Did owner-occupation lead to smaller families for interwar working-class households?  

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Introduction  

Of course, not all young wives living as Mum’s contemporaries in Lee were so caught up in the traditional ways as she was. The advance army… were the couples moving into the new ‘spec’ built housing going up for sale around the edges of Lee in the ‘thirties. These families… were already well aware of the absolute need to limit family size. How else, on railway workers’ wages or bank clerks’ salaries, were they to be sure of keeping up their mortgage payments. The joy of sex was sacrificed in the efforts to be ‘safe’. The thick male or female ‘rubber goods’ that had to be surreptitiously inspected beforehand and carefully washed, dusted with powder and hidden away afterwards were barriers in more ways than one.  

The early twentieth century witnessed the spread of fertility limitation, which had become evident among the middle-classes from around the 1870s, to working-
class households. This trend has often been treated as a simple diffusion of the ideal of the small family and the knowledge and availability of birth control, from the middle to the working-classes. Yet, despite extensive research on the causes of declining fertility in both Britain and Europe, there is still doubt regarding the motivations driving changes in families’ fertility behaviour and the extent to which the same factors influenced different socio-economic groups.iii

This paper examines the impact of new patterns of working-class consumption and status competition, associated with moves to modern suburban owner-occupied housing, in leading married couples to limit the size of their families. Owner-occupation is found to be closely associated with suburban, aspirational, and materially-driven lifestyles, linked to new notions of working-class respectability. Taking on a mortgage and meeting these new status norms considerably stretched most working-class family budgets, leading people to engage in family limitation to maintain their suburban lifestyles. Meanwhile, new notions of working-class respectability directly encouraged people to have fewer children in order to fulfil an emerging working-class ideal of the small family and ensure that sufficient monetary and psychological resources could be devoted to the care and socio-economic advancement of each child. Fertility levels are shown to have been substantially lower for working-class owner-occupiers than for families of similar incomes and socio-economic status, principally due to the under-representation of ‘large’ families of more than two children.

The next section reviews previous studies of the causes of fertility decline in Britain and, in particular, models that link family limitation to changing patterns of household expenditure and social expectations regarding status-related consumption. The growth of working-class owner-occupation and suburbanisation is then briefly
examined, together with the links between new suburban residential environments and new notions of working-class respectability. The analysis draws on a database of 58 life histories [hereafter Life Histories Database], concerning working-class people who moved into owner-occupation between 1919 and 1939, compiled from oral history sources, published and unpublished autobiographies, contemporary interviews and other sources, and discussed in more detail in the Appendix. These provide particularly rich information regarding the microeconomics of household formation and fertility and the interrelationships between decisions regarding residential location, tenure, spending priorities, and family size, in the context of long and short-term aspirations and constraints. Links between owner-occupation, pressures on working-class family budgets, and family limitation are also examined quantitatively, using a further database - of surviving household budget summaries from the Ministry of Labour’s 1937/38 working-class expenditure survey - together with quantitative data extracted from the Life Histories Database.

**Research on the causes and diffusion of fertility decline in Britain**

Contemporary research on declining fertility rates during the early twentieth century generally adopted a simple model of technological and social diffusion - the upper classes initiating family limitation, which then ‘trickled-down’ to the lower-ranks of society. However, some commentators, such as Charles, highlighted the fact that the economic pressures leading to family limitation among the working-classes, such as the changing balance between the economic value and cost of children to the household economy, and the impact of family size on married women’s ability to work, were different to those influencing family limitation among the elite. Charles was one of the first commentators to suggest a link between housing and family size,
claiming that a `vicious-cycle’ between the modern small family ideal and the standard modern house or flat with it’s small number of bedrooms had built: ‘the tradition which favours the family of two… into the structure of contemporary civilisation’.vi

The Royal Commission on Population represented by far the largest near-contemporary study of declining British fertility. Its findings emphasised the impact of status competition, and families’ desire to defend their established status ranking. A growing struggle for security and social promotion was identified among a successively wider section of the population. Children played a key role in this struggle, as their changing economic status made them both a rising cost and an increasingly important avenue for inter-generational social mobility (if properly resourced and cared for) – both trends that encouraged family limitation.vii

The impact of these factors in producing a decline in middle-class fertility from the 1870s were explored by Banks during the 1950s. Banks argued that a mid-nineteenth century rise in the level of household expenditure necessary to assert a middle-class lifestyle, followed by a slow-down in middle-class incomes during the ‘Great Depression’, made it difficult for many households to keep pace with the escalating costs associated with their social status. Family limitation was therefore adopted as a way of reducing expenditure without cutting back on socially-necessary conspicuous consumption. Meanwhile rising costs of middle-class child-rearing both accentuated the expenditure squeeze and the economies to be gained from restricting family size.viii

More recently, Szreter’s analysis of the 1911 fertility census found that Britain experienced multiple fertility declines: ‘an essentially fractured and fissured set of relatively independent processes…’ ix Like Banks, he highlighted the importance of
households’ and communities’ comparative reference frameworks in determining the perceived economic and social pressures on family size and, in turn, in bringing about fertility declines among successive social groups.\textsuperscript{x} Gittens has put forward a multi-causal explanation of declining interwar fertility for the working and lower middle classes, incorporating changes in women’s occupational roles, education, and community structures. Yet her explanation of the low interwar fertility of clerical workers involves factors similar to Banks’s analysis. According to Gittens, family limitation offered interwar clerical workers, faced with a new environment of relative job insecurity and low pay, a strategy for maintaining the ‘image of respectability’ their jobs required - ‘living in the “right” neighbourhood, possibly owning a house, dressing according to “proper” middle-class standards, etc.’\textsuperscript{xii} The work of Banks, Szreter, and Gittens thus suggests that different socio-economic groups restricted their fertility when having large families came into conflict with their economic and social goals of maintaining costly, and relatively new, standards of observed consumption and respectability in the face of limited financial resources. To what extent did the rise of working-class owner-occupation and suburbanisation similarly shift the balance of families’ goals and constraints to a low-fertility regime?

**The interwar expansion of working-class owner-occupation**

The interwar years witnessed Britain’s fastest ever expansion in owner-occupation, from around 10 per cent of the 1914 housing stock to around 32 per cent by 1938. This was mainly due to new housing development; an estimated 1.8 million houses were built for owner-occupiers, compared to 1.1 million existing houses transferred from the privately-rented to owner-occupied sector.\textsuperscript{xii} Most of these new
houses were on suburban estates rather than inner-urban areas. As Whitworth has noted, literature on the growth of home-ownership in the inter-war years often conflates the expansion of suburbia with the middle-class, rendering working-class residents invisible. However this period witnessed the dawn of working-class owner-occupation as more than a merely localised phenomenon.

