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P. E. RAZZELL

Statistics and English Historical Sociology

I

Interesting examples of the use of statistics in studying historical sociology are to be found in the recent work of the Cambridge Group. Laslett has presented evidence to show that the nuclear family was the basic form of family structure in seventeenth century England, a finding which contradicts the conventional sociological generalization about industrialization destroying the extended family.[1] Similarly, Wrigley has published statistics of pre-marital conception rates in Colyton, Devon during the period from the late sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth,[2] which can be used to test generalizations about sexual habits in pre-industrial society and how they change over time. Wrigley found that the proportion of children conceived before marriage in Colyton had been 30 and 40 per cent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and had risen to over 50 per cent by the early nineteenth.[3] This type of evidence casts doubt on the popular sociological notion that pre-marital sexual relationships are of recent origin. It also contradicts the social historians' picture of the early nineteenth century as being a transitional period in the establishment of Victorian morality.

The major problem in the use of statistical data in the study of historical sociology is the unreliability of much of the evidence which forms the basis of the data. Laslett and Wrigley have both used original records in such a way as to be confident that their findings are reliable. In this essay I wish to illustrate the use of certain types of statistical sources which have been more or less

[1] P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (1965), pp. 91–2. For a confirmation of this conclusion see the *1851 Census*, Vol. 1, Table 1, p. xliii.

[2] E. Wrigley, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. XIX, No. 1, April 1966.

[3] A study recently published in *Population Studies* (Nov. 1966) showed that in a sample of 77 parishes the pre-marital conception rate was at least 20 per cent during the seventeenth century, rising to over 40 per cent during the eighteenth.

neglected, but are sufficiently reliable to test sociological hypotheses about English history. None of the findings presented are meant to be conclusive but are intended as illustrations of the way these sources may be used.

A much neglected source has been the marriage registers compiled after the introduction of civil registration. The following information was provided on each marriage certificate: (a) occupation of groom; (b) occupations of fathers of both groom and bride; (c) whether the groom and/or bride were able to sign their own names or not; (d) streets or places in which marriage partners were residing (sometimes); (e) age at marriage (sometimes). Using this type of information, a pilot study was carried out for All Saints Parish, Maidstone, for the period 1837–38,[1] and I shall briefly describe some of the sociological results of this study.

Two main subjects may be studied by using information from marriage certificates: social class differences and social mobility. The major problem in studying both subjects is how to establish criteria and define appropriate social classes, but it was possible to partially solve this problem by using some of the distinctions made in the register itself. Of a total of 115 grooms whose occupations were noted, 45 were registered as labourers, who tended to be a distinct and homogeneous sociological group, e.g. 17 of the 20 grooms who were living in Stone Street at the time of their marriage were labourers. The tendency for labourers to live in the same areas of the parish is confirmed by information from the 1841 census tracts for the town: both agricultural labourers and unskilled labourers working in the local paper-making factory and elsewhere tended to concentrate in special geographical clusters. The geographical distribution of different occupational groups is naturally quite complex in detail, with a general tendency towards overlapping. Some labourers lived in the same streets as skilled journeymen artisans (and occasionally with people of higher occupational status), who in their turn sometimes resided in the same streets as master artisans, tradesmen and professional people in other 'fringe' areas. However, the fact that 85 per cent of all grooms registered as residing in Stone Street (according to the Marriage Register) were labourers, indicates a sufficiently high concentration to treat labourers as a distinct residential group. They were also a relatively homogeneous group

[1] This marriage register is lodged in All Saints Church, Maidstone (Kent).

with respect to education; 22 of the 45 grooms who were labourers were unable to sign their own names in the marriage register, whereas this was true for only five of the 70 remaining grooms. This social class difference in education was also reflected in differences between different types of bride: 34 of the 45 brides marrying labourers were unable to sign their names, compared with only 13 of the remaining 70.

Although I have used geographical residence and education as criteria for defining social class, it would be technically more accurate to use them as criteria for what Weber called status groups, unless they were determining factors in the formation of the occupational groups (social classes are defined as essentially economic power groups). Weber's conception of the relationship between social classes and status groups was very complex, so I will attempt to briefly summarize in simplified form the apparent relationship implicit in his writings. Status groups may be seen as the social 'routinization' and stabilization of the much more dynamic and changing social classes; the stratification of status groups and social classes is likely to be identical during a historical period of little economic and social change (such as the European Middle Ages). Using a Weberian scheme of 'ideal type' analysis, we may say that during such a period there is a high degree of social homogeneity within social classes and a very insignificant amount of social mobility or exogamy between them. In order to test whether the labourers in Maidstone constituted a status group according to these criteria, it is not sufficient to know that they formed a relatively homogeneous group with reference to education and geographical residence, but it is also necessary to analyse the pattern of social mobility into and out of this class as well as the degree of endogamy practised.

