‘Embourgeoisement’ before affluence? Suburbanisation and the social filtering of working-class communities in interwar Britain
Introduction

A series of influential studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s highlighted the emergence of a new ‘affluent’ working class in post-war Britain. While acknowledging that this phenomenon was most clearly evident in new residential communities such as new towns and suburban council estates, this literature focused on economic and social factors specific to the post-1945 era in explaining this phenomenon. Mass affluence, the economic security offered by full employment and the new welfare state, plus the boost to household incomes from the entry of married women into the labour market, were seen as key factors behind the new patterns of consumption and related behaviour of ‘affluent worker’ households.

This article takes issue both with the timing of the initial transition from a ‘traditional’ to ‘new’ working-class and with the underlying factors that initiated this transition. It demonstrates that the main features identified in the ‘affluent worker’ studies – aspirational, family and home-centred lifestyles; an increased emphasis on conspicuous consumption as a means of asserting status; and a more distant approach to neighbours, were already clearly evident on new suburban working-class estates during the interwar period. These new communities accommodated a substantial proportion of the working-class by 1938 - with around a quarter of urban working-class households migrating to the suburbs over the interwar years.

Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the article also explores how migration to new residential communities both undermined the habitus which maintained traditional working-class consumption patterns in inner-urban communities and substituted new, more materially- and domestically- orientated values. These processes are examined both via evidence from contemporary and near-
contemporary social studies, together with a database of 170 life history accounts of working-class people who moved from inner-urban areas to council estates or into owner-occupation [hereafter Life Histories Database].iii The use of existing oral history archives overcomes two of the classic criticisms of oral history research – low sample sizes arising from the labour-intensive nature of testimony collection and the possibility of bias imparted by the interviewer and interviewee selection strategy. The third main criticism – the fluidity of memory and retrospective revisions of attitudes in the light of hindsight and post-hoc evaluations - is mitigated by the use of testimonies collected over a period of several decades and corroboration with other evidence.

The affluent worker thesis

Early post-war studies of migration from traditional working-class communities to new residential areas highlighted major accompanying social changes, which formed part of a broader post-war social revolution in working-class attitudes and behaviour. A pioneering contribution was Young and Willmott’s seminal 1957 study, *Family and Kinship in East London*, which charted the social impacts of out-migration from Bethnal Green in London’s East End to the new London County Council [LCC] housing estate of `Greenleigh’ in Essex. Moves to the estate were found to be accompanied by a transition towards more privatised, home- and family-centred relationships; domestically-orientated leisure; aspirational, future-orientated, values; and much greater competition for status via material consumption.iv

Ferdinand Zweig’s *The Worker in an Affluent Society* noted the emergence by the late 1950s of a general trend (though especially strong on new council estates and
aspirational neighbourhoods) towards privatised lifestyles centered around the nuclear family, with neighbourly relations characterised as ‘Friendly but not too close’ or ‘Keep apart from neighbours, but be friendly,’ and activities such as house visiting being discouraged. Zweig argued that the ‘fully employed welfare state’ and the entry of married women into the formal labour market was transforming the British working class. Workers were adjusting to a climate of greater economic security by developing a more future-orientated outlook, based around rising material expectations; more home and family-based lifestyles; higher standards of domestic comfort in better, well-furnished, houses with modern consumer durables; and higher aspirations for the next generation.

By the late 1960s the affluent worker thesis, at least in its strong form - that as manual workers and their families achieve relatively high incomes and living standards, they assume a way of life which is more characteristically “middle class” and become in fact progressively assimilated into middle-class society – was being challenged by a weaker-form hypothesis (which also accords much more strongly with the findings of this article for the interwar period). Studies conducted by Goldthorpe and his collaborators during the 1960s produced a more qualified view of the social changes evident in ‘new’ working class communities. Rather than a trend towards the assimilation of manual workers into the middle class, they identified a much less dramatic process of convergence in certain aspects of working and middle class life (evident in values, aspirational behaviour, and a trend towards more individualistic outlooks and lifestyles). Meanwhile important differences remained in terms of attitudes to working, and some aspects of socialising, aspirations, and social perspectives. Working-class families were thus socially transformed without
becoming ‘middle class’ in any meaningful sense. However, full employment and post-war affluence were still viewed as the key factors behind this transformation.viii

More recent studies have tended to corroborate Goldthorpe et. al.’s findings that these changes fell short of the ‘embourgeoisement’ of the working class and have also called into question the rapidity and magnitude of the decline of ‘traditional’ working-class communities and values. Yet there is a strong consensus among both the early studies and more recent critiques that new residential communities were in the vanguard of changes in working-class social relations and that these changes were strongly linked to post-war affluence.ix Conversely, oral-history based studies of working-class migration to new interwar residential communities have found strikingly similar socio-economic impacts on household behaviour, despite the fact that the households concerned could not be considered ‘affluent’ by post-war definitions.x This calls in to question the importance of the fully-employed post-war welfare state as an essential driver of these trends.