The 1920s witnessed a limited expansion in working-class purchases of 'second-hand' houses, due to private landlords selling-off houses to existing tenants. However high building costs and interest rates, together with substantial mortgage deposit requirements, restricted the ability of most working-class households to purchase new houses. While there are no national data on working-class owner-occupation before the late 1930s, a review of the fragmentary local evidence by Speight indicated a working-class owner-occupation rate of around eight or nine per cent before 1932 to be an upper-bound estimate.

Yet, contrary to an early study by Swenarton and Taylor, the upper income strata of the working-classes, together with families on lower incomes but enjoying particularly stable employment, were significant participants in the 1930s owner-occupation boom. Liberalisation of mortgage terms, falling interest rates, and reductions in building costs brought new suburban houses with bathrooms, modern utilities, and front and back gardens within the financial reach of a substantial proportion of working people. Meanwhile, rising real incomes, shortages of inner-urban accommodation, aggressive marketing by the building industry, and the appeal of suburban living and modern housing, made owner-occupation attractive to large numbers of working-class families.

The 1937/38 Ministry of Labour survey of working-class household expenditure provides the best contemporary estimate of working-class owner-
This aimed to provide a representative collection of expenditure budgets for UK working-class households, covering manual wage-earners (with the exception of the long-term unemployed) and non-manual workers with salaries not exceeding £250 a year. A total of 10,762 sets of four weekly budgets were compiled, at quarterly intervals from October 1937, of which 8,905 covered non-agricultural households. Some 17.8 per cent of non-agricultural households were found to own, or be purchasing, their own homes, while 80.0 per cent rented their homes, and the remaining 2.2 per cent (mainly comprising mining families) had houses provided rent-free by their employers.

Table 1: The proportion of non-agricultural working-class households buying/owning their own home at various levels of weekly expenditure, October 1937 – July 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total weekly expenditure (s)</th>
<th>% of households in class owning/buying their home</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 40</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<td>60-70</td>
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<td>80-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>24.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>100-110</td>
<td>22.2</td>
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<td>110-120</td>
<td>26.6</td>
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<td>120-130</td>
<td>30.6</td>
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<td>130-140</td>
<td>27.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>140 and over</td>
<td>37.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>18.9</td>
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</tbody>
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Notes: Based on four weekly budgets, collected at quarterly intervals. The average weekly household income was 85s (with an average of 1.75 wage earners per household).

Table 1 shows the proportion of non-agricultural working-class owner-occupiers at different income levels. Owner-occupation is shown to be concentrated among higher income groups, but was significant for families on all but the lowest incomes - owner-occupiers constituted almost one in eight households even for families with a weekly expenditure of only 50-60s (compared to the working-class household average of 85s). The extent of working-class owner-occupation was also found to vary substantially by region, with rates of around 20 per cent in the South, Midlands, North West, and Wales, but only 5.9 per cent in Scotland and 5.3 per cent in Northern Ireland. The proportion of people actually buying their homes (rather than owning them outright, typically through inheritance) varied even more widely; five-sixths of London’s owner-occupiers were found to be making mortgage payments, compared to only a third of Scottish, and a sixth of Northern Irish, owner-occupiers. The proportion making mortgage payments in the rest of Britain is not known, but is likely to have been lower in the north and in Wales (where some localities had strong traditions of working-class owner-occupation even before 1914) than in the Midlands and South.

New suburban houses were very different in style, density, and characteristics to even better-quality pre-1914 working class houses which - even when located on the edges of built-up areas - were typically developed in long terraces lacking substantial gardens, at densities of thirty or more per acre. A new blueprint for the
working-class house had been pioneered in garden city and model workers’ village experiments prior to the First World War and was transformed into the official standard for council housing by the 1918 Tudor Walters Committee report and the various subsequent Housing Acts. The Tudor Walters Committee, appointed by the Local Government Board, recommended houses with three bedrooms and a bathroom, set on estates of not more than 12 houses per acre, semi-detached or in short terraces, with wide frontages to increase natural daylight and a cottage appearance enhanced by front and rear gardens.

Houses built for working-class owner-occupiers generally followed these broad parameters, which set a baseline standard for new suburban accommodation. Developers often adopted slightly lower densities for all but the cheapest houses (8 or 10 per acre), while distinguishing their estates from grimly-uniform local authority housing by employing features such as bays, that were generally omitted from cost-conscious local authority designs, and using a good deal of largely cosmetic ornamentation (partly to give the appearance of a variety of house styles on each street). Meanwhile building several basic `models’ of house (which were each then customised via variations in design details) enabled developers to offer a range of house prices and thus widen the potential market for any particular estate. For example, a New Ideal Homesteads estate at Barnehurst, Kent, offered a three bedroom terraced house, with a bath in the kitchen (similar in design to the cheaper type of non-parlour council house), for £395; a three-bedroom non-parlour semi, with downstairs bathroom, for £495; and several more expensive designs based on the semi- with upstairs bathroom, to a maximum of £695. Yet the presence of the bath and garden were virtually universal features, as was a lower-density, aspirational, and often semi-rural environment.
These attributes were particularly valued by working-class owner-occupiers. Of 18 accounts in the Life Histories Database that highlighted any specific positive features of the new house and/or its neighbourhood, the top three were the garden (mentioned in ten accounts), the house’s rural surroundings, and the bathroom/fitted bath (each mentioned in seven accounts). These features also received the highest ratings in a larger sample of accounts, involving migrants to new municipal suburban housing. Most inner-city urban housing - even better quality ‘bay and forecourt’ terraces - often lacked bathrooms, front gardens, or rear gardens of any size, and much urban housing even lacked indoor toilets or running water. New suburban houses thus offered a quantum leap in amenities and owner-occupied estates were aggressively marketed for their bathrooms, modern utilities, ‘labour-saving’ kitchens, light, spacious, rooms, and – differentiating them from their local authority counterparts - ‘exclusive’ residential environment.

