LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY – STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

7.12 PROBLEMS IN CLASSIFYING SOCIAL CLASS BY OCCUPATION

Deciphering the social class of people in past societies from occupational data is not as straightforward a task as historians (and others) often tend to assume. There are considerable dangers of projecting backwards twentyfirst-century assumptions about the ranking of any particular form of work. And it is even difficult to be certain about something as apparently simple as the number of different social classes at any one time. People in the past, as well as in the present, disagree.

The reason for such uncertainties is that socio-economic classes are not simply 'out there' waiting to be identified. Instead, they are complex social constructs, generated both at the time and also reformulated by later historians, sociologists and so forth. Such classifications respond to social conditions and inequalities within the wider society, but they simultaneously help to create the condition they describe by heightening people's awareness of social distinctions.[1] (Or, indeed, to minimise them, in the case of societies which claim not to recognise any such thing as social class).

It is thus not convincing for historians simply to allocate occupations, according to a pre-arranged formula, into different social classes. An occupation is often sought as an initial indicator of people's economic role – or relationship with the 'means of production', in Marxist terminology. And an occupational label does provide a preliminary 'sift' through the possibilities. But it is not so easy to go from initial impressions, either of current usage or of historical terminology, to systematic classification.

The problems may be summarised simply. Firstly, people from different social classes may nonetheless share an identical occupational label. And, secondly, there is no consensus about the number of classes that existed historically – or where the boundaries between them lay. Both these problems are discussed in further detail in the sections that follow.

In sum, the 'fuzziness' of class in application does not mean that the

concept is or was 'unreal'. Yet it does mean that it operates at a level of generality and indeed of potential deniability.[2] People in past and present societies do not invariably use this terminology, especially about themselves. Nor are they always consistent in what they say. All these nuances greatly complicate any exercise of individual class identification on the basis of occupational label alone.

7.12.1 Occupations as imperfect indicators of social class

There is no one-to-one correlation between one occupation and one social class. Attributions may be relatively clear in some cases; yet complex in others.

An element of subjectivity is part of the exercise. And quick, subjective responses may positively mislead. To take one example from an otherwise excellent study of the eighteenth-century urban electorate, O'Gorman groups woolcombers with labourers, tavern waiters, hawkers, and miscellaneous others, in the lowly category of 'labourers'.[3] That attribution was no doubt made because combing wool sounds like a relatively unskilled task, perhaps on a par with spinning. However, this was not so. Wool-combing was, before its mechanisation in the later 1780s, one of the most highly skilled and highly paid occupations among all textile producers.[4] Furthermore, the same occupational title was given to the great master woolcombers who organised the putting-out of wool. Most of these ranked among the economic leaders of extensive textile areas. None of these men was on a social par with daily labourers. Instead, lurking behind the meek occupational designation of a woolcomber was either a skilled craftsman (it was generally a male preserve) or his industrial boss.

Opacity was compounded in the case of occupations whose status was changing over time. One example was the nineteenth-century 'engineer'. This designation might be given to a skilled manual worker among the labour force, who was employed perhaps on the railways. Yet the term was rapidly diversifying in its social range and rising in social prestige. In the nineteenth-century United States, an 'engineer' could be the driver of a locomotive. Or in the UK the term could be applied to an inventor of gadgets and machines. Or an 'engineer' could be, more specifically, a technical expert in the design and building of major construction works – the usage that has come to the fore over time, now with many sub-divisions, as in terms of civil, military, electrical

engineering and so forth.[5] Again, a simple occupational label might hide a range of skills and status.

A 'manufacturer' is another example of an occupational label that might refer in the early nineteenth-century either to an employer or to an employee. Each case has to be judged individually. Over time, however, that particular occupational label has experienced a marked upwards drift in terms of application and in the twentieth century it was 'captured' by the large-scale industrial producer.

Broadly speaking, the more generalised the terminology, the more likely it was to cover a range of skills and status rankings. As already noted, a 'weaver' might have been anyone from a large master weaver, employing large numbers on the putting-out system, to the poorest journeyman, eking out a living by working for others, with weak job security and low earnings. The same applied to the 'shoemaker' and to any number of craft manufacturers, where no separate designations existed to differentiate between masters and their workforce. This point is worth stressing, because it is too often ignored by historians.