In the Maidstone sample, 37 of the 45 grooms who were labourers were themselves sons of labourers, while 8 sons of 45 labourers had a different occupation from their fathers, indicating little social mobility into or out of this occupational group. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that sons and daughters of labourers had approximately similar illiteracy rates as grooms who were labourers and their brides, i.e. education was a function of social class and not a factor fostering social mobility. There is information available in the Maidstone sample on the occupations of fathers of 44 brides who were married to labourers: 29 of these

fathers were labourers themselves. As labourers only formed about 39 per cent of the sample of fathers, the proportion of labourers' brides marrying sons of labourers (about 66 per cent) is significantly greater than would be expected if marriage occurred randomly amongst the occupational groups, i.e. there was a relatively endogamous pattern of marriage amonst the Maidstone labourers. This occupational group formed a status group, in that it was characterized by a similar area of geographical residence, low social mobility and relative endogamy. Also the 'style of life' of labourers was distinctive in that they were illiterate to a much greater extent than other occupational groups.

The sociological distinction between unskilled labourers and skilled artisans is an important one for interpreting English social history. Contemporary observers such as Francis Place were aware of its importance for understanding differences in 'moral' attitudes and style of life. Henry Mayhew believed that 'the transition from the artisan to the labourer . . . is so great, that it seems as if we were in a new land, and among another race'. He believed that the difference between the two groups was significant in all respects, including politics, with the artisans being 'red-hot' radicals and the unskilled labourers being either apathetically unpolitical or for the 'maintenance of things as they are'. He cited the example of the operative tailors among whom 'there appeared to be a general bias towards the six points of the Charter' which contrasted markedly with the coal-whippers who 'were extremely proud of their having turned out to a man on the 10th of April, 1848, and become special constables for the maintenance of law and order on the day of the great Chartist demonstration'.[1] Hobsbawm has recently emphasized this distinction in his discussion of the labouring aristocracy. Skilled artisans received twice the wages of unskilled labourers, and were sufficiently respectable to merit the appellation of 'lower-middle class' on certain occasions.[2] The association between the lower-middle class of artisans and small tradesmen and puritanism, with all that it implied for political radicalism, was strong as early as the seventeenth century.[3] The linking of artisans with small tradesmen was recognized as valid by the Registrar-General in 1838 when

[1] H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861), Vol. 3, p. 233.

[2] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (1964), pp. 273–4.

[3] The best statistical evidence for this conclusion is to be found in W. A. Cole, *The Quakers and Politics 1652–1660* (University of Cambridge Thesis 1955), pp. 302–318.

statistics of suicide rates in London were published: labourers—2·9 suicides per 10,000 males (20 years and above) living; artisans and tradespeople—6·0 per 10,000.[1] This emphasis on the distinction between artisans and labourers does not mean that it was the most important class difference during this period and it is clear that other equally valid distinctions can be made, e.g. Mayhew also noted the marked income and educational differences between 'society' (trade union) artisans and those working in a ruthlessly competitive situation under the 'sweated' conditions of their own garrets. E. P. Thompson has recently argued that a new type of working class solidarity, cutting across manual occupational boundaries, emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century. A more revealing analysis of class structure is that made by Foster in his recent work,[2] which is based on a modified Marxist theoretical framework. Foster has made a distinction between Oldham with an economy dominated by a small number of very big firms, and Northampton where there were a large number of small firms. In Oldham the social distance between skilled and unskilled workers was small whereas in Northampton it was significantly greater. Foster has measured social distance by using the indices of inter-marriage and neighbourhood residence patterns, statistics of which he has compiled from local marriage registers and census documents. He has also linked the structure of status groups with the nature of class consciousness and conflict groups (what Weber called 'Party'), although there are formidable methodological problems involved in measuring 'class consciousness'.

A thorough analysis of the social structure of Maidstone would involve a systematic analysis of social mobility, inter-marriage, educational and neighbourhood residence patterns by occupational group, linked with other appropriate evidence about styles of life, as well as political activity. The latter type of evidence is almost certainly going to be of a literary kind, except where poll-book information is available (this is likely to be rare for groups such as labourers).[3] There is the additional difficulty of being unable to distinguish from census records (and the like) real sociological

[1] *3rd Annual Registrar-General's Report*, 1841, p. 79.

[2] In H. J. Dyos (Ed.) *The Study of Urban History* (1968).