Qualitative evidence on the relationship between owner-occupation and working-class family size

The new suburban house became emblematic of new notions of working-class respectability. In contrast to Victorian ideals of working-class respectability, which emphasised independence from charitable middle-class, or state, assistance – through avoidance of debt, formal and informal mutual aid networks and, if necessary, ‘tightening one’s belt’ - this new respectability was aspirational rather than conservative and privately rather than socially-orientated. Its key features included a high standard of personal and domestic hygiene, ‘privatised’ family- and home-
centred lifestyles, and an increased commitment of material and psychological resources to the welfare and material advancement of the next generation.\textsuperscript{xxiii}

The Life Histories Database strongly emphasises these new notions of home and family-centred respectability. Migrants to owner-occupied suburbia generally had a family-orientated rather than community-orientated outlook, with the husband and wife forming a more central social unit than in traditional working-class communities and often adopting an attitude to neighbours typified as being polite and friendly, but essentially “keeping yourself to yourself”.\textsuperscript{xxiv} Most husbands in the sample did not drink heavily, engaged in relatively few regular leisure activities outside the home, and spent much of their time on home-centred pursuits such as gardening. Both husbands and wives reported taking pride in their houses and in projecting a good standard of material display and “respectable” behaviour to neighbours. Yet they clearly saw themselves as working-class, perceiving their moves to suburbia as promotion within the working classes rather than beyond its ranks.\textsuperscript{xxv}

Small families represented a key feature of the new suburban working-class respectability, being both instrumental in achieving respectability and an important marker of respectability. Mass-Observation’s \textit{Britain and her Birth Rate} survey noted that the high standards of housework and motherhood expected of suburban housewives, and the expense of maintaining these standards (compared to the expectations placed on women in traditional inner-urban working-class communities) constituted a deterrent to large families.\textsuperscript{xxvi} This reinforced general social pressures towards the small, well-cared-for, family, discussed in more detail below. As Giles noted, “Fewer children meant less housework, fewer mouths to feed, improved health and the possibility of a non-too-distant future freed from the responsibilities of childcare…. “Respectable” families had fewer children and aspirations to
“respectable” status could be achieved by smaller families’. xxvii The two child family was widely viewed as the respectable norm, with large families becoming synonymous with a lack of self-control, recklessness, or outmoded values – all features of ‘roughness’. Mass-Observation reported hostile peer reactions to large families; for example a father of five children (with a sixth pending) stated, ‘what misery the wife suffers by those nasty loud remarks, not to her, but at her, concerning rabbits and their habits etc.’ xxviii

Meanwhile efforts to achieve the suburban dream of aspirational respectability put considerable pressure on household budgets for many working-class owner-occupiers, providing a further major incentive for family limitation. While material display had been central to status competition in traditional working-class communities, it generally focused around individual expensive status-markers, such as a piano in the parlour. xxix Conversely, projecting a respectable image in the new suburban communities involved displaying a ‘consumer universe’ of coordinated goods. xxx A smart, modern, house had to be matched by similar furnishings (for at least those areas visible to visitors at the door); a tidy garden, good quality clothing, and neat, well-behaved, well-spoken children. Thus, in addition to facing mortgage instalments that were typically substantially higher than rental payments for better-quality inner-urban working-class housing and maintenance expenses that would otherwise have been the landlord’s responsibility, households also faced higher costs for furniture, clothing, and other items necessary to ‘keep up with the Jones’s’. xxxi

Suburban living, by distancing people from places of work and shopping centres, often also incurred a significant increase in transport costs. A database of surviving April 1938 budget summaries collected for the Ministry of Labour survey (discussed in more detail below) indicates that owner-occupying households had
weekly costs for transport to/from work, and for other purposes, of 37.6d and 9.4d respectively, compared to 15.1d and 6.1d for families who rented their accommodation. As the daughter of a building worker recalled, her family found it difficult to pay their mortgage and had to economize on food – not on account of the mortgage itself, but due to the additional expenses that they hadn’t figured on.\(^{xxxii}\)

Paul Johnson has argued that family budgeting strategies can be explained in terms of ‘procedural rationality’. Living and spending according to only a very short-term economic horizon is perfectly rational in an environment of chronic economic insecurity and low incomes, whereas higher and more regular incomes promoted longer-term planning and capital accumulation according to the same rational criteria. Meanwhile changes in the institutional environment of saving and spending could have a significant impact in shifting the balance of household budgeting from a present-orientated to a future-orientated time frame.\(^{xxxiii}\) Owner-occupation appears to have produced such a shift. Taking on a mortgage involved a substantial financial commitment; while minimum deposit requirements fell substantially during the 1930s, at least £25 was usually required. Furnishing a house to the standards expected in the owner-occupied suburbs was also an expensive business – accounts in the Life Histories Database indicate that the overall cost could be as high a £100 or more in some cases.\(^{xxxiv}\) Even an exhibition by the Council for Art and Industry, showing how a small home could be furnished cheaply, proposed a budget of £50 – for a two bedroom house.\(^{xxxv}\) Many families who could not meet these costs concentrated their furniture budgets on items visible from the front door and window.

Meanwhile the psychological costs of abandoning the new suburban lifestyle, the aspirational respectability with which it was associated, and the perceived opportunities it offered for their children, were also substantial. As Jane Walsh (the
wife of an Oldham cotton piecer) recalled, when a series of misfortunes made it impossible to keep up the mortgage payments on their new suburban house, handing back the keys involved closing the door, `Not only on my dream house, but on my dream children.'

These sunk costs and psychological pressures led families who moved from inner-urban areas to suburban owner-occupation to switch their spending outlook towards a more future-orientated perspective. Mortgage payments and the other associated costs of suburban living were met by squeezing the budget for items offering immediate gratification – food, heating, lighting, and so forth, in favour of expenditure linked to the long-term aim of defending their new social status. In addition to cutting back on consumption per head on food and other daily items, family limitation proved an attractive means of keeping daily spending within the limits of new budget priorities. For example, a man who had married in around 1935 told Mass-Observation:

We began married life with the intention of having no children… For me work was poor three or four days a week, also to get a passable house to live in we had to buy one in a housing scheme through a building society. That also made it necessary that we had no family or we would have been in poverty for the rest of our lives… We still could have a family, but neither of us want them now, if we ever did. We want to enjoy a decent standard of living without having more encumbrances to drag us down.
Controlling the number of children offered women the potential to break free from the chronic uncertainty and fear of destitution that had characterised many of their childhoods and had made a future-orientated perspective unrealistic for their parents. For such women, family limitation often formed part of a wider strategy to escape economic insecurity, that might also include selecting a husband with a stable job and a willingness to adopt a life centred around the family rather than the pub. As a female migrant to owner-occupied suburbia explained, she and her siblings had families of zero, one, or two children, in contrast to her parents’ six, as: `We all saw our mothers slaving away looking after loads of children. And if the father drank or was out of work they had to scrub floors or sell bootlaces or go on the assistance. We weren't having that, no that sort of thing was very old-fashioned, we wanted something better.'

