the ages of 7 and 14 (7 being the youngest age recorded of a female servant in the depositions) might be classed as children, some debate over the point at which childhood ended in early modern England exists. Some women were also widowed earlier than at the age of 41. These blurred age boundaries will be discussed at length in the subsequent sections.

²⁸ Paul Griffiths, 'Tudor Troubles: Problems of Youth in Elizabethan England', in Susan Doran and Norman L. Jones (eds.), *The Elizabethan World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 317.

²⁹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 62.

22-year-old Gloucester servant named Anne Nashe deposed that she had worked for Mr John Jones for twelve years. Although it is possible that she had previously worked for another employer, she probably left home at the age of 10 to enter service.³⁰ A small proportion like Anne were recorded in service before they had reached their fifteenth birthdays (9.4 per cent and 3.3 per cent in the Gloucester and Exeter courts respectively). Figure 2.1 shows a small number of girls working in service before their age had reached double figures in Devon and Cornwall, while the youngest recorded female servant in Gloucestershire was 10-year-old Anne Nashe.

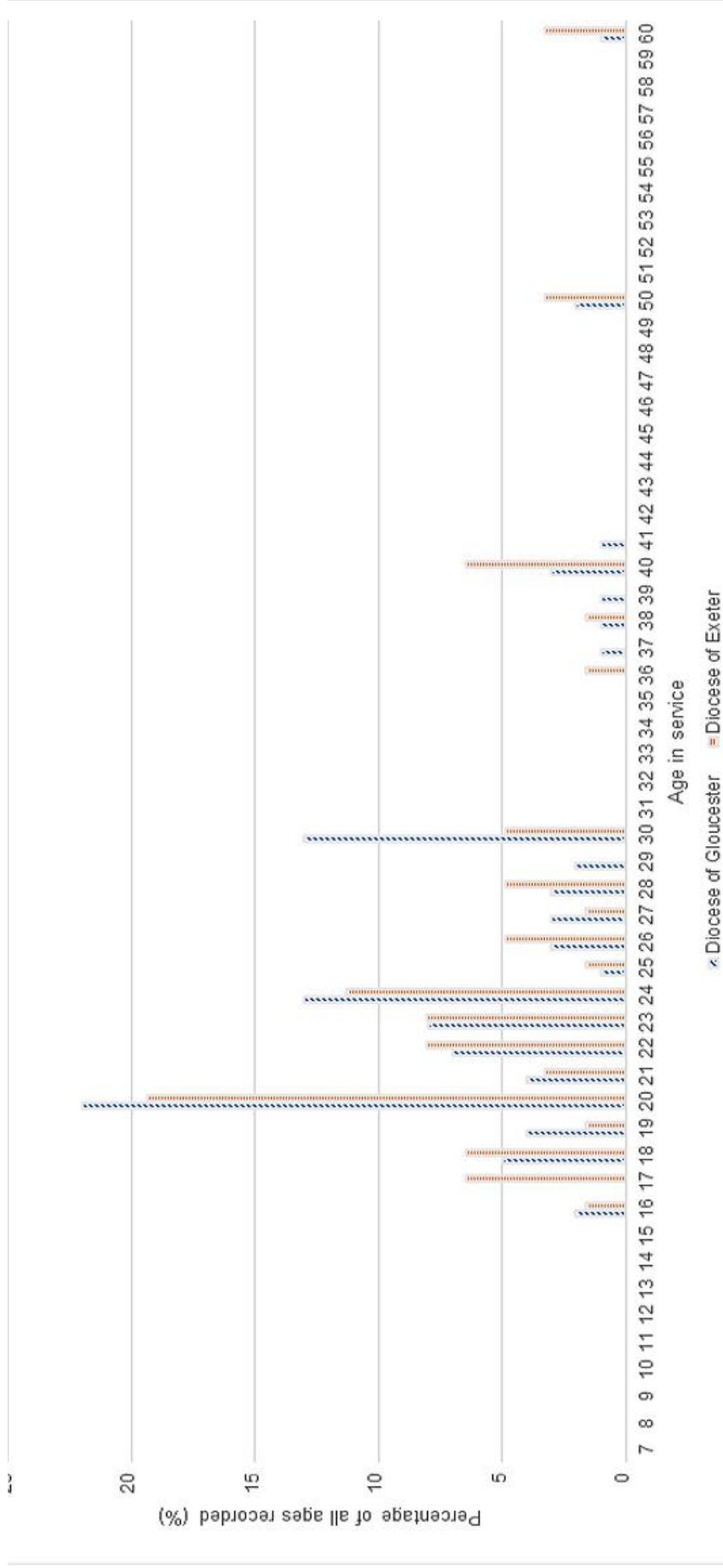
The benefits of using a methodology that accounts for *all* ages at which an individual worked in service are clear. Figure 2.2 shows only female servants' ages recorded at the time of their examinations; back projections of all ages at which each female witness had worked in service are not displayed. The youngest female servants recorded in figure 2.2 were sixteen-year-old Isabella Vaughan and Alice Mathewe who both appeared before the Gloucestershire church court.³¹ Those like Anne Nashe who were in service from the much younger age of 10 are not captured. The methodology used to derive the data presented in figure 2.1 pushes the youngest age of female service recorded in the depositions back by nine years: in 1565, 23-year-old Joanne Bonde of Pinhoe in Devon deposed that she had worked in service for 16 years, revealing her early entry into service at the age of 7.³²

³⁰ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1604, Margaret Hill v Thomas Whittingham (1630)

³¹ GRO, GDR/95, Case 720, Mary Wellins v Jane Tirrett (1605); GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

³² DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 654, John Leache v Hubert Colwell (1565).

Figure 2.2. Distribution of ages at which women were in service at the time of examination in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (expressed as a percentage of the total number of ages recorded).



Sources: As in table 1.2.

Younger female servants were less likely to be recorded in church court depositions as the average age of female witnesses was around 38. Child witnesses were perceived as less credible and therefore less frequently testified in the courts.¹ Elizabeth Foyster suggests that the absence of child witnesses had legal roots: she notes that 'according to Romano-canonical theory, no child under the age of fourteen was permitted to act as a witness in the church courts'.² When Isabelle Vaughan, servant to William Parler of English Bicknor testified in the Gloucester court in a 1605 defamation dispute, she was asked in her interrogatory to re-state her age. She responded 'that she is of thage of sixteene yeares or there aboute and not above as she beleveth'. This statement represents Isabelle's response to the defending party's attempt to raise an exception against her as a witness on the grounds of her youth, rendering her an invalid witness by the laws of the court.³ In a 1637 defamation dispute heard in the Exeter court, John Pearse's counter-narrative suggested the juvenility of a witness produced in the original suit. John deposed that '[Clement] Salter is now very young in yeeres, but of what age this deponent knoweth not'. The biographical preamble to Clement's testimony recorded that he was 20 years old. Age was considered an important determinant of whether a testimony should be accepted as credible.

Although children appeared before the church courts infrequently, the age data presented in figure 2.1 provides an indication of when young girls entered service, but the length of time a female servant had lived in a parish can provide supplementary evidence. Figure 2.3 shows the ages at which female servants who lived in a place *other than their parish of birth* moved there. The data represented in figure 2.3 is intended not to suggest that the initial age of a girl's residence in a parish was *always* equal to the age at which she entered service. Early modern society was relatively mobile; a whole family might relocate for economic or social reasons and a young person could spend several years living and working in the family home before entering service. However, some of these young women *did* leave their parishes of birth to work as servants elsewhere.

¹ Elizabeth Foyster, *Marital Violence: an English Family History, 1660-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 146.

² Elizabeth Foyster, 'Silent Witnesses? Children and the Breakdown of Domestic and Social Order in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey (eds.), *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 64.

³ GRO, GDR/95, Case 720, *Mary Wellins v Jane Tirrett* (1605).

The data therefore suggests that more female servants were placed in service before they reached their fifteenth birthdays than the age dataset (presented in figure 2.1) alone suggests.

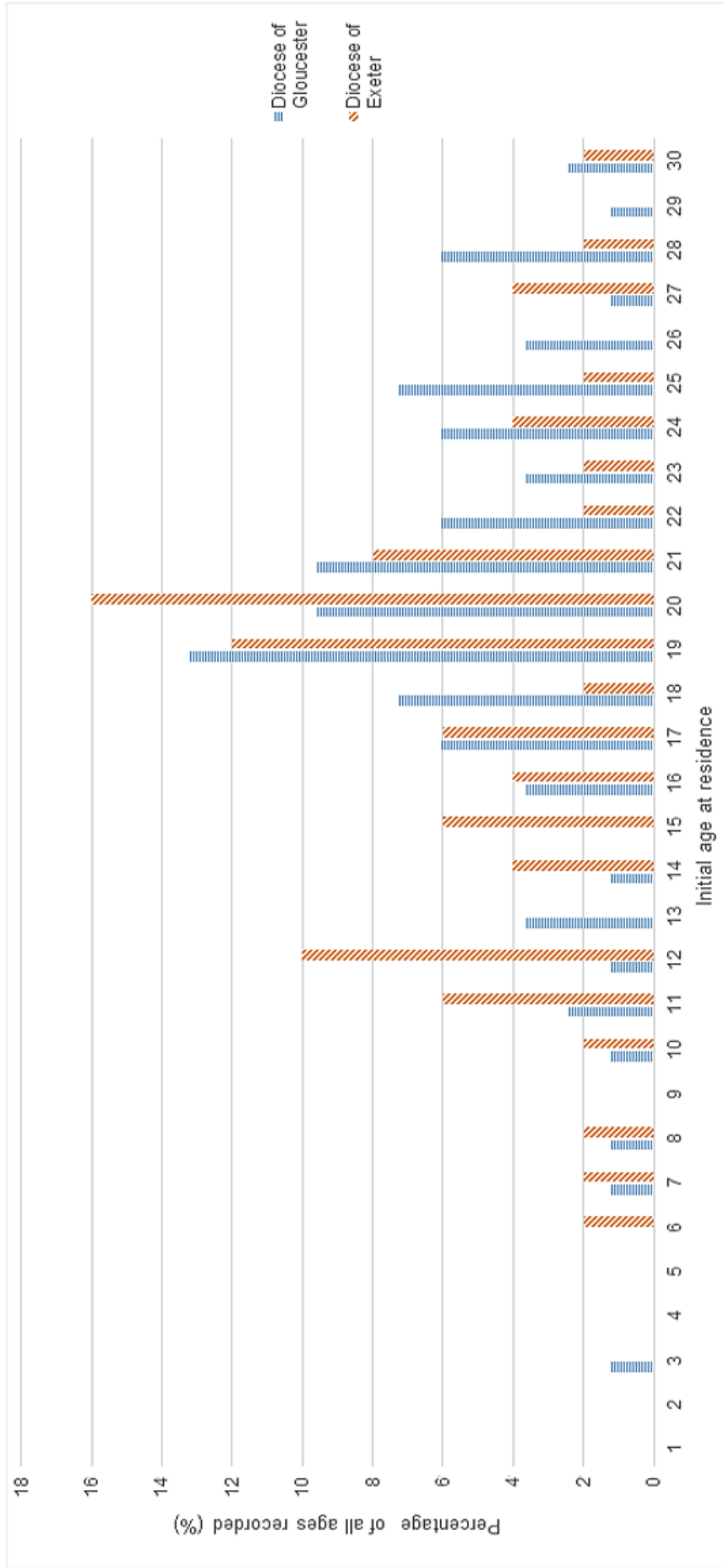
A total of twenty-two individuals were identified as moving to a parish outside their place of birth between the ages of 6 and 14. Just five were identified in figure 2.1 as starting service within this age bracket. Catherine Hall had lived in the parish of Newent in Gloucestershire for ten years between the ages of 8 and 18. However, she was recorded in figure 2.1 as a servant only at the age of 15.⁴ Margaret Burrell of Badgeworth in the same county deposed that she had worked in the service of John Kyng for at least two years, between the ages of 16 to 18. She had moved to the parish, however, at the age of 13.⁵ Alice Cooper of Throwleigh in Devon was recorded in 1598 as a 22-year-old servant; she deposed, however, that she had lived in the parish since the age of 10.⁶ Although the reasons why these children moved to different parishes at such young ages are not recorded, studying length of residence alongside age in service suggests that those who left home between the ages of 6 and 14 to go into service were perhaps more numerous than the life-cycle model accounts for.

⁴ GRO, GDR/89 and GDR/95, Case 419, Anne Harris v Frances Wylson (1604).

⁵ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1523, John Kyng v Joanne Kyrbie (1552).

⁶ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1912, Christopher Gewen v Roger Mayne (1598).

Figure 2.3. Initial age at residence of female servants who were under 30 and living in parishes outside the parish of birth, recorded in the church courts depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (expressed as a percentage of the total ages recorded).



Sources: As in table 1.2.

Entry into service was governed by orthodoxy, convention and practical considerations. The acquisition of new skills was an important aspect of service, although many children began training before leaving home. McIntosh suggests that 'most children probably remained at home until their teens, gaining the emotional security and initial training in occupational skills which they would need in their independent life as adults'.⁷ Ben-Amos adds that, 'by the time they entered service, [...] most young people had already been accustomed to work, sometimes for as long as three, four or even six or seven years of their lives'.⁸ Physical maturity was also a key determinant: Kussmaul notes that a young person could not expect to be hired for service in husbandry until they were physically strong enough to undertake the work required.⁹

Placing a child in service at a young age could be part of an economic strategy for the early modern family. In her study of probate accounts, Amy Erickson found that orphaned children were placed in service through practical and economic necessity.¹⁰ Some of these children were young. She notes that families from across the social spectrum were represented in probate accounts and that annual maintenance expenses were not commensurate with parental wealth; children from different backgrounds and of each sex were maintained at very similar rates.¹¹ Church court depositions leave no record of whether young children in service were orphans, but provide some evidence of the practice of placing a child into service as an orphan.¹²

Young children could also be placed into service through parish apprenticeship. This system was designed to alleviate the economic pressures upon a parish to support its poor by 'redistributing the burden of children from the less well-off to the more prosperous households within and beyond the parish'.¹³ The point at which a child was bound out was when the burden they placed on family resources was larger than their contribution to those resources.¹⁴ The binding

⁷ McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 49.

⁸ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 39.

⁹ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 72.

¹⁰ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹² See p. 120, for example, for a full discussion of the placement into service of the orphan Elizabeth Hallows of Gloucester. See GRO, GDR/89, Case 333, Elizabeth Hallows v Edward Trotman (1601).

¹³ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 194-195.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

out of the children of the poor had its roots in legislation from the mid-sixteenth century, but was formally laid out in the 1597-98 Elizabethan Poor Laws.¹⁵ Steve Hindle shows that legal ambiguities concerning whether the laws were compulsory created tension in the early modern community; parents did not want to give up their children and masters expressed little enthusiasm at receiving the 'idle' children of the poor into their homes.¹⁶ It was not until 1697 that a new statute clarified the terms of the apprenticeship clauses of the poor laws and the apprenticeship of poor children became more formalized.¹⁷

According to the initial parish apprenticeship clauses laid out in the 1562 Statute of Artificers, a female pauper child could be bound out by parish officials until the age of 18, which was later raised to the age of 21.¹⁸ The Elizabethan Poor Laws subsequently confirmed that female apprentices should be bound out until the age of 21 while boys should remain until the age of 24.¹⁹ Pamela Sharpe notes that the most common age for children to enter an apprenticeship was 8 in Colyton in Devon, while Hindle suggests it was slightly later in the West Riding where the mean age of female pauper apprentices was 9 years and 3 months.²⁰

The labels 'apprentice' and 'servant' were often used interchangeably in church court depositions, leaving little trace of the circumstances or conditions of employment under which a young person agreed to work. Female pauper apprentices were typically practiced in housewifery, although training in crafts might have been offered alongside this.²¹ Long periods of time spent with a particular employer from a relatively young age are indicative of parish apprenticeship. In Gloucestershire, Anne Nashe worked from the ages of 10 to 22 for her employer, while in Devon, Jane Peeke of Tavistock and Joanne Bonde of Pinhoe both began working for their employers from the age of 7, leaving at the ages of 27 and 23 respectively.²² Pauper apprentices were free to find employment in regular service from the age of 21, although some may have

¹⁵ Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices', 253.

¹⁶ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 192, 196, 208-210.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁸ Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices', 253.

¹⁹ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 196.

²⁰ Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices', 253-254; Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 214.

²¹ Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices', 256.

²² GRO, GDR/168, Case 1604, Margaret Hill v Thomas Whittingham (1630); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638); DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 654, John Leache v Hubert Colwell (1565).

remained with their employers beyond the age stipulated in the Elizabethan Poor Laws. Having lived with their masters and mistresses for so many years, they undoubtedly became imbedded in family life. While formal pauper apprenticeship was enforced across the country and particularly from 1598, with most success in arable parishes, informal parish apprenticeships pre-dated the legislation and may have been labelled as 'service' in the depositions.²³ Joanne Bonde's period of service, for example, ended around 1565. Her employer was the rector of Pinhoe, suggesting a possible link between the church and informal relief in the form of parish apprenticeship.

This was a period of change in terms of the way in which the children of the poor were dealt with. The poor laws were perceived as controversial due to the ambiguous wording of the legislation that gave parish officials the power to decide which children they considered an economic burden.²⁴ Although not compulsory, parents were nonetheless coerced into allowing their children to be removed from the home, representing a much more stringent, interventionist approach to parish apprenticeship than had previously been enacted. The data presented here raise some important questions of the experiences of childhood and service: under what circumstances were young children placed in service? What kind of work might they undertake? While further study of this youthful subgroup of servants is required, the evidence here is suggestive that economic factors were important. Those recorded in the depositions who remained in service for long periods of time were likely to have held parish apprenticeships in service, coming from families where economic resources could not be stretched to support all members of the family.

Life-cycle service and marriage

Elsewhere, young women entered service as a precursor to marriage, saving money and learning skills to set up their future marital households. These were the women Laslett labelled as life-cycle servants.²⁵ Wrigley and Schofield estimate that the average age of first marriage in England between 1600 and 1649 was 26.²⁶ Assuming that marriage was the primary reason for a woman to

²³ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 216.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

²⁵ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 34.

²⁶ Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*, p. 255.

leave service, most servants recorded in the depositions between the ages of 25 and 30 can reasonably be counted as life-cycle servants, as their ages fell either side of Wrigley and Schofield's average. The addition of these 25- to 30-year-old female servants to the original 15- to 24-year-old age bracket creates a life-cycle servant subgroup, consisting of 76.3 per cent of all female servant ages recorded.

Evidence of women in service who were engaged in courtship and left service upon marriage is plentiful in the depositions. While the ages of female servant plaintiffs who sued men for breaching marital contracts were not recorded, it is clear that the majority of these individuals were young. Employers record the frequency with which men visited their houses to court their servants. Joseph Trobridge of Exeter deposed in 1637 that Daniel Jackson 'did much frequent this deponentes howse and the company of the said Elizabeth [Joseph's servant]'. Joseph's wife Prudence also indicated her unhappiness with the couple's unchecked behaviour 'and blamed the said Elizabeth for it and did threaten to putt her away [from service] if she left not his company'.²⁷ Courtship was clearly an important experience for many servants. The 1612 deposition of shoemaker Robert Oliffe of Shipton Oliffe in Gloucestershire recorded that he entreated servant Mary Belcher to approach her master to ask whether 'he would give his consent if the said William Clifford & Mary Belcher should be marryed together'.²⁸ As Diana O'Hara suggests, the 'work-regulated environment of service' provided numerous opportunities for relationships to develop both inside the household as well as outside.²⁹

The testimonies of some married women allow previous experiences of service to be situated on a timeline of subsequent life events such as marriage. In 1613, 23-year-old Anne Pope of Thornbury in Gloucestershire came before the church court concerning the will of Edmund Patch. She had been a servant to Joan Patch, Edmund's wife, a year before the suit was brought to court but at the time of her examination was a married woman. As few married women remained in service, Anne had probably married her husband James within the year before her examination.³⁰ Anne Pope was a relatively young bride; however, marriage

²⁷ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2062, Daniel Jackson v Elizabeth Mordon (1637).

²⁸ GRO, GDR/114, Case 872, William Clifford v Mary Belcher (1612).

²⁹ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 150.

³⁰ GRO, GDR/121, Case 923, Edmund Howell v Joan Patch (1613).

was delayed for some. Anne Godwyn was 34 years old at the time of her examination in 1616 and married to Henry Godwyn of English Bicknor in Gloucestershire. Her deposition recorded that she had worked in the service of Humphrey Smart four years before her appearance in court, indicating that she was probably married between the ages of 30 and 34.³¹ While Anne's period of service extended beyond the typical age bracket of the life-cycle model, her experience of service as a precursor to marriage was nonetheless the same.

Unmarried women

For some women, the final three stages of the life cycle – courtship, marriage and widowhood - may not have been realised. Wrigley and Schofield show that 8.4 per cent of those born between 1552 and 1556 were unlikely to ever marry. Those born between 1607 and 1611 were even more likely to remain celibate: 23.6 per cent never married.³² These never married women in service cannot be categorised as life-cycle servants, who Laslett defines as 'young, unmarried persons – indeed, sexually mature persons *waiting to be married*'.³³

In the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions, around 18 per cent of all recorded female servant ages were over 30. This was a slightly lower proportion than found by Meldrum in his study: 23.4 per cent of London servants were above the age of 30.³⁴ This substantial minority of women in service deviated from the life-cycle model, representing a group who were employed as servants when society expected them to be married. Church court depositions provide just a snapshot of the lives of these women. While many were single, it cannot be conclusively shown that they had *never* married. Some married later: Anne Smyth of Northleach in Gloucestershire was 50 years old and married at the time of her examination in 1602. She had worked in service twelve years before her examination, when she was approximately 38 years old.³⁵ Had Anne appeared before the court at the age of 37, it might have seemed unlikely that she would marry. Only her deposition reveals the changed circumstances of her life twelve years later. The 1604 deposition of Agnes Baker, an 83-year-old widow of

³¹ GRO, GDR/122 and GDR/127, Case 941, Humphrey Smart v Roger Higgins (1616).

³² Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*, p. 260.

³³ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 34. Italics my own.

³⁴ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 17.

³⁵ GRO, GDR/89, Case 342, Mascall v Myllerd (1602).

Chipping Sodbury in Gloucestershire, recorded her service to Thomas Cullmor 40 years earlier, at which time she was approximately 43 years old.³⁶ Assuming that neither Anne nor Agnes were married while in service, it was therefore not inconceivable that a woman who remained in service beyond the age of 30 might marry later in life.

The marital status of over two-thirds of female servants identified in the Exeter depositions over the age of 30 was unspecified, compared to 50 per cent in the Gloucester depositions.³⁷ It is likely that these women were unmarried. Cordelia Beattie notes that while 'singlewoman', 'spinster; and the Latin '*soluta*' typically described unmarried women, these terms could theoretically be applied to widows. However, she argues that 'the term *vidua* continued to be seen as an appropriate designation for a widow'.³⁸ Although used inconsistently, marital status descriptors confirm that most of these older female servants were never married. Rose Fishmore of Honiton was 40 years old at the time of her examination and was unusually described as '*puella*', a Latin descriptor which translates as 'maiden' or 'girl'. Beattie shows that this term could either suggest financial dependence or could indicate a daughter living at home rather than a servant.³⁹ The deposition of Agnes Fishmore labelled Rose as 'her maide servant' but Agnes was also Rose's niece; the familial link between them perhaps situated Agnes as Rose's surrogate mother.⁴⁰

Christine Peters notes that while service in England was not typically a life-long career as it was in Italy, for example, for 'a minority [...] it could be a means to a life-long dependent single life'.⁴¹ Marriage was not necessarily at the forefront of all women's minds. Margaret Warner of Gloucester spent 24 years of her single adult life serving Margaret Weike, who died when Margaret Warner was around 50 years old. Upon the death of her mistress, continuing in service may have been the only route available to Margaret. Her priorities were unlikely to have been fixed on marriage and finding weekly waged work may have been an

³⁶ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jorden (1604).

³⁷ Marital status was less frequently recorded in the diocese of Exeter church court depositions. See p.78.

³⁸ Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: the Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 124.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ DHC, Chanter 857, Case 1023, Agnes Fishmore jun v Thomas Coman (1570).

⁴¹ Christine Peters, 'Single Women in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations', *Continuity and Change*, 12 (1997), 331.

unattractive prospect for a woman who had spent almost quarter of a century within the perhaps more economically secure institution of service, which guaranteed at least bed and board in return for her labour. Following her mistress' death, Margaret became the servant of Henry Reynolds, Margaret Weike's son-in-law.⁴² Margaret's loyalty to her mistress may have helped her to secure a position within the family; of relatively advanced age, she might have otherwise struggled to secure subsequent employment.

Unmarried women over the age of 30 characteristically remained in the same household for extended periods of time. In these circumstances, where marriage was an unlikely if not unpursued goal, service might be perceived as a career. Elizabeth Adkinson worked for Nicholas Richardson, the rector of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire for at least ten years between 1634 and 1644, from the age of 25 to 35. She appears to have never married.⁴³ In West Down in Devon, Joanne Deacon spent thirty years between the ages of around 10 and 40 in the service of Maud Dennys, who had also died shortly before Joanne came before the court in 1580. Joanne's destination after the death of her mistress is unstated but the case highlights another instance of extended service across life-cycle stages. In figure 2.1, Joanne is recorded not only at the ages of 10 and 40, but also at all ages in between. By the age of 40, she had not married, yet if she had appeared before the Exeter church court twenty years earlier at the age of 20, Joanne's prospects for marriage may have earmarked her as a life-cycle servant. Not all women were destined for marriage and servants cannot universally be categorised according to the life-cycle model.⁴⁴

Some female servants over the age of 30 were hired only for short-term employment. In 1594, 38-year-old Joanne Estington deposed that she had worked as a servant to George Mare, the vicar of Shipton Sollars in Gloucestershire for twelve months, indicating a different pattern of service. Joanne's employment may have been part of a wider career in service or perhaps her work was within an economy of makeshifts, whereby she may have been employed at other times in other temporary or transient roles.⁴⁵

⁴² GRO, GDR/65, Case 464, Joanne Wieke v Margaret Wieke (1587).

⁴³ GRO, GDR/205, Case 1426, Elizabeth Parke v Margaret White (1644).

⁴⁴ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1401, John Dennys sen v John Dennys jun (1580).

⁴⁵ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1307, Joane Mare v Joane Oliffe (1594).

These examples of women who remained both unmarried and in service highlight a different experience of service than the life-cycle model presents. While women were expected to marry, some may have had no such ambitions, perceiving service as a means to an independent life.⁴⁶ Others may have failed to secure a husband while in their twenties and remained in long-term service where bed, board and wages were guaranteed. A small number may have secured just short-term contracts, moving between temporary positions in order to support themselves.

Married women

Those who did marry were expected to leave service to manage their own households. In 1568, Edmund Tilney promoted the importance of good housewifery, instructing the married woman to 'looke well to hir huswifery, and not onely to see that all be done, but that all be well done'.⁴⁷ Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife*, published in 1615 noted that the married woman 'is the mother and mistress of the family, and hath her most general employments within the house'.⁴⁸ While the overwhelming majority of female servants identified in the depositions were unmarried, there are a handful of notable exceptions.

Not all women left service immediately upon marriage. Margaret Mayo of London appeared as a witness before the Gloucester church court in 1629. At the time of her examination, 21-year-old Margaret was married, but deposed that she had worked in the service of Sir Raphe Dutton two years earlier. Margaret's young age at marriage and her service in a knight's household indicates that she may have come from a wealthy background.⁴⁹ The opposing party in the case presumably believed her to have been pregnant before she was married: in response to interrogatory questions asked during her examination, Margaret

⁴⁶ See p. 150 for a full discussion of former servant Mary Malin who left service to work independently and was recorded in GRO, GDR/121, Case 913, Agnes Brushe v William Brushe sen (1613).

⁴⁷ Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: a Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*, Valerie Wayne (ed.), (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 137.

⁴⁸ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, Michael Robert Best (ed.), (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. 5.

⁴⁹ For discussion of age at first marriage and social status, see Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*, p. 255; Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 85-86; Vivien Brodsky Elliot, 'Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598—1619', in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London: Europa, 1981), pp. 80-100.

deposed that she was 'with childe when she dwelt in service with the said Sir Raphe Dutton but it was by her husband with whome she was before that tyme married unto'.⁵⁰ Marriage, then, did not necessarily remove a woman from employment in service instantly.

Margaret's continuation in service is perhaps unusual. No other examples of women who remained in service for a brief period after marriage were recorded in the depositions and her claim that she was married before her pregnancy may have been untrue. However, for some married women, a *return* to service was necessary. Marriage did not necessarily secure the permanent economic prosperity of a household. Catherine Moore of Bisley in Gloucestershire testified in 1605 on behalf of her former mistress Joan Compton. Catherine was 50 years old at the time of her examination and married to William Moore, a broadweaver. Both she and William gave evidence in the case. William informed the court of his wife's occupation as a servant six months before his examination, describing how 'Catherine Moore this examimates wife in the moneth of August last past 1604 did dwell with Joan Compton the partie producent in this suite as her household servant'. William and Catherine both referred to William's house in Bisley, indicating their shared residence in the parish but in different households. At the time of her examination, Catherine no longer served Joan; William stated that Joan was Catherine's mistress 'with whome the saide Catherine did dwell *att that tyme*'.⁵¹

Economic strain might force a married woman into service; in his microhistory of an early seventeenth-century shaming that occurred in Nantwich, Hindle notes that servant Margaret Knowsley, who was married with four children, probably lived 'a life of grinding poverty'. Hindle found that Margaret had worked as a casual servant for preachers and ministers for some time.⁵² William and Catherine's financial position may have been precarious insofar as it temporarily displaced Catherine from the marital home and placed her in the service of another family.⁵³ As a broadweaver, William's contribution to the family income

⁵⁰ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1597, Elizabeth Mayo v Hugo Griffith and Hester Griffith (1629).

⁵¹ GRO, GDR/95 Case 715, Joan Compton v Edward Townsend (1605). Italics my own.

⁵² Steve Hindle, 'The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley: Gossip, Gender and the Experience of Authority in Early Modern England', *Continuity and Change*, 9 (1994), 396.

⁵³ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 18.; GRO, GDR/95 Case 715, Joan Compton v Edward Townsend (1605).

was likely to have been modest but not insubstantial. Alexandra Shepard's study of statements of worth in church court depositions suggests that the mean worth of weavers increased from £2.26 to £11.02 between 1550 and 1649.⁵⁴ In 1605, weavers may have enjoyed some economic growth, although this growth was probably region-specific.

Several other possible reasons for Catherine's return to service can be suggested. Catherine may have been employed in Joan's service prior to her marriage, returning when required out of loyalty. Alternatively, Catherine's temporary period in service may suggest marital troubles. Joanne Bailey notes that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, casual labour 'such as petty retailing, charring, nursing and clothes-making, which formed the lowest-paid, lowest-skilled parts of the economy' was the primary option available to lone women separated from their husbands.⁵⁵ However, married women experiencing marital difficulties might have also secured employment as servants. Anne Collens of Tregony in Cornwall sought to annul her marriage with Edward Psthawe in 1556, claiming that the marriage had been unlawful as she was too young. Witnesses deposed that following the wedding, she refused to live with him, instead offering her service to her godfather, Sir Hugh Trevennon.⁵⁶ Service, therefore, may have been an escape from a troubled marriage; Joan may have provided Catherine with a temporary home and income while the couple resolved their issues.

Economic factors were clearly responsible for some married women's return to service. In 1568, Dionisia Hobbes, servant to Doctor Gammon of Exeter deposed that she and her husband, William, were of St Katherine's almshouse in Exeter, but 'she hath kept Mr doctors howse syns he came to be chanon here at Exetter'. Dionisia spent time working in his house in Exeter, but also attended to his other house in Rockbeare, 10 kilometres away. Dionisia's residence with her husband in the Exeter almshouse and her advanced age (at the age of 60, she was one of the oldest female servants recorded in the depositions) indicates that economic hardship could necessitate employment in service. Tim Wales argues that

⁵⁴ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 73.

⁵⁵ Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 189.

⁵⁶ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 50, Anne Collens v Edward Psthawe (1556).

welfare provision existed alongside informal relief, including employment in service.⁵⁷ Upon being asked her worth, Dionisia responded that 'she lyveth by almes'.⁵⁸ Average life expectancy in England at this time was relatively low: only around 8 per cent of the population were over 60.⁵⁹ Dionisia's return to service implies that even at the age of 60, she was capable of undertaking some form of work to supplement the alms she and her husband received.

Service was likely to be the last resort in counteracting economic hardship for a married woman. Neither Catherine Moore nor Dionisia Hobbes had worked in service for long, around six months in both cases, although unlike Dionisia, Catherine had left by the time of her examination. Dionisia's residence in an almshouse shows that she received welfare provision, but as an able-bodied woman, her provision existed alongside informal relief in the form of employment in service. Wales demonstrates that this was common within poor relief administration and suggests that the system can only be understood within the context of makeshift work.⁶⁰ Catherine's short period of service was probably a solution to temporary hardship, rather than a remedy to long-term poverty. As an economic unit, Catherine and her husband were also navigating an economy of makeshifts.⁶¹

Widows

The burden placed on the family economy during times of temporary hardship was further increased upon the death of the head of the household. Jane Whittle and Erickson both show that many 'enterprising widows' either matched or built upon the wealth that their husbands had left them, highlighting their participation in market-orientated activities such as money-lending and running farms and businesses.⁶² But widowhood might also compel a woman to re-enter service. Figure 2.1 shows a peak in the number of women in service in their late thirties. While some were never married women, others were widows. Whittle's analysis

⁵⁷ Tim Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and the Life-Cycle: Some Evidence from Seventeenth-Century Norfolk', in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 381-383.

⁵⁸ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

⁵⁹ Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*, p. 216.

⁶⁰ Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and the Life-Cycle', p. 356.

⁶¹ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 18.

⁶² Jane Whittle, 'Enterprising Widows and Active Wives: Women's Unpaid Work in the Household Economy of Early Modern England', *The History of the Family*, 19 (2014), 1-18; Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 193-195.

of widowed women's probate inventories indicates that the average length of marriage was 26.5 years. Using Wrigley and Schofield's average age of first marriage (around 26), she calculates that women were typically widowed around the age of 52.⁶³ A total of 431 widows were identified as litigants and witnesses or were mentioned contextually across the Gloucester and Exeter church courts.⁶⁴ The average age of widowed witnesses in the Gloucester court was 55.5 years compared to 54.6 years in the Exeter court, corresponding with Whittle's estimated average age of widowhood.

Table 2.2. Age distribution of widowed witnesses recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Age group	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
20 – 29	2	1.2	1	2.2
30 – 39	14	8.2	4	8.7
40 – 49	37	21.6	7	15.2
50 – 59	39	22.8	5	10.9
60 – 69	45	31.9	26	56.5
70 +	34	19.9	3	6.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>171</i>		<i>46</i>	

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Although Hindle notes that widows with children tended to carry out work within the home, he also suggests that 'widowhood brought the chance to re-enter

⁶³ Whittle, 'Enterprising Widows', 291-292.

⁶⁴ More widows were recorded in the Gloucester court, although this is not to imply that there were necessarily fewer widowed women in the diocese of Exeter than in the diocese of Gloucester. Rather, it suggests that court scribes were less likely to record a widow's marital status in the Exeter court than in the Gloucester court.

domestic service'.⁶⁵ Within the depositions, eight women were explicitly identified as widows working in service. For two of these women, no age was recorded, while the other six were all aged 30 and above, with an average age of 46 years. While the number of widowed servants was very small when considered against the total widow population of the two courts, they nonetheless represent instances of service under specific and unique economic conditions.

Widowhood was not exclusively the preserve of the old. The age distribution of widows identified in the courts presented in table 2.2 shows that a minority of younger women also experienced the loss of a husband. This could place them in a precarious position, particularly if they had no children of working age to supplement the family income. Richard Wall notes the importance of wage-earning children in supporting widows.⁶⁶ However, not only were younger women who lost their husbands perhaps more likely to remarry than older widows, their economic positions ultimately depended on the wealth that their husbands had left them. Widow Margaret Netherlock of Newent in Gloucestershire was 30 years old at the time of her examination in 1616. She described herself as 'a very poore woman of litle or nothing worth' and deposed that two years before appearing before the court, she lived in the house of a husbandman named John Jones. She may have been his servant, the death of her husband compelling her to return to service. Mary Wyeman, cited to appear before the Gloucester court in 1616 for bearing an illegitimate child, was also a widow, described by other witnesses as approximately 30 years old. Before her alleged pregnancy, witnesses deposed that Mary lived temporarily as a servant to Charles Morgan and his wife in Gloucester after the death of her husband.⁶⁷

Older widows were absolved of the legal requirement to return to service. The 1563 Statute of Artificers only placed those under the age of 30 in compulsory service. Hindle argues that senior widows were perceived as 'deserving objects of pity' and were allowed careers as parish pensioners.⁶⁸ Recorded as a witness in the bastardy case against Mary Wyeman (discussed above), 60-year-old widow Elizabeth Howell, who had lived in Kentchurch in Herefordshire for her

⁶⁵ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Richard Wall, 'Economic Collaboration of Family Members within and Beyond Households in English Society, 1600-2000', *Continuity and Change*, 25 (2010), 91.

⁶⁷ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1074, William Heywood v Mary Wyeman (1616).

⁶⁸ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 26.

whole life, deposed that 'shee is a very poore woman litle or nothing worth & sometymes receive the almes of the parishioners of Kentchurch aforesaid where shee dwelleth'. The sources of economic support that widows relied on were often different according to age; neither Margaret Netherlock nor Mary Wyeman, both around the age of 30, appear to have been in receipt of parish relief, whereas Elizabeth, a more senior widow, was at least intermittently reliant upon this aid.

Some older widows did return to service, seeking, as Hindle suggests, 'to shift for themselves'.⁶⁹ Widow Margaret Powell, age 60 of Castle Frome in Herefordshire had worked in the service of Richard Mathewes of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire for at least two years, ending a year before her examination as a witness in 1596. Her employment in service was not short-term or casual, indicating the value that her employer placed upon her work.⁷⁰ Widow Margaret Addams, age 41, deposed in 1606 that she had worked in the service of Alice Knight until the death of Alice's husband. Alice herself was forced to 'g[i]ve over her house keepinge att Bulley, and came to service in the Cytie of Gloucester with Margaret Wodcocke'. Widowed women who employed servants were prevalent in the depositions, representing around 11 per cent of 148 servant employers identified. Yet Alice Knight's situation shows that the economic balance of a household could shift dramatically. Alice was no longer able to afford to employ widow Margaret Addams in her service, and was instead forced to disassemble her household and return to service herself.

Service in widowhood contrasts starkly with the prosperous, enterprising activities of the widows of Whittle's study. Upon the death of one of its working members, the early modern household could become economically fragile. While the former occupation of Alice's deceased husband was not recorded, the household was probably not particularly wealthy given the witnesses' descriptions of the items Alice took with her to Margaret Wodcocke's house: the word 'old' was used to describe six of the twelve separate household items recorded.⁷¹ Service was not always a life-cycle occupation; it could also be a safety net in times of hardship later in life.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1360, Henry Hooper v Richard Mathewes (1596).

⁷¹ GRO, GDR/100, Case 587, Mary Syer v Margaret Wodcocke, (1606). William Gorway, a weaver deposed that Margaret Wodcocke possessed 'one flock bedd twoe bolsters one old

Conclusions

In 1976, Keith Thomas laid out the demographic hierarchy of early modern England: 'the prevailing ideal was gerontocratic: the young were to serve and the old were to rule'.⁷² Conduct literature advised society of their individual roles as they moved through the different stages of the life cycle.⁷³ However, life-cycle stages were more complex than the tripartite model of virginity, marriage and widowhood suggests and women did not necessarily navigate through them smoothly. Experiences of service extended across all age groups in early modern England. Service filtered into other stages of the life cycle, from childhood through to widowhood, and therefore the breadth of its demographic structure is not fully represented by the life-cycle model.

In the earlier stages of life, girls were sometimes placed in service from very young ages, as orphans or parish apprentices. The economic burden of children on poor families might lead to an early exit from the family home. Service did not always conclude with marriage before the age of 30. While life-cycle service was an experience shared by the majority of female servants, not all servants were destined for marriage. Some women continued in service for their whole lives while others married later. Some moved out, married and set up their own households, only to be struck by economic hardship or the death of their husband later in life and presented with few options but to return to service.

Patterns of service therefore followed economic patterns in the life cycle. Girls entered service at a young age when their families faced destitution. Those working in service during their formative years used the opportunity to learn skills and save their wages to enable them to set up a household upon marriage. Later in life, service could be a safety net for women who faced economic hardship, particularly the death of a husband. Service was a financially secure institution, providing bed, board and wages for those who remained unmarried. While many women who passed through service were life-cycle servants, the economic and

overworne coverlidd two olde clokes an old gownde an old petticoate three payre of sheetes twoe coffers twoe pynneis, twoe partlettes & an olde hatt and apron one Candlesticke & certen writings'.

⁷² Keith Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), 207.

⁷³ For example, see William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, 3rd edn (London, 1622).

social circumstances in which women outside this demographic group worked in service reveals a more complex picture that the life-cycle model cannot universally account for.

2.2 Social status, credit and worth of female servants

The term 'servant' captured a range of socio-economic positions. McIntosh notes that servants could expect to acquire 'occupational skills and often cash and goods which would assist them as independent adults'.⁷⁴ Service provided an opportunity for young people to become economically independent, while simultaneously allowing other demographic groups to earn wages and receive bed and board that might reduce their economic hardship. The wages that female servants earned in early modern England varied according to region, and limited evidence suggests that like male service, there was a hierarchical structure of remuneration according to the type of work undertaken or age of the servant.⁷⁵ Household and estate accounts have been recently studied to estimate the incomes and levels of wealth of female servants.⁷⁶ While evidence of women's wages is scarce, the female wage series between 1260 and 1850 recently constructed by Jane Humphries and Jacob Weisdorf marks a distinct shift in the gender balance of studies of economic growth.⁷⁷

Less attention has been accorded to the economic backgrounds of servants and the way in which labour was exchanged between households of different levels of wealth in early modern communities. Alan Macfarlane's theory that 'the institution of servanthood might be regarded as a disguised means whereby wealth and labour flowed from the poorer to the richer' is difficult to test.⁷⁸ The word 'servant' conferred occupational status upon an individual (while also carrying with it certain occupational prejudices), but like other occupational descriptors, provides no clear indication of economic or social status.

Female servants came from a variety of economic backgrounds and their positions in service often reflected this. In 1612, Elizabeth Howard worked as a servant to Sir Thomas Seymour and his wife, Anne, of Frampton Cotterell in

⁷⁴ McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

⁷⁶ Whittle, 'Housewives and Servants', 51-74; Jacob Field, 'Domestic Service, Gender, and Wages in England, c.1700-1860', *The Economic History Review*, 66 (2013), 249-272.

⁷⁷ Jane Humphries and Jacob Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women in England, 1260-1850', *Journal of Economic History*, 75 (2015), 405-447.

⁷⁸ Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: an Essay in Historical Anthropology* (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 209-210.

Gloucestershire. Commenting on Thomas Seymour's status and worth, a yeoman of the neighbouring parish of Winterbourne remarked that

the Mannor of Northstoke in the Countie of Somerset is nowe [...] in the possession and fee of the said Sir Thomas Seymore [...] and is worth per annum two hundred and twelve poundes.

Thomas was also from the same lineage as the more notable Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife. Witnesses referred to Elizabeth as 'Mrs Howard', the prefix 'Mrs' used to denote social status rather than marital status.⁷⁹ Elizabeth was probably a lady's maid rather than a servant responsible for contributing to the economic security of the household. Her experience of service was likely to have been very different to that of Elizabeth Snarling living just 20 kilometres away in Coberley, for example, who described herself as a 'poore servante'.⁸⁰

Critiques of Jean Hecht and Bridget Hill's studies of eighteenth-century servants note that historical scholarship typically focuses on gentry households, with servant experiences perceived through the eyes of prosperous employers: use of a wider source-base is called for.⁸¹ Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths' work on the seventeenth-century Le Strange family of Hunstanton in Norfolk nonetheless shows that even in gentry households, servants were employed from across the social spectrum. A few were of lesser gentry origin, while others were the sons and daughters of labourers.⁸² Whittle's study of Norfolk Quarter Sessions records provides further evidence that those employed in households of different levels of wealth came from a variety of backgrounds. She notes that 'it was not unusual for the children of husbandmen and yeomen to enter service'.⁸³

The focus of scholarship on service in gentry households means that the implications of female servants' economic and social backgrounds upon their experiences have yet to be fully explored across the vertical institution of service. In gentry households, work was specialised and therefore likely to have been

⁷⁹ Erickson, 'Mistresses and Marriage', 44.

⁸⁰ GRO, GDR/114, Case 886, Anne Seymore v Thomas Seymore (1612); GRO, GDR/204, Case 1823 Eleanor Mills v Anne Smith (1639).

⁸¹ Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*; Hill, *Servants*. For a comprehensive critique of their work, see Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 5.

⁸² Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: the World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 215-218.

⁸³ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 274.

delineated along lines of social status. Yet in smaller households too, where just one or two women were employed as ‘maids of all work’, the economic status of a girl’s family might determine her prospects in service.

Socio-economic status of female servants

The labour laws of the mid-sixteenth century imply that not all young people were expected to enter service. The 1563 Statute of Artificers established laws against vagrancy, compelling all unmarried men and women below the age of 30 to enter service *unless they (or their parents) owned lands worth 40s per year or goods to the value of £10*.⁸⁴ Service was therefore compulsory for those without a suitable income. Middling and gentry families nonetheless assigned high value to the social benefits of service, as examples of women like Elizabeth Howard demonstrate. Whittle provides examples of long-serving men and women in gentry households who worked their way up the occupational hierarchy of service. This pattern is a more clearly discernible feature of male service, as they were given different occupational descriptors according to the work they undertook. The work of female servants was often less specifically defined, although examples of laundresses and dairymaids were recorded.⁸⁵ However, social and occupational mobility was less likely in households employing just one or two servants to undertake less specialised work.

Parental economic status

High servant mobility and the distances that some female servants travelled from the parental home make it difficult to connect servants with their parents in church court depositions. The socio-economic status of a female servant is often unknown as parents and their occupational and social status were infrequently recorded; however, occasional glimpses allow some analysis of female servants’ backgrounds.

Eleanor Weekes of Exeter, a servant recorded as a witness in a 1615 matrimonial dispute was at the upper end of the social scale. Eleanor deposed that she was ‘a gentlewoman borne’, thus disclosing her father’s gentry status.⁸⁶ Her widowed

⁸⁴ ‘The Statute of Artificers (1563)’ in R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents: Being Select Documents Illustrating the Economic and Social History of Tudor England* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), p 339. Italics my own.

⁸⁵ Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*, pp. 219-220, 215.

⁸⁶ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2153, Henry Cockram v Bartholomew Jaquinto (1615).

mistress, Joanne Hull was clearly also of relatively high status: the depositions outline an alleged marriage contract made between her son, Henry Cockram, and the stepdaughter of a wealthy doctor named Bartholomew Jaquinto. Witnesses referred to Joanne as 'Mrs Hull', the prefix 'Mrs' again denoting her elevated social status.⁸⁷ Gentry children like Eleanor had no economic necessity to enter service: Eleanor disclosed that she had been made worth £60 by her father. By serving in the household of someone of roughly equal social status, they nonetheless experienced the social benefits of service, learning how to manage a household akin to their future homes, and making connections with a different community that might offer a potential suitor for marriage.

Economic wealth above the threshold of the compulsory service clause of the Statute of Artificers was often inconsequential upon the death of a parent or both parents. Orphans were often placed into service irrespective of social status. In 1601, Elizabeth Hallowes brought a testamentary dispute to the Gloucester court against Edward Trotman who was named as her guardian in her father's will. Witnesses deposed that Edward had procured a position for Elizabeth in the house of clothier William Harding of Dursley, before she was placed with widow Alice Norrys for just over a year 'to borde and to be taught to read and sewe'. Gloucestershire clothiers were often wealthy. Eric Kerridge suggests that in the west of England, they often owned their own fulling mills, one or two looms, spinning wheels and employed several weavers, workmen, servants and apprentices. They were often successful farmers, employing men and women in husbandry.⁸⁸ Elizabeth's subsequent placement with Alice Norrys to learn to read and sew indicates her gentle status. William's employment may have been lucrative but his social status as a textile manufacturer may have been below Elizabeth's breeding. She may have been placed in his service as a temporary measure until a more suitable living situation could be found: she remained in his house for just six months. Elizabeth's living situation therefore became precarious upon her father's death: William deposed that Edward asked him 'to geve entertainment unto Elizabeth'; however, this transpired to be a period in service.⁸⁹ The loss of her father changed Elizabeth's experiences of youth and

⁸⁷ Erickson, 'Mistresses and Marriage', 44.

⁸⁸ Eric Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 195.

⁸⁹ GRO, GDR/89, Case 333, Elizabeth Hallowes v Edward Trotman (1601).

complicates our understanding of the economic backgrounds of those in service. Had her father survived, it was unlikely that Elizabeth would have been engaged in the service of a clothier.

Losing just one parent could have an impact upon a young person's formative experiences. As Chapter 2.1 shows, widowhood could place a family in an economically vulnerable position. In a 1591 Gloucester defamation suit against Dionisia Sursbye, sisters Joanne and Martha Mason were produced by the plaintiff as witnesses. Countersuit witness John Tooke deposed that 'they be servantes and such as have nothing to lyve on but their wages which is but smale'. Joanne and Martha themselves deposed that they had previously worked as apprentices to Dionisia and her husband. Both young women were in their early twenties and had left their apprenticeships to enter service not long before they were examined. Their working patterns suggest that they were parish apprentices, their departures from Dionisia and her husband's household correlating with the minimum age of departure from a pauper apprenticeship for women (21).

The biographical preamble to the deposition of Anne Mason, the girls' mother, disclosed her marital status as 'widowed'. Countersuit witnesses also attempted to discredit Anne: the depositions of hosier William Elbright and John Tooke, both neighbours of the Mason family, indicated that Anne was in receipt of parish relief. John deposed that 'she is a very poore woman & lyveth by the Almes of the parish'. William elaborated further: 'she is allowed towards her maintenance out of the parishe of St Nicholas where she dwelleth vi [6] d wickyle or thereaboutes'.⁹⁰ The level of poverty of Joanne and Martha's family probably led to the two sisters being placed in parish apprenticeships. Despite their low economic and social status, the two women nonetheless may have transitioned to service with relative ease, having received substantial training in housewifery and perhaps other skills that a servant employer would welcome.

Widowhood sometimes had less dramatic effects on the household economy. In 1570, servant Agnes Fishmore of Honiton in Devon accused Thomas Coman of reneging on his promise to marry her. Among others, Agnes' widowed mother,

⁹⁰ GRO, GDR/65, Case 522, Blanche Cloterbook v Dionisia Sursbye (1591); GRO, GDR/65, Case 535, Dionisia Sursbye v Blanche Cloterbook (1591).

Agnes Fishmore senior, and her cousin and mother's servant, Rose Fishmore, provided testimonies. Agnes' mother deposed that she was worth the modest but not trivial sum of £6 13s 4d. Her worth fell short of the minimum amount required by the Statute of Artificers to retain a daughter at home: Agnes was placed in service in another household. Agnes Fishmore senior nonetheless employed her niece, Rose in her service. It is unclear whether Rose received monetary payment for her service. In response to being asked her worth, she responded that she was worth nothing, perhaps suggesting that her aunt provided her with just bed and board. As a 40-year-old woman, whose dependant status was reiterated in the use of the term '*puella*' (girl) in the biographical preamble to her deposition, Rose may have been employed out of charity.⁹¹

The economic and social conditions that governed decisions about placing a child in service can also be tested by considering young women who *were not* placed in service. Although Chapter 2.1 shows that life-cycle service was not universal, it was nonetheless one important way in which service was experienced. Examining evidence of the economic positions of witnesses who were between the ages of 15 and 24 *but not in service* sheds further light on the factors that shaped a woman's experiences of youth and early adulthood.

Depositions are peppered with examples of young women who remained at home. In 1596, 18-year-old Catherine Hutton of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire deposed that she was 'dwelling in house with Richard Mathewes beinge her father in Law [her mother's husband]'.⁹² No information was recorded of Richard's occupation or worth. In 1605, Catherine Knight, the 21-year-old daughter of weaver Henry Knight of Arlingham in Gloucestershire deposed that she 'dwelleth in his house with him & hath litle substance or welth of her owne but what her father doth geve unto her'.⁹³ While no details were recorded of Henry's wealth, his occupation as a weaver was recorded. Shepard shows that 48.3 per cent of the 547 church court witnesses from her sample who worked in craft or trade occupations estimated their worth at £10 or less.⁹⁴ Using Shepard's

⁹¹ DHC, Chanter 857, Case 1023, Agnes Fishmore jun v Thomas Coman (1570). The use of the descriptor '*puella*' in relation to this case is discussed on p. 106.

⁹² GRO, GDR/79, Case 1360, Henry Hooper v Richard Mathewes (1596).

⁹³ GRO, GDR/95, Case 739, Elizabeth Robertes v Catherine Driver (1605).

⁹⁴ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 102-103.

figures as a guide, it is possible that Catherine's father's wealth exceeded the minimum threshold required to legally retain his daughter in his house.

In 1609, 20-year-old Catherine Hatton of Bisley in Gloucestershire deposed that she witnessed Margery Shoell make her will. Margery was a widow with whom Catherine had worked as a servant for five or six years. In the biographical preamble to her deposition, Catherine was recorded as 'the daughter of John Hatton', indicating that she was dependent upon her father and had not taken up a new position in service elsewhere. Margery had died just five weeks before witnesses were examined; Catherine's residence with her parents was, therefore, perhaps temporary. Her father, John, was a dyer and like Catherine Knight's father, may have been of sufficient wealth to make Catherine's returning to service non-urgent.⁹⁵

Analysis of occupation alongside self-perceptions of worth within the depositions is extremely useful. However, the broad spectrum of wealth of individuals within one occupational group displays the inherent problems in using occupational descriptors as an absolute measure of wealth. The multiple appearances in the Gloucester court of Sibill Stone and her father, Roger, of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire demonstrate that occupational descriptors often present an incomplete picture of a family's wealth. At the age of 16, Sibill was produced as a witness in a 1578 defamation dispute between Anne Webb and Alice Brooke of the same parish. She was labelled in the biographical preamble to her deposition as 'daughter of Roger Stone' and therefore almost certainly lived with her father.⁹⁶ At the age of 25, Sibill reappeared before the Gloucester court, initially as a defendant in a defamation suit produced against her by Anne Webb. She then raised her own dispute against Anne, and was subsequently recorded as a plaintiff in the countersuit. Nine years after her initial appearance in the court, Sibill still lived in her father's house; witnesses William Bolley and Thomas Vaughan situated her within Roger Stone's household, deposing that she sat at her father's table at dinner.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ GRO, GDR/109, Case 789, William Gardner v Richard Trewman (1609).

⁹⁶ GRO, GDR/45, Case 62, Anne Webb v Alice Brooke (1578).

⁹⁷ GRO, GDR/65, Case 452, Anne Webb v Sibil Stone (1587); GRO, GDR/65, Case 458, Sibil Stone v Anne Webb (1587).

Roger was recorded as a husbandman each time he appeared before the court.⁹⁸ Shepard's data indicates that around 48 per cent of the 576 husbandmen who stated their worth estimated their wealth at £10 or less.⁹⁹ The occupational descriptor 'husbandman' therefore captured a range of economic positions. Other witnesses indicated supplementary activities that may have contributed to the Stone household economy. For example, Thomas Vaughan, a cooper, deposed that fellow witness William Bolley had 'made a pipe for Roger Stone for his Syder'. Roger's cider production may have simply been for domestic use, but could also have been a commercial enterprise. The court proceedings pursued not only by Sibill but also by her mother Joanne in 1587, required a certain level of wealth. Although the costs of court proceedings varied, the expenses involved in the production of the five witnesses produced by Sibill alone could quickly add up.¹⁰⁰ In 1616, a defamation case brought to the Gloucester court by Jane Wood against Giles Hockfield incurred expenses of £2 14s 2d, a substantial amount to pay if the court ruled against the plaintiff or, as often happened, proceedings were dropped altogether part way through the case.¹⁰¹ The cases pursued by Roger Stone's daughter and his wife would have incurred similar costs. Although labelled a husbandman, Roger may have been relatively wealthy and of sufficient income to retain his daughter at home, at least between the ages of 16 and 25.¹⁰²

The parents of those living at home did not always satisfy the income conditions of living outside service that the Statute of Artificers sought to regulate. In 1596, 20-year-old Clara Jorden deposed that she lived with her father in St. Tudy in Cornwall, describing him as 'a poor man'.¹⁰³ If a householder's worth was below the threshold for which compulsory service should be enforced, yet he was self-sufficient and not reliant on poor relief, the placement of his daughter in compulsory service was unlikely to have been a pressing concern for justices of

⁹⁸ See GRO, GDR/45, Case 62, Anne Webb v Alice Brooke (1578); GRO, GDR/65, Case 452, Anne Webb v Sibill Stone (1587); GRO, GDR/65, Case 461, Anne Webb v Joanne Stone (1587); GRO, GDR/32, Case 1235, Thomas Stone v William Brook (1575).

⁹⁹ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁰⁰ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 56.

¹⁰¹ See GRO, GDR/122, Case 1029, Jane Wood v Giles Hockfield (1614) for details of the dispute and GRO, GDR/B4/1/1069 for a record of the expenditure.

¹⁰² GRO, GDR/65, Case 458, Sibill Stone v Anne Webb (1587); GRO, GDR/65, Case 452, Anne Webb v Sibill Stone (1587); GRO, GDR/65, Case 461, Anne Webb v Joana Stone (1587); GRO, GDR/65, Case 463, Joana Stone v Anne Webb (1587).

¹⁰³ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1826, Elizabeth Trevethicke v Edward John and Petronella John (1596).

the peace. Service was not always the solution to economic hardship and other social and economic factors may have influenced a family's decision to retain a child or young woman in the home. Contemporary attitudes to work outside service and social expectations of women's work are explored in more detail in the following section. Casual work, particularly spinning, could be undertaken in the parental home by those under the age of 30 with no repercussions. In 1598, 17-year-old Anne Combe of Chudleigh in Devon deposed that she 'liveth with her father and moither and dothe use to carde and spyne'.¹⁰⁴ The same year, Margaret Hunt of Crediton in Devon deposed that she had lived in the town for her whole life except for one year and that 'she dwelleth with her brother and liveth by spinninge and washeinge'.¹⁰⁵

Illness and other forms of hardship might also retain a woman within the familial home. Mary Smithe worked as a servant to Katherine Mogridge of Brampford Speake in Devon in the 1630s. Katherine deposed that Mary left her service and 'lived with her mother who was then very sicke [...] And there tarryed neere aboute a quarter of a yeere as shee remembreth till her mother's recoverye'. Katherine and other witnesses deposed that due to the complaints of her neighbours, Mary was forced to return to service by the Justice of the Peace.¹⁰⁶ Yet while Mary was forced back into service, other women like Clara Jorden, Anne Combe and Margaret Hunt remained at home without complaint from the communities in which they lived. While the Statute of Artificers sought to control the social and economic activities of the youth population by imposing a condition on which levels of society were permitted to remain at home, in practice, it was inconsistently enforced in Devon, Cornwall and Gloucestershire. In reality, choices were largely economically driven by the needs and situations of the individual, family or even sometimes the community. This sets the work of Whittle on the enforcement of these labours laws on Norfolk servants within a regional context.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1914, Jane Iverye v Pentecost Ball and Andrew Fole (1598).

¹⁰⁵ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1924, Mary Eve v Margaret Leach (1598).

¹⁰⁶ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker (1635).

¹⁰⁷ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, pp. 225-304 (Chapter 5).

Economic status after service

The economic status of a female servant might also be measured by her subsequent marriage. Occupational descriptors do not accurately represent wealth, but nonetheless act as indicators of social status, providing an insight into the socio-economic backgrounds of the men that servants married. Eighteen examples of occupations held by husbands of former female servants were recorded in the depositions. Table 2.3 shows that while one-third of occupations identified were agricultural (six of the eighteen husbands), other types of employment were also noted. Witnesses deposed in 1576 that Elizabeth Pope, a former servant of Churcham in Gloucestershire, married a fisherman, while it was recorded in 1609 that Joanne Webb (alias Walker) married Benjamin Walker, a waterman of Haresfield in the same county.¹⁰⁸ Former servant Cicilia Firkins of Forthampton in Gloucestershire deposed in 1596 that her husband was a labourer, adding that he was 'little worth'.¹⁰⁹ Many female servants married men of modest means; however, Joanne Whittington of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire deposed in 1574 that she had worked in the service of William Whittington, who was a gentleman of the same parish.¹¹⁰ In 1606, Elizabeth Cartwright of Little Washbourne in the same county deposed of her former service to William Cartwright, for whom she had collected tithes; at the time of her examination, twenty-four years later, she was married to a yeoman named Thomas Cartwright of the same family, who had subsequently gained ownership of the tithes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ GRO, GDR/45, Case 17, Richard Kayhoe v William Pope (1576); GRO, GDR/100 and GDR/106, Case 681, George Smith v Thomas Pearse (1609).

¹⁰⁹ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1366, Thomas Hatton v Henry Hatton (1596).

¹¹⁰ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1187, John Bramedge v Guy Grove (1574).

¹¹¹ GRO, GDR/95, Case 769, James Cartwright v Timothy Cartwright (1606).

Table 2.3. Occupational/social titles of former female servants' husbands recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Occupational/social title	N
Husbandman/farmer	6
Day labourer	2
Waterman	1
Fisherman	1
Carpenter	1
Glass carrier	1
Glover	1
Miller	1
Gardener	1
Butcher	1
Yeoman	1
Gentleman	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>18</i>

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Other types of evidence of occupations of former servants' husbands are found in the depositions. In 1556, Anne Collens of Tregony in Cornwall brought a separation case against her husband Edward Psthawe, having subsequently turned to service as a means of escape from the marriage. Katherine Brown deposed that on Anne's wedding day, they walked together

by a certenn Tynne worke wherein was a great deap pitte of water; this deponent said unto the said Anna what pleasure you shall have to walke amongst your tyn works And she [Anne] said agayne rader [rather] then I will tary here with hym, I will drowne myself in this pytt.

While Anne's husband's occupation is not explicitly stated, his ownership of a Cornish tinworks suggests his relative wealth. Anne's marriage was pushed by her father, who probably saw the match as economically advantageous. Anne's

subsequent service with Sir Hugh Trevennon, her godfather and a knight, further confirms by association that she was likely to have been of gentle status.¹¹²

Elsewhere, evidence of the subsequent poverty of former female servants is recorded. Former servant Agnes Debett was described in 1592 as having four illegitimate children and living in a tenement belonging to Mr Rea, the vicar of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire, the suspected father of her children.¹¹³ Michelle Courtes was described in 1568 as having been practically forced to marry Thomas Tawton of Meeth in Devon 'a power mannes Sonne', after becoming pregnant by her master, William Parker, a gentleman of the same parish.¹¹⁴ The social stigma attached to giving birth to a child outside wedlock sometimes limited the economic opportunities of a woman later in life.