Of course, some occupational labels were less problematic than others. Bankers, for example, usually represented a fairly homogeneous group of high status individuals, with substantial capital assets and affluent lifestyles. Conversely, labourers were generally to be found towards the lower reaches – though not necessarily at the very base – of the social ladder, assuming the traditional view of society as stretching in a vertical order from the 'head' to the 'foot'.

That general assumption was consistent with the results of an exercise to investigate the taxable status of different occupational groups in the Westminster constituency in 1818. Three-quarters of the voters described as 'labourers', whose names were successfully identified in the rate books, were found to fall into the lowest quintile of rate assessments.[6] In other words, they lived in modest housing and can be classified as members of the semi-skilled working class. That conclusion is based upon a study of 5,028 individual case-histories, where links have been successfully made between the poll and rate books. The homogeneity of the labourers stands out in comparison with many other large occupational groups. The shoemakers, for example, were more heterogeneous. However, even within the relatively homogeneous status of the labourers, it should be noted that one quarter of all those with that occupational label appeared to be somewhat more affluent than their fellows – a minority but still a far from insignificant one. And, of course,

all had to have at least some means to appear as electors in the first place.

Moreover, things were much more complex in the case of many occupations between these polarities. For example, the same micro-study of the Westminster electorate shows that voters, who were builders and tailors, were distributed fairly uniformly across the rateable bands. They were not predominantly rich, middling, or poor; but dispersed across the spectrum. Hence while some occupational groups did appear relatively homogeneous in rate-paying terms (bricklayers, carpenters, labourers), others were highly heterogeneous (builders, tailors, shoemakers).

This research finding is highly significant. It means that occupation remains a relevant preliminary indicator of social status. Yet it also makes it abundantly clear that, on its own, occupation cannot be taken as conclusive. Such a designation may conceal as much as it may reveal.[7]

Ideally, therefore, additional information should always be consulted, relating to wealth, capital assets, and lifestyle, before allocating people in the past to a notional position within a hierarchy of classes. It is true, however, that it is hard to achieve this counsel of perfection in practice.

In particular, data relating to wealth-holdings in the past are often sketchy and imperfect.[8] For example, rateable assessments, while offering a fair guide to the value of housing, offer only a crude proxy for overall wealth. And local tax assessments in some cities varied according to the exigencies of local finance and the varieties of local administrative arrangements.[9] So they did not simply offer precise gauges to individual fortunes. Moreover, the source of an individual's wealth-holding as well as its quantity is also relevant for the allocation of social esteem.

One possible compromise solution might be to weight occupations for classification purposes in terms of the mean wealth of individuals associated with that occupation (assuming that enough systematic data could be found for purposes of comparison). But even such an exercise would conceal the range of variations around the norm between individuals, let alone the variations at different stages within individual life-cycles. Multi-variate analysis is therefore not an easy option.

In the case of the LED, it is true that the provision of rate-book evidence does allow an approach to such techniques by linking the individual voter's occupation to the same individual's rate assessment, where available. But, as already noted, a test case with the Westminster 1818 data found that many middling-status occupations could not be

taken as simple proxy for class – even if the situation was different in the case of the occupational titles of (say) 'bankers' at one end of the spectrum and 'crossing-sweepers' at the other.[10]

One additional complexity for macro-social analysis is that far more information tends to survive relating to male than female occupations.[11] Historians have followed the Registrar General in assuming that married women have gained the same social status as their spouse and they classify women accordingly. But that practice eliminates the possibility of studying (say) inter-class marriage patterns. The social status of women, if allocated only on the basis of the occupation of a spouse, should thus be regarded as relating to their social destinations rather than as reflecting anything about their social origins.

Certainly, any system of social classification should avoid building pre-ordained answers into the definitions. One example of this problem is found in a case study by Royle into the social structure of three Leicestershire small towns (Coalville, Hinckley and Melton Mowbray) in the mid-nineteenth century.[12] He devised his own five-part social classification, in which the upper and middle classes were represented by groups I-III, the skilled working class became class IV and the unskilled working class (Marx's *Lumpenproletariat*) survived as class V. Households were then allocated into these categories, using a variety of criteria. One of those was the employment of servants, which was deemed a characteristic of upper- and middle-class society (classes I-III). Having made the classification according to these rules, the results were, not surprisingly, conclusive. Absolutely none of the workers (classes IV and V) employed domestic servants. Yet it was not necessary to survey hundreds of households to discover that, since, rightly or wrongly, that precise conclusion was built into the classification system.