A similar pattern of cutting back on food, heating, and other daily costs, to meet higher housing and commuting expenses, plus those associated with `keeping up with the Jones’s,’ has also been identified on interwar municipal estates. Yet, while many council estates embodied new notions of respectability and associated spending patterns, discerning their impact on family size is much more difficult than for owner-occupied housing. Local authorities generally only allocated houses to families who already had children, and during the 1930s - when housing policy moved towards slum clearance and alleviating over-crowding - larger families began to receive priority. Long waiting lists for council housing also resulted in people moving to suburbia much later after marriage than those who opted for owner-occupation. Some 63 municipal housing tenants on the Life Histories Database, for whom the interval between marriage and obtaining a council house was known, moved an average of 6.9 years after marriage; compared to 2.7 years for 36 owner-occupiers for whom the
dates of marriage and owner-occupation were known. Thus, while accounts often mention limiting family size as a means of controlling expenditure, delays in obtaining council housing, together with allocation policies favouring families with children and, by the 1930s, large families, make the overall impact of municipal suburbia on fertility difficult to quantify.

**Fewer, but better provided-for, children**

Unlike the Mass Observation respondent quoted above, most working-class suburban owner-occupiers wanted families, albeit small ones. New notions of working-class respectability placed considerable emphasis on the importance on having children and on providing them with the best possible prospects for their future lives and careers. This was to be achieved by creating a better domestic environment and concentrating available monetary and psychological resources on a limited number of children.

Working-class ideals of the small, well-resourced, family were influenced by changes in the general climate of opinion regarding child-rearing, which filtered down to working-class families via contact with `professionals’ such as health visitors and maternity clinic staff, together with books, magazines, the women’s pages of newspapers, and radio programmes. During this period medical and other expert opinion promoted an increasingly elaborate `ideology of childhood’, in which the mother played a central role in creating a happy, clean home environment. Unrestricted fertility threatened this role, by forcing the mother to spread her limited resources of money and time over an ever-increasing number of children and
threatening the family’s ability to afford a healthy, modern, house in a suitable neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{xlii} 

Almost all working-class women would have come into some contact with the new ideas regarding child welfare, though suburban owner-occupiers would have been particularly exposed to them (and particularly receptive, given the congruence between these ideas and their wider notions of respectability). The ideology of domesticity, enlightened parenthood, and the efficient ‘professional housewife’ proved one of the editorial cornerstones of the new mass-circulation women’s magazines of the 1930s. For example, the largest, \textit{Woman’s Own} - which targeted the young, aspirational (but often working-class) housewife - provided advice via ‘expert’ columnists, including ‘Nurse Vincent’ who wrote its child-care pages. Content analysis of \textit{Woman’s Own} articles from October 1932-December 1939, by Greenfield and Reid, indicated that 12.32 per cent concerned child-care, 10.53 per cent housekeeping, and 12.66 per cent involved ‘lifestyle’ topics.\textsuperscript{xliii} Meanwhile the greater isolation from neighbours and the local community which characterised the new suburban estates reinforced the importance women placed on the values of family life, domesticity and, particularly, children.\textsuperscript{xliv} 

The desire to create a better home environment and long-term prospects for children, while having more time and money to devote to each child, emerges strongly from accounts in the Life Histories Database. For example, Grace Foakes, the wife of a London river man, recalled deciding following the arrival of her first child that ‘I did not want her to grow up in those surroundings [the same tenement flat in which she had grown up]. I wanted a garden and flowers and trees for her... I wanted to be able to put my baby in a lovely clean place, not as that place was with its noise and dirt... My children were to have a different life from the one I had known.’\textsuperscript{xlv} These
motivations are also reflected in accounts of differences between interviewees’
children’s upbringing and their own. A motor vehicle coach painter, who had
purchased a house on a new suburban Coventry estate for £650, described:

a broader based home environment, completely different to anything I
enjoyed, the ability to have a separate room to study in, and a piano for the
pianist in our family to play on... The ability to relax, and the chance to sit
entrance exams to the King Edward VIII Grammar School and get past,
and then leave there and go to University. They [the children] kept us poor
at one point... I'd got two lads at University, having to pay for them
both. xlvi

Several accounts mention devoting time to playing games with children and
helping them with their hobbies. An extreme example was given by the wife of a
Coventry sheet metal worker, who recalled that they devoted so much time to their
daughter’s hobby of amateur show jumping that ’we never had a Sunday lunch at
home for six months of the year’. xlvii The accounts also indicate that a substantial
proportion of the suburban pioneers’ offspring obtained higher-status jobs than their
parents, as noted in other studies of interwar working-class suburban migrants. xlviii Yet
this did not necessarily indicate a desire that their children should move from the
working to the middle class. The Life Histories Database corroborates earlier oral
history-based research by Giles, indicating that - like their own transition to suburbia -
these parents viewed the prospects for their children not in terms of transcending the
working/middle class divide, but as ’material improvement and conformity to

18
“respectable” values – a steady marriage, a solid and regular income and a
“respectable” lifestyle.” xlix

Accounts in the database generally provide little information on the actual mechanisms of birth control by which small families were achieved (even when this information was specifically requested by interviewers), women who entered into marriage during this period often being reticent to discuss such issues in any detail.1 Yet they indicate a generally very limited level of knowledge regarding sex and birth control at the time of marriage; for example one woman recalled that,  ‘When we got married... George had to teach me all I knew. I didn't know a thing 'cos Mum didn't tell you anything, and you didn't get anything from school those days...’lii Advice from birth control clinics does not appear to have played any significant role in the family planning strategies of most women. Only one respondent mentions attending a birth control clinic before the Second World War and this was as the result of medical advice that her husband's mental illness would be passed on to her children.liii Meanwhile only one of the 58 life-history accounts of families moving to owner-occupied estates mentions taking advice from the publications of Marie Stopes (while a further 112 accounts of migrants to suburban municipal housing recorded no mention of using her publications).