[3] Since this article was written Vincent has written his book *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (1967) which shows that Maidstone labourers voted consistently more Conservative than did craftsmen.

differences between occupations which are listed in identical manner but may in fact be very different, e.g. a 'tailor' may be a master employing several men (the 1851 census was supposed to have noted this but did not always do so), a skilled journeyman working in a superior workshop (Mayhew's 'society' man), a semi-skilled member of a tailoring sweat-shop, or a garret-master working under 'sweated' domestic conditions. The incomes of these groups are known to have been very different, and it is questionable whether they ought to be put together in the same class category.

In the analysis of the Maidstone data, I have restricted the discussion to the sociological differences between labourers and other occupational groups; this is mainly due to the nature of the data itself, i.e. the social homogeneity of the Maidstone labourers became clear from even a cursory examination of the statistical evidence, which was not true for other occupations. It is possible, however, to assess to some extent the social mobility pattern for the total Maidstone sample. Of 115 grooms, 65 had the same occupations as their fathers, while a further 11 had the same occupations as their fathers-in-law. It is difficult to measure total social mobility for this group, as there are no readily available criteria to distinguish the social status of the different occupations. A somewhat arbitrary method is to divide the sample of grooms into two equal groups: 57 unskilled as against 58 skilled and others. The unskilled includes all the labourers plus 6 servants, 4 bricklayers and 2 watermen, while the skilled includes all the artisans (such as papermakers and carpenters), tradesmen and professional people, as well as one or two dubious cases such as army privates. Support for this division is provided by the fact that the occupations of the non-labouring grooms who were illiterate were: one servant, bricklayer, waterman, army private and basket-maker (a total of 5 cases). On this basis of social division of occupations, of the total 115 cases, 5 grooms achieved a 'higher' position than their fathers, as against 16 whose occupational status was 'lower'. This result is not surprising during a period of rapid population increase in an area outside of industrial expansion, where most upward social mobility took place. Any index of total social mobility, e.g. 18½ per cent of men crossing the two social classes, would be misleading as the basis of comparison with more recent experience, because of differences in

social structure and the questionable validity of such an index.[1] A more appropriate comparison is that for specific occupational groups: about 82 per cent of the groom labourers in Maidstone were the sons of labourers, whereas the comparable figure for the cohort of unskilled occupations in Glass's twentieth century sample was about 40 per cent.[2] This suggests a significant increase in social mobility but is only suggestive because the two samples are not directly comparable. It is clear, however, that social mobility must have been low during the earlier period, which is associated with the high proportion of Maidstone sons who followed their fathers' occupations.

It is possible that there was a greater amount of social mobility in areas other than Maidstone—particularly in industrial regions—and during the pre-industrial period before the economic polarization associated with capitalism had developed. Richard Baxter in his book on the *Poor Husbandman* written during the latter part of the seventeenth century, noted how easy it was for agricultural labourers to set themselves up as small tenant farmers, although the economic and social benefits from this step do not appear to have been large. It is well known how relatively easy it was for journeymen weavers to set themselves up as small independent clothiers in areas such as Yorkshire before the emergence of the capitalist factory system. It is obviously desirable that such forms of social mobility be statistically measured, but unfortunately there is a great paucity of reliable information. One possible source is the Anglican marriage licences which sometimes give the occupations of both grooms and their fathers. The Sussex marriage licences for the period 1755–1800 are particularly good for the information they give; of 60 cases sampled, 44 fathers and sons were listed as having the same occupations.[3] The proportion of sons and fathers having the same occupation was slightly higher in this Sussex sample than it is in that from Maidstone. This suggests that there was no significant amount of social mobility in rural areas during the pre-industrial period, although it is possible that the enclosure movement, etc., had affected

[1] Lipset and Bendix used such an index in their comparative study of social mobility in industrial societies; their index is particularly questionable as it does not allow for distinction between upward and downward social mobility. See S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (1959), pp. 25, 26, 72.

[2] D. V. Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain* (1953), p. 187.

[3] D. Macleod (ed.), Calendar of Sussex Marriage Licences, *Sussex Record Society*, Vols. XXXII and XXXV.

Sussex sufficiently by 1755–1800 to diminish the kind of mobility described by Baxter. It is also possible that intra-generational social mobility was much more frequent than the form of inter-generational mobility (between fathers and sons) that we have been measuring. There is no evidence available on this for the earlier period, and only a fragment of information for the mid-nineteenth century. Williams has studied the census records of the West Country village of Ashworthy for the years 1841 and 1851.[1] According to his published statistics, in a village of a population just over 1,100, only two men who were labourers in 1841 were farmers by 1851, whereas two families whose heads were farmers in 1841 had become paupers by 1851 (the heads of the families dying in the intervening period).[2] This finding indicates little intra-generational social mobility, which confirms the other statistical evidence which we have considered for the period before the mid-nineteenth century.

