

**Was there ever a Ruling Class?  
Surnames and Social Mobility in  
England over the very long run,  
1200-1914**

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# Notes:

- Slides from talk APHES, Porto, Nov 13, 2009
- Working paper on the subject of the talk will be available at my home page  
<http://www.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/gclark>  
by Dec 6

# Two claims

- Commonly believed that the modern world has greater social mobility than the pre-industrial world
- This belief is wrong – despite great inequality pre-industrial England world of complete social mobility. No upper and lower classes.
- Modern societies show signs of more class structure.

**Why do we believe in long lasting upper and lower classes?**

**Because of people like this**



**Edward Richard William Stanley, 19th Earl  
of Derby, with Lady Derby**



Stanley Home – Knowsley Hall

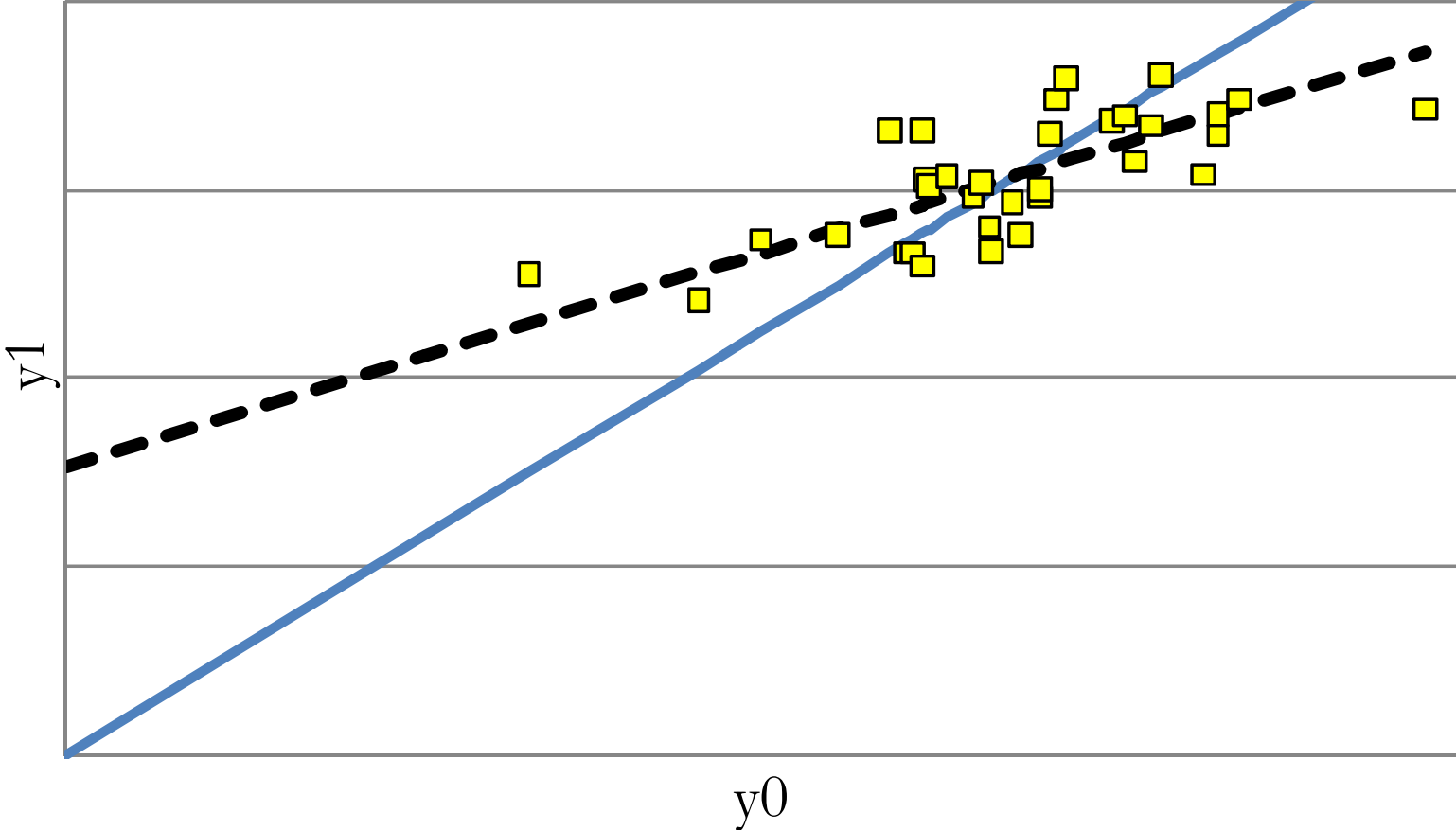
# Stanley Family History

- Ligulf of Aldithley, circa 1088, English landowner in Domesday Book
- Sir John Stanley, 1350-1414
- Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby, c. 1435–1504 crowned Henry VII after Battle of Bosworth Field
- Edward Smith-Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby, 1799-1869 Prime Minister, 1852, 1858-9, 1866-8

