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In search of the ‘traditional’ working class: social mobility and occupational continuity in interwar London¹

By DUDLEY BAINES and PAUL JOHNSON

The nature of the working-class community in Britain in the interwar period has, in some respects, remained elusive. At one extreme, it has been characterized as constrained from within by strong kinship and community networks, so that economic and social aspirations seldom extended beyond a strictly local horizon. In ‘traditional’ working-class society, friends were made, jobs found, work carried out, parties held with, and marriage partners selected from, a close network of relatives and neighbours. On the other hand, historians of the nineteenth-century working classes have found more than a trivial number of examples of inter-generational occupational mobility and exogenous marriage. Moreover, these features seem to have been becoming more common up to the First World War, a trend which is difficult to reconcile with the view that interwar working-class communities were largely unchanging.

Direct, and particularly quantitative, evidence concerning the structure and strength of ‘traditional’ working-class society in interwar Britain is rather scarce. Contemporary social surveys did not usually ask direct questions about social mobility, nor analyse the data in a way that would give quantitative insights. The view that working-class society in the interwar period was relatively endogenous is largely based on contemporary autobiographical material and on implications drawn from postwar social surveys of working-class communities. These surveys were made at a time when local and familial links were being significantly loosened by postwar changes in incomes, housing, and education and, in effect, they implied that the working-class community was relatively unchanging before the Second World War. Hence, much of the quantitative evidence which informs our views about the working-class community in the

¹ We are indebted to the other members of the New Survey of London project, Tim Hatton and Roy Bailey (both University of Essex), Angela Raspin (LSE), and particularly to Anna Leith (LSE). The computerization of the household survey records was supported by ESRC Grants R000235697 and R000221981, by the Nuffield Foundation and the Suntory-Toyota Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines at the LSE. The NSLLL dataset has been deposited at the ESRC Data Archive, file number SN3758. Versions of this article were delivered at the LSE, All Souls College, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Harvard University. We are grateful for comments at these venues and also for the comments of anonymous referees.

interwar period relates not to the period itself, but to those before and after it.

The most influential postwar study was that of Bethnal Green in the 1950s. Young and Willmott wrote that, 'People do not, after marriage, throw off the past which contains their former family and friends. They combine past and present. They continue to belong to the same community.'² They compared Bethnal Green with a new suburban estate—'Greenleigh'—to which many East Enders had been moved by bombs and town planners, where 'the family is, by the standards of Bethnal Green, isolated not only from kin but, it appears, from fellow residents as well. A new residence, a new life.'³ A decade later, a study of the affluent working class of Luton confirmed its members' more individualistic outlook. According to Goldthorpe and his collaborators, 'whatever their previous community experiences may have been, they were now largely free from the continuous and essentially conservative social pressures exerted by the extended family and by established neighbourhood customs.'⁴

Many historians have accepted the characterization of the working-class community between the wars implicit in the work of Young and Willmott and of Goldthorpe and his co-writers. Briggs, for example, stresses the 'continuation of ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour in slums across the divides of time' as shown in the books by Roberts and by Young and Willmott.⁵ Harrison stresses the changes in East Enders when they moved to suburban housing estates. They welcomed the new houses, but 'not without regret for the friendliness and sense of community of the East End'.⁶ In his recent analysis of classes and cultures in modern Britain, McKibbin explicitly adopts the dichotomous terminology of 'traditional' and 'new', and draws on a wide range of evidence to trace the social culture of the 'traditional' working class, noting that it was significantly modified by postwar housing and prosperity.⁷ By 1950, he suggests, it had become a commonplace that the new housing estates were responsible for a loss of working-class sociability. Most of the evidence for this change comes from a dozen or so postwar sociological surveys that were contemporaneous with the work of Young and Willmott.

Other writers have been more sceptical. Thompson doubts that there ever was a period in the two centuries before 1950 when 'British towns collectively sustained a complete social structure, with interrelated and

² Young and Willmott, *Family*, p. 156.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 141. The location of 'Greenleigh' was not revealed in the original study, but in the new introduction to the 1986 reprint of the book, Young and Willmott noted that it then was within the area of the Epping Forest District Council.

⁴ Goldthorpe et al., *Affluent worker*, pp. 86-7.

⁵ Briggs, *Social history*, p. 338.

⁶ Harrison, *Common people*, p. 387.

⁷ In his section on the 'traditional' working class, McKibbin, *Classes*, pp. 179-98, refers to 10 accounts of working-class social life published in the 1950s, and several subsequent works of autobiography and oral history, but to just three interwar studies, all of which deal with the narrow topic of juvenile labour and behaviour.

cohering classes'.⁸ In the second edition of his textbook, More argues that the period of the affluent worker was not necessarily preceded by a period of community-centred existence as implied by Young and Willmott.⁹ He notes the existence of heterogeneous working-class communities in the nineteenth century and the exclusion of some working-class groups from those communities. He suggests that the 'cohesion of many working-class communities may well have developed during the period of economic stagnation and low migration between the wars'.¹⁰ Glynn and Booth, in what is effectively an aside, imply the opposite: that the homogeneous working-class community existed in the nineteenth century but was declining between the wars.¹¹ Finally, Davidoff suggests that the (re)discovery of the homogeneous working-class community may have been an artefact of the Second World War which 'focused attention on the family as a national resource'.¹²

Many of the characteristics of the working-class community are not susceptible to quantitative analysis. This article is concerned with only one aspect of 'traditional' working-class society in the interwar period—inter-generational occupational stability as reflected by the entry of juveniles into the labour market. Existing evidence concerning the occupational stability of working-class communities before the First World War is based on samples taken from the census enumerators' books and samples of marriage certificates. To take just a few examples, the analysis by Miles of intergenerational occupational continuity showed considerable evidence of occupational mobility. One-third of bridegrooms had a different occupational class from that of their father at the beginning of the period 1839-1914, rising to just under half by the end.¹³ Dupree, in her study of Stoke on Trent in 1861, also shows some evidence of occupational mobility. For example, only 62 per cent of labourers and 49 per cent of miners were in the same occupation as their fathers.¹⁴ Anderson showed that, in Preston in 1851, in most occupations between 50 and

⁸ Thompson, 'Town and city', pp. 85-6.