The strands of society from which female servants originated and subsequently married into were broad. While further studies of the destinations of women after leaving service upon marriage are required, the social and economic positions of their families might determine their experiences not only of youth and service, but also of marriage, as shown in the case of Anne Collens. The shortcomings of occupational descriptors are well known; they cannot be used as direct indicators of wealth but can nonetheless situate women in service within a status group. The cultural meanings of occupations such as 'yeoman', 'fisherman' and even 'servant' are of significance here. The wealth of a weaver might be insufficient to meet the criteria set by the Statute of Artificers to retain his daughter at home. However, his occupation might bestow upon him sufficient social capital (partly but not exclusively determined by wealth) for the community to accept that his daughter might be maintained at home. A young person's place was understood within this cultural framework of social status, not simply through the legislation of the Statute of Artificers.

Statements of worth

A female servant's self-perception of social status can be discerned from statements of worth recorded in the depositions. After responding to each article in their examinations, witnesses were also asked to respond to any

¹¹² DHC, Chanter 855, Case 50, Anne Collens v Edward Psthawe (1556).

¹¹³ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1257, John White v John Thaiser (1592).

¹¹⁴ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 878, Office v Joanne Master (1568).

interrogatories or articles of exception that had been submitted. Interrogatories often contained a question about the deponent's estimated worth, which was almost invariably intended to discredit the witness; witnesses generally provided their estimated worth only in response to interrogatory articles submitted by the defending party. Estimations of self-worth and the worth of others were highly subjective and therefore sometimes inaccurate. Maintaining one's reputation and credibility was essential, both in early modern society and within the courts more specifically. Witnesses might inflate their own estimated worth to appear more credible or trustworthy, while assessments of the worth of another witness may have been deliberately underestimated if that person had testified on the behalf of the opposing party.

Shepard argues that the range of statements of worth provided by witnesses were generally 'reasonably reliable reflections of the extent of their moveable property' and therefore can be taken as an approximation of worth.¹¹⁵ They must be understood within a cultural context in which credibility and honesty were paramount. Shepard's work expands our understanding of female reputation in early modern England, suggesting that a woman's repute was judged on a 'far wider range of behavioural norms' than just sexual conduct. Industry and self-sufficiency were also considered important attributes within a complex framework of female honour.¹¹⁶

Of the 96 female servants recorded as witnesses in the Exeter court depositions, 22 (approximately 23 per cent) were asked about their economic positions. In Gloucestershire, this percentage was slightly lower: 30 of the 162 female servant witnesses (18.5 per cent) were asked to state their worth. Table 2.4 shows that of the 52 servants across both dioceses who were asked about their worth, only six gave no response at all. Three of these women were former female servants recorded as married women in the Gloucester court depositions. In 1628, 25-year-old Margaret Lovett of Twigworth in Gloucestershire, the wife of husbandman, Robert Lovett, deposed that she had previously worked in the service of William Harris, whose will was contested in the court. While the two

¹¹⁵ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 82.

¹¹⁶ Alexandra Shepard, 'Honesty, Worth and Gender in Early Modern England, 1560-1640', in H. R. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in English Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 91.

male witnesses in the case provided monetary estimates of their worth, Margaret, like other married female witnesses, did not respond to the question.¹¹⁷ Upon marriage, as *femme couvertes*, women lost their individual rights to property or goods, and were instead defined by their husband's worth. The response of married witness Elizabeth Timbrell, upon being asked her worth illustrates the economic position of married women: 'she knoweth not what her husband is worth his debtes paied'.¹¹⁸ Shepard confirms that the majority of married women responded that they were of no worth or defaulted to a response similar to that provided by Elizabeth. However, she notes that married women occasionally made reference to their own economic contributions to the household economy; their work was recorded even when they declared themselves to be worth nothing.¹¹⁹

Table 2.4. Response rate of female servant witnesses when questioned about their worth in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and the diocese of Exeter, 1548-1649.

	Diocese of Gloucester	Diocese of Exeter
	N	N
Response	27	19
No response	3	3
<i>Total</i>	30	22

Sources: See table 1.2.

In Gloucestershire, six female servants were not asked about their estimated worth when other witnesses in the same case were. These included three women from Yate who were all recorded in a 1604 tithe dispute: two former servants named Eleanor Browne and Edith Syfford, both married women at the time of their examinations, and 30-year-old Isoda Brayne, who worked in the service of David Jorden, were not asked their worth. However, Agnes Barker, who had worked as a servant forty years earlier was asked; she responded that 'she is not much worth more than her wearing apparrell'. As a widow, Agnes highlighted the

¹¹⁷ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1566, John Turley and Elizabeth Turley v William Harris (1628).

¹¹⁸ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1090, Eleanor Lane v Thomas Horwood (1622).

¹¹⁹ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 214-218.

economic deprivation that some widowed women might experience. More importantly, however, she demonstrated her legal access to her own wealth. Asking the two married former servants of their worth was perceived an irrelevant question. Shepard notes this difference in responses from married and unmarried female witnesses and suggests that while some married women displayed an interest and investment in the 'saving and accounting processes associated with the management of household assets', responses largely reflected the disparity of legal rights to possess property for married and unmarried women.¹²⁰ As an unmarried woman, however, the reasons why Isoda Brayne, was not asked to estimate her worth are unclear.¹²¹

Monetary estimates of worth

Table 2.5 shows that a higher proportion of Gloucestershire female servants (44.4 per cent) gave monetary estimates of their worth compared to their Devon and Cornwall counterparts (only 26.3 per cent provided monetary values). These monetary values ranged from as little as 13s 4d to £60, highlighting the relatively broad cross-section of economic wealth that female servants represented. The values were expressed both positively and negatively. Salame Freynes of Bishop's Tawton in Devon deposed in 1615 'that she is not worth xx [20] s in goods when all dues are payde'. Richarda Cock of Churston Ferrers in the same county was somewhat more optimistic, deposing in 1635 that 'she is a poore woeman and liveth under her mother and hopeth she is worth xl [40] s her debtes paied'.¹²² Richarda had worked in service up until the Christmas before her examination in February 1635 but had left as her master 'refused to geve her such wages as she demanded'.¹²³ Her deposition suggests some economic ambition.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

¹²¹ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jorden (1604).

¹²² DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor (1635).

¹²³ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor (1635).

Table 2.5. Categories of responses concerning estimated worth by female servants in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 and the church courts of the dioceses studied by Shepard and Spicksley, 1581-1720.

Category of response	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter		Shepard and Spicksley's dioceses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Monetary estimate	12	44.4	5	26.3	80	30.0
Non-monetary estimate	15	55.6	14	73.7	187	70.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>27</i>		<i>19</i>		<i>267</i>	

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Note: Alexandra Shepard and Judith Spicksley's diocesan church court data on worth is available from the UK Data Service. The dates of statements of worth consulted range from 1581 to 1720 and were collected from the dioceses of Cambridge and Ely, Canterbury, Chester, Chichester, Salisbury and York. See A. Shepard and J. Spicksley, 'Worth' of Witnesses in the English Church Courts, 1550-1728 [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2008. SN: 5652.

Of the seventeen monetary estimates of worth given in the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions, the mean amount stated was 112s. Shepard and Judith Spicksley's data shows that the mean worth of eighty female servant witnesses recorded in church court depositions of six dioceses between 1581 and 1720 was similarly around 124s.¹²⁴ The mean amount that female servants were worth was perhaps between £5 and £6, which seems relatively high. The most common cash value given was 40s: around 35 per cent of values recorded across both datasets matched this amount. Shepard notes that the sum of 40s comprised 'between one-fifth and more than a quarter of all positive monetary estimates between 1550 and 1625'.¹²⁵ The frequency with which this value was given was therefore even higher among the female servant population.

¹²⁴ A. Shepard, and J. Spicksley, 'Worth' of Witnesses in the English Church Courts, 1550-1728 [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], February 2008. SN: 5652.

¹²⁵ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 94.

Calculation of the median value of female servants' worth, a perhaps more accurate measure than the mean, confirms the typicality of the value of 40s amongst female servants' statements of worth. This amount is consistent with Whittle's findings that 40s was a fairly standard annual wage for female servants during the period, although as Chapter 3.1 shows, wage assessments of annual wages in service for the counties of Devon and Gloucestershire stipulated much lower maximum payments.¹²⁶ Considering wealth against wage rates suggests that 40s is rather high for this part of the country.

The data shows the breadth of economic wealth of female servants who appeared as witnesses in the church courts. At the wealthier end of the spectrum of service, Eleanor Weeks of Exeter deposed in 1615 that she was given £60 by her father, qualifying this amount by adding that she was 'a gentlewoman borne'.¹²⁷ The servant with the lowest estimated monetary worth was 30-year-old Margaret Allen of Eastington in Gloucestershire, who deposed in 1568 that she was worth 13s 4d all debts paid. This was a common wage amount, representing two-thirds of £1.¹²⁸

Where 40s was recorded, it was sometimes associated with a low level of wealth. Jane Wheeler of Gloucester described herself in 1622 as 'litle worth besides her wearing apparell', but when asked to testify about the character of fellow servant Jane Tustian, she deposed that

the said Jane Tustian is a poore maide servant [...] & this deponent is verily perswaded that the said Jane Tustian is very litle or nothing wirth besides her apparrell & is not worth as she taketh it forty shillings.

Jane Wheeler's attempt to diminish Jane Tustian's testimony by presenting her fellow servant as of little worth contradicts her description of her own economic wealth. The subjectivity of depositional evidence of worth is apparent; Jane Tustian was depicted as 'poore', yet she was potentially worth 40s more than Jane Wheeler herself.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Jane Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England c. 1450-1650: Hired Work as a Means of Accumulating Wealth and Skills Before Marriage', in Maria Agren and Amy Erickson (eds.), *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 94-97.

¹²⁷ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2153, Henry Cockram v Bartholomew Jaquinto (1615).

¹²⁸ GRO, GDR/24, Case 2001, Margery Cloterbooke v John Batte (1568).

¹²⁹ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1085, Rebecca Lane v Elizabeth Bick (1622).

Age had little bearing on the estimated wealth of female servants. Whittle's study of late sixteenth-century Norfolk servants suggests that a servant couple in receipt of no inheritance might need to work and save for between three and four years before marriage in order to purchase and stock a household.¹³⁰ Servants at the upper end of the age range who provided monetary estimates of worth might be expected to have more capital than their younger counterparts.

However, while the dataset is relatively small, figure 2.4 shows fairly static worth across all ages; only weak correlation between age and monetary statements of worth is found and Shepard and Spicksley's data reinforces these findings. In some cases, younger female servants were often worth as much as their 30-year-old counterparts. At the upper bound of the age range, 30 year-old Elizabeth Beard was worth £10 in goods in 1615; however, in 1613, Mary Malin, age 32 of Gloucester deposed that she was worth just 40s.¹³¹ Those at the lower end of the age range sometimes tended to be worth less, such as 16-year-old Isabella Vaughan and 17-year-old Salame Freynes who stated their worth as 40s and 20s respectively.¹³²

The datasets contain some outliers. Eleanor Weeks, of Exeter, the 20-year-old gentlewoman discussed above, deposed that 'she hath beene servant in howse unto Mrs hull about 3 yeeres & she had £60 given her by her father'. The three years of service Eleanor had performed, then, were not intended to increase her financial position; her worth of £60 was given to her by her father.¹³³ As a woman of gentle birth with a monetary worth of 1200 shillings, Eleanor was perhaps not a typical servant and her age and worth have therefore been omitted from figure 2.4 in order to show more characteristic correlation between age and worth. Across both datasets, monetary values of above 200s have been omitted, considered atypical.

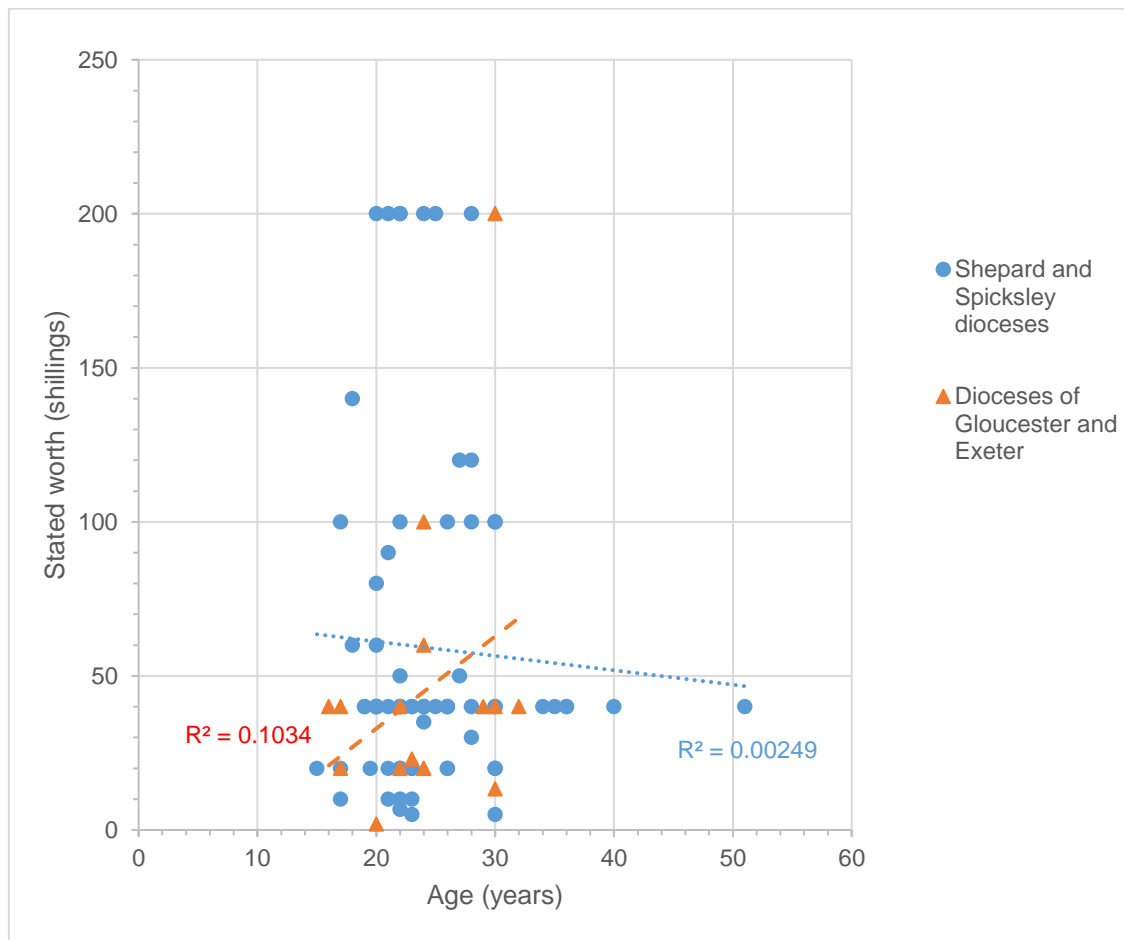
¹³⁰ Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', pp. 101-103.

¹³¹ DHC, Chanter 857, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615); GRO, GDR/121, Case 913, Agnes Brushe v William Brushe (1613).

¹³² GRO, GDR/95, Case 720, Mary Wellins v Jane Tirrett (1605); DHC, Chanter 857, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615).

¹³³ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2153, Henry Cockram v Bartholomew Jaquinto (1615).

Figure 2.4. Worth in relation to age of female servants recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649, and the dioceses studied by Shepard and Spicksley, 1581-1720.



Note: Only monetary values of worth 200s and below have been included in this figure, representing 94 per cent of data collected from the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter and 92.5 per cent of data collected from the dioceses of Shepard and Spicksley's study.

Sources: See Table 2.5.

Eleanor's high estimated wealth nonetheless shows that service was not always a means by which to accumulate wealth or goods for marriage. Eleanor's wealth was a gift from her father, presumably towards her marriage portion. Although her background and economic position was atypical of those in service in early modern England, other servants expressed a similar reliance on family support. While the dataset ultimately highlights variations in wealth across the institution of service and by extension, the socio-economic backgrounds from which

servants came, it also shows some similarities in experiences. Economic wealth was not only earned by female servants; it was also inherited.

Non-monetary estimations of worth

Dependence on family support is most clearly illustrated in some of the non-monetary statements of worth provided by female servants. Non-monetary responses comprised 55.6 per cent and 73.7 per cent of all statements of worth given by these women in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter respectively, compared to around 70 per cent in Shepard and Spicksley's data. Table 2.6 shows that four female servants expressed economic dependence upon parents. In 1579, 24-year-old Juliana Davis (alias Key) of Gloucester deposed that her worth was not represented in her own goods *so far*. Juliana was a witness in a testamentary dispute concerning the probate of Thomas and Margaret Crodie, who died of the plague in September 1578. Juliana deposed that she had lived in her parents' household and had cared for Thomas Crodie, her neighbour, in his sickness. She revealed that her mother died shortly after of the same disease and in March 1579, she began working in the service of William Barton of Gloucester, suggesting that her mother's death had a profound impact upon the household economy as Juliana was forced to take up service.

The occupation of Thomas Key, Juliana's father is unfortunately not recorded. However, witnesses testified that he was literate, being required by Margaret Crodie, the deceased, to record her will and testament. Thomas was perhaps of sufficient education and consequently, wealth, to maintain his daughter at home before his wife's death placed a strain on the family economy. Juliana may have entered service in March in order to supplement the household's loss of earnings or to reduce the strain upon the family's resources. Her quick transition from living at home to working in service perhaps explains why she was of no worth in goods *so far*. The statement is optimistic, suggesting that Juliana was unwilling to reduce her financial position to 'little or no worth', as this might suggest poverty. The words '*so far*' indicate her expectation to receive an inheritance upon her father's death. She had also not been in service for long enough to reap its

financial rewards and enjoy any economic independent from her father, despite being 24 years old.¹³⁴

Table 2.6. Non-monetary estimates of worth provided by female servants in response to being asked their worth in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649, and the dioceses studied by Shepard and Spicksley, 1581-1720.

	Diocese of Gloucester	Diocese of Exeter	Spicksley and Shepard dioceses
Category of response	N	N	N
Little or nothing	10	6	130
Does not know	2	0	6
Reference to clothes	3	0	53
Reference to wages	1	1	22
Poor	2	1	16
Dependant on parent/friends	1	3	13
Alms	0	1	0
Not in debt	0	2	35
<i>Total</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>275</i>

Sources: See Table 2.5.

Other servants also deposed that they were not yet worth anything. In 1622, Suzanna Hauckes of Cheltenham deposed that 'she is a servant maide & getteth her living therby at service & as yet is but of litle worth'.¹³⁵ Suzanna's statement is ambiguous and it is unclear whether she expected to receive a marriage portion. On the other hand, Elizabeth Bab of Bradninch in Devon, servant to Clement Rudley, made her expectations quite clear, deposing in 1637 'that she is not indebted to any and is worth what pleaseth her father to bestow on her'.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ GRO, GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Thomas Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579).

¹³⁵ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1090, Eleanor Lane v Thomas Horwood (1622).

¹³⁶ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2072, Alice Stephens v Caleb Saunders (1637).

While economic independence was supposed to be an attractive prospect, particularly for life-cycle servants, economic ties to the family were not broken. Those who expressed little wealth in goods or money did not necessarily come from poor backgrounds. Often, they were awaiting payment of their marriage portion.

Most female servants indicated their limited access to possessions and wealth. Being of 'little or no worth' was recorded sixteen times in the dataset, and was also widely recorded in the church court depositions of Shepard and Spicksley's study. Being of little worth did not denote poor credit for servants. To be in service meant dependency, upon a particular employer for wages, bed and board, and upon kin and friends for promised marriage portions. In 1616, Elizabeth Hancox of Coleford in Gloucestershire deposed that 'she is little or nothing worth her debtes paied', while Wilmota Ashford of Exeter deposed in 1635 that 'shee is not much worth but liveth by her service'.¹³⁷ As Shepard suggests, 'the relative lack of means, indeed the self-proclaimed poverty, of women and servants and the young and old suggests very strong associations of being 'poor'—particularly in the language of *self*-description—with social subordination and *dependence* as much as with *hardship*'.¹³⁸ Servants were not expected to be of great worth. The frequency with which they referred to their lack of wealth, with several making reference to their limited wages, demonstrates that their labour was considered sufficient to render their lack of assets inconsequential in measuring their credibility and integrity as witnesses in the church courts.

Shepard notes that servants were among the most frequent users of the word 'poor' in commenting upon their worth.¹³⁹ Yet it was recorded just three times in female servant self-descriptions of worth in the church court depositions of Gloucester and Exeter, and only sixteen times in Shepard and Spicksley's larger dataset. In the Gloucester court, Elizabeth Snarling labelled herself a 'poore servannte' in 1639, while Richarda Cock of Churston in Devon described herself

¹³⁷ GRO, GDR/122 and GDR/127, Case 941, Humphrey Smart v Roger Higgins (1616); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1978, Mary Blight v Suzan Richardson (1635).

¹³⁸ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 133.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

in 1635 as 'a poore woeman'.¹⁴⁰ Richarda's poverty was relative, however; she deposed that she had left the service of John Taylor after he refused to pay her the wages she demanded. Her alleged poverty was perhaps not as acute as the word 'poor' might suggest. She chose to leave service due to low wages and instead returned to her mother's house.¹⁴¹ Dionisia Hobbes, an elderly servant to Doctor Gammon of Exeter in 1568, however, described her position in service running concurrently with her receipt of alms, indicating a much more desperate economic situation.¹⁴²

The word 'poor' was clearly used subjectively. When asked to comment upon the worth of female servants, witnesses presented a bleak picture of their economic positions, almost invariably using the word 'poor' to describe these women. Three witnesses in a 1635 defamation dispute in Brampton Speke in Devon attempted to discredit the testimonies of servants Mary Bond and Mary Smithe. Mary Bond was repeatedly described as 'a poore wenche', while Mary Smithe was labelled 'a poore woman and of little Creditt'.¹⁴³ Economic insecurity was linked with ill-repute and dishonesty, although the label 'poor' was not exclusively assigned to female servants. In 1618, Walter Gibbs of Seaton in Devon deposed in his interrogatory that 'Robert Woodland is butt a poore man and liveth by his trade at sea, and [...] Katherine hooper Mary Saunders Alice Welsh and Mary Lee are poore woemen but live without the Almes of the parish'.¹⁴⁴ Although described as poor, the hard work and labour of these individuals was also stressed. By contrast, no descriptions of female servants were prefixed with the caveat that they were hard-working or industrious. Service, and the dependency it suggested, was an easy target for those seeking to discredit a female servant's testimony.

Female servants, or at least proctors who directed their testimonies, were acutely aware of this perception of service. Examples demonstrate attempts to conform to contemporary understandings of creditworthiness. In the Exeter court, two servant witnesses, Christian Collen of Harberton and Elizabeth Bab of Bradninch

¹⁴⁰ GRO, GDR/204, Case 1823, Eleanor Mills v Anne Smith (1639); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor (1635).

¹⁴¹ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor (1635).

¹⁴² DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

¹⁴³ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker (1635).

¹⁴⁴ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2320, John Manson and Robert Starre v William Redwood (1618).

deposed that they were not in debt. The financial independence that the two women conveyed in their depositions demonstrates their awareness that the credibility of their testimonies might be questioned on the grounds of poverty. Christian in particular, an unmarried woman with an illegitimate child, was keen to stress her hard work and industry: she deposed that 'she thanckes she lives in the waye of truthe'.¹⁴⁵ Christian and Elizabeth were nonetheless described by other witnesses as 'of small welth' and 'a poore woman' respectively.

This is not to suggest that female servants were excluded from credit networks and economic communities. Evidence of female servants' debt is found elsewhere in the depositions. Young female servants clearly borrowed money from those in the same demographic cohort. In 1551, John Smythe of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire was brought to the court for allegedly breaking a marriage contract with servant Margaret Shawe. In his personal responses to the allegation, he claimed that he visited her master's house over two nights to request payment of 13s 4d that Margaret owed him.¹⁴⁶ In 1572, Humphry Traye of Barnwood in Gloucestershire also claimed that he had not promised marriage to Elizabeth Flowk. Being asked whether he had given Elizabeth any gifts or tokens of courtship or marital promise, he responded 'no, saving this respondent sometymes hath lent hir money'.¹⁴⁷ In Devon, Richard Stone deposed that in 1556, his servant, Wilmote Rogers, borrowed money from him to raise her marriage portion. Accused of committing adultery with her, Richard claimed that he did not offer money to 'solicit nether induce the said Wilmot to incontineny'. Rather, she asked him to lend her 40s as her potential suitor was likely to ask her what money and goods she possessed.¹⁴⁸ Each of these examples raise inherent questions about the validity of the deponents' statements and the purposes for which these sums of 'borrowed' money were intended. However, the evidence nonetheless shows that it was at least considered plausible that female servants might borrow money. They were, therefore, trusted debtors who participated in credit networks.

¹⁴⁵ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, John Morris v John Sparcks (1578); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2072, Alice Stephens v Caleb Saunders (1637).

¹⁴⁶ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1473, Margaret Shawe v John Smythe (1551).

¹⁴⁷ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1743, Elizabeth Flowk v Humphry Traye (1572).

¹⁴⁸ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 58, Office v Richard Stone (1556).

Female servants were also money-lenders. Spicksley's study of probate documents demonstrates the importance of single women as creditors.¹⁴⁹ Single women's access to surplus capital was less restricted: they had fewer responsibilities, having no household or family to support. Erickson shows that around 50 per cent of women had lost their fathers before they were married and so many may have been left money by deceased parents.¹⁵⁰ Anne Parrie of Frampton-on-Severn in Gloucestershire died in 1588. Evidence of her economic activity is available within the nuncupative will she left that was subsequently disputed within the Gloucester church court. Anne's will referred to various sums of money she had lent to both kin and others. The will annulled a debt amounting to 20s owed by her father, who was still alive, but maintained two other debts. A debt of £4 was owed to her by 'one Thomas Curtes' while 18s was owed to her by 'one Browning her brother in lawe'. Anne had lent a total of £5 18s, a not insubstantial amount for a female servant to hold. Anne was industrious, choosing to lend her money out while she had no immediate use for it.¹⁵¹

Material goods could also indicate wealth. In their statements of worth, three Gloucestershire female servants made reference to clothes or apparel. For example, Jane Wheeler of Gloucester deposed in 1622 that 'she is but little worth besides her wearing apparrell'.¹⁵² While no equivalent references were recorded in the Exeter depositions, Shepard and Spicksley's dataset identified many examples, thus reinforcing the association of clothes with female servant self-assessments of worth. Tim Reinke-Williams notes the impact of social status on possession of clothing, pointing out that while Gregory King calculated in 1688 that 'a quarter of national expenditure went on clothing' the amount that households and individuals spent on clothing varied.¹⁵³ Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wage assessments show that justices of the peace included allowances for clothes or livery in service. In Devon, clothing was typically valued

¹⁴⁹ Judith M. Spicksley, "Fly with a Duck in thy Mouth": Single Women as Sources of Credit in Seventeenth-Century England', *Social History*, 32 (2007), 187-207.

¹⁵⁰ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 93.

¹⁵¹ GRO, GDR/R/1588/14.

¹⁵² GRO, GDR/148, Case 1085, Rebecca Lane v Elizabeth Bick (1622).

¹⁵³ Tim Reinke-Williams, 'Women's Clothes and Female Honour in Early Modern London', *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), 74.

between 5s and 6s 8d, depending on the age of the servant.¹⁵⁴ Clothes were considered to be items of value and were a symbol of status. Importance was placed upon servants wearing good clothes.¹⁵⁵ It was given to servants: John Dennys of West Down in Devon deposed in 1580 that he had seen Joanne Deacon, servant of the late Maud Dennys, wearing her deceased mistress' cloak, although he did not know whether it had been bequeathed to her or not.¹⁵⁶ In a 1551 testamentary dispute heard in the Gloucester church court, witness Joanne Whyfyld deposed that her late mistress, Elizabeth Steynerode, had bequeathed her 'an old frock'.¹⁵⁷

Garthine Walker suggests that clothes held more emotional significance for women than for men.¹⁵⁸ They clearly also held economic value: Richard Kingdon of Launceston, accused of incontinence with his former servant Joanne Nymoe, attempted to convince her to return to his service. Witness Hugh Glase deposed that Richard sent a message to Joanne, stating

that she should comme away in all hast back agayne to Launceston. If she could not have her clothing [from her employer] she should comme awaye, and he would have a shifte founde for her clothinge afterwarde.¹⁵⁹

Clothes were often a condition of the agreement made between employer and servant. In a 1610 Tewkesbury defamation dispute, clothes were again used as a bargaining tool. Witnesses deposed that servant Elizabeth Flann told her master, Cyprian Wood, that she no longer intended to serve the full year of her covenant, wishing instead to marry. Elizabeth's clothes were withheld from her and Cyprian allegedly declared that he 'would first know whether she might not be by law compelled to serve him the said terme before she the sayd Flanne should have her cloyes or apparel from him'. Whether Elizabeth's clothes were returned to her is unknown. She nonetheless sought recompense by bringing

¹⁵⁴ For Devon wage assessments, see Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Vol.3, The later Tudors (1588-1603)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 19, 284.

¹⁵⁵ Reinke-Williams, 'Women's Clothes', 76.

¹⁵⁶ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1401, John Dennys sen v John Dennys jun (1580).

¹⁵⁷ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1475, Robert Redverne v Henry Stone (1551).

¹⁵⁸ Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 162-167.

¹⁵⁹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1430, Office v Richard Kingdon (1580).

Cyprian to court for defaming her; witnesses deposed that he had called her a whore.¹⁶⁰

Female servants' statements of worth demonstrate the complexities of determining their socio-economic backgrounds. Monetary values show that the amount of capital or worth in goods that female servants possessed was varied. However, these values may have been supplemented with future inheritances and marriage portions supplied by parents. Those who provided monetary values in response to being asked their worth may have referred to savings from their employment in service, while others may have received no wages, sent all or part of their earnings back to the family home or simply spent the money they were paid. Non-monetary statements of worth help to clarify this complex picture. Those who were due inheritance or marriage portions knew to expect these from their parents. They placed economic value on material goods such as clothes and steered away from declaring themselves 'poor'. Statements of worth offer a glimpse into the socio-economic backgrounds of female servants, demonstrating that these women were aware of their futures, had economic aspirations and understood their positions with the economic framework of society.

Conclusions

Socio-economic backgrounds of those in service are difficult to uncover in early modern records. Evidence from church court depositions of parental occupations and the working activities of spouses of former servants indicates the range of backgrounds from which female servants came, from the lower levels of society to those of higher status. Incidental evidence of families who did not place their children in service indicates that the economic conditions of compulsory service laid out in the 1563 Statute of Artificers were not always applied in the South-West; its enforcement appears to have been limited. In other areas of the country, such as Norfolk, those under the age of 30 and of insufficient wealth to meet the criteria of the Statute were compulsorily placed in service. This raises questions about regional differences in the demographic, social and economic occupational structures, not only of service but also of other forms of employment that women undertook. National comparisons of the social and economic profiles

¹⁶⁰ GRO, GDR/109, Case 797, Elizabeth Flann v Cyprian Wood (1610).

of female servants is beyond the scope of this thesis but is worthy of further investigation.

Statements of worth provide further evidence of the varying gradations of wealth in service. Although the most frequently deposed monetary value of worth was 40s, several women were worth much less, deposing that they were worth 'little or nothing'. Others were worth considerably larger sums, up to the value of £60 in the depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter. Qualitative analysis of responses to interrogatory questioning of worth demonstrates the framework of dependency in which service was viewed and the low expectations of both servants and their contemporaries of the wealth they were anticipated to hold. Creditworthiness was partly measured by early modern society in terms of hard labour, and service, at least for young people, was considered a worthy and honourable occupation within this framework. Only when witnesses made deliberate attempts to discredit female servants was the trope of the 'poor servant' deployed.

3. Work

The contribution of single women to the early modern economy has received some attention in recent years. Judith Spicksley's study of probate inventories and wills between 1601 and 1700 highlights the importance of unmarried women as money lenders, showing that debts were still owed to 63 per cent of single female testators upon their deaths.¹ As unmarried women, servants were engaged in both formal and informal lending, extending credit to employers and investing their wages.² Amy Erickson demonstrates the significance of credit released by single women's investments in creating the English capitalist economy, situating unmarried women's money-lending activities in a broader economic context.³ The economic contribution of unmarried women is recognised in other European societies: Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden's work on the European Marriage Pattern credits the wage labour of single women who married later in life for their contribution to 'a highly commercialised environment, in which households interacted frequently with labour, capital, and commodity markets'.⁴ In many ways, the institution of service facilitated these economic patterns and developments, employing many of these unmarried women. The ways in which early modern service operated, the conditions and terms of employment and the working activities that the female servant typically spent each day undertaking have received less attention.

This section focuses on female servants' working patterns, and is divided into two chapters. The first chapter considers early modern understandings of service, and explores how service operated as a contractual agreement between servant and employer. The ways in which female servants found employment, how long they stayed and the extent to which they negotiated conditions of service are discussed. The second chapter analyses the type of work that female servants undertook, demonstrating the economic breadth of activities that these women

¹ Spicksley, "Fly with a Duck in thy Mouth", 191.

² Ibid., 188; Judith M. Spicksley, 'Usury Legislation, Cash, and Credit: the Development of the Female Investor in the Late Tudor and Stuart Periods', *The Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), 293.

³ Amy Louise Erickson, 'Coverture and Capitalism', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005).

⁴ Tine De Moor and Jan Luiten Van Zanden, 'Girl Power: The European Marriage Pattern and Labour Markets in the North Sea Region in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period', *The Economic History Review*, 63 (2010), 1.

engaged in and considering these tasks alongside the occupational groups to which their employers belonged.

3.1 Conditions of employment

Defining service

In defining work, economic historians often draw a distinction between wage labour and annual service. This distinction is based on both the form of payment and the type of agreement made; service involved the security of an annual contract, annual payment, bed, board and perquisites such as clothing and tips or vails. Casual labour was more flexible and insecure, paid by the task, day or week. In her study of agricultural service, Ann Kussmaul charts a decline in the employment of annual servants between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century, whereby servants in husbandry were replaced by day labourers due to changes in the agrarian economy.⁵ More recently, the work of Jane Humphries and Jacob Weisdorf presents evidence of female wages from 1260 to 1850, in which they chart the wages of 'two distinct forms of female employment: daily wage labour, often on a casual basis, and annual service'.⁶

This distinction between casual labour and annual service was also made in the labour laws passed between the mid-fourteenth century and the end of the sixteenth century. This series of legislation sought to regulate wages, enforce servants' contracts, and control casual labour by forcing unmarried men and women into service.⁷ Ensuring that young people under the age of 30 were employed in service was the responsibility of secular courts. Jane Whittle notes that petty sessions were designed solely to enforce labour legislation: servants and labourers were required to appear with their employers at these sessions to declare their wages and terms of employment, while other young people were to be found employment if not in service.⁸ Able-bodied men and women under the age of 60 were forced into compulsory service under the terms of the 1349

⁵ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 133.

⁶ Humphries and Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women', 407.

⁷ The labour laws are printed in the following publications: The 1349 Ordinance of Labourers and 1388 Statute of Cambridge in P. A. Brown, R. H. Tawney, and A. E. Bland (eds.), *English Economic History: Select Documents* (London: Bell, 1920), pp. 164-167 and 171-176. The 1351 Statute of Labourers in R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 63-68. The 1563 Statute of Artificers in Tawney and Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), pp. 338-350.

⁸ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 276.

Ordinance of Labourers and 1351 Statute of Labourers.⁹ The Statute of Labourers clearly distinguished casual labour from annual service, ordering that servants were to be ‘hired to serve by the entire year, or by other usual terms, and not by the day’. Two hundred years later, this legislation was consolidated with some amendments in the 1563 Statute of Artificers, which ruled that

every person between the age of Twelve yeres and the age of Threescore yeres, not beinge lafullie reteyned, nor [an] apprentice [...] nor beinge reteyned by the yere or half the yere at the leaste [...] be compelled to be reteyned to serve in husbandrye by the yere.¹⁰

Wages were set locally by justices of the peace each Easter at the Quarter Sessions and even mobility was controlled: servants were forbidden to leave a parish without a letter or certificate of good character.¹¹ A memorandum issued in 1572 complained that many employers hired servants without asking for these certificates, indicating that they may have been infrequently issued.¹² Social and economic control of the ‘masterless young’ was paramount; the legislation was underpinned by an ideology that young people *should* be placed in service.¹³ As Whittle suggests:

the labour laws were designed to ensure that youthful servants accepted the authority of their employer; those who broke the terms of service contracts and rejected the authority of their master were punished.¹⁴

Despite this clear demarcation between service and casual labour in legislation, contemporary understandings of service in early modern England appear more complex. The inconsistency with which court scribes and officials recorded service is outlined in Chapter 1.1, and ambiguities of the term ‘servant’ loom large in the discussion. As occupational descriptors were rarely assigned to women, female servants are often hidden in legal documents. Unpicking the cultural meaning of phrases that denote residence but not necessarily occupational

⁹ Brown, Tawney, and Bland (eds.), *English Economic History* (London: Bell, 1920), pp. 164-167; Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, pp. 63-68.

¹⁰ Tawney and Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), pp. 338-350.

¹¹ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, pp. 291-292.

¹² ‘Proposals for the Better Administration of the Statute of Artificers (1572) in Brown, Tawney, and Bland (eds.), *English Economic History* (London: Bell, 1920), pp. 333-336. See also, Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 131-132.

¹³ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, pp. 351-389, esp. p.356.

¹⁴ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 299.

status – ‘dwelling with’ and ‘in the house of’ - is not straightforward. In describing someone’s place of residence, distinctions between those living in service and non-servants living outside a parental or marital household were rarely clear-cut. In 1608, witness Thomas Lydyat, a butler who worked in the parish of Thornbury in Gloucestershire deposed that ‘he knoweth certenlye that [...] Jane Tayler dwelled in house with [...] William Holder for a twelve moneth’. Only later in his examination did Thomas depose that William’s ‘mayde Jane Tayler was gon awaie from him with childe’. Jane’s position as a servant was therefore only clarified when William’s legal responsibility for her was raised as significant to the case; her pregnancy triggered questions about the ill-rule that William kept in his household.¹⁵ In 1592, 26-year-old Sanicta Peryn of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire deposed that ‘for the space of three years or thereabouts this deponent dwelte with Thomas Welshe’. Sanicta’s relatively young age and the evidence she provided of being sent to ask the vicar’s wife when she planned to bake is indicative of her employment in service in Thomas Welshe’s household, but is nonetheless inconclusive. In 1588, 30-year-old John Pillman of Goodleigh in Devon deposed that ‘he dwelleth in house with John discombe in Goodly since easter Last having no certen place of abode of his owne’. His deposition later recorded that ‘he is a mason by his occupacion’.¹⁶ Service was not the only context in which individuals might share a house with a non-family member.

Residence outside the parental or marital home was not, therefore, understood as an experience unique to service. A detailed defamation case heard in 1634 in the Exeter church court shows the range of circumstances in which individuals could be residents of a particular household. Witness Joanne Pittman of Kentisbeare in Devon outlined the legal context in which distinctions between conditions of residence outside the parental or marital household might be made. In the interrogatory to her examination, Joanne deposed that she ‘did spynne at the howse of the said Joane Bennett & her husband [John] by the weeke’, providing a detailed breakdown of the number of weeks she had worked for the couple and the value of her weekly wages. Her spinning activities may have been relatively profitable: Craig Muldrew notes an increasing demand for spinning labour in both Gloucestershire and Devon, particularly in the seventeenth

¹⁵ GRO, GDR/106, Case 1161, George Smith v William Holder (1608).

¹⁶ DHC, Chanter 862, Case 1753, Nicholas Shorte v Hamond (1588).

century.¹⁷ When asked to outline the connections of two other witnesses to the plaintiff, Joanne responded

that Mary Thomas did live in howse with John Bennett about 3 quarters of a yere as a servant to the said John Bennett for wages as she thincketh but now liveth with one Edward hart, and Robert Sweete hath lived there a while by the day as she thincketh at husbandry labour.

Interrogatory questioning aimed to discredit witnesses and their testimonies: exceptions might be made if Mary Thomas and Robert Sweete were identified as servants of the plaintiff, their loyalties rendering them unreliable witnesses. Joanne Pittman's detailed description of the employment arrangements by which she and these two fellow witnesses resided within the Bennett household needed to be stated only within this legal framework; employment conditions were rarely expressed incidentally.

The response given by witness Robert Sweete concerning the circumstances of Mary Thomas and Joanne Pittman's residence in the household suggests that the phrase 'lived in house' requires further attention:

and otherwise he cannot answer savinge that Joane Peekeman [Joanne Pittman] hath lived about a moneth last past in howse with the said Bennett at spinninge by the weeke, & Mary Thomas did live in howse there also till about a weeke since but for what wages he knoweth not.

Robert's unfamiliarity with the conditions of Mary's employment, categorised in Joanne's deposition as service, reveals that even workers employed within the same household did not always distinguish between casual and annual contracts. Residence in a non-parental or marital home did not automatically link an individual to service. Society's expectations of young women in finding employment were also relatively accommodating, at least in the community of Kentisbeare. At the time of their examinations, both Joanne and Robert were young and living outside service: Joanne was 20 years old and Robert aged 24. Furthermore, the conditions of 20-year-old Mary's employment and residence with the Bennetts were ambiguous, at least according to Robert's deposition. The circumstances of residence in the household of John and Joanne Bennett

¹⁷ Craig Muldrew, "'Th'ancient Distaff' and 'Whirling Spindle': Measuring the Contribution of Spinning to Household Earnings and the National Economy in England, 1550–1770", *The Economic History Review*, 65 (2012), 520.

demonstrate that enforcement of the compulsory service clause laid out in the Statute of Artificers was clearly not rigorously exercised in this east Devon parish.¹⁸

Indeed, enforcement seems to have been only occasional in the regions of this study. While secular courts were responsible for the implementation of the legislation, numerous examples of women outside service suggest that justices of the peace became involved only at the request of parishioners. This might have happened in instances where a family claimed poor relief when a member of the household should have been working in service. In 1635, Mary Smith of Brampford Speke in Devon was produced as a witness in a defamation dispute. Mary was and had previously been the servant of Katherine Mogridge. Katherine told the court that Mary had left her service a year ago to live

with her mother (who was then very sicke) in Brampford Speke. And there tarryed neere aboute a quarter of a yeere as shee remembreth till her mothers recoverye. And then afterwards a Complaine was made by some of her neighbors unto a Justice for not living with a Master.

Katherine further deposed that the Justice of the Peace threatened to punish Mary and so she returned to Katherine's service. However, the narratives of the countersuit witnesses amounted to a slightly different story. Edward Paine did not acknowledge Mary's mother's sickness, claiming that Mary

was questioned & Convented before Sir Nicholas Marten a Justice of Peace for not living with a Master. And then the said Sir Nicholas did enjoyne her to procure a Master within one moneth following which she did then accordingly but did not long tarry with him by reason whereof shee was againe brought before a Justice, And was threatned to bee punished if shee did not live with a Master. And since that tyme shee hath lived in service.

Edward and three other male witnesses all deposed that Mary was 'a poore woman & of little Creditt'. Mary's mother's illness meant that she was perhaps unable to work and was therefore reliant on poor relief. Steve Hindle notes that recipients of poor relief whose children were not bound into service risked being denied relief and placed in the house of correction.¹⁹ The male witnesses in this case deposed that Mary, not her mother, was threatened 'to be sent to Bridewell

¹⁸ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1966, Joanne Bennett v Joanne Deymont (1634).

¹⁹ Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 199.

for not living in service'. Mary's mother's reliance on relief therefore explains Mary's forcible placement back into service.²⁰

Those who undertook alternative forms of work, however, were readily accepted by society in south-west England. Society's expectations were flexible and movement between service and casual employment was tolerated. In 1639, 18-year-old Judith Kilmaster of Cirencester in Gloucestershire testified in a matrimonial dispute on the behalf of Mary Stone, the daughter of widow, Elizabeth Stone, who was Judith's former mistress. While Judith deposed that she was employed in the Stone household as a servant in 1638, she had left by the time she was examined a year later; other witnesses, including her former employer, described Judith as 'then servant'. Judith herself stated that

she cometh to testify in this cause at the request and charges of Mary Stone the party produceinge her and hath received six pence allready from the said Mary Stone towards the payement of her dayes worke which she hath neglected and the residue she is promised and not otherwise and that she is maintained by her father.²¹

Judith probably lived in her father's household and may have worked for him or for another household by the day. The six pence she received in lieu of her 'dayes worke' shows that the economic value of her work outside service continued to be recognised. Transitions from service to casual labour arrangements were not perceived by society as an expression of idleness as the labour laws suggest. Although the Statute of Artificers theoretically made employment in service compulsory for young people, work outside service was conceptualised as a socially and economically acceptable alternative.

Women who had never married were also sometimes permitted to leave service to enter a different form of employment. In 1612, 32-year-old Mary Malin of Brockworth in Gloucestershire testified in a testamentary dispute between Agnes Brushe and William Brushe senior, wife and father respectively of the deceased William Brushe junior. In her deposition, Mary maintained that at the time William Brushe made his will, she 'did worke for her selfe in the howse of the said Henry Hallier & *not as a servant*'. The depositions of fellow witnesses Philip

²⁰ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood and Dorothea Tucker (1635).

²¹ GRO, GDR/204, Case 1828, Mary Stone v John Cuffe (1639).

Chamberlen and Henry Hallier confirmed this: Henry deposed that she 'did worke at [his] howse in Brockworth at her owne handes'. The earnestness with which these witnesses impressed upon the court that Mary was not a servant is again symptomatic of the legal operation of the court. Countersuit deponents John Milton, Anne Milton and Margaret Webley all upheld that Mary's service with the deceased's father and the time at which his son made his will coincided and Mary's appearance as a witnesses could be contested on these grounds. Establishing the timing of her service was therefore essential to assessing the reliability of Mary's testimony.

Beyond these disagreements over the precise timing of Mary's service, this dispute provides a window into understanding the flexibility with which women could move between annual live-in service and the casual labour market. The countersuit witnesses expressed no concern that Mary lived by her own means; outside service, she was no longer legally dependant on a master. Mary's maturity partly explains the readiness with which this was accepted. Although marriage was not outside the realms of possibility at the age of 32, it is likely that Mary's marital prospects were somewhat limited. Equally, she may have sought a single life. Amy Froide suggests that service was not the only option available to women who did not marry and many women departed from service as it 'emphasized their dependence and subordinate status'.²² Casual employment granted women like Mary the freedoms and liberties that service often restricted.

Mary was an accepted and integrated member of the community. The high esteem in which she was held by her neighbours is implicit in their descriptions of her character: even the witnesses of the countersuit characterised her as a woman 'of good creditt & estimacion'.²³ Other female servants who moved between service and casual labour were less well-regarded. While Joanne Whiddon and Agnes Cowse of Brampford Speke in Devon both deposed in 1635 that 'Mary Bond & Mary Smithe are honest people', Jerome Upton told the court that Mary Bond 'never lived above one yeere at a tyme in the parishe but hath gonn and lived a little tyme in one place & so in another' and was 'one to whome little or no Creditt is to bee given'. Mary Smithe, he claimed, was 'such a one as

²² Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 90.

²³ GRO, GDR/121, Case 913, Agnes Brushe v William Brushe (1613). Italics my own.

doth use to wander upp & downe the Conuntry And not live in service' and therefore 'little Creditt is to bee given to what shee sayes'.²⁴ The reputations of Mary Bond and Mary Smithe were tarnished by their lack of stable employment. This may have been due to their younger age: Mary Malin, at the age of 32 was theoretically no longer required by the Statute of Artificers to remain in service.

Some women's work was virtually indistinguishable from that of a servant. Overlap in the work and characterisation of a 'servant' and a 'charmaid' or 'charwoman' can be identified in the depositions: the terms initially seem to have been used interchangeably. Within the literature, distinctions are made: Bridget Hill suggests that charmaids worked for a household on a casual basis and were not live-in employees like servants.²⁵ Sue Wright characterises charmaids as 'daily helps' who were 'frowned upon by the authorities' for living by such unreliable employment.²⁶ In a 1606 matrimonial dispute, John Crockett of Newent in Gloucestershire attempted to discredit two witnesses, claiming that

Margery Dawe and Ellinor Phillpott have bin or are the chare maydes or servantes unto the foresayde Mathewe Berrowe & that they are not worthe fortye shillinges apeece but are soe sillye & simple that they cann scarcelye rehearse the Lordes prayer.

Ostensibly, John Crockett made little distinction between employment as a charmaid and as a servant. Yet implicit within his choice of word order in the statement – 'Margery Dawe and Ellinor Phillpott have bin or are the chare maydes or servantes' - was his perception of *Margery* as a charmaid and *Eleanor* as a servant. Both women claimed that they were servants; however, while Eleanor was 19 years old at the time of this dispute, 40-year-old Margery was more than twice her age, situating her comfortably within the older demographic group of the small number of other charmaids found within the depositions.²⁷ Eleanor Hubbard notes a distinction between the treatment of adult women as charwomen and young women as charmaids. She argues that 'charmaids were objectionable because of their youth and maiden status; their work could be seen as a cover

²⁴ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothea Tucker (1635).

²⁵ Hill, *Servants*, p. 12.

²⁶ Sue Wright, "'Churmaids, Huswyfes and Hucksters": The Employment of Women in Tudor and Stuart Salisbury', in Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds.), *Women and Work in Pre-industrial England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 104.

²⁷ GRO, GDR/95, Case 759, Milberowe Berrowe v John Crockett (1605).

for prostitution. Charwomen, on the other hand, were as respectable as their poverty permitted'.²⁸ Masterless young women were a threat to the fabric of society whereas older women living by their own means were of lesser concern. In 1624, 40-year-old Elizabeth Sparckes of Upton St. Leonard in Gloucestershire was described by witness Robert Nelme as

a singlewoman of no credit or accompt, an ordinary and common chare maide and hireling here to day and in another place hired to drudge for reward to morrow of no certaine place or abode and is beggarly not worth agroate.²⁹

Elizabeth was referred to as a 'charmaid' and not as a 'charwoman', suggesting that the word 'charmaid' could be used as an insult, reducing the adult status of a charwoman to that of a young maiden. The term 'charmaid' symbolised economic and social dependence. Hubbard points out that having to call their employers 'mistress' and 'master' must have been 'a painful concession for adult women, [who] did not enjoy the relative security of maidservants, who received meals and lodging'.³⁰ In a 1612 church seating countersuit, 35-year-old widow Edith Serney of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire was described by witness John Nayle as a former servant of Cressett Cox, the suit's plaintiff. Yet John further deposed that she 'nowe at this present is a chare maide to the said Cressett Coxe', indicating Edith's movement from service to casual labour.³¹ Sheila Mclsaac Cooper notes that those who moved from service to charwork 'suffered serious erosion in status'.³²

Female labour tended to flow in this direction: servants became charmaids, shifting from annual to casual labour. One notable exception was Joanne Knight of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire recorded in 1596 as a witness in a matrimonial dispute. The biographical preamble to her deposition recorded that she was a servant of Margaret Knight, a widow. Joanne deposed, however, that she had previously worked as a charmaid to the plaintiff, stating that she 'did many tymes doe chareworke for the sayd goodwife Cowley'. Deviating not only from the

²⁸ Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 213.

²⁹ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1133, Richard Atkins v Giles Boyse (1624).

³⁰ Hubbard, *City Women*, p. 211.

³¹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 881, Cressett Cox v Silvester Nayle (1612).

³² Sheila Mclsaac Cooper, 'From Family Member to employee: Aspects of Continuity and Discontinuity in English Domestic Service, 1600-2000', in Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux (ed.), *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity: Understanding the Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th-21st Centuries* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 280.

pattern of moving *from* service *to* charwork, Joanne's young age is also notable in comparison to other charwomen of the South-West: she was 16 years old at the time of her examination. Further study of the working lives of charwomen is required; however, depositional evidence suggests that poverty was closely linked with charwork. Upon being asked her worth, Joanne deposed 'that she is worth litle or nothings, for that she is a poore servant'.³³ Others referred to Edith Serney as 'verye poore' and 'beggarly', describing her as 'of no credit'.³⁴ While witnesses presented charwork as an inferior form of labour, the production of charwomen as witnesses suggests that they were not automatically considered to be of little credit.

In addition to old age and poverty, other circumstances could force women out of service into casual labour arrangements. Unmarried former servants who became pregnant were sometimes recorded as charwomen in the depositions. In 1592, witnesses deposed that Agnes Debett of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire had 'foure base children borne out of wedlocke'. Witness Edmund Everish deposed that Agnes had previously worked in service in Badgeworth. Yet according to witness Jocosa Bosley, Agnes had since taken up residence in a tenement belonging to Mr Rea, the parish vicar, who was allegedly 'the father of the sayd children for that she was his charemayde & aboute him nighte & daye'.³⁵ In 1637, witness Richard Wood described how Mellony Pacey had been delivered of an illegitimate child sixteen or seventeen years earlier. She had since worked as 'an ordinary servant' in the house of Emmanuell Sannders in Sampford Peverell in Devon where she had 'beene dayly'. The phrase 'ordinary servant' was synonymous with 'charwoman' here; Richard implied that Mellony was not an annual, live-in servant but was instead hired daily by Emmanuell Sanders.³⁶ Following the birth of an illegitimate child, female servants were often forced to take up residence elsewhere in a household that could accommodate the child. Frequently, they found new casual employment elsewhere; as the case of Agnes Debett shows, attitudes towards those who retained incontinent servants in their employment as charwomen might be negative. Mr Rea's integrity was

³³ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1368, Julian Cowley v Richard Selwin (1596).

³⁴ GRO, GDR/114, Case 881, Cressett Cox v Silvester Nayle (1612).

³⁵ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1257, John White v John Thailer (1592).

³⁶ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2052, Sanders v Sanders (1637).

questioned as rumours spread that he had fathered Agnes' children. These rumours were undoubtedly further fuelled by his continued employment of her.³⁷

Attitudes to young women working outside service generally do not reflect the preoccupation of law makers with regulating young people's employment in service. Alexandra Shepard notes that 'wage labour remained conceptually indistinct from service in the seventeenth century' and this mentality was generally reflected in witnesses' depositions.³⁸ Only charwork was distinct. The term 'charmaid' was frequently used to reduce the social status and credibility of a witness. The type of work that employers hired servants and charmaids to do was probably very similar, but the arrangements under which that labour took place fell within distinct conceptual frameworks. Working as a live-in servant was perceived as secure employment in a way that working as a charmaid or charwoman, employed on a daily or weekly basis, was not. More importantly, the word 'charmaid' was sometimes used derogatively: those involved in charwork were typically older and presented as poor, beggarly and of no credit. While female servants were frequently asked to state their worth before the courts, they were never described as beggarly or of ill credit by other witnesses simply by virtue of their occupation. Charwork appears to have been a form of labour imposed on women in old age, poverty or other desperate circumstances. Although women could be compulsorily placed in service, it was nonetheless considered a standard and therefore accepted occupation for young people. While terms like 'servant', 'charmaid', 'worked by the day' and 'lived in the house of' were in some ways understood as distinct from one another and had cultural, social and economic meanings, the distinction between casual labour and annual service asserted by the labour laws did not necessarily have significant resonance in terms of how people perceived, described and even, to some extent, experienced work.

Wages and contracts

The distinctions drawn between casual labour and service in the historiography largely rest on the principles that service was annually contracted, with wages

³⁷ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1257, John White v John Thair (1592).

³⁸ Alexandra Shepard, 'Poverty, Labour and the Language of Social Description in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, 201 (2008), 55-56.

paid by the year, while those working in casual employment had no fixed contract and were paid on a daily or weekly basis. The following discussions show that these conditions of annual labour, however, were not integral to early modern understandings of service and that depositional evidence complicates these distinctions.

Employment patterns

Servant hiring in early modern England is often characterised as a seasonal phenomenon. Simon Penn and Christopher Dyer note that late medieval servants started annual contracts at Michaelmas (29 September) or Martinmas (11 November). Kussmaul's study of long eighteenth-century settlement examinations suggests that Michaelmas was the typical hiring period in the south and east of England while servants were more frequently hired at Martinmas in the north. Kussmaul found that over 90 per cent of hiring took place around these religious festivals. A different pattern was found only in Lincolnshire where more servants in husbandry were hired on May Day.³⁹ Michael Roberts adds that annual contracts of service were 'orientated by the year of church festivals, itself rooted in the seasonal rhythms of the farming year'.⁴⁰

Penn and Dyer note that uniformity of the late medieval servant hiring patterns implies 'some machinery for bringing masters and servants together', such as hiring fairs. Continuity between late medieval and nineteenth-century hiring might be suggested: Kussmaul notes that hiring fairs were important sites of employment throughout the long eighteenth century.⁴¹ However, Whittle's study of service in sixteenth-century Marsham in Norfolk shows that while the county's arable economy might have lent itself to a Michaelmas hiring pattern, servants were hired irregularly throughout the year.⁴² Her recent examination of household accounts suggests a similar picture: in the Le Strange and Toke households, for example, 'there was no time of the year when it was impossible for a servant to take up employment or leave'.⁴³ With servants hired at virtually

³⁹ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰ Michael Roberts, "'Waiting upon Chance": English Hiring Fairs and their Meanings from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth century', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1 (1988), 124.

⁴¹ Simon Penn and Christopher Dyer, 'Wages and Earnings in Late Medieval England: Evidence from the Enforcement of the Labour Laws', *The Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), 365; Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 59-61.

⁴² Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 272.

⁴³ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

all points of the liturgical calendar, hiring fairs could not have been a typical means by which servant labour was exchanged. Roberts suggests that statute sessions, the administrative machinery designed to enforce the fourteenth-century labour laws, developed labour markets that provided service with an institutional framework: those who were not in service could find employment at these sessions.⁴⁴ Whittle, on the other hand, argues that there is no evidence that the petty sessions (as the statute sessions came to be known) operated as hiring fairs during this period; this was a later phenomenon.⁴⁵

Almost invariably, references to time within the depositions were orientated by the liturgical calendar. The time of year in which female servants were hired was recorded incidentally. The Gloucester court sometimes recorded the name of the servant's employer and the time of year her employment had commenced in the biographical preamble to her deposition. In 1605, the appearance of witness Joanne Brayne was recorded as follows:

Joanna Brayne the servant of John Mawnder of Broadmarston in the parish of Pebworth in the county of Gloucestershire where she has been since the feast of St. Michael.⁴⁶

In the Exeter court, female servants were rarely assigned occupational descriptors in the biographical preambles to their depositions. Evidence of hiring is therefore scarcer: hiring dates were available for just six female servants recorded within the Exeter depositions, compared to eighteen of their Gloucestershire counterparts. Of the six female servants recorded in the Exeter court depositions who specified the time of year that they entered service, only one deposed that her employment had commenced at Michaelmas. Hiring patterns were more flexible: in a 1574 matrimonial suit, Robert Watte (alias Davys) of St. Germans in Cornwall deposed that his servant was hired around May, stating that 'about whitsontyde laste, Joanne Sybley came to this deponentes wife to seke service'.⁴⁷ In 1615 in Bishop's Tawton in Devon, servants Joanne Osmonde and Salame Freynes were hired at different points in the year. Joanne deposed that her employment in the service of Henry Hartwell,

⁴⁴ Roberts, "Waiting upon Chance", 124, 130.

⁴⁵ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

⁴⁶ GRO, GDR/95, Case 734, *Hogkins v John Maunder* (1605).

⁴⁷ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1146, *Joanne Sybly v Thomas John* (1574).

the parish vicar, had commenced at Shrovetide, while Salame initially worked for him from Midsummer for three months before returning again to his service at Michaelmas until Christmas.⁴⁸ Henry therefore hired servants at three different points in the year: around February, June and September.

The initial findings from the Gloucestershire data, however, suggest less variation in hiring patterns. Four female servants were not hired at Michaelmas, but at Shrovetide (February), around the feast of Annunciation (March), at Easter (March or April) and at Christmas (December).⁴⁹ The fourteen remaining female servants all deposed that their periods of service had commenced at Michaelmas. In a 1576 defamation case, witness Alice Spryte of Cam was recorded as the servant of George Turner, with whom she had lived since the feast of St Michael Archangel.⁵⁰ A 1584 testamentary dispute revealed that servant witness Maud Broade of Churchdown in Gloucestershire had lived in service with the deceased, Fulk More, since the feast of St Michael.⁵¹

The evidence indicates that female servants in Gloucestershire were more typically hired around Michaelmas, while hiring in Devon and Cornwall was rarely organised around this point in the year. Other data can be drawn from the depositions to flesh out this picture of servant hiring patterns. Servants often stated how long they had worked in the service of their employers. Although these are often approximations, the month in which each female servant was hired can be estimated by subtracting the length of time they had worked for a particular employer from the date of their examination in the church court. For example, on 4 July 1582, Mary Ware of Dartington in Devon deposed that she had served in the household of Sir Gawen and Lady Roberta Champernowne for two years.⁵² Projecting back, her period of service in the Champernowne household can be estimated as having commenced in July 1580. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the estimated start months of employment for female servants across the two dioceses. The data provides a general, indicative

⁴⁸ DHC, Chanter 857, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615).

⁴⁹ See GRO, GDR/25, Case 1745, Elizabeth Godwyn v William Jackson (1572); GDR/148, Case 1143, Giles Turner v Jane Cooper (1625); GDR/8, Case 1493, Office v John Curtesse (1551); GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weeks and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579).

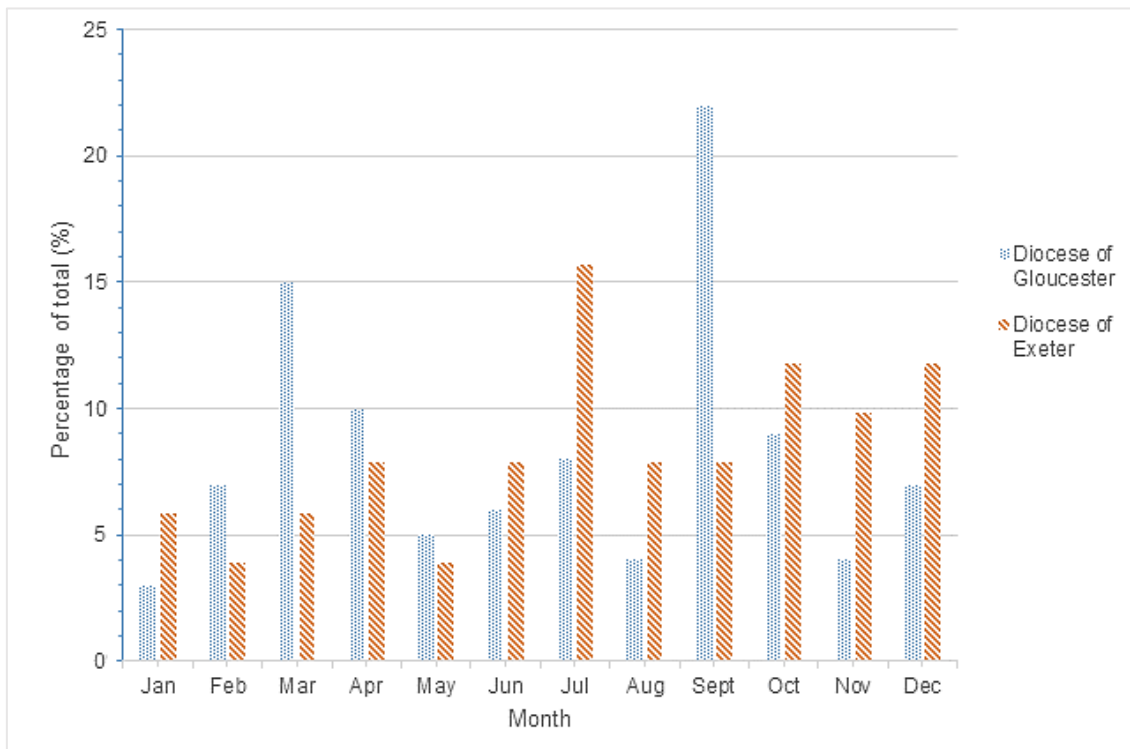
⁵⁰ GRO, GDR/45, Case 19, Richard Smythe v Richard Woodward (1576).