**New working-class communities in interwar Britain**

Interwar Britain witnessed intense waves of suburbanisation, dominated by municipal housing in the 1920s and owner-occupied housing during the 1930s. Council housing expanded from less than one per cent of Britain’s 1914 housing stock to around 10 per cent in 1938, with over 90 per cent of the 1.1 million new inter-war council houses located on suburban estates. Meanwhile owner-occupation is estimated to have increased from around 10 per cent of Britain’s 1914 housing stock to around 32 per cent in 1938, mainly due to new developments (an estimated 1.8 million new houses were built for owner-occupiers, compared to 1.1 million existing houses transferred from the privately-rented to owner-occupied sector).xi The 1914 owner-occupation
rate is subject to a substantial margin of error, as it is based on an assumption regarding the volume of pre-1914 housing transferred from the privately-rented to owner-occupied stock by 1938, for which there are no direct estimates. Yet a very low 1914 owner-occupation rate is strongly corroborated by contemporary sources. As with council houses, the vast majority of new owner-occupied housing was located on suburban estates. Around 900,000 houses were also developed for private renting, again concentrated in the suburbs.

Working-class households were important participants in this process. While council housing was initially dominated by the upper strata of the working class (and, in many cases, the lower middle class), by 1938 reductions in rents, slum clearance programmes, and the migration of middle-class council tenants to owner-occupied estates had transformed it into an overwhelmingly working-class tenure, encompassing a broad range of incomes. Meanwhile during the 1930s falling interest rates, liberalised mortgage terms, reductions in building costs, and rising real incomes (for those in work) produced the first boom in working-class suburban home-ownership. A major national survey of working-class household expenditure, conducted by the Ministry of Labour during October 1937 – July 1938 [hereafter Ministry of Labour survey] indicated that some 17.8 per cent of non-agricultural working-class families were owner-occupiers; at least double the proportion at the start of the decade. Working-class owner-occupation spanned a broad income range, being as high as 12.3 per cent even for families with a weekly household expenditure of 50-60 shillings, compared to the working-class household average of 85 shillings.

Rates of owner-occupation, and particularly house purchase via mortgage, were, however, very low outside England and Wales. The survey recorded rates for
Scotland and Northern Ireland of only 5.9 and 5.3 per cent respectively, while the proportion of owner-occupiers making mortgage payments was also much lower - suggesting that working-class owner-occupation in these areas occurred largely via inheritance rather than new purchases. Meanwhile interwar house-building in Scotland was equivalent to only 28 per cent of its 1911 housing stock, compared to 52 per cent for England and Wales. Depressed industrial areas in northern England and Wales also had markedly lower levels of house-building and suburbanisation than more prosperous areas in the South and Midlands. Most workers in these areas lacked the stability of employment necessary to purchase houses on mortgage, depression eroded the local rates-base available to fund municipal housing, and migration to more prosperous areas eased pressures on the existing housing stock.

The proportion of non-agricultural British working class households who moved to suburban estates during the inter-war years can only be estimated to a broad order of magnitude. Given a non-agricultural working-class owner-occupation rate of 17.8 per cent and making the conservative assumption that 50 per cent of owner-occupiers were located on the suburbs, indicates that 8.9 per cent of non-agricultural working-class households took the owner-occupation route to suburbia. Meanwhile, given that at least 90 per cent of interwar council houses were on suburban estates, and assuming that 90 per cent were occupied by working-class families by 1938, produces a figure of 891,000 working-class households taking the municipal housing route. As the number of working-class households in Britain can be very roughly estimated at 7.5 million, and agricultural workers comprised around 9 per cent of these, this would translate into about 13.1 per cent of non-agricultural working-class households. The addition of privately-renting suburban residents is even more problematic, but assuming that three quarters of the 900,000 houses
developed for this sector were in the suburbs, and that 30 per cent of these were rented by working-class families, gives a figure of 202,500 households, or 3 per cent of the non-agricultural working-class.\textsuperscript{xix} Thus something in the order of 25 per cent of non-agricultural working-class families are estimated to have been living on new suburban estates by the eve of the Second World War.

Interwar suburban working-class houses were very different in design from their urban predecessors. Prior to the First World War new working-class neighbourhoods on the edges of towns were typically developed in long terraces, at densities of thirty or more per acre, and were of similar design to inner-urban housing.\textsuperscript{xx} The 1918 Tudor Walters Report on the standards of post-war local authority housing set out a new blueprint, drawing on contemporary planning ideas (pioneered in garden city and model workers’ village projects), that sought to improve economic and social conditions by creating healthier and better-designed housing and communities.\textsuperscript{xxi} The report proposed specifications well in advance of current standards, including a minimum of three ground floor rooms (living-room, parlour and scullery with larder), three bedrooms (at least two of which could take two beds), plus a bathroom. Houses were to be built at a density of no more than 12 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.\textsuperscript{xxii}

Tudor Walters standards embodied the basic features of both the municipal and owner-occupied inter-war working-class house (private developers following them mainly on account of their popularity with purchasers). Yet within these broad parameters a spectrum of housing designs emerged, providing a physical reflection of gradations in status both between estates and different areas of the same estates. Developers of owner-occupied estates aimed at providing houses of variegated
design, drawing heavily on the English vernacular tradition and producing the ‘Tudorbethan’ semi that remains, for many people, the ideal house. Meanwhile councils rapidly developed a preference for a ‘neo-Georgian’ style of plainer houses in near-identical rows, both as a means of economising on costs and emphasising their municipal identity.