⁹ The contestable nature of the historical evidence may explain why the idea of a 'traditional' working class has been mythologized in some of the sociological literature. If modern social arrangements were the outcome of some process of change, a past has to be identified or, if not identified, invented. In the *Affluent worker* study, Goldthorpe et al. expand on their invention in a footnote: 'Such concepts as the "traditional worker" or "traditional working-class community" must be understood as tools of sociological and not historical analysis. Their use, for example, contains no implication that at some period of time all or even most of the members of the community displayed social characteristics, or lived in communities with characteristics, of the kind that are labelled "traditional"' (Goldthorpe et al., *Affluent worker* n. 1, p. 86).

¹⁰ More, *Industrial age*, pp. 388-9.

¹¹ Glynn and Booth, *Modern Britain*, p. 176.

¹² Davidoff, 'Family', p. 128.

¹³ Based on an analysis of 10,835 marriages where the occupation of groom and parent was given. Miles used the conventional schema of five occupational classes. Movement to and from the working classes (III, IV, and V) to classes I and II is included but most mobility took place within the working class: Miles, 'How open?', pp. 23, 28. See also Savage and Miles, *Remaking*, pp. 28, 34.

¹⁴ On the other hand, the other major occupations (pottery workers, iron workers, shoemakers) had mainly endogenous marriages. Pottery worker was the preferred occupation: Dupree, *Family structure*, pp. 161, 168.

60 per cent of sons had the same occupations as their fathers.¹⁵ The analysis of a sample of marriage register data by Mitch showed comparable rates.¹⁶

How may these data be interpreted? It is possible, of course, that they are unrepresentative. The rate of occupational change was partly dependent on the rate of structural change in a locality. Hence, the opportunity for occupational change varied.¹⁷ And the preferred occupations may have varied between individual towns. Assuming that the studies are representative, the apparent fluidity of the nineteenth century, which, moreover, seems to have been increasing, is difficult to reconcile with the existence of a 'traditional', relatively unchanging working-class community in the interwar period.¹⁸ In other words, if such a community existed there would have to have been a break in trend. As we have seen, there is no agreement on when this break might have occurred. McKibbin, in his recent survey of the literature, describes a 'traditional' community in the interwar period, but does not say when its main characteristics were created.¹⁹ Miles and Savage, on the other hand, suggest that the characteristics of these communities were created by about 1900, but then began to decline.²⁰

The occupational progression shown in marriage registers seems to be at variance with the commonly held view that many juveniles entered the labour market under the influence of friends and relatives. Anderson was fairly sure that it was the 'usual way of obtaining a job' in mid-nineteenth-century Preston.²¹ The introduction of compulsory schooling might be expected to reduce the importance of personal contacts in labour force entry, but Vincent's study of entry into the labour force in the early twentieth century, based on autobiographies, also showed that more than half of first jobs had been obtained with the aid of parents and relatives.²² Evidence from the interwar period seems to suggest that personal contacts may have remained common. McKibbin concluded that 'boys followed

¹⁵ The occupational progression rate of 50-60% refers to sons aged 20 and over. Among sons under age 20 working in a factory, more than three-quarters had fathers who were also working in a factory, but other sons under 20 were much less likely to be in the same occupation as their fathers: Anderson, *Family structure*, tab. 29, pp. 142-4, 154. This study is based on the enumerators' books and therefore includes only co-resident sons.

¹⁶ Using a conventional five-point schema, 60-65% of marriages were between members of different occupational classes (1839-73): Mitch, 'Inequalities', p. 142.

¹⁷ In Miles's analysis, out of a total mobility rate of 46%, 32-34% could have been accounted for by structural change: Miles, 'How open?', p. 28.

¹⁸ Evidence for this would be that occupational continuity among skilled workers was probably higher than that for unskilled workers and petty traders: see, e.g., Mitch, 'Inequalities', p. 148.

¹⁹ McKibbin, *Classes*, pp. 179-88.

²⁰ Savage and Miles argue that the inner-city communities began to decline from about 1900, as the working class moved out of the central areas: Savage and Miles, *Remaking*, pp. 62, 70.

²¹ Anderson, *Family structure*, p. 119.

²² Using as the source 432 autobiographies of people who started work before 1914, from the family life and work survey, 56% said that their first job had been obtained through personal recommendation: Vincent, 'Mobility, bureaucracy and careers', p. 221.

their fathers and mates'.²³ Quantitative data are scarce but a late 1930s survey estimated that 34 per cent of boys and 38 per cent of girls had found their first job through the intervention of family and friends.²⁴ According to Young and Willmott, in the 1950s direct father-son continuity in the workplace 'although not so widespread as it was, is still fairly common'. Fathers or other relatives would 'speak to the Guv'nor' to get a job for a teenager, although Willmott and Young thought that the buoyant labour market of the immediate postwar period made this personal influence less important than it had been in the 1930s.

In this article data collected in 1929-32 on 28,000 London working-class households are used to examine the extent to which juveniles followed in the occupational footsteps of their fathers. The data also allow us to measure the degree of father-son social mobility, and to assess, in a limited way, the extent to which the school system offered opportunities for mobility before the postwar introduction of universal secondary education.

The article proceeds in five stages. Section I presents outline details of the data and the survey from which they are derived. This is followed by a brief comparison of the metropolitan and national labour markets in order to demonstrate that conditions faced by juveniles in London in 1929-32 were not exceptional. The following three sections examine, in turn, the rate of father-son occupational continuity in London, the degree of father-son class mobility, and the potential returns to an additional year of schooling for juveniles from skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled backgrounds. The results cast doubt on accepted views about the power of internal and external social structures to limit the occupational choice and social horizons of juvenile and young adult males living in working-class communities in interwar London.

I

The data are derived from the *New survey of London life and labour* (NSLLL), which was the largest and most comprehensive social survey undertaken in Britain before the Second World War and the only one for which the original survey cards have survived (almost) in their entirety.²⁵ The NSLLL involved a detailed house-to-house enquiry which collected information on more than 2 per cent of the working-class

²³ McKibbin, *Classes*, p. 120. McKibbin cites a survey of juvenile employment in Sheffield (Owen, 'Survey', pp. 17-18) which stressed the importance of friends as opposed to relatives. Glucksmann's work, which collects autobiographies of women workers, includes several examples where mothers obtained the first jobs for their daughters in the London mass production industries. Posts in many of these new industries were perceived as 'superior': Glucksmann, *Women assemble*, pp. 97, 132, 139.