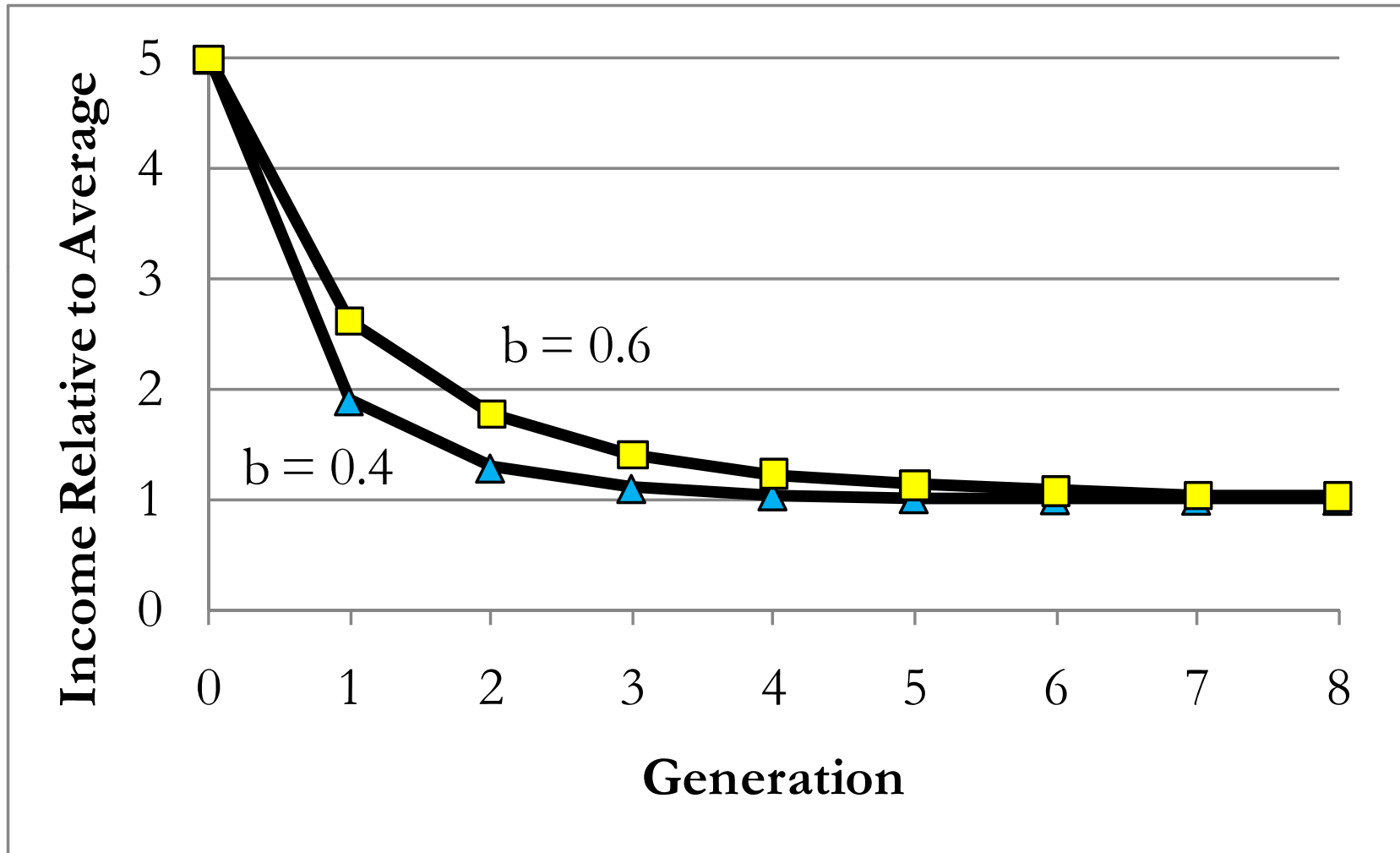
# The impossibility of persistent social classes - the Chicago View

- Regression to the mean universal
- $y_1 = by_0 + u_0$        $b \approx 0.2 - 0.5$
- $\Rightarrow y_n = b^n y_0 + u_n^*$
- As  $n$  becomes large,  $y_n \approx u_n^*$

Figure 1: Regression to the mean in income illustrated



# Regression to the Mean by Generation



## Implications of Chicago View

- In the long run there is profound equality. The modern rich descended as much from the ancestral poor as from the ancestral rich.
- There can be no long run upper or lower class groups