There was also substantial variation of house design within each tenure. The ambitious standards outlined in the Local Government Board’s 1919 Housing Manual, which exceeded those of the Tudor Walters Committee in some respects, produced a council house that was beyond the means of most working-class families. Subsequent cost-saving reductions in council housing standards widened access to lower income groups. The proportion of houses with parlours fell, the bathroom was sometimes sacrificed for a bath in the kitchen (with a removable top so that it could serve as a table when not in use) and the dimensions of rooms became less generous. Developers for owner-occupation also sought to build down to lower income groups, particularly during the mid- and late-1930s. For example, New Ideal Homesteads - one of London’s most prolific housebuilders – offered a range of house designs on each estate, sometimes including a low-cost design based on a three bedroom non-parlour terrace with a bath in the kitchen. This was very similar to the cheaper type of non-parlour council house and, with a price of £395 (that translated into minimum weekly mortgage payments of 9 shillings 6 pence) compared well with many such houses in terms of cost.

Communities and social norms

Bourdieu views consumption as a process of reproducing dispositions which constitute differential tastes and which emanate from the pursuit of lifestyles that are
subjectively acceptable given individuals’ economic, social, and cultural ‘capital’
constraints. These pre-dispose people with similar ‘capitals’ to develop shared
consumption orientations, a process reinforced by strategies of distinction in which
individuals understand their own consumption orientations in relation to their
interpretations of those social groups with which they identify, or contrast themselves.
Thus social differentiation is determined not only by individuals’ ‘capital’
endowments but by shared consumption orientations maintained through normative
mechanisms that make social distinction (and consumption) meaningful.xxv

Such consumption orientations are governed by the *habitus* (‘taken for
granted’ common sense social norms and habits which mould daily behaviour and
practices). As Bourdieu noted, as a product of history and perceived material realities
for a person and their reference group, the *habitus* generates a series of positively
sanctioned ‘reasonable’, ‘common sense’ behaviours, encompassing what is possible
within the limits of these realities, while excluding all ”extravagances” … behaviours
that would be negatively sanctioned because they are incompatible with the objective
conditions’.xxvi

The most powerful reference group was the local residential community. A
major characteristic of traditional working-class life was close and frequent contact
with neighbours. High housing densities and, often, the use of the same staircases,
outdoor water taps, toilets, and courts, brought neighbours into frequent and
unavoidable contact. The fact that neighbours also had commonalities with each other
in terms of workplaces and upbringing reinforced this familiarity, thus strengthening
channels for enforcing prevailing norms. Research on traditional working-class
communities has highlighted an economically conservative and culturally static value
set, with respectability construed in terms of independence from state or charitable
assistance via mutual aid networks, thrift, living within one’s means, and, if necessary, tightening one’s belt during hard times. As Szreter noted, such values made working-class communities relatively closed and each a law unto themselves, while ambitions for social status and consumer aspirations were contained within the very modest limits considered appropriate to the circumstances of the great majority. xxvii Bourdieu highlighted this policing role of local communities as a powerful mechanism for enforcing conformism:

The calls to order (“Who does she think she is?” “That’s not for the likes of us”) which reaffirm the principle of conformity… and aim to encourage the “reasonable” choices that are in any case imposed by the objective conditions also contain a warning against the ambition to distinguish oneself by identifying with other groups, that is, they are a reminder of the need for class solidarity… Other people’s expectations are so many reinforcements of dispositions imposed by the objective conditions.xxviii

Such pressures greatly narrowed the range of consumption patterns evident in each community. Yet by the interwar period socio-economic changes were offering some working-class households both a model of an alternative lifestyle and the financial ability to pursue this model (if at the cost of considerable sacrifices in other areas of expenditure). This period saw an expansion of working-class `economic capital’, with a substantial increase in incomes for those in work. Real wages rose by an average of 1.21 per cent per annum over 1913-38, while wage differentials between un/semi-skilled workers and their skilled counterparts narrowed.xxiv There was also some limited increase in working-class `cultural capital’, via improvements
in education standards and opportunities (though most people on the Life Histories Database appear to have had a typical working-class education and did not stay at school beyond the minimum leaving age). Furthermore - contrary to some traditional depictions - the interwar years, and particularly the 1930s, witnessed a marked expansion in working-class occupational, geographical, and (within constraints imposed by their material circumstances and class position) social mobility.xxx

Bourdieu’s model encompasses the process by which ‘needs’ are modified, involving their emergence from the unconscious realm of the habitus into a conscious arena where they are open to debate, modification, and incorporation into lifestyles as ‘wants’ before being re-submerged into the habitus as new needs.xxxi A range of influences, including the advertising and communications industries, the state, and social reform movements, drew many interwar working class households who had hitherto excluded themselves from ‘middle class’ standards of housing, hygiene, and domesticity into this new value set. Recent studies have noted how changing practices regarding indoor plumbing, hot water, and bathrooms, have been underpinned by the powerful symbolic linking of personal hygiene with respectability, virtue, and citizenship - promulgated by agencies ranging from social reformers and health professionals to commercial interests.xxxii The central and local state played an important role via the large-scale development of the Tudor-Walters standard council house, which had a powerful demonstration effect in showing an alternative model of working-class housing which was hygienic, spacious, light, modern, and semi-rural.

Meanwhile new mass-circulation women’s magazines, women’s sections in national newspapers, the Ideal Home Exhibition (and various similar local and regional exhibitions), and advertisements for furniture and other consumer durables latched on to the ‘ideology of domesticity’ as a powerful marketing tool.xxxiii These
emphasised the married woman’s role as ‘professional housewife’, providing a happy, clean, home environment for her family via labour saving devices and efficient household management practices. A modern suburban house was seen as offering the ideal environment for these new values, on account of its hygienic conditions, modern, labour-saving layout, more spacious rooms, front and rear gardens, and semi-rural setting.