²⁴ Jewkes and Jewkes, *Juvenile labour market*, p. 34. On the other hand, a contemporaneous survey in Merseyside showed that only 19% of boys and 18% of girls had obtained their first job through the intercession of parents, friends, or relatives. The survey is difficult to evaluate, however. A total of 42% of males and 38% of females said that they had obtained the job through their 'own effort'. In addition, the influence of relatives was reported as being higher during the search for a second job: Jones, *Social survey of Merseyside*, III, p. 212.

²⁵ Results of the survey were published in nine volumes. The household survey was referred to in only two volumes and then only in aggregated form. See Llewellyn Smith, ed., *New survey*.

population in 38 London boroughs—28,100 households containing 98,400 individuals. Data concerning 26,915 households and 94,137 individuals have survived; most of this material relates to 1929 and 1930.²⁶ Information was collected on the demographic structure of the household, housing conditions, and the occupation, income, earnings and birthplace of each individual, including the name of the employer and the cost of the journey to work. Manual tabulation of the data was a laborious task and, in common with other surveys of the time, little analysis of the data was undertaken. The cards have now been fully computerized.²⁷

The strengths and limitations of the NSLLL data should be noted. The household was, in effect, defined as all persons living at one address, and, most important, included only working-class households. 'Working class' was defined by exclusion, the main criterion being occupation. Hence, police inspectors were excluded, but police sergeants included. Most 'employers and managers' and 'proprietors' were also excluded. If in doubt, as, for instance, in the case of the self-employed, the investigators were instructed to include only those households where the income of the head was less than £250 per annum, this being the upper income threshold for National Insurance contributions. Working-class households were selected for inclusion in the survey on a random basis within each borough. This makes the survey an excellent resource for the analysis of intra-household economic and demographic characteristics, but it precludes the direct evaluation of some extra-household issues such as the residential propinquity of kin.

II

Individual level data are available only for London and the analysis here is confined to London (which in 1931 accounted for 14 per cent of the population of England and Wales, and 15.5 per cent of the labour force). Moreover, the coincidence of the NSLLL with the interwar depression means that the survey data may be unrepresentative of the interwar period as a whole. Trends in the national economy in the interwar period disproportionately favoured the growth of employment in London, for both adults and juveniles. The main employment growth in the interwar period was in services, in which there were many entry-level jobs. Furthermore, technical changes in the newer consumer industries, which were relatively important in London, favoured juveniles.²⁸

The 1931 census shows that London had higher juvenile participation

²⁶ The cards for the outer London boroughs of Walthamstow and Tottenham, although used for the published volumes, have been lost. The proportion of the 26,915 households surveyed in each year was 1928: 0.1, 1929: 34.9, 1930: 49.3, 1931: 13.5, 1932: 2.3.

²⁷ The cards are held in the British Library of Political and Economic Science (the LSE library). The entire contents of each card have been computerized, together with additional coding of occupations, birthplaces, and location of employer. Full details of the project, including the quality of the sample, are given in D. E. Baines, 'The computerisation of the New survey of London life and labour, 1929-31' (LSE, Working Papers in Economic History, 1998). The computerised data are now held by the ESRC Data Archive.

²⁸ Gollan, *Youth in British industry*, p. 80.

rates than England and Wales at all ages for both males and females.²⁹ Yet London also had marginally higher proportions of 14-17-year-olds in fulltime education. This apparent conundrum of both higher participation rates and more fulltime education in London is accounted for by the greater than average propensity of unoccupied male juveniles in London to be in receipt of fulltime education (81.6 per cent, compared with 72.5 per cent in England and Wales). The contrast for females was even greater: 65.1 per cent compared with 42.8 per cent.³⁰

Table 1. *Occupied population (%), juveniles, aged 14-17, London, and England and Wales, 1931 census*

<i>Males</i>				
<i>Age</i>	(1) <i>England & Wales</i>	(2) <i>Census</i> <i>(NSLLL area)</i>	(3) <i>NSLLL survey</i> <i>(N = 3,332)</i>	(4) <i>NSLLL (with</i> <i>earnings)</i>
14-	52.8	58.1	52.6	50.1
15-	74.8	76.7	80.7	77.4
16-17	88.7	90.6	88.8	85.3
<i>Females</i>				
<i>Age</i>	<i>England and Wales</i>	<i>Census</i> <i>(NSLLL area)</i>	<i>NSLLL survey</i> <i>(N = 3,303)</i>	<i>NSLLL (with</i> <i>earnings)</i>
14-	40.4	52.1	42.4	41.6
15-	60.8	70.2	77.4	74.9
16-17	75.6	85.8	86.6	82.2

Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1931*; NSLLL data files

Juveniles in the NSLLL sample also exhibit higher participation than in the country as a whole (table 1). But the NSLLL data differ somewhat from the census return for the equivalent area of London, in that participation rates for 15-17-year-old females and 15-year-old males are higher and for 14-year-olds lower. The reason is probably definitional. Occupational status was self-defined in the census, but independently defined by the interviewer in the NSLLL, according to seven possible current labour market states: 'not in labour force'; 'employed'; 'self-employed'; 'unemployed'; 'sick/incapacitated'; 'on strike'; 'unknown/other'. This article counts as occupied all juveniles except those declared as 'not in labour force'; this is an upper-bound estimate of the participation rate (column 3 of table 1). Since information on earnings in the survey week is also available, it is possible to treat juveniles who reported current earnings as a lower-bound estimate of participation (column 4 of table 1). Even on this restricted definition, participation at some ages was higher than in the census, confirming the exceptionally high participation rates in London.

²⁹ Here 'London' is defined to include the LCC area (the census definition) plus the outer boroughs surveyed by the NSLLL (Acton, Brentford, Ealing, Hornsey, Willesden, East Ham, West Ham, Barking, Leyton, Tottenham, and Walthamstow) except that to maintain comparability with the computerized NSLLL data, the definition excludes the two boroughs—Tottenham and Walthamstow—for which the NSLLL cards have not survived.

³⁰ 1931 *Census of England and Wales: Occupational Tables*.

The high juvenile participation rates in London, particularly for females, suggest that demand for juvenile labour was buoyant in 1929-32, and that most school leavers could find employment. This impression is confirmed by NSLLL data on unemployment; for each age from 14 to 17 the proportion of males reported to be unemployed was, respectively, 2.7, 2.1, 4.0, and 5.0 per cent. For females the figure was, respectively, 2.4, 1.3, 2.8, and 2.8 per cent. It is clear, therefore, that at the time of the NSLLL survey the juvenile labour market in London was not particularly depressed.³¹ There is no reason to think that behaviour observed in 1929-32 was uncharacteristic of the interwar period.