Yet despite the absence of formal family planning advice, many couples appear to have successfully planned for a certain number of children. For example, the wife of a sheet metal worker, when asked if their family was planned, replied:  `Not particularly planned as such … But I didn't want any more than two, so I didn't want any more, I'd had two girls. That was enough! Couldn't afford any more, we paid enough’ . liii Similarly, a motor vehicle worker who had purchased a £575 house on marriage, when asked about whether they had planned the family, responded  `Well,
we planned to have one or two, but two was enough.’ Asked about how they had accomplished this, he replied ‘I suppose we took things to chance, you know, guessed it, and everything turned out as we wanted it.’

Cryptic comments about leaving things to chance, or ‘being careful’ usually refer to non-mechanical contraception methods, principally abstinence, coitus interruptus, or using the safe period of the menstrual cycle. The database records no evidence of the use of sheaths, pessaries, or other mechanical methods. The reticence with which most people discussed these issues might have led to their use being under-reported, though these findings accord with those of other studies. The prevalence of non-mechanical methods, particularly coitus interruptus and abstinence, indicates the importance of husbands’ cooperation in enabling women to successfully limit the size of their families. As Seccombe has noted, male self-restraint was a key factor behind successful family limitation - involving a willingness to limit sexual pleasure in order to meet the economic and social objectives of the household. Foregoing immediate gratification in pursuit of long-term goals was the key underlying feature of suburban owner-occupiers’ lifestyles during this period – for example paying the mortgage and keeping up with the standards of the estate often had to be put ahead of good quality and plentiful food, while men were required to make long commutes to work and forego the pleasures of the pub, which was not now at the end of the street.

This period witnessed a change in thinking regarding ‘proper’ sexual relations between married people, with men being expected to exercise new standards of restraint and consideration. The diffusion of such ideas remained limited, though they had begun to enter into magazines and other literature read by working-class women. Studies of interwar working-class suburban communities have highlighted
the importance of more companionate and equalitarian marriages than were then the norm, with husbands being prepared to make greater sacrifices in the interests of their families.¹⁴ While in some ways the sacrifices made by women were even greater (for example, they often bore the brunt of the family’s reduced food intake) the lifestyle changes required of men marked a much sharper and more fundamental break with inherited patterns of behaviour than those required of women. The Life Histories Database indicates that women often sought ‘prudential’ marriages, selecting husbands largely on account of their having the qualities necessary to make successful partners in their project of suburban respectability and securing a good long-term future for their children. This suggests that the roots of their successful family limitation strategies often pre-dated their marriages and migration to suburbia, the new owner-occupier estates providing the environment in which these aspirations could be achieved.

**Statistical evidence regarding the impact of owner-occupation on working-class family size**

Contemporary social surveys provide little information regarding the relationship between fertility and owner-occupation. Most covered either inner-urban areas, or large council estates - such as the famous studies of the London County Council’s Becontree and Watling Estates.¹⁴ One exception is Rowntree’s 1936 York survey, which included post-war semi-detached non-council houses, mainly located on the outskirts of the city. A report prepared for the survey noted that many working-class owner-occupiers of such houses, ‘have found that re-payments for loans, rates, and costs of repairs constitute a heavy drain on their resources. There is no doubt that
this is an important factor making for restriction in the size of the family. The average size of families occupying this class of house is only 3.24. Yet the published survey and its surviving archival records do not contain sufficiently detailed data on family composition, household incomes, and housing tenure for statistical analysis of their interrelationships.

The 1946 Family Census did not contain information on housing, though this topic was explored in the largest near-contemporary qualitative survey of attitudes towards family limitation - Mass Observation’s 1944 family planning study, published as Britain and her Birth Rate. Unfortunately, analysis of the original interview responses to this survey show that its sample was overwhelmingly drawn from inner-London boroughs and was heavily dominated by people living in private rented accommodation. The same was true for the London munitions factory sample (most workers commuting from inner-London) and the other ‘check’ samples. No sample contained a significant proportion of either owner-occupiers or other suburban dwellers.

National government sources are also less than perfect; household tenure is not recorded alongside data on the date of marriage and the number and ages of children in any contemporary official sources (even those currently closed to researchers, such as the Census). The contemporary survey that comes closest to providing this data is the 1937/38 Ministry of Labour survey of weekly expenditure by working-class households. Returns included the ages of each child under 14, together with the number of children aged 14-17. However, it does not contain the date of the parents’ marriage or the age of the mother, preventing analysis of fertility relative to that expected given the duration of marriage and age at marriage. Meanwhile it is not possible to separate children over 18 from other adult household members, who are
simply recorded as male and female adults, and older children who have left the household are not recorded. A further drawback is the inclusion in the survey of non-manual workers with wages/salaries not exceeding £250 a year; though, given that wages for adult non-manual employees rose sharply with age, that they typically married later than manual workers, and that house-purchase almost always took place on or after marriage, the proportion of non-manual married heads of household in the sample is not likely to be substantial.\textsuperscript{lxv}

Most of the individual budget summaries compiled for the survey were destroyed during the early 1960s. However, 99 sets of summaries, each comprising four weekly budgets taken at quarterly intervals from October 1937 to July 1938, were preserved at the Public Record Office.\textsuperscript{lxvi} A further 524 sets of summaries were donated to a research project and were eventually deposited in the University of Bangor Archives.\textsuperscript{lxvii} A database of these surviving summaries has been compiled by the author, using the summaries for April 1938 (as these had the closest pattern of expenditure to the average for all four quarterly budgets).

Of the 623 surviving budgets, 42 were omitted from the analysis as they concerned families (mainly of agricultural or mining workers) who were provided with accommodation `rent-free’ by their employers. As this accommodation represented payment in kind, but its implicit monetary value was usually not recorded in the budget summaries, their inclusion would have distorted the analysis. Similarly, families who owned their house outright (25 in total) were excluded from the `buyers’ category, as a wholly-owned house represented an endowment that negated accommodation costs (other than ground rents, rates, and maintenance). This left 79 households who were purchasing their houses on mortgage and 477 who lived in rented accommodation.
In order to control for the potential impact of differences in family incomes on the allocation of household expenditure and on family size (given the positive relationship between socio-economic status and the use of birth control) house buyers were divided into three roughly equal groups: those on relatively low-working-class incomes (below 77s a week) medium-high incomes (77-109 shillings; the mean income of all non-agricultural households covered by the survey being 85s) and high incomes (over 109 shillings). They were then compared to renters, using the same income groupings. The results are shown in Table 2, which includes the distribution of expenditure between major items, mean household size, and the number of children under 18.