## Alternative View – Class Society

- $y_0 = z_i + e_0, \quad z_0, z_1, \dots, z_n$

- $y_1 = z_i + e_1$

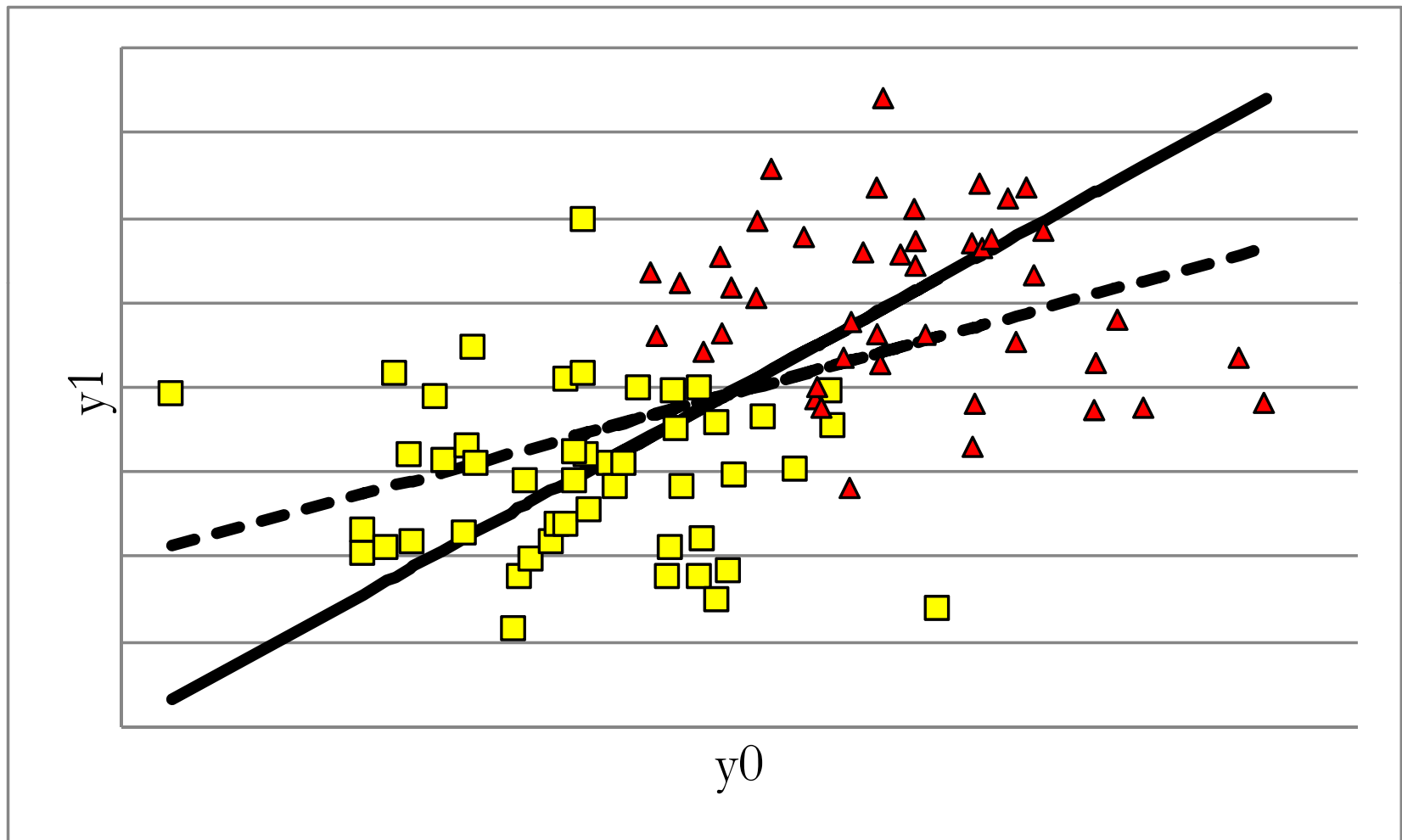
- $\Rightarrow$  *Regression to the mean*

$$y_1 = by_0 + u, \quad b < 1$$

- But now after the first generation no further regression

$$y_n = by_0 + u$$

# Regression to the mean with different social classes



# England, 1250-1914

- Despite the inevitability of regression to the mean was there a persistent upper class? And a persistent lower class?
- Three tests –
  - Common surnames 1250-1700
  - Wealth correlation of fathers and grandsons, compared to fathers and sons, 1500-1914
  - Rare surnames 1600-2009

# England, 1250-1600

- Emergence from feudal era (Magna Carta 1215)
- Reform of Church, 1533-39
- Initial creation of surnames – by 1300 in south east most people have surnames

**Table 1: Types of English Surnames**

| <b>Type of Surname</b> | <b>Examples</b>               | <b>Percent Taxpayers 1327-32</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Locative</b>        | Walsham, Pakenham, Merton     | 27                               |
| <b>Toponymic</b>       | Hill, Green, Wood, Lane       | 13                               |
| <b>Patronymic</b>      | Williamson, Wilson, Adams     | 20                               |
| <b>Nicknames</b>       | Brown, White, Little, Hardy   | 19                               |
| <b>Occupations</b>     | Smith, Taylor, Wright, Baxter | 10                               |
| <b>Other</b>           | -                             | 11                               |

# Upper Class in medieval England (1236-1273) had mainly locative surnames

| Type of Surname | Subclass          | Number       | Percent of surnames |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <b>Locative</b> |                   | <b>1,598</b> | <b>74.7</b>         |
| Toponymic       |                   | 4            | 0.2                 |
| Patronymic      |                   | 18           | 0.8                 |
| Nicknames       |                   | 44           | 2.1                 |
| Occupations     | higher status     | 36           | 1.7                 |
| Occupations     | artisan and lower | 8            | 0.4                 |
| Other/Unknown   |                   | 430          | 20.1                |
| No Surname      |                   | 159          | -                   |