III

This section examines the evidence of father-son occupational continuity in the London labour market. In their discussion of the subject, Young and Willmott wrote:

This system probably used to result in many more sons following their fathers than do so today. We do not know; we can only surmise. All we are certain is that only ten out of the forty-five husbands in the Bethnal Green marriage sample have the same occupations as their fathers, as dockers, market porters, and in a few other trades.³²

Unfortunately, Young and Willmott did not collect information about fathers' occupations in their general household sample. Their 1950s evidence of a 22.2 per cent rate of occupational continuity was derived from the 45 families in their sub-sample of married couples with two or more children. The 2 per cent NSLLL sample of the London working-class population may be used directly to test for evidence of father-son progression in both Bethnal Green and London generally, and in each occupational sector, in 1929-32.

We first examined those male juveniles aged 14-20 who were economically active, and who lived in a household where the male head (nearly always the father) was also economically active. The occupations of these individuals were coded into the 31 main occupational orders, as given by the 1931 census, but cases where the occupation was 'other and undefined' (sector 31) or retired, or unknown, were omitted. This gave a sample of 3,909 males aged 14-20. One-fifth (20.4 per cent) of these juveniles were in the same occupational order as their fathers for the NSLLL area as a whole, but there was considerable variance across boroughs. Table 2 lists those boroughs that displayed a level of working-class father-son occupational continuity more than one standard deviation away from the mean.

Some of this inter-borough variance is a function of differences in the occupational structure. Some orders exhibited very high rates of father-

³¹ The adult labour market in London was also little affected by the depression. The average unemployment rate recorded in the NSLLL for males aged 21-64 was 7.2%.

³² Young and Willmott, *Family*, p. 75.

Table 2. *Within-order occupational continuity: boroughs with rates more than one standard deviation from the mean*

<i>Borough</i>	<i>% father-son occupational continuity</i>
Stepney	31.0
Kensington	29.3
Shoreditch	26.6
Leyton	26.5
Bethnal Green	26.2
Lambeth South	25.8
Hackney	15.1
Chelsea	15.0
Woolwich	15.0
Poplar	14.9
Stoke Newington	14.3
Fulham	13.7
Hampstead	13.6
Westminster	13.2
Hammersmith	13.0

Source: NSLLL data files

son occupational continuity. This was particularly the case with building (order 18: 41 per cent), transport (order 22: 36 per cent), and clothing and shoes (order 13: 30 per cent), so boroughs with a concentration of these trades were likely to have above average rates of inter-generational occupational continuity. A regression across boroughs of the measured rate of occupational continuity on the employment share of the major occupational sectors explains less than one-fifth of the inter-borough variance (R -bar-squared 0.16). This implies that independent borough-specific influences were responsible for most of the observed inter-borough variance in continuity. However, table 2 does not point to any simple 'East End' or 'traditional working-class' effect. The 'traditional' borough of Bethnal Green exhibits a high level of occupational continuity, as do the inner East End boroughs of Stepney and Shoreditch. Yet Poplar, adjacent to both Bethnal Green and Stepney, and with a heavy concentration of dock workers, is well below average in table 2. In the west of London, the borough with the second highest rate of continuity, Kensington, is sandwiched between Westminster and Hammersmith which have the lowest recorded rates. On the metropolitan fringes, and beyond the London County Council administrative area, the borough of Leyton had a rate of occupational continuity of 26.5 per cent whereas the suburban borough of Barking had a rate of only 16.4 per cent.³³

The NSLLL evidence so far indicates that the degree of father-son occupational continuity found by Young and Willmott in Bethnal Green

³³ The borough-specific rates of occupational continuity derived from the NSLLL are, like those of Young and Willmott, based on the residential location of fathers and sons. On this measure a juvenile working in the same occupational sector as his father, but whose place of work was in a different borough, would be deemed to be exhibiting occupational continuity.

in the 1950s (22.2 per cent) was above the average level for working-class households in London in 1929-32 (20.4 per cent), but below the interwar level for Bethnal Green (26.2 per cent). However, the test made here for occupational continuity within broad occupational orders is far more inclusive, and hence much less precise, than that used by Young and Willmott. For example, sector 22 (transport and communications) includes all workers in railways, road transport, the merchant marine, and the docks, together with postmen, telephone operators, lift attendants, messengers, and porters. If a father worked in the docks and his son on the railways, there is no genuine occupational continuity, although both work in the same broad sector. Young and Willmott, by contrast, identify the existence of occupational continuity only if there is exact job matching—both father and son working as dockers, or as market porters. A more accurate view of occupational continuity in the NSLLL sample, and one more comparable with Young and Willmott's study, can be gained by examining the specific occupations reported by respondents, which have been coded according to a modified version of the 1931 census classification of occupations.³⁴ By this measure the rate of father-son occupational continuity in the NSLLL is just 7.6 per cent, ranging from zero in Woolwich to 12.6 per cent in East Ham. Bethnal Green is again above average (9.4 per cent), but within one standard deviation of the mean. In Bethnal Green 22 of the 233 juveniles had exactly the same occupation as their fathers: four sons followed their fathers into tailoring, seven into cabinet-making, four into french polishing, with the other seven working as metal moulder, building labourer, driver, butcher, wholesale salesman, van salesman, and costermonger. None of the Bethnal Green juveniles followed their fathers into the docks, portering, or printing, the three occupations identified by Young and Willmott as characteristic of intergenerational occupational continuity. This is perhaps not surprising since none of the fathers of the 233 juveniles worked in printing, and just seven worked as porters and 14 were dock workers. The fact that printing, portering, and dock work were very much minority occupations in Bethnal Green itself suggests that the occupations of fathers in the Young and Willmott 'marriage sample' were unrepresentative of occupations in the borough as a whole.

Neither of the measures of occupational continuity used here supports the contention that this form of behaviour was much more prevalent before the Second World War than in the 1950s. The narrow measure based on exact occupational matching finds less than 10 per cent of sons following in their fathers' footsteps. Since no one has suggested that occupational continuity was more prevalent in the postwar than the prewar period, it is likely that the data derived from the Bethnal Green marriage sample in the mid-1950s were unrepresentative of the father-

³⁴ R. Bailey and A. Leith, 'Computerising, and coding the New survey of London life and labour' (mimeo, Univ. of Essex, 1997), pp. 33-40. This coding scheme contains 629 distinct occupational categories.

son occupational continuity experienced in the borough and, more generally, in London as a whole.