The discussion of sociological statistics in the study of English history has been mainly confined in this paper to evidence derived from marriage registers kept under the civil registration system and lists of special marriage licences issued by the Anglican Church. This raises the question as to how accurate these marriage records were with reference to the sociological information contained in them. It is partially possible to check the accuracy of the Anglican special licences by comparing some of their information with that in parish registers (this is also a cross-check on the reliability of the parish register). Some of the Sussex licences give the period of residence in the parish from which a person was married. In the cases where this was 'all his (or her) lifetime', it is possible to check back in the parish register to see whether they were actually born in the parish, and whether the age at marriage given in the licences is accurate. This was done for 40 persons married by licence issued in the Chichester Archdeaconry during the period 1760–1800.[3] Only two of these 40 persons could not be traced in the parish register, no mention being made of their family during the estimated period of their births. Thus both the parish register and the marriage licences are relatively accurate as records in respect to when and where a person was born and how

[1] W. M. Williams, *A West Country Village Ashworthy* (1963).
[2] Ibid., p. 128.
[3] Macleod, op. cit.

long they had lived in the parish before marriage. The ages at marriage are somewhat less in agreement in the comparison between parish register and marriage licence. Of the 38 traced cases, there was approximate agreement in 22, a difference of about one year in nine, and somewhat greater differences in the remaining seven cases. All but one of the differences were due to the understatement of age in the marriage licences, but such differences are not large enough to significantly affect median ages at marriage calculated from the two types of data (age stated in the licences and reconstituted age at marriage from the parish register).

The information in the Sussex licences enables us to compile statistics of the relative geographical mobility of different occupational groups.

Table I

PROPORTION OF PEOPLE LIVING IN SUSSEX PARISHES FOR ALL THEIR LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE[1]

Groom's Occupation	*Period*	*Per cent 'All Their Lives'*			
		Grooms %	*N*	*Brides* %	*N*
Labourers	1786–1800	2	100	18	100
All Occupations	1793–1794	16	100	24	100
Farmers and Yeomen	1790–1797	46	100	39	100

The variations in geographical mobility were much greater amongst grooms than brides. The difference between labourers and farmers was most marked: two as against 46 per cent living all their lives until marriage in their parish of birth. This result should not surprise us, for most farmers and yeomen (as opposed to 'husbandmen') probably owned some of their own land which would tend to tie them to particular parishes, whereas labourers owning no land had to move to areas where cottages and remunerative work was available. This is reflected in literary evidence, e.g. the description of the hire at local farms of labourers for the year. Presumably women were more likely to live all their lives until marriage in their parish of birth as there was less economic necessity for them to move, although this was not true of domestic servants.

[1] Ibid.

The occupational differences in geographical mobility have been studied by Williams in his analysis of the 1841 and 1851 census records of Ashworthy. He has studied both immigration and emigration from the parish during this decade.

Table 2
INTERCENSAL MOVEMENT OF (ASHWORTHY) POPULATION 1841–1851[1]

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Farmers' Families</th><th>Craftsmen's Families</th><th>Labourers' Families</th><th>Other</th></tr>
<tr><td>IMMIGRATION</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Living in same dwelling</td><td>161</td><td>76</td><td>115</td><td>66</td></tr>
<tr><td>Moved within Ashworthy</td><td>42</td><td>32</td><td>102</td><td>34</td></tr>
<tr><td>Came to Ashworthy</td><td>19</td><td>27</td><td>123</td><td>38</td></tr>
<tr><td>Changed status</td><td>10</td><td>—</td><td>—</td><td>—</td></tr>
<tr><td>Children born in Ashworthy</td><td>71</td><td>55</td><td>101</td><td>23</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total 1851</td><td>303</td><td>190</td><td>441</td><td>161</td></tr>
<tr><td>EMIGRATION</td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Living in Ashworthy (1841 and 1851)</td><td>213</td><td>108</td><td colspan="2">317</td></tr>
<tr><td>Probably moved from Ashworthy</td><td>64</td><td>31</td><td colspan="2">202</td></tr>
<tr><td>Died</td><td>21</td><td>11</td><td colspan="2">73</td></tr>
<tr><td>Changed status</td><td>9</td><td>—</td><td colspan="2">—</td></tr>
<tr><td>Not known</td><td>—</td><td>11</td><td colspan="2">36</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total 1841</td><td>307</td><td>161</td><td colspan="2">628</td></tr>
</table>

These statistics confirm our conclusions that farmers were very much less geographically mobile than labourers, and this was true even for movement within the parish itself. However, it is possible to produce statistics for other parishes to show that labourers had lower mobility rates than the general population,[2] and this is a subject that can only be settled after very much more research.