## In general population in 1381 Poll Tax occupational names instead common

| Type of Surname          | Number | Percent |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|
| Locative                 | 149    | 9.6     |
| Toponymic                | 72     | 4.6     |
| Patronymic               | 91     | 5.8     |
| Nicknames                | 92     | 5.9     |
| Occupations –high status | 37     | 2.4     |
| Occupations – artisans   | 233    | 14.9    |
| Other/Unknown            | 886    | 56.8    |

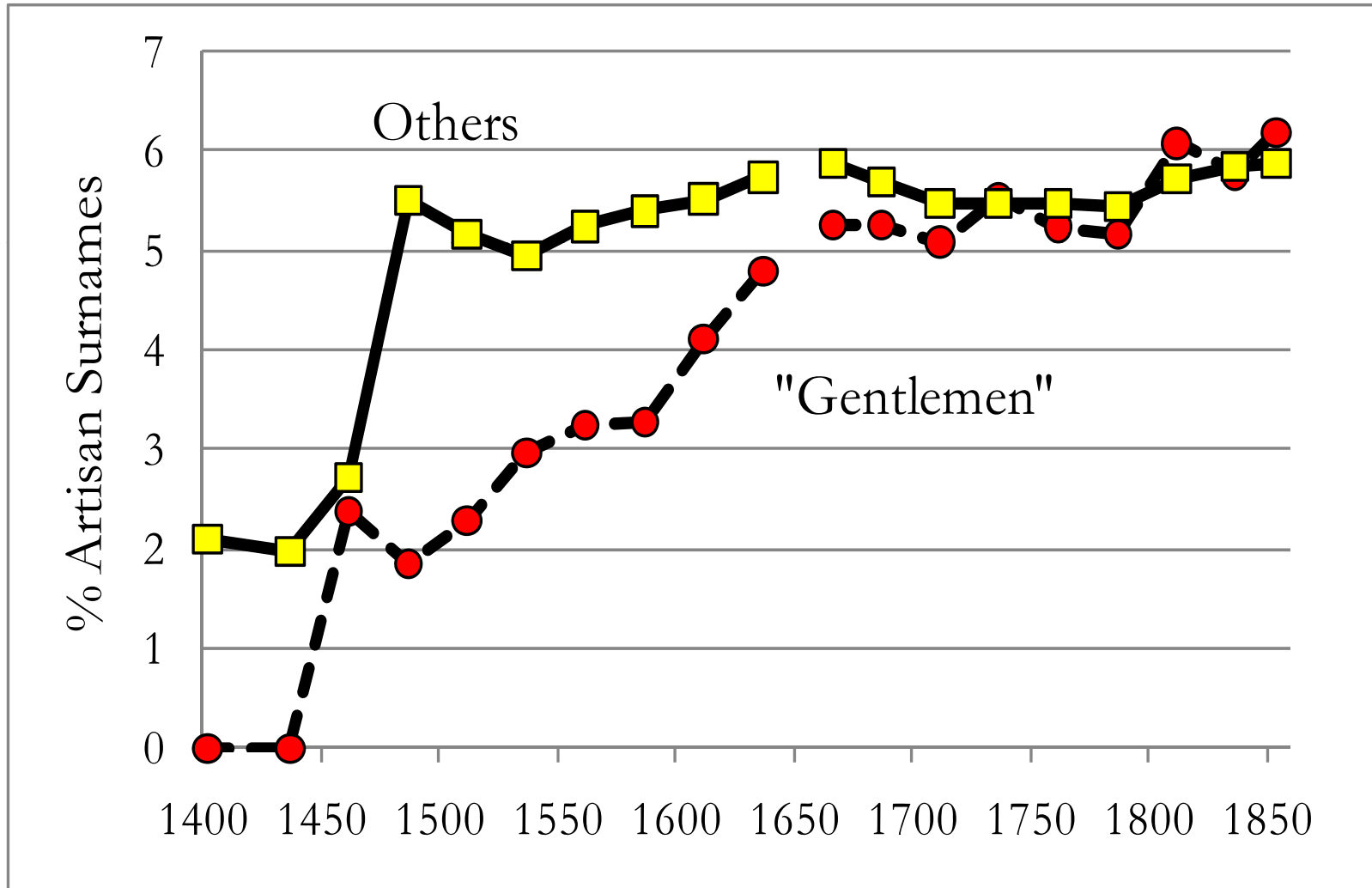
# Name frequencies among the upper class, 1384-1858

- Wills probated in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury (PCC)
- Mainly the wills of the richest people in southern England
- Represent top 10% or above of the wealth distribution