IV

The low rate of (narrow) father-son occupational continuity among working-class households in London demonstrates that initial employment choices for juveniles were not massively constrained by 'traditional' job-seeking practices. This suggests that there may have been significant opportunities for sons to find jobs with a different status to that of their fathers, and thus to achieve upward or downward social mobility. Such social mobility would appear to be at odds with the views of Glass, who in his analysis of the pattern of mobility across successive cohorts born between 1890 and 1929 found that 'there have been no major differences between generations in the overall intensity of the status association between fathers and sons'.³⁵ Goldthorpe's 1972 study found clear evidence of rising absolute mobility rates over the middle decades of the century, but this was a function of the expansion of the relative and absolute number of service class (white collar) jobs, rather than a result of greater 'openness' in society; the underlying structure of mobility chances in Britain remained largely unaffected.³⁶ Both the Glass and the Goldthorpe studies concentrated on movement between manual and non-manual occupations, and so are not directly compatible with the NSLLL data which are restricted to a working-class population. A better basis for the long-run comparison of working-class social mobility is the data relating to over 10,000 sons, fathers, and fathers-in-law collected by Vincent from a sample of marriage registers between 1839 and 1914. As already noted, analysis of these data by Miles reveals much greater 'openness' over time, especially *within* the working class. In particular, he finds that in the 75 years between 1839 and 1914, the total mobility rate—the proportion of men leaving their class background by the time of their first marriage—rose from one-third to almost half.³⁷

By grouping NSLLL occupational data into socio-economic classes, it is possible to see whether working-class social mobility in interwar London corresponds with the pattern of growing openness found by Miles in the 1839-1914 data. We have borrowed the Registrar-General's classification of socioeconomic class (used in censuses from 1911 to 1951) which allocated occupations according to their level of skill to one of five categories: I = higher professionals, managers and proprietors; II = other professionals, managers and employers; III = skilled and clerical workers; IV = semi-skilled workers; V = unskilled workers.³⁸ Miles also uses this five-point class scale, so direct comparison with his data for the period up to 1914 is possible. There is, however, an important difference

³⁵ Glass and Hall, 'Social mobility in Britain', p. 216.

³⁶ Goldthorpe, *Social mobility*, chs. 4, 12.

³⁷ Miles, 'How open?', pp. 22-3.

³⁸ Bailey and Leith, 'Computerising' (above, n. 34), p. 38.

between occupational data collected by the NSLLL and those derived from marriage registers. The NSLLL explicitly excluded nearly all households containing workers in non-manual employment, and so occupations of both fathers and sons are restricted to classes III, IV, and V. Allowance is made for this by adjusting Miles's data to exclude those cases where mobility occurred into or from classes I and II.

It is also necessary to recognize that recording the occupations of fathers and co-resident sons is not the same process as recording the occupations of bridegrooms and their fathers. By the time of marriage, some grooms would no longer be resident in the family home, possibly because they had migrated to improve their employment prospects. It might be expected, therefore, that the NSLLL would under-report the level of father-son occupational and class mobility relative to the marriage register data. However, this bias is likely to be small. An analysis of the skill composition of male juvenile and young adult workers in the NSLLL shows that, not surprisingly, unskilled (class V) jobs dominated at the age of 14, by 16 juveniles were equally represented in unskilled and skilled (class III) jobs, but for 17-year-olds, skilled jobs dominated. By age 19 the occupational distribution of males had converged to the adult (age 21-30) norm, with 50.3 (51.3) per cent in skilled jobs, 21.4 (21.3) per cent in semi-skilled jobs, and 28.3 (27.5) per cent in unskilled jobs. There is no net class mobility for males between the ages of 19 and 30 in the NSLLL sample, and so no reason to believe that the occupations of co-resident young adults would be significantly different from the occupations of bridegrooms.

The NSLLL has been used to compare the skill classification of 1,075 young adult males aged 19 and 20 with the skill classification of their fathers.³⁹ In table 3 these data are compared with those derived by Miles from marriage registers for 1839-54 and 1899-1914, adjusted to exclude mobility to and from classes I and II. The data are presented in table 3 in the form of a mobility matrix. Column percentages (headed column *i*) represent the percentage of sons working in class *x* who originated from (i.e. whose father's class was) class *y*; this is a measure of occupational inflow. Row percentages (in columns headed *o*) represent the percentage of fathers working in class *x* whose sons work in class *y*; this is a measure of occupational outflow. For example, of the 548 fathers in the 1929-32 (NSLLL) sample who worked in class III occupations, 64.4 per cent had a son working in a class III occupation, and 17.0 per cent had a son working in a class V occupation. Of the 580 sons in the 1929-32 sample who worked in class III jobs, 60.9 per cent originated in a class III household, and 19.5 per cent originated in a class V household.

Table 3 demonstrates that, on the evidence of these samples, mobility within the working class rose substantially over time. In the 1839-54 sample, more than three-quarters of working-class sons were in the same working-class skill range as their father; by 1899-1914 this had fallen to

³⁹ Excluded from this analysis are all cases where either the young adult or the father was not in employment, or where the occupation was not defined.

Table 3. *Social mobility matrix*

Father's class		Son's class						n
		III		IV		V		
		i	o	i	o	i	o	
III	1839-54	79.1	85.0	23.1	5.5	13.0	9.6	1,078
	1899-1914	72.2	69.7	39.9	18.1	31.7	12.2	1,042
	1929-32	60.9	64.4	43.8	18.6	36.9	17.0	548
IV	1839-54	6.6	32.8	46.7	51.3	4.7	15.9	232
	1899-1914	13.3	38.0	35.7	47.9	12.5	14.2	353
	1929-32	19.7	54.0	25.8	28.4	14.7	17.5	211
V	1839-54	14.3	18.5	30.2	8.6	82.4	72.9	897
	1899-1914	14.5	30.0	24.5	23.9	55.9	46.1	486
	1929-32	19.5	36.9	30.5	23.2	48.4	39.9	306
n	1839-54	1,158		255		794		2,207
	1899-1914	1,006		474		401		1,881
	1929-32	580		233		252		1,075

*Notes:*col. *i* = percentage by col. (inflow)col. *o* = percentage by row (outflow)

n = number of observations

Sources: for 1839-54 and 1899-1914, Miles, 'How open?', p. 22; for 1929-32, NSLLL data files