The building industry and building society movement also played a key role in promoting these values. Property supplements in local and regional newspapers extolled the advantages of the modern suburban house, while visits to new building estates constituted a significant popular leisure activity in their own right, their leisure appeal being reinforced by firework displays, concerts, visits from politicians, and launch events hosted by film or radio stars. Housing advertising pioneered an aspirational sales-pitch, which both tapped into the new family- and home-centred model of working class respectability and cleverly promoted these values.

Working-class women who were attracted to these new social values often looked for similar values in their future husbands. As Bourdieu noted, ‘Taste is a match-maker… discouraging socially discordant relationships, encouraging well-matched relationships, without these operations ever having to be formulated other than in the socially innocent language of likes and dislikes… Love is also a way of loving one’s own destiny in someone else and so of feeling loved in one’s own destiny.’ This is strongly reflected in the Life Histories Database accounts. Most husbands did not drink heavily and were not extensively involved in community activities, while the accounts indicate relatively little conflict between husbands and wives regarding housing preferences, consumption priorities, or leisure choices. As a housewife on Manchester Corporation’s Wythenshawe Estate recalled:
I've been laughed at in the guild. Oh leave your Harold, he'll be alright.

But no, I said to my husband, we agreed in the beginning that I joined the
guild, I could have that night out... His was his union night and he went
out that night and I took over and that was it. And I always joined on the
understanding that I never left him.xxxviii

Migration to suburbia offered both access to the hygienic, semi-rural, residential
environment promoted by this new model of working-class respectability and an
escape from the constraining influence of inner-urban community norms. For
example, another migrant to Wythenshawe recounted how harassment of his wife for
her conspicuous consumption had prompted the move. `We had a beautiful house in
Fallowfield, but every time she bought anything for the house the neighbours
criticised it - she was very unhappy. I used to be working in town and [when] I came
home the wife said the neighbours had been ridiculing her again. I realised that I
would have to get her away’.xxix Occasionally hostility to `snooty’ behaviour took a
more extreme form. An artisan’s wife, who had moved to a Coventry municipal estate
developed in the 1930s from a low rental inner-urban area, recalled that, `The children
were hooligans, running around with bare feet, dirty noses and hardly any clothes on.
If they saw anybody well-dressed they used to spit and the grown-ups used to call
after you and I used to walk a long way round to save going down that street’.xl

Moving from traditional neighbourhoods to the suburbs itself incurred social
opprobrium, as it was interpreted as a rejection of community values. For example, a
man who applied for a council house, citing health reasons, fell foul of his neighbours
when health inspectors visited: `when they knew health inspectors was in the street
they wanted to lynch me’. Similarly, Jane Walsh, who moved from a one-up, one-down house in an Oldham slum court to a new three-bedroom suburban owner-occupied house in around 1925, found herself ostracised by her old neighbours despite attempts to maintain contacts: `a lot of people from our old district thought Charlie and me very "snobby" for moving away into our new house. One or two of the women I invited out were sure I was only having them there to gloat. And yet if I hadn't asked them out they would have been equally wrathful with me for deserting old friends.’

Evidence indicates that suburban migration was largely motivated by dissatisfaction with the previous residential environment. For example, Joanna Bourke’s analysis of applications for Bolton council housing showed that dislike of the applicant’s existing neighbourhood was the most common reason given for wanting to move. In addition to escaping restrictive social norms, suburban estates offered a number of major environmental advantages, which collectively constituted a strong positive attraction to migrants. These included modern labour-saving designs, more spacious rooms, better natural lighting, modern plumbing and utilities, front and rear gardens, and a semi-rural environment. Analysis of the Life Histories Database included an attempt to classify the positive environmental features people associated with their new houses and neighbourhoods. This proved problematic for a number of reasons. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish positive mentions of particular features from mere description; descriptions lacking clear positive statements were disregarded. Furthermore, as the life histories were assembled from a wide range of sources, the detail with which the house was discussed varied considerably, some accounts making little or no reference to its characteristics. Finally, factors associated
with certain pursuits, such as gardens, are more likely to receive positive mention than others, for example mains electricity.

Nevertheless, the data, shown in Table 1, do provide a broad indication of the major environmental attractions of suburban housing. Among council tenants the presence of a bathroom or fitted bath ranked particularly high, mentioned by almost 60 per cent of accounts that noted any positive features. Running, or hot, water was also mentioned in a substantial proportion of accounts, as was mains electricity and an indoor toilet. Most urban working-class accommodation lacked bathrooms and indoor (or, often, individual) toilets, while many flats and older houses lacked hot, or even running, water. Regular bathing and cleanliness (and, by extension, access to indoor plumbing and a bathroom) had become important markers of respectability by the interwar period, their role in ensuring cleanliness and hygiene being symbolically reinforced by their dominant clean, white, tiled and spartan design aesthetic of suburban bathrooms.\textsuperscript{xliv} Indoor plumbing also had a major impact in reducing housework (or freeing up additional time for other housework), as it removed two of the housewife’s most time-consuming tasks – heating water for washing and bathing purposes and carrying it through the house. Many accounts also stress the importance of getting away from negative environmental factors associated with previous housing, such as dampness, vermin infestations, and cramped conditions – space receiving much more frequent mention as a negative feature of previous accommodation than as a positive feature of new housing.