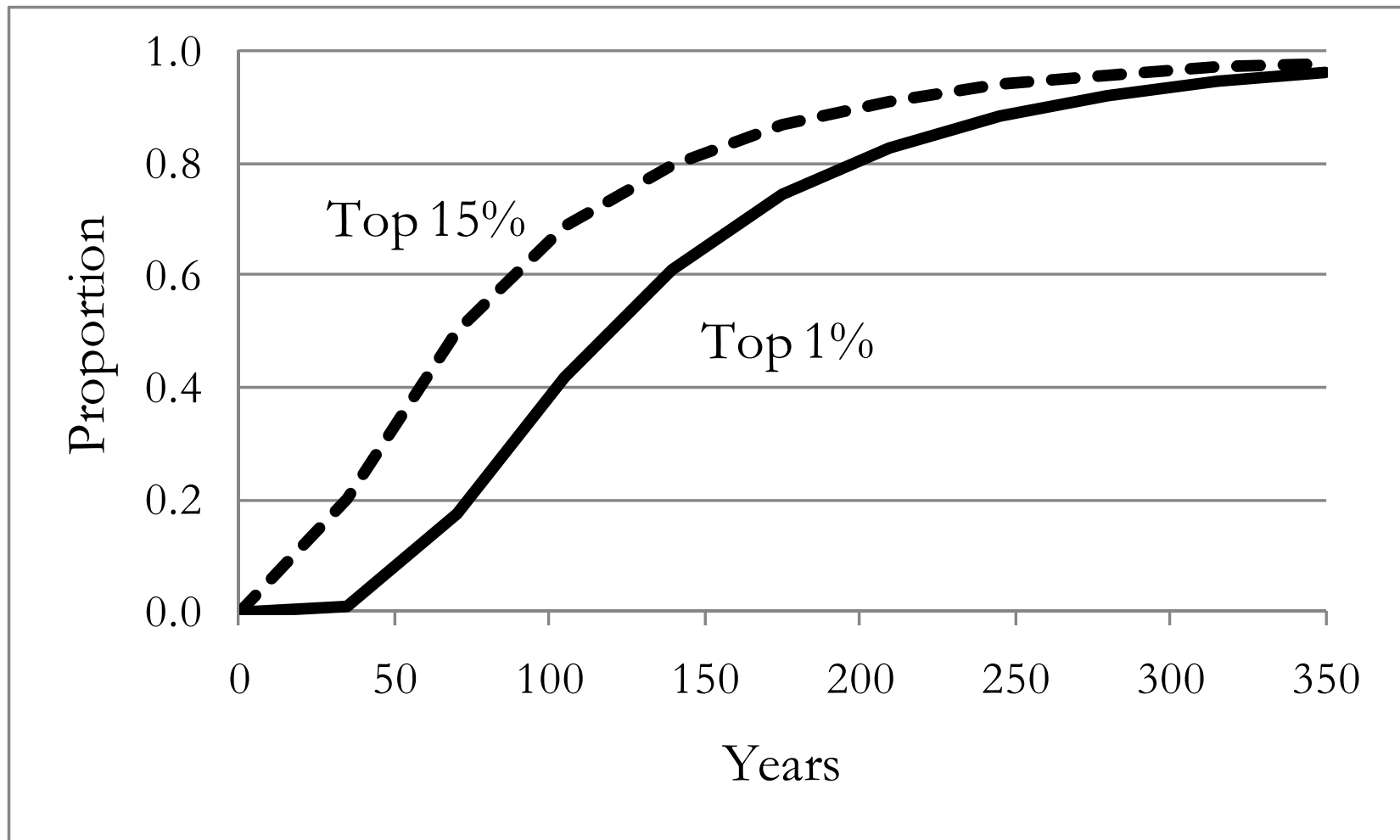
**Table 4: Distribution of PCC wills**

| <b>Century</b> | <b>PCC wills</b> | <b>Population<br/>(m)</b> | <b>Wills/year/death</b> |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1384-99        | 87               | 2.5                       | .0002                   |
| 1400-99        | 5,915            | 2.3                       | .002                    |
| 1500-99        | 45,555           | 3.3                       | .010                    |
| 1600-99        | 218,624          | 5.2                       | .029                    |
| 1700-99        | 361,827          | 6.7                       | .040                    |
| 1800-58        | 384,119          | 14.6                      | .036                    |