The evidence reviewed in the previous sections indicates that moving from inner-urban rented accommodation to owner-occupation was generally associated with a substantial increase in the proportion of income devoted to housing, and with increases in spending on travel and items linked to materially-driven status competition, such as furniture and clothing. Meanwhile funding these expenditures entailed cut-backs in items of daily consumption - food, fuel and lighting. The data corroborate this: the proportion of income devoted to housing is shown to be substantially higher for house-buyers than for renters in each income group. Meanwhile the proportion of expenditure devoted to food was substantially lower for buyers, while that on fuel and lighting was a little lower for each income band. Expenditure shares for other items remained higher for buyers, despite their greater accommodation costs.

The final two columns compare household size and the number of children under 18. Family size for buyers in the medium and high household expenditure groups is substantially lower than that for renters. For example, in case of families in
the 77-109s group (for which mean household expenditure for buyers and renters is roughly similar) the average number of children is around 0.5 lower for buyers. Yet this relationship is not evident for families in the lowest income-group. This may be due to the inclusion within this group of former tenants who had been persuaded by their landlords to buy their existing inner-urban houses, often on mortgages provided by the landlord. Both Rowntree’s 1936 York survey and a study of Birmingham housing recorded the prevalence of this practice, which was said to be targeted at poor
Table 2: The distribution of expenditure and average family size for house-buyers and renters at various income levels, April 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>% distribution of expenditure</th>
<th>Mean values of Income (d)</th>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>No. of children under 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buyers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 77s</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-109s</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109s or over</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Buyers</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>1280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Renters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 77s</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-109s</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109s or over</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>1785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All renters</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Database, compiled by the author, of 623 surviving budget summaries collected for the Ministry of Labour survey of working-class household expenditure. Based on 556 budgets for households who rented their homes, or were buying them on mortgage.
quality inner-urban properties and was viewed as a device by which landlords tied
down gullible tenants to sub-standard housing let (and later mortgaged) at inflated
rents. Such moves generally had a minimal impact on the purchaser’s residential
environment and could not, therefore, be expected to influence fertility.

The lack of disaggregated data for household members over age 18 complicates the analysis, as renters might have a higher proportion of older children who fall into this class than owner-occupiers, while the data might also be distorted by the inclusion of single heads of household. Comparison was therefore restricted to families with one male and one female over 18 (who were very likely to be married couples). The 52 home-buying households in this category had an average of 1.27 children, while the 305 renting families with one adult of each gender had an average of 1.64. This still leaves the possibility (given that the owner-occupation boom was largely a 1930s’ phenomenon, and was concentrated among families buying homes within a few years of marriage) that owner-occupiers in the sample might represent younger families with less complete fertility. Analysis of the ages of children in the two groups showed that buyers had only a slightly lower proportion of children aged 5-17 (66.67 per cent) than renters (68.34 per cent). This was due to a larger proportion of children aged 14-17 among renting households (17.03 per cent of children under 17 for renters, compared to 9.09 per cent for buyers). However, restricting the sample to relatively young families - with one adult of each gender and no child above age 13 - still produces a lower average number of children, (1.13) for owner-occupiers than for renters (1.35).

The Family Census found that with each successive birth, a process of selection occurred among married women. While most completed their families with the second birth, the remainder continued to have further births at relatively high

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If moves to owner-occupation were associated with a desire to restrict the number of children to two, then the proportion of house-buying families with three or more children should be substantially below the proportion for renting families. Analysis of the data indicates that 11.39 per cent of house-buying families had three or more children and 3.80 per cent had four or more. These proportions were much lower than those for renters (18.87 per cent and 8.18 per cent respectively).

Restricting the sample to households with one male and one female adult produced similar results - the proportions with three, and with four more children were 13.46 and 3.85 per cent respectively for house-buyers, and 23.61 and 10.49 per cent for renters. This pattern of family limitation by restricting fertility beyond the second child may explain the reduced gap between fertility for owner-occupiers and renters when the analysis is restricted to younger families.

Problems arising from the use of cross-sectional data on incomplete fertility in the above analysis would, ideally, be resolved via comparison with other data involving completed fertility. The Life Histories Database provides such data, but with a lower sample size than the Ministry of Labour database. Of the 58 life-histories, each involving working-class households who entered into owner-occupation via house purchase, rather than inheritance, 14 either contained no information of sufficient detail to be useful for the following analysis, or were excluded as they referred to families that had moved into owner-occupation more than ten years after marriage \(^{lxxi}\) (or, in one case, had their children after the loss of their house - due to a failure to maintain mortgage payments). Data for the remaining 44 families was not always available for all variables under examination.

The families concerned generally moved into owner-occupation on, or within a few years of, marriage. The average interval between marriage and the move to
owner-occupation (known for 35 of the 44 families) was 2.5 years, 18 families having moved within around a year of marriage.\textsuperscript{lxxii} Data on both the wife’s dates of birth and marriage were available for 22 accounts, the average age of marriage being 24.0 years, roughly equal to the average for the wives of all manual workers during this period, and well below that of higher-income groups.\textsuperscript{lxxiii} The sample, while rather small, does not therefore suggest that owner-occupiers achieved smaller families by postponing marriage. Unlike many salaried occupations, which offered annual increments, working-class jobs did not have steeply rising earnings by age (once workers were on ‘adult’ wage rates). There was thus less incentive to postpone marriage in order to increase the income available for household formation.

Information on completed fertility is available for 41 families, who had an average of 1.80 children. This figure may be a slight over-estimate, as some accounts, omitted because they did not mention children, might have concerned childless families. Conversely the omission of children who died in infancy or early childhood might slightly bias the figures downwards (a problem also inherent in the 1946 Family Census and similar surveys). The Family Census (spliced with additional data from the 1951 population census), provides estimates of ultimate family size for all married women by year of first marriage (and, from 1926, for different age ranges at each year of marriage).\textsuperscript{lxxiv} Using this data it was possible to compare the actual and expected ultimate fertility of each woman in the sample. For women whose age at marriage was not known, the average for all women under 45 who married in the year in question was used. For some women the exact year of marriage was not known, and the average for the span of years over which they could have married was taken. However the potential margin of error incurred by making these assumptions was not significant.\textsuperscript{lxxv}
Expected ultimate family size for the 41 households was calculated at 2.19 children, 0.39 more than their actual family size. Comparison with manual workers’ families, rather than all families, would have further increased the gap between actual and expected fertility. The Family Census provided family size projections by socio-economic group, for women married between 1930 and 1934 at 20 years duration of marriage (which approximates to completed fertility). Projected family size for the wives of manual wage-earners, excluding agricultural workers and unskilled labourers, was given as 2.27 (with values of 2.33 for agricultural workers and 3.01 for labourers). Meanwhile the projected number of children for non-manual wage earners was 1.67, while self-employed workers, professionals and larger-scale employers; and salaried employees, had projected values of 1.69, 2.04, 1.64, and 1.38 respectively. Owner-occupation thus appears to have been associated with family sizes above those of non-manual urban workers, but closer to non-manual than to manual groups.