Contrasting with this case-study is the case of York in 1851. When classifying its census data, Armstrong adopted a five-fold system based solely upon occupational criteria. He then found that servant-employing households stretched well beyond the upper and middle classes (which he defined as classes I-II) into the lower social classes III and IV, representing the skilled workers and some ordinary plebeian families.[13] Only the York *Lumpenproletariat* households in Armstrong's class V were entirely without living-in domestic staff. So his data contradict the assumption made by Royle. While the preponderance of York's servant-employing households appeared in the upper and middle classes I-II, the association between social elevation and servant-keeping was far from

absolute. (Both classifications, by the way, referred exclusively to living-in domestic staff, as revealed by the census, and perforce excluded any daily domestic helpers who lived separately in their own households).

Neither result was conclusive. If Royle's assumption about servant-keeping is correct, then Armstrong's classification based upon occupations is shown to produce errors, as some York households that were allocated into the working class did in fact employ servants. On the other hand, it could be the other way round. If Armstrong's classification by occupation is accurate, then Royle's assumption that only the upper and middle classes employed living-in domestic help would be shown to generate a biased outcome. However, there is nothing in the sources and classification systems in themselves that demonstrates which result is historically the more accurate.

Furthermore, it was notable that, while both these historians detected five social classes in mid-Victorian Britain, their enumeration of the classes differed in detail. Royle placed the middle class in group II, while Armstrong located it in group III instead.

Finding the Victorian bourgeoisie is thus an exercise in historical interpretation, not simply one of description. Koditschek accordingly uses a hybrid classification for mid-nineteenth-century Bradford that defines the urban bourgeoisie in terms of all servant-keeping households *plus* certain specific occupations, whether employing live-in servants or not.[14] That tactic adds flexibility. Yet it still retains the unproven assumption that living-in servants were always employed by upper and middle class households, and were never engaged by the skilled 'aristocrats of labour', who headed the ranks of the working class. That latter proposition, however, is by no means accepted by all historians.

Indeed, further evidence from Rochdale in 1851-71 suggests the reverse. Numerous elite households managed without living-in servants, while servant-keeping was particularly characteristic of many of the *petit-bourgeois* shopkeepers and some of artisan 'aristocrats' who needed additional labour close at hand.[15] That pattern matched the results of Armstrong's methodology when applied to York. Numerous servants lived in households headed by individuals defined by Armstrong as skilled working-class or plebeian (his social classes III and IV).

Data within the LED also highlights a separate point about gender. Keeping a liveried male servant within the household was a tolerably clear indicator of affluence but hiring a female maidservant was undertaken by people from a wide range of backgrounds.[16] Clearly, then,

valid observations may be made relating to the characteristic behaviour of different groups of people at different levels of society. But such observations do not crystallise easily into a simple set of rules for social classification.

7.12.2 Uncertainty about the number of social classes

There was no contemporary consensus in Britain between 1550 and 1914 about the number and definition of its social classes.[17] And the same indeterminacy has been observed in a range of other communities around the world.[18]

Numbering the social classes is therefore not an automatic task but one that requires prior consideration by historians. The more the sub-divisions of society that are selected, the greater the uncertainties when allocating occupations between the various sub-sections – and the greater the potential for error. Conversely, the simpler the model, the greater the likelihood of blurring genuine social distinctions, and of producing unhelpful or even meaningless results.