⁵¹ GRO, GDR/57, Case 269, Testament of Fulk More (1584).

⁵² DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1495, Gawen Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne (1582).

impression of hiring patterns, but confirms Whittle’s findings that servants were hired at all points of the year, while further reinforcing the conclusion that a higher proportion of Gloucestershire female servants started service in September than their Devon and Cornwall counterparts.

Figure 3.1. Estimated monthly hiring patterns of female servants recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.



Note: Calculations have been possible for 100 female servant hirings in the diocese of Gloucester compared to 51 female servant hirings in the diocese of Exeter. Each instance of hiring has therefore been represented as a proportion of the total number of hirings for each diocese in order to make the data comparable.

Sources: As in table 1.2.

September hirings nonetheless still accounted for just 22 per cent of the total number of female servant hirings in Gloucestershire. If Michaelmas was a typical time of year for hiring female servants, it might also be expected that figure 3.1 would show high proportions of hirings in the preceding and following months (August and October) to allow for the imprecision with which female servants referred to the length of time they had worked for a particular employer. However,

August, September and October hirings represented just 35 per cent of the data in the diocese of Gloucester and only 27.5 per cent of those in the diocese of Exeter. The second most frequent time of hiring in Gloucestershire was March, while July was the second most commonly estimated start month of employment for Devon and Cornwall female servants. These months map roughly onto two of the quarter days on which servants were frequently paid: Lady Day on 25 March and Midsummer on 24 June.⁵³

Kussmaul explains the typicality of servant contracts ending in Michaelmas as a phenomenon of areas of arable farming and the requirement for seasonal labour. Pastoral farming, on the other hand, required care of animals all year round.⁵⁴ Neither Gloucestershire, Devon nor Cornwall supported particularly arable economies; both counties contained woodland and pastoral areas, which maintained strong clothworking industries.⁵⁵ Servants were therefore probably required throughout the year in rural farming communities. Yet agriculture cannot exclusively account for hiring patterns: cities like Gloucester and large towns like Tewkesbury were less likely to hire according to agricultural labour requirements but some urban employers did hire at Michaelmas. In 1579, Anne Elie deposed that she had served John Horne of the City of Gloucester since the Feast of St. Michael.⁵⁶ Isabella Rogers of Tewkesbury deposed in 1604 that she had been Thomas Kyldermore's servant since the feast of St. Michael.⁵⁷

Other factors were important in choosing when to hire a servant. Alice Mathewe of Cheltenham deposed in 1611 that 'aboute the beginning of Aprill last past Thomas Mathewes [...] did hire this deponent to be his servant until Michaelmas the next cominge'. In 1611, Cheltenham was still a small town with a population of around 1300 and probably contained some agricultural land.⁵⁸ Alice may have been hired to help out over the harvest period, although none of her work tasks were specified in her deposition. Failing to make a good impression on her

⁵³ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

⁵⁴ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 97; Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 256.

⁵⁵ Joan Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500-1750* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 28; Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ GRO, GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579).

⁵⁷ GRO, GDR/89, Case 413, Thomas Kyldermore v Agnes Quarrier (1604).

⁵⁸ Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 28.

employer, Alice remained in Thomas Mathewe's service for just one week, deposing that Thomas' wife, Elizabeth

did entreate the said Thomas Mathewes her husband to give her leave to goe forth into the towne to his brothers howse to get one of his daughters to come with her into the howse, *having a little child in her hands*.⁵⁹

Alice's deposition records Elizabeth's fears that she would not be able to manage caring for a small child alone while also maintaining her work duties to support the household economy. Whether Elizabeth intended to employ her niece to help care for the child or to undertake the necessary work is unclear. What is evident is that the availability of family labour could be important in determining hiring periods and patterns.

Family connections in finding employment

If employers did not hire at particular points in the year through hiring fairs, then how did women find out about employment opportunities in service? Family connections could play an important role. In post-Restoration London, a high proportion of women came from outside the capital in search of employment in service. Tim Meldrum suggests that family members could be a vital connection for female servants, helping to 'smooth their plunge into the great unknown'.⁶⁰ Whittle shows that gentry families sometimes employed extended kin to work in service in their households.⁶¹ In Gloucestershire, seven women expressed a reliance on kinship networks, working in the service of their relatives. In the Exeter court depositions, evidence of kin-employers is scarcer, with only four examples identified. Across both courts, over half of these women were the nieces of their employers. In 1615 in Quinton in Gloucestershire, 19-year-old Anne Higgens witnessed Joan Chettle call her mistress Martha Higgens 'a hilding Jade'. She deposed that 'she is an hired servant to the plaintiff Martha Higgens & the brothers daughter of George Higgens, husband of the plaintiff'.⁶² Seven years earlier, 20-year-old Anne Reynolds of Topsham in Devon deposed that she was the servant of John and Grace Corbyn, her mother and Grace being 'naturall

⁵⁹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewes v Thomas Mathewes (1611). Italics my own.

⁶⁰ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 19.

⁶¹ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

⁶² GRO, GDR/122, Case 1063, Martha Higgens v Joan Chettle (1615).

sisters whereby the saide Grace is Aunte to this respondente'.⁶³ Working in a household headed by kin was a mutually convenient arrangement. Natural alliances may have already existed; both Anne Higgins and Anne Reynolds were loyal to their kin-mistresses, deposing on their behalf against their defamers.

Siblings and cousins were also sometimes instrumental in providing employment opportunities for female relations. In 1609, Elizabeth Brewer of Stroud in Gloucestershire deposed that she was the servant of her cousin, Thomas Brewer, while in 1567, Alice Pawe of Dowland in Devon worked in her brother-in-law's household.⁶⁴ In 1604, Eleanor Browne deposed that in the 1570s she had worked as a servant to Thomas Jones, her brother, in the Gloucestershire parish of Yate, describing her payment of tithes on his behalf.⁶⁵ Kin could play a key role in a young woman's experience of service, although not just in her formative years as Meldrum implies.⁶⁶ Eleanor Browne and Elizabeth Brewer were 28 and 29 years old respectively when employed in the service of their kin. The employment arrangements they established with these particular family members were only possible once their kin had established their own households. Of the same generation, these kin-employers may have gained financial independence from service or apprenticeship only recently themselves. Offering a position in service to a female family member may not have been possible any sooner, thus explaining the relative maturity of Eleanor and Elizabeth when they were employed by their same-generation kin.

Some women were more distantly related to their employers, unaware of the specific familial link between them beyond a shared surname. In a 1598 tithe dispute originating in Morebath in Devon, Katherine Tynewell deposed that she was 'kinne unto Christofer Tynewell [the defendant and Katherine's master] but in what degree she cannot tell'.⁶⁷ As Naomi Tadmor shows, 'kin' had a broader meaning in early modern England and could include social alliances as well as blood relations.⁶⁸ However, in the context of Katherine's deposition, 'kin' referred

⁶³ DHC, Chanter 865, Case 1956, Grace Corbyn v Joanne Drewe (1608).

⁶⁴ GRO, GDR/100, Case 678, Jane Brewer v Alice Warner (1609); DHC, Chanter 856, Case 782, Alice Pawe v John Brenelcombe (1567). 'Brother-in-law' is used here in its modern sense, meaning the husband of Alice's sister.

⁶⁵ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jurden (1604).

⁶⁶ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 19.

⁶⁷ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1918, William Lambert v Christopher Tynewell (1598).

⁶⁸ Naomi Tadmor, 'Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change', *Continuity and Change*, 25 (2010), 24.

exclusively to a blood relationship. Katherine not only shared the same family name as her employer, she also made reference to the 'degree' of their relatedness, thereby placing herself and Christopher within the same family tree.

Several female servants shared a family name with their employers, but kinship links between them were not explicitly identified in the depositions. Alice Mathewe, the 16-year-old servant of Thomas and Elizabeth Mathewe of Cheltenham, may have been related to the couple.⁶⁹ Elizabeth Baker of Newent shared the family name of her employer, Thomas Williams (alias Baker). Her 1594 deposition outlined that Thomas was the brother of the plaintiff, John Williams (alias Baker), but she made no reference to her own relationship with these men who shared her surname.⁷⁰ Richarda Burden of Kenton in Devon described herself in 1617 as the servant of John Burden, while Joanne Wannell of Otterton in the same county deposed in 1583 that her mistress was Alice Morgan (alias Wannell), probably her recently married sister.⁷¹ Almost invariably, the female servants who shared a family name with their employers had lived in the same parish since birth, supporting the idea that employment was sometimes found within a local support network of kin. Alan Macfarlane's suggestion that the early modern family did not rely on the bonds of kinship in selecting and employing servants does not map onto these experiences of servant employment in the communities of Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall.⁷²

Employers might also hire a succession of female kin. Whittle notes that the Le Strange and Toke families often hired servants who had familial connections with those already employed in their households. Between 1628 and 1657, almost 25 per cent of the Le Strange's servants had the same surname as a former servant.⁷³ In 1585, Juliana Wathen, a servant in the household of Richard Yelf of Longney in Gloucestershire, outlined a conversation that took place between herself and Richard Dowdie, her sister Margaret's suitor, concerning her future employment:

⁶⁹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611). Italics my own.

⁷⁰ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1327, Anne Williams v Francis Donne (1594).

⁷¹ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2286, Robert Pridham v Combe and Ann Scadlake (1617); Chanter 861, Case 1582, Sprynt v Thomas Wichalse (1583). The addition of 'alias Wannell' to Alice Morgan's name suggests her recent marriage, although other uses of 'alias' are found in the depositions.

⁷² Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, p. 148.

⁷³ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

the said Dowdie requested this examine [Juliana] to come thither to dwell & serve John Walker at Michaelmas following saieing that he wold then marrie the said Margaret, this examines sister.

John Walker and his wife, Mary, were uncle and aunt to Juliana and Margaret. This familial connection provided employment for Margaret, and subsequently, upon Margaret's marriage, a position in service for Juliana. This must have been an opportune arrangement for both parties.⁷⁴ In replacing servants, family connections could be the first port of call for employers. When Elizabeth Mathewe of Cheltenham sought to replace her servant Alice Mathewe in 1611, she suggested her niece, indicating that kin were an obvious source of additional or replacement labour within the household. Macfarlane's theory of individualism, whereby early modern kinship connections operated only within the nuclear family, does not hold in these examples of servant kin-employers.⁷⁵

Labour exchange via kin networks was just one way in which women found employment in service. Alternative routes were equally or perhaps even more commonplace. While eighteenth-century hiring fairs acted as formal sites of labour exchange, servants also enquired door-to-door about employment opportunities.⁷⁶ Enquiry was a common method of securing employment in service in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. In 1574, Robert Watte (alias Davys) of St. Germans in Cornwall deposed that his servant, Joanne Sybly 'came to this deponentes wife to seke service'.⁷⁷ In 1568, John Brook, a gentleman of Rockbeare in Devon, deposed that he had 'knowne Isott [his servant] by the space of ii [two] yeres for she came to Staverton from Overbryen and offered her service to this deponentes wiff'. Travelling to a nearby parish, Isott Riches had secured employment with John and Katherine Brook without any apparent familial connection to them; John indicated that she certainly had not known them before this point.⁷⁸ Both Joanne and Isott offered their service to the mistresses of the household, highlighting the role of the wife in selecting and hiring the women that would come to be part of the household.

⁷⁴ GRO, GDR/57 and GDR/65, Case 305, Margaret Wathen v Richard Dowdie (1585).

⁷⁵ Alan Macfarlane, *The origins of English individualism: the family, property and social transition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 98-99, 146-147.

⁷⁶ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 57.

⁷⁷ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1146, Joanne Sybly v Thomas John (1574).

⁷⁸ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

Broadweavers Hugo Salter, John Browninge and Thomas Parker of Uley in Gloucestershire deposed in 1607 that servant Joanne Daingerfield had 'noe certen habitacion but worketh sometimes with one & sometimes with an other as she cann procure worke in anye place'. Joane's agency in 'procuring' her own work was implied, although her lack of permanent residence and the temporality of her service raised questions about her credibility as a witness. Thomas described her as 'a poore lame gerle [who] hath no certen habitacion or dwelling but goeth from one to an other to gett worke', while John further deposed that she 'stragleth upp and downe to gett worke'.⁷⁹ The nomadic qualities that these witnesses imparted upon Joanne's character in her quest to find work emphasise the struggles that some women, and particularly those living with a physical impairment, might have experienced in securing employment.

Some female servants travelled considerable distances from their place of birth to find work. In 1622, Jane Wheeler found employment in Gloucester nearly 26 kilometres away from her place of birth in Kemble in Wiltshire.⁸⁰ Joanne Whittington, former servant and subsequent wife of William Whittington, deposed in 1574 that she was born in Whitchurch in Shropshire, but worked over 100 kilometres away in William's household in Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire.⁸¹ How these women found such distant employment is unclear. Dispersed kin connections may have been important in encouraging mobility within service. Women like Jane Wheeler may also have travelled to urban areas where employment opportunities were reputed or rumoured to be high.

Once in service, young women might become firmly rooted in family life, finding themselves subsequent work with other family members. Eleanor Newcombe of Southam in Bishop's Cleeve in Gloucestershire, was a witness in a 1605 tithe dispute. She deposed that she had worked for seven years as Edmund Wallwin's servant following the death of Edmund's father, Edward, who was her former employer.⁸² The same pattern of hiring was found in Stonehouse in Gloucestershire: in 1558, Isabella Orpin deposed that she worked in the service of William Hiatt following the death of his father.⁸³ The 1587 deposition of servant

⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/100, Case 619, George Birche v Thomas Payne (1607).

⁸⁰ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1085, Rebecca Lane v Elizabeth Bick (1622).

⁸¹ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1187, John Bramedge v Guy Grove (1574).

⁸² GRO, GDR/95, Case 737, Edmund Wallwin v Robert Hobbes (1605).

⁸³ GRO, GDR/65, Case 466, William Hiatt v Thomas Hiatt (1558).

Margaret Warner of Gloucester recorded that following the death of Margaret Weike, her mistress, she was employed by her deceased employer's son-in-law, Henry Reynolds.⁸⁴ Family members of deceased employers often took responsibility for hired workers within their late kin's household. All three women discussed above had served the deceased for particularly long periods, suggesting they had proved themselves to be both capable and loyal and had become firmly integrated within the family. Eleanor described her tithe collection responsibilities on the behalf of both father and son employers. This was a task that required an understanding of the customs and practices of tithing in the parish. For Edmund Wallwin, retaining a servant who was well-trained, knowledgeable and dependable would surely have been favourable.⁸⁵

Length of employment

Entry and exit from service were therefore not organised around a particular hiring period. Female servants found employment in various ways throughout the year, sometimes travelling outside their parish for work. Young people in early modern England, most of whom were servants and apprentices, are considered to have been highly mobile.⁸⁶ Kussmaul's analysis of eighteenth-century settlement examination shows that 75.8 per cent of (mostly male) servants in this period spent exactly a year in the continuous employment of a particular employer, failing to renew their contracts at the end of the year.⁸⁷ Marjorie McIntosh affirms this conclusion in her study of Havering in Essex, but acknowledges that other options were available to servants: she notes that 'some adolescents remained in a given [...] household year after year, becoming virtually a member of the core family, while others moved on every year or two'.⁸⁸

Church court depositions provide new evidence of the length of time that late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century female servants remained in continuous service with particular employers. In 1578, Elizabeth Wotton of St Thomas in Exeter deposed that

⁸⁴ GRO, GDR/65, Case 464, Joanne Wieke v Margaret Wieke (1587).

⁸⁵ GRO, GDR/95, Case 737, Edmund Wallwin v Robert Hobbes (1605).

⁸⁶ See Ian D. Whyte, *Migration and Society in Britain 1550-1830* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 33; Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 72.

⁸⁷ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 52.

⁸⁸ McIntosh, 'Servants and the Household Unit', 12.

she this deponent did dwell a dosen yeres in the house of Mr Castle as a servante with Mr Castle and came from thence about v [five] yeres agoe.⁸⁹

Exclusively within the Gloucester court depositions, the length of time a woman had served in a household was sometimes recorded in the biographical preamble to her deposition, stated alongside the occupational descriptor 'servant'. In 1567, the biographical preamble to Margaret Nyblett of Painswick's deposition recorded this information:

Margaret Nyblett of the parish of Painswick in Gloucestershire the servant of Thomas Jackette who she has served since the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel.⁹⁰

Occasionally, other witnesses volunteered this information on the behalf of female servants: in a 1630 matrimonial suit, witness George Francombe of Gloucester revealed that the plaintiff, Margaret Hill, had worked alongside him in service for almost two years. He deposed that he

hath byn servant to the said Mr Jones for the space of almost two yeres last past as aforesaid during all which tyme he was fellowe servant with the said Margaret.

George's deposition therefore recorded the *minimum* number of years that Margaret had served in Mr Jones' household.⁹¹ The data collected from the depositions do not therefore necessarily account for the full length of time that a woman had served a particular employer. Many servants undoubtedly remained with their employers beyond the date of their examinations in the court. In 1622, 23-year-old Suzanna Hauckes of Cheltenham deposed that she had worked for her employer for ten months, but had not yet left his service.⁹² The *minimum* length of Suzanna's continuous service with her employer has therefore been recorded as ten months.

Table 3.1 shows that the mean length of service for women across both dioceses was almost three years, although as the data represents minimum lengths of service, this is a conservative average. While approximately one-third of female servants remained with an employer for up to a year, a considerable proportion

⁸⁹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1318, Raymond Wadland v Blanche Apworthie (1578).

⁹⁰ GRO, GDR/23, Case 1551, Jones v Thomas Ducke (1567).

⁹¹ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1604, Margaret Hill v Thomas Whittingham (1630).

⁹² GRO, GDR/148, Case 1090, Eleanor Lane v Thomas Horwood (1622).

stayed for longer. This data suggests a significantly different pattern of service compared to the consistent annual turnover of eighteenth-century agricultural servants found by Kussmaul.

The 1660 Settlement Act entitled servants to claim settlement rights if they had been in service for over one year; Keith Snell suggests that by the eighteenth century, this had resulted in servants no longer being hired annually.⁹³ Roberts adds that the timing of hiring fairs allowed servant employers to avoid giving servants settlement rights with a full twelve month contract, offering periods of 364 days instead.⁹⁴ Longer periods in service, as shown in table 3.1, might therefore represent a phenomenon of service that applies specifically to the period before the 1660 Act.

Table 3.1. Number of years of continuous employment within a household recorded for female servants in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Length of service (years)	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
< 1	38	33.3	34	40.0
≥ 1 and < 2	29	25.4	14	16.5
≥ 2 and < 3	16	14.0	12	14.1
≥ 3 and < 4	8	7.0	5	5.9
≥ 4 and < 5	4	3.5	6	7.1
≥ 5 and < 6	4	3.5	2	2.4
≥ 6	15	13.2	12	14.1
<i>Mean</i>	2.68		2.81	
<i>Total</i>	114		85	

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Long service

Women who spent particularly long periods of time in the service of a particular employer were often connected with certain types of disputes. Table 3.2 shows that female servants recorded as litigants or witnesses in tithe and testamentary

⁹³ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 73-77.

⁹⁴ Roberts, "Waiting upon Chance", 134.

cases typically served for longer periods. Those recorded in defamation and matrimonial disputes served, on average, for just under two years, while female servants connected with disputes over tithe payment and wills had typically remained with their employers for closer to five years. Tithe disputes often relied upon witnesses with a good understanding of parish customs. A long-serving female servant was therefore more likely to be produced as witnesses in these cases; as a relatively settled resident with a good knowledge of the tithe customs of the parish through her work, she had often become embedded within community life. Elizabeth Cartwright of Little Washbourne in Gloucestershire deposed in 1606 that she had served for ten years in the farm house of William Cartwright, acquiring knowledge of who the tithes belonged to and who was required to pay. Elizabeth subsequently married Thomas Cartwright, William's successor in terms of ownership of the Little Washbourne tithes; the knowledge she held concerning the tithes made her not only a suitable witness in the church court but also a suitable wife.⁹⁵

Table 3.2. Mean length of continuous service in the same household of female servants recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (by type of case).

Type of case	Mean length of service (years)
Defamation	1.8
Matrimonial	1.9
Testamentary	5.1
Tithes	4.7

Sources: As in table 1.2.

Long-serving female servants recorded as witnesses in testamentary disputes had often established good relations with their employers. In 1638, Eustice Peeke produced a case against William Carewe, the administrator of the will of Dorothy Gay of Tavistock in Devon. Eustice's wife, Jane, had served Dorothy for nearly twenty years. The will, the Peeke's claimed, rewarded Jane's loyalty: Dorothy had allegedly bequeathed them her best featherbed and not 'the worst

⁹⁵ GRO, GDR/95, Case 769, James Cartwright v Timothy Cartwright (1606).

bed' that William Carewe delivered to the couple after her death.⁹⁶ In 1576 in Exeter, Joanne Preston, who had served the deceased Robert Buller for seven years, deposed that when her master visited London, he told her that 'if she or her fellow did lacke any mony and thing ells they should goe to Mr dennis', demonstrating the provision he made for his servants while absent from home. Joanne's long period of service with Robert, rivalled only by the ten years that fellow servant Katherine Wellington had spent working in the house, was predicated on a sense of mutual respect, care and trust between employer and servant.⁹⁷

Those who spent the longest periods of time in the service of an employer were typically never married. Appearing in 1587 before the Gloucester court, 50-year-old Margaret Warner had worked in the service of Thomas and Margaret Wieke for twenty-four years.⁹⁸ Her employment with the couple commenced at a point in her life when she was most likely to marry. Between around 1550 and 1580, Joanne Deacon of West Down in Devon was in service for 30 years from the age of 10 until 40, when her employer also died. Her period of service spanned much of her adolescent and adult life.⁹⁹

A life-long career in service was not the destiny of all long-serving women. In 1612, 50-year-old Eleanor Shephard of Blaisdon in Gloucestershire, the wife of a glover, was recorded as a witness in a testamentary dispute. She deposed that she had served Elizabeth Hampton, the deceased, of Westbury-on-Severn, for eighteen years. Eleanor had lived in the parish of Blaisdon for eleven years, indicating that she had probably married and left Elizabeth's service when she was around 39 years old, having served the Hampton family for almost two decades.¹⁰⁰ Jane Peeke, discussed above, served Dorothy Gay between the ages of 7 and 27, before marrying.¹⁰¹ As outlined in Chapter 2.1, the recurrent pattern of women entering service at a young age and remaining for long periods of time resembles demographic patterns of pauper apprenticeship, where a child

⁹⁶ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638).

⁹⁷ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1273, Gilbert Denys v Gentill Buller (1576).

⁹⁸ GRO, GDR/65, Case 464, Joanne Wieke v Margaret Wieke (1587).

⁹⁹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1401, John Dennys v John Dennys jun (1580).

¹⁰⁰ GRO, GDR/114 and GDR/121, Case 893, Daniel Baineham and Silvester Baineham v William Whitmey (1612).

¹⁰¹ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638).

as young as 7 could be placed in service until they reached the age of 21.¹⁰² The line between service as income-generating work and service as a form of poor relief was sometimes blurred. If Jane had entered Dorothy's service as a pauper apprentice, her associated poverty did not prevent her from marrying. Rather, Dorothy may have helped Jane by providing her with a marriage portion: the bequest of a feather bed to Eustice, Jane's husband indicates some financial support of the couple.

Annual service

Although service was not governed by an annual obligatory or customary change in employer, some women were nonetheless hired on a yearly basis by their employers. In Gloucestershire in particular, some women were hired around Michaelmas for twelve-month periods. Joanne Daingerfield of Uley in Gloucestershire deposed in 1607 that she was 'dwelling as housholde servant with one Morris dawncye of Uley as his hired servant till Michaelmas next', having served him since the previous Michaelmas. This was not necessarily a typical experience of service and women were not expected to change employment each year. Annual service was not a recurrent pattern in Joanne's employment history. She had previously lived with Thomas Whitorne in the same parish, probably also a servant, working for him for a total of three years rather than one.¹⁰³

Even those who specifically made an annual contract of service were not necessarily expected to leave at the end of the year. The depositions of a 1615 case against servant Elizabeth Gawen of Turkdeane in Gloucestershire imply that her employers, George Bannester and his wife, exerted pressure on witnesses to swear to her incontinent behaviour with Robert Harries, acting in retaliation to Elizabeth's decision to leave their service at the end of the agreed year. Witness Gilbert Hudson deposed that Elizabeth was a

poore servant & late in the service of M[ist]res[s] Bannester wife of George Bannester of Turkedeane & left their service after the yeare was out but whether contrary to their wills this respondent knoweth not.

Witnesses testified that Elizabeth was commonly reported in Turkdeane to have behaved incontinently with Robert Harries: fellow servants deposed that she and

¹⁰² Sharpe, 'Poor Children as Apprentices', 253.

¹⁰³ GRO, GDR/100, Case 619, George Birche v Thomas Payne (1607).

Robert Harries were found in 'naked bed' together. However, the witnesses all testified to Elizabeth's good character. Elizabeth's reasons for leaving the Bannester's service at the end of her year's covenant were unrecorded, yet the evidence nonetheless suggests that some employers expected to retain their servants beyond this period and could make their lives difficult if these expectations were not met.¹⁰⁴

Such expectations were reciprocal: some women did not anticipate being forced to leave service at the end of the year. In a 1574 matrimonial dispute, Robert Bannycke of St. Germans in Cornwall deposed that the plaintiff, a servant named Joanne Sybly, was thrown out of the house of William John following the end of her covenant. Robert told the court that Thomas John who also lived in the house, had fallen out with William John's wife over Joanne's immediate ejection from the John's service and their house at the end of the year. Robert deposed that 'the sayd William Johns wiff would not suffer the sayd Joanne Syblie lye in her house for that night'. Joanne evidently had not sought employment elsewhere and had not anticipated that her employers would eject her from their household at the end of her contract.¹⁰⁵

Other women agreed annual contracts but left service before the year had ended. The 1349 Ordinance of Labourers stipulated that a master was entitled to forcibly take back a servant who had left before the agreed contract had come to an end under pain of imprisonment.¹⁰⁶ This legislation was consolidated in the 1563 Statute of Artificers and was duly enforced in sixteenth-century Norfolk, where Whittle's study of Quarter Sessions records shows that many servants tried to leave service before the end of their agreed terms.¹⁰⁷ Intention to marry was one possible reason for early withdrawal from service. In 1610, Elizabeth Flann of Stoke Orchard in the same county left the service of Alice and Cyprian Wood earlier than the year she had promised 'for she said she intended very shortely to marry'. Witness Richard Yarnton deposed that Elizabeth was Cyprian's 'hired servant for one yeare and that she [...] suddenly departed before the terme of her said yeare was expired'. Cyprian withheld Elizabeth's clothes while he sought

¹⁰⁴ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1059, Robert Payne v Elizabeth Gawen (1615).

¹⁰⁵ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1146, Joanne Sybly v Thomas John (1574).

¹⁰⁶ 'The Ordinance of Labourers' (1349) in Brown, Tawney, and Bland (eds.), *English Economic History* (London: Bell, 1920), p 165.

¹⁰⁷ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 281.

advice on whether he could force her to serve out the remaining time of her covenant.¹⁰⁸ In 1560, upon her betrothal to William Baker, Rabigia Bennett of Buckland-in-the-Moor in Devon allegedly told her uncle that she ‘woldd desire that [she] miyght tarrye here meaning yn Exeter untyll her covenant yn Exeter with her sayde Mr wer expired’. However, she did not rule out the possibility of an early departure from service to be married immediately, deposing that she would ‘comme home at his [William’s] request’.¹⁰⁹ Even annual covenants were not inflexible: a contract could be amicably broken with the agreement of both parties.

Less than one year

Informal agreements of shorter periods of service were relatively commonplace. Alice Mathewe of Cheltenham agreed to serve Thomas and Elizabeth Mathewe from April 1611 to the following Michaelmas.¹¹⁰ A woman named Julian was hired to serve in the household of John Curtesse of Beckford, now in Worcestershire, between Shrovetide and harvest of 1551.¹¹¹ Formal agreements of less than a year were also upheld by the labour laws: Agnes Barons of Ilsington in Devon allegedly agreed to serve Mr Done for just six months, ending around Lady Day of 1626. Mr Done, however, ‘did clayme a promise of Longer tyme’ and Agnes was forced to appear before the Justice of the Peace to defend her early exit from service. The Justice did not force her to return to Mr Done, demonstrating that shorter terms of service were considered acceptable.¹¹²

Agreed terms of service were sometimes curtailed by the employer. Alice Mathewe agreed to serve for five months, but remained for just one week as Thomas Mathewe began ‘to dislike with her’. This circumstances of her dismissal are perhaps atypical: Thomas was presented as a cruel and unreasonable employer by Alice and other female servant deponents in the case. It is likely that Alice may have undermined Thomas’ patriarchal authority over his household: she deposed that she had often ‘taketh the part’ of his wife when Thomas was violent or abusive towards her.¹¹³ Other employers tried to overlook the inappropriate conduct of their servants rather than automatically dismiss

¹⁰⁸ GRO, GDR/109, Case 797, Elizabeth Flann v Cyprian Wood (1610).

¹⁰⁹ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 288, Rabigia Bennet v William Baker (1560).

¹¹⁰ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

¹¹¹ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1493, Office v John Curtesse (1551).

¹¹² DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2050, William Harries v Audrey Rowell (1636).

¹¹³ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

them. John Edwardes of Thornbury in Gloucestershire deposed in 1577 that his friends

wished him to putt her [his servant, Margery Carter] awaie which this examine refused to doe streight waies but saide he wolde keepe her a quarter of a yere longer to trie her an honest woman.

No details were recorded of Margery's inappropriate or dishonest behaviour, but her reputation had evidently been impaired.¹¹⁴ Sexual misbehaviour could place a servant in a precarious position. Pregnancy outside wedlock commonly resulted in expulsion from service.¹¹⁵ Although the regulation of sexual conduct was the business of church courts, and female service was a period in the life cycle when women were most vulnerable to non-marital sexual activity, just 16.5 per cent of cases studied in this thesis make reference to servant pregnancy. Illegitimate pregnancy was therefore not a typical experience for female servants; however, those who found themselves pregnant almost invariably left service, either by dismissal or leaving of their own accord. The circumstances of departure were not always clear. Jane Taylor, servant to William Holder of Thornbury in Gloucestershire, was described in 1608 as having 'gon awaie from him with childe', while Cheltenham witnesses who deposed in a 1553 separation case between Margaret and Richard Kemysse claimed that Joan Blyke 'went away with child beyng servant to the said [Richard] Kemysse'.¹¹⁶

The majority of women employed in service for less than a year were not, however, pregnant upon their departure. Service was often informally arranged and therefore the length of time a servant was hired for was unfixed. Some were also employed for short periods, hired specifically on these terms or leaving service earlier than had initially been agreed. Annual contracts of service existed and some women moved from employer to employer each year, as Kussmaul argues. However, others were employed for much longer periods for a number of reasons: some had not married and had few other options, while others remained out of loyalty or contentment, choosing a single life. Expectations on

¹¹⁴ GRO, GDR/46, Case 162, Margery Carter v John Edwardes (1577).

¹¹⁵ See Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 125; Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Sex, and Reproduction in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 61-62.

¹¹⁶ GRO, GDR/106, Case 1161, George Smith v William Holder (1608); GRO, GDR/8, Case 1529, Margaret Kemysse v Richard Kemysse (1553).

both the part of the employer and servant were not always established and there were no prevailing ideas that servants should fulfil one year's continuous service. Rather, length of service was often determined by the requirements of the family, the relationships that servants and employers forged and ever-changing circumstances within the household.

Wages

The informality and irregularity of hiring patterns raises further questions about how female servants were paid. Servant wages are typically assumed to have been paid on an annual basis. Humphries and Weisdorf's work on women's wages between 1260 and 1850 makes a distinction between casual wage labour and annual labour. Their definitions of these categories equate annual labour with service, while casual labour could be any type of work paid by the task, day or week.¹¹⁷ Service is considered a form of annually contracted labour. Whittle's analysis of gentry household accounts shows that servants were commonly paid on traditional 'quarter' days: 'Our Lady' or 'Lady Day' (25 March), Midsummer (24 June), Michaelmas (29 September), and Christmas (25 December). This payment structure suggests some regularity of servant payment in gentry households, despite, as Whittle shows, irregular, non-annual patterns of servant employment in these households.¹¹⁸

Evidence from church court depositions shows that payment for service was sometimes made on a weekly or even daily basis for those who served for shorter periods than one year. In October 1604, Elizabeth Greene was recorded as a servant in John Sheile's house in Gloucester. Responding to being asked her worth, she deposed that

she is little or nothinge worth more then the cloathes she useth to weare, and that she doth worke taske worke with John Sheile in his house in bargaine by the weeke till [till] Christmas next.

Elizabeth had agreed a short contract of service with her master, lasting just three months and accordingly, was paid by the week.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Humphries and Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women', 407.

¹¹⁸ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

¹¹⁹ GRO, GDR/95, Case 701, *Sheile v Thomas Bishopp* (1604).

In a defamation dispute heard in the Exeter court in 1618, 23-year-old Mary Hayne of Silverton, a servant of John and Elizabeth Faryes, was produced as a witness. She was described by others as a servant to the Fareys 'in the tyme of Christmas last past by the daye and by the weeke'. The casual arrangement of her payment meant that her wages fluctuated: Willialmus Trowte recalled in his deposition a conversation that had passed between Mary and himself:

he this deponent did aske the said Merria what sorte she was abiding with the forsaid Elizabeth Farye And the said Marria tould this deponent that some tymes the said Elizabeth Farye promised her vi [6] d a weeke and sometimes viii [8] d a weeke for her service as she could make her bargaine.

Mary's negotiation of her wage rate each week demonstrates a sense of agency. The language used in Willialmus' deposition - 'as she could make her bargaine' - suggests a collaborative discussion between servant and mistress in the agreement of a suitable weekly wage.¹²⁰ Mary and her mistress might have negotiated wages on the grounds of Mary's performance, the nature of the tasks she undertook or conditions external to her performed service such as the family's economic position. Earning either 6d or 8d through her weekly-paid service, Mary earned the equivalent annual wage of between 26s and 34s 8d based on a 260 working day year.¹²¹ Humphries and Weisdorf's data shows that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century female servants earned an average of 40s per year, not including food, drink, clothing and lodging. In 1618, they might have earned as much as 54s.¹²² Whittle confirms that 40s was not an untypical wage for servants, which suggests that Mary's earnings were low.¹²³ However, wage assessments for Devon in 1595 indicate that the justices of the peace agreed that those over the age of 24 could legally earn only 20s in service, while those below this age could earn only up to 16s.¹²⁴ In 1654, this has only increased to 23s 4d for those between the ages of 18 and 30.¹²⁵ This was below the minimum wage Mary could

¹²⁰ The word 'bargaine' is also used in Elizabeth Green's deposition (above), although in this context its meaning is unclear; 'bargain' could also refer to a small holding.

¹²¹ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2345, Elizabeth Faryes v Grace Luscombe (1618).

¹²² Humphries and Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women', 431-432.

¹²³ Whittle, 'Servants in Rural England', p. 92.

¹²⁴ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor royal proclamations: Vol.3*, pp. 150-151.

¹²⁵ Alexander Henry Abercromby Hamilton, *Quarter Sessions from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Anne: Illustrations of Local Government and History Drawn from Original Records (Chiefly of the County of Devon)* (London: Sampson Low, 1878), pp. 163-164.

earn in the employment of the Faryes family over the course of a year.¹²⁶ Though insecure, her casual employment in service provided an opportunity to earn a higher annual income than she legally might have earned in annual service. Witnesses deposed that Mary was from a poor background: her mother was described as ‘a poore woman as Liveth by her hard labour at spynninge’. Yet Mary unlocked higher earning potential through her weekly negotiated wages than the fixed legal maximum wage for a woman in service allowed. Casual labour and service were therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive; servants sometimes undertook shorter contracts and consequently received weekly wages, a pattern more frequently associated with casual labour.

The relatively detailed discussion of Mary’s wages is unusual; female servants’ wages were infrequently recorded in the depositions. Servants were questioned about their worth but were not required to state how much they earned. The majority of those who referred to their wages provided no specific details. In 1639, 21-year-old Elizabeth Snarling of Cubberley in Gloucestershire deposed that she ‘nowe doth live as a servannte unto ye party producent & receiveth wages of her’.¹²⁷

Depositions from the Exeter church court occasionally recorded female servants’ wages. In 1585, Pasthasus Soper of Dunsford in Devon, a witness in a tithe dispute, deposed that he had ‘two mayd servants his daughters serving in Dunsford whom have received xvi [16] s a peece by the yeere for their wages’.¹²⁸ While around 27s was the national average annual wage for a woman in service between 1580 and 1590, the 1588 Exeter wage assessment indicated that no female servant between the ages of 16 and 24 ‘shall take above 16s by the year, or for her vesture or garment 5s’; only those over the age of 24 were permitted to earn 20s in wages annually.¹²⁹ Pasthasus’ daughters probably earned the maximum legal wage commensurate with their age. In 1598, 20-year-old Mary Tanner of Crediton in Devon deposed that ‘shee servith with William Osbourne of Crediton and hath xx [20] s a yeere wages’. In 1595, just three years before Mary’s appearance in court, the maximum legal wage for an Exeter female

¹²⁶ James E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866), p. 694.

¹²⁷ GRO, GDR/204, Case 1823, *Eleanor Mills v Anne Smith* (1639).

¹²⁸ DHC, Chanter 861 and Chanter 862, Case 1647, *John Thomas v James Puddicomb* (1585).

¹²⁹ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor royal proclamations: Vol.3*, p. 19.

servant remained unchanged from the 1588 assessment.¹³⁰ This was again significantly lower than the national average of around 35s per year recorded by Humphries and Weisdorf.¹³¹ In a regional context, Mary was nonetheless paid the maximum wage that employers were legally able to offer.¹³²

While wage assessments aimed to control the labour market, some female servants were paid more than was legal. A 1634 defamation dispute between two women from Kentisbeare in Devon, produced 20-year-old Mary Thomas as a witness. Mary deposed that she

did live a servant in howse to the said Joane Bennett & her husband with whome she lived 3 quarters of a yere for wages after the rate of xl [40] s per ann.

Again, this was slightly lower than the national average annual rate of 50s found for the decade 1630 to 1640.¹³³ More importantly, however, Mary was paid more than the maximum wage set by the justices of the peace. In 1595, maximum wages for female servants between the ages of 16 and 24 were assessed at 16s per year; yet even by 1654, 20 years after Mary's examination, the maximum legal wage in Devon was just 23s 4d for female servants between the ages of 18 and 30.¹³⁴ Employers did not always conform to the wage limits set for the county. Moreover, the fragmentary evidence presented here suggests that wages in Devon were generally lower than the average wage female servants earned across the country. This also indicates that Humphries and Weisdorf's dataset is not entirely representative of wage patterns on a local level.

Some servants received no wages. In 1584, Margaret Peerse of Devon, who appeared before the Exeter court, claimed that she had been placed in the service of William Peerse at the age of 13 or 14, but was not paid for her service. Margaret appears to have been an orphan who was placed in service until she reached the age of majority and could receive her legacy. Her deposition records her objections to the lack of monetary remuneration for her service, indicating

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 144.

¹³¹ Humphries and Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women', 432.

¹³² DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1924, Mary Eve v Margaret Leach (1598).

¹³³ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1966, Joanne Bennett v Joanne Deymont (1634); Humphries and Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women', 432.

¹³⁴ Hamilton, *Quarter Sessions*, p. 163.

that she believed she was both due and entitled to payment.¹³⁵ Yet in Otterton in Devon in 1585, Joanne Wannell deposed rather matter-of-factly that ‘she is Thomas Morgan’s servant and hath of him no wages but meate drinke and clothes’. She raised no objections, perhaps suggesting a difference in social status and therefore expectations of service between Joanne Wannell and Margaret Peerse. Non-payment of servants is found elsewhere; in her analysis of the 1566 petty sessions list of Marsham in Norfolk, Whittle notes a number of servants who were not subject to wage assessment in the subsidies, receiving ‘nothing more than board and lodging in return for their work’.¹³⁶ Kussmaul also suggests that the youngest servants might have received no wages.¹³⁷ Wage assessments confirm this condition of employment in service, with Exeter Justices of the Peace assessing in 1588 that

no woman servant under the age of 16 years shall have any wages but only meat and drink and other necessaries as shall be agreed between their master, mistress, and the servant.¹³⁸

Yet this age condition does not entirely account for all non-payments: in Otterton, Joanne Wannell’s two fellow servants, Mary Tayler and Melison Solye both received wages in return for their service. Yet the women were all of a similar age: Melison was the youngest at the age of 17, followed by Joanne who was 18 years old when she was examined, and Mary, the oldest, was 19.¹³⁹ Joanne’s shared family name with her mistress, Alice Morgan (alias Wannell), suggests a familial connection between servant and employer. Joanne’s lack of wages might be explained by this kinship bond. She may have been taken in as an orphan by her relatives upon the death of her parents, a relatively common arrangement as Erickson suggests that by the age of 21, one in three people had lost at least one parent.¹⁴⁰ Under such circumstances, kin may have had the means to clothe, feed and provide lodging for their orphaned relatives but could not afford to pay wages. Both social and economic factors therefore determined not only the amount that female servants were paid, but also whether they were paid at all.

¹³⁵ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1618, Thomas Peerse v Margaret Peerse (1584).

¹³⁶ Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 302.

¹³⁷ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 37.

¹³⁸ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor royal proclamations: Vol.3*, p. 19.

¹³⁹ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1582, Sprynt v Thomas Wichalse (1583).

¹⁴⁰ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 93.

Conclusions

For early modern women working in south-west England, there was no typical experience of service in terms of working patterns and length of service. Distinctions between annual service and casual employment were not always clear as a few women described as servants were paid by the week. Some women left service to take up casual employment or return to their parental home with no legal repercussions. Labour laws may have been established to control masterless young men and women, but they do not appear to have been enforced rigorously in pastoral areas like the South-West.

Within the same parish and even sometimes within the same household, women in service were employed for different lengths of time and paid at different rates. Annual covenants were not a universal experience of service and length of time in the employment of one employer was determined and influenced by both employer and servant alike. While scholarship suggests that annual payments and contracts that commenced and terminated around Michaelmas were typical experiences, depositional evidence shows that experiences were more varied, although Michaelmas hirings were more common in Gloucestershire. Family connections could provide women with employment opportunities and employers with easy access to a pool of female servants. However, many women arranged and negotiated their own positions in service. The widely held perception of female servants as annually employed and paid workers does not adequately represent the experiences of many women working in service in the early modern South-West, forcing a fundamental re-evaluation of our understanding of women's work in terms of annual and casual contracts, pay and working patterns.

3.2 Work tasks

Economic historians continue to perceive work in both binary and gendered terms, separating paid work from unpaid work, wage labour and income-generating work from housework, and men's work from women's work.¹⁴¹ In her recent article 'Crediting women in the early modern English economy', Shepard criticises economic historians for ignoring the contribution of women's work:

Too often women appear as shadowy bystanders in such assessments of early modern economic development on account of their relative 'invisibility', and their work is disregarded owing to its characterization as piecemeal, irregular and difficult to compute.¹⁴²

Women's work can be placed into three categories: income-generating work; wage labour; and housework and family care. Historians have made some headway in studying the engagement of women in income-generating work within the household economy. Whittle's study of the economic activities of early modern widows shows their engagement in unpaid income-generating labour such as food processing and running business and farms.¹⁴³ Erickson and Spicksley highlight the participation of single women in money-lending activities.¹⁴⁴ Muldrew's study of the contribution of female spinners to the English household economy on the eve of the Industrial Revolution shows how earnings could contribute over 30 per cent of the total household income.¹⁴⁵

However, housework, including tasks such as laundry, preparing food and running a household, is characteristically unpaid work and is therefore the 'invisible' work that Shepard refers to. Separating out paid or waged work from unpaid domestic work implies that the latter makes no contribution to the economy, although as Robert Eisner argues, 'clearly, nonmarket household labour adds a major and varying amount to total output.'¹⁴⁶ Whittle and Mark

¹⁴¹ See for example, Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴² Alexandra Shepard, 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern English Economy', *History Workshop Journal*, 79 (2015), 2.

¹⁴³ Whittle, 'Enterprising Widows', 283-300, esp Table 2, 288.

¹⁴⁴ Erickson, 'Coverture and Capitalism', 1-16; Spicksley, "'Fly with a Duck in thy Mouth'", 187-207.

¹⁴⁵ Muldrew, "'Th'ancient Distaff'", 498.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Eisner, 'Measure It to Make It Count', *Feminist Economics*, 2 (1996), 143.

Hailwood's project 'Women's work in rural England, 1500-1700: a new methodological approach' at the University of Exeter shows the benefits of using Margaret's Reid's third party criterion in classifying work activities, whereby if 'an activity is of such character that it might be delegated to a paid worker, then that activity shall be deemed productive'.¹⁴⁷ By this definition, work activities such as cleaning and cooking are included as 'productive' and important to the economy.

The recognition of these activities as important forms of early modern women's work is significant. Whittle notes that early modern society appreciated the value of household management and keeping house.¹⁴⁸ Thomas Tusser wrote in 1573 'Though husbandry semeth, to bring in the gains, yet huswifery labours, seeme equall in paines'.¹⁴⁹ The lack of importance that historians place on women's work is, as Whittle states, 'often accompanied by its designation as 'domestic', without any detailed consideration of what domestic might mean in an economy in which most production was located in or near the home'.¹⁵⁰

This is important: the term 'domestic' is unhelpful in describing work tasks. The work of female servants is frequently characterised as 'domestic work', a phrase that is sometimes used to describe the type of task (typically tasks relating to the care of the family) and sometimes the location of work (the home). Female servants have thus been labelled 'domestics', primarily responsible for undertaking work within the household such as cooking, cleaning and childcare. McIntosh's discussion of female servants largely falls within a chapter titled 'Domestic and personal services', while Muldrew refers to female servants employed almost exclusively for 'domestic' work.¹⁵¹ Among the 506 female servants recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, however, only Isabella Rogers of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire was specifically recorded as '*famula domestica*' (domestic servant).¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Margaret G. Reid, *Economics of Household Production* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1934), p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ Whittle, 'Housewives and Servants', 51.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry United to as Many of Good Huswiferie* (1573), sig S2r.

¹⁵⁰ Whittle, 'Housewives and Servants', 52.

¹⁵¹ McIntosh, *Working Women*, pp. 46-61; Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness*, p. 235.

¹⁵² GRO, GDR/89, Case 413, Thomas Kyldermore v Agnes Quarrier (1604).

The domestic workload of the female servant is also set against the income-generating work in husbandry undertaken by her male counterpart. Within this dichotomous gendered framework, the work of male servants is situated within an agricultural context, while female service is typically located within domestic space. Kussmaul defines servants in husbandry as those who were 'hired not to maintain a style of life, but a style of work, the household economy'. She describes the work of servants in husbandry as 'productive'.¹⁵³ By extension, the work of female servants is considered 'domestic' and non-productive. However, male servants working in husbandry were not the only contributors to the household economy by Kussmaul's criteria of 'productivity'. Other activities were also of direct value to the family economy and when considered in conjunction with Reid's 'third party criterion' of 'productive' work, Kussmaul's distinction disintegrates.

Amanda Flather shows the huge potential of church court depositions in providing evidence of women's working activities. She demonstrates the varied spaces in which women's work took place and the way in which working spaces were used by men and women at different times of the day and year.¹⁵⁴ This has shed significant light on gendered working patterns in early modern England, but more quantitative analysis is needed. The varied types of work that female servants undertook are explored in this chapter to demonstrate that their contribution to the household economy has been both understated and misrepresented.

The depositions provide evidence of 105 instances in which female servants were recorded undertaking work activities. Just thirty-eight of these examples were recorded within the Exeter court depositions, reflecting the higher number of female servants recorded in the Gloucester court depositions. A further fifteen non-specific work activities were also recorded across the two courts: for instance, in a 1568 defamation case between Margery Cloterbooke and John Batte, Margery's servant Elizabeth Harewood of Eastington in Gloucestershire deposed that 'as she was at her werke goinge aboute the house she often tymes behelde them'.¹⁵⁵ Servant Margaret Vaughan of Siddington in Gloucestershire, a witness in a 1582 matrimonial dispute, provided a similarly vague description

¹⁵³ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 75-93.

¹⁵⁵ GRO, GDR/24, Case 2001, Margery Cloterbooke v John Batte (1568).

of her work. She deposed that she did not hear any words of betrothal between the two parties, although she added that she passed through the room quickly 'having haste about other busynes'.¹⁵⁶ As these references to work identify no particular work task or activity, they have not been included in the data.

This study adopts a verb-orientated approach to recording work tasks.¹⁵⁷ Work tasks rather than occupational descriptors are of interest; for example, Guy and Jane Dobbins of Newent in Gloucestershire deposed in 1604 that they sent their servant Catherine Hall to make the bed in a lodging chamber in their house; 'making the bed' has therefore been counted as evidence of work.¹⁵⁸ Shepard highlights the benefits of this approach in counting examples of women's work in church court depositions, indicating that few examples of women's work are identifiable when relying solely on occupational descriptors.¹⁵⁹ Rosemarie Fiebranz et al. also note these problems; few women were given occupational descriptors and few people undertook just one type of work.¹⁶⁰ The word 'servant' provides no indication of the type of work expected of an individual in service and documents seldom make a distinction between domestic service and service in husbandry in the way that scholarship often does. Work tasks are therefore recorded here as evidence of the type of work female servants were expected to undertake.

Table 3.3 outlines categories of work tasks according to modern conceptions of work. Childcare, washing and making beds are categorised as forms of housework alongside other 'domestic' tasks. Errands are broadly defined to include miscellaneous tasks undertaken by female servants at the request of their employers. Within this category, the payment, collection and delivery of tithes have been included as well as the delivery of messages. Husbandry tasks relate directly to both arable and pastoral agricultural work undertaken on the behalf of an employer. Work activities relating to the processing of raw materials into items for consumption have been categorised as 'production tasks'. No distinction has been made between production for the household and for a commercial market.

¹⁵⁶ GRO, GDR/57, Case 195, Alice Watkins v Maurice Bennett (1582).

¹⁵⁷ See Fiebranz et al., 'Making Verbs Count', 273-293; Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living*.

¹⁵⁸ GRO, GDR/89 and GDR/95, Case 419, Anne Harris v Frances Wylson (1604). Italics my own.

¹⁵⁹ Shepard, 'Crediting Women', 11.

¹⁶⁰ Fiebranz et al., 'Making Verbs Count', 278-279.

Table 3.3. Categories of work tasks classified from evidence of work recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Category of work	Work task
Housework/domestic	Care, childcare, fetching wood, heating a kettle, household management, making a fire, making the bed, preparing or serving food and drink, shopping or collecting food, sweeping, washing clothes
Errands	Collecting tithes, delivery, paying or delivering tithes, running an errand,
Husbandry	Carrying crops, cocking barley, cutting rye, driving cattle, feeding animals, gathering apples, gathering fern, gelding a boar, milking, pitching crops to a cart, raking, reaping, setting out tithes, furnishing/draining a stall
Production	Dusting malt, grinding corn, spinning

The proportion of work activities undertaken by female servants within each category is shown in table 3.4. Housework comprised the largest category of work undertaken by female servants recorded in the Exeter court, representing 36.8 per cent of all work tasks, while a similar proportion (38.8 per cent) of work was classified as ‘housework’ in the Gloucester depositions. In the Gloucester court, a slightly higher number of labour activities were categorised as errands (40.3 per cent), making this the primary category of work undertaken by Gloucestershire female servants. A smaller but still significant percentage of work activities recorded in the Exeter court fell within this category. A high proportion of agricultural tasks were recorded in the Exeter court depositions. Across both courts, only a small percentage of work activities were linked to food or textile production.

Table 3.4. Categories of work activities undertaken by female servants recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Category of work	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
Housework/domestic	26	38.8	14	36.8
Errands	27	40.3	9	23.7
Husbandry	13	19.4	12	31.6
Production	1	1.5	3	7.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>67</i>		<i>38</i>	

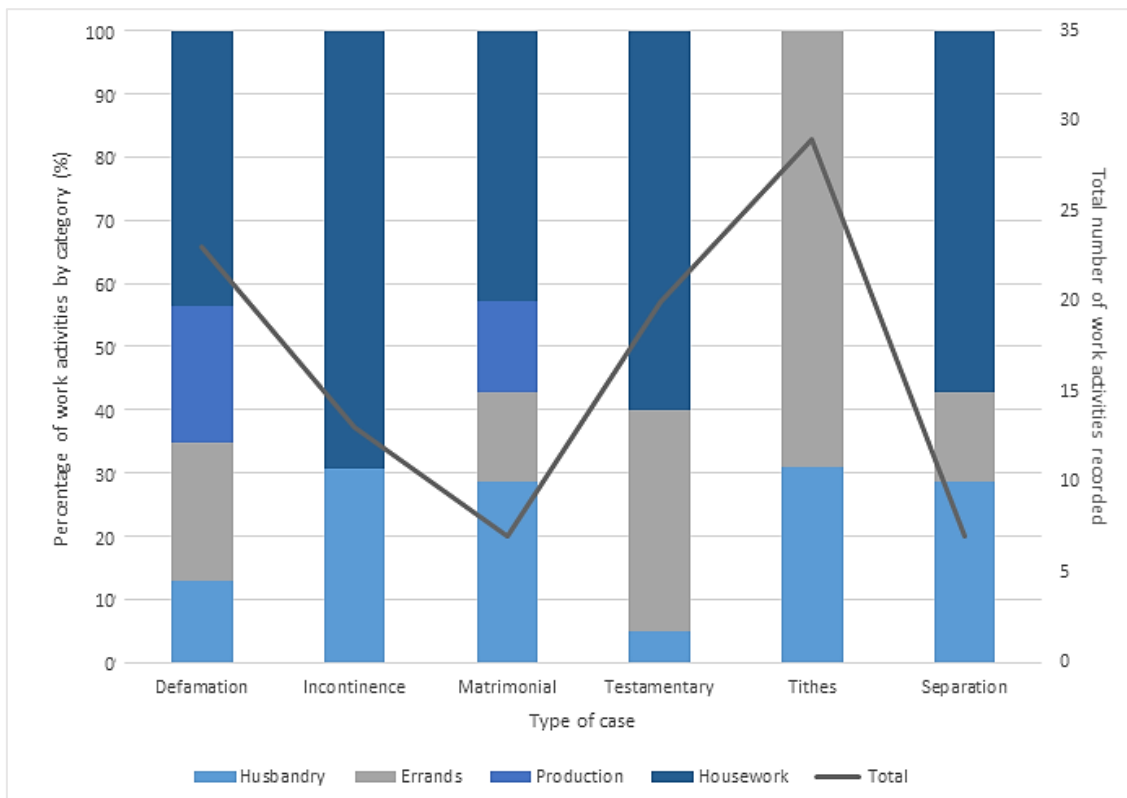
Sources: As in table 1.2.

Evidence of work found within church court depositions was rarely stated as a means of exoneration from a particular crime. It was recorded somewhat more incidentally, although several types of work were undoubtedly linked with the type of dispute they were recorded within. Witnesses in tithe disputes often provided evidence of their agricultural work when asked whether they had seen particular produce being properly tithed. In testamentary disputes, female servant witnesses in particular were more likely to describe their care of a sick employer upon his or her deathbed.

Figure 3.2 shows this connection between the work female servants were described as doing and the type of litigation the work was described in connection with. The collection, payment and delivery of tithes was recorded only within tithe disputes. This is reflected in the high proportion of 'errands' recorded in these cases (around 69 per cent). While tithes were an important part of early modern social and economic life, the proportion of female servants who undertook this type of work is likely to be lower than the data suggests. This is particularly the case in Gloucestershire, where 31.3 per cent of work activities recorded were tithe-related, a particularly high figure given that less than 8 per cent of female servants recorded in the Gloucester court depositions were recorded in cases connection with tithes. The evidence is nonetheless important insofar as it

establishes female servants within a system of tithe collection that is typically perceived within the historiography as male-dominated.¹⁶¹

Figure 3.2. Types of work undertaken by female servants recorded in church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (by type of case in which the work task was recorded).



Note: The figure, for example, shows that 23 work activities undertaken by female servants were recorded in defamation cases. Of these 23, around 13 per cent were categorised as 'husbandry'. Work activities were also recorded in cases concerning adultery, heresy and clerical offences, as well as disputes where the nature of the case could not be identified. These have not been represented as they comprised just 5.7 per cent of the data.

Sources: As in table 1.2.

¹⁶¹ See Steve Hindle, 'A Sense of Place? Becoming and Belonging in the Rural Parish 1550-1650', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil J. Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 96-114; Keith Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 10-46.

Figure 3.2 also shows that work tasks were predominantly recorded within depositions relating to three of the four main types of cases heard within the church courts: tithe, defamation and testamentary disputes. The high proportion of work activities recorded in tithe disputes is primarily accounted for by the volume of tithe-related disputes that came before the courts: tithe disputes represented around 27 per cent of all cases heard across the two dioceses over the period. Substantial evidence of female servant working activities were also recorded in defamation and testamentary disputes, litigation that was also highly represented within the church court depositions.

Only 6.7 per cent of work tasks were recorded in matrimonial disputes, despite the dominance of this type of case in the depositions. The formation of a marriage contract (the type of matrimonial dispute that comprised the bulk of this type of litigation) was often formally arranged, perhaps over dinner in the house of one of the litigant's parents. Friends were invited to witness the betrothal. In 1595, witnesses attested to a contract of marriage between Thomasina Downham and John Harding of Cullompton in Devon, testifying that the couple were betrothed after the company had dined together.¹⁶² A disputed marriage contract between Milberowe Berrowe and John Crockett of Newent in Gloucestershire, was allegedly made in 1604 at a 'speciall meetinge att the house of Mathewe Berowe' [Milberowe's father]', to which their friends and kin were invited. The union of the two parties was discussed 'after they had all dynded together'.¹⁶³ Incidental evidence of female servant work is therefore less likely to be recorded within these contexts. Most witnesses had been invited specifically to witness the formation of the contract: the occasion was a social affair and therefore economic activity was not at the fore of these depositions. The few work tasks recorded in this type of litigation were connected with more informal promises of marriage: Eleanor Philpott, the servant of Matthew Berrowe, for example, deposed that John Crockett had visited Milberowe when the household had gone to bed and that Eleanor 'did rise out of her bed & did let the sayde Crockcett in a door & *made a fyer* for him in the hall'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1813, Denys Ellyott v Thomasina Downham (1595).

¹⁶³ GRO, GDR/95, Case 759, Milberowe Berrowe v John Crockett (1605).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Italics my own.

Just seven examples of work undertaken by female servants were recorded within separation cases, a different kind of matrimonial dispute. This is noteworthy, given that only 54 cases of this type (just 1.2 per cent of the total number of cases) were heard in both courts. This figure is particularly striking when compared to the 477 matrimonial disputes brought before the courts, in which an identical number of work activities were recorded. In 22 per cent of separation cases, at least one female servant deposition was recorded. Requests for spousal separation were usually predicated on claims of either cruelty or adultery by one of the parties. Servants regularly witnessed these abuses and incidental accounts of their working activities when they witnessed such behaviour were often recorded. In 1552, Margaret Burrell of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire deposed that 'she was appointed by her Mr to the oxe howse there to serve [feed] them where she sawe a place upon the strawe where some had been lyeng'. Margaret's visit to the ox house to feed the cattle was mentioned incidentally within the context of the evidence she provided of her mistress' extramarital affair.¹⁶⁵

While work tasks were recorded more frequently in particular types of cases, the range of case types provides several different contexts in which female servants described their daily activities. Although the biases of the depositions and the higher frequency with which particular case types were heard in the courts undoubtedly shapes the type of work activities recorded and their number, many tasks were also recorded incidentally.

Housewifery to housework

Across both courts, female servants were frequently engaged in tasks categorised as 'housework'. This does not mean that their work exclusively took place within the domestic setting. Tasks have been classified as 'domestic' according to a modern conception of housework and include cooking, cleaning and washing clothes. This understanding of housework assumes that the work took place within the home; however, this is ahistorical for some early modern work tasks. It is possible that 'washing' sometimes referred to dishes, not clothes. Bernard Capp notes examples of a Leicestershire servant as well as Henry Best's

¹⁶⁵ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1523, John Kyng v Joanne Kyrbye (1552).

seventeenth-century female servants engaged in washing dishes.¹⁶⁶ This type of activity may have occurred within the household but could also have happened outside, depending on the availability of water. Washing clothes, on the other hand, typically took place outside the home and sometimes involved carrying clothes considerable distances to a water supply. Sibill Castle (alias Salter) deposed in 1587 that she washed clothes in a brook in Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire with fellow servant Alice Kirton (alias Milwarde).¹⁶⁷ In 1611, servant Anne Browne of St. Aldate parish in Gloucester deposed that she and a married woman named Joan Worrall went to the River Severn for the 'washing of a bucking'.¹⁶⁸ Bucking involved soaking clothes for long periods in lye to both clean and whiten fabric and could be heavy work.¹⁶⁹ The collaboration between servant and a married woman in undertaking this task indicates that women's work was not always demarcated by hierarchies of age or marital status.

Washing was sometimes performed within the home; servant Honor Drynford of Sheepwash in Devon deposed in 1583 that her mistress 'came to this deponent *washing in her house* and asked where her Mr was'.¹⁷⁰ One year later, orphan Margaret Peerse came before the same court as a defendant, deposing that she had initially been placed in the house of William Peerse 'to worke with her needle' but had been burdened with the work of a servant, performing 'such necessarie business as was to be donne *in the house* as washing and such like'.¹⁷¹ Flather notes that by the seventeenth century, more sources describe clothes being washed within the home.¹⁷² The category 'housework' or 'domestic work' therefore fails to capture the various ways in which work this type of work was performed. While washing might be perceived as domestic in a modern context, it was undertaken in spaces both within and outside the home, depending on the financial capacity of the household to obtain its own water supply.

Characterising work tasks as 'housework' or 'domestic' highlights further discord between modern and early modern conceptions of work. The term 'housewifery' was more frequently used to describe women's work in early modern England.