The statistics of geographical mobility so far considered suggest that the traditional picture of stable English village communities in which inhabitants lived their whole lives, is incorrect. This point is sociologically important as sociologists have too easily assumed that the pre-industrial English village formed a 'Gemeinschaft' type of community, with the sense of community based on

[1] Williams, op. cit., p. 128.
[2] For example, in Harlow, Essex (1851), labourers formed about a third of the resident natives but only about a fifth of people not born in the parish.

life-long face-to-face social contact within the context of a closed system of social relationships. The 'Gemeinschaft' community arises when sociability is structured between individuals for a major part of their lifetime (in the extreme case for the whole of their lifetime). One way of studying this subject is to examine the proportion of any village population which has lived in that village since birth. According to Williams's statistics for Ashworthy, just over 72 per cent of the 1851 population were born in the village;[1] this figure includes children as well as adults, which would tend to be higher than the proportion just for adults. This is reflected in Williams's findings, for amongst adults 67·8 per cent of farmers, 59·6 per cent of male farm workers and servants and 62·5 per cent of female farm servants were born in Ashworthy.[2] These proportions are still surprisingly high, in the light of the movements of the population into the village between 1841 and 1851; if we exclude children born in the parish during this decade, about a quarter of the 1851 population had moved into the village during the ten-year period. It is therefore surprising that such a high proportion of adults were listed as having been born in the village, although there is no necessary contradiction between the two types of evidence. It is possible that many families (particularly those of labourers) moved to several parishes before coming back to their home parish. Evidence for this is to be found in the 1851 census documents, e.g. Jonathan Foster, a labourer, was born in Latton, Essex, and his wife Sarah was born in Harlow, Essex; their first five listed children were born in Latton, but the last two were born in Harlow, where the whole family was enumerated in 1851. Much of the migration into and out of Ashworthy might have been of this type and would explain the high proportion of people listed as having been born in the parish. Another factor of some importance explaining the discrepancy between the statistics of migration and 'nativity' is the greater number of emigrants than immigrants—much of the geographically mobile population found its way into large towns rather than other villages, thus diminishing the proportion of 'foreigners' in any one village. It is therefore possible that there was more geographical mobility between villages (and therefore lower proportions of native populations in these villages) during

[1] Williams, op. cit., p. 123.
[2] Ibid.

the pre-industrial period and in fact this does seem to have been the case, e.g. of the 401 people living in Clayworth in 1676, only 158 were still living there in 1688, 91 dying in the parish during the intermediary period.[1] However, other types of evidence suggest that there was no significant increase in geographical mobility, e.g. see Table 3.

Table 3
PROPORTION OF PEOPLE MARRYING IN COLYTON, DEVON, WHO WERE BORN IN THE PARISH[2]

Period	*Number of Marriages*	*Number married and born in the parish*		*Per cent*	
		Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
1560–1646	854	258	371	30	43
1647–1719	379	109	136	29	36
1720–1769	424	90	104	21	25
1770–1837	888	219	275	25	31

Although the English rural population was geographically mobile as early as the late sixteenth century, most of this mobility was probably restricted to a group of local parishes. There is no systematic statistical evidence for this conclusion for the earlier period, and only a limited amount for the later one. According to the 1841 population census, 80·7 per cent of the English population were born in the county that they were living in at the time of the census, and Williams concluded from his study of the 1851 census records of Ashworthy that most of the immigrants into the village were born within the area of a ten-mile radius of the parish.[3] This confirms what we know about the area in which migration occurred from the study of settlement certificates, as well as conclusions reached from an examination of particular family histories, e.g. the surname Dilnot was confined to a group of East Kent parishes, within a circle of a 20 mile radius, from as early as the fourteenth century through to the nineteenth.[4]

Not only was the rural population very much more mobile than has been commonly assumed, but the inhabitants of large towns seem to have moved very frequently from one house to another within the town itself.

[1] P. Laslett and J. Harrison, 'Clayworth and Coganhoe', in H. E. Bell and R. L. Ollard (eds.), *Historical Essays 1600–1750* (1963), p. 174.
[2] Wrigley, op. cit.
[3] Williams, op. cit., p. 123.
[4] I am grateful to Mr R. Dilnot for this information.