With regard to moves into owner-occupation, a smaller proportion of accounts mention positive environmental factors and those that do typically identify fewer factors. Some involved moves into owner-occupation from municipal, or other better-
Table 1: Positive features of suburban housing identified in 170 life-history accounts of working-class people who moved to suburban estates during the inter-war period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of house move descriptions mentioning any positive feature, which included positive mention of:</th>
<th>Municipal tenants</th>
<th>Owner-occupiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom/fitted bath in kitchen</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running/hot water</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightness</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural surroundings</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Number identifying any positive features               | 96                | 18              |
| Total number of relevant house moves                  | 116               | 58              |

Source: UK Data Archive, AHDS History, SN 5085, P. Scott, 'Analysis of 170 Biographical Accounts of Working-Class People who Moved into Owner-occupation or Suburban Council Housing during the Inter-war Period' (2005).

Notes: The 170 accounts include 174 relevant house moves.

quality, accommodation – which already had at least some of these attributes, while a larger proportion of accounts, compared to the municipal sample, did not discuss the house in any detail. Nevertheless, the presence of a bathroom still constituted a major attraction, being highlighted by almost 39 per cent of accounts that noted any positive factor.

Meanwhile the external environment of the house receives more frequent mention than its interior, for both tenures. Gardens receive positive mention in a larger proportion of accounts than any other environmental factor. This was
corroborated by a 1935 survey of the Wythenshawe estate, where 90 per cent of respondents to a question on the value of the garden stated that it was appreciated. The local area’s rural environment is also highlighted in a substantial proportion of accounts – some people placing considerable emphasis on this. Again, external environmental factors sometimes featured as the absence of a previous negative. Several people mention their previous area’s unhealthy environment, especially with regard to the needs of children - dangers including pollution, and traffic on busy urban streets. Indeed a significant number of migrants to council housing moved following medical advice regarding a child’s chronic health problems. The environmental priorities indicated in the accounts are broadly indicative of what has been termed the ‘suburban aspiration’, defined by Clapson as comprising: a wish to escape from inner-city living; a desire for a suburban-style house and garden; and ‘social tone’ - the appeal of a high-quality residential environment, both in terms of its material qualities and type of people.

A new working-class respectability

The new suburban estates became dominated by new social norms, respectability becoming defined in terms of independence from even the local community and focused on the family as ‘an intense domestic unit enclosed from the wider world.’ Domesticity proved key to this new privatised respectability – encompassing a high standard of personal and domestic hygiene, family and home-centred lifestyles even for adult males, and an increased commitment of material and psychological resources to the welfare and material advancement of children. Aspirational behaviour and social mobility (mainly for the next, rather than current, generation) became both
legitimate and laudable goals for a `new respectable working class’ that coalesced on the new estates. However, very few people saw this as `embourgeoisement’. While a substantial proportion of the life histories discuss moves to suburbia in terms of creating a better life, especially for their children, only one account makes any mention of a desire to rise from the working- to the middle-class.

As noted above, moves to the suburbs were often made under the influence of these new values. Bourdieu has highlighted the powerful social significance of housing choices; as a particularly expensive durable investment, which is permanently exposed to the public gaze, a family’s house constitutes one of its most important social statements. Yet `new’ values appear to have been strongly accentuated following housing moves. Migration removed the constraining influence of local community sanctions which policed `extravagant’ consumption behaviour; substituted the broad `life portrait’ criteria for measuring status with a much narrower material yardstick (as discussed below); and served as a major system-shock to the habitus, by removing the family’s main reference group and replacing it with what initially appeared a very isolated environment.

Evidence suggests that migration to suburbia could have a strong psychological impact on both working-class and middle-class housewives (men do not appear to have been similarly effected – as they retained their established workplace environments). For example, Elizabeth Bowen’s short story `Attractive Modern Homes’ charts the psychological decline of Mrs Watson, a middle-class housewife, following a move from the community in which she had grown up and where `everyone took them for granted and thought well of them’, to a `box-like’ cheap semi-detached house on an unfinished estate. Mrs Watson’s transformation is described as one of both descent into depression and movement from the habitus to
conscious analysis of her life. `Up to now she had been happy without knowing, like a fortunate sheep or cow always in the same field. She was a woman who did not picture herself... the move had been like stepping over a cliff... She came to ask, without words, if she did exist.' The loneliness of the new estate leads her to realise that her old life was not the only 'natural' way of doing things and the end of the story, when meeting a new neighbour provides hope of re-establishing a social life, she tells the new housewife `I've no doubt a place grows on one. Its really all habit, isn't it?'

This fictional account is corroborated by contemporary medical evidence. In a 1938 *Lancet* article, Stephen Taylor coined the term 'suburban neurosis' to describe the anxiety states – often with hysterical features and reactive depression – which he found among his patients on new estates. These he attributed to boredom (arising from lack of friends and not enough to do or occupy the mind); together with anxieties linked to financial pressures arising from the new house and a 'false' set of values (failure to achieve unrealistic expectations of suburban married life culminating in a general disillusionment with life). A series of studies conducted in the mid-late 1950s found a recurrence of these conditions on post-war LCC out-county estates. Several contemporary surveys of municipal estates mention people who could not psychologically adapt to their new environment and who often returned to their former communities (this being easier in council, than in owner-occupied, estates, owing to the smaller financial commitment to the new house). Several Life Histories Database accounts mention women suffering from a combination of depression and anxiety, usually as a transient condition during the early period after migration (though return-migration may have reduced the reported incidence of
people with longer-term symptoms). As a migrant from the Old Kent Road to an owner-occupied estate in Sidcup recalled:

when the husband went to work say seven o'clock in the morning... they probably wouldn't get back till nearly seven o'clock at night, and the women used to get lonely, fed up... there wasn't much round here then, like... churches and things like that... no clubs or anything... and they used to get bored stiff, and often they used to kind of break down, you know, my wife found it very hard at first, but... then she got used to it by getting mixed up with the church…

While significant psychological symptoms appear to have been limited to a small minority of migrants, they nevertheless illustrate the disorientating impact of the new residential environment and the shock it imposed to taken for granted social norms.