¹⁶⁶ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁷ GRO, GDR/65, Case 458, Sibil Stone v Anne Webb (1587).

¹⁶⁸ GRO, GDR/114, Case 864, Margaret Payne v Walter Britten (1611).

¹⁶⁹ Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*, p. 114.

¹⁷⁰ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1150, Mary Scam v Anne Hayne (1583). Italics my own.

¹⁷¹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1618, Thomas Peerse v Margaret Peerse (1584). Italics my own.

¹⁷² Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 79.

However, it incorporated activities that modern sensibilities would not recognise as falling within this category including food, drink and textile production potentially for the market. In 1615, Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* advised the early modern woman of her duties:

it is most requisite and fit that our housewife be experienced and well-practised in the well making of malt, both for the necessary and continual use thereof, as also for the general profit which accrueth and ariseth.¹⁷³

Markham recognised the value of women undertaking this type of production for both household consumption and for the generation of income for the household. Elsewhere, he extolled the virtues of a housewife who was experienced in making butter, cheese and textiles.¹⁷⁴ These tasks do not correlate with modern understandings of 'housework' or 'domestic' work.

Markham suggested that activities classified here as 'production' tasks could generate profit (such as brewing and spinning, for example). In undertaking activities such as dusting malt, however, part of the process of brewing, individuals may not have known whether their work contributed towards a domestic or commercial product. The records certainly make no distinction. Few servants were recorded as undertaking 'production' activities, suggesting that this type of work was typically undertaken by the mistress of the household. Jeremy Goldberg identifies some example of female servants engaged in brewing but suggests that brewing was typically undertaken by married women alongside their husbands, or by widows.¹⁷⁵ Combining the number of 'production' and 'housework' tasks recorded in the depositions to satisfy the early modern definition of housewifery nonetheless accounts for 40.3 and 44.7 per cent of all work activities recorded in the depositions. In 1575, witness Margaret Ratcliff of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire deposed that she saw 'the sayed Alyce davys ther dustinge malte in the streat before her masters dore', when she was allegedly defamed by Elizabeth Bundy.¹⁷⁶ The records provide no indication of whether Alice's master intended the beer or ale to be brewed for home consumption or for a commercial market. The traditional polarization of work by economic historians as either market-oriented and income-producing or 'domestic', is therefore

¹⁷³ Markham, *The English Housewife*, p. 180.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-165; 166-179.

¹⁷⁵ P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c.1300-1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 113-114.

¹⁷⁶ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1223, Alice Davys v Elizabeth Bundy (1575).

fundamentally flawed as division of work tasks along these lines is not always possible.

Female servants engaged in textile production were recorded only in the depositions of the Exeter church court. Spinning was described in three separate cases: in 1580, servant Katherine Carwythian of Launcester deposed that nobody was present at the matrimonial contract she witnessed 'unless some maydes were there a spynning'.¹⁷⁷ Katherine Mogridge of Brampford Speke deposed in 1635 that her servants Mary Smithe and Mary Bonde were spinning when Dorothea Tucker entered her house and defamed Mary Flood.¹⁷⁸ However, textile production was completely absent from the descriptions of work undertaken by female servants within the Gloucestershire depositions. This is particularly surprising given the dominance of the clothworking industry across the county. Two cases suggest that female servants could be engaged in tasks related to textile production. In 1595, Elizabeth Deynton, the former servant of Agnes Bathe of Cirencester, deposed that she, her mistress and fellow servant Agnes Chester were working in the woolhouse.¹⁷⁹ The location of these two servants and their mistress suggests their involvement in textile production. However, it is also possible that they were simply cleaning or undertaking other work in this location. In 1585, a testamentary dispute concerning the will of servant Elizabeth Alridge of Moreton Valence in Gloucestershire was brought before the court. Witness Alexander Hook deposed that Elizabeth bequeathed four poundes of wool 'that she had to spinning' to her sister.¹⁸⁰ Spinning and other forms of textile production may have been more frequently undertaken by women outside service. Christine Peters indicates that spinning is an activity most associated with women achieving economic independence in the early modern period.¹⁸¹ Depositional evidence supports this: Joanne Pittman of Kentisbere in Devon deposed that she was employed to spin by the week, and was not in service, while widow, Mary End of Stoke Orchard in Gloucestershire,

¹⁷⁷ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1398, John Lucas v Joanne Simons (1580).

¹⁷⁸ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker (1635).

¹⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1343, Alice Vyner v Agnes Bathe (1595).

¹⁸⁰ GRO, GRO/57, Case 302, Testament of Elizabeth Alridge (1585); GDR/R/1585/28 Will of Elizabeth Alridge (1585).

¹⁸¹ Peters, 'Single Women', 331.

also not in service, deposed in 1611 that Alice Wood sent her some wool to be spun.¹⁸²

Errands

Errands are typically perceived as tasks given to children as part of their introduction to the world of work.¹⁸³ It is therefore interesting to note that female servants continued to run errands, suggesting that the work not only of servants and married women overlapped, but also of children and servants. While the proportion of tasks characterised as 'errands' is probably overstated due to the overrepresentation of female servants paying and collecting tithes, some errands did not relate to this type of activity. William Stubbe of Cheltenham deposed that around Michaelmas of 1574, Alice Hunt, the servant of Jane Sherford came to his house 'uppon an arrant [errand]'.¹⁸⁴ The 1572 deposition of Alice Chester of Gloucester revealed how she overheard Jane Abarnesdale speak defamatory remarks of the wife of Sir Williams upon receipt of 'a message th[at] hir wentch had brought from Sir Williams wife'.¹⁸⁵ Errands took female servants outside the household and into the wider community.

Although overrepresented in the data, errands relating to tithes had much the same effect. For servants who worked for tithe-owners, collecting tithes on his or her behalf was essential work. In 1613, Catherine Holman, the servant of Richard Moore, the vicar of Bickleigh deposed that upon inviting strangers to his house, presumably to dine, Richard 'did send this deponent [Catherine] to [...] Richard Collyns his house for one tythe pigg which the said Mr Moore had marked in the eare'. The following year, Catherine was requested to fetch a tithe pig from the same household.¹⁸⁶ Tithes were an essential part of clerical income; entrusting Catherine with the responsibility of collecting such payments demonstrates that errands were not just simple activities designed to introduce

¹⁸² DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1966, Joanne Bennett v Joanne Deymont (1634); GRO, GDR/109 and GDR/114, Case 832, William Rea v Cyprian Wood and Alice Wood (1611).

¹⁸³ See Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 41; Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 29.

¹⁸⁴ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1234, Jane Sherford v Alice Hunte (1575).

¹⁸⁵ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1722, Williams v Jane Abarnesdale (1572). Use of the possessive word 'hir [her]' here indicates that the 'wench' was a servant, rather than an unmarried woman or young girl.

¹⁸⁶ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2171, John Wolcombe and Richard Ashe v Collins (1615).

children to working life. They could represent an integral or vital contribution to the household economy.

Payment of tithes by parishioners was equally important in maintaining status as a creditworthy household. Writing about the context of an increase in tithe disputes at the outset of the Reformation, Ralph Houlbrooke notes that the failure of those to pay tithes was sometimes the result of economic hardship.¹⁸⁷ Female servants who were given the responsibility to deliver or pay tithes did not simply run errands; being asked to perform this task signified an employer's trust in his or her female servant to make the payment and thus maintain the family's economic reputation. Edith Longden of Hawkesbury in Gloucestershire deposed in 1604 that while employed as a servant to John Hathway of Horton fifty-five years earlier, she was asked to deliver the small tithe of cheese to the parish church on three separate occasions.¹⁸⁸ Payment of tithe cheese by a servant to the parson of Rockhampton in the same county was also recalled by Alice Green in 1586, who had herself served the parson thirty-five years earlier.¹⁸⁹ Stephen Mullyes of Michaelstow in Cornwall recalled seeing 'the mayde servant of the sayd [Henry] Mullyes carry a gosling to the sayd Burton for the tithe of goslinge' in 1593.¹⁹⁰ Given the rise in tithe litigation during the period, employers placed a great deal of trust and responsibility in their servants in delivering these customary payments.

Husbandry

Agricultural tasks represented the next most frequently undertaken type of work by female servants. The distinction made by historians such as Kussmaul between 'domestic' servants and servants in husbandry is not substantiated by depositional evidence. A 1568 case in which a servant named Isott Riches of Rockbeare in Devon became pregnant by a gentleman named Frances Yarde demonstrates the economic breadth of tasks servants were required to do. Isott's neighbour, Margaret Martyn deposed that Isott 'sett before [her] mylk and creme', indicating Isott's role in serving and preparing food. Margaret also deposed that Isott was responsible for milking: she reported that upon seeing Isott lingering in

¹⁸⁷ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁸ GRO, GDR/89, Case 406, Andrew Thomas v Henry Norris (1604).

¹⁸⁹ GRO, GDR/65, Case 430, John Welcock v John Smith (1586).

¹⁹⁰ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1820, Richard Burton v Henry Mullyes (1596).

a field with Frances, John Brooke, Isott's master's brother-in-law said to her 'Is it not tyme to go milking, come away'. Husbandman John Waren's deposition also indicated her involvement in agricultural tasks. He deposed that in the harvest before his examination, he was mowing oats in the vicarage grounds while Isott was reaping barley in the same field. Roberts indicates that reaping was frequently undertaken by women in early modern England, with wage assessments showing the distinctions that justices of the peace made between the wages of male and female reapers.¹⁹¹

Isott was not the only female servant engaged in husbandry tasks. In 1604, Edith Syfford recalled in her deposition that sixty years earlier while employed in the service of George Morryce, the parson of Yate in Gloucestershire, she 'did then Rake after the woman that fetched the tythe hay', demonstrating not only her own work in husbandry as a servant, but also the work of women more generally in agricultural labour.¹⁹² In 1594, servant Taria Heywood of Maisemore in the same county recalled gathering apples growing in her master's orchard, noting that she was also involved in the weighing of the apples and the carrying away of all but the tenth of them, which was left as tithe payment. Taria's knowledge of the quantity of apples that were collected the year before she was examined in the court is precise; she deposed that the apples were collected in malt sieves, and that each full malt sieve amounted to one bushel of apples, thus indicating her engagement, knowledge and familiarity with this type of work.¹⁹³

Milking was a task common to most early modern households and female servants were frequently recorded in the depositions as responsible for this type of work. In 1588, Anne Hiett, a servant of William Hiett, and Margaret Allen, a servant of William Compier, both of Temple Guiting in Gloucestershire, deposed that they heard Anne White call Elizabeth Wolliams 'a rogue' while the four women were milking in a common field. Their depositions highlight the communal nature of this task undertaken by women: Margaret Allen deposed that the field was 'where their kine wente all together'.¹⁹⁴ Cows usually belonged to the households in which servants worked; however in this case, the possessive noun

¹⁹¹ Michael Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes: Women's Work and Men's Work at Harvest Time', *History Workshop*, 7 (1979), 7.

¹⁹² GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jurden (1604).

¹⁹³ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1312, Richard Restall v William Dancy (1594).

¹⁹⁴ GRO, GDR/65, Case 465, Elizabeth Wolliams v Anne White (1588).

'their' suggests that the two servants owned their own cows (Margaret Allen described the cattle as *their* kine), although it is possible that the phrase 'their kine' simply suggests the servants' familiarity with the cows rather than their ownership. Erickson shows, however, that while cows were relatively valuable property in early modern society, servants were likely to purchase cattle in preparation for setting up a home upon marriage.¹⁹⁵ Some servants received payments in kind along with their wages, and employers sometimes permitted them to pasture sheep and lambs, for example, on their master's land.¹⁹⁶ The cows in this case, however, were pastured on common ground rather than land owned by Anne and Margaret's employers.

Milking was perhaps more common in areas of pastoral farming. Sheilagh Ogilvie shows that female servants in the Württemberg region of Germany were more frequently engaged in pastoral agricultural work, although they were not barred from arable farming.¹⁹⁷ The examples discussed above highlight the mixed nature of husbandry work that female servants undertook. A 1578 tithe dispute between John Morris and John Sparcks of Harberton in Devon concerning a piece of ground highlights the division of agricultural labour along gendered lines. Of the thirteen witnesses produced to testify on the behalf of both the litigants, five (three men and two women) were former servants. Christian Collens was John Sparcks' servant for nine years. She deposed that in each of the first four years of her service, she was asked to 'helpe to gather in the ferne [bracken] growing there'. This was labour intensive work, however, John Drake of Dartington, a former servant of William Greere, who was the owner of the other half of the same piece of land that Christian worked on, deposed that he *mowed* the ferns. This was even more physically demanding, suggesting a difference in what was considered suitable for male and female workers engaged in husbandry. Roberts suggests that mowing was a job reserved for only the most skilled and experienced male workers, the use of the scythe in this task requiring physical strength and stature. It was therefore better paid.¹⁹⁸ Other male

¹⁹⁵ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 65.

¹⁹⁶ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 39.

¹⁹⁷ Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁹⁸ Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes', 9-10.

witnesses in this case also described undertaking heavy work while in the service of William Greere including driving cattle, beasts and sheep.¹⁹⁹

This gendered distinction between male and female service was recorded elsewhere. In a 1596 allegation of simony against Henry Hooper of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire, who was accused of obtaining the parsonage unlawfully, Thomas Baskerveile detailed Henry's inappropriate behaviour in the parish, deposing that he did

wholy addicte himsele to such drudgerye beinge very unseemely & contrarye to his function & all the laste harveste or the moste parte thereof did drive his Carte himsele his mayde then rydinge in the Carte whome he usuallye called his boye.

The word 'boye' was used to refer to male servants; Matilda Sentill of Mortonhampstead in Devon deposed in 1557 that while she was reaping with John Warnell, she 'sawe his boye carie Rye sheaves together in heapes'.²⁰⁰ Use of the word 'boye' in the Bromsberrow case suggests that the work Henry required his servant to do conflicted with societal expectations of the work of a female servant. The unusual way in which he referred to his female servant was considered so noteworthy that it was recorded in Thomas Baskerveile's deposition. By calling his servant 'boye', Henry both remarked upon and in some ways subverted the gendered expectations of work in service for women.²⁰¹ Roberts' analysis of Henry Best's employment of female workers suggests that 'if a woman was to be employed at a man's job on Best's farm, her unusual ability had to be self-evident'.²⁰²

Absence of evidence or evidence of absence?

Despite the range of tasks that female servants were described as undertaking, some types of work are notably absent in the depositions from their repertoire of tasks. Historians note the typicality of female servant engagement in commercial activities like money-lending and retail.²⁰³ These activities are not strongly linked to female servants in the depositions, although absence of evidence here should

¹⁹⁹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, John Morris v John Sparcks (1578).

²⁰⁰ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 87, Office v John Warnell (1557).

²⁰¹ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1367, Thomas Higges v Henry Hooper (1596).

²⁰² Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes', 10.

²⁰³ See Spicksley, "'Fly with a Duck in thy Mouth'", 187-207; Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 153-158; Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 104.

not indicate evidence of absence: these absences are determined by the nature of the sources.

Young women were at the forefront of money-lending in early modern England, generating additional income for themselves. Spicksley and Erickson show that single women were involved in credit networks as lenders, as they were 'a significant source of cash' and loaned money to their neighbours and employers.²⁰⁴ As Chapter 2.2 shows, no instances of female servant money-lending were identified in the depositions. Only a glimpse of this economic activity was provided in the 1588 will of Anne Parrie of Frampton-on-Severn in Gloucestershire, which exists as a supplementary document to the records of a dispute raised after her death concerning the making of her will.²⁰⁵ The lack of evidence of female servants lending money in the depositions does not necessarily indicate that female servants did not take part in this commercial activity in south-west England. References to money-lending were relatively few in the depositions across all social groups, representing a shortcoming of the source material. Shepard suggests that as opportunities for money-lending increased from the second half of the seventeenth century, witnesses referred to income generated through loans and investments with more frequency.²⁰⁶ Moreover, Spicksley notes that a rise in the number of cash bequests by parents over the course of the seventeenth century rather than a combination of cash, livestock and other assets, provided single women with increased access to cash. Opportunities to lend money therefore became more plentiful in the period after 1650.²⁰⁷

Meldrum and Tim Reinke-Williams suggest that retail was an integral part of the workload of London female servants. Reinke-Williams notes that 'the work of maidservants often included selling the goods produced by their artisan masters'.²⁰⁸ In 1620, Robert Loder recorded that he paid his female servants 6d a day for selling cherries grown on his Berkshire farm, suggesting that

²⁰⁴ Spicksley, "Fly with a Duck in thy Mouth", 187-207; Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 81.

²⁰⁵ GRO, GDR/R/1588/14 (1588).

²⁰⁶ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, p. 295.

²⁰⁷ Spicksley, 'Usury Legislation, Cash, and Credit', 280-282.

²⁰⁸ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 153-158; Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 104.

engagement in retail tasks was not only associated with urban service.²⁰⁹ However, no evidence of female servants undertaking this type of work is found in the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions. Commercial activity occurred in both urban and rural communities: in 1596 in South Molton in Devon, 38-year-old Matilda Buckingham deposed that she was 'in the shopp of Mr Maye in South Molton by occasion that she sold a busshell of Rye to that house'.²¹⁰ In Pauntley in Gloucestershire in 1551, servant Alice Nutt deposed that her mistress Alice Wall did business with Joanne Sheale, giving her 'a peck of malt & loffe of bred'.²¹¹ In 1594, Richard Davis of Quedgeley in Gloucestershire deposed that 'the sayd Alice Hughes [a widow] did divers tymes sell apples to [his] wyfe'.²¹² Only one case described unmarried women undertaking work in retail. In 1591, 20-year-old Joanne Mason of Gloucester and her 19-year-old sister, Martha, deposed that eight years earlier they had been at work in their mistress' shop. Both women described themselves as apprentices (probably pauper apprentices) but neither sister provided details of the work they undertook nor any information about the type of shop they worked in.²¹³ It is likely that the lack of evidence of female servants engaged in retail or commercial activities reflects the relatively small sample of female servants examined in this thesis and perhaps indicates a bias against the recording of such work in the depositions.

Social status of employers

The experience of service for women was also shaped by the social and economic backgrounds of their employers. Female service was an opportunity for women to learn necessary skills to set up their own future households.²¹⁴ For male servants, placement with an employer of a particular occupation may have been part of a strategy to obtain certain occupational skills. In 1584, a gentleman named John Arundell of the parish of Veryan in Cornwall testified in a matrimonial dispute concerning his nephew, Richard Rawe, who was in his care. He deposed that

²⁰⁹ Robert Loder, *Robert Loder's Farm Accounts, 1610-1620*, G. E. Fussell (ed.), (London: R.H.S., 1936), p. 185.

²¹⁰ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1853, Margery Payne v Katherine Maye (1596).

²¹¹ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1491, Edward Sheale v Joanne Sheale (1551).

²¹² GRO, GDR/79, Case 1325, Alice Awood v Richard Smith (1594).

²¹³ GRO, GDR/65, Case 522, Blanche Cluterbook v Dionisia Sursbye (1591).

²¹⁴ For example, see McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 49.

having somme care that he might be taught bothe in matters of husbandry and also in the occupation of a victualer, that he might afterwards live the better [he] did putt the same Richard to service with Thomas danyell abowte five yere agowe last past, where he continued abowte a two yeres together.²¹⁵

Such considered placement of female servants was not recorded in the depositions. Housewifery was the most common training that women in service received; however, not all work related to housewifery, even by its early modern definition. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos highlights the vulnerabilities of working life in early modern English towns, suggesting that fluctuations in trade or the sudden death of an apprentice or master might propel a female member of a household into learning a trade or skill.²¹⁶ Whittle's study of widows' work through the lens of probate inventories shows a high incidence of widows starting new businesses and increasing household incomes following their husbands' deaths, sometimes achieving much success.²¹⁷ While a new business venture by a widow may have been born out of a set of skills practised over the course of her marriage or perhaps even newly learnt upon the death of her husband, they equally may have been acquired during her period of service.

Occupational descriptors of servant employers do not record *all* economic activity that took place within a household, but are nonetheless useful in suggesting the primary economic activity upon which households depended and consequently the type of activities that female servants within these households might be engaged in. Employer occupations are sometimes recorded in the depositions, particularly where employers were also recorded as witnesses. Using the Gloucester court depositions and probate documents, 90 unique employers of female servants recorded in the depositions have been identified. Details of the employers of just under a third (91 out of 303) Gloucestershire female servants have been identified.²¹⁸ Just 38 employer occupations have been identified for female servants recorded in the Exeter court depositions; these employers hired 44 of the 204 female servants identified. Although cross-referencing depositional

²¹⁵ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1625, John Trevanian v Joanne Daniell (1584).

²¹⁶ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Women Apprentices in the Trades and Crafts of Early Modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991), 242.

²¹⁷ Whittle, 'Enterprising Widows', 283-300.

²¹⁸ Some employers hired more than one of the servants identified in the depositions; the occupations of these employers have been counted just once to avoid overrepresenting particular occupational groups.

evidence of employers with wills was used to identify only 11 per cent of Gloucestershire employer occupations, the low survival rate of wills from Devon and Cornwall during this period partially accounts for the lower number of employer occupations returned for these two counties.

Table 3.5. Occupational categories of female servant employers in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Occupational group	Diocese of Gloucester	Diocese of Exeter	Total	
	N	N	N	%
Clerics	19	6	25	19.5
Gentlemen	16	10	26	19.5
Yeomen and farmers	21	2	23	18.0
Service trades	10	11	21	16.0
Husbandmen	11	3	14	11.0
Cloth and leather	5	3	8	6.3
Smiths, makers and building	5	1	6	4.7
Mariners and fishermen	2	2	4	3.1
Labourers	1	0	1	0.8
Animal keepers	1	0	1	0.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>-</i>

Sources: GRO, GDR deposition books and DHC, Chanter deposition books; and selected wills from GRO, GDR/R.

The three most frequently recorded occupations of male employers identified in table 3.5 (clerics, gentlemen and yeomen and farmers) matched the three wealthiest occupational groups found by Shepard in her work on statements of worth in church court depositions. Shepard suggests that around 31.6 per cent of gentry, 15.4 per cent of clergy and 21.4 per cent of yeomen were considered to be worth £40 or above.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, pp. 94-95.

Employers from these occupational status groups are more likely to be identified in wills due to their relative wealth. However, as female servant employers, yeomen and farmers are probably under-represented in the Exeter church court depositions. In the Gloucestershire depositions, twenty-one yeomen were identified, compared to just two in the depositions of the Exeter court. This reflects the low incidence of yeomen generally recorded in the Exeter depositions, as Chapter 1.3 demonstrates. Conversely, the number of clerics recorded as servant employers is inflated by the overrepresentation of this occupational group within the depositions of both diocesan courts. Vicars and rectors were more frequently represented in these courts due to their connections with the church and ecclesiastical law. Despite these limitations, table 3.5 nonetheless shows the wide range of occupations that employers undertook. Female servants were employed in the households of yeomen, gentry and clergymen, but also of innkeepers, joiners, bakers and doctors.

The term 'gentleman' is an ambiguous occupational descriptor, used to describe farmers and clergymen of substantial wealth as well as members of the gentry and aristocracy. Servants within gentlemen's households were therefore employed to perform various roles and tasks. The 1612 deposition of Elizabeth Howard, labelled as the '*serviens*' of Dame Anne Seymore of Frampton Cotterell in Gloucestershire records her work as a lady's maid. Elizabeth's role was to maintain a quality of life of that befitted her mistress' status, a difficult task given that Anne's husband allegedly mistreated his wife. Elizabeth told the court of her responsibility 'to looke to her [Anne's] potte & filling of her drinck', as Anne feared that her husband was trying to poison her. The household cook, another witness, further deposed that 'M[ist]res[s] Howard' was sent to him to request that he 'provide broath or other thinges fit for any Lady beeing sicke'.²²⁰ Within the households of gentry families, there was a hierarchy of roles for women who served. Elizabeth Howard was clearly a lady's maid, responsible for the wellbeing of her mistress and for arranging her care. Other servants employed in gentry households undertook more labour-intensive tasks including making beds, cleaning and washing. A separation case heard in the Exeter court in 1582 between Lord Gawen and Lady Roberta Champernowne of Dartington in Devon

²²⁰ GRO, GDR/114, Case 886, Anne Seymore v Thomas Seymore (1612).

produced three female servant witnesses from the household. Mary Cornishe, who was 17 years old, provided evidence of the type of work she was required to do. Being asked of her knowledge of an alleged affair between her mistress and a man named Christopher Melhuise, Mary deposed that she went to Lady Roberta's closet, a small interior chamber just off the bedchamber 'and asked of the sayd Ladie Robarda whether she would have her night stuffe washed' where she found her mistress and Christopher Melhuise together. Then 'assone as she came downe and brought the clothes to be washed she tould Alice Blackaller a servant likewise in the sayd house what she had senne', suggesting that the two servants were responsible for washing their mistress' clothes together.²²¹ Jacob Field points out that eighteenth-century servants in more prosperous houses were more numerous and therefore tended to specialise in particular activities. They were less likely to be called upon to engage in agricultural or farm service.²²² This may have been the case in the Champernowne household, where at least three female servants were employed in 1582.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Catherine Halle of Newent in Gloucestershire worked in the service of gentleman Guy Dobbins and his wife Jane. Suspecting Catherine to be light-fingered, the couple planted two silver coins 'to ye value of vi [6] d a peece upon a bedd in a lodgeinge chamber' and then 'purposelie sent the saide Catherine hall to make the same bedd'. Catherine stole the money and hid it 'under olde tymber' in the house with some other money that the couple knew was missing. Caught in the act, she was examined by the Justice of the Peace and placed in the stocks.²²³ 'Making the beds' was a fictive work task created by Guy and Jane in order to trick their servant. However, the task had to be plausible, an activity that Catherine routinely undertook in her role as a servant. 'Keeping house', which might include tasks like making beds, was referred to in the depositions of female servants employed by gentlemen. In 1568, Dionisia Hobbes told the court that she 'hath kept Mr doctors howse syns he came to be chanon here at Exetter'.²²⁴ In 1615, William Freeman, a yeoman

²²¹ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1495, Gawen Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne (1582).

²²² Field, 'Domestic Service, Gender, and Wages', 251.

²²³ GRO, GDR/89 and GDR/95, Case 419, Anne Harris v Frances Wylson (1604).

²²⁴ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

neighbour of gentleman George Bannester and his wife, deposed that the couple left the parish of Turkdeane and

went unto Northamptonshere to keepe theire Christmas with his wives mother [...] and lefte the said Elizabeth Gawen amongst other his servantes to attend his busines and kepe his howse till his retorne.²²⁵

Elizabeth's dual responsibility for keeping George's house and attending to his business suggests that even in a gentleman's house, the work of female servants was not necessarily confined to specific tasks like making beds and washing clothes. Work was not always specialised and servants could be asked to undertake whatever tasks their employers saw fit, particularly in smaller households where few servants were employed.

Gentlemen sometimes owned large farms and therefore the tasks they assigned to their female servants could extend to agricultural work. Whittle's study of the lesser gentry households of Henry Best and Nicholas Toke indicates that these household economies and therefore the work of their servants were geared towards agricultural production.²²⁶ Returning to the varied workload of Isott Riches of Rockbeare in Devon outlined in Chapter 3.1, it is clear that Isott's gentleman employer, Doctor Gammon, did not expect her to solely undertake housework. Gentleman John Brooke, Isott's former employer and kin to Doctor Gammon, continued to oversee her work. The depositions record his request for Isott to go to milking, while her fellow servant, Dionisia Hobbes, deposed that Isott reaped barley in the vicarage ground. While Doctor Gammon was a gentleman, his role as a canon of Exeter and his incumbency in the vicarage of the small parish of Rockbeare meant that Isott's work was not confined to the house; rather, she was employed to help maintain the *household economy*, which in this case involved milking and undertaking work in husbandry. Fellow servant Richard Swadell encapsulated the range of work Isott was be required to do; deposing that he told Isott she should not have been out in the meadow with Frances Yarde, as 'it is no place to be in when you mought have been otherwise occupied about your master's busyness'. She was responsible, therefore, for whatever her master saw fit.²²⁷ The same conception of female service was expressed by

²²⁵ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1059, Robert Payne v Elizabeth Gawen (1615).

²²⁶ Whittle, 'A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500-1660'.

²²⁷ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

Robert Loder, a seventeenth century Berkshire farmer who described the work of servants as 'doing of the thinges, that must indeed be donne'.²²⁸

Within clerical households, female servants often described their engagement in the process of tithe collection. The more unusual example of a widow named Margery Powell, servant to Henry Hooper, the parson of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire, who witnesses recalled helping her master geld a boar, indicates other types of husbandry activities that women might be engaged in within clerical households. The same witnesses also acknowledged the inappropriateness of the parson's activities for a man of his social standing, suggesting that this was not a typical work activity that female servants working in clerical households undertook alongside their masters.²²⁹ The 1615 deposition of Mellisa Tawton, who worked in the house of Henry and Susan Hartwell, the vicar of Bishop's Tawton in Devon and his wife, demonstrates another dynamic of clerical households. While Melissa's deposition did not record the type of work she undertook in the couple's service, she deposed that

the sayd Mr hartweswell in greate radge came downe into the dayrie house where this deponent and the wife of the sayd Mr harteswell and a gerle were aboute business.

The presence of these three women in the dairy house indicates their engagement in the production of butter or cheese. Production of butter and cheese by members of this clerical household was not, however, a specialised task as it probably was in gentry households: three women at different life-cycle stages and of different social status participated in the same activity. The involvement of Melissa's mistress, Mrs Hartwell suggests the collaborative nature of some tasks by all female members of the household irrespective of status or wealth.²³⁰

The work of some women in service extended to tasks directly related to their master's occupation. Witnesses in a 1580 case against Richard Kingdon of St Stephens in Launceston in Cornwall, who was accused of incontinence with his servant Joanne Nymoe, suggest Joanne's engagement in mill-related work. Richard Gresson, a neighbour, deposed that Richard Kingdon met Joanne at

²²⁸ Loder, *Robert Loder's Farm Accounts*, p. 71.

²²⁹ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1367, Thomas Higges v Henry Hooper (1596).

²³⁰ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615).

night in his mill house. While no physical work activity was described, he told the court that after observing the pair enter the mill together, he challenged Richard Kingdon to tell him why Joanne was there at night. Richard responded that 'she should be there agayne the next morning', implying the innocence of Joanne's presence at the mill, this being the site of her daily work. Joanne was subsequently removed from Richard's service by the constable, moving to Plymouth to serve 'one Butler a myller unto whome Kingdon sent her'. Joanne's continued work with a miller suggests her capability in undertaking mill-related work, and implies her specialisation in this kind of economic activity.²³¹ Despite the dearth of verb-orientated evidence of female engagement in 'production' activities in the church court depositions, this case indicates that income-generating activity within the household could therefore be undertaken by employers and servants alike.

The occupation of an employer shaped not only the type of work a female servant was required to do but also the environment in which she undertook that work. In the inn of a man named Thorne in Birdlip in Gloucestershire, where an adulterous wife from Bisley met with a man named Roger Pile in 1593, witness Richard Fettipeace, a gentleman from Coln St. Aldwyn deposed that a maid of the house served food at a banquet held there, noting that she 'passed along with the legge of a henne'.²³² Serving food was a typical experience for female servants working for employers from almost all levels of society. The unique environment of the inn, in which the age, gender, social status and background of the guests frequenting the Birdlip inn was varied, exposed this servant to a broad spectrum of society. The unnamed maid's experience of service was therefore influenced by her employer's occupation as an innkeeper and her social interactions were consequently determined by the nature of this work.

Conclusions

Early modern female service cannot be conceived as 'domestic'. The categorisation of work tasks is shown to be problematic due to a shift over time in what is understood by the terms 'domestic', 'housework' and 'housewifery'. Such categorisation involves grouping tasks according to either a narrow, modern

²³¹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1430, Office v Richard Kingdon (1580).

²³² GRO, GDR/79, Case 1339, William Snow v Elizabeth Snow (1595).

meaning of housework that early modern society did not understand, or by a broader, early modern definition of housewifery, in which income-generation was not necessarily separated out from domestic consumption. Neither definition satisfactorily accounts for women's work in service. Yet despite these problematic categories, it is nonetheless clear that women engaged in service did not simply undertake work *within the household*. Rather, work extended outside domestic space into the fields and beyond, where female servants undertook agricultural tasks, were involved in food production, ran errands and performed other forms of work that their employers saw fit.

Experiences of working in service were varied, yet patterns are nonetheless found. The social status of an employer shaped experiences of service in many ways. In the households of the gentry and nobility, work in service was typically specialised. Women were employed specifically as lady's maids or to wash clothes and milk cows. Further down the social scale, this type of specialisation did not exist, with women engaged in a range of activities from washing, food preparation and milking to grinding corn, dusting malt, pitching hay and reaping barley. Work often depended on the primary income-generating occupation of the head of the household. Household needs and requirements were individual and employment in service could provide women with experience in a range of different work activities. The typicality of a varied workload and the non-specialised nature of work in service was summed up by Elizabeth Greene servant of John Sheile of Gloucester, who deposed in 1604 that 'she doth worke taske worke', while Anne Holder, servant of John Bryan of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire deposed that 'she was a servant of the howse & did not staie in the place where they were but did passe by them now & then as her busines did requyre'.²³³

²³³ GRO, GDR/96, Case 701, Sheile v Thomas Bishopp; GDR/45, Case 121, William Salisbury v Elizabeth Hains (1580).

4. Geography

Experiences of mobility, place and space in early modern England are key to understanding parochial and inter-parish relationships, connections and communities. This section considers female servants' interactions with and experiences of the environments in which they lived and worked, and is loosely structured according to Beat Kümin's tripartite model of location, place and space, which allows these experiences to be studied on different scales. The first chapter examines geographical mobility between locations, with 'location' referring to a specific fixed point 'defined by coordinates on a modern map', in this case, the parish.¹ It compares patterns of residence, movement and migration exhibited by female servants to those of all witnesses who appeared before the church courts and left a record of where they were born and had lived over the course of their lifetimes. The chapter shows that early modern servants travelled a wider range of distances than previous scholarship suggests and demonstrates the importance of considering not only how mobility affected experiences of service but also how different experiences of service shaped mobility patterns.

The second chapter considers physical space on a smaller scale, exploring the ways in which female servants experienced and interacted with particular 'places' and 'spaces', defined here as 'locations with a broadly accepted set of functions, furnishings and meanings (e.g. a church or market square)'.² The chapter demonstrates the range of places and spaces these women moved between, both inside and outside the household. The household is re-examined and shown to be an open space, in which privacy from both household members and the wider community was limited. The household provided opportunities for sociability that facilitated connections and friendships. Outside the household, spaces presented the female servant with some privacy and independence from the family she served; patriarchal control of female servants by the head of the household is shown to have been limited outside the context of the home.

¹ For Kümin's tripartite model, see Beat Kümin, 'The Uses of Space in Early Modern History - An Afterword', in Paul Slack (ed.), *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 231.

² Ibid.

Throughout the section, the ways in which people thought about and understood space are considered; here, 'cognitive space' denotes the 'relational situating of [...] environmental features and objects in people's minds'; that is, the cognitive and perceptual maps that individuals create of the environment that surrounds them.³ Understanding contemporary conceptions of space and place provides a cultural context for the evidence found within the depositions.

4.1. Geographical mobility

Early modern society was highly mobile. Over a ten-year period, the composition of a parish could change remarkably. Using parish listings, Peter Laslett found that population turnover between 1618 and 1628 in Cogenhoe in Northamptonshire was around 52 per cent, and between 1676 and 1688, around 62 per cent of the population of Clayworth in Nottinghamshire had left the parish.⁴ In her study of Norfolk church court depositions between 1499 and 1530, Jane Whittle found that just 22.1 per cent of men and 18.2 per cent of women had been resident in the same parish since birth, a pattern confirmed by Lawrence Poos' study of late fifteenth-century Essex.⁵

Historians take a comparative approach to studying the mobility of early modern society. The extent of mobility is divided along gendered lines: Whittle and Peter Clark both show that female witnesses appearing before church courts were more mobile than male witnesses, although Clark adds that women typically travelled shorter distances than their male counterparts.⁶ Different patterns of mobility are suggested according to topography and settlement type. Clark found marked differences between rural and urban society: men and women from urban areas more frequently travelled in excess of 16 kilometres when moving to a new parish but were less mobile than those from rural areas.⁷ In his study of the late medieval bishopric of Worcester, Christopher Dyer also suggests different topographical contrasts. He notes that 'champion' corn-growing parishes tended

³ Ibid.

⁴ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, pp. 65-67.

⁵ Jane Whittle, 'Population Mobility in Rural Norfolk among Landholders and Others c.1440-c.1600', in Christopher Dyer (ed.), *The Self-Contained Village? The Social History of Rural Communities, 1250-1900* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007), p. 29; Poos, *Black Death*, p. 170.

⁶ Whittle, 'Population Mobility in Rural Norfolk', p. 30; Clark, 'Migration in England', 73.

⁷ Clark's measurement is given in miles (i.e. 7 miles) and has been converted to kilometres. See Clark, 'Migration in England', 64-68.

to house less stable core populations than areas with mixed agriculture; land use was less flexible, therefore discouraging people from remaining in these parishes in times of dearth.⁸ Contrasts are found in the mobility of different social groups. Clark shows that in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Kent, wealthier social groups were often less mobile than craftsmen, servants and labourers. For the same period, Keith Wrightson and David Levine show that gentlemen and large-scale farmers were the most fluid members of the Essex parish of Terling.⁹

Service is often at the forefront of scholarship on early modern mobility. Laslett notes that in Clayworth, 'servants shifted more often than anyone else' and that 'after a decade scarcely a servant name was the same'.¹⁰ Whittle confirms that those in their teens and twenties exhibited 'a more pronounced concentration of movement' as they moved between parishes to take up new opportunities in service.¹¹ Using settlement examinations, Ann Kussmaul shows that eighteenth-century servants in husbandry were mobile but rarely travelled more than 15 kilometres between their parish of birth and location of employment, or between locations of employment.¹² Whittle similarly outlines a geographically limited impression of servant mobility in sixteenth-century Norfolk.¹³

Our understanding of female servant mobility in early modern England is incomplete. Whittle's findings are based on Quarter Sessions records for the county of Norfolk, while Kussmaul's conclusions are based on eighteenth-century documents and her focus is primarily on male servants. No comparative study exists for female servants in early modern south-west England.

Charting mobility

Church court depositions allow mobility to be charted in two ways. Firstly, the length of time that people lived within parishes can be determined from the records. When providing the court with their residential histories, witnesses often

⁸ Christopher Dyer, 'Were Late Medieval English Villages 'Self-Contained'?', in Christopher Dyer (ed.), *The Self-contained Village? The Social History of Rural Communities, 1250-1900* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007), pp. 17-19.

⁹ Peter Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns, 1580-1640', in Peter Clark and David Souden (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English towns, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 122-123; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 81.

¹⁰ Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 72.

¹¹ Whittle, 'Population Mobility in Rural Norfolk', p. 30.

¹² Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 52.

¹³ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 52; Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, p. 273.

stated the length of time they had lived in a parish, thus indicating the frequency of movement of early modern society. Secondly, where witnesses provided both their parish of residence and a parish of former residence, the distance between these two parishes can be calculated.

Mobility should not be measured in binary terms; movement was experienced on different scales and should therefore be measured by degrees. While the terms 'movers' and 'stayers' are used to distinguish those who left their parish of birth and those who had remained in the same parish since birth, this is not to suggest that 'stayers' were not mobile on a local level.¹⁴ Residence in the same household across an entire lifetime was uncommon and moving from the parental home to another house within the same parish could involve travelling some distance. In a 1639 testamentary dispute, the rector of Cowley in Gloucestershire described how he 'liveth about the space of *halfe a mile* from the house where the said testator died', while William Mills, a husbandman from the same parish deposed that 'hee liveth about *a mile* from the house'.¹⁵ Many parishes contained a number of communities and neighbourhoods, which as Bernard Capp suggests 'concealed a patchwork of [...] networks based on factors such as occupation, kinship, status, age, and values.'¹⁶ Connections could extend across the geographical landscape of a parish and beyond; neither the rector of Cowley nor William Mills lived in close proximity to the testator, but both men were present at the making of his will. Networks and relationships could therefore stimulate mobility within a parish.

A parish could contain one or several centres, with some people living on the outskirts or peripheries. In these areas, travel for work, leisure and worship was necessary. On 1 March 1582, William Braban and his wife of the parish of Flaxley in Gloucestershire were presented before the church court for failing to attend services at the parish church. William deposed that he and his wife lived two miles (3.2 kilometres) from Flaxley church and instead attended service at the parish church of Littledean with his mother every Sunday 'unlese urgent busines doe hinder him'.¹⁷ As figure 4.1 shows, parts of the parish of Flaxley were

¹⁴ This terminology is employed by Ian Whyte. See Whyte, *Migration and Society*, p. 31.

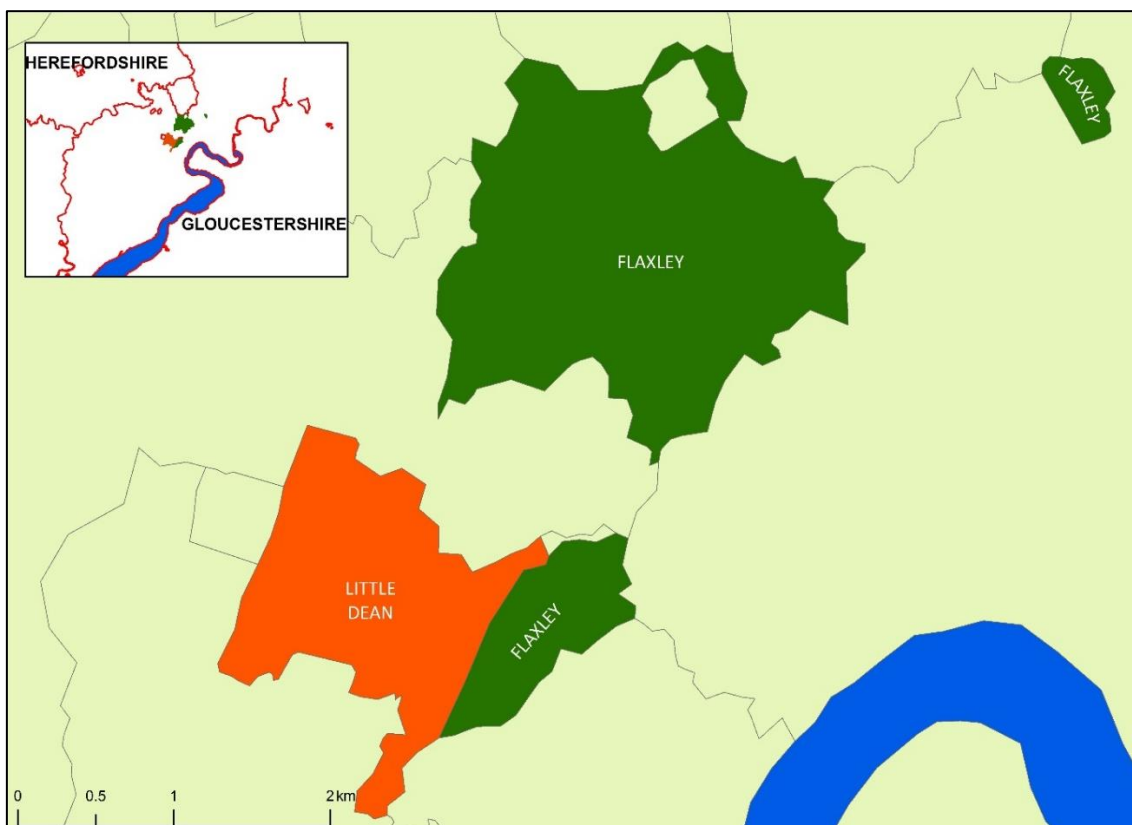
¹⁵ GRO, GDR/204, Case 1823, Eleanor Mills v Anne Smith (1639). Italics my own.

¹⁶ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 185.

¹⁷ GRO, GDR/50, Office v William Braban (1582).

detached from the main area of the parish. One part was instead contiguous with the parish of Littledean. The distance between the two furthestmost points of the larger parish mass of Flaxley was approximately 2.9 kilometres. Only by living in the southern detached part of the parish could William and his wife have lived two miles (3.2 kilometres) away from the church and near Littledean church. While Littledean church was closer to their home, parishioners were nonetheless expected to travel not to their nearest church but to their *parish* church. F. G. Emmison notes that explanations like William Braban's were met with little sympathy in the Essex church courts.¹⁸

Figure 4.1. Map of Flaxley and Littledean parishes, Gloucestershire.



Administratively, parishes were important, but in many ways parish boundaries are an arbitrary unit of measure. Although environmental features such as rivers and mountains create natural parish borders, early modern parishes were not

¹⁸ F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office, 1973), pp. 84-85.

deliberately divided with physical boundaries. Adjacent or neighbouring parishes were often closer than some parts of the same parish. The extent of most people's movement depended on economic and social opportunities inside and outside the parish rather than its administrative and customary boundaries. As Thomas Hylland Erickson notes, 'the village appears as a sub-system; as part of a larger system. Systemic boundaries are in this way not absolute but relative to a particular kind of social context or a set of activities'.¹⁹

Employment opportunities might be one such context. In 1603, husbandman Anthony Nicholson of Quedgeley in Gloucestershire testified that he was told that John Wood lived 'lewdley' with the female servant of William Merryman 'whilst he [John Wood] was *abroade about his worke*'.²⁰ In 1558, Philipp Franklyn of Lamerton in Devon deposed that he had lived in the parish since birth, but worked in the adjacent parish of Tavistock, approximately 11 kilometres away.²¹ He allegedly heard the defendant Richard Wood call Joanne Allen a whore while he was 'hedgyng [...] at Shelly mylle within the parishe of Tavistok upon a certen work day'.²² Over the course of a working day, individuals could travel some distance for employment, although journeys were unlikely to be made daily by those travelling considerable distances. In 1551, Joanne Edwardes of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire deposed that William Turloe 'did work there [in the vicar's house] day and night' as a carpenter.²³ Board and lodging were sometimes provided for the duration of such employment.

Common land also often extended across multiple parishes. In a Cornish tithe case heard in the Exeter court in 1578, witness Robert Grubb testified that even cows were not prohibited from moving between parishes, deposing

that Thomas Helliar had [...] ix [9] milch kyene or not above x [10] at the most as he beleveth in his conscience which sayd kyne pastured and fedd in three several parishes [...] in Ianliverie, Lestithiell and St Wynne, the ground wherein they went in such sorte that they might goe in all the three parishes

¹⁹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: an Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 4th edn (London: Pluto, 2015), p. 99.

²⁰ GRO, GDR/89, Case 377, Collwall v John Wood (1603). Italics my own.

²¹ The maximum distance is calculated between the two furthestmost points of each parish.

²² DHC, Chanter 855, Case 213, Joane Allen v Richard Wood and John Wood (1558).

²³ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1484, William Turloe v Janet Williams (1551).

without restraint for that there is no perfect inclosure to keap the ground distant one from the other.²⁴

Yet parishes provided a clear point of reference for early modern society. Robert understood the distinctions between the three Cornish parishes of Lanlivery, Lostwithiel and St Winnow. Parishes were frequently used as geographical descriptors; several witnesses who lived within the cities of Gloucester and Exeter named their specific parish of residence rather than identifying with the city more generally.²⁵ In 1615, witness John Pearse of the Gloucester parish of Longford, demonstrated his knowledge of parish divisions, deposing that he ‘was borne & bredd in Longford aforesaid & knoweth that Longford boundes & lymittes goeth to the broad shard in Westfield towards the city of Gloucester & noe further’.²⁶ As Fiona Williamson notes, even in large cities ‘parish limits were zealously guarded’.²⁷

Awareness of parish boundaries was ingrained in society from a young age as older inhabitants passed on their knowledge of parochial customs and boundaries.²⁸ In disputes concerning parish customs, age of the witness and by extension, the length of time they had lived in a parish was considered important, as Andy Wood and Nicola Whyte show.²⁹ Perambulation of the perimeters of a parish by its inhabitants was common in early modern England, primarily to prevent encroachment on use of common land. In a 1623 tithe dispute over land in the Gloucestershire parish of Corse, witness Jacob Clerke described how ‘the foresaid comon called Corse lane conteyneth and is the length [of] aboute fower miles’, providing justification for this knowledge that ‘he hath divers tymes with the minister & parishioners of Corse aforesaid gone the perambulation of that parishe’.³⁰ Parish perambulation signified inclusion and fostered a collective parish identity. As Whyte indicates, ‘boundary features became part of peoples’

²⁴ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1324, Edward Batten v Thomas Hellyar (1578).

²⁵ 55.3 per cent of those residing in Exeter provided a specific parish name, compared to 34.8 per cent of Gloucester residents.

²⁶ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1057, William Evans v Robert Robinson (1615).

²⁷ Fiona Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space: Norwich, 1600-1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), p. 57.

²⁸ Andy Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: the Peak Country, 1520-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 134.

²⁹ Andy Wood, ‘Custom and the Social Organisation of Writing in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 9 (1999), 259; Whyte, ‘Custodians of Memory’, 167.

³⁰ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1103, William Lambert v William Webb (1623).

life-histories', experienced as 'collective events designed to perpetuate and re-affirm local geographies of inclusion and belonging'.³¹

Geographical boundaries were therefore important in fostering individual affiliation with a particular parish, town, hamlet or estate. In his study of early modern xenophobia, Keith Snell suggests that hostility towards inhabitants of other parishes was born out in many social and economic situations.³² Parishes were administrative centres in which the distribution of poor relief and payment of tithes were organised and overseen. Vagrancy laws were introduced in the late sixteenth century and consolidated from 1662 onwards with the Settlement Acts, thus further intensifying institutional xenophobia.³³ Vagrants and the migrant poor were barred from settling in parishes and were forced to return to their birthplace or the parish in which they had most recently lived. This prevented 'outsiders' from seeking parochial relief.³⁴ Parishioners were actively involved in ensuring that poor relief was reserved only for those who were entitled to it. In 1625, Joanne Jefferies deposed that the illegitimate pregnancy of her fellow servant Susan Fourd caused the parishioners of Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire to produce

the said Mr Richard Greene [the suspected father] before the Justices of peace to enter into bond to save them harmless from the keeping of the said childe.³⁵

This collective act of parish unity ensured that the financial burden of the baby did not fall upon the parishioners of Wotton-under-Edge, and that Richard Greene, considered of sufficient wealth to support the child, was held accountable for his actions.

Parishioners undoubtedly affiliated themselves with the parish in which they lived and often had extensive knowledge of its customs, geography and other inhabitants. When a witness indicated that he or she had moved between two parishes, this meant something to that individual and was understood not only as a physical or geographical shift but also a change in one's identity. Using the

³¹ Nicola Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather, 2009), p. 86.

³² K. D. M. Snell, 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, 28 (2010), 1-30.

³³ Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 28.

³⁴ See Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 300-360.

³⁵ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1156, Dorothy Greene v Richard Greene (1625).

parish as a unit of measure in analysing mobility reflects the ways in which people identified with and thought about the geographical space in which they lived. While crossing the border of a parish may not have been physically restricted, sense of belonging was nonetheless measured by inclusion within the parish.

Mobility in the church court depositions

Mobility was recorded in the church court depositions with some irregularity. In the Exeter court, parish of birth was rarely recorded unless it matched the witness' parish of residence. In 1580, the following biographical preamble to the deposition of servant Beatrix Hawkes was recorded:

Beatrix hawkes of Launceston where she has lived since birth and was born there.³⁶

Other statements of residence show that people returned to their parish of birth. Thomasine Garrett appeared before the Exeter court in 1608 to testify in a defamation suit:

Thomasine Garrett of Topsham, spinster, where she was born and where she has lived for the most part of her life.³⁷

Thomasine had left the parish of Topsham at some point in her life, but where she travelled to or when she left and returned to Topsham was not recorded. In some biographical preambles to Exeter court depositions, only parish of residence was recorded. Where the stated length of residence in the parish was less than the age of the witness, it is reasonable to assume that the witness was born in another parish. The 1583 biographical preamble to Ebbota Langmead's deposition therefore indicates mobility but not the distance she covered in her journey to St Stevens near Saltash:

Ebbota Langmead of St Stevens near Saltash where she has lived for xvi [16] years age xxxvi [36].³⁸

It is therefore rarely possible to calculate the distances that witnesses travelled between parishes of residence across the counties of Devon and Cornwall as only one location of residence was typically recorded. In the Gloucester court depositions, descriptions of residence were often more detailed. The parish of

³⁶ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1398, John Lucas v Joanne Simons (1580).

³⁷ DHC, Chanter 865, Case 1956, Grace Corbyn v Joanne Drewe (1608).

³⁸ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1575, Sampson Rawlye v Elizabeth Kneebone (1583).

birth of migrant witnesses was recorded with some frequency, as in the case of Eleanor Phillpott, who appeared before the court in 1606:

Ellinore Phillpott of Hope Mansell in the county of Herefordshire where she has lived for the space of 3 months last past and previously in Bowson in the parish of Newent in the county of Gloucestershire for 2 years last past, born in Hope Mansell.³⁹

Other locations in which a witness had resided over the course of his or her lifetime were also sometimes included. This was not an exclusive feature of the Gloucester court records; previous parishes of residence were also occasionally recorded in the Exeter court depositions.

Mobility

Extent of mobility

Of the 6804 individuals who testified in the Gloucester court, 'movers' and 'stayers' can be identified in 86.4 per cent of cases. The same information was recorded for 87.2 per cent of the 6428 witnesses recorded in the Exeter court depositions. The extent to which people moved from their parish of birth is shown in table 4.1. Across both courts, male mobility was lower than female mobility; this difference was even more pronounced in the Gloucester court with just 49.3 per cent of men moving from their parish of birth compared to 61.2 per cent of women.

Life-long residence in a parish was almost equally as likely as migration for Gloucestershire men but slightly less likely for their Devon and Cornwall counterparts who were more mobile. By contrast, in both dioceses, it was significantly more commonplace for a woman to have moved at least once from her parish of birth. These patterns reflect those found in the Gloucester church court by Clark for the period 1660 to 1684. Clark shows that female urban mobility was around 60 per cent, compared to around 66 per cent in rural areas, while around just 46 per cent of urban male deponents and 49 per cent of rural male deponents left their parish of birth.⁴⁰ Similar patterns of mobility were found between 1550 and the late seventeenth-century.

³⁹ GRO, GDR/100, Case 588, Milberrowe Berrowe v John Crockett (1606).

⁴⁰ Clark, 'Migration in England', 65, 67.

Table 4.1. Male and female mobility recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

	Diocese of Gloucester						Diocese of Exeter					
	Stationary			Moved			Stationary			Moved		
	Total	N	%	N	%	Total	N	%	N	%	Total	
Male	4848	2458	50.7	2390	49.3	4798	2054	42.8	2744	57.2		
Female	1027	398	38.8	629	61.2	808	298	36.9	510	63.1		
Total	5875	2856		3019		5606	2352		3254			

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

As a subset of the society presented in table 4.1, female servants were among the most mobile members. Female witnesses who referred to their employment in service can be divided into three categories: 'current' servants, who worked in service at the time of examination; 'former servants', who were no longer in service at the time of their examination; and 'one-time' servants, who had previously worked in service and whose marital status was either unmarried or unstated, but for whom employment status at the time of their examination was not recorded.¹ The mobility of those recorded as 'current' servants can be assessed by comparing their parish of birth and parish of residence at the time of examination. Locational data of those recorded as 'former' and 'one-time' servants has been manipulated to add to the dataset: by taking the parish in which the last known instance of service took place alongside the parish of birth, the data is made comparable to the locational data available for those in service at the time of their examination.

Table 4.2 shows that 87.1 per cent and 69.7 per cent of female servants in the Gloucester and Exeter courts respectively had moved from their parish of birth while in service, indicating the high mobility of these women. Comparison of the extent of their mobility and the movement of all female witnesses (represented in table 4.1) shows that servants were clearly among the most mobile female witnesses. Migration of Gloucestershire female servants was particularly extensive: just 12.9 per cent of women in service remained in the same parish since birth.

¹ The terminology used here (i.e. 'current', 'former' and 'one-time') is used in reference to the time at which the witness was examined. A large proportion of 'one-time' servants were likely to have still been in service at the time of their examination. Married women have been classified as 'former servants' unless otherwise stated as the likelihood of them retaining a position within service once married was low, although neither impossible nor without precedent.

Table 4.2. Female servant mobility in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

	Moved		Stationary		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Diocese of Gloucester	121	87.1	18	12.9	139
Diocese of Exeter	53	69.7	23	30.3	76

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Length of residence

Despite the number of people who were mobile over the course of their lifetimes, residence in a parish was often for extended periods, suggesting that people did not move regularly. The length of time witnesses remained in a parish was similar across both courts and across gender: as table 4.3 shows, men were marginally less likely than women to have lived in a parish for less than ten years (20.7 per cent compared to 28.5 per cent), again confirming women to be the more mobile sex. More significant differences lie in the age distribution of witness mobility. Table 4.4 shows that approximately 60 per cent of witnesses over the age of 70 had either remained in the same parish since birth or had spent over fifty years in the same parish. The oldest witness to appear before the Exeter court, 103-year-old Nicholas Cornworthy deposed in 1570 that he had lived in Halberton in Devon for a century.² At the other end of the age spectrum, witnesses under the age of 30 were more likely to have spent fewer than five years in the same parish. While only 3 per cent of witnesses over the age of 70 had lived in their parish of residence for less than five years, 30.5 per cent of those in their teens and 27.6 per cent of those in their twenties had joined a new parish within just five years of their deposition being recorded. Mobility mostly occurred in the earlier stages of the life cycle, with more permanent settlement occurring later in life, probably upon marriage.

² DHC, Chanter 857, Case 1027, John Pyle and Thomas Sweteland v Robert Whytefyld (1570). It is not recorded where Nicholas spent the other three years of his life are given in his deposition. It is possible that while his age is recorded with some precision, his length of residence in the parish may have been rounded to the nearest decadal threshold, meaning that he may have been resident in Halberton since birth.

Table 4.3. Length of residence of witnesses recorded in the church courts depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Length of residence (years)	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 1	58	3.6	148	1.8	206	2.0
≥ 1 and < 5	242	14.9	876	10.4	1118	11.1
≥ 5 and < 10	164	10.1	727	8.6	891	8.8
≥ 10 and < 15	161	9.9	726	8.6	887	8.8
≥ 15 and < 20	100	6.1	424	5.0	524	5.2
≥ 20 and < 25	160	9.8	833	9.9	993	9.9
≥ 25 and < 30	33	2.0	189	2.2	222	2.2
≥ 30 and < 35	85	5.2	491	5.8	576	5.7
≥ 35 and < 40	11	0.7	89	1.1	100	1.0
≥ 40 and < 45	76	4.7	406	4.8	482	4.8
≥ 45 and < 50	0	0.0	33	0.4	33	0.3
≥ 50	27	1.7	230	2.7	257	2.6
From birth	512	31.4	3285	38.8	3797	37.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>1629</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>8457</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>10086</i>	<i>-</i>

Note: Individually, the courts display very similar patterns in terms of length of residence and therefore the data has been combined into one table.

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Table 4.4. Length of residence of witnesses (excluding female servants) in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649, by age at examination.

Length of residence (years)	10-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-69		70+	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 1 year	6	4.0	71	5.0	40	2	32	1.4	15	0.8	7	0.5	2	0.4
≥ 1 and < 5	40	26.5	323	22.6	338	16.7	183	8.2	98	5.0	50	3.2	14	2.6
≥ 5 and < 10	11	7.3	177	12.4	307	15.2	214	9.6	88	4.5	52	3.4	17	3.1
≥ 10 and < 15	9	6.0	99	6.9	274	13.6	273	12.2	149	7.6	53	3.4	15	2.7
≥ 15 and < 20	2	1.3	39	2.7	117	5.8	176	7.9	124	6.3	50	3.2	7	1.3
≥ 20 and < 25	1	0.7	51	3.6	132	6.5	328	14.6	301	15.4	148	9.6	21	3.8
≥ 25 and < 30	0	0.0	8	0.6	18	0.9	53	2.4	92	4.7	40	2.6	9	1.6
≥ 30 and < 35	0	0.0	0	0.0	35	1.7	115	5.1	195	10.0	194	12.6	36	6.6
≥ 35 and < 40	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	0.2	8	0.4	31	1.6	41	2.7	14	2.6
≥ 40 and < 45	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	45	2.0	135	6.9	227	14.7	73	13.3
≥ 45 and < 50	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	11	0.6	10	0.6	10	1.8
≥ 50	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	1.9	97	6.3	118	21.5
From birth	82	54.3	664	46.4	757	37.4	812	36.3	678	34.7	573	37.2	213	38.8
Total	151	-	1432	-	2022	-	2240	-	1954	-	1542	-	549	-

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Table 4.5 shows that female servants in Gloucestershire were more mobile than their Devon and Cornwall counterparts. Almost one-fifth of Gloucestershire female servants had lived in their parish of residence for less than a year compared to just 9 per cent of female servants within the diocese of Exeter. Dispersed settlements were more typical in Cornwall and Devon: Harold Fox notes that 'dispersed settlement bred small-scale, intensely local loyalties' which these 'stationary' servants may have exhibited.¹ Devon was a large county, with poor internal roads that may have limited mobility between its parishes.² Parishes within Gloucestershire were also typically smaller: the average area of parishes in Devon and Cornwall was around 11,980 km² compared to just 6141 km² in Gloucestershire.³ Female servants living in the diocese of Exeter may have been mobile within rather than between parishes.

Over 50 per cent of female servants from both dioceses had lived in the same parish for less than five years, compared to just 27.8 per cent of all witnesses between the ages of 10 and 29. While some of the witnesses within this 10-29 age group were individuals whose occupational identity as a servant could not be verified in the depositions, many did not work in service. Some may have married in their early twenties and had therefore settled in a parish for a period that exceeded five years. This is reinforced by the almost 3 per cent difference in the proportion of those aged between 20 and 29 who had lived in a parish for between five and ten years compared to those between the ages of 10 and 19.

¹ H. Fox, 'Medieval Farming and Rural Settlement', in Roger Kain, William Ravenhill, and Helen Jones (eds.), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 277-278, 279.

² Havinden and Stanes, 'Agriculture and Rural Settlement', p. 281.

³ Humphrey Southall and Nick Burton, *GIS of the Ancient Parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850*. [data collection]. (2004), UK Data Service. SN: 4828, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4828-1>.

Table 4.5. Length of residence of female servants recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Length of residence (years)	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
From birth	18	13.0	23	30.3	41	19.1
Less than 1 year	27	19.4	7	9.0	34	15.8
≥ 1 and < 5	54	38.9	22	29.0	76	35.4
≥ 5 and < 10	13	9.0	14	18.4	27	12.6
≥ 10 and < 15	10	7.2	5	6.6	15	7.0
≥ 15 and < 20	6	4.3	3	4.0	9	4.2
≥ 20 and < 25	9	6.5	2	2.6	11	5.1
≥ 25 and < 30	2	1.44	0	0	2	0.93
<i>Total</i>	<i>139</i>		<i>76</i>		<i>215</i>	

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Others remained in the parental home. Only around 13 per cent and 30 per cent of female servants in the Gloucester and Exeter courts respectively had lived in the same parish since birth, compared to around 47 per cent of witnesses between the ages of 10 and 29. A few of these 10-to 29-year olds were children; however, only a very small number of witnesses were below the age of 15. As previous chapters show, despite legislation ruling that young people should be compulsorily employed in service, enforcement was probably low across the two dioceses. Those who remained at home contributed to the lower incidence of movement within this 10-29 age group. Age was not the only factor that

influenced mobility patterns; marriage and employment choices could be equally as important.