Table 4
LENGTH OF TIME WHICH THE HEADS OF FAMILIES HAVE RESIDED IN THEIR PRESENT DWELLINGS
(St. George's-in-the-East, 1848)[1]

	Families	*Single Men*	*Single Women*	*Total Families*
1–4 weeks	60	3	2	65
1–6 months	369	10	12	391
6 months–1 year	270	17	13	300
1–3 years	467	18	12	497
3–6 years	269	8	6	283
6–9 years	148	3	—	151
9–12 years	69	—	4	73
Over 12 years	136	2	7	145
Not ascertained	14	27	8	49
	1,802	88	64	1,954

This table summarizes a survey conducted by the Royal Statistical Society amongst the poor of St. George's-in-the-East, London, in 1848. The median period of residence for all families was about two years, a very short period of time compared to the lengthy periods spent in particular houses according to current surveys of working class populations such as that in Bethnal Green. In fact it is possible to make some kind of comparison of geographical mobility patterns in Bethnal Green at the middle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to a survey carried out by Glass and Frankel in 1944 seventy-seven per cent of the heads of families were born in the borough of Bethnal Green; a sample of 100 adults residing in Temple Street, Bethnal Green, in 1851 had an equivalent figure of 25 per cent, i.e. 25 of them had been born in the parish. Of course these figures are not strictly comparable, but they probably suggest the significant difference between the two periods fairly accurately, and indicate the kind of historical comparisons that can be made with this type of data.[2]

The reasons for the high amounts of geographical mobility within places like St. George's-in-the-East and Bethnal Green during the mid-nineteenth century are not hard to find. Their

[1] See the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. XI (1848).

[2] One working-class informant in the early 1950s could not remember anyone moving into the street of seventy houses in which he lived (in Bethnal Green) during a forty-year period. See J. H. Robb, *Working Class Anti-Semite* (1954), p. 57, for this and other information about geographical mobility in Bethnal Green.

total population was expanding very rapidly during the nineteenth century, e.g. the population of the borough of Bethnal Green multiplied by about six times during the second quarter of the nineteenth century[1]—as the indigenous population was expanding at a very much slower rate, most of the increase came from immigration into the area. It is possible that other factors played a part in the very high turnover in house occupation in a place like St. George's-in-the-East: the need to move near new employment (transport being very inadequate) or the frequent evictions of the poor from their homes because of their inability to always pay the rent (this latter factor may have played a major part in the village of Ashworthy where the other factors are not likely to have played such an important part). Much of the mobility so far discussed took place within a relatively small area so that many of the immigrants into Temple Street, Bethnal Green, for example, came from neighbouring parishes of Shoreditch and St. Lukes. However, many of the sample came from outside London, a fact which is also reflected in the statistics of 'nativity' for London as a whole: of the 1·4 million adults living in London in 1851, about a half had been born outside the city. In fact this is a relatively high proportion compared with the relevant statistics of other towns during the same period: of Manchester and Salford's adult population of 226 thousand only just over one quarter were born in the city. Even very small towns like Dorchester, Dorset (adult pop. 3,734), Truro, Cornwall (adult pop. 6,161) and Bedford (adult pop. 6,354) had very low proportions of resident adult natives: 32 per cent, 38 per cent and 28 per cent. A place like Birmingham with an adult population of 127 thousand in 1851 had a higher proportion of natives: 44 per cent.[2] This proportion was higher than that found in some small villages, e.g. the parish of Havering, Essex (adult pop. 233), had only 11 per cent adult native residents.[3] Mere size was not the only factor in determining the proportion of native residents; the economy of a particular town, the demand for labour from the countryside, etc., would all determine the pattern of geographical mobility. Havering, Essex, probably had such a small proportion of native residents because it was so near London, which drew

[1] Ibid., p. 195. According to census data the population of Bethnal Green district quadrupled between 1801 and 1851.

[2] For all these statistics of nativity see *1851 Census*, Vol. 1, Population Tables 2, p. 418.

[3] See the 1851 Census documents for Havering in the Public Record Office.

much of its population from the surrounding countryside. London itself was big enough to provide work for all its native residents, who might have to move from parish to parish, but would still be able to find work and housing somewhere within the city. Villages relatively isolated from large towns appear to have had a large proportion of resident natives, e.g. of Garsington, Oxon's 327 adult population, 70 per cent had been born in the village according to the 1851 Census.[1] Garsington is thus like Ashworthy in its high proportion of native residents; an example of an 'intermediate' village is Harlow, Essex, of whose 275 adult population (1851), 39 per cent had been born there.[2]

It is clear that we cannot assume that agricultural villages were necessarily Gemeinschaft villages—many had relatively mobile populations who had not shared socially structured relationships for the major part of their lifetimes. This provisional conclusion is logically related to findings about the structure of the family and the relationship between neighbourhood and kinship. Willmott and Young found that the 'extended family' is common in traditional Bethnal Green, but this is the case only because the population is so static. If there is little migration into or out of a community, a network of kinship relationships is bound to be built up (unless the population is decreasing rapidly). This may be illustrated by the case of Garsington where the same surname exists much more frequently than it does in Maidstone during the same period; of a sample of 100 listed names of heads of households taken from the 1851 Census in both places, the most frequent name (Quartermaine) was mentioned nine times in Garsington as against only three (King) in Maidstone. This is what one would expect as the former place had 70 per cent resident adult natives while the latter had only 36 per cent.[3] This is not the only factor determining kinship neighbourhood patterns, as even if a population was geographically mobile it could still migrate with other members of the family.