Dividing society into two rival groups of 'great' and 'small', or 'rich' and 'poor', would ease classification in one sense, since the range of options is dramatically narrowed. In relation to eighteenth-century English society, it also matches the influential analysis of E.P. Thompson, who identified a dichotomy between 'patricians' and 'plebs'.[19] On the other hand, a binary typology creates immense difficulties when allocating the many 'middling' occupations. It produces a tiny 'elite' at the head of society and an undifferentiated mass of 'the rest'. Such a result removes from visibility all those in the 'middling sort' or the 'middle class'.[20] It is an odd fate for a social group that is attracting considerable research attention, especially from urban historians.[21]

If, however, a plurality of classes of social groupings is required, what should their number be? Neither contemporaries nor subsequent historians have reached any consensus. It can be argued that, as Britain became commercialised and industrialised, the class structure became more complex. But when and how that happened remains unclear. Thus three classes are commonly invoked when broad generalisations are required, while four or five classes have often been cited as alternatives as well.[22]

Indeed, in 1814 the knowledgeable social commentator Patrick Colquhoun[23] identified seven. These he outlined using a mixture of

occupational designations plus stipulations about income, as follows: class I the king and great aristocracy; class II the landed gentry and those on large incomes (not further specified); class III the leading professionals, bankers, great merchants and manufacturers; class IV a range of middling occupations with moderate incomes; class V the lesser category of those in middling occupations; class VI 'working mechanics', artisans, agricultural labourers, servants; and class VII all paupers, vagrants, rogues, gypsies and 'idle and disorderly persons'.[24] The definitional boundaries between these groups were not particularly clear but his schema expressed Colquhoun's sense of the multiplicity of status distinctions, particularly at the 'top' of the pyramid.

Some later historians, encouraged by this pluralism, have argued strongly against any teleological model of class emergence within industrial societies and have particularly attacked the view that 'economic' class must automatically be equated with a 'cultural' class consciousness or any inevitable class 'struggle'. Thus Patrick Joyce, for example, stresses that social groupings are flexible and fluctuating. As a result, 'class' should not be reified into a simple and single thing. Instead, he investigates the diverse terms and images that the Victorian working class used to interpret their social world.

Nonetheless, old and influential concepts are hard to eliminate entirely. Joyce has not found 'class talk' in terms of a Marxist class struggle by the workers in nineteenth-century Britain. But he stated in his conclusion that he had found instead 'the semblance of a class talking'.[25] That defiant noun seemed to restore the concept of a distinctive social divisions after all.

Conspicuous disagreement among historians and commentators on something as basic as the number of significant social groupings indicates the intense subjectivity of the whole exercise. Five classes, however, did become widely adopted by sociologists and economists in the twentieth century. Such a number was sufficient to display variety, yet it was not so great that the big picture lost cohesion. The five classes were initially dubbed as numbers I-V on a vertical ladder, although advertisers and market researchers now term them, more chastely, as classes A-E in a horizontal line, in order to avoid offending those at the notional base of the heap. Sub-groups can then be added. Thus C1 represents the skilled manual workers.

Originally, this schema was suggested by the Registrar General for analysing British census returns in 1911;[26] and it has been subsequently

revised from census to census. Different occupations are moved up and down the scale, which still retains its basic five-fold framework. The result enshrines, as Armstrong notes in a terse aside, the 'Whitehall civil servant's view of the social hierarchy'.[27]

Within the five-fold classification there were three key social polarities, at the top (where the upper and middle class are yoked together as class I), the economic middle (the skilled working class), and the base (the unskilled), with two intermediate groupings between them, as shown in Table 94.

Table 94
The Registrar General's five-fold social classification for Britain in 1911

Class I	Upper and middle class
Class II	Intermediate between I and III (occupations like shopkeepers)
Class III	Skilled working class
Class IV	Intermediate between III and V (partially skilled occupations)
Class V	Unskilled working class

Source: S.R.S. Szreter, 'The genesis of the Registrar-General's social classification of occupations', *British Journal of Sociology*, 35 (1984), pp. 522-46.

Applying this schema to historical occupations, however, produces a number of problems. As already noted, it does not differentiate between the upper and middle class. Lumping together such potent and often rival social identities precludes analysis of the social context of those electoral and cultural clashes in London between 1700 and 1870, when class issues were either highlighted or implied.

But the major difficulty in using the Registrar General's classification, on the basis of unsupplemented occupational data, is that it tends to produce a 'swollen' class III. Many industrial occupations have titles that imply some manufacturing expertise, and, without further information about the extent of skill or otherwise, all these occupations end up grouped together in the middle band. Thus Armstrong's study of York in 1851, using this classification, found that as many as 49 per cent of all household heads were skilled workers in class III. Not surprisingly, critics were not impressed by this result.