As discussed elsewhere, service was not a formative experience for all. Despite working in the typically transient and mobile institution of service, female servants aged 30 and above display similar characteristics to women of the same age range shown in table 4.4. Of the eighteen female servants in this age bracket whose places of residence and birth were recorded, just five had lived in a parish for less than five years (around 28 per cent). The majority had lived in the same parish for over ten years: those who were never married were likely to remain with the same employer in the same parish and those who were widowed or turned to service in times of economic hardship were more likely to find a position within the parish in which they already lived. In 1605, Katherine Moore, a 50-year-old married woman, secured temporary service within the parish of Bisley in Gloucestershire: she had lived in the parish for twenty-four years.⁴ Grace Warde of the parish of Tavistock in Devon was the 40-year-old servant of Peter Russell of the same parish in 1618 and had lived there for twenty years.⁵ Older servants did not display the same living and working patterns as their younger counterparts; in this context, age was the most important factor in determining how mobile a female servant was. Mobility was perhaps a less attractive prospect to an older servant.

Urban employment opportunities

Even in settlements where intense local loyalties were held, employment opportunities were key to mobility. Many young people left their parish of birth in search of work. London's large number of migrant servants in the early modern period has been well documented.⁶ Yet other urban centres may have offered plenty of employment opportunities for young people. A quarter of Gloucester-born female servants found work within the city. Sisters Joanne and Martha Mason were born in Gloucester. They were recorded as witnesses in a 1591

⁴ GRO, GDR/95, Case 715, Joan Compton v Edward Townsend (1605).

⁵ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2312, Elizabeth Drake v Robert Wills (1618).

⁶ See Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp. 18-20; Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: the Demography of London, 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 140; Brodsky Elliot, 'Single Women', p. 88.

defamation dispute between Blanche Cluterbook and Dionisia Sursbye, who was their former mistress while they had been apprentices (probably pauper apprentices). Both remained in Gloucester after leaving their apprenticeships and took up service in the same city.⁷ The 1593 deposition of Alice Kew, the servant of Alice Wiseman, also recorded that she had remained in Gloucester, the city in which she was born.⁸

In Gloucestershire, 15.5 per cent of women in service at the time of their examinations lived in Gloucester, including servant Anne Browne who in 1611, deposed that she had lived there for just one year.⁹ As Chapter 1.3 discusses, around 5 per cent of the population of Gloucestershire lived in the diocesan capital around 1660. A disproportionate number of female servants therefore lived and worked in Gloucester, even accounting for the high proportion of cases originating from the city (8.4 per cent). David Rollison notes that between the mid-sixteenth century and 1801, Gloucester itself barely doubled in size. Its importance in the county's wool trade was as a distributor rather than as a producer, meaning that fewer hands were employed.¹⁰ However, while the wool trade may have offered fewer employment opportunities in Gloucester, the city nonetheless provided much work for women looking for employment in service.

The depositions suggest a similar pattern in Exeter. No female servants had lived in the city since birth but it had attracted several migrants. Mirroring the pattern of servant migration to Gloucester, around 14 per cent of female servants in Devon and Cornwall lived in Exeter. This was a substantial proportion; in 1660, just over 3 per cent of the diocesan population resided in the city, and only 6.2 per cent of cases were Exeter-based over the period 1550-1650. In both dioceses, no other town competed with the number of female servant inhabitants: eight lived in Cheltenham, while just four lived in Crediton in Devon and Cirencester in Gloucestershire. Jeremy Goldberg's study of fourteenth-century Yorkshire church court depositions suggests that there were comparatively fewer female servants entering service in rural parts of Yorkshire than in the city of

⁷ GRO, GDR/65, Case 522, Blanche Cluterbook v Dionisia Sursbye (1591).

⁸ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1287, Alice Wiseman v Elizabeth Stringer (1593).

⁹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 864, Margaret Payne v Walter Britten (1611).

¹⁰ Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 40.

York.¹¹ While rural servants were by no means few in number in the Gloucester and Exeter court depositions, a disproportionate number of female servants worked in urban areas.

Mobile employers

Female servants did not always choose to leave a parish. Several instances were recorded in the depositions of servants moving with their employers. In 1636, Elizabeth Mills deposed that she had worked in the service of Mr. Done for a year and three-quarters, but had lived in Ilsington in Devon for less than a year, having before lived in Wiltshire. She had therefore moved to Ilsington with her master.¹² In 1568, John Brooke revealed that Isott Riches came to Staverton from the neighbouring parish of Torbryan in Devon and offered her service to his wife, Katherine. The Brooke's then moved to Rockbeare, taking Isott with them; Isott had travelled around 38 kilometres from Staverton to Rockbeare. She was subsequently sent to Kilmington, a further 25 kilometres away, when she fell pregnant.¹³ In 1638, Jane Peeke, servant to Dorothy Gaye for twenty years, deposed that she had lived in Tavistock for just twelve years. Dorothy had previously lived in Dartmouth, indicating that Jane made the journey with her between Dartmouth and Tavistock.¹⁴ Good conditions of service, competitive wages, and good relations with the employing family may have encouraged young women to follow their employers when they relocated.

Distances

Early modern society could therefore be mobile over relatively large distances: Jane Peeke's journey between Dartmouth and Tavistock was around 45 kilometres. Distance between two locations could affect experiences of mobility: geographical shifts were less monumental over short distances where existing support networks were readily accessible. Wood encourages us to consider the regional similarities of neighbouring parishes that collectively formed

¹¹ P. J. P. Goldberg, "'For Better, For Worse': Marriage and Economic Opportunity for Women in Town and Country', in P. J. P. Goldberg (ed.), *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), p. 109.

¹² DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2050, William Harries v Audrey Rowell (1636).

¹³ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

¹⁴ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638).

'neighbourhoods'. These areas might be referred to by early modern society as their 'country', defined by similarities in 'migration patterns, kinship links, credit networks, gossip, folklore, commerce, marriage horizons, labour markets, administrative divisions, intercommoning arrangements and road and river networks'.¹⁵

Perceptions of distance were often context-specific. Even places within the same parish could be considered distant. In 1611, Margaret Hawlinge, a servant of Thomas and Elizabeth Mathewe of Cheltenham, deposed that Elizabeth was refused entry to her own house by her husband and

was constrained the same night to repayre to John Parkers house in Aston aforesaid her brother being aboute a quarter of a mile distant from her dwelling house to lodge there all night.¹⁶

A quarter of a mile (0.4 kilometres) is a short distance but Margaret's deposition suggests that she perceived it improper for Elizabeth to be forced to travel so far from her marital home to find shelter. She noted that it was 'very neare Midnight' when Elizabeth was locked outside the house, indicating that time of day influenced perceptions of how far people, particularly women, should travel at night. As Paul Griffiths shows in his work on London 'nightwalkers', there was some anxiety over women on the street after dusk concerning prostitution and vice; G.R. Quaife suggests this anxiety extended into the provinces.¹⁷ While the distance of 'quarter of a mile' was not noteworthy in other contexts, travel outside the neighbourhood after dusk was considered inappropriate.

Elsewhere, time of day similarly affected perceptions of distance. In a 1606 case against Henry Evans, the curate of Oldford in the parish of Bitton in Gloucestershire, witness John Chick deposed that

other some tymes the said henrye Evans and namely uppon New yeares daye last did not beginn to reade evening prayers att Oldland till after fower of the

¹⁵ Wood, *The Memory of the People*, p. 99.

¹⁶ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

¹⁷ Paul Griffiths, 'Meanings of Nightwalking in Early Modern England', *Seventeenth-Century Journal*, 13 (1998), 212-238, esp. 228-229; Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, pp. 46-52.

Clock in the afternoon which was exceeding late for those that dwelt a myle or more of to goe home to their houses after evening prayer was ended.¹⁸

As Emmison notes, clerical pluralism, resulting in his non-residence in the parish, generated much litigation against the clergy.¹⁹ Witnesses deposed that Henry served multiple benefices, which explained his lack of punctuality in reading evening prayers. John's deposition highlights a practical consideration in travelling around the parish. On New Year's Day after four o'clock in the evening, it would be growing dark, making it difficult for those residing in distant corners of the parish to navigate their way home safely. Distance was of practical importance to those living on the peripheries of a parish.

Habitual patterns of mobility around a parish might also affect perceptions of distance. The journeys people made for work, leisure and sociability may not have regularly taken them to all parts of the parish. In 1609, William Baker of Oldbury-on-Severn in Gloucestershire deposed that

he doth thincke that aboute twoe yeares agoe [...] Jane Web did dwell as housholde servant with the said Pearce but he cannot tell certenlye because he dwells twoe miles from pearce & seldome cometh thether [...] and by sight onlye hath knowne the said Pearce for these twentie yeares last but was never famylierlye acquainted with him nor never within his house.²⁰

William did not belong to the same neighbourhood as Thomas Pearce. The two men did not move in the same circles and the part of the parish in which Thomas lived was not an area that William was familiar with. A neighbourhood that was two miles away (3.2 kilometres) could be perceived as 'distant' within this context.

Specific contexts, then, governed the way in which individuals thought about distances. Within a local consciousness of distance, places just a couple of miles away could be considered distant if not within the neighbourhood or usual sphere in which a parishioner lived, worked and moved about their daily business. Service had its own dynamics and provided its own context within these perceptions of distance. Many women travelled considerable distances from their

¹⁸ GRO, GDR/95, Case 763, Office v Henry Evans (1606).

¹⁹ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts*, p. 185.

²⁰ GRO, GDR/109, Case 776, Office v Thomas Pearce (1609).

place of birth or last place of residence when entering a new contract of service. The mobility that service often required of young people fostered a unique perception of distance in which travel was perhaps expected.

Calculating distances

Calculating the distances that witnesses moved between parishes is imprecise. Some parishes covered relatively large geographical areas and the exact location of residence within the parish was rarely recorded. As figure 4.2 shows, the distance between two parishes varies depending on the specific locations within the parish from which measurements are taken. At their closest points, parishes A and B are just 0.7 kilometres apart, while at their furthest points, the distance is just over 9 kilometres. These maximum and minimum distances have been added together and divided by two to calculate the mean distance. Euclidian distances are measured here; actual journeys would undoubtedly exceed the distances calculated by 'straight line' measurements, as travellers rarely move in straight lines. Rather, early modern society navigated the paths, roads and natural features of the landscape in moving between their start point and destination. Parishes can therefore be used as a proxy for measuring the actual distances that individuals travelled.

Figure 4.2. Minimum and maximum distances between parishes.

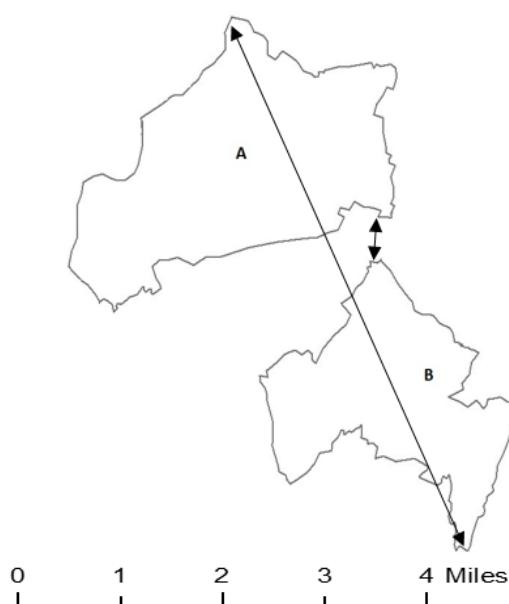


Table 4.6 shows the distances that Gloucestershire male and female witnesses travelled between their parish of birth and their parish of residence.²¹ Movement between two parishes may have been made in one journey or sometimes several. Inclusion of previous parishes of residence in a deposition indicates that more than one journey was made. In 1571, Alice Parker of Dursley in Gloucestershire testified in a tithe dispute. She had lived in the parish for ten years but was born in Tregare in Monmouthshire, 36 kilometres away. Her route between Tregare and Dursley was not direct; she had previously lived in at least one other parish (Tortworth in Gloucestershire) over the course of her lifetime.²² Alice's long journey across these two counties was not atypical. Table 4.6 shows that while almost 51 per cent of men and just over 48 per cent of women travelled no more than 15 kilometres from their parish of birth, all other witnesses travelled further. John Powe, the rector of Langridge in Somerset had travelled the furthest, moving a total distance of around 375 kilometres from Crosby in Cumberland, where he was born.²³ The woman who had travelled furthest was former servant Elizabeth

²¹ It has not been possible to include data from the diocese of Exeter church court; as noted, a typical Exeter court deposition recorded just the witness' parish of residence and therefore few distances travelled can be calculated.

²² GRO GDR/25, Case 1713, Edward Tovie v Thomas Paine (1571).

²³ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1058, Christopher Wise v Dalamore Gittis (1615).

Adkinson, who was recorded in a 1644 testamentary dispute. Elizabeth had travelled around 263 kilometres between Sandwich in Kent, where she was born, and Slimbridge in Gloucestershire, where she was employed by the deceased testator, Nicholas Richardson.²⁴

Table 4.6. Distance travelled by witnesses between parishes recorded in the church court depositions of the diocese of Gloucester, 1548-1649.

Distance (km)	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
> 0 and < 5	310	21.3	57	14.8	367	19.9
≥ 5 and < 10	268	18.4	71	18.4	339	18.4
≥ 10 and < 15	165	11.3	59	15.3	224	12.2
≥ 15 and < 25	209	14.3	60	15.5	269	14.6
≥ 25 and < 35	126	8.6	34	8.8	160	8.7
≥ 35 and < 50	98	6.7	33	8.6	131	7.1
≥ 50	282	19.3	72	18.7	354	19.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>1458</i>		<i>386</i>		<i>1844</i>	

Sources: As in Figure 1.2.

While journeys like those made by Elizabeth Adkinson were not commonplace, some female servants travelled considerable distances between their parish of birth and new opportunities in service. Table 4.7 shows the distribution of distances travelled by female servants. Across both courts, over half of the distances travelled by female servants between parishes were greater than or equal to 15 kilometres. Shorter distances were travelled by 43.5 per cent of female servants compared to 50.5 per cent of all Gloucestershire witnesses (shown in table 4.6). Edith Welsted, who appeared before the Gloucester court in 1602, lived in Rodborough in Gloucestershire at the time of her examination and had travelled just 3.3 kilometres from Woodchester, where she was born.²⁵

²⁴ GRO, GDR/205, Case 1426, Elizabeth Parke v Margaret White (1644).

²⁵ GRO, GDR/89, Case 359, Stephen Cooke v Margaret Dudbridge (1602).

Isoda Brayne worked in the service of David Jordan of Yate in Gloucestershire in 1604, and had travelled a maximum distance of 3.9 kilometres from the adjacent parish of Chipping Sodbury where she was born.²⁶ Margaret Allen's 1568 deposition recorded her experiences of service with William Cloterbooke of Eastington in Gloucestershire. She was born in Frampton-on-Severn, a maximum of 4.9 kilometres away.²⁷

Table 4.7. Distances travelled by female servants in the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Distance (km)	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
> 0 and < 5	9	13.0	1	7.1	10	12.1
≥ 5 and < 10	11	15.9	1	7.1	12	14.5
≥ 10 and < 15	12	17.4	2	14.3	14	16.9
≥ 15 and < 25	16	23.2	4	28.6	20	24.1
≥ 25 and < 35	10	14.5	2	14.3	12	14.5
≥ 35 and < 50	5	7.3	3	21.4	8	9.6
≥ 50	6	8.7	1	7.1	7	8.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>69</i>		<i>14</i>		<i>83</i>	

Note: While 69 female servant 'movers' were recorded in the Gloucester court depositions, just 14 were recorded in the Exeter court depositions. The Exeter 'movers' have been included as supplementary data.

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

²⁶ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jordan (1604).

²⁷ GRO, GDR/24, Case 2001, Margery Cloterbooke v John Batte (1568).

However, typical patterns of mobility were more akin to those of fourteenth-century Yorkshire. Goldberg shows that most migrants, many of whom were servants, 'appear to have moved no more than a day's walk, that is between twelve and twenty-four miles [approximately 9 and 38 kilometres]'.²⁸ Almost a quarter of female servants represented in table 4.7 made journeys of somewhere between 15 and 25 kilometres. These are not insubstantial distances. A 15-kilometre journey could take half a day or more to cover on foot. The data presented here therefore differs from Kussmaul's findings for the long eighteenth century; using settlement examinations, Kussmaul shows that most servants moved less than 15 kilometres.²⁹

In 1576, the deposition of Alice Spryte, a servant of George Turner of Cam, recorded that she had travelled from Gloucester to Cam, around 22 kilometres away. She was one of just three female servants who was born in Gloucester but left the city to find employment elsewhere. One possible explanation for her movement may be the series of bubonic plague outbreaks in the city almost every year between 1573 and 1580.³⁰ A series of depositions from 1578 record that Thomas Crodie, his wife and children were killed by plague in Gloucester; the testimonies, however, recorded that the family's neighbours, servants Anne Elie and Juliana Davis (alias Key) remained within the city.³¹

Clark suggests that in rural areas, younger servants might have remained in the same parish, accustoming themselves to living away from the parental home before seeking employment in a neighbouring or even distant parish.³² Depositional data, however, shows that the average age of female servants who remained in their parish of birth was just under 25 years. The age distribution of this group of 'stayers' was broad, demonstrating that while some younger

²⁸ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 282.

²⁹ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 57.

³⁰ Peter Clark, 'Early Modern Gloucester (to 1640): Population and Economic Development to 1640', in N. M. Herbert (ed.), *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4: the City of Gloucester* (London: Victoria County History, 1988), p. 74.

³¹ GRO, GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579).

³² Clark, 'Migration in England', 71.

servants found service in their parish of birth, others who remained were older and had perhaps worked in service for several years.

Table 4.8. Average age of female servants whose distance of travel is recorded in the church court depositions of the diocese of Gloucester, 1548-1649.

Distance (km)	N	Mean age (years)
No mobility	39	24.9
> 0 and < 5	9	24.3
≥ 5 and < 10	12	26.3
≥ 10 and < 15	14	22.2
≥ 15 and < 25	20	26.7
≥ 25 and < 35	12	27.5
≥ 35 and < 50	8	21.0
≥ 50	7	27.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	

Sources: As in Figure 1.2.

Only 7 of the 39 female servants for whom no mobility was recorded were under the age of 20. As table 4.8 illustrates, no clear link can be established between age and mobility for those who travelled no distance or short distances. Female servants who made journeys in excess of 50 kilometres had a comparatively high collective average age of 27, although this data subset is made up of the ages of just seven individuals. Younger servants may have found the prospect of uprooting and moving such considerable distances away from kinship networks somewhat more daunting than a more mature female servant. However, in 1612, 30-year-old Elizabeth Howard made a 185-kilometre journey from Stamford in Lincolnshire to Frampton Cotterell in Gloucestershire to work in the service of Sir Thomas and Lady Anne Seymore. Elizabeth was of an aristocratic background, and while her journey was perhaps still daunting in many ways, travel across

longer distances was probably a more familiar experience to a woman of Elizabeth's age and social standing.³³

Conclusions

Kusmaul's representation of mobility in the long eighteenth century as widespread but local is not reflected in the experiences of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century female servants.³⁴ Mobility was indeed widespread and few female servants remained in their parish of birth. However, servants typically travelled more than 15 kilometres in seeking employment. They could travel considerable distances: Elizabeth Mills' journey of at least 131.8 kilometres between Wiltshire and Ilington represents the extreme end of the spectrum.³⁵ Conversely, Jane Hollwell travelled just 4.8 kilometres between Whimble and neighbouring Talaton.³⁶ Most commonly, female servants migrated within a day's travel of their previous place of residence.

Age had little bearing upon distances travelled. Those who migrated from the most distant places may have been slightly older, although a larger body of evidence is required to substantiate this conclusion. Age, however, did determine the length of time that some female servants remained within a parish. Those who remained in service or returned to service later in life had frequently lived in the parish for longer, their patterns of mobility corresponding with those of married women of the same age rather than life-cycle servants. Younger women in service were typically more mobile than those of the same age who were not recorded in service. Employment opportunities in cities enticed a disproportionate number of women into service in Gloucester and Exeter, highlighting the need for further studies of the mobility between rural and urban areas outside London. While Goldberg's work supports the hypothesis that a higher proportion of female servants were employed in urban areas in the later middle ages and suggests that marriage and economic opportunities were better

³³ GRO, GDR/114, Case 886, Anne Seymore v Thomas Seymore (1612).

³⁴ Kusmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 56-57.

³⁵ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2050, William Harries v Audrey Rowell (1636).

³⁶ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1488, Suzanna Mychell v Harrie Langford (1582).

in towns than in rural parishes, this requires further investigation for urban areas of early modern England.³⁷

The patterns of mobility represented in the data have important implications. Women in service could travel considerable distances, leaving behind support networks of family, friends and kin. While collective identities within parishes might rely on long-term residence, migrant servants inserted themselves into parish life in many ways.³⁸ As Naomi Tadmor suggests, mobility across any distance involved some continuity of experience. When moving to a new parish and joining communities, people found themselves 'surrounded by new yet structurally similar sets of neighbours and neighbourly relationships'.³⁹

³⁷ Goldberg, "For Better, For Worse", pp. 108-125.

³⁸ See Chapters 6.1. and 6.2.

³⁹ Naomi Tadmor, 'Friends and Neighbours in Early Modern England: Biblical Translations and Social Norms', in L Gowing, M Hunter, and M Rubin (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* (Basingstoke: New York, 2005), pp. 95-96.

4.2. Spaces

Those who remained in the same parish for their whole lives experienced the world beyond the parish boundaries, but their main interactions with space were on a local level. Travel *within* the parish was widespread, with both men and women interacting with spaces outside the home for work, leisure and worship. Economic, social and religious factors could also temporarily take them outside the parish.

Since the 'spatial turn', historians have conceptualised space not as a passive backdrop against which social interactions and everyday life took place, but as a social construct that shapes identity, societal development and human behaviour and experience. As Santa Arios stresses, space is itself a historical concept and is not an 'inert, frozen set of relations devoid of social origins and social implications'.⁴⁰ Rather, space is a fluid concept in which regional, personal and circumstantial factors shape the meanings that individuals attach to particular places and locations.⁴¹

The categorisation of space has therefore faced much criticism, with scholarship challenging explanations of human behaviours and interactions that are reliant on rigid frameworks and categorise space in binary terms. The 'separate spheres' paradigm, which separates out public and private space along gendered lines, has received considerable attention. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall are among its biggest proponents: their argument for the importance of separate spheres in understanding eighteenth- and nineteenth-century middle class lived experiences is rooted in 'the language of public and private spaces, a language which comes from the tracts, poems, letters and diaries of [...] men and women'.⁴²

Part of the reason why the separate spheres framework has been so influential in scholarship of past societies is due to the dominance of this model in early

⁴⁰ Santa Arios, 'Rethinking Space: An Outsider's View of the Spatial Turn', *GeoJournal*, 75 (2010), 31.

⁴¹ Shirley Ardener, 'Ground Rules and Social Maps for Women', in Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg, 1983), pp. 11, 34; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 122, 178; cited in Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space*, p. 6.

⁴² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780—1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), p. xv.

modern literature itself. Conduct or advice books prescribed space according to gender. Writing in 1568, Edmund Tilney advised that 'the office of the husbande is to go abroad in matters of profite, of the wife, to tarry at home, and see all be well there'.⁴³ In 1615, Gervase Markham added that

the perfect husbandman [...] is the father and master of the family and whose office and employments are ever for the most part abroad, or removed from the house, as in the field or yard; [...] the office of our English housewife, who is the mother and mistress of the family, and hath her most general employments within the house.⁴⁴

In recent years, the dichotomous separate spheres paradigm has become less accepted as a useful way of categorising gender and space. Amanda Vickery emphatically demonstrates its chronological inconsistencies in accounting for women's economic, social and institutional activities.⁴⁵ Laura Gowing's study of liminal space shows that public and private frequently collided, while others including Griffiths and Amanda Flather consider the ways in which spaces changed meaning and use over the course of a day.⁴⁶ Kümin suggests that these challenges should not be made at the expense of undermining all established spatial demarcations. As today, early modern society was governed by accepted spatial rules and boundaries and while they could be transcended and circumvented in many ways, this is not to diminish their value altogether.⁴⁷

Flather provides a new framework for understanding use of space in early modern England that recognises this without reducing spaces to fixed or prescriptive uses. She concludes that 'space had a range of gendered meanings that were fluid rather than fixed'. Space could change in function depending on factors such as the time of day and season. Flather notes that men in early modern Essex typically remained in the fields until mid-November, retreating to the house for just a couple of weeks to perform non-agricultural tasks before returning again

⁴³ Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship*, p. 120.

⁴⁴ Markham, *The English Housewife*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Vickery, 'Historiographical Review: Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', 383-414.

⁴⁶ Laura Gowing, "'The Freedom of the Streets': Women and Social Space, 1560-1640", in Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London c.1500-c.1750* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 134-137; Griffiths, 'Meanings of Nightwalking', 213-238; Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 81-82.

⁴⁷ Kümin, 'Afterword', p. 230.

to the fields.⁴⁸ Martine Segalen's work on nineteenth-century rural French peasantry indicates an opposite pattern, with men spending more time in the household during winter months.⁴⁹ Prescriptive notions of gender and space represented in early modern literature do not map neatly onto lived experiences.

Scholarship has however made little headway in rescuing female servants from the separate spheres framework. It is often assumed or implied that their work was domestic and therefore confined to the home. The title of Roger Richardson's recent work, *Household Servants in Early Modern England*, highlights the preoccupation with studying female servants within domestic space.⁵⁰ Tim Meldrum's study of servants in post-Restoration London discusses problems with the separate spheres framework but largely in relation to the spheres of influence that masters and mistresses had over the governance of their servants.⁵¹ While he explores the roles that female servants might play in local networks and in mediating the family or household reputation, he provides little evidence of the spaces that female servants occupied outside the household.⁵²

This focus upon servants within the household is partly the result of the artificial gendered division of servants into categories that purportedly relate to their work: male 'servants in husbandry' and female 'domestic servants'. As this thesis shows, this latter category does not account for the broad range of work tasks performed by female servants, particularly in rural households. As service is credited as an institution that promoted mobility, it is surprising that so many studies of female service situate these women almost exclusively within domestic space. While Marjorie McIntosh acknowledges that servants in Havering in Essex were a mobile group, noting that 'even within a period of employment many young people did some travelling, going about on errands for their master or

⁴⁸ Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 16, 81-82, 178.

⁴⁹ Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the Peasant Family: Rural France in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 109.

⁵⁰ Richardson, *Household Servants*.

⁵¹ Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 39-41.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

loaned to another employer for a day or week', a spatial history of service has yet to be written.⁵³

Space in the church court depositions

By analysing descriptions recorded in church court depositions of the range of places that female servants occupied, spatial patterns of service can be constructed. The church, street and bed chamber were amongst a catalogue of spaces given as points of reference by deponents when asked to explain how they knew that a particular alleged offence, occasion or activity had taken place. In 1624, husbandman Thomas Griffin of Sandford near Cheltenham deposed that he heard Mary Higges call servant Mary Pie 'a welche whore' while the two women were '*standing in a lane* in Sandford'.⁵⁴ The open street or lane was the archetypal site in which defamation disputes played out. To successfully file a defamation suit, plaintiffs had to prove not only that they were of good character before the defamatory words were spoken, but also that the words were spoken in public: the word 'publicly' is used frequently in defamation suit depositions to describe the context and space in which the plaintiff had been defamed.⁵⁵ The street as a communal place within a parish was therefore a typical site in which people witnessed heated exchanges.⁵⁶

Particular places are therefore overrepresented in certain types of disputes. In testamentary cases, individuals were more frequently recorded in bed chambers and parlours as witnesses gathered around the sick bed to hear the dying testator make his or her will. In tithe disputes, a high number of people recorded setting out, paying and collecting tithes raises the number of instances in which individuals were described in both fields (setting out tithes) and other households (paying and collecting tithes). Despite these particular biases, many places in which individuals were described were recorded within a narrative of events in which location seems relatively inconsequential to the dispute. In 1563, William

⁵³ McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 61.

⁵⁴ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1126, Mary Pye v Mary Higges (1624). Italics my own.

⁵⁵ See Anne Tarver, *Church Court Records: an Introduction for Family and Local Historians* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1995), p. 113; Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space*, p. 134.

⁵⁶ This is not to imply that the street was the only place in which words like 'whore' and 'rogue' were exchanged, only that the street was more likely to feature in the defamation suits brought before church courts.

Hare of Yarcombe in Devon deposed that he witnessed the making of a marriage contract between Richard Smythe and servant Katherine Haydon 'at the barnes dore' of Katherine's master, John Matthews.⁵⁷ Informal contracts of matrimony were made in many different spaces; 'at the barn door' was neither typical nor atypical.

Classification of space

Depositions from the two church courts record 446 instances in which the location of a female servant was described. Table 4.9 shows how different places have been loosely classified according to whether they were inside or outside the household. 'Household' is used here to refer to the domestic space in which the female servant was employed at the time of her service. Households in which friends, neighbours, former employers, parents and other kin resided have been classified as 'outside the household' in order to make a social and spatial distinction between a female servant spending time in her employer's home and the homes of others. Beyond this restriction, 'household' here is broadly conceived. The boundaries of the household extended beyond the physical living space of the home, encompassing land, outbuildings, bake rooms, brew houses, wool houses and shops that were clearly identified as part of the house or within the perimeter of the grounds owned or occupied by the head of the household. The category 'outside the household' therefore captures all other physical places in which female servants were recorded within the depositions.

⁵⁷ DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 484, Katherine Haydon v Richard Smythe (1563).

Table 4.9. Classification of types of spaces recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Category of space	Type of space
Household	Antechamber, bake room, brew house, buttery, by the fire, cellar, chamber, closet, court, cow house, dairy house, doorway, entry, garden, gate, hall, inn, kitchen, loft, ox house, parlour, shop, stable, well, wool house, yard
Outside the household	Alehouse, at sea, barn, brook, church, churchyard, court, dancing place, fair, farm, field, forest, funeral, groves, highway, inn, market, meadow, mill, orchard, other household, outside the parish, parent's house, pound, register's office, river, road, shop, street, water, woods

Household

Table 4.1 shows that across both sets of depositions, just over half of the spaces in which female servants were recorded were within the household. The household was a hive of activity in early modern England. Depositions frequently locate men and women alike within their own homes. In making their wills, men and women on their deathbeds requested servants to fetch neighbours and friends as witnesses, and these individuals could often be found in their own homes. In 1584, Edward Carter of Churchdown in Gloucestershire deposed that

one William, a servant of Foulk More [...] came to this deponents home to his house & desired him to come to Foulk More his maister saying he was verie sick.⁵⁸

Work was carried out within the household by both genders. In January 1575, cooper Edward Rowland of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire deposed that he was 'workeing in his shoppe in his howse', while in 1577, weaver Robert Leddington of Bromsberrow in the same county told the court that he was 'at work in his owne

⁵⁸ GRO, GDR/57, Case 269, Testament of Fulk More (1584).

house' in the previous harvest.⁵⁹ Some male occupations were well-suited to a household work environment and much male work took place in shops and workshops that adjoined the house. As Flather shows, the multi-functionality of rooms meant that 'men, women, servants and children of both sexes appeared regularly in all the rooms and service areas of the house throughout the period'.⁶⁰

Table 4.10. Spaces in which female servants were recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Type of space	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter	
	N	%	N	%
Household	139	53.3	103	55.7
Non-household	122	46.7	82	44.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>261</i>		<i>185</i>	

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Neighbours, visitors, friends and kin also passed through the household and its rooms. The privacy of a household and its members from the wider community was often difficult to police. A 1608 defamation case in the parish of St Nicholas in Gloucester demonstrates that disputes instigated in the street might not be prohibited from moving into the 'private' space of the household. In the street outside William Webb's house, Edith Oram allegedly called Joan Dudson, William's servant, a 'whoare & arrante whoare'. Testifying on behalf of his servant, William deposed that

neare this examinate dwelling house in the parishe of St Nicholas within the Cytie of Gloucester and fallinge into hot angrie termes against the saide Joane Dudson & thereupon the said Joane Dudson comeinge into this examinate house from the said Edith Oram, the said Edith Oram followed and came after her into the entrie of this examinate house which is neare to this examinate hall [he] being then asate by the fier in the said hall accompanied with Alice Web this examinate wife.

⁵⁹ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1223, Alice Davys v Elizabeth Bundy (1575); GRO, GDR/65, Case 458, Sibil Stone v Anne Webb (1577).

⁶⁰ Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 43.

Once inside the house, Edith told Joan that

if her maister [...] did knowe as muche by her the said Dudson as she the said
Edith Oram did knowe he wolde never keepe her one deye in his house.

Households were not impermeable; not only could William hear Joan and Edith's disagreement outside his house, Edith also freely entered the home, perhaps specifically to defame Joan in front of her employers or simply to continue the quarrel. Joan's retreat into the house represents an attempt to shield herself from the words of her defamer. By entering her employers' home, Joan perceived a difference between the space outside and the space inside the house. While Flather and Meldrum have both highlighted the limited access female servants had to privacy, Joan's attempt to seek solace in her employers' household emphasises the way in which this was theoretically perceived as a private space.⁶¹ Joan's retirement from the argument in the street by entering their house indicates that she did not expect the quarrel to follow her inside the home of her employers. The narratives of William and Alice Webb's depositions suggest they supported Joan's suit and did not punish or blame her for bringing the disagreement inside. Joan's perception of their household as a sanctuary from the outside community was therefore validated by her employers.⁶²

Female service is frequently characterised by scholarship that focuses on narratives of conflict and abuse experienced within the household. Yet for many servants, the household was a safe and familiar space. The idiosyncrasies of a house could become etched on the memories of those who spent considerable time in the house or worked in the service of a particular employer for a long period. Elizabeth Wotton of St Thomas in Exeter deposed in 1578 that she had lived for ten years as a servant in the house of Mr Castle five years before her examination. Testifying against Blanche Apworthie, who was suspected of incontinent behaviour, Elizabeth cast no judgment on whether she believed the suspicions to be true; rather, she commented on

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 42, 48, 72; Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 71-83.

⁶² GRO, GDR/100, Case 668, *Joan Dudson v Edith Oram* (1608).

a hole in the dawbed wall of the buttrye aboute a fote from the grounde and then one John Kelly a servant in the sayd house did stoppe the sayd hole but whither anie hole were in the same place since the sayd tyme of her being there as a servant which was five yeres agoe she cannot tell.⁶³

The reasons why Elizabeth commented on the hole are not recorded but it is likely that other witnesses whose depositions have not survived deposed that they had witnessed Blanche's incontinent behaviour through this alleged hole in the buttry wall.⁶⁴ However, the mental map that Elizabeth retained of her former employer's house, noting the precise location - a foot from the ground - where the hole was found is important. The home of a former employer came to be known intimately by female servants and its particular spaces associated with memories.

The familiar trope or conventional motif in depositional narratives of holes and chinks in walls and doors that provided windows into household spaces in early modern England has been the subject of much scholarship.⁶⁵ In 1579, William Conneby, a tanner from Gloucester, deposed that he heard Margaret Crodie, a victim of the plague, make her will. Not wanting to enter the house for fear of contracting the disease, William described how he 'stoode in the backside under the windowe, where at a hole that is in the wall he might putt his hedd into the howse'.⁶⁶ Walls were often thin: in 1610, witnesses deposed against Michael Paine and Joan Anslett who were believed to have been living incontinently together for at least a year. Margaret Wood of Gloucester deposed of her conviction that the couple were engaged in adultery, describing how being in 'a rome next room adjoining', she

did see and behold the said clay wall shakeinge and heard the said Michael Paine blowe and puff as yf he had bin out of breath.⁶⁷

⁶³ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1318, Raymond Wadland v Blanche Apworthie (1578).

⁶⁴ A buttry was a small room used for storage of victuals and cooking pots. See Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean, and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 131.

⁶⁵ See Dolan, *True Relations*, pp. 146-148; Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 189-192; Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 244-245; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ GRO, GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579).

⁶⁷ GRO, GDR/109, Case 820, Henry Jones v Michael Paine and Joan Anslett (1610).

Whether witnesses invented holes and cracks as narrative embellishment is irrelevant here. Household construction was imperfect and houses were porous and penetrable. The household was not an isolated, closed-off or private entity; as Gowing notes, architecturally ‘the early modern household was not built for privacy’.⁶⁸ Glazed windows were not commonplace in early modern England and only became a feature of domestic architecture in towns in the sixteenth century.⁶⁹ Open window frames therefore allowed easy viewing and interaction with the house and its members from the outside. Nor was privacy necessarily expected. Within this context, when entering service, female servants did not just join a household; they entered a space that was relatively open to members of the community, who entered and intruded frequently.

Household spaces

Considering the early modern household in this way raises the need for a new interpretation of the use of and interaction with spaces found within it. Table 4.11 shows that female servants accessed virtually all types of space within the household. Room functions might be divided into the following categories: sleep; eat; work; and sociability. Yet few rooms were used in just one way in early modern England and the label that a room was given did not necessarily match the activities that took place within it.

⁶⁸ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 190.

⁶⁹ John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 66.

Table 4.11. Household spaces in which female servants were described in within the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Household spaces	N	%
Chamber	50	33.6
Hall	17	11.4
Kitchen	17	11.4
Doorway/Entry/Gate	15	10.1
Parlour	14	9.4
Animal house	6	4.0
Court or yard	4	2.7
Garden	4	2.7
Inn	4	2.7
Shop	3	2.0
Buttery	2	1.3
Cellar	2	1.3
Closet	2	1.3
Loft	2	1.3
Stairs	2	1.3
Antechamber	1	0.7
Bake room	1	0.7
Brew house	1	0.7
Well	1	0.7
Woolhouse	1	0.7
Unspecified	93	-
<i>Total excl. unspecified spaces</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Total incl. unspecified spaces</i>	<i>242</i>	<i>-</i>

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Sex, sociability and bedfellows

A third of household spaces in which female servants were recorded were rooms described as chambers. In their study of early modern probate inventories, Mark Overton et al. show that the term 'chamber' was frequently used synonymously with the word 'room' to indicate a general-purpose space used for cooking, sleeping, eating and work.⁷⁰ Flather notes that supper might be consumed in almost any room of the house, including the bedchamber.⁷¹ Depending on the size and prosperity of a household, chambers might be used exclusively as bedrooms and chambers for sleeping increasingly came to be located upstairs over the course of the seventeenth century.⁷² Where ownership of a chamber was described, such as 'Lady Roberta's chamber' or '*her* chamber', the room was usually intended as a sleeping space for that individual, although this did not necessarily bar other people's entry from the space. More commonly in households of more modest means, the function of a chamber could change over the course of a day. Sleeping was nonetheless an almost universal function of the chamber, with beds found in virtually all chambers referred to by Overton et al. in their sample of probate inventories.⁷³

Scholarship on female servants typically presents the chamber as a sexually charged space, in which these women either risked sexual abuse from predatory masters and other men in the household, or became voluntarily entangled in adulterous or premarital sex. Ingram suggests that the degree of freedom enjoyed by servants led to high levels of sexual promiscuity amongst them that is only partially captured in church court records; illicit sex with masters and other men 'in halls, *bedchambers*, barns and cowhouses was only very partially open to the scrutiny of neighbours and churchwardens'.⁷⁴ Yet while the bedchamber was frequently (although not always) characterised within depositions as a site of

⁷⁰ Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 133, 126.

⁷¹ Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 62.

⁷² Matthew Johnson, *English Houses, 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2010), p. 150; Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 133.

⁷³ Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 133.

⁷⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 259. Italics my own.

illicit sex, the stereotype of the sexually incontinent or vulnerable female servant does not correspond with the majority of those depicted within the records.

To turn first to the 'sexualised' chamber itself: those who peered through cracks in doors and walls did so to discover and expose adultery and illicit sex that took place most frequently in bedchambers. Around 41 per cent of cases in which female servants were recorded in chambers related to suspected sexual misconduct. Although the servant was sometimes the target of this suspicion, at other times, she was the suspicious party. In 1582, servant Mary Hutchings of Alverdiscott in Devon deposed that William Pugglie, a visitor to her master's house told her

that yf she would goe into the Chamber over the porch she should finde the sayd [William] honacott and Joane Hatche [Mary's fellow servant] alone together [...] the sayd Puggslye affirming earnestlye That the sayd honacot and hatch were there and that he had heard a bed in that chamber oftentymes to Crack.

The degree of privacy that a chamber on an upper level of the house could offer was often betrayed by the architecture of the house itself. Noises travelled through thin wall and floors allowing members of the household to monitor these spaces carefully. Female servants themselves frequently policed chambers; upon William's report, Mary deposed that she

went up into the same chamber and opened the dore being closed to and there in deed found them both alone together on the bed but this deponent did not see them committing anie ill acte together.⁷⁵

Chambers were often open spaces within a household; suspicion justified entry into a room and rooms were expected to be accessible to members of the household. Locked doors were treated as suspicious. In 1625, servant Joanne Jeffries of Highleadon in Gloucestershire outlined in her examination an affair between Susan Fourd and her former master Richard Greene, deposing that she

⁷⁵ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1486, Joanne Hatch v William Hanacott (1582).

did oftentymes fynde them together in a chamber, the doore lock to them & there continued sometimes three or fower houres together in the night tyme in the darke at unreasonable tymes.⁷⁶

The locked door therefore added further weight to Joanne's suspicions.

While architectural historians suggest that middle- and upper-class households of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England developed servant quarters in a bid to separate the family from those in service, most early modern houses imposed no such division.⁷⁷ Depositional evidence suggests that there were no restrictions placed on a female servant's entry to particular spaces; even the employer's bedchamber was accessed at all times of the day. Only in the aristocratic household of Lord and Lady Champernowne of Dartington Hall in Devon were servants admonished for entering their employer's chambers. In 1582, Mary Cornishe entered Lady Roberta's chamber to enquire whether 'she would have her night stuffe washed' and deposed that later

the sayd Ladie was angrie with this deponent for coming up there while Melhuish was there, and asked of her whether she could not putt her night clothes to washing but she must comme to knowe of her.

This is not indicative of increased segregation between servants and employers of high social status; rather, Lady Roberta's reprimand was likely to have been a product of her fear of being caught in adultery with Christopher Melhuishe.⁷⁸

In more modest homes, sharing a chamber and sometimes even a bed with one's employer was relatively commonplace, extending the communal nature of the early modern household into its most intimate and private spaces. Servant Margaret Hawlinge probably shared a room with her employers Thomas and Elizabeth Mathewe, deposing in 1611 that Elizabeth cried out for her as her husband attempted to 'stifle her to death'.⁷⁹ Servant Agnes Durrum of Silverton

⁷⁶ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1156, Dorothy Greene v Richard Greene (1625).

⁷⁷ See Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: a Social and Architectural History* (Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 136-138. Historians have since debated whether the fabric of the house provides conclusive evidence of an increased demand for privacy. See Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 78; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 25-48.

⁷⁸ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1495, Gawenus Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne (1582).

⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

in Devon shared a bed with her widowed employer Joanne Callowe, deposing in 1596 that

John hunny did often tymes resort unto the sayd Joanne Callowes chamber and did Lye with her there manie tymes, most part of all the night this deponent then Lyeing in the same bed.

Agnes monitored the couple's behaviour, deposing that she 'misliking with that behaviour of his did on a tymme fynde faulte with him [John Hunny] for it'. Rather than being ejected from service for meddling in her mistress' affairs, Agnes' deposition reveals her own concerns for her reputation. She deposed that 'she was troubled three or iiiii [four] tymes (when this deponent was there) aboute the sayde huny'. To deal with the adulterous couple's behaviour, Agnes explained that 'when he came to the bed [she] would not suffer him to goe into the bed by her but made him goe an other waye', thus staking a claim of her own to the shared space.⁸⁰

Sasha Handley notes that 'the sleeping environments of servants were heavily influenced by the wishes of their employers and by considerations of practical economy'.⁸¹ Given lack of space and beds in many early modern households, bed sharing was relatively commonplace and the absence of one's bedfellow was not unnoticed. Flather describes how beds were often overcrowded and might be shared by younger men and women in service. She notes that age and status were more important in bed sharing practices than gender.⁸² While bed sharing was predominantly a practical arrangement, it allowed the sexual activity of female servants to be checked at night, while also allowing them to monitor and regulate the behaviour of their bedfellows. In 1575, Thomas Turner of Bulley in Gloucestershire shared a house with his brother, John. Both men employed their own servants; Elizabeth Addys was John Turner's servant, while his brother Thomas employed Margaret Robert. Margaret deposed that while sitting by the fire one evening, she overheard John ask his servant 'whether she would come to bed th[a]t night', meaning his own bed. That evening, after Margaret and

⁸⁰ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1830, Thomas Edbury v Joanne Callowe (1596).

⁸¹ Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 119.

⁸² Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 71.

Elizabeth had retired to their shared bed, Elizabeth rose, thinking Margaret to be asleep. In light of the earlier conversation she had overheard, Margaret

rose shortly after her & lighted a chandelle & went to the chamber of the said John Turner where she found her the said Elizabeth Addys in bed with him the said Turner her Mr & demanding her the said Addys what she did there she answered her not & he made as though he had been sleeping.

Margaret's actions were bold; by following Elizabeth and actively policing the chamber, she risked being sent from her master's service for challenging his brother's suspicious behaviour. The next morning, after recounting the story to her fellow servants, Margaret was subsequently beaten and chided by John Turner.⁸³ Yet his ill-treatment of her was again indicative of his fears that his secret affair with Elizabeth might be unveiled, rather than his anger that Margaret entered his chamber.

The appropriateness of company from outside the household in a bedchamber was both context and gender specific. In 1608 in Down Ampney in Gloucestershire, John Blunt accused Thomas Kinge of being 'verie bolde to open his chamber dore and goe to bed to my mayd [Elizabeth Clerke] she beinge led in her smocke'. However, witnesses contested this version of events, deposing that Thomas had merely lain upon the bed while Elizabeth got ready to go to a merry-making. Eleanor Blunt, who was 26 years old at the time of her examination, deposed that

there was a merrie meetinge att the house of one Elizabeth Harris [...] & on the sundaye night aforesaide [...] one or two maydens of downe Ampney came to the said John Bluntes house this examine & the said Elizabeth Clerke being both abed & came upp into the Roome where this examine was & desired her to come to them to make merrye att the foresaid Elizabeth Harris house soe this examine arose & came out of her chamber & went into the chamber wherein the said Elizabeth Clerke was & when this examine came in she found the said Elizabeth arose out of her bed haveinge her weareinge clothes on her & puttinge on her apron haveinge a Candle burneing lighte in the said chamber & Thomas Kinge the plaintiff in this suite walkeinge in the chamber by her & whilest she putt her apron on her did lye on the bed in the said chamber she beinge not neare him And when

⁸³ GRO, GDR/32 and GDR/45, Case 14, Elizabeth Addys v John Edwardes (1576).

the said Elizabeth had made her self readie & putt on her cloathes the said Thomas Kinge, Elizabeth Clerke & this examinee did all three goe together to the house of the said Elizabeth Harris & there amongst divers other[s] were merrye.

Eleanor's deposition stressed that Elizabeth was not in the bed and was in her 'weareinge clothes' while she shared the space with Thomas Kinge, thus legitimising the appropriateness of his presence there. Despite his absence, John Blunt's policy on access to the bedchamber from those outside the household operated along gendered lines. The one or two women who invited Eleanor and Elizabeth to the 'merrie meetinge' entered their rooms with no later objections by John; however, Thomas Kinge's presence in the bedchamber led to a defamation suit.⁸⁴

For each female servant in the above examples whose sexual deviance is described as taking place in a chamber, another is recorded in the same space policing or admonishing such behaviour, demonstrating the limitations and biases of the historiography. Of the total number of references to female servants in chambers, just 17.3 per cent were implicated in sexually deviant behaviour in these spaces. The chamber was not always a sexualised environment. As Gowing notes, 'when beds feature in legal proceedings, they are [...] the place where a will was made, a suspicious intimacy noted, a secret child delivered, or a theft concealed'.⁸⁵ The work of some female servants also took them into chambers. In 1604, employers Guy and Jane Dobbins of Newent in Gloucestershire asked their servant Catherine Hall to go to a bedchamber in the house to make the bed.⁸⁶ Elsewhere, the care of a sick employer or another household member by a female servant was often located in a chamber. In 1606, servant Agnes Chambers of Fifield in Gloucestershire was recorded as a witness in a testamentary dispute concerning the will of her former employer John Greene. She deposed that 'she attended as servant uppon the testator from the tyme that he made his will until his deathe', noting that he was 'then layen sicke

⁸⁴ GRO, GDR/100, Case 650, Thomas Kinge v John Blunte (1608).

⁸⁵ Laura Gowing, 'The Twinkling of a Bedstaff', *Home Cultures*, 11 (2014), 277.

⁸⁶ GRO, GDR/89 and GDR/95, Case 419, Anne Harris v Frances Wylson (1604).

in his bedd of a lame legge in an upper chamber of his house in Fifield'.⁸⁷ As expected, chambers also functioned as practical sleeping spaces.

Bed sharing could be a sociable rather than sexual experience. Handley argues that 'bedfellowship could be both functional and desirable, especially in the context of sociability where it presented unique opportunities to deepen friendships'.⁸⁸ Even when female servants were asked of their suspicions concerning illicit sex while sharing a bed, their depositions also invoked a sense of camaraderie and closeness with their bedfellows. Katherine Ball of Chudleigh in Devon deposed in 1564 that 'John hawkyns and Margerye grove and this deponent and ii [two] other mayden servantes dyd lye to gather yn one bed and that there was no dishonestye donne'. Margery, who had been called 'John hawkyns hower [whore]' by a neighbour had not, according to Katherine, behaved dishonestly in the bed with John.⁸⁹ Katherine's support of her fellow servant in the defamation case indicates the type of friendships that might flourish within the house through bedfellowship.

Living, working and recreational spaces

The chamber was only one site of household sociability. Table 4.11 shows the spatial importance of the hall, parlour and kitchen in female servant patterns of movement around the house. Spending time in these rooms placed female servants at the heart of family life. The hall was the traditional centre of the home, functioning as the main living area for the family throughout the medieval period up until the later seventeenth century.⁹⁰ Matthew Johnson suggests that the hall functioned as a community space in which status and hierarchy were communicated; he notes that even in the humblest of households

the smallest hearth was placed in a hall which [...] was still open to the roof, still had upper and lower ends, and around which different family members sat in a hierarchical pattern'.⁹¹

⁸⁷ GRO, GDR/95, Case 773, John Greene v Emma Haynes and Edmund Greene (1606).

⁸⁸ Handley, *Sleep*, p. 177.

⁸⁹ DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 561, Margery Grove v Edward Wyndesore (1564).

⁹⁰ Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, pp. 127, 129.

⁹¹ Johnson, *English Houses, 1300-1800*, p. 73.

The halls of many sixteenth-century houses contained an open hearth with no chimney in the centre of the room. It was only gradually during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the open hearth as a feature of domestic architecture was replaced by the chimney fireplace.⁹²

Overton et al. suggest that in smaller houses, a range of activities took place in the hall including work, cooking and eating.⁹³ Several examples of female servants spinning in the halls of their employers' homes were recorded in the depositions. In a 1635 defamation dispute between Mary Flood and Dorothy Tucker, widow Katherine Mogridge of Bramford Speke in Devon deposed that her two servants, Mary Smithe and Mary Bond 'were then both there present at spynning' in the hall of her house when Dorothy allegedly accused Mary of premarital sex.⁹⁴ The hall functioned as a work space but was also where neighbours and others were received into the house.

News and gossip were exchanged in the hall; deponent Richarda Burden, a servant of John Burden of Kenton in Devon, deposed in 1617 that she witnessed Ann Scadlake speak defamatory words of Robert Pridham and Mary Quicke, claiming that 'the newes was full in the Towne that a mare was skinned downe in Mr hobbs his broome Close'. According to Richarda, the reported adulterous behaviour between Robert and Mary in the broom close of one Mr Hobbes was couched in this metaphor. Here, 'public' collided with 'private': the public fame or 'newes [of] the Towne' was brought directly into John Burden's hall by Ann Scadlake.⁹⁵ By extension, the home should not be considered an exclusively 'private' space: gossip and rumours were frequently exchanged in the domestic setting.

The home could therefore be a sociable space. Not only did households receive uninvited neighbours and visitors, organised entertainment was hosted in various homes across early modern communities.⁹⁶ While the alehouse has been lauded

⁹² Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*, p. 8.

⁹³ Overton et al., *Production and Consumption*, p. 130.

⁹⁴ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker (1635).

⁹⁵ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2286, Robert Pridham v Combe and Ann Scadlake (1617).

⁹⁶ For example, see GRO, GDR/122, Case 1059, Robert Payne v Elizabeth Gawen (1615); GRO, GDR/100, Case 650, Thomas Kinge v John Blunte (1608).

as a key site of sociability, depositional evidence shows that much informal socialising and drinking occurred within kitchens. Alice Spryte, the servant of George Turner of Cam in Gloucestershire was in the kitchen of her master's house in December 1575 when five men who were 'drinkeinge in the kitchin' attacked the vicar, calling him 'knave priest' and striking him with a dagger 'soe th[a]t the bloud came out'.⁹⁷ Alice did not appear to have joined in the revelries but was just passing through the kitchen: her presence was not recorded in the depositions of other witnesses. The company of so many men may have been a barrier to her joining in. Other servants were nonetheless described as engaging in kitchen sociability. Gentleman John Arundell of St Veryan in Cornwall deposed in 1584 that his nephew

Richard Rawe was at the sayd daniells house in a kitchen all the night longe with the sayd Joane daniell, an other mayde of the house, one dorothey being in company with them.⁹⁸

The working space of the kitchen could become a place of sociability during the evenings, particularly for younger members of the household.

Employers, however, might also engage in social drinking or celebrations with their servants. Elizabeth Adkinson, who had served Nicholas Richardson, the vicar of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire until his death in 1643, deposed that in his sickness he named his sister his sole legatee and then

tooke a Cupp or glasse of Beere and Dronke unto the said witnesses (three of them being then his household servants and soe the fourth had buire) and said as followeth or to the same effect, here I drink to you, and I pray god to blesse you all.⁹⁹

The act of social drinking was restricted, perhaps due to the servants' ages or simply their occupation: Elizabeth and her fellow servants were denied beer by their master. A division was therefore perceived by Nicholas between his contractual employees and the friend or neighbour who joined his celebration of his will-making.

⁹⁷ GRO, GDR/19, Case 19, Richard Smythe v Richard Woodward (1576).

⁹⁸ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1625, John Trevanian v Joanne Daniell (1584).

⁹⁹ GRO, GDR/205, Case 1926, Elizabeth Parke v Margaret White (1644).

Fundamentally, the kitchen was also associated with cooking and eating. Catherine Baker deposed that she witnessed Margery Cloterbooke and John Batte's affection towards one another 'sittinge by the fyer in her [Margery's] kytchin' while Catherine 'was scalding poultrye by them' in the same room.¹⁰⁰ Few examples of servant dining experiences were recorded within the depositions. In most houses, servants appear to have eaten with the family. In 1611, servant Emmett Jeynes deposed that she was eating a simple supper of bread, butter and cheese with her mistress Elizabeth Mathewe when her master locked away the food in cruelty towards his wife.¹⁰¹ In 1585, Juliana Wathen, a servant of Longey in Gloucestershire described a visit to her uncle's house where her sister Margaret was a servant. She noted that, 'Richard & Margaret & this deponent with a maidservant ther being together [were] at the table eating a possett'.¹⁰² Although this group of servants ate together in this case, no explicit segregation between family dining and servant dining was recorded elsewhere in the depositions.

Liminal spaces

Just over 10 per cent of spaces in which female servants were recorded in were doorways, entries or gates to the household. Typically sites of observation of events unfolding on the street or in the neighbourhood, these liminal spaces on the boundary of a household were, as Gowing shows, 'public' spaces, in which female servants were engaged in community life.¹⁰³ The street was presented as a frequent site of tension in church court depositions. As people heard situations unfolding in the street, the boundary between 'private' and 'public' space was, as Shirley Ardener argues, 'measured primarily by earshot'.¹⁰⁴ From the vantage point of the doorway or gate, female servants accessed exchanges between community members in the street and the family in the household. In her 1576 deposition, Katherine Frynde deposed that she was standing at the door of her master's house in Crediton in Devon when she overheard defamatory

¹⁰⁰ GRO, GDR/24, Case 2001, Margery Cloterbooke v John Batte (1568).

¹⁰¹ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611).

¹⁰² GRO, GDR/57 and GDR/65, Case 305, Margaret Wathen v Richard Dowdie (1585).

¹⁰³ Gowing, "The Freedom of the Streets", pp. 134-137.

¹⁰⁴ Ardener, 'Ground Rules', p. 12.

remarks pass between Elizabeth Lange and Hugo Hempton.¹⁰⁵ In 1575, servant Joanne Edwardes, deposed that she was spinning in the entry of her master, Mr Morryce's house in Shebbear when she heard Jane Paddon defame Alice Rowland.¹⁰⁶ Spinning outdoors was commonplace and women frequently sat in the entries of their homes to take advantage of the natural light.¹⁰⁷ The engagement of women in community life at the boundaries of their homes is significant; their work did not segregate them from the wider community but instead could place them at the heart of it.

Other liminal spaces also had public aspects. Courts, yards, gardens and 'backsides' were domestic spaces at the boundaries of properties, sometimes adjacent to pieces of ground belonging to others. In 1552, Thomas Jackette of Meysey Hampton in Gloucestershire deposed that he bound Thomas Orchard and Jane Rook, the servant of Thomas' mother, in matrimony having observed 'the sayd Orchard stode in his mothers ground at a stone wall adjoynnyng to this deponentes backside'.¹⁰⁸ In 1618, witnesses including Mary Hayne who was in her master's courtyard in Silverton in Devon, overheard Grace Luscombe speak slanderous words of her mistress.¹⁰⁹ In villages with nucleated settlement patterns, spaces on the peripheries of the home were often as public as the streets, lanes and communal buildings of the parish.

The household itself was not always a 'private' space. Neither the female servant nor the family enjoyed much privacy from the other, with virtually all spaces operating as shared space. Nor was the household private from the neighbourhood: neighbours, friends and even enemies could (and did) freely enter the house, while liminal spaces on the peripheries of the household such as doorways and gardens offered access to events taking place on the street. The activities of female servants across all spaces within the household therefore placed them in contact with the community beyond the household.

¹⁰⁵ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1274, Elizabeth Lange v Hugo Hempton (1576).

¹⁰⁶ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1209, Alice Rowland v Jane Paddon (1575).

¹⁰⁷ Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁸ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1524, Jane Rook v Thomas Orchard (1552).

¹⁰⁹ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2345, Elizabeth Faryes v Grace Luscombe (1618).

Beyond the household

As shown in this thesis, the work tasks of female servants extended beyond 'domestic' work. Running errands, performing agricultural tasks, and washing clothes were among a catalogue of activities undertaken by servants that took place in spaces beyond the household. Although some recreation was to be found at home, female servants also attended dances, fairs and other social events both within the parish and beyond it. Outside the household, the range of spaces that female servants occupied was broad. Female servants were recorded in the streets, fields, markets, shops and many other spaces as table 4.12 shows. One woman was even found at sea: in 1567, Joanne Corne of North Hill in Cornwall deposed that she had run away from her husband to work as a servant on board a ship, where she was employed 'to washe the clothinge of the Saulderes'.¹¹⁰

The range of spaces outside the home in which female servants were identified should be unsurprising. Not only did their work take them beyond the sphere of the household, but certain places commanded their presence, such as church. Yet the myth of what Griffiths describes as the 'great enclosure' of youth continues to permeate understandings of the spaces that female servants occupied.¹¹¹ Michael Mitterauer argues that 'in service, there was no such thing as a private sphere independent of working relationships' and that recreation was subject to the control of the head of the household.¹¹² Age and youth were as important as gender in the spatial freedoms that women enjoyed while in service. Yet although servants were theoretically subordinate to their employers, in practice this operated with some flexibility. Griffiths highlights the existence of youth culture in early modern England, with young people 'on the move, spilling onto fields and streets'.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 775, Richard Corne v Joanne Corne (1567).

¹¹¹ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 112.

¹¹² By 'private', Mitterauer refers to the sphere of the individual rather than within the context of the 'separate spheres' debate. See Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 115, 131.

¹¹³ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 113.

Table 4.12. Non-household spaces in which female servants were described in within the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Non-household spaces	N	%
Other household	57	31.3
Church	23	12.6
Street	22	12.1
Field/meadow	19	10.4
Highway/road	12	6.6
Outside the parish	11	6.0
Parental house	7	3.9
Mill	5	2.8
River/brook/water	5	2.8
Barn	3	1.7
Fair	2	1.1
Inn or alehouse	2	1.1
Market	2	1.1
Orchard	2	1.1
At sea	1	0.6
Churchyard	1	0.6
Court	1	0.6
Dairy house	1	0.6
Dancing place	1	0.6
Farm	1	0.6
Pound	1	0.6
Register's Office	1	0.6
Shop	1	0.6
Woods/forest	1	0.6
Unspecified	22	-
<i>Total excl. unspecified spaces</i>	<i>182</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Total incl. unspecified spaces</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>-</i>

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Other households

As table 4.12 shows, outside the familial household, female servants were most frequently recorded in the households of others. Williamson confirms that the people of early modern Norwich also spent much time in others' households.¹¹⁴ This pattern further highlights the sociability of the early modern household and the numerous interactions that took place within it: people often visited one another's houses. The church courts recorded numerous examples of intentional visits made to another household specifically to gossip about or defame another parishioner. In 1581, William Preston of Crediton in Devon deposed that 'John Wattes cam to a well in Mr Nicholas Troublefields house' where he then alleged that Margaret Brushford had a child outside wedlock.¹¹⁵ Others were invited guests: in 1592, Edmund Evenish of the parish of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire deposed that he

passed alonge by one Gallondes house without the further northgate in Gloucester as he went homewardes, & passinge along by the sayd house Mr Rea the vicar of Badgeworth called in this deponent & willed him to drinke with him.¹¹⁶

People worked in the households of others. John Somerwell of Goodleigh in Devon deposed in 1588 that 'he this deponent a Taylor by his occupation being then at work in Nicholas Shorts house' was witness to the making of the will of Walter Blackmore, Nicholas' servant.¹¹⁷ Others came on business: in 1573, Nicholas Phillippes, a butcher of Cirencester in Gloucestershire visited the house of John Hytchins in Down Ampney 'for sheep th[a]t he had bought of hyme'.¹¹⁸

When pinpointing precise locations in which events took place, witnesses frequently made references to others' houses. The house was a landmark on the physical map of the parish but also on the mental maps that individuals created, serving as points of reference in descriptions of location. In 1635, three witnesses named Richarda Cock, Jacob Knight and John Bagwell of Dartmouth in Devon

¹¹⁴ Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space*, p. 59.