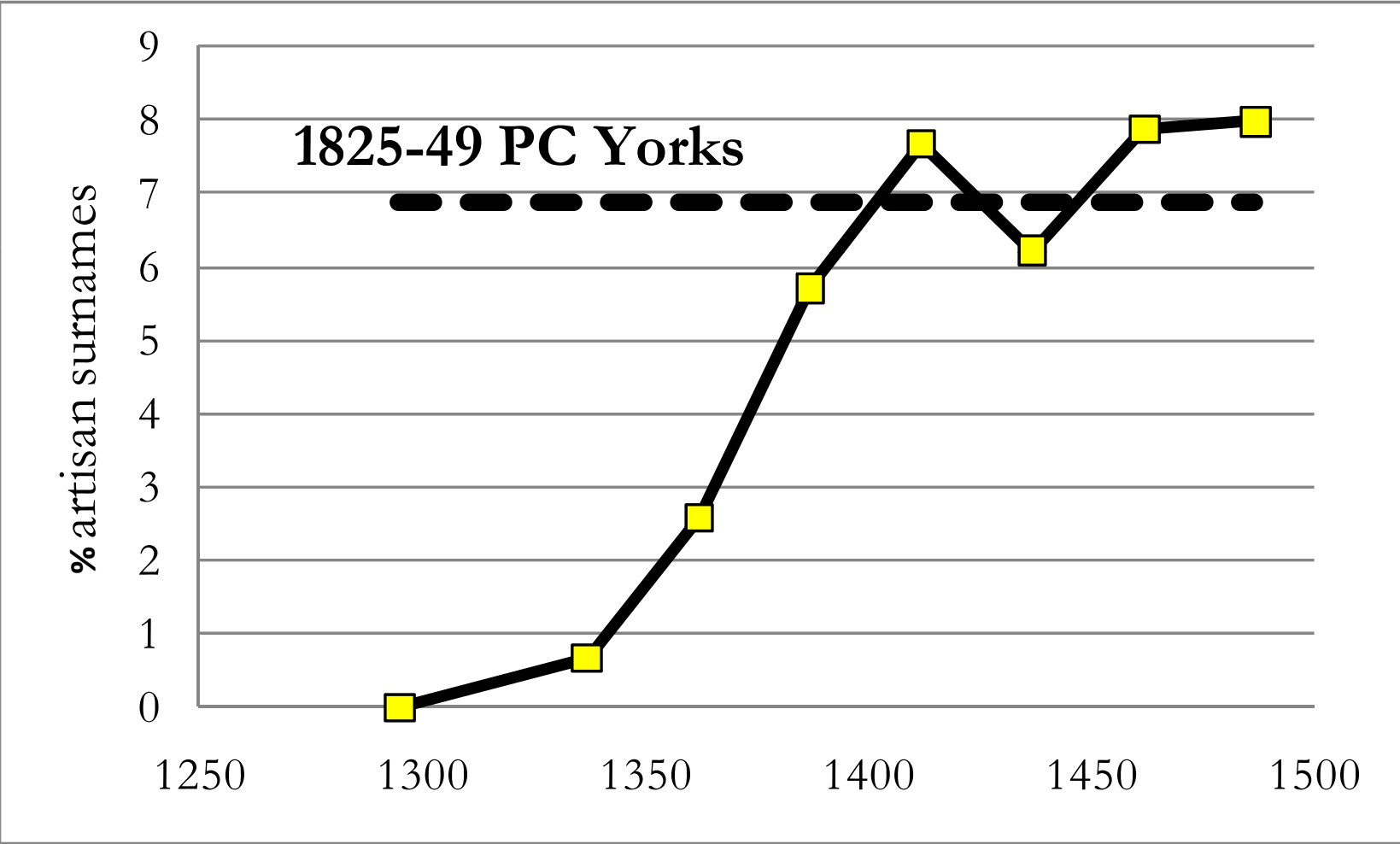
# PCC Wills with Artisan Surnames



# Share in top wealth if $b = 0.7$ , initial wealth of group $-.44$ SD below mean



# % artisan surnames, all wills Yorkshire



**Table 7: Surname frequencies (%)**

| <b>Surname</b> | <b>1850-8<br/>PCC</b> | <b>1853<br/>England</b> | <b>1381<br/>Suffolk</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Smith          | 1.27                  | 1.36                    | 1.67                    |
| Wright         | 0.35                  | 0.45                    | 0.77                    |
| Taylor         | 0.50                  | 0.68                    | 0.90                    |
| Cook           | 0.31                  | 0.38                    | 0.71                    |
| Carter         | 0.17                  | 0.18                    | 0.71                    |
| Shepherd       | 0.15                  | 0.07                    | 1.09                    |
| <b>All</b>     | <b>5.28</b>           | <b>5.24</b>             | <b>10.84</b>            |

**Table 6: Surname Type Frequencies (percent)**

| Group                             | Number | Percent<br>“Smith” | Percent<br>Other<br>Artisan<br>Names |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Suffolk, 1381, Poll Tax           | 1,560  | 1.6                | 9.2                                  |
| England, all, 1853                | -      | 1.4                | 3.8                                  |
| PCC wills, 1850-8                 | 66,807 | 1.3                | 4.0                                  |
| London, indicted, 1850-9          | 15,705 | 3.0 <sup>a</sup>   | 4.1                                  |
| PCC wills, 1600-24                | 31,690 | 1.2                | 3.9                                  |
| Indicted Laborers, Essex, 1559-99 | 1,262  | 1.7 <sup>a</sup>   | 4.1                                  |
| Indicted Laborers, Essex, 1600-25 | 891    | 2.2 <sup>a</sup>   | 4.4                                  |

# Sample of Upper Class Names

- Eg. Baskerville, Berkeley, Beaumont, Essex, Hilton, Lancaster, Maundeville, Neville, Normanville, Percy, Somerville, Wake

# Medieval Upper Class Name Sample – among wealthy

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| Period    | share<br>wealthy | share all | rate<br>wealthy |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1236-99   | 10.43            | (0.45)    | 23.23           |
| 1380-1499 | 1.67             | 0.45      | 3.73            |
| 1500-99   | 0.90             | 0.55      | 1.64            |
| 1600-99   | 0.69             | 0.57      | 1.21            |
| 1700-99   | 0.67             | 0.58      | 1.15            |
| 1800-58   | 0.61             | 0.59      | 1.04            |