59.5 per cent, and by 1929-32 it had decreased further to 49.8 per cent. In other words, mobility across unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled boundaries, from being exceptional in the mid-nineteenth century, had become the norm for young adult males by the interwar period.⁴⁰ This rise in mobility was not simply the consequence of an expansion in the number of class III jobs. The proportion of class III fathers and sons was lower in 1839-54 than in 1929-32, but only marginally so (48.8 and 51.0 per cent for fathers, 52.5 and 54 per cent for sons). Over time, the proportionate increase in the chance of a son originating in class III and falling to class V was almost as great as the increase in the chance of a son originating in class V and rising to class III. The mobility matrix in table 3 reveals increasing fluidity over time; working-class occupational stability had been significantly attenuated in London by the 1930s. A contemporaneous survey of Merseyside also showed high occupational mobility rates.⁴¹ It is ironic that this is exactly the period identified by

⁴⁰ Movement from Classes III, IV, and V to Classes I and II is unobserved, since the NSLLL surveyed working-class households only. However, unless downward movement from the middle classes to the working classes exceeded upward movement, which seems unlikely, the estimates would undercount rather than overcount mobility.

⁴¹ In the Merseyside survey, 37% of sons were in the same occupational group as their father, 28% had higher-status occupations than their father, and 35% had lower-status occupations. Most of the movement was relatively limited, although working-class juveniles entering white-collar occupations were mentioned. Of course, Merseyside had an industrial structure different from that of London, with fewer 'new' industries and more depressed sectors, which will have reduced occupational progression. Moreover, the survey used a nine-point occupational scale which is difficult to match with the NSLLL data. In particular, it is insufficiently sensitive to isolate Class IV. The proportions entering the father's occupation were as follows: small dealer, 18%; independent worker, 20%; skilled engineer/shipbuilder, 12%; unskilled engineer/shipbuilder, 19%; skilled builder, 20%; unskilled builder, 6%; railwayman, 8%; dock labourer, 20%; seaman, 25%. (N = 979). Jones, *Survey of Merseyside*, II, pp. 38, 44, 46.

many scholars as the apogee of the 'traditional' working-class community. The NSLLL evidence indicates that, in terms of occupational mobility, this ascription is incorrect.

V

Significant amounts of mobility within the working class in 1929-32, and low rates of father-son occupational continuity, suggest that many juveniles and young adults were gaining employment in ways that relied less heavily on family connections than in the past. It is possible that the education system played a role in determining the type of work obtained by juveniles, and this possibility can be examined with NSLLL data on juvenile employment. The NSLLL did not record information about education, but it is known from the census that 82 per cent of unoccupied male juveniles in London were in fulltime education, and in the following analysis it is assumed that non-working juveniles were at school.

Table 4. *Probability of son's work status, by class of father*

<i>Father's class</i>	<i>Son's class</i>			
	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>no work</i>
<i>Age 14</i>				
III	0.16	0.07	0.21	0.56
IV	0.17	0.05	0.31	0.47
V	0.13	0.09	0.38	0.40
<i>Age 15</i>				
III	0.33	0.13	0.32	0.23
IV	0.25	0.17	0.40	0.17
V	0.17	0.16	0.51	0.16
<i>Age 16</i>				
III	0.44	0.14	0.28	0.13
IV	0.34	0.21	0.33	0.11
V	0.26	0.16	0.52	0.06
<i>Age 17</i>				
III	0.53	0.20	0.23	0.05
IV	0.37	0.17	0.38	0.08
V	0.35	0.22	0.41	0.03

Note: because figures are rounded, not all rows sum to 1.

Source: NSLLL data files

Data from a cross-tabulation of boys' occupational class by the occupational class of the head are used to estimate the age-specific probability that a boy from a class x household gained employment in a class y job. Table 4 reports these probabilities for boys for each age from 14 to 17. Children from class III households consistently had the highest probability at each age of working in a class III job and the lowest probability of working in a class V job. For class V children this relationship is reversed. The probability of obtaining class III employment generally increased with age, but class remained important. Class V boys made up relatively little ground on their class III peers as they became older. For employed juveniles only, the probability that a juvenile from a class V household

held a class III job at age 17 (0.36: derived as 0.35/0.97) was marginally less than the probability that a class III juvenile did at age 14 (0.37: derived as 0.16/0.44).

The class of origin affected not only the chance of obtaining a particular class of job, but also the probability at each age of being in the labour force. The final column in table 4 includes data on non-occupied juveniles. This shows that there were significant class differences in the propensity to enter the labour force for juveniles aged 14-16. Boys from class V households were, at each age, more likely to be in paid employment than class IV boys, who were more likely to be working than class III boys. By age 17 more than 95 per cent of boys were in employment and the clear class hierarchy in employment propensities had disappeared.

These data provide some support for the idea that deferred entry, and the additional schooling that this implied, increased the chance of obtaining higher status employment. It is not possible to test this proposition directly, however, since the NSLLL includes only cross-sectional data. To go further, several important assumptions have to be made. First, the cross-section of juveniles needs to be considered as if it were a cohort on which data have been collected over several years. It has to be assumed that these 14-year-olds in year t become the 15-year-olds in year $t+1$, and so on. In other words, a pseudo-cohort must be constructed from cross-section data. Biases introduced by this procedure will be minimized if the imputed length of time over which the cohort is followed is kept short (in this case just three annual periods), and if the labour market environment of the preceding years (in this case 1927-30) has been stable. There does not seem to have been any change in the education system or the labour market in London in this period which would have altered the age at which juveniles entered the labour market or the probability of changing to a different class of job. Therefore, it is valid to treat the juvenile cross-section as a pseudo-cohort.

It is necessary to adjust the underlying data to compensate for small variations in cohort size by standardizing the number of juveniles in each cohort at 1,000. With this standardized pseudo-cohort data it is possible to get a rough idea of the extent to which an extra year's schooling altered the chances of any particular juvenile obtaining a specific class of job. The findings are necessarily approximate because it is impossible to know from these data the extent of inter-occupation mobility from one year to the next among juveniles already in employment. For example, as the cohort ages from 14 to 15 there is no way of knowing how many of the 162 additional class III boys working in class III jobs came from the 343 new entrants to class III jobs, and how many came from the 276 boys from class III households who were employed as 14-year-olds in class IV and class V jobs. It is possible, however, to examine different hypothetical scenarios. The following three are considered:

Static: this assumes that there was no mobility among the previous year's workforce until all new entrants had been accommodated in the highest class possible.