It is partly possible to measure the geographical mobility patterns of family members from information in the Sussex licences. When a person getting married was under 21 they needed their parents' consent and the places of residence of child and parent were given. Of 100 grooms, 42 were residing (during the

[1] See the 1851 Census document for Garsington in the Public Record Office.
[2] 1851 Census documents for Harlow in the Public Record Office.
[3] *1851 Census*, Vol. 1, Population Tables 2, p. clxxiii.

latter half of the eighteenth century) in the same parish as their parents at the time of marriage; the comparable figure for brides is 80 out of 100. Thus brides were much more likely than grooms to live in the same parish as their parents, although they may have subsequently moved more frequently to their husband's present parish where he presumably worked. There were significant differences amongst different occupational groups for the grooms: all 12 farmers and yeomen in the sample lived in the same parish as their parents, whereas this was true for only four of 24 labourers, none of 28 husbandmen (tenant farmers), but as many as eight of ten artisans.[1] These findings confirm those about class differentials in geographical mobility for the Sussex sample and suggest that economic factors were most important in determining the relationship between kinship and neighbourhood. The whole question of neighbourhood and kinship patterns is clearly very complex, as is the related theme of geographical mobility. Only after much further research into community and class differences will it be possible to make confident generalizations. What is certain is the influence of population and economic growth on the mobility and kinship neighbourhood patterns. It was possible for kin to cluster in the same neighbourhoods in Bethnal Green because of the relatively static population and economic position of the area during the first half of the twentieth century. Much of this population was moved during the 1950s and '60s as the result of a planning decision to 'improve' the area and rehouse willing migrants in Greenleigh and elsewhere, and this was when many married children were separated from their parents who stayed behind in the old community (the proportion of older people surviving in a community is also obviously important in determining this type of relationship). Perhaps the type of geographical mobility which separates kin will increase as social mobility is fostered by the spread of education, although this factor itself could become relatively stabilized in time, as did the population and economic changes in places like Bethnal Green during the late nineteenth century.

There are one or two other historical sociological topics which may be briefly illuminated through the use of unfamiliar statistical sources. It is possible to calculate the age of marriage of different social groups as early as the eighteenth century.

[1] Macleod, op. cit.

Table 5
MEDIAN FIRST AGE AT MARRIAGE IN SUSSEX[1]

Period (approx.)	*Labourers Grooms*	*Labourers Brides*	*All Occupations Grooms*	*All Occupations Brides*	*Yeomen Farmers Grooms*	*Yeomen Farmers Brides*
1757–69	25½	23	26½	23½	27	24
1788–1800	24	22	25	22½	25½	23

(each median was calculated from a sample of 100 cases)

In late eighteenth-century Sussex there was about one year's difference in the median age at first marriage between labourers and other occupational groups; this was true for both grooms and brides (although the difference is greater amongst grooms than brides). There is very little alternative evidence to check this finding; a brief analysis of the Nottinghamshire marriage licences yielded no significant difference in the age at marriage between different occupational groups. The age at first marriage differed between the two social classes defined for Maidstone: during 1837/38, of the 57 brides marrying grooms with unskilled occupations, 18 married below the age of 21, as compared to only 10 of the remaining 58 brides. Thus the Maidstone marriage statistics tend to confirm those for Sussex, although it does appear that the class differential in the age at marriage was widening throughout the nineteenth century: certainly the age at first marriage was rising amongst the aristocracy during the nineteenth century,[2] whilst among the total population it probably did not change much on average (this could mask changes between social classes, e.g. the age of marriage amongst the middle classes might have risen, whilst that among the working class fallen). Again further research is needed to settle this issue, particularly as it might have some bearing on the relationship between the age at marriage and the practice of birth control amongst the different social classes and how these factors changed over time.

Finally, there is one other subject which may be profitably studied through a neglected statistical source: attendance at communion service. The Anglican incumbents of Tenterden in Kent, noted the number of communicants during the main religious festivals for the period 1731–1848, although there are

[1] Ibid.

[2] T. H. Hollingsworth, *The Demography of the British Peerage* (supplement to Population Studies, Vol. XVIII, no. 2, pp. iv and 108, 205).

long gaps in the record.[1] I shall confine the discussion to the number of Easter communicants, as it reflects quite accurately the numbers of those at other times of the year, and the following table represents the predominant trends throughout the whole period.