Other historians, using alternative occupational rankings, managed to reduce the size of class III but only at the cost of increasing class II

instead.[28] In this way the possibilities of massaging the data to produce a pre-required outcome become all the more apparent. But the value of the exercise is accordingly blighted.

Two well-known 'boundary' problems further illustrate the problems of classifying individuals on the social borderlines. On the lower margins between respectability and the working class came the 'artisan'. In the nineteenth century, this term was quite widely used but rarely defined.[29] He could be an independent small master craftsman, located within the ranks of the respectable middling sort. But he could also be a skilled journeyman, working for others to earn his bread. Over time, the latter usage tended to predominate, as the term moved 'down' the social scale. But, at any given moment, additional information is needed in order to classify an individual 'artisan'. Without that, a prior decision in favour of one side or another, gives a systematic tilt to the entire results.

Just as problematic, at the other end of the scale, was the social designation of the 'gentleman'.[30] That of course was not an occupational label. Rather, it was often offered in lieu of that. But the term in application straddled the boundaries of upper and middle class respectability, blurring the rigidities of social divisions at the 'top' of the social hierarchy. Certainly, the 'gentleman' was by no means a term of social respect applied exclusively to landowners, contrary to the assumptions of some historians.

Instead, usage was eclectic and inventive, as the title was an unofficial one, not subject to royal grant or favour. For example, in Westminster in 1749, one self-styled gentleman was described as being 'miserable poor, almost naked', while another was said to keep a bawdy house.[31]

Claims to status also varied with age and life cycle. In 1784 one Samuel Collins of Westminster described himself as a rubbish carter. In 1788 and 1796 a man of the same name and address was styled as a scavenger. And, by 1802, he had become a 'gentleman', at least to his own satisfaction, as he so identified his status when he cast his vote.[32] Perhaps he had retired and was living off his capital. The linkage algorithm is sufficiently robust to suggest that all these references do indeed refer to the same Collins.[33] Accordingly, his case history shows that the coveted designation could be applied to men with social pretensions from a relatively wide range of social backgrounds. A gentleman could be urban or rural, a grandee or an upwardly socially mobile 'middling sort'. Each case thus needs careful scrutiny.

If attributing social class to individuals in history, then, it is best to supplement a simple occupational label with multiple indices of social position, whenever possible. An effective study of nineteenth-century Lancashire showed how it can be done.[34] In that case, key information about income levels and employment status tempered the occupational information to make a robust classification. But, disappointingly for historians, it is hard to find such additional data.

7.12.3 Summary of problems

In general, systems of social classification based upon occupational labels alone, without further cross-checking and supplementation from other sources, are more than usually fallible.[35] Such occupational class-rankings may be used today as approximations for defining relevant social groupings for (say) advertising or opinion-poll purposes. In those cases, approximation is usually all that is required. Yet for a more probing and more accurate historical analysis, especially at individual level, much more is needed. Otherwise, classifications based upon occupational labels alone tend to end up reflecting the prior assumptions of the investigating historian or sociologist.[36]

The very basic disagreements about the number of social classes also contribute to the instability at the heart of such classifications. And things become even more problematic if such postulated class structures (based upon unsupplemented occupational labels) are used for international comparisons.

Nonetheless, it is very often the case that, where there is differentiation of work, then there is scope for differentiation of social respect. Entire caste systems have emerged in response to such perceptions.[37] It is worthwhile therefore to study occupational prestige, both as self-attributed by the relevant occupational groups and as attributed to them by others. Indeed, sociologists have made brave but far from unproblematic attempts to rank occupations internationally in terms of their attributed prestige.[38] Yet it cannot be assumed that the status of different forms of work always remains fixed in stone, either across space or through time. Perceptions are ‘slippery’, liable to adaptation.[39] If some occupational reputations seem to remain stable over long periods of time (such as the ‘lowliness’ of cleaners), others rise (such as the social prestige of nineteenth- and twentieth-century engineers). Moreover, individual careers may also refute the stereotypes, as in the case of the

'lowly' Westminster scavenger (cited above) who eventually became a 'lofty' gentleman.