**Conclusions**

Working-class families sustained owner-occupation during the 1930s using a combination of short and long-term household budgeting strategies that included family limitation - producing a reduction in the fertility of a significant section of the working-class to below replacement levels for the first time. Like earlier moves towards fertility restriction by the upper-middle, and then the lower-middle classes, conflicts between new standards of housing and status-related consumption, and the income available to finance this consumption, appear to have played a key role in leading working-class families to restrict family size. Owner-occupation had begun to
offer working people ‘modern’ suburban lifestyles, holding out the prospect of a better life for themselves and their children - if the numbers of those children could be kept sufficiently low to support lifestyles that were demanding in terms of both money and time. The above analysis highlights the importance of housing, the local residential environment, and associated lifestyle norms, in influencing household consumption and family planning decisions. Working-class owner-occupiers had found themselves drawn into consumption patterns that considerably stretched their financial resources and responded with strategies that prioritised those items necessary to defend their new lifestyles at the expense of sacrificing current gratification - including that from unrestricted fertility.

Appendix: The Life Histories Database

The 58 life biographical accounts of working-class owner-occupiers examined for this study form part of a larger database, assembled by the author, of life histories concerning working-class people who moved from inner-urban areas to council estates or into owner-occupation (covering a total of 170 individual accounts and 174 relevant house moves). A summary database, providing details of the sources and analysis of their contents, is to be deposited with the UK Data Archive. Sources included published and unpublished autobiographies, and a few contemporary interviews, though most accounts were taken from oral history archives and studies. Oral history has proved particularly valuable for historical analysis of the family, whereas the links between decision-making in areas such as household formation, consumption priorities, and family planning are poorly captured in most conventional documentary sources. Yet oral history sources raise a number of methodological
problems, including the potential for bias imparted by the interviewer; the variable quality of records and of the research standards of their compilers; the imperfect nature of memory and its filtering through subsequent experiences; and possibilities that interviewees might mythologize, withhold information, or otherwise distort their accounts.

Vetting accounts for this study followed Paul Thompson’s procedure of examining each interview for internal consistency, cross-checking with other sources, and evaluation in terms of wider context. Problems of interviewer bias and the impact of subsequent experience on earlier memories were minimised by the use of material collected by a large number of interviewers over a period spanning several decades, and comparison with the discussion of similar topics in the autobiographical and contemporary interview accounts summarised in the database. Interviewees provided a good deal of quantitative information regarding such things as rents, mortgage instalments, and house purchase costs; when checked against documentary sources these revealed a surprising degree of accuracy. While recollections concerning values and attitudes were less amenable to such checking, the fact that the same views emerged from large numbers of accounts, assembled at different times by different interviewers, considerably increases the weight that can be placed on them.

Given the limited number of relevant and accessible oral history collections, the sample composition was strongly influenced by the availability of sources. For example, the lower representation of owner-occupiers, compared to council tenants, was partly due to the availability of several substantial oral history studies of large municipal estates. The 58 accounts concerning owner-occupiers were concentrated in rapidly expanding population centres in the South East and West Midlands. Some 34 concerned house purchasers in the South East – distributed over a large number of
London suburbs and other expanding centres within this region. The next largest region was the West Midlands, with 15 accounts. All but one were taken from a single centre, Coventry; an extensive search failed to identify suitable collections for other West Midlands’ centres. Six accounts concerned northern England (three each from Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West); and there were two from the East Midlands and one from East Anglia.

The occupation of the head of household was given in 54 of the 58 accounts. Some 25 were employed in the vehicle and engineering industries (these were probably over-represented in the sample, as 13 concerned workers in Coventry). A further two involved printing trade workers. These sectors generally offered relatively high wages but unstable employment; workers incomes were often sufficient to maintain mortgage payments despite periodic lay-offs during periods of seasonal or other variations in demand. The next largest group, comprising 11 accounts, concerned workers in public transport and utility industries. Bus drivers, railway workers, and postmen were not particularly well-paid, but had what were regarded as ‘jobs for life’ - greater security of income enabling them to devote a higher proportion of that income to mortgage payments. The sample also included six heads of household in non-engineering factory trades, three building workers; three other workers in building-related trades (two carpenters and a self-employed plumber); a river man; and a horse driver. Two ‘white collar’ workers were also included - a clerk and the manager of a small shop. The shop manager earned less than £3 a week at around the time of the house purchase, while the clerk earned only £3 5s from his clerical work (his income being supplemented by his wife continuing to work after marriage – unlike most women in the sample - as a dressmaker, and from money he
earned at weekends in a jazz band). These workers thus earned less than many factory workers and lived on estates where such workers were also resident.

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iv For a summary of the relevant literature, see Szreter, Fertility, Class and Gender, pp. 9-17.

v Charles, Twilight of Parenthood.

vi Ibid, p. 198.


viii Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood, p. 54.

ix Szreter, Fertility, Class and Gender, p. 364.

x Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood; Szreter, Fertility, Class and Gender.

xi Gittens, Fair Sex, p. 83.

xii Merrett, Owner-occupation in Britain, pp. 1 & 16.

xiii Whitworth, ’Men, women, whops’, p. 5.


This figure is higher than that for individual earnings, as there were an average of 1.75 wage earners per household.

Ravetz, Council Housing, p. 62.

Burnett, Social History of Housing, pp. 222-6.

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Scott, P. ‘Selling owner-occupation to the working-classes in 1930s Britain’, University of Reading Centre for International Business History discussion paper (forthcoming, 2004).

Ibid; Hughes and Hunt, ‘A Culture Transformed?’, p. 92.; Szreter, Fertility, Class and Gender, p. 528; Gittens, Fair Sex, pp 175-6, notes the importance of these new family-centred lifestyles as a factor encouraging family limitation.