Meanwhile the heavy financial and psychological costs of, and commitment to, the new suburban house focused the family’s attention on their material domestic environment. As Bourdieu noted, such housing:

tends gradually to become the exclusive focus of all investments: those involved in the – material and psychological – work required to come to terms with it in its reality, which is often so far removed from anticipations; those to which it gives rise through the sense of ownership, which determines a kind of domestication of aspirations and plans (these now end at one’s own doorstep and are confined to the private sphere …);
those it inspires by imposing a new system of needs… in the eyes of those
who seek to live up to the (socially formed) idea they have of it.\textsuperscript{lv}

Many accounts emphasise the emotional commitment (particularly of the
housewife) to the new suburban house. For example the wife of a railway labourer,
who moved to a small (non-parlour) council house on Liverpool’s Fazakerley estate in
1930 recalled, ‘I loved it. Everything was new. We had a bath to ourselves, hot water
and lots of space. I can remember the range in the kitchen. All the neighbours used to
polish it to see who could get the steel edges the cleanest. We were very proud of our
new houses.’\textsuperscript{lvvi}

Suburban estates were often initially communities of strangers. Lacking the
long acquaintance necessary for a ‘life portrait’ assessment of status - including one’s
family background, occupation, and community and leisure activities – the new
communities adopted a much narrower yardstick; a process also observed by Young
and Willmott in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{lvii} A central feature involved appropriate material values,
construed in terms of minimum standards for all observed markers of consumption.
As Ruth Durant’s survey of the LCC’s Watling Estate noted, ‘The new house needs
new linoleum, new curtains and even new furniture, and all is bought on hire
purchase. In the old “mean street,” people were not tempted by the example of their
neighbours to acquire fresh impedimentia. At Watling… the wireless next door
becomes an obligation to bring home a wireless.’\textsuperscript{lviii} Similarly, a 1939 survey of a
Birmingham municipal estate found high levels of hire purchase [HP] debts, many
directly linked to the house move - as migrants’ old furniture looked:
very shabby and dirty when it is set out in a new light room. One of the first outlays of the rehoused family is often on curtains with which to hide their dilapidated possessions from the inquiring eyes of the neighbours. A greater number of rooms may call for more furniture, and many people feel that new beds are a necessity. The fear of being accused of bringing vermin into new houses seems to be sufficiently strong to make some housewives undertake instalments on new beds for the whole family.  

While owning and displaying prestige goods was a recognised feature of status competition in traditional working-class communities, it generally focused around one, or few, particularly prized possessions.  

For example, a man who grew up in a mice-infested Coventry court house recalled how his mother bought a 57 guinea piano, which took up almost half their ground-floor room, on HP - paying almost half as much on the instalments as her family paid in rent.  

In contrast the new suburban working-class respectability generally involved adopting, or at least projecting to the outside world, a broader, coordinated material lifestyle that encompassed all aspects of observed consumption - creating ‘consumption communities’, tied together not by background, workplace, or religion, but by shared material values.  

Aspects of material life that received greatest attention were those most visible to neighbours. For example, gardens constituted an intense arena of neighbourly competition, formalised by the annual prizes awarded by local councils and, in some cases, private developers. Within the house, those areas visible from the front door step or accessible to visitors – the hall and the parlour/front room - received most attention. One couple interviewed by Lesley Whitworth felt obliged to furnish the hall
before any of the rooms so that it appeared respectable when the front door was
opened.\textsuperscript{lxiii}

The other principal feature of the new suburban respectability involved a new,
restrained, pattern of neighbourliness, summed up by the ubiquitous phrase ‘keeping
ourselves to ourselves’ - again generally identified as a post-war phenomenon in the
affluent worker studies.\textsuperscript{lxiv} There is some debate regarding the real extent of close
neighbourliness even in traditional working-class communities.\textsuperscript{lxv} Yet the great
majority of Life Histories Database accounts identify a marked change in neighbourly
relations on moving to suburbia. This was partly the result of suburban migrants
having a preference for greater privacy and private space – their moves having often
been at least partially motivated by a wish to get away from intrusive neighbours.
Audrey Kaye’s study of Wythenshawe concluded that people typically moved, ‘not to
found a community but for three bedrooms, a bath, and a smoke-free environment.
Neighbours were less important than private space.’\textsuperscript{lxvi} As a migrant to a Liverpool
council estate explained: ‘I liked to keep myself to myself…When I had my little girl
I got to know people a little better, but I was never what you would call a mixer.
People did keep to themselves around here, it was never the sort of place where
people were in and out of each other's houses.’\textsuperscript{lxvii}