An in-depth study of the Sussex aristocracy finds a core of leading families, with titles, extensive lands, great wealth, and magnificent country houses. Yet there were many permutations. Some prestigious families had land and wealth but no title; others had a titled head but not much wealth. And one or two individuals from 'old' families managed to have great social prestige without either a title or great wealth.[40]

Context is vital for historical understanding. And there is plenty of scope for building prestige classifications 'outwards' from existing social data, as well as for fitting data into aggregative groupings, like 'class', which have their own historical meanings – and complexities.

7.12.4 Social classification within the LED

On the basis of the reservations already outlined, it was decided not to code the individuals within the LED into class groupings based solely upon occupational labels. Among other things, the electorate in these metropolitan constituencies did not cover the whole social gamut. Hence the historian already knows that the individuals in the LED, being defined by the franchisal requirements,[41] were drawn chiefly from the urban elite, middle class, and (in the case of Westminster) respectable artisans and craftsmen.

Nonetheless, the raw data of individual occupational designations are entirely available within the LED for any exercise in social classification that any user might seek to undertake.

Lastly, the contemporary record did include a number of voters who identified themselves not by occupation but by a title denoting a professional occupation or special social status (or, in some cases, by both status and occupation). Such records constitute a form of contemporary self-classification. Voters publicly declared their status titles, which were accepted as plausible by the returning officers at the poll. So a self-declared elite among the electorate can be identified and their claims to status subjected to historical analysis, as explained in section 7.13.

Notes

[1] As introductions to a huge literature, see P. Calvert, *The concept of class: an historical introduction* (1982); and D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven, Ct, 1998).

[2] For an ultra-sceptical approach, S. Maza, *The myth of the French bourgeoisie: an essay on the social imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, Ma, 2003), esp. pp. 1-13.

[3] O'Gorman, *Voters, patrons and parties*, pp. 398-9.

[4] H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries* (Oxford, 1965), p. 263; J. Burnley, *The history of wool and woolcombing* (1889), pp. 88-90.

[5] R.A. Buchanan, *The engineers: a history of the engineering profession in Britain, 1750-1914* (1989), p. 11.

[6] See Harvey, Green and Corfield, 'Continuity, change and specialisation', p. 487, Table 7; and E.M. Green, 'The taxonomy of occupations in late eighteenth-century Westminster', in Corfield and Keene (eds), *Work in towns*, pp. 164-81.

[7] G.D.H. Cole, *Studies in social structure* (1955), pp. 1-24.

[8] For problems in incorporating wealth data into occupational classifications, see T. Herschberg and R. Dockhorn, 'Occupational classification', *Historical methods newsletter*, 9 (1975/6), pp. 59-60.

[9] E. Baigent, 'Assessed taxes as a source for the study of urban wealth: Bristol in the later eighteenth century', *Urban History Yearbook 1988* (Leicester, 1988), pp. 31-48.

[10] Even crossing sweepers had different fates; and none anyway appeared amongst the relatively respectable electorates within the LED. On the hand-to-mouth lifestyles of people at the foot of eighteenth-century society, see Hitchcock, *Down and out*.

[11] See variously E. Higgs, *A clearer sense of the census: the Victorian censuses and historical research* (1996), pp. 97-99; idem, 'Women, occupations and work in the nineteenth-century censuses', *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), pp. 59-80; and E. Roberts, *Women's work, 1840-1940* (Cambridge, 1995).

[12] S.A. Royle, 'Aspects of nineteenth-century small town society: a comparative study from Leicestershire', *Midland History*, 5 (1979/80), pp. 50-62, with details of classification, pp. 60-1.

[13] W.A. Armstrong, *Stability and change in an English county town: a social study of York, 1801-51* (1974), pp. 163-4.

[14] T. Koditshek, *Class formation and urban industrial society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. pp. 585-9.

[15] E. Higgs, *Domestic servants and households in Rochdale, 1851-71* (New York, 1986), pp. 217-19.

[16] For attempts to tax servant-keeping, see J. Chartres, 'English landed society and the servants tax of 1777', in N.B. Harte and R. Quinault (eds), *Land and society in Britain, 1700-1914* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 34-56.