¹¹⁵ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1475, Margaret Brushford v John Wattes (1581).

¹¹⁶ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1257, John White v John Thaier (1592).

¹¹⁷ DHC, Chanter 862, Case 1733, Nicholas Shorte v Hamon (1588).

¹¹⁸ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1174, Elinore Rowles v John Hytchman (1573).

all recalled the exact location of Joanne Taylor's alleged defamation of Joanne Penny with reference to the house of John Plumley. Richarda, who months before had worked in the service of John Taylor, deposed that the defamatory words were spoken 'in the Towne of Dartmouth in the streete there *neire the howse of Mr Plumley*'. Jacob and John provided similar locational descriptions. This collective reference to John Plumley's house suggests that it was a well-known and important landmark, the three witnesses employing it as a descriptive tool by which to pinpoint the precise location on the street.¹¹⁹ The social descriptor 'Mr', used by all three witnesses, indicates that John Plumley was a gentleman.¹²⁰ Important or prosperous households could therefore feature prominently on the mental maps of early modern society.

Yet people clearly had physical as well as cognitive interactions with other houses in the parish. Almost a third of female servants were recorded in households outside their place of employment. Sometimes their work took them there; running errands brought them into the homes of others, as the 1638 deposition of Catherine Dickinson, servant to Edmund Badger, reveals. Catherine deposed that she visited William Martin's house in Prestbury in Gloucestershire to collect a tithe of wool.¹²¹ The servants of vicars and tithe-owners found themselves in households that they otherwise may not have entered, interacting with parishioners outside their immediate neighbourhood. To some extent, servant interactions with spaces and people were controlled by their employers. Catherine's visit to William Martin's house was determined by her engagement in a task she was instructed to perform by her master.

Yet even when required to visit a household by their employers, servants displayed their own agendas and agency. In 1575, William Stubbe, witness in a defamation dispute between Jane Sherford and her servant, Alice Hunte,

¹¹⁹ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joane Penny v Joane Taylor (1635). Italics my own.

¹²⁰ A yeoman by the same name was also recorded as living in Dartmouth in the sixteenth century, suggesting that the Plumley family were long-term residents of the parish. See DHC, Chanter 855 and Chanter 855a, Case 359, John Leache v Jacob Leache (1561); DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 362, John Leache v John Clement (1561); DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 363, John Leache v Michael Taylor (1561); DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 371, John Leache v Walter Clerk (1561). A 1642 will of a gentleman with the name John Plumley also exists. See TNA, PROB11/188/305, Will of John Plumlegh, Gentleman of Dartmouth, Devon (1642).

¹²¹ GRO, GDR/204, Case 1782, Murrall v William Martin (1638).

deposed that Alice had ‘came upon an arrant [errand]’ to his house’ where she subsequently defamed her mistress. This defamation was, according to William, rooted in Jane’s failure to grant Alice the freedom to ‘goe abroad’ when she wanted. Servants were not expected to linger in other people’s houses: William told Alice that her mistress ‘would checke [rebuke her] for staying longe upon a message’.¹²² Yet while the servant was away from the household, they were out of the sight and control of their employers. The space of another household could become familiar to female servants who may have visited frequently on errands, but stayed to socialise.

Other female servants directly undermined the patriarchal rule of the household in which they served by entering other homes with tales and gossip. In 1571, Anne Jacob of Cheltenham entered the households of Ralph and Sibil Wyllcocke and Thomas and Alice Gregorye of the same town, declaring that her master ‘kepith Alice Clerk as commonly as he doth his wyf’.¹²³ In defaming her master, Anne entered her neighbours’ households with no indication that she has been sent on an errand by her employers. Other households could therefore present forums for female servants to subvert the control of their employers, both through words and actions. Capp notes that reports made by servants concerning their employers could be deeply damaging and that ‘knowledge of the family’s private concerns gave servants a powerful weapon’.¹²⁴ Relative freedom of speech within another household endowed female servants with the opportunity to voice their feelings, although as these examples show, their words often returned to haunt them when reported back to employers.

The houses of other members of the community could at times provide refuge for servants. In 1558, Thomas Langdon of Exminster was brought before the court of the diocese of Exeter to answer a charge of assault against him. He deposed that he visited John Bondes house to ‘fetche home’ his servant who had run away

because he had given her two or three Strypes with a lether halter. And
fydning her in the said Bondes howse gave her 2 or 3 stripes with a whyte

¹²² GRO, GDR/32, Case 1234, Jane Sherford v Alice Hunte (1575).

¹²³ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1703, Alice Clerck v Anne Jacob (1571).

¹²⁴ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 170.

Rodde which [he] had in his hand [...] And willed her to gett her home again to [his] howse.¹²⁵

Outside her master's abusive household, the servant felt some sense of place, belonging and home within John Bonde's house. The house could sometimes be a fraught space for female servants as Bernard Capp and Flather show.¹²⁶ Following a heated exchange between Joanne Sybly and the wife of Williams Johns, her mistress, who refused to let her stay in her house past the end of her covenant, Joanne found lodging with 'one William Geyke in the same parishe' not only at short notice but also at night.¹²⁷ Female servants made connections outside the household and community members shared their space with these women when they were placed in a precarious position. Even Alice Hunte saw William Stubbe's household as a place in which she could share her frustration with her mistress, Jane Sherford.¹²⁸

Female servants also spent time in these spaces recreationally and outside the control or oversight of employers. In 1568, William Martyndale appeared before the Exeter court charged with incontinence with his servant. He deposed that Widow Hucker told him she enjoyed the company of Alice Andrewe, his servant, because she 'made good chere'. William insisted that Widow Hucker 'desired the sayd Alys' to visit her house and that her attendance at the widow's merry-making had not been as his guest.¹²⁹ In 1615, John Allen deposed that while his master and mistress were away from home celebrating Christmas, he 'went unto one Rooles howse in Turkedean [in Gloucestershire] to make merry at home' with his fellow servant, Mary.¹³⁰

Communal spaces

While households were in many ways non-private, open spaces, locations outside the household were unquestionably communal, inviting all parishioners to interact with these spaces. Churches, streets, fields, markets and riversides

¹²⁵ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 239, Office v Thomas Langdon (1558).

¹²⁶ See Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 156-157; Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 39-74, esp. pp.47-49.

¹²⁷ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1146, Joanne Sybly v Thomas John (1574).

¹²⁸ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1234, Jane Sherford v Alice Hunte (1575).

¹²⁹ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1135, Thomas Hutche v William Martyndale (1568).

¹³⁰ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1059, Robert Payne v Elizabeth Gawen (1615).

all encouraged communal activities from female servants were not excluded from participation. Table 4.12 indicates the frequency with which they were recorded in churches, streets and fields in particular, underscoring the ways in which their social and working interactions took them beyond the boundaries of the household.

The church

Evidence of how female servants experienced religion in a period of religious uncertainty and change is scarce given that most women in service were illiterate and therefore their religious experiences were unrecorded. Church court depositions provide occasional glimpses into the experiences of young female servants learning the catechism. In 1583, Richarda Miller of Hatherleigh in Devon deposed against the vicar Sir Thomas Pickering who attempted both her chastity and that of her servant, Joan Pengelley, when asking Joan to come to the vicarage to 'learne the Cathechisms'.¹³¹ Only one case records the religious attitudes of a female servant. In 1618, witnesses deposed that on her deathbed, servant Bridgett Furse bequeathed 5s to the poor of Okehampton in Devon 'saying that she did thinke that her soule would rest better for that which she gave to the poore'. Bridgett also 'prayed god to Love her soule so well as she loved Mr Blighe' who she had intended to marry.¹³² However, the religious attitudes of the servant population cannot be measured by evidence from just one case, particularly when the servant was in the final stages of her life.

It is clear that female servants attended religious services, with the church comprising 12.7 per cent of instances in which female servants were recorded outside the household. Servant Elizabeth Perrycote of Kenton in Devon deposed in 1577 that she crossed paths with John Evans, his wife and John Morrye as she 'was going toward the parishe church to morning prayer'.¹³³ Anne Ingram of Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire deposed in 1605 that she was in church 'uppon a Sundaye or hollidaye att the tyme of divine service' when the parson

¹³¹ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1199, Office v Thomas Pickering (1583).

¹³² DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2299, William Blighe v Jordan (1618).

¹³³ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1290, Joanne Johns v Jacob Escourt (1577).

told the parishioners of a change in tithe ownership.¹³⁴ According to conduct literature, employers were responsible for the moral instruction of their household, ensuring that servants attended church. Gouge stressed that

Masters must cause their servants to go to the publike ministerie of the word, and worship of God, to be further built up thereby, and confirmed in their faith.¹³⁵

Employers did not always exert this control over servants. While many examples of female servants spending time in church were identified, others were absent. Servant Elizabeth Brewer of Stroud in Gloucestershire deposed that her mistress, Jane, returned home from church with injuries after a dispute with Alice Warner over church seating. Elizabeth deposed that Jane's legges

were blacke & blewe in manye places & [she] complayned of the payne of her armes & sholders as beinge hurte & punched [...] but this deponent did not see the said defendant soe hurte beate or misuse the Complantant on the Sunday aforesaid for this deponent was not at churche that daye.¹³⁶

Emmison notes that individuals were presented before the courts for non-attendance at church on Sundays and holy days.¹³⁷ Elizabeth's non-attendance is therefore significant, particularly given the presence of her mistress in church that day. Capp confirms that some servants were left at home to mind the house on a Sunday.¹³⁸

Nonetheless, the 1604 deposition of Eleanor Browne of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire reinforces the idea that in many households, the master was responsible for maintaining the spiritual welfare of his family. Eleanor deposed that while she was in her brother's service, her 'said brother and his howsehold did usually come to Yate church to heare divine servyce'.¹³⁹ Her singling out of her brother as the head of the household implies his responsibility in ensuring his family's attendance at church. Richardson notes that servants must have

¹³⁴ GRO, GDR/95, Case 722, Edmund Chamberlen v Richard Perkes and Edward Broughton (1605).

¹³⁵ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 667.

¹³⁶ GRO, GDR/100, Case 678, Jane Brewer v Alice Warner (1609).

¹³⁷ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts*, p. 79.

¹³⁸ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 336.

¹³⁹ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jorden (1604).

resented employers for making them attend church, a resentment that he argues was further fuelled by spatial segregation in church in which servants were treated as socially inferior.¹⁴⁰ Yet some servants attended church without being induced. In 1615, Catherine Holman told the court that her master Richard Moore, the vicar of Bickleigh in Devon, was in Ireland for around three months, and therefore absent from the parish. She deposed that she knew of his absence 'because shee this deponent was then his servant, and frequented the Church in his absence, and well knewe his goeing awaye and comeinge home'.¹⁴¹

Attending church could place servants at the heart of community life. Edith Serney of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire deposed that Silvester Naile 'did with her hands & shoulders pushe thruste & through [throw] the said Cressett [Edith's mistress] in such violent & malitious manner that the said Cresset was almost downe in the said seate'.¹⁴² Servant Blanche Cole brought a defamation case against Frances Wells who on her way home from church in the company of Richard Higges, Richard Taylor (the vicar) and her own servant Mary, allegedly stated that 'Blanche Cole should not sitt in her seate where she the said Frances sate [because] she knew her [...] to be a whore'.¹⁴³ Whether observing a dispute or embroiled in one, servants' experiences of the church could be primarily social rather than spiritual. The church acted as a centre of sociability and was often an arena in which community disputes and dramas were played out.

Churchyards could also be sociable spaces. On a Sunday in 1607 after morning prayers had ended, Joanne Daingerfield of Uley entered the churchyard through the church porch when she overheard

divers men talking & speakeinge together & sayeing one to the other that the said Thomas Payne since he then came out of the churche called Mr George Birche [...] false forsworne knave agayne'.¹⁴⁴

Conversation spilled out from the church doors into the churchyard, where individuals engaged in casual conversation with their fellow parishioners. The

¹⁴⁰ Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁴¹ DHC, Chanter 876, Case 2171, John Wolcombe v Richard Ashe v Collins (1615).

¹⁴² GRO, GDR/114, Case 881, Cressett Cox v Silvester Naile (1612).

¹⁴³ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1291, Blanche Cole v Frances Wells (1593).

¹⁴⁴ GRO, GDR/100, Case 619, George Birche v Thomas Payne (1607).

church, at the centre of the parish, provided regular opportunities for those at the peripheries to share stories, news and gossip. Keith Thomas notes the importance of ‘the congregation loitering in the churchyard’ after service as a means of sociability.¹⁴⁵ In 1571 in the churchyard of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire, John Masye sought clarification of a rumour that servant Alice Gylman had been cited by the church court for telling Thomas Hemminge that ‘one Bagler sholde be naught [had been naughty]’ with his wife Alice, her mistress’ daughter. He deposed that he asked Alice Gylman why she had said this, to which Alice responded that the defamation was provoked by her mistress accusing *her* of incontinency with Bagler.¹⁴⁶ The church was a space in which individuals could be challenged and stories set straight.

Servants were involved in the rituals, rites of passage and life-cycle stages that were performed in church. In 1606, servant Joanne Brayne of Broad Marston in Gloucestershire was present at the funeral of Ann Stewarde. Ann was probably related to Joanne’s master, John Maunder as she lived in his house when she died. John’s entire household may have attended the funeral; servant Edward Greenhill also deposed of his attendance.¹⁴⁷ Propinquity, neighbourliness and a sense of mutual support within a community gave rise to social obligation and duty in attending the funeral of a deceased neighbour.¹⁴⁸ Servants could be heavily involved in the funeral preparations of deceased members of the household. In 1617, witness Eleanor Seaward of Harpford in Devon deposed that upon the death of Beatrix Carye fourteen years before her examination, she had worked in her service and oversaw the distribution of food and money to the poor ‘and dressed much of the meate’.¹⁴⁹ The involvement of servants like Eleanor in funeral preparations demonstrated their right to pay their respects to the dead.

The attendance of female servants at baptisms and christenings might also be considered important within the community. Witness Joanne Turner of

¹⁴⁵ Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 220.

¹⁴⁶ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1699, Alice Hemminge v Alice Gylman (1571).

¹⁴⁷ GRO, GDR/96, Case 764, Hodgkins v John Maunder (1606).

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁹ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2275, Office v Bridgeman and Henry Ashe (1617).

Brockworth in Gloucestershire deposed against John White, the vicar of the parish for refusing to baptise the child of Richard Wood and his wife on Good Friday in 1591. She told the court that upon arriving at church, the child was 'very weake', but the vicar told them he could not christen the child there and then and asked them to return in the afternoon. Joanne deposed that they 'further tolde him that one of the gossips was a servanthe & could not have tyme to come agayne'. Widow Elizabeth Reeve added that the vicar replied 'bring the child then [in the afternoon] & I will baptize yt without gossipps'.¹⁵⁰ The word 'gossip' here meant 'godparent', indicating the important role that this female servant was given in establishing kinship and social ties across generations.¹⁵¹ David Cressy argues that social respect and honour were bestowed upon individuals chosen as godparents, and that parents were prepared to postpone christenings in order to secure a particular individual as a godparent.¹⁵² In being chosen as a 'gossip', the Brockworth servant accumulated social capital and became embedded in the traditions and rituals of community life.

While instances in which female servants were recorded in church reveal little about their religious experiences and beliefs, they nonetheless showcase the interactions with the community that the church facilitated. The church was not just a spiritual space; it was also a social space. This was important for the female servant whose residence in the community may not have been fostered by kinship connections and may have placed considerable distance between her and her home community.

Fields

The fields of a parish have traditionally been presented as spaces occupied by men; however, a substantial body of scholarship now exists that situates women's work in fields and Chapter 3.2 further places female servants within such agricultural spaces.¹⁵³ Flather shows that occupation of such spaces was seasonal in early modern Essex: the spring usually brought men and women

¹⁵⁰ GRO, GDR/65, Case 558, Office v John White (1591).

¹⁵¹ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 156.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See for example Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes', 3-28.

together in the fields, with married couples working alongside one another.¹⁵⁴ Tasks were typically divided along gendered lines, although some examples show this was not always the case. In 1616, Anne Godwyn, the former servant of Humphrey Smart, the vicar of Newland in Gloucestershire deposed that she was sent to the field where Roger Higgins kept his sheep

to receive tithes of wooll from the said Higgins & when this deponent came to the said Higgins where he was sheering of his sheepe, there this deponent sawe the said Higgins had aboute fifty sheepe.

Although Anne named Roger as the sheep shearer, witness Margery Broad, a married woman from the same parish deposed that 'at sheering tyme [she] did helpe to shere them in both the said yeares'.¹⁵⁵ The field then, was not necessarily a male-dominated space.

Other female servants deposed of their working activities in fields and meadows. Alice Mole of Lostwithiel in Cornwall deposed in 1578 that she 'did always for the most parte go unto the fylds herself and to the ground where the kye [cows] were and milked them'.¹⁵⁶ In 1598, Katherine Tynewell described her presence in her master Christopher Tynewell's fields in Morebath in Devon, where she 'did helpe to cutt [...] Rye'.¹⁵⁷ Servant Margaret Allen of Guiting Power in Gloucestershire deposed in 1588 that she went 'milkinge with divers others into a common field where their kine wente all together'.¹⁵⁸

Yet female servant interactions with fields and meadows did not occur solely within a working context. Fields and meadows could offer privacy that the early modern household often lacked. In both rural and urban society, fields might be distant from the house, street and other communal areas. In seventeenth-century London, fields were situated on the outskirts of the city, again removed from the primary living space. Gowing suggests that these fields offered relative privacy

¹⁵⁴ Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁵ GRO, GDR/122 and GDR/127, Case 941, Humphrey Smart v Roger Higgins (1616).

¹⁵⁶ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1324, Edward Batten v Thomas Hellyar (1578).

¹⁵⁷ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1918, William Lambert v Christopher Tynewell (1598).

¹⁵⁸ GRO, GDR/65, Case 465, Elizabeth Wollams v Anne White (1588).

to poor pregnant women who were 'excluded from the civilising rituals of birth' that took place within the city walls.¹⁵⁹

Sexual activity also took place in these semi-private spaces; Gowing notes that references to fields as sites of illicit sex and female prostitution were frequently made in London.¹⁶⁰ Such activity also took place in rural society. In 1556, Thomasina Floode, servant of Robert Coxe of Farway in Devon confessed to a series of sexual encounters with several men including Robert's son, John, William Wood and 'his kynsman'. All these acts of illicit sex took place within fields. Thomasina identified these sites as 'a certen mede of the said Robert Cox', 'a Close of wheat' and 'the next close'.¹⁶¹ In 1551, servant Alice Lymbroke was spotted by witnesses while engaged in illicit sex with her master John Hughes in 'a medowe' and 'in a lesue [lea]' where she was heard to say 'that a thorne did prick her buttock'.¹⁶² At night, agricultural spaces were typically empty. Thomasina Floode deposed that John Coxe 'had her in a Close [...] within the nyght this last somer'.¹⁶³ For adulterous or sexually miscreant couples, the cover of night and the remoteness or emptiness of meadows and fields provided shelter from the watchful eyes of the community.

Within traditional courtship, the privacy that fields offered was again reiterated. A case produced against Frances Yarde generated an unusually detailed set of depositions concerning his courtship with servant Isott Riches. Witnesses deposed that Frances and Isott spent an hour and a half sitting under a bush in a meadow situated within walking distance of the vicarage where she was employed. Meeting in the daytime, their privacy was limited; Margaret Marytn, who accompanied Isott to the meadow, acted as a chaperone, deposing that she 'removed herself from them by the space of 12 paces or ther about'. Her decision to remain within sight and earshot indicates her suspicions of their intentions. When questioned, she deposed only that she occasionally saw Isott sitting on Yarde's knee or between his legs.¹⁶⁴ That Margaret sanctioned some privacy

¹⁵⁹ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁰ Gowing, "The Freedom of the Streets", p. 144.

¹⁶¹ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 59, Office v Thomasina Floode (1556).

¹⁶² GRO, GDR/8, Case 1478, Office v John Hughes (1551).

¹⁶³ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 59, Office v Thomasina Floode (1556).

¹⁶⁴ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

indicates that even chaperoned courtship operated with flexibility and semi-private interactions between unmarried members of the opposite sex were permitted. Outdoor spaces such as fields might be considered 'private' depending on who occupied them; by remaining in the meadow, Margaret continued to monitor how the space was used.

The street

The street, which comprised around 12 per cent of all spaces outside the household in which female servants were recorded, was a typical site of conflict and defamatory remarks often passed between parishioners in this public space. Alice Kew of Gloucester was in the street passing by the door of Elizabeth Stringer when she heard Elizabeth deplore Alice Wiseman for accusing her of being kept in adultery by Alice's husband.¹⁶⁵ The interaction between those on the peripheries of their houses and those in the street has been discussed above, but it is important to consider the street as a lived space itself.

Like all communal spaces, the street placed female servants shoulder to shoulder with people from a range of social backgrounds. As Emily Cockayne indicates 'the social classes mixed on the streets: the tattered and torn rubbed shoulders with the well-heeled rich'.¹⁶⁶ Her work refers principally to urban centres, which represents the environments in which the majority of female servants were recorded in the street. Alice Kew was recorded in a Gloucester street in 1593 alongside Anne Parker, the wife of a clothier, as well as John Reignoldes, a cordwainer and 'a mayde of Mr Garnas'. Anne's superior status was marked by Alice's reference to her as 'goodwyfe Parker'.¹⁶⁷ The range of occupational and social profiles present on the street is indicative of the ways in which spaces facilitated interactions between social groups.

Urban streets could be busy and therefore the perfect forum for individuals to start rumours and discourse concerning immoral activity. In 1605, gentleman William Locksmithe brought a defamation case against servant Alice Butler who

¹⁶⁵ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1287, Alice Wiseman v Elizabeth Stringer (1593).

¹⁶⁶ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 159.

¹⁶⁷ Erickson, 'Mistresses and Marriage', 53.

had reputedly claimed that he had got his servant Margaret Gilbert pregnant while Anthony Provis, another servant in the household, was named the father. Jacob Bennett deposed that 'there was a yonge sucking childe brought into the southgate streete in Gloucester and left upon a benche neare the house of William Locksmithe'. Estimates of the size of the crowd that surrounded the baby differed according to each testimony, ranging between forty and one hundred people. In front of this crowd and in the 'open streete', Alice Butler boldly declared 'Well masters, the servant hath the name but the master had the game', thereby implicating William in the illicit pregnancy of his servant.¹⁶⁸ Communal spaces in which people were both transient and more permanent provided women like Alice with a forum in which to raise suspicions. Her commentary on the situation in William Locksmithe's household reached beyond the street, travelling to the parish of Hartpury, just outside the city. The parish vicar, William Grove deposed that he had heard it reported 'that a younge woman in Gloucester sayd that the man had the name, and the maister had the game'.¹⁶⁹ The public nature of the street, particularly in crowded, urban areas could facilitate the transmission of rumour and news more widely.

The reasons why Alice Butler was in the street were not stated. Williamson notes that 'urban streets were not simply conduits: they were *lived* spaces'.¹⁷⁰ Rural streets too acted as extended spaces for work, sociability and communal activities. Poor lighting and exposure to the smoke of the central hearth encouraged people to be outside.¹⁷¹ Within the depositions, work activities undertaken in the street by female servants were occasionally recorded. In 1575, servant Alice Davys brought a case against Elizabeth Bundye for calling her 'shitten and [...] gowtye whore' while she was dusting malt in the street in Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, a task associated with brewing.¹⁷² While 'fetching wood out of the streete', Andrea Phillips of Cirencester in the same county deposed in 1612 that she was witness to Anne Vaughan calling Elizabeth

¹⁶⁸ GRO, GDR/95, Case 727, William Locksmithe v Alice Butler (1605).

¹⁶⁹ GRO, GDR/95, Case 728, William Locksmithe v Robert Provis (1605).

¹⁷⁰ Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space*, p. 127.

¹⁷¹ Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*, p. 8.

¹⁷² GRO, GDR/32, Case 1223, Alice Davys v Elizabeth Bundye (1575).

Tomes 'whore & over rydden whore'.¹⁷³ Witnesses also deposed in 1566 that Alice Barnes of St Petrock in Exeter complained about the whores of her father's house 'unto her fathers servants goinge in the streete about there busines'.¹⁷⁴ The street as a site of work frequently placed female servants in the disorder and discord of village and town life but such communal living also fostered connections between people.

Beyond the parish

Movement in and out of the parish was relatively fluid. Female servants interacted with spaces outside the parish for both work and leisure. Elizabeth Kyne, servant to Juliana Roughan deposed in 1559 that she visited the market at Helston in Cornwall, which neighboured the town of Penzance, where she lived.¹⁷⁵ The 1573 deposition of servant Agnes Cowley of Cowley in Gloucestershire recorded that she 'happened to go with hir dame Catherin Cam to Frowcester', although no reason for her journey was recorded.¹⁷⁶ In 1560, Rabigia Bennet told the court that she attended an ale in Buckland-in-the-Moor in Devon, 27.4 kilometres away from the house she served in Exeter.¹⁷⁷ Female servants were accustomed to travelling as shown in Chapter 4.1 and mobility was not restricted to within the parish once a position in service had been secured.

While streets were lived spaces, roads could also connect rural communities to towns and other villages. Diana O'Hara shows that for young people, fairs, markets and 'liminal spaces' in between were sites of courtship and social interaction, 'where people from different communities met together outside their normal, daily pattern of life'.¹⁷⁸ Female servants recorded in highways or roads were occasionally described as travelling to other places outside the parish with potential suitors. In a 1552 matrimonial suit produced by Margaret Fydler of Abson in Gloucestershire against William Hyll, Margaret detailed her courtship with William as 'they rode togeyther to bristoll'.¹⁷⁹ Community squabbles and

¹⁷³ GRO, GDR/114, Case 891, Elizabeth Tomes v Anne Vaughan (1612).

¹⁷⁴ DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 719, Anne Mosse v Alice Barnes and Eliza Tuckfield (1566).

¹⁷⁵ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 270, Cuthbert Marshall v Juliana Roughan (1559).

¹⁷⁶ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1748, Julian Bowyn v Catherine Cam (1573).

¹⁷⁷ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 288, Rabigia Bennet v William Baker (1560).

¹⁷⁸ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 139.

¹⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1514, Margaret Fydler v William Hyll (1552).

feuds could also play out on these highways or roads. John Grene, a labourer of Huntley in Gloucestershire deposed in 1571 that in accompanying Alice Hemminge from the city of Gloucester towards her house, they met Alice Gilman who 'spake verye angerlye to & bye the saied Alyce hemyng' and called her 'an arrant whore'.¹⁸⁰ Even when its members were several miles away from home, communities could reassemble beyond the parish boundaries.

O'Hara's work stresses the importance of kin and community in playing an intermediary and often regulatory role in courtships and betrothals. Yet she suggests that spaces in which courtship occurred 'allowed transgression, licence and experimentation', albeit within a local context of prescribed space and time.¹⁸¹ In 1551, John Smith, the defendant in a matrimonial suit brought to the Gloucester court by servant Margaret Shawe deposed that he

and the said Margaret went together to Tewkesbury fayre being Saint Mathewes daye and dranck together and from thense came together to [John's] fathers howse in gretton and there drancke and eat [ate].¹⁸²

The couple were both servants in Winchcombe, around 11 kilometres away from Tewkesbury. The distance was not far and John's father's house was just 2 kilometres away from Winchcombe on the route home. At markets and fairs, communities collided and intersected, the space being occupied by both familiar and strange faces. The practice of courtship within such spaces operated within the prescriptive bounds of what was considered acceptable by the communities that Margaret and John were part of. The couple were not anonymous at the fair, and many members of the community would have made the same journey. The couple's visit to John's father's house after the fair where they ate and drank indicates that their courtship was acted out under the surveillance and monitoring of both kin and community.

Other female servants avoided such surveillance. In 1568, Katherine Brooke of Rockbeare in Devon reported a conversation between her brother, Doctor Gammon and a gentleman named Frances Yarde, who was suspected of

¹⁸⁰ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1699, Alice Hemminge v Alice Gylman (1571).

¹⁸¹ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, pp. 238-239.

¹⁸² GRO, GDR/8, Case 1473, Margaret Shawe v John Smythe (1551).

behaving incontinently with Doctor Gammon's servant, Isott Riches. She deposed that her brother told Frances that he would 'prove you have ben in other places [in] the citie [Exeter] in Isottes companye' to which Frances responded

never [...] but ones [once] at the fayre I mett her and hobbes wiff with her and willed them to come to Stephyns howse to geve her a quart of wyne unto the which place she and hobbes is [his] wiff came in thafter noone.¹⁸³

The fair was a habitual meeting place; female servants could find themselves in the households of others, sharing in communal recreational practices such as eating and drinking outside the parish spaces they habitually criss-crossed. Doctor Gammon's concern that Isott and Frances were 'in other places [in] the citie' indicates that busy masters were unable to monitor their servants' behaviour at all times and in all spaces. Isott had initially entered the service of Katherine Brooke from the parish of Torbryan, around 38 kilometres from Doctor Gammon's home in Rockbeare. In the absence of a strong kin network, the spaces that servants occupied in courtship could not be easily controlled, particularly beyond the parish boundaries.

Female servants policed liminal spaces themselves. Scholarship shows that women employed in service could hold power within the household in monitoring the behaviour of their employers and other servants. Capp notes that female servants could seriously damage the reputation of an employer by broadcasting family secrets, particularly those of a sexual nature.¹⁸⁴ Female servants were not limited to monitoring the behaviour of those within the household in which they served; they were also privy to the incontinent lives of their neighbours. As privacy within the household was often compromised, intercourse frequently occurred outside the household. In 1551, Alice Nutt of Pauntley in Gloucestershire deposed against a married woman named Joanne Sheale:

by chance [...] as she went to mylkyng [she] founde the said Jone and William together suspiciouslye, the clothes of the said Jone beyng above her knees and the said DAVISSE's hoses being downe.

¹⁸³ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

¹⁸⁴ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 170-172.

This chance observation took place between two groves or wooded areas on the route between Pauntley and Dymock four years prior to Alice's examination. Whether Alice kept Joanne's secret for this period of time or made it publically known is unclear; however, Alice acknowledged in her deposition the power she held over her:

And further saith that sithen that tyme the said Jone asked of this deponent 'did ye see me upon such a day with the said DAVISSE?' This deponent answered 'ye know best', then the said Jone desired this said deponent to sey nothyng to her husband for if she did, she said her husband did love her litull now and that he would love hir lesser, and otherwise she cannot depose.¹⁸⁵

While the behaviour of female servants outside the household was closely monitored by kin and community, the reverse was also true. Alice's chance passing through the liminal space near the grove as she went to milking made her party to a long-standing affair between two members of the parish in which she lived.

Conclusions

The dichotomous model of public and private space cannot easily be mapped onto the household and the spaces outside it. With its porous walls and lack of glazing, the early modern house was not private. People moved in and out and its proximity to the street provided the eyes and ears of community members with access at almost all times of the day. The spaces within the household were also not private. In relation to female servants, chambers are often typified as sexually charged spaces. However, chambers had many other uses; they could be sites of sociable bedfellowship and only a small proportion of female servants recorded in chambers in the church court depositions were actually implicated in sexually deviant behaviour. Servants also monitored these spaces, policing the behaviour of others.

Sociability for female servants could be found not only in conventionally communal sites such as markets and fairs, but also in other household spaces including kitchens and halls. Other households offered opportunities for sociability with the wider community, and could act as a surrogate home when

¹⁸⁵ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1494, Edward Sheale v Joanne Sheale (1551).

relations between the female servant and her employers became frayed. Privacy could be secured elsewhere, even in outdoor spaces such as fields at particular times of the day. Communal spaces such as the church and the street were also sites of sociability. Attendance at church in particular not only indicates the interaction of female servants with religious life, but also placed them at the heart of community life, in which disputes played out, gossip and news was shared and notices were read out. The street, as a lived space in which people worked and interacted with one another across social and class divides, provided another forum in which female servants became integrated into community life. The physical necessity of undertaking work outdoors due to poor natural light and lack of space within the humble early modern household situated female servants within the hubbub of daily life.

Beyond the boundaries of the parish, female servants were identified in a range of spaces, including conduits connecting villages to larger settlements, where markets and fairs could be found. These liminal spaces could be sites of courtship but could also shift the physical location of a community. Within the hybrid communities that assembled in markets and fairs, where members of different parishes met, interacted and monitored the behaviour of their kin and friends, courtship and business could take place. While sometimes the subject of scrutiny, female servants could also monitor the behaviour of others. The high degree of mobility experienced by these women on a local level as they travelled between parishes provides further evidence that characterisation of the female servant as 'domestic' is anachronistic and misleading.

5. Relationships

As the previous section shows, female servants could move considerable distances between instances of employment, but were not necessarily transient members of society. Sometimes they remained in the same parish for long enough for it to become an established, if not permanent, home. On a local level, the activities of female servants both within the household and in other parochial spaces brought them into contact with a wide range of people. Yet the integration and interaction of female servants with members of the communities in which they lived is missing from our understanding of the experience of service for early modern women. This section explores the connections and relationships that female servants built within the early modern community. The first chapter focuses on the nature of the relationships that they established while in service, demonstrating how integral they were to community life and not just to the household. It explores the range of people with whom female servants came into contact and the representation of their relationships with other people in church court depositions. The chapter considers contemporary understandings of friendship, studying not only support networks but also companionship and sociability as further facets of friendship. The second chapter uses the study of female service as a window to understand how communities functioned both alone and in relation to others. It examines the connections that female servants maintained after leaving a parish, highlighting the importance in extending our understanding of community beyond the geographical and administrative boundaries of settlement.

5.1. Community

The term 'community' often takes on a fairly elastic meaning. Used by many to describe a grouping of people around a particular place, such as the parish, others have raised criticism against this geographical centring and definition of 'community'. Chapter 5.2 outlines these debates in more detail. Importantly, Charles Pythian-Adams argues that community 'is more than a collectivity of

people living within some shared structure'.¹ Instead, it is a social grouping arranged around common interests, meaning that communities can overlap geographically. Steve Rappaport's work on sixteenth-century London highlights the different scales on which community operated. He describes 'worlds within worlds', noting that Londoners existed within 'precincts within wards, households within parishes, they were liverymen within companies'.² While the early modern parish itself could be a religious or administrative community, it typically contained several overlapping communities which spilled over parish boundaries. These communities were centred on economic, social and other shared interests. Craig Muldrew argues that inclusion within an economic community of credit depended on trustworthiness, thrift and industry; the 'culture of credit' was predicated on a system in which members of the community were judged on their economic and social value.³ Bernard Capp stresses the importance of female communities in managing and negotiating patriarchal society. Being invited to a neighbour's birthing, a fundamentally female affair, was indicative of inclusion within a female 'gossip network', which offered a close circle of mutually-dependent female friends.⁴

It is important to recognise the different scales and foundations upon which communities are built. Neighbourhood, as a complex form of community in which geography and shared interests bring individuals together, is predicated on inclusion. As Norman Jones and Daniel Woolf suggest,

unlike parishes, counties, manors and towns, they [neighbourhoods] had no legal or formal definition: the neighbourhood formed the most immediate and inescapable social context for all but the most marginal members of the population.⁵

¹ Charles Pythian-Adams, *Re-thinking English Local History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), p. 27.

² Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 215.

³ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 2.

⁴ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf, 'Introduction', in Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 7.

Community is defined by a sense of belonging; without bonds that unite its members, community as a social and experiential construct cannot exist. The strength of these economic or social relationships determines the cohesiveness of a community. Small-scale communities such as companies, households and networks connect outwards to other individuals and communities through strong relationships and ties. People can therefore be members of more than one community.

The household

The relationships that female servants fostered while in service are typically conceived of within the smallest unit of community: the household. Mirroring the way in which female servant experiences have been mapped almost exclusively onto the household and its spaces, historians have focused on female servants' integration, interaction and negotiation within the ordered and patriarchal institution of the home. Naomi Tadmor demonstrates that servants were included in contemporary understandings of family. Her study of the way in which the word 'family' was used in Thomas Turner's diary locates its meaning to include *all people living within a household*, not just biological kin.⁶ Family was therefore a household community, predicated on economic and social connections between co-resident but not exclusively biological relations. Capp endeavours to situate female servants in wider female gossip networks but fails to move beyond the domestic; the chapter title 'Maidservants and the Politics of the Household' captures his household-centred approach to studying women in service.⁷ Elsewhere, relationships with masters, mistresses and the family have come to define the female servant.⁸

Masters are frequently presented as patriarchal at best and sexually abusive or violent at worst. Capp suggests that 'young women were brought up to obey [...] and many living with decent employers probably adjusted without too much

⁶ Naomi Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 151 (1996), 111-140, esp 113, 117, 138.

⁷ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 127-184.

⁸ See for example, Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, pp. 37-51, 68-127; Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 145-174.

difficulty'.⁹ Yet the stock character of the vulnerable female servant within her employer's household is also prevalent in historical study; Paul Griffiths presents a bleak picture, noting that 'fear, awe, and helplessness conspired to place a servant in a weak position, and ensured that in many cases abuse was covered up and remained a household secret'.¹⁰ The female servant is frequently presented as somewhat marginalised, perceived by the rest of the community as an outsider.

The stream of clerical texts produced in the seventeenth century on effective household governance instructed masters and mistresses on the importance of maintaining good order within the family. William Gouge advised against masters becoming companions or friends of their servants, warning that this would lead them to 'take libertie to presume above their master'. He cautioned of mistresses who 'oft lose their authoritie by conspiring with their servants to goe abroad, take away goods, gossip, and doe such other like things privily without their husbands consent'.¹¹ Physical correction was to be exercised with moderation and a master should not 'impaire life, health or strength of his servant'.¹² Robert Dod and John Cleaver added that a master should not 'meddle with the punishing or chastising of the maide-servants'; only his wife should exercise this power.¹³

Despite this prescriptive advice, historians' characterisation of the precariousness of female servant relationships with their male employers is not unfounded. Accounts of unmarried servants giving birth to illegitimate children fathered by their masters are commonplace in court records. Of 62 unmarried female servant pregnancies recorded in the Gloucester and Exeter church court depositions, the father of the resulting child was the servant's master in 61 per cent of cases. In 1568, Joanne Master, servant to an Exeter gentleman named William Parker, deposed that many of his servants were forced to leave service after William had got them pregnant, herself included.¹⁴ In 1582, the paternity of

⁹ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 181.

¹⁰ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 272.

¹¹ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 652.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 660.

¹³ Dod and Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government*, sig A24.

¹⁴ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 878, *Office v Joanne Master* (1568)

servant Grace Combe's illegitimate child was conferred upon her master, Nicholas Kelway; Grace's fellow servant Dorothy Inell testified to their indecent behaviour in plain sight within Nicholas' household in Upton Pyne in Devon.¹⁵

Masters were not the only members of the household who might make sexual advances towards female servants. Witnesses in 1578 deposed that Christian Collens, who had worked in service in Harberton in Devon, had a child by Nicholas Browse, her former master's stepson. Attempts to discredit Christian as a witness were made on the grounds of her illegitimate pregnancy.¹⁶ In 1556, Thomasina Floode of Farway in Devon was cited to appear before the Exeter court for committing adultery with her master's son and his kinsman.¹⁷ Numerous matrimonial cases heard in the courts also indicate that female servants frequently fathered illegitimate children on their male counterparts. Elizabeth Budde of Barnstaple in Devon brought a matrimonial suit against Richard Sharshell in 1561, claiming that he had got her pregnant and promised to marry her while they were both servants in the house of Phillip Albridge.¹⁸ In 1600, Joanne Dirrie, the servant of Mr Babbe of Matson in Gloucestershire was brought before the church court for engaging in premarital sex. In her examination, she deposed that John Whetstone, a servant in the same house, was the father of her child.¹⁹

An underlying assumption in the historiography is that sexual intercourse between servants and masters was often non-consensual and therefore a form of abuse. Susan Amussen, for example, argues that the power masters had over their servants was commonly displayed through the 'use of their authority to obtain sexual favours'.²⁰ On the other hand, it is suggested that sex with other servants or young people within the house was agreed by both parties. Garthine Walker notes a pattern of 'sexual violation [of servants] by masters or other men

¹⁵ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1189, *Office v Nicholas Kelway* (1582).

¹⁶ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, *John Morris v John Sparcks* (1578).

¹⁷ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 59, *Office v Thomasina Floode* (1556).

¹⁸ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 345, *Elizabeth Budde v Richard Sharshell* (1561).

¹⁹ GRO, GDR/89, Case 309, *Office v Joanne Dirrie* (1600).

²⁰ Susan Dwyer Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline, and Power: The Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 15.

in positions of authority'.²¹ Consent is a modern concept linked with a gradual movement towards women's rights over their bodies. As Laura Gowing suggests, legal records present women as passive in discourses about sex, making it difficult to ascertain whether intercourse was desired by both parties.²² Rape was infrequently tried in the courts and therefore the study of rape involves the study of exceptional records. Sexual abuse of servants by their masters undoubtedly occurred in early modern England; examples are found in church court depositions of men using 'such force' as to 'carnally know' women outside wedlock and this experience was probably familiar to some female servants.²³ Yet some women in service may have consented to intimate relations with their employers. Several examples of servants who married their masters are identified in the depositions. In 1630, Dorothy Woodward was described by witness Richard Benfield of Hempsted in Gloucestershire as visiting

the Registers Office of the dioces of Gloucester [...] to procure a licence of marriage for herselfe to be marryed to William Goodcheape [...] and upon sight of her this deponent did then see that she had a greate belly and was great with childe.²⁴

Dorothy's marriage to William may have been prompted by her pregnancy and therefore does not necessarily imply her desire or consent in engaging in sexual intercourse with him. However, it is unlikely that all women in service who married their employers did so through fear or fear of destitution. The difficult task of untangling evidence of consensual and non-consensual extramarital sex between masters and servants remains.

It was, however, precisely the business of the church courts to apply ecclesiastical justice to sexual deviancy. A high incidence of adultery cases featuring female servants and their masters recorded in church court depositions is therefore unsurprising. Yet other depositional evidence demonstrates that not

²¹ Garthine Walker, 'Rape, Acquittal and Culpability in Popular Crime Reports in England, c.1670-c.1750', *Past & Present*, 220 (2013), 116.

²² Gowing, *Common Bodies*, pp. 87, 90.

²³ See, for example, GRO, GDR/25, Case 1645, Roger Southill v Thomas Bauge (1570). Gowing also notes that in infanticide testimonies, women described how 'men had 'used' them against their will'. See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p.90.

²⁴ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1611, Office v William Goodcheape (1630).

all master-servant relationships matched this stereotype. Eleanor Hubbard highlights the inaccuracy of assuming the typicality of sexually abusive masters, arguing that 'to cast all men indiscriminately as potential sexual predators is to ignore the strong moral views that kept many of them on the straight and narrow path'.²⁵

Everyday details of servant relations with their employers are encountered contextually in the depositions. Relationships that servants built with their masters and mistresses were much more varied than is supposed. Other types of abuse by masters were recorded. While examples of violent masters are more readily identified in Quarter Sessions records, scattered references were made to physical abuse in the church court depositions. In 1558, Thomas Langdon was brought before the Exeter court for beating his female servant with a belt in another man's house.²⁶ In the Gloucester court, Joanne Kent of Sandhurst deposed in 1591 that her master John Boseley

dyd beate his wife and this examine being his servant for that they found fault with him for that he wrought [worked] for the said Isabelle heyward & left his owne busyness undone.²⁷

Amussen suggests that while household violence occurred regularly in early modern England, the legitimacy of punishment was finely graded in terms of correction for misconduct, with only the most serious offences clearly justifying physical discipline.²⁸ While Thomas Langdon was apprehended for his extreme violence, John Boseley's physical abuse of his wife and servant was recorded incidentally in a case concerning his adultery with another woman. He was probably not reprimanded for his ill treatment of his family.

Tumultuous relationships between female servants and their mistresses were also recorded. Capp indicates that mistresses could distrust their servants and were wary of them passing on gossip and tales of the household to the wider community.²⁹ Poor relationships between servants and their mistresses could

²⁵ Hubbard, *City Women*, p. 88.

²⁶ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 239, Office v Thomas Langdon (1558).

²⁷ GRO, GDR/65, Case 527, Anthony Chapman v John Bosely (1591).

²⁸ Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline, and Power', 13.

²⁹ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 170-174.

develop for other reasons. In her 1578 deposition, Joanne Veysy revealed continued tension in her relationship with Margaret Putt, her former mistress, who refused to pay her 3d in wages upon her exit from service.³⁰ In 1591, Ann Mason, the mother of sisters Joanne and Martha who had both worked in the service of Dionisia Sursbye of Gloucester, deposed that she was not an impartial witness against Dionisia 'for certen abuses done by the said Sursbye to [her] children'.³¹ No further details were specified. In 1592, servant Joanne Powell who lived in the house of Alice Richmond in Broadmarston in Gloucestershire, was used as a pawn in her mistress' feud with John Yate. According to Thomas Yate, Joanne came to his house and

signified unto this deponentes wife that her dame (meaning the sayd Alice Richmond) had procured her to say & affirme that the sayd John Yate [...] did carnallye use the bodye of one Alice heyward [...] & that he did occupye her in a place under a hovel of furse.

Joanne confided in the couple that her mistress had enticed her to defame Alice Heyward, fearing that she 'had undone her & had procured her to affirme an untruth against the sayd John Yate'.³²

On the other hand, servants and their employers might develop close bonds. Cases of separation brought before the courts in which female servants were key witnesses provide evidence of employer-servant connections created through shared fear and anxiety caused by a husband or wife behaving outside their prescribed role within the household. In 1611, Elizabeth Mathewe of Cheltenham produced four female servant witnesses who testified to her husband's cruelty, while in 1567 Richard Corne of North Hill in Cornwall produced witness Joanne Richards, a servant in the house where Richard suspected his wife of adultery with Thomas Fynche.³³

³⁰ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, John Morris v John Sparcks (1578).

³¹ GRO, GDR/65, Case 522, Blanche Cluterbook v Dionisia Sursbye (1591).

³² GRO, GDR/65, Case 573, John Yate v Alice Richmond (1592).

³³ GRO, GDR/114, Case 860, Elizabeth Mathewe v Thomas Mathewe (1611); DHC, Chanter 855b, Case 775, Richard Corne v Joanne Corne (1567).

Positive bonds might develop in other circumstances. In 1560, Juliana Hedgeman's master Philip Bowden of Witheridge in Devon assumed the role of a protective guardian. Allegedly drawing a dagger, he threatened to turn Richard Squier's friends against him if he refused to marry Juliana after getting her pregnant.³⁴ Philip may have been primarily concerned with maintaining order within his household, although his direct involvement in remedying Juliana's situation as opposed to simply turning her away from service suggests otherwise. Depositional evidence concerning positive female servant relations with mistresses is equally rich. In 1559, Elizabeth Kyne of Penzance in Cornwall worked in the service of Juliana Roughan. Her deposition records the support she gave her mistress in brokering a contract of matrimony with Cuthbert Marshall. She deposed that she was responsible for delivering tokens between the couple after their betrothal, symbolising the loyalty and trust her employer bestowed upon her.³⁵

Bequests were also given by dying masters and widowed mistresses to their servants. In a 1564 testamentary dispute heard in the Exeter court concerning the will of Thomas Fursman, witnesses noted that 20 nobles were bequeathed to each of his household servants.³⁶ Joanne Whyfyld, a witness in a 1551 testamentary case concerning the will of Elizabeth Steynerode of Shipton Sollars in Gloucestershire deposed that she had been bequeathed 'an old frock and a sheete' by her mistress.³⁷ In 1638, witnesses deposed that Dorothy Gay of Tavistock bequeathed a featherbed to Eustice Peeke, the husband of Dorothy's former servant Jane.³⁸ Jane Whittle's work on legacies given to servants shows that employers' bequests to male servants were outnumbered by those made to female servants at a ratio of 78:100.³⁹ Loyalty and long-term service might contribute to such bequests being made.

When the integrity of a household was tarnished by the suspected or reported misbehaviour of a servant, a simple solution to maintaining or restoring good

³⁴ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 289, Juliana Hedgeman v. Richard Squier (1560).

³⁵ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 270, Cuthbert Marshall v Juliana Roughan (1559).

³⁶ DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 551, Anne Harris v. Dorothy Carwythea (1564).

³⁷ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1475, Robert Redverne v Henry Stone (1551).

³⁸ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2081, Eustice Peeke v William Carewe (1638).

³⁹ Whittle, 'Housewives and Servants', 54.

household order was to expel the servant from service. Yet the testimonies of employers on the behalf of their servants demonstrates the support they could provide. William and Alice Webb of Gloucester supported their servant Joan Dudson in a 1608 defamation case; William testified that Joan 'haveinge dwelt with [him] these three yeares' had 'honestly behaved her self'.⁴⁰ In Cornwall in 1613, witnesses deposed that Thomasine Parracott appealed to Sir Thomas Browne for John Parson to be cited to appear before the court for breaking a contract of marriage he had allegedly made with her servant Agnes Fulford. Witness Richard Yallande of Langtree deposed that Thomasine was 'very partiall to the said Agnes and grewe favour & solliciter of the Cause', while John Addams of the same parish deposed that 'shee wished her well as hee beleiveth'.⁴¹

The depositions also reveal closeness between servants and other household members. Shared space and bedfellowship, as Chapter 4.2 shows, as well as the commonality of working and living patterns could encourage friendships within the household. Richard Swadell, fellow servant of Isott Riches of Rockbeare in Devon deposed in 1568 that he advised her against leaving her master's service and travelling to Frances Yarde's house, demonstrating concern for her, if not direct friendship.⁴² Elsewhere in the depositions, intimate affections could develop between servants. In 1563, Katherine Heydon and Richard Smyth, both servants to husbandman John Mathewes of Yarcombe in Devon, contracted marriage together, a common outcome of the intimacy with which servants living in the same household could come to know each other.⁴³ Whittle found examples of women in service who worked for the Le Strange family of Hunstanton who married fellow servants, and Robert Loder's farm accounts record two servants, Robert and Alice who were 'then in great love (as it appeared to[o] well)'.⁴⁴

Yet even where evidence of physically or sexually abusive servant-employer relationships is mitigated by examples of harmonious household relations, the

⁴⁰ GRO, GDR/100, Case 668, Joan Dudson v Edith Oram (1608).

⁴¹ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2106, Agnes Fulford v John Parson (1613).

⁴² DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

⁴³ DHC, Chanter 855a, Case 484, Katherine Haydon v. Richard Smythe (1563).

⁴⁴ Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*, pp. 219-220; Loder, *Robert Loder's Farm Accounts*, p. 127.

connections, acquaintances, networks and friendships that female servants constructed while in service need to be considered on a larger scale. Female servants' relationships with the family and other members of the household represent only some of the connections that that these women made. This approach is limited, presenting an inward-looking representation of female servant relations. The household was just one type of 'community' or institution with common economic and social interests. As Chapter 4.2 shows, those in service displayed some autonomy in their interactions with space outside the household and by extension, their friendships and relationships with members of the wider community.

Familiarity and acquaintance

Despite the paucity of scholarship concerning female servants and their relationships with the community, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos considers the impact that people outside the household could have on the young. Her study of autobiographical evidence suggests that the community could be the most influential people in the lives of those in service. She astutely observes that

most young people were away from their mothers and fathers by the time they reached their mid-teens [...] by far the most direct effect on them was neither from youth groups nor even their parents or masters, but from a host of other people, mostly adults – a neighbour, a 'poor man' who came to the house, 'many people' and 'godly people' in or around the village or town [...] travelling preachers, godly ministers, and women and men a youth encountered at the local inn, or in his master's shop. The strong presence of the community and neighbourhood is obvious.⁴⁵

While Ben-Amos' conclusions are drawn from autobiographical material and therefore may not be representative of lived experiences of all young people, the presence of the community within the early modern household is confirmed in the depositional evidence presented in Chapter 5.2. Networks of economic exchange brought individuals to even the most isolated farmsteads. Female

⁴⁵ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 188.

servants were mobile both within and outside the parish, bringing them into contact with a wide range of people.

Spheres of contact

Members of the community were frequently referred to in the depositions of female servants. Table 5.1 shows the number of references made by female servants in church court depositions to various individuals, who are categorised according to their formal relationship with the servant. The data presented in table 5.1 do not necessarily indicate regular interaction between members of each sub-group with female servants but instead suggest the types of individuals with whom these women were familiar and had contact. Within 280 female servant depositions analysed, 694 people were referred to by these women. Many references were to litigant parties or key players in disputes. In 1582, Alice Blackaller, a servant in the household of Lord Gawen and Lady Roberta Champernowne in Dartington in Devon, deposed against her mistress, testifying to her adultery with Christopher Melhuishe. She deposed that

she sawe the sayd Melhuishe through a chinck of the dore of the sayd [Lady Roberta's] closett and did see Elizabeth Chapernown the sayd Ladie Roberdas daughter to have the keye in her hand and to open the sayd dore and opening whereof she this deponent was present and sayd unto her, Mrs Besse, there is a man in your fathers closet whoseever it is and the sayd Elizabeth Chapernown answered there was no bodie there.⁴⁶

Lady Roberta and Christopher Melhuishe were referred to in direct relation to the case: Alice's responses suggest that she was asked to state what she had heard or seen of her mistress' alleged affair. Her interaction with Elizabeth Champernowne, her employers' daughter was, however, recorded incidentally.

⁴⁶ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1495, Gawenus Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne (1582).

Table 5.1. Frequency of references made by female servants to various social groups in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (by gender).

Community subset	Diocese of Gloucester						Diocese of Exeter					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employers	66	64.7	36	35.3	102	27.9	63	62.4	38	37.6	101	30.7
Fellow servants	9	31.0	20	69.0	29	7.9	14	30.4	32	69.6	46	14.0
Employers' children	6	37.5	10	62.5	16	4.4	2	25.0	6	75.0	8	2.4
Biological kin	8	40.0	12	60.0	20	5.5	6	40.0	9	60.0	15	4.6
Other	118	59.6	80	40.4	198	54.2	94	59.1	65	40.9	159	48.3
<i>Total</i>	207	-	158	-	365	-	179	-	150	-	329	-

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Table 5.1 suggests that the dominance of employer-servant relationships in the historiography is perhaps unwarranted: less than a third of references to others by female servants were to employers. Just under two-thirds of these references across both courts were made to masters. The fewer references to female employers reflects the patriarchal dynamic of service and the way in which female servants perceived both their place of residence and their employment arrangements. In 1573, Elizabeth Owens deposed that she overheard John Perkins call Elizabeth Mason an 'arrant whore' while she was 'in the shop of William Brayford *this deponentes Mr his howse in Gloucester*'.⁴⁷ Elizabeth Wotton of St Thomas in Exeter deposed in 1578 that 'she this deponent did dwell a dosen yeres *in the house of Mr Castle*'.⁴⁸ In situating themselves in the context or location in which an alleged offence had taken place, female servants frequently referred to being in or near to their employer's house. The laws of coverture determined that this space was almost invariably referred to as their master's house and references to the homes of widowed employers, who acquired property rights upon the death of their spouse, further support this principle. In 1635, servants Mary Bond and Mary Smithe of Brampford Speke in Devon deposed that they were '*in the house of the widdowe Mogridge*', their mistress, when they heard Dorothy Tucker defame Mary Flood.⁴⁹

Just 7.9 per cent and 14 per cent of references made by female servants during their examinations in the Gloucester and Exeter church courts respectively were to fellow servants. The children of their employers, some of whom were co-resident, represented an even smaller proportion of references made by female servants to others. The proportion of references to individuals within these two household sub-groups were unevenly distributed across genders. References to female children and servants were more commonplace than to their male counterparts. For servants, this is partially accounted for by the working activities that they undertook. Elizabeth Deynton referred to her fellow servant Agnes Chester, who she was at work with in the woolhouse of Agnes Bathe in

⁴⁷ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1177, Elizabeth Mason v John Perkins (1573). Italics my own.

⁴⁸ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1318, Raymond Wadland v Blanche Apworthie (1578). Italics my own.

⁴⁹ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2006, Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker (1635). Italics my own.

Cirencester in 1595.⁵⁰ Division of labour was often gendered and therefore female servants frequently referred to other female servants working alongside them.

Young children are significantly underrepresented in church court depositions. The majority of children that female servants referred to were young adults. Some were married and therefore did not live in the same household. Children of deceased employers were frequently referred to within the context of disputed wills. In her 1587 deposition, Margaret Warner, who had served Margaret Weike of Gloucester for twenty-five years until her mistress' death made reference to Margaret Weike's daughters, Joanne and Mary. Joanne was additionally referred to as 'Joanne Webbe alias Weike', indicating her status as a probably recently married woman.⁵¹ Interactions with servants and their employers' children who no longer lived with their parents could therefore create a bridge between the household and the wider community.

Some children were younger, often of similar age to life-cycle female servants. Jane Holwell of Whimble in Devon deposed in 1582 on behalf of her employers' daughter, Suzanne Mychell, who pursued a matrimonial dispute against Harry Langeford. She detailed her interactions with Suzanne, who still lived in her father's house, outlining in her deposition that Suzanne had received

certain tokens from henrie Langeford [...] as namelie an old groate and a piece of iii [3] d guilted and showing them to this deponent did tell [her] That she was betrouthed unto the sayd harrie Langeford.⁵²

Similar interactions between servants and children of marriageable age were recorded elsewhere. Several cases relied upon the depositions of female servants who testified to the existence of contracts made between their employers' children and their male suitors. Isabella Janekyns, the servant of

⁵⁰ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1343, Alice Vyner v Agnes Bathe (1595).

⁵¹ GRO, GDR/65, Case 464, Joanne Weike v Margaret Weike (1587).

⁵² DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1488, Suzanne Mychell v Harry Langeford (1582). The addition of 'alias Weike' to Joann Webbe's name suggests her recent marriage, although other uses of 'alias' are found in the depositions.

William Jenyns of Arlingham in Gloucestershire deposed in 1553 that she had heard William Dryer promise her master's daughter, Elizabeth:

I will marye with the Elisabeth and I have the in thy smock and that though my father & my mother & all the kynne that I have be agaynst me.

Isabella further deposed that she had seen Elizabeth and William 'carnally using them selves oon tyme upon a chest' and that William had given her a ring as a token of his promise. The intimate details of courtship of employers' children could be both witnessed by and exchanged with female servants.

Matrimony and courtship featured frequently in interactions between female servants. In Exeter in 1637, Alice Halstowe, the former servant of Joseph Trobridge deposed that she was asked by Daniel Jackson to deliver a letter to Elizabeth Mordon, another servant in the same household. Alice testified that she 'did mucche dislike of the company keeping of the said daniell & Elizabeth Moreton [...] & thereupon the said Elizabeth fell out with this deponent'.⁵³ Servants could become intimately involved in the courtship of other young women living in the same household. By contrast, church court depositions record no evidence of female servant involvement in the courtship of male children or male servants living in the same household.

Female servants made very few references to male and female biological kin. Sometimes kin were close by: in 1596, Anne Mane of South Tawton in Devon deposed that she was with her mother, Eleanor Mane 'comeinge homewardes frome South tawton church' when she heard Thomas Badge call her mistress, Jane Batshill, a 'bobtayled whore'.⁵⁴ Some kin were also employers: Eleanor Browne of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire recalled in 1604 that 'aboute xxx [30] yeres a goe [she] did dwell with Thomas Jones this deponents brother [...] for the space of two yeres as his servant'.⁵⁵ Ben-Amos suggests that those who lived further away from their biological kin might maintain links with home, citing the example of a Bristol apprentice who visited his widowed mother each Sunday after church. She also notes that there is evidence to suggest that some servants

⁵³ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2062, Daniel Jackson v Elizabeth Mordon (1637).

⁵⁴ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1840, Jane Batshill v Thomas Badge (1596).

⁵⁵ GRO, GDR/89, Case 405, Thomas Baynham v David Jordan (1604).

sent their wages home to their parents.⁵⁶ However, table 5.1 shows that biological relations were not the central focus of female servants' depositions.

Female servants discussed members of the community (that is, those living outside the household in which they served and categorised as 'Other' in table 5.1) with more frequency than any other group. Across both dioceses, they made more references to neighbours, friends and parishioners than to any others. Gender distribution of these references was relatively even. In both courts, around 40 per cent of references were to female members of the wider community. Walker suggests that 'general patterns of sociability and economic exchange' featured 'much male and female interaction [...] in gendered, if overlapping, circles'.⁵⁷ This gender dynamic of social interactions seems accurate; rather than casting doubt on this pattern of sociability and interaction, the slightly higher proportion of references to male members of the community probably reflects male dominance in the courts. Female servants and other witnesses were more likely to refer to men as they comprised a higher proportion of litigants and witnesses. As with male employers, these women also referred to men within the context of property ownership: servant Bridget Verne of Berkeley in Gloucestershire referred in 1593 to 'Richard hamons [...] sittinge upon a stile belonginge to his owne grownde' while Richarda Cock of Dartmouth in Devon made reference to 'the howse of Mr Plumley' in 1635.⁵⁸

While scholarship of female servants traditionally considers their roles and relationships within the household as central to understanding the experience of service, the data show that this focus is too narrow. Female servants' relationships beyond the household require further examination.

Ubiquitous but anonymous?

Ann Kussmaul's estimate that around 60 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 24 were in service suggests that servants were ubiquitous within early modern communities. Gowing notes that 'the goodness of a woman's name was

⁵⁶ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, pp. 160, 223.

⁵⁷ Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order*, p. 173.

⁵⁸ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1288, Eleanor Everett v Richard Hammons (1593); DHC, Chanter 866, Case 1971, Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor (1635).

contingent on not being spoken of at all – a good name meant no name'.⁵⁹ However, being spoken of with familiarity and being referred to by name was also a marker of inclusion. Of 746 depositions that made reference to one or more female servants, just 61 (8.2 per cent) did not provide their full names.⁶⁰ Some witnesses were simply referred to as 'maid' or 'servant'. In 1582, witness Roger Over of Blisland in Cornwall deposed that

upon Easter Eave last past there came a woeman servant to the parsonadge house of Blisland and enquired for Mr parson of Blisland.⁶¹

Others recalled the first name of the female servant but provided no surname. Juliana Ware of Driffield in Gloucestershire deposed in 1587

that William Hawkins [...] begot his servant with child whose name was Jane aboute fower yeres agoe.⁶²

Maryanne Kowaleski notes that only the first name and employer's name of medieval servants listed in the Exeter mayor's court rolls were recorded and suggests that this is evidence of their low status.⁶³ However, Jeremy Goldberg argues that an unrecorded surname is not indicative of status, but instead reflects an individual's youth.⁶⁴ A servant's family name was unimportant in these legal records. Legal responsibility for a servant lay with his or her employer. It is therefore unsurprising that only first names of servants were recorded within these legal documents. In the biographical preambles to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church court depositions, full names of servants were invariably recorded, legal responsibility being less important in ecclesiastical courts. Where the full name of a female servant was unspecified in church court depositions, this was within the context of another witness' deposition.

⁵⁹ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 270.

⁶⁰ The depositions of a total of 1933 witnesses were analysed, all relating to cases heard in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter between 1548 and 1649 in which a female servant was recorded. In these depositions, 746 witnesses individually made reference to a female servant.

⁶¹ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1534, John Trelawny v Thomas Robyns (1582).

⁶² GRO, GDR/65, Case 459, Thomas Iles v Joanne Addams (1587).