A collective preference for privacy was, in part, motivated by fears of one-
sided borrowing; intrusive neighbours who might spread gossip; and the possibility
that frequent contact might lead to conflict. The taboo against mutual visiting was also
driven by fears that the entry of neighbours into the home would reveal the family’s
true standard of living. Durant noted that some Watling residents were even deterred
from socialising outside the home by the embarrassing consciousness that their outfits
were shabby, though many turned to ‘Provident Checks’, by which clothes could be bought on credit.\textsuperscript{lxviii}

Neighbourliness became regarded as an activity which occurred outside the home - in gardens, whilst cleaning front paths and sills, at local shops, and while taking the children to school.\textsuperscript{lxix} Durant emphasised the rarity of mutual house visiting: ‘A Watling woman who had lived four years in the same cottage and is on very good terms with her neighbour has, nevertheless, not been in her house. Their boys play together, but each in his own garden, the fence separating them.’\textsuperscript{lxxx}

Similarly, Alice Pond, who moved from Hackney to an owner-occupied estate in Chingford in 1935 recalled, ‘You talked to [neighbours]… over the fence, at the shops, and if you had children. But no, it wasn't like Hackney with people dropping in.’\textsuperscript{lxxi}

Yet mutual support was still valued, and expected, during times of crisis such as illness, bereavement or childbirth. For example, a woman who had set up home on an owner-occupied Coventry estate recalled that: ‘if Mrs Sweet was ill I would go and see if there was anything I could do. And when Arthur was ill she’d come and see if I wanted anything, you know. But we never… butted in on private lives.’\textsuperscript{lxxii} Similarly, a man who had migrated to the LCC’s Castleneau Estate as a child recalled, ‘it wasn't a kind of East End spirit with you living in each other's place. [But] if you wanted any help you knew that you could always get it. When my brother died I went down to a friend's down the road and she gave me meals and looked after me… while they were going to hospital.’\textsuperscript{lxxiii}

Restrained behaviour extended beyond distant neighbourliness, encompassing a broader behavioural code, which also militated against plainness in speech, strong accents, the free use of tabooed words, children who appeared poorly cared-for, over-
readiness with a cuff for the children, a forthright approach in personal relations, and poor standards of housework (observed, for example, via the wash line). Having a large family was also taken as a sign of roughness, as it indicated a lack of the restraint necessary to achieve the suburban dream of a well-cared for house and well-cared for, well-resourced, children. Achieving this new model of respectability led to substantial changes in working-class household spending priorities, patterns, and planning, as discussed below.

The economic costs of suburban respectability

The costs of moving to suburbia and meeting the social requirements of the new estates proved onerous for many families. Suburban houses were generally substantially more expensive than the ‘rooms’ or small houses from which their occupants had migrated. Some 36 Life Histories Database accounts for migrants to municipal estates, that include both their new and previous rent, indicate that moving to a council house involved an average rise in rental costs of 21.2 per cent. Analysis by Madeline McKenna of several thousand Liverpool council tenants’ house cards, showing the rent paid in the new and previous accommodation, indicated that tenants moving to houses built under the 1919 Housing Act experienced average rises of 26.2 per cent. This fell to 19.7 per cent for houses built under the 1923 and 1924 Acts and only 7.5 per cent for the small number built under the 1925 Act. Yet, it increased to 44.1 per cent for houses built under the 1930 and 1935 Acts – which were primarily aimed at slum clearance tenants. The Life Histories Database contains insufficient data to estimate weekly accommodation costs before and after moves to owner-occupation (many owner-occupiers purchased their house on, or shortly after,
marriage and had no previous accommodation other than with parents). However, as Table 2 shows working-class owner-occupiers devoted a substantially higher proportion of income to accommodation than renters.

In addition to increased rent/mortgage costs, suburban living also entailed extra travelling expenses (for both work and other purposes), together with higher local food costs. A 1939 survey of Birmingham’s Kingstanding estate found that people generally paid 2s 6d – 3s per week on commuting to work; Andrzej Olechnowicz found that the median figure for LCC cottage estates was in the region of 3 - 6s in 1937, while McKenna estimated that residents of Liverpool council estates during the 1920s had to pay about 2s per week extra on transport to work and a total of about 6s for all additional transport and food costs. Meanwhile social pressures to engage in material display required families to maintain or increase expenditure on furnishings and clothing, often using expensive HP or ‘clothing club’ credit. Young’s survey of the LCC’s Becontree estate estimated that families spent between 3s and 5s on furniture, usually on HP, while Jevons and Madge’s Bristol municipal estates’ survey put the figure at 2s 6d.

These new costs were met, primarily, by squeezing budgets for items of daily expenditure – food, heating, lighting, alcohol, etc. Surviving individual returns for the April 1938 Ministry of Labour working class household expenditure survey allow comparison of budgets for families buying houses on mortgages (mainly in the suburbs) and those renting accommodation, at various levels of household expenditure. The results, presented in Table 2, indicate that owner-occupiers devoted a substantially higher proportion of expenditure to accommodation than other households with similar incomes, substantially less on food, fuel, and lighting, and slightly more on ‘other’ items (furniture, household equipment, clothing, etc.).
Table 2: The Distribution of Household Expenditure and Average Family Size for House-buying and Renting Households, at Various Levels of Total Expenditure, April 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly expenditure</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>% distribution of expenditure:</th>
<th>Mean values of:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing¹</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Fuel &amp; light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buyers</strong>³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 77s</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-109s</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109s or over</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Buyers</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Renters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 77s</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-109s</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109s or over</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All renters</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  

¹ Includes mortgage instalments plus any ground rent for purchasers (or rent for renters), plus rates, minus any rent received for rooms sub-let.  
³ Households buying their homes on mortgage (rather than owning them outright).  