Historic: this assumes that new entrants were distributed across occupational classes in the same proportion as the previous year's workers.

Dynamic: this assumes that new entrants were distributed across occupational classes in the same proportion as the following year's workers.

The static scenario implies that an additional year of schooling always promoted new entrants into additional higher-class jobs ahead of those juveniles in the workforce who were accumulating experience in the workplace. The historic assumption is pessimistic and assumes that an additional year of schooling does nothing to improve the chances of gaining higher-class jobs. The dynamic scenario assumes that the additional schooling received by labour market entrants in year t is a major determinant of the change in the distribution of juveniles across job classes between year $t - 1$ and year $t + 1$.

Table 5. *Estimated probabilities of 15-year-old new entrant from class (x) starting a job in class (y)*

Father's class	'scenario'	Son's class		
		III	IV	V
III	static	0.49	0.18	0.34
	historic	0.37	0.16	0.53
	dynamic	0.51	0.16	0.33
IV	static	0.27	0.41	0.33
	historic	0.32	0.10	0.58
	dynamic	0.38	0.24	0.37
V	static	0.15	0.31	0.54
	historic	0.22	0.15	0.63
	dynamic	0.28	0.17	0.56

Note: because figures are rounded, not all rows sum to 1.

Source: NSLLL data files

What are the probabilities produced by these hypothetical scenarios that a 14-year-old boy who was not in employment would start work at age 15 and enter any particular occupational class? The probability of the non-employed 14-year-old starting work at 15 was about 0.6, regardless of the class of the household from which the boy came (derived from the final column of table 4). But the probability of his gaining a job of a particular class was closely related to the class of the household from which he came. Table 5 shows the probability of a 15-year-old boy from class x entering a class y occupation, according to the three scenarios outlined above. For new entrants from class III households, the chances of entering a class III job were at or substantially above those experienced by 14-year-olds, for all scenarios.⁴² For a boy from a class V household, however, the additional year of schooling had an ambiguous impact. Under the static scenario his chances of obtaining a class III job would have fallen, whereas under the dynamic scenario they would have risen,

⁴² Note that the probabilities under the 'historic' scenario here represent the chances of a 14-year-old new entrant of achieving employment in any particular class.

compared with the baseline 'historic' scenario. However, the additional year of schooling consistently reduced the chances of 15-year-olds from classes IV and V entering a class V job.

The probabilities presented in table 5 depend crucially on the plausibility of the underlying assumptions. The assumption of the 'historic' or baseline scenario that a year's additional schooling does nothing to enhance the job prospects of new entrants seems unrealistic. If there was nothing to be gained from deferring labour market entry, then few boys (or their parents) would have been willing to forgo a 14-year-old's average annual income of over £17 (equal to just under 8 per cent of the total average earnings of NSLLL households containing a 14-year-old boy). With either the static or dynamic scenario, an additional year's schooling improves the chances of boys entering a higher-class employment. There is, however, a clear class gradient to this effect. Under the dynamic scenario, for boys coming from class V households the deferral of labour market entry from age 14 to age 15 raised the chance of entering a class III job by 27 per cent (0.28 as against 0.22), compared with 38 per cent (0.51 as against 0.37) for a boy from a class III household.

The pseudo-cohort data show that boys from skilled households gained potentially more from delayed entry into the labour force than did boys from unskilled households. The data also support the contention that education played a role in promoting social mobility. Postwar analysis of formal education has concentrated on the contribution of secondary and tertiary education to social mobility, and has concluded that formal educational qualifications have been important in the achievement of higher-status employment, but that access to the educational system has been relatively limited for children from working-class families.⁴³ This analysis of the NSLLL indicates that the interwar elementary school system, which served all working-class children, was a potentially important extra-familial influence on social mobility. However, even within the working-class population there was a class gradient to these mobility opportunities. In this respect the findings concur with the postwar conclusion of Hall and Glass that 'education as such appears to modify, but not to destroy, the characteristic association between the social status of fathers and sons'.⁴⁴

VI

The analysis of the NSLLL data on juvenile employment has produced three important findings:

that on the basis of close occupational matching, the extent of father-son occupational continuity in London was less than 10 per cent;

⁴³ Hall and Glass, 'Education'; Halsey et al., *Origins*.

⁴⁴ Hall and Glass, 'Education', p. 307.

that metropolitan working-class society in the 1930s was socially fluid, with just over half of young adult males belonging to a socio-economic class different from that of their father;

that an additional year of schooling improved the chances of working-class boys entering the labour market in a higher-class job, and therefore that elementary education contributed to social fluidity; on the other hand, the benefits of education were less for boys from unskilled households.

Other historical evidence is in accord with these findings. Low rates of father-son occupational continuity have been found elsewhere. For example, in the Lancashire cotton industry, which has often been assumed by historians to be a locus of embedded working-class traditionalism, Griffiths has recently discovered that 'family influence was exiguous to recruitment in the aggregate'.⁴⁵ In 1898 a factory inspector found that only 14 per cent of children working in cotton mills had parents working in the industry; in 1921 a mill director stated that the majority of boys employed as piecers were not the sons of cotton operatives.⁴⁶ Furthermore, a dominant role for family connections in juvenile job placement seems incompatible both with the extensive Edwardian and interwar concern about the *absence* of career guidance for juveniles, and with the pressure from craft unions to maintain the exclusivity of skill and position, and to sustain formal barriers to entry.⁴⁷

Additionally, there was a considerable degree of geographical mobility within the London working-class population. In the NSLLL sample, 18 per cent of male household heads were born outside the Greater London area.⁴⁸ But out-migration was more important than in-migration. The 1931 census estimated the relative contribution of migration and natural increase to the inter-censal population change of each administrative district in the country. Between 1921 and 1931 the East End of London experienced massive net out-migration: Bethnal Green lost 16.2 per cent of its population over this decade, Shoreditch lost 16.4 per cent, Stepney 17.3 per cent, Poplar 14.3 per cent.⁴⁹ Only 49 of the 1,120 metropolitan boroughs and urban districts in England experienced net out-migration rates greater than those in Bethnal Green, and the majority of these places were steel, mining, and shipbuilding towns that had been severely hit by the 1920-1 depression.⁵⁰ Gross migration rates would, of course, have been higher, but there is no way of estimating their extent. In

⁴⁵ Griffiths, 'Work', p. 154.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

⁴⁷ On juveniles' job placement and the 'boy labour' problem see Political and Economic Planning, *Entrance*. On craft unions, see Phelps Brown, *Origins*, ch. 8.