⁶³ Maryanne Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 169.

⁶⁴ Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 181.

Some servants were given no name but a collective identity. Individual servants became anonymous when referred to as part of a group of servants. George Parlor of Newent in Gloucestershire deposed in 1603 that he heard Anne Harrys call Dorothy Wylson 'a druncken sott, a druncken socket, and druncken pissepott' in the presence of 'Mrs Suckliffes three maides'.⁶⁵ Arthur Rowe of Lamerton in Devon deposed in 1618 that he heard defamatory remarks made by Robert Wills against Elizabeth Drake 'present also then and there two maydes of [...] Peter Russells house'.⁶⁶ Children were often treated in a similar way and were rarely referred to by their full names: in 1593, servant Bridget Verne of Churcham in Gloucestershire noted that 'two little children under eyghte yeares of age' were present when Richard Hammons defamed Eleanor Everett.⁶⁷ Alice Combe of Chudleigh in Devon deposed in 1598 that 'it was reported that Pentecoste Balls mayde had beaten Jane Everies children'.⁶⁸ Youth, and therefore dependency, often determined how groups of servants were perceived and consequently referred to. As a group, female servants sometimes lost the identity that a name could give them.

Witnesses who referred to female servants only by their first name typically talked about them within the context of premarital sex or pregnancy. Sexual misdemeanours and subsequent pregnancies were discussed by witnesses in relation to three otherwise unidentified servants named Abigail, Jane and Eleanor.⁶⁹ Reducing a female servant to just her first name or even no name could convey contemporary judgements of sexually deviant women. In 1591, witness Walter Bicklesse of Cirencester in Gloucestershire relayed a conversation between himself and Anthony Hungerford, who had told him that 'John havland had a Bastard by his servant and that the same was conveyed by him into Oxfordshyre or Barkshire'.⁷⁰ Some may have deliberately referred to a female servant by her first name either to protect her identity or to protect

⁶⁵ GRO, GDR/90, Case 404, Dorothy Wylson v Anne Harrys (1603).

⁶⁶ DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2312, Elizabeth Drake v Robert Wills (1618).

⁶⁷ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1288, Eleanore Everett v Richard Hammons (1593).

⁶⁸ DHC, Chante 864, Case 1914, Jane Iverye v Pentecost Ball and Andrew Fole (1598).

⁶⁹ GDR/168, Case 1559, William Phippes v Anne Gearinge (1628); GRO, GDR/121, Case 910, Office v William Hall (1613); DHC, Chanter 856 and 857, Case 964, Henry Dugdale v Margaret Tudde (1564).

⁷⁰ GRO, GDR/65, Case 532, John Haveland v Anthony Hungerford (1591).

themselves from being accused of defamation. Accusations of illegitimate pregnancy frequently resulted in church court litigation. However, Walter Bicklesse's deposition already defamed John Havland and therefore he may have been unconcerned about also defaming his servant. The unknown name of the servant also indicates the witness' finite relationship with her, devoid of any emotional, social or economic attachment or connection. Here, the communities in which the servant and witness lived did not overlap.

Within this context, an otherwise inconspicuous female servant who became pregnant outside wedlock could feature as a topic of news or gossip in a community. Yeoman John Goodwyne of Berkeley in Gloucestershire deposed in 1613 that 'Jone', the former servant of Robert Lawford, another yeoman of the same parish, was pregnant before she was married, although, he added, 'by whome this respondent knoweth not *nor never heard*'.⁷¹ Mary Gearinge, the wife of a Lechlade yeoman in the same county deposed in 1628 that William Phippes' servant Abigail

was begotten with child when she lived with the said Mr Phippes *but never heard* the said Mr Phippes suspected to be the father thereof *but hath heard* that one Roberte Butcher alias Joy was the father thereof but whether the said Abigail was ever punished for the same *she knoweth not*.⁷²

As Adam Fox suggests, 'behind any tale told to the authorities of church and state was this undercurrent and atmosphere of public gossip'.⁷³ News of people's behaviour that conflicted with ordered society structured around community norms thrived in the early modern village or town and could be transmitted from place to place.

A servant's family name might have little resonance or meaning beyond her kin community. Many servants moved away from their home and kin. While she may have been well known in her parish of birth and other neighbouring parishes as part of a particular kinship group, moving to a parish further afield could reduce

⁷¹ GRO, GDR/121, Case 910, Office v William Hall (1613). Italics my own.

⁷² GRO, GDR/168, Case 1559, William Phippes v Anne Gearinge (128). Italics my own.

⁷³ Adam Fox, 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 601.

the meaning and identity attached to her family name. In 1611, Thomas Geast of Tewkesbury provided just the first name of a servant of Nicholas Grenewood of the same town: 'Elizabeth a maide servant of his howse'. His unfamiliarity with Elizabeth's family name may reflect her mobility; she may not have been born in the town of Tewkesbury or its neighbouring parishes. Additionally, the communities in which they lived may not have intersected. Tewkesbury was the second most populous town in Gloucestershire in the mid-sixteenth century, with a population of around 2600 inhabitants.⁷⁴ While Thomas lived within the same town boundaries as Elizabeth and their social and economic circles of support and friendship may have overlapped, their interactions with one another may have been limited in a relatively densely inhabited space.⁷⁵

While the evidence implies that female servants were not well integrated into their communities, instead remaining relatively anonymous, fewer than 10 per cent of witnesses who referred to female servants failed to provide their full names. This is therefore a study of the exceptional and examples of female servants whose full names were not given can be explained by specific circumstances. Most female servants were known by both their first name and surname, suggesting that women in service could become familiar faces within the communities in which they lived.

Familiars

Familiarity between servants and the wider community can be examined using another measure. During examinations, witnesses were sometimes asked to state how well they had known the litigant parties and for how long they had known them. Their responses were recorded in the biographical preambles to their depositions. This question was a relatively common feature of early modern examinations across both secular and ecclesiastical courts. Andy Wood's recent work on custom and memory makes some mention of this feature of

⁷⁴ Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ GRO, GDR/115, Case 852, Elizabeth Grenewood v Elizabeth Eaton (1611).

depositions.⁷⁶ Elsewhere, however, responses given to this type of questioning have been little studied.

Female servants rarely stated that they did not know the defending parties at all. Only Juliana Davis of Gloucester and Margaret Bearde of Swimbridge in Devon deposed that they knew only one of the parties on whose behalf they testified as witnesses. Both Juliana and Margaret were produced in testamentary disputes, where a knowledge of goods and the will of the testator were paramount, rather than a knowledge of the parties who made claims against the administration or contents of the will.⁷⁷

The phrase 'knows the parties well' was sometimes recorded in a witness' response to being asked how well or how long they had known the litigant parties. Table 5.2 shows that around 39 per cent of the 57 female servants respondents in the Exeter court and just one-fifth of the 25 female servant respondents in the Gloucester court responded in this way. What constituted 'knowing someone well' is subjective; however, by stating familiarity with a plaintiff or defendant, female servants signified a sense of inclusion within a community. Elizabeth Owyn of Gloucester deposed in 1573 that she knew the parties Elizabeth Mason and John Perkins well. She was the servant of William Braford, who owned a shop in the city, and she had worked there for a year and a half, having previously lived nearby in the Crypt School in Gloucester. She perceived herself sufficiently integrated within the community to comment on Elizabeth's reputation, deposing that the words spoken by John were 'not of suche credit th[a]t they have hurte hir good name but [...] words of slander may deminishe & take away hir good name which shee hayth not deservyd'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Wood, *The Memory of the People*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ GRO, GDR/45, Case 91, Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove (1579); DHC, Chanter 862, Case 1733, Nicholas Shorte v Hamond (1588).

⁷⁸ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1177, Elizabeth Mason v John Perkins (1573).

Table 5.2. Types of responses female servant witness gave to being asked of their familiarity with the litigant parties recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

	Total respondents	Knows the parties well		Length of time familiar with litigants stated			
				Plaintiff		Defendant	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Diocese of Exeter	57	22	38.6	27	47.4	28	49.1
Diocese of Gloucester	25	5	20.0	13	52.0	14	56.0

Note: The percentages here do not tally because a witness could provide responses concerning more than one party.

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

In her 1551 deposition against the adulterous behaviour of Joanne Sheale of Dymock in Gloucestershire, servant Alice Nutt deposed that she knew Joanne and her husband Edward well. Her familiarity with the parties was not as a neighbour; Alice lived in Pauntley, around 2 kilometres away. Her connection with Joanne may have been through her mistress. Alice deposed that Joan ‘came to the howse of oon Alice Wall of Pauntleye this deponentes dame who then gave the said Jone a peck of malt & loffe of bread’. Alice Wall’s interaction with Joanne placed them in the same economic network. As Alice Wall’s servant, Alice Nutt may have become part of this community. Her relationship with Joanne may have become unfriendly as she witnessed her adulterous behaviour and later testified against her.⁷⁹

A significant proportion of witnesses stated a specific length of time for which they had known the parties. Wood notes that those who stated their familiarity with

⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1491, Edward Sheale v Joanne Sheale (1551).

the parties from around the age of 20, for example, had typically moved to the parish around that age. By contrast, those who deposed that they

had known a place or person from adolescence often meant that they had been born in the place in question, their 'remembrance' referring to what they called their 'age of discretion' (early adolescence) rather than to the actual length of their knowledge.

Memory in this sense was a cultural construct rather than just an indication of settlement.⁸⁰ Within church court depositions, the length of time a witness had known the litigant parties for was typically stated in years rather than from a particular age. The biographical preamble to the deposition of Nicholas Glynn, for example, who testified in a matrimonial dispute between Anne Perkyn and John Mychell in 1566, recorded that he had known Anne and John for six and seven years respectively.⁸¹

An older servant was more likely to have known the parties for longer. Table 5.3 therefore expresses the length of time female servants had known the litigants for as a proportion of their age in order to account for this bias. Just under 30 per cent of female servants had known the plaintiff and defendant for less than 20 per cent of their lifetimes. The mean age of these female servants was 26, meaning that this group had typically known the parties for approximately less than five years. Female servants are thought to have been highly mobile, spending just one year in service. Yet under a third had known the litigants for roughly less than five years. This is surprisingly low and therefore supports the evidence presented in Chapter 3.2 of more variation in contract length than is often supposed.

⁸⁰ Wood, *The Memory of the People*, p. 35.

⁸¹ DHC, Chanter 855b and Chanter 856, Case 740, Anne Perkyn v John Mychell (1566).

Table 5.3. Familiarity of female servants with the litigant parties, recorded in the church court depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649 (measured as a proportion of a servant's lifetime).

Proportion of lifetime known (%)	Plaintiff		Defendant	
	N	%	N	%
> 0 and < 5	6	16.2	6	14.3
≥ 5 and < 20	5	13.5	5	11.9
≥ 20 and < 40	11	29.7	14	33.3
≥ 40 and < 60	8	21.6	10	23.8
≥ 60 and < 100	5	13.5	5	11.9
100	2	5.4	2	4.8
<i>Total</i>	37		42	

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Familiarity and therefore a long-term connection with the witness was undoubtedly important in some cases. It was important that litigants produced witnesses whom they could trust and whose credibility was unlikely to be questioned. Particular types of cases often required witnesses who had known the parties for longer periods of time. Tithe disputes relied on knowledge of parish customs as well as the annual tithing activities of parishioners. In other types of disputes, this was less important. Defamation disputes and sometimes matrimonial disputes relied on the production of witnesses who happened to be present at a fixed time and place when defamatory words were spoken or when a formal or informal contract of matrimony was made. The length of time the witness and plaintiff had known each other in these types of disputes was sometimes of little consequence to the case.

A servant's length of residence in a parish was likely to match the amount of time she had known the parties. Alice Blackaller of Dartington in Devon deposed in 1582 that she had lived in the parish for just one year and knew the parties (her employers, Lord and Lady Champernowne) for the same amount of time. Alice's

short-term residence in Dartington alongside the elevated social status of her employers meant that Alice, a servant whose role included washing laundry, was unlikely to have crossed paths with them before her service commenced.⁸² Servant Honor Drynford of Sheepwash in Devon deposed in 1583 that she had known Anne Hayne since she was a child and Mary Scam for twelve years. Honor had lived in the parish since birth. At the age of 22, her familiarity with Mary for twelve years might indicate that her first memory of her was when she was around the age of 10. Mary was also described as married, and so perhaps moved to the parish either before or upon her marriage when Honor was 10 years old.⁸³ While some servants like Alice Blackaller could be transitory inhabitants of a parish, others were more fixed and were born into pre-existing circles of friendship and support, rather than joining them upon migration as adolescents.

The connections between female servants and others sometimes pre-dated their co-residence in a parish. Servant Alice Rowland of Shebbear in Devon brought a defamation dispute against Jane Paddon in 1575, producing three witnesses who testified that Jane had called her 'an arrante whore and a Copper nosed drak[e]'. Fellow servant Joanne Edwardes had lived in Shebbear for her whole life and deposed that she had known Alice for just one year. She had known Jane since she was a child, indicating that while the plaintiff had probably more recently moved to the relatively small parish of Shebbear, the defendant was probably resident there since birth. Joanne's familiarity with the parties therefore bears resemblance to that of Honor Drynford. The other two witnesses produced, Richard Norryce and Henry Rackclief, however, had known Alice for longer. Richard was the master of Henry, Joanne and Alice. He deposed that Alice 'hathe dwelte in [his] house this xii [12] monethes'. Henry had lived in Shebbear for just six months but had known Alice for seven years, suggesting a connection between them across parishes. Alice's relationships with Joanne and Richard were clearly created through co-residence in the same household. However, she had known Henry for longer; her position in Richard's service commenced six

⁸² DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1495, Gawen Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne (1582).

⁸³ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1550, Mary Scam v Anne Hayne (1583).

months before Henry's, perhaps suggesting that his long-term affiliation with Alice helped him to secure employment within the household.⁸⁴

Co-residence in the same neighbourhood was only one way in which female servants might become familiar with others. Familiarity could transcend neighbourhood boundaries. Barbara Tyll of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire deposed in 1573 that she had known Joanne Rydge and Griffin Ap Thomas, parties in a defamation dispute, for five and six years respectively. Barbara was born in Tewkesbury but had not been stationary. She had worked in the service of William Cotterell of Tewkesbury for three years but had previously been the servant of gentleman Mr Reede of Mitton, a parish just outside the town, for four years. Barbara's familiarity with Joanne and Griffin again pre-dated the commencement of her service with William Cotterell. Joanne and Griffin both lived in the same neighbourhood as William Cotterell; however, she had known them before she joined his household while she was still a servant in Mr Reede's house in Mitton. In large towns, connections were both made and retained across neighbourhoods.⁸⁵

Analysis of the length of time that female servants had known litigant parties or had been known by witnesses indicates the types of connections that female servants formed with fellow parishioners and others beyond the boundary of the ecclesiastical parish. The assumption that the mobility of service prevented strong bonds and connections from being forged between servants and community members, with servants rarely staying in service for long enough to become integrated, is problematic. Some servants knew members of a neighbourhood for longer than they had resided together in a parish. Other women in service had lived in the parish for longer than they had known the parties. Servants were not the only migrants in early modern England and in some instances were fixed features of a community, and witnessed others, including non-servants, entering and leaving the parish. Parishes could contain

⁸⁴ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1209, Alice Rowland v Jane Paddon (1575).

⁸⁵ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1767, Joanne Rydge v Griffin Ap Thomas (1573).

any number of neighbourhoods, and spheres of contact and familiarity were not always coterminous with the geographical unit of the parish.

Friendship and support

Formal friendship

Other evidence emphasises the networks of friendship that female servants constructed during service. The term 'friend' is rarely defined with any precision in church court depositions but is frequently recorded in testimonies relating to matrimonial disputes. Alan Macfarlane's study of the diary of seventeenth-century clergyman Ralph Josselin suggests that 'friend' was used as an 'equivalent to kin', encompassing related and non-related individuals, often within the context of negotiating marriage contracts.⁸⁶ Although kin and friend were not necessarily equivalents, Diana O'Hara notes that many intermediaries involved in brokering marriages were termed 'friend'.⁸⁷ She proposes that a range of connections were drawn upon including 'family and the surrogate family of masters, mistresses and fellow servants, from biological kin, affines, and a range of what may loosely be termed fictive kin'.⁸⁸

O'Hara identifies these intermediaries, labelled as 'friends', to have typically been male, older than the couple and of gentle or yeoman status.⁸⁹ They had known at least one of the parties for a minimum of two to three years.⁹⁰ Masters frequently acted as intermediaries. In 1552, 60-year-old William Harding of the parish of Abson in Gloucestershire deposed on the behalf of his servant Margaret Fydler, who claimed that a contract of marriage had been made between herself and William Hyll. William Hyll allegedly argued that he would 'not tak[e] her with nothyng'. The economic transaction was explicitly laid out; William Harding responded 'she is not so offered unto the[e] for thow hast had money offered with her *of her frendes* and she shall be made worth xx [20] nobles'. William Hyll, however, claimed that he 'thynck her frendes will not stand to their word seeing

⁸⁶ Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, pp. 149-151.

⁸⁷ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 110.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

the chance'.⁹¹ Margaret's friends were therefore economically key to securing her marriage. Her master was also an important mediator between the couple and was probably included within this formal friendship group.

The definition of the word 'friend' is not always clear. The precise nature of the relationships between Margaret and her 'friends' was not specified. The economic agreement to provide her with a dowry was arranged by several individuals but how Margaret knew them was not recorded. O'Hara suggests there was a hierarchy of intervention that operated among the 'go-betweens' in arranging courtship and marriage, with intermediaries ranging from 'the aged and respectable, to the marginal characters at the other end of the spectrum'.⁹² Within marriage litigation, it is often difficult to tease out the different types of friendship or support that each member of a friendship group provided, meaning that evidence of courtship does not always present a complete or accurate picture of friendship.

Other types of dispute situate friendship within a different context. In 1583, a defamation case was brought to the Exeter court by Sampson Rawlye of St Stephens near Saltash in Cornwall against servant Elizabeth Kneebone, who alleged he had attempted to rape her while she returned home from milking. Charges of rape were uncommon in early modern England. Walker suggests that there were several very real obstacles to a woman prosecuting for rape, not least the fact that a woman was male property and therefore not the 'wronged part[y]'.⁹³ Rape cases were supposed to be heard in secular courts yet Miranda Chaytor notes that they were recorded just once every two years in the records of the Northern Circuit assizes.⁹⁴ Allegations of rape were occasionally raised before the church courts. F.G. Emmison notes that Essex assize records show very few indictments of rape, whereas several were raised within the ecclesiastical courts.⁹⁵

⁹¹ GRO, GDR/8, Case 1514, Margaret Fydler v William Hyll (1552). Italics my own.

⁹² O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 117.

⁹³ Walker, 'Rape, Acquittal and Culpability', 116-117.

⁹⁴ Chaytor, 'Narratives of Rape', 378.

⁹⁵ Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts*, p. 44.

Witnesses produced to defend Elizabeth's rape accusation made reference to the importance of her friends in providing support. Ebotta Langmead and Alice Kneebone testified that upon Elizabeth's struggles with Sampson, she cried out, 'telling him that if he did abuse her so she would [...] go home to her frendes', whereupon he let her go and made her promise 'that she should not tell anye of her frindes of it'. Witness William Kneebone added that afterwards, 'Elizabeth [...] made complaint to her frendes against Rawlyn for that he attempted to have carnall knowledge of her bodye'. Elizabeth's anonymous 'friends' were referred to repeatedly by witnesses. According to their depositions, Elizabeth invoked them at a time of particular vulnerability. During the attack, she desperately asserted her integration within a community of friends, warning Sampson that her friends would support her in pursuing action against him if he continued to abuse her. As Chaytor suggests, women who made allegations of rape were women who belonged; they were always engaged in useful production, providing evidence of their integration in economic and household structures.⁹⁶ Elizabeth, who was returning home from milking during the attack, did not just imply her integration into a household community. She also asserted her belonging within an established group of friends in order to thwart Sampson's advances by forewarning him of a strong network of individuals who would support her cause.

Her 'friends' here can be identified. Alice Kneebone, 24 years old at the time of her examination, deposed that Elizabeth came to her directly after the attack, 'weeping verie bitterlye' and 'she made the like complaint to this deponent and Elizabeth kneebone this deponentes brothers wife'. Elizabeth's support network was largely familial: Alice shared the defendant's surname and her deposition also revealed the additional support provided by her sister-in-law. Only fellow servant, 36-year-old Ebbota Langmead was outside this biological kin group, deposing that Elizabeth came directly to her and 'all the tyme she tould this deponent of the abuse of the sayd Rawlyn wept verie bitterlye and often tymes verie sorrowfully wronge her handes'. Servants in neighbouring households could develop close connections with fellow servants. Their working patterns and position within the household might provide shared experiences. The language

⁹⁶ Chaytor, 'Narratives of Rape', 379.

used in Ebbotta's deposition was particularly evocative; in describing Sampson's 'filthie attempt' to 'defloure her', the deposition suggests Ebbotta's outrage at his abuse of her friend. Frances Dolan warns against studying only the exceptional in church court depositions and notes that 'the appearance of a vivid adjective [...] might not necessarily signal authenticity'.⁹⁷ However, the use of language in Ebbotta's deposition in comparison to other depositions in the same case might suggest a particularly close bond between her and Elizabeth Kneebone.

Significantly, the final witness, William Kneebone did not name himself as a 'friend'. He deposed that '*he heard a reporte* That Elizabeth kneebone made a complaint to her frendes against Rawlyn'. Age 25 with the same family name, it is likely that William was also related to Elizabeth. His deposition represents an attempt to bolster her defence. As Gowing notes, 'both men and women witnesses were subject to attempts to discredit their words; but women were interrogated particularly closely on the truth of their words'.⁹⁸ Contemporary ideas of credibility were gendered. The addition of a male testimony to an exclusively female set of depositions added integrity to Elizabeth's cause. Beyond this legal agenda, however, the depositions reveal that the physical support group that Elizabeth turned to – Alice Kneebone and her sister-in-law, as well as servant Ebbotta Langmead – was comprised of solely female alliances.⁹⁹

Sociability

Some tension exists between modern and early modern understandings of 'friendship' and 'friends'. In a modern context, friendship does not usually denote such formalised relationships and networks of support as found in the matrimonial evidence detailed above. While friendship includes elements of emotional and even sometimes economic support, companionship and sociability are also important. Amanda Herbert notes that early modern women used the word 'friend' to 'describe some of their homosocial bonds', denoting 'positive social

⁹⁷ Dolan, *True Relations*, pp. 144-145.

⁹⁸ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 50.

⁹⁹ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1575, Sampson Rawlye v Elizabeth Kneebone (1583). Italics my own.

relationships between women'.¹⁰⁰ The definition does not differentiate between formal alliances within an organised friendship group and the informal relationships that developed through proximity, sociability and other lived experiences.

In church court depositions, individuals were typically labelled as friends only when part of a formal support group. Yet as Tadmor argues for the eighteenth century, the word 'friend' could encompass a spectrum of interpersonal relationships.¹⁰¹ Contextual reading of church court depositions nonetheless provides evidence of types of friendships beyond the formal friendship model. They record female servant sociability and social interactions with a range of individuals of different ages, social status and genders. Companionship and sociability represent particular aspects of friendship which may have overlapped with the formal supportive (and perhaps at times intrusive) types of friendship evidenced in cases of marriage mediation and negotiation.

For young servants, opportunities to socialise with individuals of a similar age may have been plentiful. Outside the patriarchal structure of service, youth subcultures have been identified across early modern Europe.¹⁰² Alexandra Shepard identifies a culture of nightwalking and fraternal bonds created through a collective desire for prowess amongst young men in early modern Cambridge.¹⁰³ Other historians note the collective socialisation of young people in alehouses. Amanda Flather observes that

it seems that alehouses and taverns were acceptable spaces for young women and men to use as part of courtship, perhaps explaining Gouge's acknowledgement that drinking houses were bearable places for young single women to be.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 171.

¹⁰² See Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), 41-75; Bob Scribner, 'Reformation, Carnival and the World Turned Upside-Down', *Social History*, 3 (1978), 303-329.

¹⁰³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, pp. 97, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Flather, *Gender and Space*, p. 116.

Beat Kümin argues that 'women did not need an excuse to visit public houses. Court records suggest that many simply enjoyed a sociable drink'.¹⁰⁵ Discussion of young people and leisure often centres on the relative freedom that traditional holidays permitted. Griffiths proposes that May Day was 'primarily a festival of unmarried young people', a colourful day of dance, mischief and song in which young people were allegedly allowed free rein to follow their 'preoccupation with courtship and love making'.¹⁰⁶

In some parishes, sociability with people of the same age was commonplace. In 1596, 40-year-old Robert Good of Tiverton in Devon, was recorded as having been a casual servant of Joanne Callowe's husband. He deposed that he

was in the danning place at Uton Arundall in Kerton [Crediton] parish where many maydes and young men did meete thether to dance, about two of the clock in the morning before it was daye and there having canndle light amongst them did see the sayd John hunnye fetch the keye of the hall dore of the house of the sayd Joanna Callowe with one Agnes a servannt of the same Joanna.

Agnes' presence at the dance until two o'clock in the morning indicates that servants were permitted leave from service to participate in activities specifically designed for the parish youth. At the age of 40, Robert's presence at the dance was not typical; he specified that the dances were designed for 'maydes and young men'.¹⁰⁷ Such events provided a forum in which young men and women from just one or several contiguous parishes might meet. In highlighting the importance of the proximity in terms of female friendship, Tim Reinke-Williams indicates that friendship was fostered not only on doorsteps within the neighbourhood but also through arranged communal activities including 'singing and dancing'.¹⁰⁸

The Crediton dance continued until the early hours of the morning. Sociability between young people often occurred in the small hours, coinciding with a period of the day where there were few or no jobs to do and the household had retired

¹⁰⁵ Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters: Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁷ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1830, Thomas Edbury v Joanne Callowe (1596).

¹⁰⁸ Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 129.

to bed. Sasha Handley argues that from the late seventeenth century, all levels of society increasingly socialised at night, although evidence found here suggests that young people were already at the heart of late-night sociability by the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰⁹ This sociability might take place in the households of wealthier members of the community where empty rooms were available at night compared to smaller households in which virtually all rooms doubled-up as bedrooms. In 1584, gentleman John Arundell of St Verrian in Cornwall deposed that his nephew

was at the sayd daniells house in a kitchen all the night longe with the sayd Joane daniell, an other mayde of the house one dorothey being in company with them.¹¹⁰

In 1630, witness Thomas Prichard, a 48-year-old baker of Gloucester deposed of a contract of marriage between servant Margaret Hill and Thomas Whittingham witnessed during late-night drinking 'in the howse of John Jones Esq'. A diverse range of people were involved including 22-year-old servant Anne Nashe; 18-year-old servant George Francombe; a 40-year-old married woman named Anne Addams; and a 35-year-old husbandman named Ludovic Jenkin. Thomas reported that the event took place 'upon St Clementhes day last being Munday [...] aboute tenn or eleaven of the clock at night' and added that 'the said Thomas Whittingham was drunck at the tyme of the making of the foresaid contract & did not well knowe what he did'. Frequent references to drinking by all of the witnesses in the case suggest the integration of servants within early modern drinking culture.¹¹¹

The range of people with whom servants Anne Nashe and Margaret Hill (the plaintiff) interacted indicates their shared experiences of sociability with the wider community. Sociability was not restricted to people from the same age or occupational group. Rabigia Bennet worked in service in Exeter in 1560 and

¹⁰⁹ Importantly, Handley points out that evening sociability did not replace the two phases of sleep that characterised the early modern night time. Sleep occurred in two stages with a break in between, usually between the hours of 12am and 1am. This was presumably also the case in the earlier period of this study. See Sasha Handley, 'Sociable Sleeping in Early Modern England, 1660-1760', *History*, 98 (2013), 80-81.

¹¹⁰ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1625, John Trevanian v Joanne Daniell (1584).

¹¹¹ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1604, Margaret Hill v Thomas Whittingham (1630).

deposed that she attended an ale in Buckland-in-the-Moor, both her parish of birth and the home of her intended husband.¹¹² Church ales, which declined as a result of the Reformation and the imposition of 'a tighter distinction between worldly recreation and godly devotion' were festive occasions held to raise money for the church. Full of entertainment, including music, dramatic performances, dancing and drinking, they are just one example of collective sociability in which the entire parish and beyond was engaged.¹¹³ Young people also engaged with the public performance of punishment, including ridings and charivaris which sought to shame those whose behaviour was immoral or disorderly.¹¹⁴ Keith Wrightson shows the importance of these 'formal festivities' such as ales and dances, as well as 'less familiar' life-cycle rituals including weddings and funerals.¹¹⁵ Female servants were recorded in the depositions as attendees of these events: in 1571, servant Ann Jacob told witness Thomas Reynoldes, a blacksmith of Cheltenham that she returned home to her master's house from her brother's wedding and 'being somewhat late in the evening [...] found my Mr [...] and Alyc Clerk in bed together'.¹¹⁶

Wrightson also highlights the significance of less formal sociability.¹¹⁷ The proximity of a female servant to her neighbours could foster friendships that were less one-sided than the formal support group model of friendship suggests. In 1594, 24-year-old servant Elizabeth Backer of Newent in Gloucestershire deposed that she heard Francis Donne, her neighbour, defame Anne Williams. Frances told her husband Christopher that 'he should not have riden to [Tewkesbury] fayre with so arrant whoore as the said Anne Williams'. Elizabeth explained to the court that

she went voluntarylie of her owne accord to the said donnes howse dowing
leaste the said Christofer donne wold have heardly [hardly] used his wife viz
Francis donne for speaking of the said speeches & to perswade her the said

¹¹² DHC, Chanter 855, Case 288, Rabigia Bennet v William Baker (1560).

¹¹³ Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie, *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 169.

¹¹⁴ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 203.

¹¹⁵ Wrightson, *English Society*, pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁶ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1703, Alice Clerk v Anne Jacob (1571).

¹¹⁷ Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 42.

Frances to refrayne to utter those heard [hard] speeches againste her husband.

While deposing against Frances, Elizabeth's narrative indicates a concern for her neighbour. Her fear that Christopher would beat his wife for her slanderous words caused her to visit the house to monitor the situation, placing herself at the heart of the dispute.¹¹⁸ Female servants were not always the recipients of protection and emotional support; sometimes, they could provide advice, guidance and support to others.

While church ales, weddings and other forms of arranged sociability were common to most parishes, some forms of youthful sociability were perhaps restricted to larger settlements. Arranged dances were likely to have been more common in towns with higher numbers of young people. The nature of female servants' sociability could depend on the type of settlement in which servants lived. Opportunities were perhaps limited in range for servant Isott Riches of Rockbeare in Devon, whose interactions were outlined in detail by witnesses in 1568. Rockbeare was a parish of scattered farmsteads that even 200 years later was described as a 'small, stragglng village'.¹¹⁹ The number of young people was likely to have been low and therefore Isott may have been one of the youngest members of the parish living outside a parental home. A sense of guardianship characterised the majority of the relationships recorded in the depositions between Isott and others. Sir George Martyn and his young wife Margaret assumed responsibility for Isott's economic and social wellbeing. Despite the fact that Margaret was just 26 years old, her social and marital status imposed a marked difference between herself and Isott. She chaperoned Isott's courtship with Frances Yarde while they sat together in a meadow, and spent the night in her bed at the request of Doctor Gammon, Isott's master, when the rest of the household was away. Margaret's husband took responsibility for asking Frances to return Isott's purse, indicating the role of care he took in reclaiming her lost money.

¹¹⁸ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1327, *Anne Williams v Francis Donne* (1594).

¹¹⁹ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon*, 2nd edn (Sheffield: White, 1878), p. 681.

It is unsurprising then that Dionisia Hobbes, Doctor Gammon's servant in his Exeter house deposed that when Isott was instructed to come to Exeter, she sought to insert herself into recreational practices. She begged Dionisia to accompany her to Mr Stephyn's house, where 'Mr frances yarde hath promised to gyve us a quart of wyne'. Isott's search for sociability was a concern for Dionisia, who replied to her 'I am lothe to go thether for it [is] almost by your Mrs dore and it will come to his eares that you have bene theare', although she accompanied Isott nonetheless.¹²⁰

Isott sought sociability while away from her employer's watchful gaze, indicating the relative lack of freedom that some female servants may have been given to establish friendships. In 1575, Jane Sherford of Cheltenham brought her former servant Alice Hunte before the Gloucester church court, charging her with defamation. Witness William Stubbe, a tailor from the same town, testified on Jane's behalf, deposing that Alice had 'came uppon an arrant [errand]' to his house and

complaining th[a]t she could not have libertye to goe abroad at her pleasure [...] she told this deponent and his wife th[a]t walter harrys of London kept her the saied Jane her dame and when he come thither to her house they went comonlye to a chamber alone and th[a]t she the saied Jane was his whore.

Alice had perhaps accrued a reputation for idleness as William suggested that her mistress would not be happy that she had stayed in his house for so long. It is unclear whether Alice's idleness or defamatory words were the final straw for Jane Sherford: the second witness produced in the case, 20-year-old butcher Walter Farrynton deposed that Alice had been dismissed from Jane's service. Visiting Walter's mother's house at supper time, Alice again defamed her then former mistress for which she was rebuked by Walter's mother. Walter concluded that Alice was 'scarce well thought of'.

Despite the negative relationships that Alice built, she nonetheless attempted to integrate herself within the community. Not only did she express her desire for more freedom and 'libertye', she also used excuses such as delivering errands

¹²⁰ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

as a means by which to socialise with other parishioners.¹²¹ Capp notes that visits made by neighbours under the pretence of borrowing an item, for example, 'might cover an essentially social visit'.¹²² Alice's behaviour mirrored that of her neighbours. Service could therefore be an integrating, not isolating experience as opportunities for sociability were not limited to organised events and occasions. Relationships and friendships could be fostered through work-related visits to other households.

Conclusions

The study of female servants' relationships with members of the household in which they worked provides a limited understanding of the range of friendships and support networks that a woman in service drew upon. The types of relationships they forged with masters, mistresses and other household members were mixed and varied, but ultimately did not define the female servant. Women in service established other types of relationships, and the range of groups within the early modern community that they referred to indicate the array of people they might interact with on a daily basis. Female servants were ubiquitous in early modern communities; depositional evidence suggests that most witnesses who referred to these women knew them by name. Only in very specific circumstances, such as when they were described as part of a group or within the context of illegitimacy, were full names dropped.

Women in service typically knew the parties on whose behalf they testified well. Despite their supposed transience within early modern communities, the majority had known them for more than a fifth of their lifetimes. Length of residence in a parish often matched the length of time a servant had known her fellow parishioners, indicating that movement to a new position in service typically involved interaction with a new group of people. However, in some cases, co-residence in a parish was not connected to how long a female servant had known the parties; this was particularly true in towns, which contained a web of

¹²¹ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1234, Jane Sherford v Alice Hunte (1575).

¹²² Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 57.

neighbourhoods to which the servant belonged to just one but could interact with many.

A full picture of friendship is not constructed by studying the relationships between female servants and those they labelled as 'friends' in church court depositions. In an early modern context, the word 'friend' constituted a myriad of relationships. However, use of the word 'friend' in depositions denoted a member of a formal support group who provided advice, guidance and economic support, particularly in key life-cycle events such as marriage. Evidence of sociability within the communities in which female servants lived and worked helps to furnish a more complete picture of female servants' friendships. The range of people that female servants socialised with highlights the opportunities that women in service had to establish friendships based on companionship as well as support.

5.2. Connected communities

Traditional scholarship of the organisation of former societies situates community within a pre-modern context. The oppositional model of community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*), developed by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887, suggests that community was built on links of kinship and the ‘sentiment of belonging to a group (blood, place, mind)’.¹²³ Superseded by society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ‘community’ is accordingly rooted in the idea of a highly localised, inward-looking village structure. By contrast, ‘society’ is a modern construct that emerged when kinship links were broken and ‘community’ destroyed as a result of industrialisation, urbanisation and centralisation.¹²⁴ This linear view of change held considerable weight throughout much of the twentieth century, with Lawrence Stone, Keith Thomas and David Underdown among its key proponents.¹²⁵ Early modern villages were described as ‘isolated’, assumed to display little evidence of the interconnectivity that Chapter 4.1 suggests.¹²⁶ The transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is therefore characterised as an increasing movement away from localism towards centralisation.

Richard Smith contends that the *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* model does not recognise the influence of the central state on medieval communities, which he argues were not always ‘closed’. Institutions such as medieval courts were not ‘isolated entities’ and men ‘were prepared to use elements of the nation’s administrative and legal machinery for securing their assumed rights’.¹²⁷ Shepard and Phil Withington argue that the idealised, retrospective, and

¹²³ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Association: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1887).

¹²⁴ Alan Macfarlane, ‘History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities’, *Social History*, 2 (1977), 631.

¹²⁵ See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 123-150; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Hamondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 672; David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 17-18.

¹²⁶ G.E. Fussell and K. R. Fussell, *The English Countrywoman: A Farmhouse Social History: The Internal Aspect of Rural Life AD 1500-1900* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1953), p. 17.

¹²⁷ Richard Smith, ‘Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays’, in A.R.H. and Gregory Baker, D. (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 176.

fundamentally rose-tinted depiction of medieval village life, organised around the principles of *Gemeinschaft*, fails to account for variation in experiences of community in pre-modern England.¹²⁸ As anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen notes, the dichotomy between ‘community’ and ‘society’ is not a representative characterisation of different social structures across time and place. He argues that there are no clear boundaries, but rather ‘grey zones and differences in degree’.¹²⁹ In explaining the process of change from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, historians make the critical mistake of assuming homogeneity across all places at one time, centring their discussions on the principles of centralisation, authority and control.

A further problem in the way in which the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is studied is that historians fail to draw a distinction between ‘settlement’ and ‘community’. Pythian-Adams notes that ‘spatially definable’ boundaries of community, including town and county or shire, ‘represent no more than a rough and ready conceptual hierarchy’ of social links. He argues that even today, local governments unsuccessfully place societies within geographical jurisdictions ‘only to find that [...] many people have swum safely through’ jurisdictional boundaries, demonstrating ‘the inadequacy of most administrative units as objects for societal analysis’.¹³⁰ When using the term ‘community’, historians often mean ‘settlement’, denoting co-residence in a geographical location and, against the backdrop of the seventeenth-century poor laws, the legal right to claim relief from a particular administrative entity such as the ecclesiastical parish. ‘Community’, which is created through economic ties, emotional bonds, cultural or religious contacts and shared friendship groups, cannot be implied through settlement. Care must be taken not to indiscriminately equate the two; as Macfarlane indicates, “community” may be geographically

¹²⁸ Alexandra Shepard and Phil J. Withington, 'Introduction: Communities in Early Modern England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil J. Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 4-5.

¹²⁹ Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues*, p. 38.

¹³⁰ Pythian-Adams, *Re-thinking English Local History*, pp. 45-46.

based or it may not [...] it may be mistaken to demarcate the area of interest on the basis of physical space'.¹³¹

While inclusion in a community is not always geographically defined, for most early modern people, communities were often situated in the places they lived. The village or the parish was 'the relevant social system'.¹³² However, this administrative area often contained several communities, of which not all parishioners were members and not all members were parishioners. In a modern context, Hylland Eriksen notes that 'the first teenager who went to secondary school became a participant in a [social] system of larger scale than his friends were involved in'.¹³³ The number of connections and relationships created by the individual expand as the scale of social interaction increases. As the most mobile members of early modern society, female servants frequently engaged with a scale of community larger than was common. When leaving a position in service, they did not just leave behind their employment or even the household in which they served. They departed from intricate networks of sociability, neighbourliness and support that defined early modern communities. Their physical departures could undoubtedly destabilise these connections; however, emotional bonds, attachments and friendships were not altogether lost. The ways in which communities intersected and extended over parish boundaries can be studied through the lens of female service.

Severed connections

Illegitimacy was one reason why female servants might leave a parish. Around 14 per cent of the 508 female servants identified in the depositions became pregnant during service. Many of these left the parish, either through choice or by force. While pregnant servants represented just a small proportion of women in service, studying the circumstances of their departures offers an insight into the way in which they were perceived by communities and the way in which communities perceived themselves.

¹³¹ Macfarlane, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', 633.

¹³² Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues*, p. 103.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Inclusion within a community was not solely predicated on residence within a parish; however, right to settlement could nonetheless colour the collective attitudes of community members. The origins of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century culture of xenophobia identified by Keith Snell are found in the 1598 Elizabethan Poor Laws, which were established to deal with vagrancy and the relief of the poor.¹³⁴ The legislation placed responsibility for the poor onto the parish itself and levied a tax on parishioners to pay for the relief of those who were unable to work.¹³⁵ The guiding principle of these laws and the piecemeal legislation that pre-dated it was that everyone had a parish of settlement to which they could be 'returned' if they became vagrant and, consequently, a financial burden on the parish in which they lived.¹³⁶ Included within the vagrant population were unmarried migrant mothers, who had worked in service and became pregnant. Church court records document many examples of young women, often female servants, who were cited for engaging in premarital sex resulting in pregnancy.¹³⁷ In 1599, Katherine Symons, servant of Richard Sharpe of Brimpsfield in Gloucestershire was cited to appear before the court as 'she had a childe at Cleve by ye parsons man'. The legal responsibility for her appearance at court lay with her master and therefore Richard was also cited.¹³⁸

Poor law legislation encouraged parishioners to assume a collective, inward-looking interest in economic self-preservation, passing the financial costs of supporting a fatherless child and single mother onto another parish. As Gowing notes, 'sanctions against illegitimacy were an integral part of the system, meant to protect parishes from the burden of poor children and single mothers'.¹³⁹ Policing of illegitimate pregnancy, well documented in Gowing's *Common Bodies*, helped to forearm parishioners against the economic burden that a pregnant

¹³⁴ K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 39, 81-161.

¹³⁵ 'The Relief of the Poor (39 Eliz I c.3) (1598)' and 'For the Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars (39 Eliz I c.4) (1598) summarised in Slack, *The English Poor Law*, pp. 52-53.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹³⁷ For examples from the Gloucester church court, see GDR/40, GDR/51 and GDR/68.

¹³⁸ GRO, GDR/87, *Office v Katherine Symons* (1599); GRO, GDR/87, *Office v Richard Sharpe* (1599).

¹³⁹ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 117.

single woman might place upon them.¹⁴⁰ As Wrightson suggests, the parochial relief system 'presupposed membership of a community', providing 'a framework of interaction involving every level of parish society'.¹⁴¹ The system of poor relief defined 'the boundaries of community by the recognition of settlement and entitlement'.¹⁴²

Evidence from the Gloucester church court depositions in particular suggests the importance of conveying pregnant female servants over not only parish but county borders. Gowing notes that in late seventeenth-century Hereford, a master attempted to force his pregnant servant out of the county.¹⁴³ Susan Fourd who worked as a servant in Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire was 'delivered of her bastard childe in the County of Wiltshire at the howse of one George Speck' around 1622.¹⁴⁴ Agnes Debbett was 'removed to one William Whitacres house in Herefordshire where she was delivered', having worked as a servant in the parish of Badgeworth in Gloucestershire in 1588.¹⁴⁵ In 1614, witnesses deposed that John Jones of Newent in Gloucestershire arranged for his sister-in-law, Mary Wyman (alias Carpenter), a servant-widow who became pregnant after her husband's death to be 'carried into Monmouthshere there to be delivered of her bastard childe'.¹⁴⁶ In 1575, Elizabeth Godwyn brought a case against her former master, William Jackson of Staunton in the same county, as she claimed he had got her pregnant and promised to marry her. Yeoman William Stevens testified that despite promising to make arrangements for their marriage, William Jackson

carried hir [Elizabeth] away to Morton in Worstershir to one of his cozens
Henry Rogers and afterward sent her ther iii [3] loopes of wheat towards her

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 52-81.

¹⁴¹ Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish', p. 21.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ L Gowing, 'Ordering the Body: Illegitimacy and Female Authority in Seventeenth-Century England', in M. J. Braddick and John Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 58-59.

¹⁴⁴ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1156, Dorothy Greene v Richard Greene (1625).

¹⁴⁵ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1257, John White v John Thairer (1592).

¹⁴⁶ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1074, William Heywood v Mary Wyeman (1616).

fynding, and the said Rogers would not keep hir any longer and sold the wheate.

The distance from Staunton to Birtsmorton or Castlemorton (it is not specified which of these two parishes she was taken to) was no more than 8 kilometres. The importance of crossing the boundary into a different county, however, was clear.¹⁴⁷

A tension exists in studying the attitudes of people who expelled pregnant servants from the parish and those who harboured them or assisted in trying to secure a marriage for them. Not only did the poor laws direct that unmarried mothers should be returned to their parish of settlement, community members were also instructed to report illegitimate pregnancy to the church courts to ensure punishment. In deciding upon the appropriate treatment of these women, early modern parishioners had to consider the implications of secular law and parochial relief, ecclesiastical law and morality, as well as their own consciences. Martin Ingram suggests that immoral acts were 'not regarded as matters for the private conscience but as social and political ills that were subject to the sanction of public authority'.¹⁴⁸ Rebecca Probert adds that parochial relief 'was designed not only to discourage illicit sex, but also to ensure that offenders had no support from the community'.¹⁴⁹

However, Marjorie McIntosh notes an increase in the number of prosecutions of harbourers from the late fifteenth century and suggests a dissonance between new attitudes of evicting unmarried mothers from the parish and the traditional charitable approach to assisting the poor and vagrant.¹⁵⁰ Despite community controls on monitoring illegitimate pregnancy and accompanying mechanisms for punishment in the church courts, several men and women were charged with the unlawful harbouring of unmarried mothers, frequently allowing them to give birth

¹⁴⁷ GRO, GDR/25, Case 1745, Elizabeth Godwyn v William Jackson (1572).

¹⁴⁸ Martin Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', in Adam Fox, Steve Hindle, and Paul Griffiths (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 48.

¹⁴⁹ Rebecca Probert, *The Changing Legal Regulation of Cohabitation: From Fornicators to Family, 1600-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 83-84.

before leaving the parish unpunished.¹⁵¹ Richard Helmholz notes that some harbourers claimed they did not know the woman was pregnant, citing examples of pregnant women claiming to be sick and begging for a place to stay. Other harbourers, however, admitted their knowledge of the illegitimate pregnancy but were 'moved to pitie' to take in these women.¹⁵² Sometimes pregnant unmarried women were unknown to the harbourer. Elizabeth Howell of Kentchurch in Herefordshire deposed in 1616 that a widowed servant who 'was called by the name of Mary' appeared at the house of Anne Jones in Monmouth and was delivered of a child conceived outside wedlock.¹⁵³ In other instances, these women were well known within the community. Gowing argues that in infanticide cases, those closest to the pregnant woman such as 'other servants and mistresses' were often complicit, while 'those outside the household were readier to confront, challenge and search those they suspected of illegitimate pregnancy'.¹⁵⁴ This was not always the case. In 1590, Edmund Evenesse was charged with keeping Jane Powell, the mother of an illegitimate child, in his house. Edmund deposed that she

departed from Mr Machins service and came to this examinate house & there remayned two or three dayes & no more & saith [...] that he harbored her in consyderacion the sayd Jane Powell tould this examine that her Mr & her Mrs dyd intend to make maryadge [between her and the child's father].¹⁵⁵

While Kussmaul notes that pregnancy was not sufficient grounds for a servant's departure, both she and Richard Adair note the frequency with which servants either left of their own accord or were turned away by their employers.¹⁵⁶ Employers could, however, also be a source of support. As the case above illustrates, marriage was considered a preferable solution to an illegitimate pregnancy. Not only did Edmund attempt to shield Jane from punishment, her

¹⁵¹ R. H. Helmholz, 'Harboring Sexual Offenders: Ecclesiastical Courts and Controlling Misbehavior', *Journal of British Studies*, 37 (1998), 262.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁵³ GRO, GDR/122, Case 1074, William Heywood v Mary Wyeman (1616).

¹⁵⁴ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁵ GRO, GDR/65, Case 497, Office v Edmund Evenesse (1590).

¹⁵⁶ See Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy, and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 84; Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, p. 32.

employers also attempted to remedy her pregnancy by marriage. Marriage entailed a change of social status. Bridal pregnancy, although still punishable in the church courts, was commonly accepted within early modern communities.¹⁵⁷ A 1560 matrimonial dispute provides further evidence that employers attempted to secure marriages for their pregnant servants. In some cases, this may have been due to masters being the fathers of the illegitimate child. However, this was not always the case. In testifying in the court, Phillip Bowden of Witheridge in Devon confirmed that Richard Squier had promised to marry his servant, Juliana, who was allegedly pregnant with Richard's child. He deposed that he had asked him 'how sayst thow art thow contented to marrye with the said Julian and the syde Richard made answeare and sayd ye yf I shall not have your displeasure'. Upon the making of the contract, Phillip deposed that he gave the couple 2d each. The involvement of an employer in securing marriage for their servants shows that exclusion from the community was not automatic.¹⁵⁸ Servants were not indiscriminately turned away; other solutions were sometimes sought.

Other evidence suggests entitlement to settlement and parish relief does not adequately explain the removal of unmarried women in service from the parish. The intricacies of early modern community, credit and belonging contribute to a more complex picture. In 1587, a parish constable named Roger Chardon was cited to appear before the Exeter court to answer a charge against him of adultery with his servant, Joanne Hull. Witnesses deposed that Roger and his wife made covert arrangements for Joanne to be sent away after she fell pregnant. The journey she made from St. Sidwells parish in Exeter to Taunton in Somerset was around 44 kilometres in distance. Witness Richard Hitchens deposed that he surreptitiously followed Joanne and her paid chaperone, Avice Frier, to Taunton, where, upon mistaking him in the dark for another man, Avice asked him to tell Roger and his wife upon his return to Exeter

that Joane is well [...] and that they doe sett their harts at rest and feare nothing of the matter [...] and so the woorse comne to the worse they shall never [hear] a feather springe of it.

¹⁵⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 157, 219-220.

¹⁵⁸ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 289, Juliana Hedgeman v Richard Squier (1560).

Richard noted that Joanne's pregnancy was 'notorious and well known unto most of the parishioners of St Sidwells'; however, Roger and his wife nonetheless made attempts to conceal it by displacing Joanne as far away from their home as possible, breaking connections both with her and Roger's unborn child. When Avice returned from Taunton, Roger arranged for her to be conveyed 'out of the Countrie' for fear that she was likely to be apprehended by a constable, thus unravelling his deception. Roger's reputation was at stake here. Gowing argues that 'the whole process of being formally recognised as the father of a bastard brought respectable men into question'.¹⁵⁹ However, she contends that ideas of male and female honour were 'incommensurable', and that female but not male reputation was primarily bound up in sexuality.¹⁶⁰ Shepard, on the other hand, argues that many husbands 'felt deeply implicated in and disgraced by accusations of sexual misconduct against their wives, and were often the sponsors of legal action to clear their names'.¹⁶¹ In this case, legal action found Roger despite his attempt to conceal his affair.

Roger's concerns were not disconnected from the financial burden of an illegitimate child upon the parish. Roger undoubtedly could not afford to maintain Joanne's baby. His concerns nonetheless ran deeper, his motivations partly lying in retaining his social standing within the community as a constable. Aware of the social repercussions of denying paternity and the hostility he would face in attempting to pass the financial burden of the baby onto his fellow parishioners, sending Joanne away was the only solution. The deposition of Roger Courtes of St. Sidwells in Exeter further highlights these motivations. He deposed that around one year after Joanne was sent to Taunton, he saw her coming through the field while he was travelling through the parish of Rewe, just outside the city of Exeter. Roger Coutes deposed that Joanne told him 'I have Lackt a yere and more to save one mans honestye', directly referring to Roger Chardon's attempted self-preservation. Joanne told him that the child was now dead, but affirmed that Roger Chardon had been its father and had sent her away. She allegedly declared 'I canne staye away no Longer for I have nether hose nor

¹⁵⁹ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 185.

¹⁶⁰ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 110.

¹⁶¹ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p. 154.

shoes and I will complayn of him to the Justices'. Roger Coutes deposed that Joanne sought the sum of 30s in recompense from Roger Chardon, assuring him that she would trouble him no further. She promised if 'I may have so much of him I may marye with this man poynting to one in the company', who Roger Coutes did not know.

Poverty and a sense of injustice encouraged Joanne to return to Exeter to restore her own economic and social position. Having been sent away to Taunton with scarcely enough money to clothe herself, she sought monetary recompense to purchase an honourable life as a married woman. Although she had been excluded from the parish by her master, Joanne's reflection upon the situation reveals that she had left not of her own accord, nor by the wishes of the community, but simply 'to save one mans honestye'.¹⁶² Gowing notes that some parishioners petitioned officials when pregnant women were poorly treated, demonstrating the role of care that communities could exercise towards young women in service who became pregnant.¹⁶³ Exclusion of female servants from a community was therefore not simply driven by administrative or institutional legislation.

For the female servant, being sent away upon discovery of pregnancy did not always entail a permanent disconnection from the community. Some depositions described female servants who were secreted away in another parish for the baby's delivery, before the servant mother returned without the child to the same position in service. In 1605, John Roberts, the rector of Rudford in Gloucestershire deposed that once Margaret Gilbert, the servant of gentleman William Locksmithe, 'was delivered of her childe she came home agayne' to serve in William's house.¹⁶⁴ Adair notes that sending a servant away to bear her child was occasionally 'a temporary expedient' to 'circumvent church discipline'.¹⁶⁵

Connections with servants sent away due to pregnancy were maintained in other ways. In 1568, servant Isott Riches was sent away from the parish of Rockbeare

¹⁶² DHC, Chanter 862, Case 1702, Office v Roger Chardon (1587).

¹⁶³ Gowing, 'Ordering the Body', p. 61.

¹⁶⁴ GRO, GDR/95, Case 728, William Locksmithe v Robert Provis (1605).

¹⁶⁵ Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy, and Marriage*, p. 84.

in Devon to Kilmington in the same county after becoming pregnant. While the majority of witnesses did not know Isott's destination, her former mistress, Katherine Brooke deposed that 'she craved of her brother xii [12] d for charitie sake that she mought send her [Isott] and dyd send it to her'.¹⁶⁶ Isott had served Katherine for two years before she was passed into the service of Doctor Gammon, Katherine's brother. The compassion Katherine felt towards Isott is further evidenced in the deposition she provided against the man suspected of fathering her child, indicating that some former mistresses felt a continued sense of duty towards the servants they dismissed. Gowing notes the protectiveness that mistresses could display towards their pregnant female servants; one Yorkshire mistress refused to allow her servant's breasts to be examined by her mother and neighbours.¹⁶⁷

Unwelcome connections

Connections with a place of former residence were not always positive. Entering employment in a new parish could allow female servants not only a chance to escape oppressive, corrupt or abusive employers, but also their own pasts. Capp notes that London offered a runaway servant plenty of opportunities for both employment and concealment, while Gowing stresses that large numbers of rural migrants who were subsumed into London's urban society raised concerns about immorality in a city full of anonymous people.¹⁶⁸ Anonymity was harder to find and maintain in rural areas. Early modern rural parishioners connected with people from their surrounding areas, establishing a collective identity that extended beyond the parish. Although the parish could be an important delineator of identity, it was sometimes an arbitrary measure. Witnesses frequently made reference to one's 'country'. David Rollison suggests that 'country', was defined in early modern society as a region or area 'having more or less definite limits in relation to human occupation e.g. owned by the same lord or proprietor, or inhabited by people of the same race, dialect, occupation, etc.'¹⁶⁹ Wood adds that similarities across regions were constructed by people's

¹⁶⁶ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

¹⁶⁷ Gowing, 'Ordering the Body', p. 48.

¹⁶⁸ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 178; Gowing, *Common Bodies*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶⁹ Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society*, p. 16.

everyday social and economic interactions across their 'country', an area he defines as 'larger than the manor or parish, but much smaller than the county'. Spheres of exchange and interaction, Wood suggests, were present in 'migration patterns, kinship links, credit networks, gossip, folklore, commerce, marriage horizons, labour markets, administrative divisions, intercommoning arrangements and road and river networks'.¹⁷⁰

Knowledge of particular customs and traditions could spread to other parishes and beyond. In 1574, yeoman Thomas Goode, recorded as a witness in a church seating dispute in the parish of Bromsberrow in Gloucestershire, explained his knowledge of the social hierarchy of seating in the church, 'he being born and dwelling at dymock which is but about ii [2] Miles distant from Bromesborough churche'.¹⁷¹ Not only was customary knowledge disseminated beyond parish boundaries, other types of information spread across relatively large areas. Fox notes that oral rumours 'could originate, spread and seize people's minds'; he outlines the geographical reach of a rumour that King Charles I was dead that circulated in the summer of 1628 in South Wales and spread across the Bristol Channel to Cornwall.¹⁷²

The boundlessness of how far a rumour or story could travel was summed up in 1567 by witness John Stowford of Dolton in Devon, who deposed in a matrimonial dispute that the 'rumour of the contrye is that they shulld marry to gather', referring to servant Alice Pawe and her intended husband, John Brennelcombe.¹⁷³ 'Country' had no fixed geographical boundary and its definition shifted from place to place and from person to person. Some witnesses were aware of how far gossip and news travelled: Martin Tresteyne of Ruan Langham in Cornwall, testifying in a 1584 matrimonial dispute, deposed that

the fame and reporte is not onely in the parish of Ruan Lanyhorne but as [he] thincketh nere within tenne miles compasse That the sayd Joanne daniell and

¹⁷⁰ Wood, *The Memory of the People*, p. 99.

¹⁷¹ GRO, GDR/32, Case 1187, John Bramedge v Guy Grove (1574).

¹⁷² Fox, 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion', 613-614.

¹⁷³ DHC, Chanter 856, Case 782, Alice Pawe v John Brennelcombe (1567).

Richard Rawe live incontinently together and this deponent hathe hard the same diverse and sundry tymes.¹⁷⁴

In a largely illiterate society, oral transmission of rumour and news was probably the most common method of dissemination. Richard Cust notes that provincial centres must have been sites of exchange of news and gossip, functioning in a similar way to London's Exchange and St. Paul's Walk.¹⁷⁵ The reputations of rural female servants were likely carried over parish boundaries by employers and parishioners who visited these common locations of news exchange. Within her discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hiring fairs, Kussmaul suggests that these formal centres of contracting employment may not have been the forums in which servants and masters gained knowledge of one another. Social centres such as alehouses and markets were more likely to be sites of exchange in terms of news, gossip and the accreditation of strangers.¹⁷⁶

Unwelcome connections with former communities in which female servants had lived and served could be retained through rumour and gossip. In 1637, Elizabeth Bab of Bradninch in Devon testified in a defamation dispute, deposing that she had heard John Saunders call Alice Stephens a whore. Elizabeth provided a brief history of her employment in service. At the time of her examination, she was servant to Alice Stephens' father, Clement Rudley, but had previously served Alice and her husband William. Yet Elizen Cooke, the vicar of Dawlish, revealed that Elizabeth's career in service pre-dated her employment with Alice and William Stephens, deposing that

Elizabeth Bab the daughter of James Babb of Dawlish aforesaid about 3 yeeres sithence was a servant unto one William Painter thelder of dawlish and after that was servant to one in Kenton (whose name as this deponent hath heard was Kenwood) And saith that by Credible report the said Elizabeth Bab was whiles she was servant to the said Kenwood unlawfully begotten with Childe and was delivered of a base Childe as he hath heard but who was the reputed father thereof he knoweth not.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1625, John Travonian v Joanne Daniell (1584).

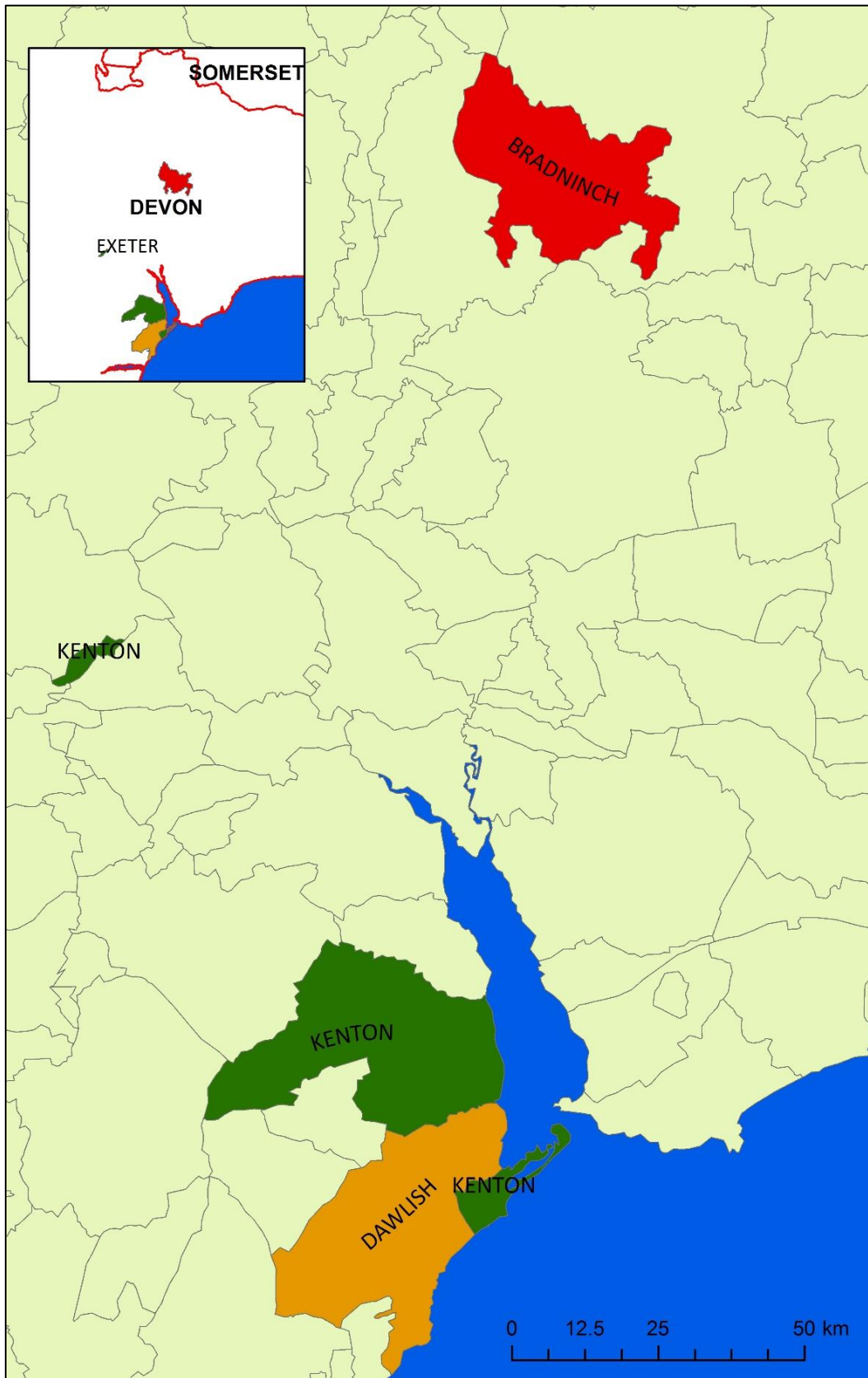
¹⁷⁵ Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 112 (1986), 70.