For more detailed discussion of this new pattern of neighbourliness and family-centred lifestyles see Scott, P. ‘Visible and invisible walls: suburbanisation and the social filtering of working-class communities in interwar Britain’, University of Reading Centre for International Business History discussion paper (forthcoming, 2004).

Johnson, Saving and Spending, pp. 223-4, found a similar pattern of asserting status within the boundaries of the working-class.

Mass-Observation, Britain and Her Birth Rate, pp. 153-66.
xxvii Giles, ‘Something that bit better,’ p. 270.

xxviii Mass-Observation, Britain and Her Birth Rate, p. 75.


xxx Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, Social Communication, p. 65.


xxxiv Essex Record Office, SA/8/1585-93, interview with Jack Aston, railway worker; Nottingham Record Office, A 106 A-B, Lifetimes Oral History Project; interview conducted with William Heath, a factory worker at Players, by Julie O’Neil, September 1984; estimate by Chris Pond, based on receipts of his parents (a clerk - with a wage at the time of the house purchase of £3 5s - and a dressmaker); Imperial War Museum, 1083, 88/8/1, unpublished typescript memoirs of F. J. Stephens, a printer earning £5 a week, who spent £95 furnishing three of the rooms in his new home at around the time of the house move; Bexley Local Studies, Bexley Between the Wars, interview with Mrs Mantle, the wife of a newspaper compositor, who initially furnished their house for just over £100 in 1934.

xxxv Ravetz, Council Housing, p. 120.

xxxvi Walsh, Not Like This, p. 65.

xxxvii Museum of London Archives, material collected for Weightman and Humphries, Making of Modern London, regarding Joyce Leader, the daughter of a building worker who purchased a new three bedroom house in Whitton, outer-London, for £475 in 1938; Walsh, Not Like This, pp. 56-7; North Kingston Centre, Kingston, Surrey, NKC/OH62, transcript of interview with Mr Walden (a bus driver) and his wife, who purchased a new house in Kingston, in 1935, for £710, on a weekly income of £3 18s.

xxxviii Mass-Observation, Britain and Her Birth Rate, pp. 123-4.
xxxix Interview supplied to the author by Chris Pond. The interviewee was a dressmaker, working in a Hackney factory, who married in 1935 and set up home on a new estate in Chingford. Her husband was a clerk, earning £3 5s at the time of the house purchase; she continued working after marriage to supplement the family income.

x See, for example, Kaye, 'Wythenshawe'; McKenna, 'Development of suburban council housing.'

xi The dates of marriage and house moves are generally only known to the nearest year. One owner-occupier who purchased a house (originally jointly with his brother) before marriage is treated as having moved there on marriage.

xli Gittens, Fair Sex, pp. 182-3.

xlili Greenfield and Reid, 'Women's magazines'.

xliv Gittens, Fair Sex, p. 136; Kaye, 'Wythenshawe', p. 238.

xlv Foakes, Between High Walls, p. 81. Her family's move to suburbia occurred via two stages – first into council housing, and then (following a period in privately-rented accommodation) to a new owner-occupied estate in Hornchurch – idem, My Life with Reuben.

xlvi Coventry Record Office (hereafter CRO) 1647/1/4, interview with male, born 1908, recorded for a project on the social history of car workers and deposited by Paul Thompson in 1986. The interviewee had three sons, the first of whom was born in 1938. All graduated in branches of engineering - two at Imperial College, one at the University of Manchester.

xlvii CRO/1647/1/36, female, born 1913.

xlviii See, for example, Giles, 'Something that bit better', p. 327.

xlx Ibid, p. 293.

1 Ibid, p. 278; Kaye, 'Wythenshawe', p. 238.

II Bexley Local Studies, Bexley Between the Wars, interview with Mrs Harrington.


liii CRO/1647/1/36, female, born 1913.

liv CRO/1647/1/56, male born 1906.

lv Mass Observation, Britain and her Birth-rate, p. 59.

lvi Gittens, Fair Sex, p. 33; Seccombe, 'Starting to Stop'.

lvii Seccombe, 'Starting to Stop', pp. 176-77.
Giles, Parlour and the Suburb, p. 61.
Durant, Watling; Young, Becontree and Dagenham.
Mass-Observation, Britain and Her Birth Rate, p. 75.
Some 61.45 per cent of the wives of manual workers in the 1935-38 marriage cohort were estimated to have married at below age 25, compared to only 38.49 per cent of the wives of salaried employees, Glass and Grebenik, Trend and Pattern of Fertility, p. 47.
NA, LAB 17, 8-106.
University of Bangor Library Archives, Ms 24611-26445.
The remaining sample comprised 46 house-buying, and 245 renting, households.
Only four families in the remaining sample moved into owner-occupation eight or more years after marriage. Three of these had further children after the move.
Including one household where the husband had purchased his house (originally jointly with his brother) prior to marriage. The estimate was compiled from data generally giving the dates of marriage and of the house move to the nearest year.
During the interwar period the average age at first marriage for wives of manual workers, marrying below the age of 45, fell from 24.33 over 1920-24 to 24.19 over 1935-39. Meanwhile the average age of marriage for the wives of professionals, employers, farmers, and farm managers, was over 26, Glass and Grebenik, Trend and Pattern of Fertility, p. 6.
Ibid, Chapter 6, Table 40 and Chapter 7, Table 100 (Part A). Data refer to woman marrying at below age 45, whose first marriages had not been terminated by the Census date or before the age of 45. Data for women married after 1926 involve an element of population projection.

For example, projected ultimate family size for women under 45 marrying between 1931 and 1938 varied only slightly from year to year, within the range from 2.115 to 2.158 - Glass and Grebenik, *Trend and Pattern of Fertility*, Chapter 6, Table 40 and Chapter 7, Table 100 (Part A).

Employing less than 10 people, excluding farmers.

Glass and Grebenik, *Trend and Pattern of Fertility*, Chapter 6, Table 40 and Chapter 7, Table 59.

The number of house moves is greater than the number of life histories due to the inclusion of one interview involving two people who moved to different houses as children; two interviews involving people who had moved into both local authority and owner-occupied housing, and one interviewee who described interwar house moves both with her parents and following her marriage.

Copyright restrictions prevent deposit of the full database of life history summaries.


The largest individual representation was for Bexley Heath, comprising six accounts.