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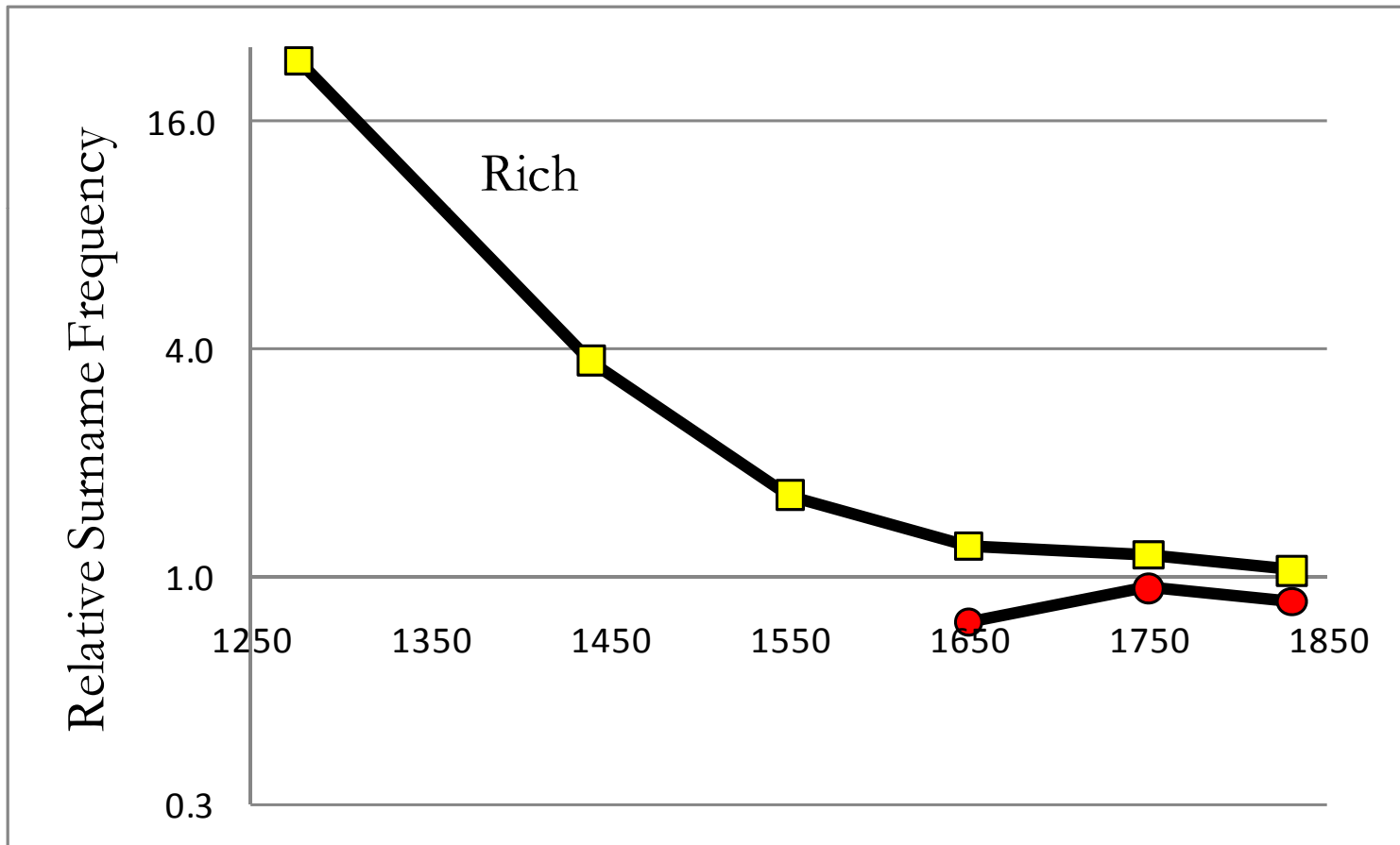
# Medieval Upper Class Name Sample – among Old Bailey criminals

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| <b>Period</b> | <b>share<br/>accused</b> | <b>share<br/>victims</b> | <b>rate<br/>wealthy</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1600-99       | 0.68                     | 0.90                     | 0.75                    |
| 1700-99       | 0.61                     | 0.66                     | 0.93                    |
| 1800-58       | 0.47                     | 0.55                     | 0.86                    |

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# Relative Intensity of medieval rich sample among the elite and the criminal



# New Immigrant Groups

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| <b>Surname<br/>Group</b> | <b>Period</b> | <b>PCC<br/>wills (%)</b> | <b>Old<br/>Bailey<br/>Victims<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Old Bailey<br/>Accused<br/>(%)</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Artisans                 | 1830-59       | 3.82 <sup>a</sup>        | 3.90                                      | 4.25                                  |
| Irish                    | 1830-59       | 0.67 <sup>a</sup>        | 1.18                                      | 3.69                                  |
| Scottish                 | 1830-59       | -                        | 2.04                                      | 2.01                                  |

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# English Social Mobility, 1500-2009

- Cannot use common surnames
- Linked samples of fathers, sons, grandsons
- Rare Names

# Recap - the Chicago View

- Regression to the mean universal
- $y_1 = by_0 + u_0$
- $\Rightarrow y_2 = b^2y_0 + u^*_2$