¹⁷⁶ Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁷⁷ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2072, Alice Stephens v Caleb Saunders (1637).

Other witnesses from Bradninch further deposed that Elizabeth 'had a Bastard & so ran away from her owne Country'. Shame clearly played some part in the departure of a pregnant servant from the parish. It is likely that her child did not survive as none of the witnesses referred to it living. Elizabeth's reputation as an illegitimate mother was not confirmed through the physical proof of a child; rather, it was established through gossip and hearsay. Figure 5.1 shows both the distance over which Elizabeth's reputation extended and also how far she travelled. Her movement north through Exeter and beyond demonstrates her search for anonymity. How far stories could travel depended on settlement patterns as well as the economic and social connections between communities. Witnesses rarely specified the source of their knowledge, remaining deliberately vague perhaps to avoid implicating others in a defamation dispute. Elizen Cooke's reference to hearing of Elizabeth's illegitimate pregnancy by 'Credible report' demonstrates the imprecision of the source of his evidence.

Figure 5.1. Map of the parishes in which Elizabeth Bab had lived and in which parishioners knew of her illegitimate child.



Irrespective of where the information had come from, sexual miscreants were invariably regarded as dishonest and disorderly. Gowing argues that 'sexual dishonesty was visualized as polluting the honesty of women, households and neighbourhoods'.¹⁷⁸ Good household order relied on the honesty and good reputation of its members. The tiniest hint of suspicion that a female servant had engaged in premarital sex threatened the integrity of the household in which she served as well as the servant's employment prospects. In 1624, Mary Higges of Sandford near Cheltenham was brought before the Gloucester church court for calling servant, Mary Pie, 'a welche whore [who] had had a bastard & had milke in her breste when she came to dwell with her Mr Powell'. The defamation was partly a xenophobic outburst. In other church court depositions, Welsh people were similarly defamed: in 1601, Christopher Hornedge of Matson in Gloucestershire branded Mr Evans 'a scurvy welshe knave and [...] welshe roge'.¹⁷⁹ Being Welsh was noteworthy; asked what he knew of a man named George Miller, William Pennyne of Harberton in Devon responded in his 1578 examination that 'he knoweth only the person of the sayd Georg miller [is] welch, his behaviour and conditions he knoweth not'.¹⁸⁰ George had lived in the parish of Berry Pomeroy in Devon for at least five years, yet his Welsh accent continued to set him apart from the rest of the community.

Mary Higges' defamatory words framed Mary Pie's nationality as 'otherness', thus limiting her entitlement to belong to the community of Sandford. However, the slander was part of a wider dispute. Countersuit witness Thomas Higges deposed of the ongoing feud between Mary Pie's employers, John and Mary Powell, and Mary Higges and her husband, Anthony. Thomas told the court that the Powells had attempted to sue Anthony at the Court of the Marches of Wales and that the Powells did 'envy mallice and hate' them.¹⁸¹ In defaming Mary Pie, Mary Higges attempted to bring the entire household into disrepute. By claiming that Mary had milk in her breasts when she entered service, Mary Higges tapped into a universally recognised understanding of pregnancy in early modern

¹⁷⁸ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁹ GRO, GDR/89, Case 331, *Evans v Christopher Hornedge* (1601).

¹⁸⁰ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, *John Morris v John Sparcks* (1578).

¹⁸¹ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1126, *Mary Pie v Mary Higges* (1624).

England. As Gowing shows, the pregnancy of a single woman was of interest to the whole community. Women therefore took it upon themselves to police the bodies of unmarried young women, touching, examining and noting any indications of pregnancy, including signs of breast milk.¹⁸² Characterising Mary as an outsider who had arrived in the parish pregnant with an illegitimate child presented her as an undesirable member of the community of Sandford, who had been permitted entry by her employers. Rumour was not always a means by which communities were connected. Sometimes rumours were started to keep members out.

News of misdemeanour might also travel back to a servant's previous place of residence. In 1607, Elizabeth Nurberie (alias Wooles) of Newent deposed that

she hath knowen Jane Jenkins [...] hath had a bastard by one John Redd heade aboute half a yeare since & hath heard that she was putt into the stockes in St Marye parishe in Gloucester [...] but for what offence she knoweth not.

Jane Jenkins was a former servant in the parish of Newent, but resided in Gloucester at the time of her examination. Her deposition recorded her difficult relationship with Jane Drewe, her former mistress, in whose house Jane had become pregnant. Following her pregnancy, she left Jane Drewe's service, deposing that

feareinge least if she sholde stayer longer with her dame Jane drewe she might be drawn to committ the like lewdnes with some other, removed of her own accorde out of the service & house of the said Jane drewe.

Jane Jenkins' departure from her mistress' insalubrious household did not prevent their paths from crossing. While the news of why Jane was placed in the stocks in Gloucester did not reach Elizabeth Nurberie, Jane's deposition provided more detail. She deposed that she had met John Redhead (alias Davis), the father of her illegitimate child, for a drink 'att one Witcombes house' in Gloucester. Jane then

¹⁸² Gowing, *Common Bodies*, pp. 45-46.

sawe Jane drewe come out of Witcombes house & thereuppon this Respondent being moved rayled on her & called her whore & for that the Constable putt this Respondent [Jane Jenkins] in the stockes.

Approximately 13 kilometres apart, it might have taken no more than two hours to travel between Gloucester and Newent. While Jane Jenkins moved away from her former mistress, the close proximity of Gloucester prevented her from completely evading Jane Drewe. Not only was her punishment in the stocks reported in the town of Newent, its explanation lay in a continued unwanted connection between Jane and her former mistress of the same town.¹⁸³

Rumour and news created geographical connections between communities that were retained over time. Scandalous stories and rumours could remain in people's memories for many years. In 1628, 27-year-old Thomas Rayner of Tewkesbury deposed that 'he hath heard that Quinborowe Johnsons [...] is a bastard'. Quinborowe was a servant, just three years younger than Thomas and lived in the same parish. She admitted her illegitimate status and her mother's bridal pregnancy, deposing that 'she is the natural daughter of William Johnson [...] & she this respondent was borne before the said William Johnsons was married to her mother'.¹⁸⁴ Quinborowe was born in Bredon in Worcestershire around 5 kilometres from Tewkesbury, while Thomas was born 3 kilometres away in Ashchurch in Gloucestershire. The news of her mother's premarital affair had therefore travelled a reasonable distance, remaining in the memories of people who were geographically located across a 5-kilometre radius. 'Illegitimate' was a label that did not wear off and across the depositions, the unforgiving memories of early modern people are recorded. In 1637, Richard Wood of Sampford Peverell in Devon deposed that Mellony Pacey had worked in the service of Emanuell Sander but added that 'aboute xvi [16] or xvii [17] yeeres since she was delivered of a base Childe as hee hath credibly heard which Childe is yet living'.¹⁸⁵ The passing of time failed to erase memories of illegitimacy within the parish and beyond.

¹⁸³ GRO, GDR/100, Case 639, Ann Francombe v Jane Drewe (1607).

¹⁸⁴ GRO, GDR/168, Case 1558, Thomas Vaughan v Elizabeth Canner (1628).

¹⁸⁵ DHC, Chanter 866, Case 2052, Sanders v Sanders (1637).

Maintaining connections

Women who left service for innocuous reasons also remained in contact with members of the communities in which they had lived. The regular mobility of servants across early modern parishes meant that they frequently left behind established kin and friendship networks. As Chapter 5.1 shows, proximity was key to establishing friendships. While distances between a servant and her network of friends could be considerable once she left a position in service, depositional evidence suggests that long-distance connections were nonetheless maintained.

Several female servants or former servants were cited to testify in disputes concerning past employers or neighbours. Although servants were sometimes asked to testify on the behalf of members of the communities in which they had previously lived, this does not necessarily imply that they had regular contact with the plaintiff or that they frequently returned to these parishes to visit former neighbours and friends. Cases were probably discussed with witnesses prior to their examination in court in order to ensure that their testimony would uphold the cause. Payment of travel costs and expenses must have also been established prior to the witness' travel to court. However, these practicalities of testifying may have been discussed with distant witnesses by a proctor rather than the plaintiff themselves. Servant Mary Shorte of Slimbridge in Gloucestershire testified on the behalf of defendant Nicholas Davis of Longney in 1625, deposing that

she cometh to testify in this cause at the request & procurement of the said Nicholas & saieth that she hath not received nor hopeth or expecteth to have or receive any money or other reward for her testimony in this cause but only to have her charges borne which the said Nicholas hath undertaken to doe.¹⁸⁶

Payment of expenses was therefore pre-arranged, yet no evidence of physical interaction between plaintiff and witness was recorded. Regular contact between plaintiffs and distant witnesses was not necessarily expected, although suspected collusion of witnesses and plaintiffs was sometimes flagged up in interrogatory questioning. In 1623, Jane Tyler of Queenhill in Worcestershire

¹⁸⁶ GRO, GDR/159, Case 1852, John Jacques and Joanne Jacques v Nicholas Davis (1625).

testified in a tithing dispute on the behalf of her former master, William Lambert of Corse in Gloucestershire, around 8 kilometres away from her new parish of residence. Jane deposed that 'she was not taught directed or advised by Mr Rudgewell or Mr James Clynt [...] or any other person whatsoever what or howe to depose'. Mr Rudgewell was the vicar of Hartpury, an adjacent parish to Corse and was involved in the dispute; however, James Clynt was identified as 'one of the proctors of this Court'.¹⁸⁷ In addition to providing legal advice, proctors also functioned as intermediaries between plaintiffs and witnesses living in different communities. The church courts themselves therefore were not only disciplinary institutions; they also re-established connections between individuals that might otherwise have been broken.

This is not to suggest that communities were otherwise isolated or that without the church courts all relationships across parish boundaries would be lost. Connections could be retained once servants left communities. In 1557, Juliana Burges, a married woman of Tavistock in Devon, was described as returning to the parish of Whitchurch where she had previously worked as a servant to William Gooding. Travelling a distance of approximately 2 kilometres, the purpose of Juliana's trip was to 'vysyt a Seke [sick] childe' of William's next-door neighbour. Juliana maintained her friendship with the family who lived next-door to her former master after she had left service, demonstrating the continued impact that a female servant could have upon a community after her departure. Relationships were more permanent than migration patterns of service suggest. Living in a mobile society, early modern people might travel to visit friends and former neighbours who lived outside their parish of residence. Sustaining connections and relationships across distances was the dual responsibility of both parties; Chapter 5.1 shows that the friendships and relationships that female servants established were not always one-sided. Women in service provided support and sociability within their neighbourhoods and communities even after they moved away. Juliana continued to visit and provide support to her Whitchurch friends. Her connection with her former employers was also retained: while the purpose

¹⁸⁷ GRO, GDR/148, Case 1103, William Lambert v William Webb (1623).

of her return to the parish was to visit the neighbouring family, Juliana was described as staying overnight in William's house.¹⁸⁸

Distance could affect the connections that female servants maintained with their former neighbours and employers. A total of 53 female witnesses were identified in the church court depositions as former servants who had left the parish in which the plaintiff lived. They were called upon to relay information concerning their knowledge of events, customs or the behaviour of residents of the communities that they had physically departed.

Table 5.4 shows the distances that female servants produced as witnesses by their former neighbours and employers had moved away. The average distance travelled by Gloucestershire female servants was 13.3 kilometres compared to 22.7 kilometres travelled by their counterparts in the Exeter court. Parishes were typically larger in the diocese of Exeter and therefore movement even to the next parish could involve travel over a greater distance in Devon and Cornwall than in Gloucestershire. Nonetheless, distances travelled by female servant witnesses who testified on behalf of former neighbours and employers varied greatly. While just under 50 per cent had moved less than 10 kilometres away, the same proportion had travelled further, with examples of women testifying in cases concerning past acquaintances and friends as distant as 67 kilometres away.

¹⁸⁸ DHC, Chanter 855, Case 88, Office v William Gooding (1557).

Table 5.4. Distances between former female servants' parish of residence and the parish from which the case originated in the depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Distance (km)	Diocese of Exeter		Diocese of Gloucester		Total
	N	%	N	%	
> 0 and < 5	2	12.5	11	29.7	13
≥ 5 and < 10	3	18.8	10	27.0	13
≥ 10 and < 20	4	25.0	7	18.9	11
≥ 20 and < 30	2	12.5	5	13.5	7
≥ 30	5	31.3	4	10.8	9
<i>Total</i>	16		37		53

Sources: As in Table 1.2.

Across the two courts, sixteen female servants had moved to the next parish. Across such short distances, connections established while in service were easier to maintain. Up until eight years before her examination in the Exeter church court in 1578, Christian Collen of Totnes in Devon had worked for the defendant John Sparcks of the adjacent parish of Harberton for nine years. Christian had become pregnant in his service and her reference to him as a former 'enemy' suggests a rift between them following her pregnancy. Despite her tarnished reputation, Christian was nonetheless produced as a witness on the behalf of the plaintiff John Morris, indicating a connection between her and a former neighbour eight years after she had left service. Asked whether she had been instructed on how to depose, Christian responded 'no, otherwise then [than] that Morrrys and wootton did talke with this deponent to understand what she could saye in this matter'. The identity of 'Wootton' was not disclosed, but Christian's conversation with John Morris concerning the case indicates a retained or perhaps renewed relationship between them. The short distance from Harberton to Totnes permitted Christian's continued involvement in Harberton community life. Her deposition recorded her maintained knowledge of the countersuit witnesses, who were residents in the parish. Their references to her typically centred on her illegitimate pregnancy: witness William Pennyne deposed that Christian 'was begotten with child unlawfully and [that] this is notorious within

the parishe of Harberton [where she] did dwell at that tyme'. However, their familiarity with Christian nonetheless suggests that her connection with the community in which she had previously lived and worked was not broken.¹⁸⁹

Distance did not always determine who was selected as a witness. It also did not prevent social bonds from being retained. Joanne Blackmore of Rackenford in Devon deposed in 1582 that three or four months before her examination, she was in Thomas Ilbert's house in Moretonhampstead when she heard Edith Tremelet say that Pasthowe Ingoram had given birth to a child before she was married. Joanne had worked in Pasthowe's service in Moretonhampstead 'within this xii [12] monthes' but not at the time she witnessed the defamatory words. She therefore maintained a relationship not only with her former mistress after her period in service had ended, but also with the wider community of Moretonhampstead. Her presence in Thomas' house indicates her continued involvement in community life and interactions with its members. The relationships Joanne forged while in service persisted across a distance of 33 kilometres between Rackenford and Moretonhampstead.¹⁹⁰

In 1615, a total of eleven witnesses testified to the cruelty of Henry Hartwell, the vicar of Bishops Tawton in Devon, towards his wife, Susan. While a man could charge his wife with infidelity in order to be permitted to live separately from her (but not to remarry), a woman could only raise a separation case against her husband on the grounds of extreme cruelty.¹⁹¹ Within this context, former female servants, with intimate knowledge of the marital relations of the household in which they had served, were frequently asked to testify to a husband's cruelty. Four of the eleven witnesses in this case were former servants who had worked for the Hartwells. Joanne Osmonde testified that during her two weeks in their service, she had witnessed Henry Hartwell

wringe her [Susan] aboute the necke and aboute her throate and shee saith
that they lived so unquiette a life that shee thinkethe noe woman are able to

¹⁸⁹ DHC, Chanter 860, Case 1326, John Morris v John Sparcks (1578).

¹⁹⁰ DHC, Chanter 861, Case 1514, Pasthowe Ingoram v Edith Tremelet (1582).

¹⁹¹ Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 180.

abide it, And saith further that shee never heard the said Mistris hartwell
misuse herself towards her husbande.¹⁹²

Despite these words of support for Susan's cause, Joanne's testimony was comparatively brief. The average number of words that comprised the eleven depositions in the case was 579. Joanne's deposition was just 218 words in length and lacked the detailed descriptions of Susan's abuse that Salame Freynes and Melissa Tawton, two other servants in the Hartwell household, provided: both women's intimate knowledge of the household amounted to some 1200 words per deposition. Unlike Salame and Melissa, Joanne had left the parish of Bishops Tawton, travelling approximately 48 kilometres to work in the household of Humfrey Curstone of Exeter. How long Joanne had lived in the parish of Bishops Tawton was unrecorded but she had worked in the Hartwell's service for just a fortnight, twelve months before her examination. Joanne's distance from Bishops Tawton and her short period in the service of the Hartwell's indicates that she was perhaps included as a witness who could present herself as comparatively impartial.

Other community members might also request female servants who had previously lived in the parish to testify against their former employers. In 1595, Elizabeth Deynton, who had worked in the service of Thomas Webley of Witney in Oxfordshire for three months at the time of her examination, deposed against her former mistress Agnes Bathe of Cirencester in Gloucestershire. Elizabeth deposed that one day, while working in her mistress' wool house with her fellow servant Agnes Chester, Agnes Bathe 'demanded [...] whether the sayd Alice Vyner [the plaintiff] had not had a bastard'. In response to Elizabeth and Agnes' replies that they had never heard such a report, Agnes Bathe claimed that 'it [the illegitimate child] was kepte or remayned in Mr Doctor Awbreys house'. Elizabeth deposed that after 'the sayd Agnes Bath did revile the sayd Alice Vyner publicuely in speeches [she said] that she would stande to it th[a]t she had a bastard'. The connection that Elizabeth maintained with the community in which she had worked was not through her employer; rather, she retained a link with Alice Vyner, an unmarried woman who Elizabeth stressed 'was alwayes reputed & taken for

¹⁹² DHC, Chanter 867, Case 2149, Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell (1615).

an honeste mayden'. Agnes Chester, who had also left Agnes Bathe's service and had, at the time of her examination, worked for Mr Knight, the rector of Coates in Gloucestershire for one year, was also produced by Alice Vyner as a witness. Lasting connections, friendships and alliances could be maintained by female servants over varying distances. Agnes Chester had moved just to the next parish, only around 4 kilometres away, while Elizabeth had travelled a distance of around 43 kilometres to her new place of employment.

Length of residence may have also strengthened the bonds of friendship and increased the chance of retained connections. While Agnes' length of residence in the town was unrecorded, Elizabeth had lived in Cirencester for three years.¹⁹³ In 1604, Anne Rowles, who worked in the service of Rowland Vaughan in Gloucester deposed that she had heard Joanne Nicholls defame Elizabeth Weale in Longhope in Gloucestershire. Her service in Rowland's household had commenced just one month before her examination in the church court in February 1605. Prior to this, she had lived in Longhope since birth. Her sustained connection with her former neighbours and the community in which she had lived was recorded in her deposition. She deposed that she knew 'the name & fame of the foresaid Elizabeth Weale is impaired and hurte by the utterance of the foresaid words by Joane Nicholls', indicating her understanding of how Elizabeth Weale's reputation had changed as a result of the defamatory words and the new way in which she was perceived by the community.¹⁹⁴

When a female servant left a parish, she frequently left an imprint upon the community. A servant typically spent more than one year in the service of an employer before moving on either to a new master or mistress or to a marital home. During the time she spent in service, she established both short-term and more lasting relationships with members of the household in which she served and the wider community. While many relationships continued to thrive even over long distances, the church courts also played a role in reconnecting individuals,

¹⁹³ GRO, GDR/79, Case 1343, Alice Vyner v Agnes Bathe (1595).

¹⁹⁴ GRO, GDR/95, Case 710, Elizabeth Weale v Joanne Nicholls (1605).

recollected experiences returning them to the heart of the communities in which they had previously lived and worked.

Conclusions

Communities are founded upon shared interests and emotional connections. From an economic perspective, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century communities are often conceived as inward-looking, supporting only those who had right to settlement. However, communities were not administrative units and integration and inclusion was not entirely based upon settlement and entitlement to parish relief. The reasons why pregnant servants were forced to leave service and the parish were more complex. While shame, both on the part of the pregnant servant and her master, might prompt her removal or flight from the parish, pity and compassion might encourage members of the community to harbour them or seek alternative solutions. The social and economic dynamics of a community were complex.

Communities were not simply defined by geography; female servants retained connections and relationships across time and space. While proximity could determine who people knew, and a neighbourhood was delineated by the physical closeness of a group of inhabitants at a particular time, the boundaries of this community could be stretched outside the neighbourhood when individuals left. Proximity to a neighbourhood or parish in which a community might primarily be located could facilitate connections, although distance was not an insurmountable barrier and relationships endured across considerable distances. Female servants established a range of connections, both temporary and enduring, positive and negative. Some of these connections were maintained through the endeavours of both parties to retain contact. Other relationships were regenerated by the processes of ecclesiastical law and litigation, which inadvertently reconstructed communities within the walls of the church courts and in the pages of the depositions. Even where direct interaction does not appear to have occurred regularly between former servants and litigant parties, shared recollections and memories nonetheless served to place the female servant within a past community.

Conclusions

This thesis has important implications for our understanding of experiences of service for early modern women. More broadly speaking, the thesis demonstrates that it is possible not only to capture these experiences through qualitative analysis of depositional evidence, but also to consider the typicality of experiences through a statistical approach that accounts for the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the church courts. The thesis showcases the potential scope for further studies of social groups and communities using depositional evidence from early modern church courts. By understanding the courts and the way in which they operated, the proportions of different social groups who came before them, the geographical distribution of cases and the types of cases they heard, experiences of particular groups represented in the depositions can be placed in these contexts. Narrative evidence presented within the depositions can therefore be more effectively scrutinised.

The methodology also identifies further lines of enquiry. While this thesis focuses solely on experiences of female servants, it highlights the value of quantifying occurrences and trends that are not typically counted such as spaces, types of working activities and references to particular groups by witnesses. This statistical approach to using church court depositions offers a unique opportunity to understand and observe trends quantitatively, while analysing these trends in conjunction with narrative evidence. The application of these methodological innovations to studying church court depositions opens up opportunities to seek new perspectives on various aspects of early modern life.

In 2003, Bernard Capp suggested that 'service as a category was [...] more fluid and flexible than is often supposed'.¹ This flexibility is however, rarely explored. Historians frequently characterise service as a life-cycle experience, a transitional occupation for those in their formative years. Women entered service in their early teens and left in their mid to late twenties when they generally married. Women in service are typically perceived as mobile, moving annually between employments but travelling only short distances from their parish of birth. Their

¹ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 182.

work is portrayed as 'domestic', involving cooking, cleaning and other tasks which fall within a modern conception of housework, and the relationships they forged are studied only within the confines of the household.

This thesis shows that experiences of service for women in early modern England were much more varied. There was no uniform experience; female servants were not a homogeneous group. The range of socio-economic backgrounds from which early modern servants came demonstrates a vertical gradation of service that matched the broad socio-economic spectrum of employers for whom they worked. Statements of worth given in depositions indicate that many female servants perceived their own worth in terms of their parents' economic wealth. Some were only too aware of their economic adversity, characterising themselves as 'of little worth', while others referred to substantial sums of money their parents had already given them. Frequently, expectations of inheritance coloured perceptions of self-worth, demonstrating the economic state of 'limbo' that some female servants were in between childhood and marriage.

Distinctions were drawn between individual women in service in relation to their age. Most historians have overlooked age as a category or organising principle of early modern service, assuming both male and female servants to have been young. The age range of female servants was wider than is often supposed, with children as young as 7 years old and women as old as 60 working for families in exchange for wages, bed and board. Service spanned across all life-cycle stages, providing employment for early modern women of all marital statuses: single, married, widowed and never married women entered, re-entered and sometimes remained in service. Navigation of life-cycle stages was not always smooth for early modern women and a high proportion of women never married. The institution of service operated with flexibility, remaining a persistent and accessible source of income to women at all stages of the life cycle. Evidence from the church court depositions draws attention to the economic contexts in which women worked as servants. Instances in which children were placed into service at particularly young ages should be interpreted as signs of parish or pauper apprenticeship, in which the young were bound out either formally or informally in order to ease the burden on the household economy. At the other

end of the age spectrum, entering service could be a response to economic hardship for widowed and even sometimes married women.

Early modern labour laws characterised service as a preferable and more honourable form of work, particularly for young women, placing them under the patriarchal rule of the household, perceived as a microcosm of the state. Evidence suggests however that early modern society recognised little difference between service and other forms of wage labour. Only the occupation of a 'charmaid' was endowed with a cultural meaning that conveyed low social status and often advanced age. Enforcement of the Statute of Artificers and the labour laws from the second half of the sixteenth-century seems to have been profoundly divergent across early modern England. On the one hand, Jane Whittle's work on servants appearing at the Norfolk Sessions for living outside service suggests a preoccupation with enforcing this legislation. On the other hand, attitudes to those not in service in the South-West were typically indifferent: only those who presented a threat to the economic stability of the parish through their potential to claim parochial relief seem to have been brought before the justices of the peace. These comparisons between the east and west of England are relatively speculative based on the limited evidence of the church court depositions. Further study of the incidence in which women were apprehended for living outside service using surviving Quarter Sessions records is needed to confirm these findings.

The length of time that a woman remained in service with an employer was shaped by a range of factors. Investigation into the typicality of annual contracts shows that while many female servants in Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall remained for just one year, substantial proportions remained for significantly longer, with some women becoming established and almost permanent members of the household for most of their lifetimes. Others carried out much shorter periods of employment in service, remaining for just one week when relations with employers turned sour or making short-term agreements from the outset. No clear pattern of hiring was indicated; Michaelmas hirings were more commonly recorded in the Gloucester court depositions, but across both ecclesiastical jurisdictions, female servants were hired at virtually all times of the

year. This has implications on the way in which hiring is understood in the early modern period. Hiring fairs that were so commonly referred to in eighteenth-century records could not have been widespread in the preceding two centuries, indicating that servants more frequently relied on word of mouth, familial connections or general enquiry in seeking new employment.

Depositional evidence reveals an assortment of contract lengths and agreements made by women in service. Some were described as servants but negotiated their pay on a weekly basis in the manner of a casual worker. This complicates our understanding of annual and casual employment for women during this period. Service could be experienced as a relatively permanent or long-term form of employment, with some women remaining for most of their lifetimes, presumably paid on an annual basis. For others, it could be a more casual, informal agreement of labour exchange. This has important implications on the historiography of women's work in early modern England, since hitherto historians have assumed clear distinctions between service as a form of annual labour and other forms of wage labour, working by the day or task in spinning, husbandry or charring.

The engagement of female servants in non-housework tasks, particularly in activities relating to husbandry and running errands, challenges common assumptions amongst historians that women in service carried out 'domestic' work, while their male counterparts worked the fields. Further research needs to be conducted on the work of male servants in order to fully understand the gendered dynamics of the working patterns of service in early modern England. At what points did the work of male and female servants overlap? To what extent was work in service considered gendered? These questions are partially answered in this thesis and the depositions indicate that labour was divided along gendered lines, particularly at harvest times when both male and female servants worked in the fields but undertaking different tasks. Patterns of working activities mapped onto the social and economic status of the household. Female servants working in gentry houses were typically engaged in more specialist tasks: servants at the lower end of the social spectrum were involved in tasks such as washing clothes while those at the upper end worked as lady's maids.

Specialisation of work tasks was less common in households further down the social scale, with women employed in service to undertake all types of work that needed to be done to keep the family economy afloat. This thesis demonstrates that the occupational category of service fails to account for these distinctions in the type of work that women in service undertook.

Servants are rightly characterised as the most mobile members of early modern society. However, the findings of this thesis show that mobility was not a uniform experience and that while some travelled considerable distances, others remained in parishes local to their place of birth. Typically, they travelled no further than a day's journey from where they were born. Studies of the mobility of service are often linked with the common perception of year-long contracts and frequent movement from master to master, delaying servants from experiencing any sense of belonging to a parish, community or neighbourhood until they were married. Yet as has been shown, female servants were often not transient members of the parishes in which they lived and worked. Some stayed within the parish for several years. While only a small proportion were born and remained in the same parish, service for women frequently involved extended periods of time in the same parish, thus allowing them time to become integrated into community life.

Like women more generally, female servants were encouraged by prescriptive writers to remain in the home. This was of course impractical not only in consideration of the outdoor working activities that female servants carried out, but also in terms of their social and religious lives. Service for early modern women was as much a social experience as a working one since households and communities were connected in so many important ways. Household spaces in which female servants were recorded in the church court depositions highlight their interactions with the wider community, with neighbours frequently passing in and out of the household. While sexual misdemeanours frequently haunt characterisations of female servants, connecting them to histories of infanticide and premarital pregnancy, their presence in bedrooms was frequently as a monitor of ill-rule within the household, thus undermining the familiar trope of the sexually promiscuous female servant.

In spaces beyond the walls of the household, female servants were engaged in sociability through their working, social and religious lives. They were an integral part of community life. While their ubiquity is well-known, their invisibility is often assumed. Friendships were created with members of the community as well as within the household. These friendships extended beyond the formal networks of support that matrimonial disputes present, with sociability and companionship providing a different outlook on the connections they formed while in service. Overall, this thesis offers a new perspective on early modern service, which forces us to challenge the often marginal status that historians have accorded to servants within early modern communities.

The study of female service also offers a new perspective to studying community life. As a migrant work force, servants frequently moved between communities, thus offering a different angle from which communities can be studied. The connections they retained and maintained upon leaving a position in service remind us that communities were not isolated nor simply geographically contained, but connected through people, with former residents remaining part of a community through their continued connections to others. While settlement was an important aspect of some communities, inclusion was not entirely predicated on settlement. Examples of pregnant women who were turned away from the parish show the multitude of reasons that explained this beyond the somewhat simplistic interpretation that historians have tended to take of a collective mentality of exclusion to prevent access to settlement and parish relief. Reputations could spread across communities and at times, rumours could bar access from communities: connections were not always positive. Evidence shows that church courts facilitated and re-established connections, while simultaneously representing the networks of connectivity independently retained and experienced by individuals across the dioceses.

Significantly, this thesis has explored the diversity of experiences of service for women across the early modern South West. It provides a vivid picture of these women's lives and the factors that shaped their experiences of living and working in early modern communities. When 19-year-old Anne Higgens of Quinton in Gloucestershire deposed that she worked for her aunt and uncle, Martha and

George Higgens, she implicitly told the court of her employment within a household where kin alliances could be instrumental in helping her integration into community life.² The great loss that 50-year-old Katherine Wellington must have experienced upon the death of her master, gentleman Robert Butler of Exeter, is understood only when considering her advanced age and her choice to remain in his service for ten years.³ And when Margaret Smith of Brent in Devon deposed that she was standing at her master's door in 1597 when she heard Elizabeth Toyser call Phillippa Yeaton a whore, she indirectly revealed her physical placement at the heart of not only a heated dispute but also of community life.⁴

The words recorded during Joanne Large's examination before the Exeter church court in 1568, in which she deposed that servant Isott Riches told her that she did not come to Katherine Brooke's service in Rockbeare in Devon 'to be beatyn, nor to be her drudge and that she wolde not tary long', contributed to a richly-woven tapestry of Isott's experiences recounted by witnesses in the case. A vivid picture of Isott's experiences and expectations of service was recorded, including her relative isolation from recreational activities in the scattered settlement of Rockbeare, her extensive mobility across the county of Devon and her varied but perhaps heavy workload of milking, reaping barley and food preparation.⁵ The specific and individual experiences of women in service ultimately resist its characterisation as a domestic, temporary, isolating or uniform institution.

² GRO, GDR/122, Case 1063, Martha Higgens v Joan Chettle (1615).

³ DHC, Chanter 859, Case 1273, Gilbert Denys v Gentill Buller (1576).

⁴ DHC, Chanter 864, Case 1893, Phillippa Yeaton v Elizabeth Toyser (1597).

⁵ DHC, Chanter 858, Case 1132, John Roo v Frances Yarde (1568).

Appendix 1: Nodes

The following is a list of the basic themes or 'nodes' created within NVivo. Within each of these nodes, sub-nodes have also been created. For example, two more tiers of nodes have been created under the node 'location'. The first refers to whether it was inside or outside the home in which the female servant was working (labelled 'household' and 'non-household') and the second refers to the precise location ('chamber' or 'field', for example).

Nodes created in NVivo

1	Bed sharing
2	Bridewell or house of correction
3	Care for relatives (outside service)
4	Character descriptions of servants
5	Church court processes and operations
6	Clothing
7	Conditions of service (either gender)
8	Deposition potentially made in the presence of other witnesses
9	Descriptions of illnesses
10	Distance or travel
11	Employer abuse and discipline
12	Employer affection
13	Employer status, worth and occupation
14	Employer titles
15	Employers who were fathers of a servant's illegitimate child
16	Entry and exit from service
17	Gifts given and received
18	Legal conditions of service
19	Length of service
20	Locations
21	Married couples who lived with parents
22	Non-servants (age 15-24)
23	No knowledge of what an oath is

24	Public shaming
25	Reference to female servants by others
26	Reference to others by female servants
27	Same family name
28	Servant and master marriage
29	Servants who were present at deathbed or will making
30	Servant background or family status
31	Servant death or illness
32	Servant destinations (after service)
33	Servant finances
34	Servant friendships
35	Servants who were godparents
36	Servants who were related to the litigant parties
37	Servant kin referred to by others
38	Servant knowledge of family/community life
39	Servant misbehaviour
40	Servant pregnancy as a burden on society
41	Servant pregnancy
42	Servant social occasions
43	Servant requesting employer's permission to marry
44	Servants who were widows
45	Servants and religion
46	Servants who were removed from the parish due to premarital pregnancy
47	Servants who were shared/borrowed/passed on
48	Servants dining
49	Servants who lived in the household of a relative
50	Type of deposition (gender and occupation)
51	What is a servant? Blurred distinctions between service and apprenticeship
52	Witness did not provide the full name of the servant
53	Witness did not provide first name of servant

Appendix 2: Ages in service

All ages of female servants recorded in the depositions of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter, 1548-1649.

Age in service	Diocese of Gloucester		Diocese of Exeter		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
7	0	0.0	2	0.8	2	0.3
8	0	0.0	2	0.8	2	0.3
9	0	0.0	2	0.8	4	0.6
10	1	0.3	3	1.2	4	0.6
11	1	0.3	3	1.2	4	0.6
12	1	0.3	3	1.2	8	1.3
13	4	1.1	4	1.6	10	1.6
14	5	1.4	5	2.0	17	2.7
15	9	2.5	8	3.1	23	3.7
16	10	2.7	13	5.1	24	3.9
17	9	2.5	15	5.9	30	4.8
18	14	3.8	16	6.3	34	5.5
19	18	4.9	16	6.3	54	8.7
20	29	7.9	25	9.8	32	5.2
21	19	5.2	13	5.1	46	7.4
22	28	7.7	18	7.1	40	6.5
23	27	7.4	13	5.1	39	6.3
24	29	7.9	10	3.9	27	4.4
25	17	4.7	10	3.9	26	4.2
26	19	5.2	7	2.7	18	2.9
27	14	3.8	4	1.6	25	4.0
28	16	4.4	9	3.5	17	2.7
29	13	3.6	4	1.6	21	3.4
30	17	4.7	4	1.6	4	0.6
31	3	0.8	1	0.4	6	1.0
32	4	1.1	2	0.8	6	1.0
33	4	1.1	2	0.8	6	1.0
34	3	0.8	3	1.2	9	1.5

35	5	1.4	4	1.6	7	1.1
36	3	0.8	4	1.6	8	1.3
37	4	1.1	4	1.6	10	1.6
38	6	1.6	4	1.6	11	1.8
39	7	1.9	4	1.6	9	1.5
40	4	1.1	5	2.0	5	0.8
41	4	1.1	1	0.4	4	0.6
42	3	0.8	1	0.4	3	0.5
43	2	0.5	1	0.4	2	0.3
44	1	0.3	1	0.4	2	0.3
45	1	0.3	1	0.4	3	0.5
46	2	0.5	1	0.4	2	0.3
47	1	0.3	1	0.4	2	0.3
48	1	0.3	1	0.4	3	0.5
49	1	0.3	2	0.8	4	0.6
50	2	0.5	2	0.8	0	0.0
51	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
52	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
53	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
54	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
55	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
56	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
57	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2
58	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.3
59	2	0.5	0	0.0	2	0.3
60	1	0.3	1	0.4	2	0.3
<i>Total</i>	365		255		62	
					0	

Sources: As Table 1.2.

Appendix 3: Occupational status

The occupational and status categories used in Table 1.7 to analyse occupational structure have been compiled as follows:

Occupational Category	Occupation
Husbandmen	Husbandmen
Cloth and leather	Broadweavers, button makers, cappers, card makers, cloth makers, cloth workers, clothiers, clothes makers, collar makers, corders, cordwainers, drapers, dyers, felt makers, fullers, glovers, haberdashers, hemp dressers, hosiers, linen drapers, milliners, narrow weavers, shoe makers, silkweavers, skimmers, tailors, tanners, tuckers, upholsterers, weavers, wool merchants, wool winders, woollen drapers, yarn makers.
Yeomen and farmers	Yeomen, farmers.
Gentlemen	Esquires, gentlemen, knights.
Servants	Servants.
Service trades	Aldermen, apothecaries, bakers, barbers, booksellers, brewers, butchers, butlers, carriers, chandlers, charwomen, constables, cooks, curriers, doctors, fishmongers, fletchers, gardeners, glass carriers, haulers, housekeepers, innkeepers, jail keepers, journeymen, lawyers, malt makers, mayors, merchants, midwives, millers, physicians, public notaries, salters, schoolmasters, scribes, sieve makers, shopkeepers, singingmen, soldiers, spirit dealers, surgeons, traders, victuallers, vintners.

Smiths, makers and building	Basket makers, bellfounders, blacksmiths, bottle makers, braziers, bucket makers, carpenters, coopers, cutlers, farriers, freemasons, glaziers, goldsmiths, gun makers, hoopers, house carpenters, ironmongers, joiners, latch makers, lime burners, lime makers, locksmiths , masons, milestone makers, millwrights, nailers, net makers, oil makers, paint makers, pewterers, pin makers, plasterers, plough makers, ploughwrights, plumbers, potters, rope makers, saddlers, sawyers, ship's carpenters, shipwrights, silversmiths, slaters, smiths, spurriers, thatchers, tilers, tinkers, turners, wheelwrights, wire drawers, woodmongers.
Labourers	Coal drivers, colliers, drillers, labourers, miners, quarrymen, tanners.
Mariners and fishermen	Shearman, fish drivers, mariners, sailors, trowmen, watermen.
Animal keepers	Fowlers, grasiers, grooms, herdsman, ostlers, shearmen, shepherds.

The frequency of specific occupational descriptors for all male witnesses who appeared before the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter between 1548 and 1649 are listed below:

Occupational category	Occupation	Diocese of Gloucester	Diocese of Exeter
		N	N
Animal keepers	Groom	0	1
Animal keepers	Shepherd	14	0
Animal keepers	Shearman	6	0
Animal keepers	Ostler	2	0
Animal keepers	Herdsmen	1	0
Animal keepers	Grasier	1	0
Animal keepers	Fowler	1	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>25</i>	<i>1</i>
Clerics	Rector	88	157
Clerics	Vicar	173	129
Clerics	Parson	28	40
Clerics	Curate	97	32
Clerics	Priest	2	5
Clerics	Clergy	6	3
Clerics	Parish clerk	0	1
Clerics	Friar	0	1
Clerics	Archdeacon	1	1
Clerics	Minister	3	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>398</i>	<i>369</i>
Cloth and leather	Weaver	198	100
Cloth and leather	Tailor	140	38
Cloth and leather	Shoe maker	75	26
Cloth and leather	Tucker	39	17
Cloth and leather	Clothier	73	12
Cloth and leather	Tanner	30	8
Cloth and leather	Cordwainer	12	5

Cloth and leather	Glover	30	5
Cloth and leather	Fuller	11	4
Cloth and leather	Haberdasher	9	3
Cloth and leather	Dyer	11	2
Cloth and leather	Draper	7	2
Cloth and leather	Felt maker	5	2
Cloth and leather	Woollen draper	5	2
Cloth and leather	Clothes maker	0	1
Cloth and leather	Silkweaver	1	1
Cloth and leather	Skinner	0	1
Cloth and leather	Hosier	7	1
Cloth and leather	Broadweaver	149	0
Cloth and leather	Capper	9	0
Cloth and leather	Narrow weaver	8	0
Cloth and leather	Milliner	6	0
Cloth and leather	Card maker	6	0
Cloth and leather	Cloth worker	5	0
Cloth and leather	Linen draper	3	0
Cloth and leather	Yarn maker	2	0
Cloth and leather	Collar maker	2	0
Cloth and leather	Wool winder	2	0
Cloth and leather	Wool merchant	2	0
Cloth and leather	Hemp dresser	1	0
Cloth and leather	Cloth maker	1	0
Cloth and leather	Upholsterer	1	0
Cloth and leather	Corder	1	0
Cloth and leather	Button maker	1	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>852</i>	<i>230</i>
Gentlemen	Gent	386	154
Gentlemen	Esquire	42	28
Gentlemen	Knight	12	2
<i>Total</i>		<i>472</i>	<i>185</i>

Husbandmen	Husbandman	1693	552
<i>Total</i>		<i>1693</i>	<i>552</i>
Labourers	Labourer	141	35
Labourers	Tinner	0	14
Labourers	Driller	0	1
Labourers	Quarryman	0	1
Labourers	Miner	8	0
Labourers	Collier	8	0
Labourers	Coal driver	1	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>158</i>	<i>51</i>
Mariners and fishermen	Mariner	2	9
Mariners and fishermen	Sailor	19	9
Mariners and fishermen	Fisherman	10	8
Mariners and fishermen	Fish driver	0	3
Mariners and fishermen	Trowman	6	0
Mariners and fishermen	Waterman	5	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>42</i>	<i>29</i>
Servants	Servant	168	144
<i>Total</i>		<i>168</i>	<i>144</i>
Service trades	Merchant	45	24
Service trades	Miller	23	14
Service trades	Public notary	13	11
Service trades	Doctor	1	9
Service trades	Baker	43	6
Service trades	Butcher	68	5
Service trades	Trader	0	5
Service trades	Constable	1	3
Service trades	Victualler	10	3
Service trades	Carrier	5	2
Service trades	Surgeon	6	2
Service trades	Apothecary	5	2
Service trades	Bookseller	0	1

Service trades	Journeyman	0	1
Service trades	Shopkeeper	0	1
Service trades	Barber	4	1
Service trades	Jail keeper	0	1
Service trades	Innkeeper	33	0
Service trades	Alderman	12	0
Service trades	Malt maker	12	0
Service trades	Chandler	7	0
Service trades	Fletcher	7	0
Service trades	Vintner	6	0
Service trades	Cook	6	0
Service trades	Sieve maker	5	0
Service trades	Brewer	5	0
Service trades	Gardener	4	0
Service trades	Scrivener	4	0
Service trades	Soldier	3	0
Service trades	Physician	3	0
Service trades	Currier	3	0
Service trades	Lawyer	2	0
Service trades	Spirit dealer	2	0
Service trades	Schoolmaster	2	0
Service trades	Mayor	2	0
Service trades	Butler	2	0
Service trades	Glass carrier	1	0
Service trades	Salter	1	0
Service trades	Housekeeper	1	0
Service trades	Fishmonger	1	0
Service trades	Servingman	1	0
Service trades	Hauler	1	0
Service trades	Singingman	1	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>351</i>	<i>91</i>
Smiths, makers and building	Carpenter	73	15
Smiths, makers and building	Blacksmith	53	12

Smiths, makers and building	Mason	26	11
Smiths, makers and building	Slater	4	7
Smiths, makers and building	Smith	35	6
Smiths, makers and building	Goldsmith	0	2
Smiths, makers and building	Cutler	4	2
Smiths, makers and building	Cooper	13	2
Smiths, makers and building	Joiner	13	2
Smiths, makers and building	Thatcher	2	2
Smiths, makers and building	Paint maker	0	1
Smiths, makers and building	Bucket maker	0	1
Smiths, makers and building	Turner	1	1
Smiths, makers and building	Barrel bearer	0	1
Smiths, makers and building	Millwright	3	1
Smiths, makers and building	Latch maker	0	1
Smiths, makers and building	Glazier	6	1
Smiths, makers and building	Spurrier	0	1
Smiths, makers and building	Sawyer	9	0
Smiths, makers and building	Wheelwright	8	0
Smiths, makers and building	Tiler	7	0
Smiths, makers and building	Pewterer	7	0
Smiths, makers and building	Saddler	4	0
Smiths, makers and building	Hooper	4	0
Smiths, makers and building	Ploughwright	3	0
Smiths, makers and building	Freemason	3	0
Smiths, makers and building	Tinker	2	0
Smiths, makers and building	Pin maker	2	0
Smiths, makers and building	Brazier	2	0
Smiths, makers and building	Plasterer	2	0
Smiths, makers and building	Potter	2	0
Smiths, makers and building	Plumber	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	House carpenter	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Lime burner	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Nailer	1	0

Smiths, makers and building	Gun maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Bellfounder	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Rope maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Lime maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Ironmonger	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Woodmonger	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Oil maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Farrier	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Shovel tree maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Bottle maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Net maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Milestone maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Basket maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Silversmith	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Wire drawer	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Plough maker	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Ship's carpenter	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Shipwright	1	0
Smiths, makers and building	Locksmith	1	0
<i>Total</i>		<i>311</i>	<i>69</i>
Yeoman and farmers	Farmer	94	124
Yeoman and farmers	Yeoman	741	58
<i>Total</i>		<i>835</i>	<i>182</i>

Appendix 4: Work tasks

The frequency of specific work tasks performed by female servants that were recorded in the church courts of the dioceses of Gloucester and Exeter between 1548 and 1649 are listed below:

Work task	Total	Diocese of Gloucester	Diocese of Exeter
	N	N	N
Collecting tithes	12	10	2
Washing clothes	10	6	4
Care	10	2	8
Running an errand	9	7	2
Milking	8	4	4
Delivery	7	6	1
Preparing/serving food and drink	7	4	3
Paying or delivering tithes	6	4	2
Household management	3	2	1
Making the bed	3	2	1
Spinning	3	0	3
Childcare	2	2	0
Gathering apples	2	1	1
Making a fire	2	1	1
Pitching crops to a cart	2	1	1
Reaping	2	0	2
Cocking barley	1	1	0
Driving cattle	1	1	0
Dusting malt	1	1	0
Feeding animals	1	1	0
Fetching wood	1	1	0
Gelding a boar	1	1	0
Heating a kettle	1	1	0
Raking	1	1	0
Setting out tithes	1	1	0
Carrying crops home	1	0	1
Cutting rye	1	0	1
Furnishing the stall	1	0	1
Gathering fern	1	0	1
Grinding corn	1	0	1
Selling goods	1	0	1
Shopping or collecting food	1	0	1
Sweeping	1	0	1

Sources: As Table 1.2.

Appendix 5: Cases

Cases consulted from the depositions of the church court of the diocese of Exeter, 1550-1640:

Deposition book	Case ID	Case name	Year
Chanter 855	22	Office v Peter Hoperill	1556
Chanter 855	24	Office v Jacob Alye	1556
Chanter 855	33	Office v Wilmote Rogers	1556
Chanter 855	44	Office v John Kegell	1556
Chanter 855	45	Office v William Whitechurche	1556
Chanter 855	47	Office v Joanne Cantor	1556
Chanter 855	50	Anne Collens v Edward Psthawe	1556
Chanter 855	54	Office v John Coxe	1556
Chanter 855	59	Office v Thomasina Floode	1556
Chanter 855	63	Office v Joanne Hancock	1556
Chanter 855	66	Ebote Seck v Peter Hoperill	1556
Chanter 855	72	Margery Awstyn v John Wyllys	1556
Chanter 855	88	Office v William Gooding	1557
Chanter 855	92	Office v Margaret Myles	1557
Chanter 855	131	William Escott v Thomas Byrnock	1557
Chanter 855	223	Office v Joanne Hunt	1558
Chanter 855	234	Roger Arkyson v Katherine Tanner	1558
Chanter 855	239	Office v Thomas Langdon	1558
Chanter 855	250	Bastard v Pope	1558
Chanter 855	255	Office v Alice Wattes	1558
Chanter 855	265	Office v John Delve	1559
Chanter 855	270	Cuthbert Marshall v Juliana Roughan	1559
Chanter 855	285	William Seyward v John Payne	1560
Chanter 855	288	Rabigia Bennet v Wiliam Baker	1560
Chanter 855	289	Juliana Hedgeman v Richard Squier	1569
Chanter 855	293	Office v John Hayward and Avicia Neyle	1560
Chanter 855	341	Joanne Brown v Peter Roberts	1561
Chanter 855	345	Elizabeth Budde v Richard Sharshell	1561
Chanter 855a	388	William Jane v Alice Myller	1561
Chanter 855a	484	Katherine Haydon v Richard Smythe	1563
Chanter 855a	486	Office v Elizen Wood	1563
Chanter 855a	507	John Phillip v Edward Blaxton	1563
Chanter 855a	538	Office v Richard Rawe	1564
Chanter 855a	540	Jane Hooper v Henry Hunt	1564
Chanter 855a	543	Office v Leonard Evered and Joanne Ham	1564
Chanter 855a	551	Anne Harryes v Dorothy Carwythea	1564
Chanter 855a	555	John Hockridge v Alice Baron	1564
Chanter 855a	558	Agnes Barnes v Phillip Rawe	1564

Chanter 855a	561	Margaret Grove v Edward Wyndesore	1564
Chanter 855b	341	Joanne Brown v Peter Roberts	1561
Chanter 855b	626	Office v Peter Feynde	1565
Chanter 855b	635	Testament of Ermine Whiet	1565
Chanter 855b	650	John Gyles v William Somester	1565
Chanter 855b	654	John Leache v Hubert Colwell	1565
Chanter 855b	672	Katherine Bennett v Thomas Mortimer	1566
Chanter 855b	681	Office v Walter Plympton	1565
Chanter 855b	708	William Pannell v Walter Heyle	1566
Chanter 855b	719	Anne Mosse v Alice Barnes and Eliza Tuckfield	1566
Chanter 855b	728	George Correy v John Palmer	1566
Chanter 855b	740	Anne Perkyn v John Mychell	1566
Chanter 855b	764	Mary Bynemore v Pentecoste Walter	1567
Chanter 855b	775	Richard Corne v Joanne Corne	1567
Chanter 856	650	John Gyles v William Somester	1565
Chanter 856	740	Anne Perkyn v John Mychell	1566
Chanter 856	777	Christian Soper v Joanne Yarde	1567
Chanter 856	782	Alice Pawe v John Brenelcombe	1567
Chanter 856	800	Margaret Efford and Alice Efford v Joanne Buttland	1567
Chanter 856	805	Office v Alice Towker	1567
Chanter 856	806	Office v Richard Avery	1567
Chanter 856	877	John Grynslade v Joanne Franke	1568
Chanter 856	878	Office v Joanne Master	1568
Chanter 856	898	Office v Thomasina Towker	1568
Chanter 856	935	Elizabeth Trevillion v Alice Olde	1569
Chanter 856	964	Henry Dugdale v Margaret Tudd	1569
Chanter 857	964	Henry Dugdale v Margaret Tudd	1569
Chanter 857	1023	Agnes Fishmore v Thomas Coman	1570
Chanter 857	1034	Testament of Roger Byrdwood	1570
Chanter 857	1081	John Toker v Grace Hunt	1571
Chanter 857	1101	Testament of Nicholas Mayo	1571
Chanter 857	1110	Richard Lyllington v John Elwyll	1571
Chanter 857	1122	Office v John Hewitt	1571
Chanter 858	1132	John Roo v Frances Yarde	1568
Chanter 858	1134	Office v Richard Avery	1568
Chanter 858	1135	Thomas Hutche v William Martyndale	1568
Chanter 858	1137	Office v John Sellys	1569
Chanter 858	1146	Joanne Sybly v Thomas John	1574
Chanter 858	1189	Office v Nicholas Kelway	1582
Chanter 858	1199	Office v Thomas Hicking	1583
Chanter 859	1209	Alice Rowland v Jane Paddon	1575
Chanter 859	1227	Richard Lane v Katherine Barrye	1576
Chanter 859	1273	Gilbert Denys v Gentill Buller	1576

Chanter 859	1274	Elizabeth Lange v Hugo Hempton	1576
Chanter 859	1290	Joanne Johns v Jacob Escourt	1577
Chanter 859	1301	Testament of John Littlejohn	1577
Chanter 860	1318	Raymond Wadland v Blanche Apworthie	1578
Chanter 860	1324	Edward Batten v Thomas Hellyar	1578
Chanter 860	1326	John Morris v John Sparcks	1578
Chanter 860	1357	Paul Triggess v Margaret Dotton	1579
Chanter 860	1398	John Lucas v Joanne Simons	1580
Chanter 860	1400	Sidwell Callerd v Elizabeth Markes	1580
Chanter 860	1401	John Dennys v John Dennys junior	1580
Chanter 860	1408	Joanne Marten v David Bowman	1580
Chanter 860	1421	Alice Rawle v Henry Frenche	1580
Chanter 860	1423	Richard Hawkye v Thomas Beale	1580
Chanter 860	1430	Office v Richard Kingdon	1580
Chanter 860	1475	Margaret Brushford v John Wattes	1581
Chanter 860	1485	Roger Grannt v William Wootton	1582
Chanter 860	1486	Joanne Hatch v William Hanacott	1582
Chanter 860	1488	Suzanna Mychell v Harry Langeford	1582
Chanter 861	1486	Joanne Hatch v William Hanacott	1582
Chanter 861	1495	Gawen Champernowne v Roberta Champernowne	1582
Chanter 861	1500	William Hanacott v Joanne Hatch	1582
Chanter 861	1503	Elizabeth Frenche v Wilmote Frenche	1582
Chanter 861	1514	Pasthowe Ingoram v Edith Tremlet	1582
Chanter 861	1519	Elizabeth Whetford v John Whetford	1583
Chanter 861	1534	John Trelawny v Thomas Robyns	1582
Chanter 861	1550	Mary Scam v Anne Hayne	1583
Chanter 861	1557	Office v Robert Aveye	1583
Chanter 861	1558	George Doderidge v Richard Moxaye	1583
Chanter 861	1575	Sampson Rawlye v Elizabeth Kneebone	1583
Chanter 861	1582	Sprynt v Thomas Wichalse	1583
Chanter 861	1618	Thomas Peerse v Margaret Peerse	1584
Chanter 861	1625	John Trevanian v Joanne Daniell	1584
Chanter 861	1647	John Thomas v James Puddicomb	1585
Chanter 862	1647	John Thomas v James Puddicomb	1585
Chanter 862	1673	William Wiche v Mary Hamlyn	1586
Chanter 862	1688	Margery Staplehill v Anne Browning	1587
Chanter 862	1696	Barnard Smith v Katherine Peron	1587
Chanter 862	1702	Office v Roger Chardon	1587
Chanter 862	1703	Elizabeth Hunt v Margaret Cole	1587
Chanter 862	1718	Richard Deerlove v John Moore	1588
Chanter 862	1733	Nicholas Shorte v Hamond	1588
Chanter 864	1774	John Nicholl v John Dyver	1594
Chanter 864	1813	Dennis Ellyott v Thomasina Downham	1595
Chanter 864	1819	Office v Thomas Morrell	1596

Chanter 864	1820	Richard Burton v Henry Mullyes	1596
Chanter 864	1830	Thomas Edbury v Joanne Callowe	1596
Chanter 864	1840	Jane Batshill v Thomas Badge	1596
Chanter 864	1841	Elizabeth Shorte v Sampson and Sampson	1596
Chanter 864	1853	Margery Payne v Katherine Maye	1596
Chanter 864	1893	Philip Yeaton v Elizabeth Toyser	1597
Chanter 864	1912	Christopher Gewen v Roger Mayne	1598
Chanter 864	1914	Jane Iverye v Pentecost Ball and Andrew Fole	1598
Chanter 864	1918	William Lambert v Christopher Tynwell	1598
Chanter 864	1924	Mary Eve v Margaret Leach	1598
Chanter 865	1937	Testament of Roger Hooper	1592
Chanter 865	1956	Grace Corbyn v Joanne Drewe	1608
Chanter 866	1966	Joanne Bennett v Joanne Deymont	1634
Chanter 866	1971	Joanne Penny v Joanne Taylor	1635
Chanter 866	1978	Mary Blight v Suzan Richardson	1635
Chanter 866	1981	Vincent Love v William Arminge	1635
Chanter 866	2006	Mary Flood v Dorothy Tucker	1635
Chanter 866	2009	Rodd v Joseph Drewe	1636
Chanter 866	2050	William Harries v Audrey Rowell	1636
Chanter 866	2052	Sanders v Sanders	1637
Chanter 866	2062	Daniel Jackson v Elizabeth Mordon	1637
Chanter 866	2072	Alice Stephens v Caleb Saunders	1637
Chanter 866	2081	Eustice Peeke v William Carewe	1638
Chanter 867	2106	Agnes Fulford v John Parsons	1613
Chanter 867	2149	Susan Hartwell v Henry Hartwell	1615
Chanter 867	2153	Henry Cockram v Bartholomew Jaquinto	1615
Chanter 867	2155	Downe v William Woolfe	1615
Chanter 867	2171	John Wolcombe and Richard Ashe v Collins	1615
Chanter 867	2183	David Davies v Garthred Moysey	1616
Chanter 867	2204	Hugh Smyth v William Tylley	1616
Chanter 867	2242	Testament of Margaret Hammond	1617
Chanter 867	2275	Office v Bridgeman and Henry Ashe	1617
Chanter 867	2284	Amy Westcott v Alice Hake	1617
Chanter 867	2286	Robert Pridham v Combe and Anne Scadlake	1617
Chanter 867	2287	John Mathewe v Agnes Wills	1617
Chanter 867	2299	William Blighe v Jordan	1618
Chanter 867	2301	Anne Calmady v Anne Chynge	1618
Chanter 867	2305	Testament of Margaret Heydon	1618
Chanter 867	2312	Elizabeth Drake v Robert Wills	1618
Chanter 867	2320	John Manson and Robert Starre v William Redwood	1618
Chanter 867	2339	Richards Crymes v Margaret Knight	1618
Chanter 867	2345	Elizabeth Faryes v Grace Luscombe	1618
Chanter 867	2347	Margaret Hugh v Agnes Crosse	1619

Cases consulted from the depositions of the church court of the diocese of Gloucester, 1548-1650:

GDR deposition books	Case ID	Case name	Year
GDR/45	9	Isabel Davys v Margaret Hewed	1575
GDR/32	14	Elizabeth Addys v John Edwardes	1576
GDR/45	14	Elizabeth Addys v John Edwardes	1576
GDR/45	17	Richard Kayhoe v William Pope	1576
GDR/45	18	Catherine Bennett v Jane Winston	1576
GDR/45	19	Richard Smythe v Richard Woodward	1576
GDR/45	35	Maurice Gryffin v Elizabeth Plummer	1577
GDR/45	36	Walter Daie v Thomas Shewell	1577
GDR/45	44	Thomas Shewell v Walter Daie	1577
GDR/45	49	Joan Newman v Katherine Coston	1577
GDR/45	61	Edmund Ible v James Mychell	1578
GDR/45	62	Anne Webb v Alice Brooke	1578
GDR/45	65	Agnes Jones v Robert Ashfield	1578
GDR/45	78	Anne Webb v Thomas Brooke	1578
GDR/45	90	Anne Hedges v William Draper	1579
GDR/45	91	Thomas Weekes and Thomas Key v Richard Crodie, Eleanor Davys and Alice Dove	1579
GDR/45	116	Geoffrey Pynnell v John Hill	1580
GDR/45	121	William Salisbury v Elizabeth Hains	1580
GDR/45	134	Alice Walker v Elizabeth Cookesey	1580
GDR/46	146	Richard Carpenter v Joan Felde	1576
GDR/46	149	Margaret James v Francis Etheridge and Margaret Etheridge	1576
GDR/46	162	Margery Carter v John Edwardes	1577
GDR/46	171	Office v Richard Merrett and William Mayles	1578
GDR/57	175	Elizabeth Roane v Walter Hathway	1581
GDR/57	187	Humfrey Palmer v Anne Skey	1582
GDR/57	195	Alice Watkins v Maurice Bennett	1582
GDR/57	200	Anne Lluellin v Joan Warde	1582
GDR/57	202	Catherine Babbington v Richard Hyett	1582
GDR/57	231	Testament of Margaret Cook	1583
GDR/57	257	William Clevelie v Elizabeth Collett	1584
GDR/57	259	Catherine Abbington v Margery Berrie	1584
GDR/57	269	Testament of Fulk More	1584
GDR/57	283	Giles Roberts v Thomas Gold	1584
GDR/57	302	Testament of Elizabeth Alridge	1585
GDR/57	303	Alice Pates v Eleanor Goodchap	1585
GDR/57	305	Margaret Wathen v Richard Dowdie	1585
GDR/65	305	Margaret Wathen v Richard Dowdie	1585

GDR/89	309	Office v Joanne Dirrie	1600
GDR/89	331	Evans v Christopher Hornedge	1601
GDR/89	333	Elizabeth Hallowes v Edward Trotman	1601
GDR/89	342	Mascall v Myllerd	1602
GDR/89	348	Walker and Harrys v Anne Depwell	1602
GDR/89	349	Robert Reeve v Kellam Welles	1602
GDR/89	354	Office v Richard Restall	1602
GDR/89	356	Anne Wyllys v William Wyllys junior	1602
GDR/89	359	Stephen Cooke v Margaret Dudbridge	1602
GDR/89	367	Anne Tully v Anne Thomas	1602
GDR/89	369	Hugh Baker v Mabel Elliotts	1602
GDR/89	370	John Wayt and Howell v John Wylmott	1602
GDR/89	377	Colwall v John Wood	1603
GDR/89	381	Henry Jones v John Thorne	1603
GDR/89	392	John Pritchards v Jane Wise	1603
GDR/89	404	Dorothy Wylson v Anne Harrys	1603
GDR/89	405	Thomas Baynham v David Jurden	1604
GDR/89	406	Andrew Thomas v Henry Norris	1604
GDR/89	413	Thomas Kyldermore v Agnes Quarrier	1604
GDR/89	419	Anne Harris v Frances Wylson	1604
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DHC Chanter 857	(1569-1574)
DHC Chanter 858	(1568-1585)
DHC Chanter 859	(1565-1578)
DHC Chanter 860	(1570-1583)
DHC Chanter 861	(1581-1585)
DHC Chanter 862	(1585-1589)
DHC Chanter 864	(1593-1598)
DHC Chanter 865	(1589-1609)
DHC Chanter 866	(1634-1640)
DHC Chanter 867	(1613-1620)

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GRO GDR/6	(1552)

GRO GDR/8	(1550-1553)
GRO GDR/10	(1554-1555)
GRO GDR/16	(1564-1566)
GRO GDR/17	(1560-1562)
GRO GDR/19	(1561-1563)
GRO GDR/23	(1567)
GRO GDR/24	(1567-1570)
GRO GDR/25	(1569-1573)
GRO GDR/32	(1573-1576)
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GRO GDR/46	(1576-1578)
GRO GDR/57	(1574-1601)
GRO GDR/65	(1585-1593)
GRO GDR/75	(1594)
GRO GDR/79	(1591-1597)
GRO GDR/89	(1589-1604)
GRO GDR/95	(1604-1606)
GRO GDR/100	(1606-1609)
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