[17] See K. Wrightson, 'Estates, degrees and sorts: changing perceptions of society in Tudor and Stuart England'; P.J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number in eighteenth-century Britain'; and G. Crossick, 'From gentleman to the residuum: languages of social description in Victorian Britain', all in P.J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, history and class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 30-52, 101-30, and 150-78.

[18] See ibid., for essays on the parallel complexities of social nomenclature in Spain, France, Germany, colonial India, and China.

[19] E.P. Thompson, 'The patricians and the plebs', in idem, *Customs in common* (1991), pp. 16-96.

[20] For the emergence of this terminology, see Corfield, 'Class by name and number', pp. 120-3.

[21] See *inter alia* the classic text by C. Wright Mills, *White collar: the American middle classes* (New York, 1951; reissued 2002); as well as P. Earle, *The making of the English middle class: business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (1989); S.M. Blumin, *The emergence of the middle class: society and experience in the American city, 1760-1900* (Cambridge, 1989); Morris, *Class, sect and party*; J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds), *The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics, 1550-1800* (1994); J. Smail, *The origins of middle-class culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780* (Ithaca, NY, 1994); A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *The making of the British middle class? Studies in regional and cultural diversity since the eighteenth century* (Stroud, 1998); L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (1987; 2nd edn 2002); B. Lewis, *The middlemost and the milltowns: bourgeois culture and politics in early industrial England* (Stanford, Ca, 2002); L. Young, *Middle-class culture in the nineteenth century: America, Australia and Britain* (Basingstoke, 2003); and L. James, *The middle class: a history* (2006).

[22] Corfield, 'Class by name and number', pp. 115-21.

[23] For Patrick Colquhoun (1745-1820), merchant, magistrate, police reformer, and social commentator, see *ODNB*; and G.D. Yeats, *A biographical sketch of the life and writings of Patrick Colquhoun* (1818).

[24] P. Colquhoun, *A treatise on the wealth, power, and resources of the British empire* (1814), pp. 106-7.

[25] P. Joyce, *Visions of the people: industrial England and the condition of class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 1-16, 332-42, esp. pp. 332, 342.

[26] S.R.S. Szreter, 'The genesis of the Registrar-General's social classification of occupations', *British Journal of Sociology*, 35 (1984), pp. 522-46; and J.A. Banks, 'The social structure of nineteenth-century England as seen through the census', in Lawton (ed.), *Census and social structure*, pp. 179-223.

[27] W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation, part I: a basis for social stratification', in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 424, n. 31.

[28] D. and J. Mills, 'Occupation and social stratification revisited: the census enumerators' books in Victorian Britain', *Urban History Yearbook 1989* (1989), pp. 63, 68, 73-5.

[29] Crossick, 'From gentleman to the residuum', pp. 167-9.

[30] Corfield, 'The rivals', pp. 1-33.

[31] Based upon evidence in WAC, E/3078: Objections made by the counsel for Sir George Vandeput, Bt, on the poll for St Margaret and St John the Evangelist, Westminster, fos 10, 24.

[32] Case history from the Westminster Historical Database, for which see WHD; and comment in Corfield, 'The rivals', p. 11.

[33] Linkage methodologies are discussed in *WHD*, pp. 142-69.

[34] See M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (1971).

[35] That point is stressed by P. Doorn, 'Social structure and the labour market: occupational ladders, pyramids, and onions', in K. Schürer and H.A. Diederiks (eds), *The use of occupations in historical analysis* (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 75-100.

[36] Whenever the task is attempted, it is good practice for the classifiers to define all general categories that are invoked, rather than leaving these to inference.

[37] On this theme, see I. Banerjee-Dube (ed.), *Caste in history* (Delhi, 2008); and A. Dass with S. Deulkar, *Caste system: a holistic view* (Delhi, 2002).

[38] See D.J. Treiman, *Occupational prestige in comparative perspective* (New York, 1977), esp. pp. 223-30.

[39] Cole, *Studies in class structure*, pp. 6-7, 80-1, 148-9. See also M. Alestalo, *Prestige and stratification: a comparative study of occupational prestige and its determinants* (Helsinki, 1980).

[40] A. Warner, 'Finding the aristocracy, 1780-1880: a case study of rural Sussex', *Southern History,* 35 (2013), pp. 98-126.

[41] Explained in full in section 3.