# English wills

John 13  
Gooday

In the name of God Amen

The Eight and twentieth Day of August Anno Domini One thousand Six hundred thirtie yeares And in the Thirtenth yeare of the reigne of our Sovereigne Lord Charles by the grace of God King of England Scotland France and Ireland Defender of the faith &c. I John Gooday of Hertsheire in the Countie of Suffolke yeoman And within the Citie of Northwich beinge sick in bodie but of whole minde and perfect remembrance Laude and praise be given unto Almighty Gods kindnes nothinge more certaine then Death, and nothinge more uncertayne then the houre and tyme thereof, remembrance and recollectione all former Wills heretofore by mee made, Doe constitute void and make this my Last Testament, testifyinge herewith in my last Will: First I commaund my Soule unto the hande of Almighty God, my onlie Saviour and Redeemer And my body to the Earth from whence it came, hopinge through the promyse of Christ Iesus, at the same death in Corruption, soe it shall rise againe in incorruption And be united unto the same Soule in Joye everlastinge felicitie in the Kingdome of Heaben: And as touchinge the disposition of all and singuler my Land Tenement goodes and Chattells wherewith it hath pleased God to endowe mee with all, I leave them to be ordered and disposed of, in sorte followinge: First I give and bequeath unto Elizabeth my wife All that my Messuages or Tenement wherewith one John Strutton doth, now inhabite and dwell with all the Lande both Coppy holds and Lease Land with all appurtenances thereto and unto belonginge situate lyinge and beinge in the Citie of Northwich in the Countie of Cheshire or his Assignes in the Countie aforesaid or elswhere, Do have and to holde the said Messuages or Tenement with all the said Lande thereto belonginge unto her the said Elizabeth my wife and her Assignes for and duringe, and untill such tyme as John Gooday my Sonne shall or might accomplish his full age of one and Twentie yeares, And after such tyme expired I doe give unto my said wife Elizabeth the residue of my Messuages

# Testators 1500-1914

- $y_1 = by_0 + u_0$
- Between father and son (n = 645), b = 0.67
  
- $y_2 = by_0 + u^*_2$
- Between father and grandson (n = 112), b = 0.42
  
- $\Rightarrow$  complete social mobility over time

# Rare English Surnames

- Despite well known common surnames “Smith”, “Williamson”, “Jones” typical English surname rare.
- National samples over last 150 years suggest that 40% of UK surnames held by only **one** person.
- Some of this just spelling variations – “Smith”, “Smyth”, “Clark,” “Clarke”

# Idea

- Samples of rich, poor with rare surnames identified for 1600, 1860. eg. Bazalgette
- Occupational, wealth distributions calculated for same surnames 1860, 2000

## Sample of Poor - Essex Indicted, 1590-1620

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| Verdict           | Number |
|-------------------|--------|
| Not Guilty        | 580    |
| Guilty            | 974    |
| Hung              | 306    |
| Whipped           | 184    |
| Fined             | 24     |
| Benefit of Clergy | 347    |
| Pardoned          | 16     |
| At Large          | 194    |
| Unknown           | 134    |
| All               | 1,882  |

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**Table 9: Occupational Distribution: the Rich and the Indicted**

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| Social Group            | Bequest of £250<br>or more<br>(%) | Indicted<br>(%) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Gentry                  | 17                                | 2               |
| Merchants/Professionals | 8                                 | 1               |
| Farmers/Yeomen          | 70                                | 6               |
| Traders                 | 2                                 | 9               |
| Craftsmen               | 2                                 | 13              |
| Husbandmen              | 2                                 | 11              |
| Laborers                | 0                                 | 54              |

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**Table 3: A Random Sample of Names of the Indicted and the Rich**

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| Names of the indicted | Names of the Rich |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Abstan                | Aldham            |
| Banbricke             | Ayliffe           |
| Bittin                | Base              |
| Bradwyn               | Birle             |
| Cabwell               | Breame            |
| Cheveney              | Bynder            |
| Cockle                | Cobbold           |
| Creame                | Coventry          |
| Cutmore               | Danbrook          |
| Drinckall             | Fatter            |
| Elvis                 | Folkes            |

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Table 8: Socioeconomic Status by Surname History, 1851

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| Status, 1851               | Rich in 1600 | Indicted in 1600 |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| “Gentry/Professionals” (%) | 6.1          | 4.1              |
| “Farmers” (%)              | 4.7          | 3.7              |
| <b>“Laborers” (%)</b>      | <b>31.5</b>  | <b>28.6</b>      |
| Number in Sample           | 278          | 294              |

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## **Are we still a classless society?**

England, rare names, wealth 1859-67 predicts  
wealth of others with name 1859-67

England same rare names, wealth 1996-2009

Complete regression to the mean

New immigrant groups? E.g. Pakistan, India

# USA: 1967-2000, clear social classes

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| Independent Variable           | No controls | Only Race | All Observable<br>Parental<br>Characteristics |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------|---|
| Ln Family Income of<br>Parents | 0.52**      | 0.43**    | 0.20**  |
| Black                          | -           | -0.33**   | -0.28**                                       |
| Latino                         | -           | -0.27**   | -0.15   |
| Jewish                         | -           | -         | 0.33**  |

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Notes: \*\* = significant at the 1 percent level. Only 3 percent of the sample was Latino.

Source: Hertz, 2005, table 6.

# Conclusions

- England a classless society of complete long run social mobility, 1250-2009 – for the indigenous population
- Fate of some modern immigrant groups unclear
- Rate of mobility still to be determined
- Modern US society divided by class