⁴⁸ Place of birth was not recorded in all cases. This analysis is based on data for 20,924 male household heads.

⁴⁹ High net migration rates are not necessarily incompatible with a stable community, of course. A population of 'movers' with a high turnover could co-exist with a population of 'stayers' with a low turnover.

⁵⁰ *1931 Census of England and Wales: County Reports*. For comparison, the net out-migration rates in selected towns were: Barrow-in-Furness 16.2%, Ebbw Vale 20.7%, Jarrow 20.3%, Barnard Castle 19.6%.

demographic terms, the East End population in the interwar period may have been one of the least stable in the country.

There are, of course, many aspects of what McKibbin calls the 'social culture' of 'traditional' working-class life that are not directly related to occupational and social mobility, and which cannot be captured by a household survey such as the NSLLL. The culture of the pub and the street may have been more vibrant, community and kinship ties may have been stronger, in prewar 'traditional' working-class communities than in the post-1945 period. The relationship between mothers and daughters may have been exceptionally close. But the investigation of occupational continuity and social mobility undertaken in this article is difficult to reconcile with this view.

For Goldthorpe and his co-authors, 'the salient characteristics of the "traditional" type of working-class district could be said to derive from the relative stability and the social homogeneity of its population.'⁵¹ These concepts of stability and homogeneity appear in much postwar writing on working-class society. The largely autobiographical accounts by Hoggart and by Roberts of growing up in interwar Leeds and Salford present a picture of working-class life as standardized and homogeneous, as does Hobsbawm's interpretation of the making and persistence of 'traditional' working-class society in Britain between 1880 and 1950.⁵² Sociological studies of a wide range of communities as diverse as mining villages, county towns, suburban estates, and inner city boroughs all emphasized the stable, resigned, inward-looking nature of the traditional working class.⁵³ The study of Bethnal Green by Young and Willmott fits with a large body of other postwar research, but the findings of this article suggest that working-class communities in interwar London, including Bethnal Green, were neither as occupationally stable nor as homogeneous as has been claimed. What accounts for this difference?

A full resolution of the conundrum would require extensive historical research into a number of different working-class communities in the interwar period, but some indicators can be drawn from the existing literature. Looking first at the work of Young and Willmott, it is worthy of note that both the population of Bethnal Green and the marriage sample they drew from this population were affected by the peculiar circumstances of the Second World War. The combined effects of bombing and evacuation reduced the population of Bethnal Green by almost 50 per cent in the first two years of the war, and even at the postwar population peak of 1948 the borough's population had barely recovered to two-thirds of the 1939 level. Much of this net population decline was the result of rehousing policies; between 1931 and 1955 nearly 11,000 families containing more than 40,000 Bethnal Greeners were rehoused

⁵¹ Goldthorpe et al., *Affluent worker*, p. 86.

⁵² Hoggart, *Uses*; Roberts, *Classic slum*; Hobsbawm, *Worlds of labour*, chs. 10, 11.

⁵³ For northern mining villages, see Dennis et al., *Coal*; for the county town of Banbury, see Stacey, *Tradition*; for suburban estates, see Shaw, 'Impressions', Slater and Woodside, *Patterns*; for inner city areas, see Kerr, *Ship Street*.

on LCC estates.⁵⁴ People who rejected rehousing were likely to have had particularly strong local kinship and community ties. Evacuation and postwar rehousing must have heightened community-centredness among the population that remained through a process of concentration.

Young and Willmott's marriage sample of 45 couples with two children was also affected by peculiar wartime conditions. Almost half (21) of these couples began their married life in the parental home, and this may be taken as evidence of strong kinship ties.⁵⁵ However, it seems likely that this high rate of co-residence was determined by exogenous factors. Over three-quarters of the husbands and wives in this marriage sample were aged 39 and below in 1955,⁵⁶ and so almost certainly married during or shortly after the war, when geographical mobility and household formation were severely constrained by manpower planning and an acute housing shortage.

The inferences about the importance of community drawn by Young and Willmott, and by many other postwar sociologists, were also biased by their method. The community study, largely an invention of postwar sociology, consciously identified the population to be studied by reference to geographical boundaries. Any geographically bounded study will necessarily over-emphasize community ties over other (for instance workplace) relationships, because extra-territorial relationships are ignored or under-enumerated by such a method. Harris has suggested that 'the discovery of the traditional working class and its correlative family forms' was a direct result of this method, and that it is 'the disappearance almost overnight in the mid-1960s of the empirically-based community study', rather than any real change in family or community forms, which accounts for the waning of evidence about traditional working-class community life.⁵⁷

Equally strong caveats can be voiced about the semi-autobiographical accounts of stable working-class communities in the interwar period. Savage and Miles have noted that these accounts were 'frequently written by academics from working-class backgrounds who possibly romanticised working-class life and solidarity'.⁵⁸ Certainly social historians have found evidence that working-class society was not homogeneous. Davies has shown how gender cut across and challenged ideas of consensus in working-class communities in interwar Manchester and Salford; Fielding has identified similar tension created by religion and ethnicity.⁵⁹ And from a literary perspective, Hewison has argued that the cultural autobiographers perpetrated a myth of an organic working-class society.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Young and Willmott, *Family*, p. 99.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵⁷ Harris, 'Family', pp. 48, 51.

⁵⁸ Savage and Miles, *Remaking*, p. 14.

⁵⁹ Davies, *Leisure*; Fielding, *Class*. See also the introduction to Davies and Fielding, *Workers' worlds*, for comments on the portrayal of Salford community life by Roberts.

⁶⁰ Hewison points out that 'Hoggart's description of the "peculiarly gripping wholeness" of working-class life contrasts with the violence and disturbance that ran through Alan Sillitoe's novel *Saturday night and Sunday morning*, published a year after Hoggart's study'; the novel was based on Sillitoe's personal experiences: Hewison, *Culture*, p. 103.

The recently computerized NSLLL has contributed to this debate by enabling us to quantify some of the characteristics of working-class society in London in the early 1930s. The new data provide little evidence of occupational continuity or low levels of social mobility, as might be expected of a 'traditional' working-class community in the 1930s, and as was assumed to have existed in the community-based studies of the immediate postwar period. This raises two possibilities, and an agenda for future research. Either working-class society in London had, by the 1930s, already changed from a stable homogeneous community towards the more individualized and dynamic society observed in the postwar period, or homogeneous working-class communities had never been the norm in Britain.

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