Table 6

THE NUMBERS OF EASTER COMMUNICANTS IN TENTERDEN, 1731–1848

Date:	1731	1756	1761	1774	1781	1809	1848
No. of communicants	140	142	239	250	230	140	124

The number of communicants was more or less constant between 1731 and 1756, after which it rose very sharply. It is difficult to explain the rise between 1756 and 1761, as the number of baptisms fell slightly during the same period and only began to rise from 1763 onwards, which probably reflected an increase in population. The number of communicants reached a final peak in 1774, after which it began to fall slightly. Between 1781 and 1809 there is a complete blank in the record, and the figure for 1809 is markedly smaller than that for 1781. There were large fluctuations after this, although the final figure for 1848 was somewhat smaller than that for 1809. This decline in the number of communicants during the first half of the nineteenth century is all the more remarkable in the context of an expanding population: it increased from 2,370 in 1801 to 3,782 in 1851. The main decline in the number of communicants, however, appears to have occurred between 1780 and 1809, and although there are no population figures available for this period it is possible to express communicants as a proportion of baptisms. This proportion changed from just over 4:1 in 1731 to 5:1 in 1781, dropping sharply to under 2:1 by 1809. Making certain standard assumptions about the birth rate and the age structure of the population, we may estimate that about 40 per cent of the eligible population were communicants before 1780 and only about 10 per cent by 1848.

Some of the changes in the proportion of the eligible population who were communicants might be due to the policy of particular incumbents but this can hardly explain the long term trend. It is possible that some of the decline can be attributed to the emergence of Methodism during the relevant period. In 1790, Hastep estimated that there were in Tenterden, '2,000 inhabitants, of

[1] See the Tenterden parish register, lodged in the Kent County Record Office.

which about 500 were dissenters, who have two meeting houses here, one of Presbyterians, the other of Methodistical Baptists.[1] According to the religious census of 1851, there were in the Tenterden district (an area covering Tenterden and several surrounding villages) 7,412 total sittings, of which 2,650 belonged to dissenters. The increase in the proportion of dissenters—from about 25 per cent in 1790 to 35 per cent in 1851—cannot explain the degree of decline in the number of Anglican communicants in relation to the increase of population. There is no obvious explanation for this decline, and it might simply reflect the customary abandonment of ritual participation in Anglican services just in the town of Tenterden. Some contemporaries did note the religious apathy of agricultural labourers and Engels quoted the labourers who told a journalist in 1843 that they only went to Church because of it being a condition of receiving work and charitable concessions of fuel and potato plots.[2] It is possible that the creation of a landless agricultural proletariat through the enclosure movement may have destroyed the 'organic' sense of solidarity the poor are supposed to have felt with the rich before the enclosure movement, but this type of explanation involves an analysis of the changing social structure of Tenterden which it is not possible to pursue here. One specific factor might have been of some influence: the elimination of smallpox at the end of the eighteenth century. There was a general inoculation in the town in 1798 which appears to have covered all the vulnerable population; it is possible that the elimination of the great killer disease of smallpox removed one of the psychological reasons for religious worship (the early clerical opponents of inoculation predicted that it would have this effect): fear of death and disease.[3] Whatever the reasons for the decline of religious participation during the first half of the nineteenth century, it is clear that such a finding contradicts the conventional picture of this being a period of religious revival. Like the increase in Colyton pre-marital conception rate, the fall in the number of Tenterden communicants leads us to question historical generalization based purely upon literary evidence.

[1] E. Hasted, *The History of the County of Kent* (Canterbury, 1790), p. 98.

[2] F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1958), pp. 303, 304.

[3] An example of the effect of disease on religious behaviour is the trebling of church and chapel communitants during and after the chlorea epidemic of 1849 in Merthy Tydfil. See *The Morning Chronicle* 15.4.50.

Practically all the statistical data in this paper has been about very specific localities, and England is a country with a history notorious for its regional variations. A great deal more research will have to be done before it is possible to make confident generalizations about any subject discussed in this paper, but as a great wealth of the relevant information is to be found in the Registrar-General's vaults and Public Record Office's ledgers, perhaps we can expect social historians and historical sociologists to do the sort of research required to reach definitive conclusions. No doubt many historical myths will wither in the process, possibly to be replaced by new ones in innocent statistical clothing. There are limits to the usefulness of statistics: how inadequate numbers are in describing the fact that six people died of starvation in Riseley, Bedfordshire, during the period 1690–1742,[1] but although these deaths are only casually recorded they do at least warn us against the myth of the pre-industrial golden age.

[1] See the Riseley Parish Register, *Bedfordshire Parish Registers*, XXVIII, in the Bedfordshire Record Office.