Similar shifts in expenditure patterns following moves to new suburban estates are recorded in the Life Histories Database accounts. A significant number mention reducing food budgets to make ends meet, or other behaviour aimed at reducing daily costs, such as going to bed early to cut down on fuel and lighting expenses. For example, a woman who had moved to a Hull council estate recalled that many ex-slum dwellers found themselves, 'having to pay excessive rents, for which they had not budgeted... The new Preston Road Housing Estate was duly christened “Corned Beef Island”, that being in many cases, the menu throughout the week, the said commodity costing only 2.5d per quarter pound.\textsuperscript{1xxx}

One particularly important long-term means of controlling expenditure was family limitation. As one council tenant explained: 'Only having the two children helped of course. After the second one, I said, no more, that's it, I wasn't going to have a brood of children like my mother'.\textsuperscript{1xxxi} Many accounts mentioned estates of 0, 1, or 2, children, small families becoming both a means of sustaining a suburban lifestyle and an important marker of respectability. This was particularly evident on owner-occupied estates; as Table 2 shows, working-class house-buyers had fewer children than renters at each income band other than the lowest (which included a large number of former sitting-tenants of traditional inner-urban housing who had been persuaded to purchase their houses on mortgage by their former landlords).\textsuperscript{1xxxi} Oral history evidence suggests that many families on council estates also engaged in family planning to cope with the extra costs and material expectations of their new environment. However, the aggregate impact of lower post-migration fertility on family size was muted by long waiting lists for council housing and allocation policies favouring children with families (and, during the 1930s, large families).
Suburban migrants mainly relied on abstinence, coitus-interruptus, or using the safe period of the menstrual cycle to control family size. Like economising on food, fuel and light, this involved sacrificing immediate gratification for the goal of a respectable suburban lifestyle and, in the longer-term, a better life for their children. Database accounts strongly emphasise the aspirational nature of new suburban estates, short-term material sacrifices being weighted against socio-economic advancement, particularly for the next generation. For example, the wife of a heavy vehicle driver, who moved to Wythenshawe in 1934, recalled the importance she and her husband placed on the children’s education: `Every night, after their tea, they had to get on with their homework... Kids would be knocking on the door to ask if the boys were going out to play. 'No he's doing his homework' I would answer. When they got on the neighbours realised that I had been right.'

This change in consumption time-preferences closely matches the transition to an aspirational, future-orientated mind-set described in the post-war studies. Bourdieu found a similar pattern among French clerical workers during the early 1970s - who had both lower food expenditure than skilled manual workers and a substantially lower average number of children. He explained this in terms of different, `objective futures… The hedonism which seizes day by day the rare satisfactions (“good times”) of the immediate present is the only philosophy conceivable to those who ”have no future” and, in any case, little to expect from the future.' Paul Johnson’s has developed a similar model of `procedural rationality’ governing working-class spending and saving, people conceiving their consumption behaviour in terms of either a present-orientated or future-orientated time frame – according to their perceived economic environment. Thus, as Ross Mckibbin noted, traditional differences between working and middle class expenditure patterns reflected not only
higher middle-class incomes, but a different ‘order of urgency’. The emergence of working-class suburbia had initiated to a transition towards the future-orientated and status-orientated consumption patterns traditionally associated with the middle class; though without (as Goldthorpe and his collaborators similarly noted for the post-war ‘new working class’) constituting a trend towards wholesale ‘embourgeoisement’.

**Conclusion**

New suburban communities offered a substantial section of the urban working-class the freedom to engage in a new, materially- and domestically-orientated model of working-class respectability, participation in which had hitherto been suppressed by low pre-1914 working-class incomes and the policing role of traditional inner-urban social norms. Migration to the suburbs removed families from their main reference group and placed them in a new environment where traditional social values no longer held sway. On these new estates there was a rapid transition towards the new working-class social traits identified by Young, Willmott, and Zweig for the post-war period, despite the fact that the migrants could not be considered ‘affluent’ according to any meaningful post-1950 definition. The emergence of the ‘new working-class’ is thus shown to be a longer-term process than accounts focusing on the second half of the twentieth century acknowledge and was not *initiated* by the marked post-1945 improvement in the levels, stability, and security of working-class incomes. These findings also highlight the key importance of the new post-1918 working-class suburban house in initiating the transition towards a domestically and future-orientated, aspirational working-class, which constituted one of the most important social changes in twentieth century Britain.
Appendix: The Life Histories Database

This database summarises 170 biographical accounts of working-class people who moved from inner-urban areas to council estates or into owner-occupation, covering a total of 174 relevant house moves. Sources included published and unpublished autobiographies, and contemporary interviews, though most accounts are from oral history archives. In assembling the database, ‘working-class’ was interpreted narrowly, with occupations such as clerks generally being excluded. In other respects the sample composition was largely determined by the availability of sources. For example, municipal tenants account for 116 of the 174 relevant house moves, partly due to the fact that oral history studies of new estates have generally focused on large municipal estates rather than their smaller, owner-occupied, counterparts.

In terms of broad regional composition, the sample achieved significant representation of the north (covering 74 moves), midlands (26) and south (74). Yet at the level of Standard Economic Regions the sample is heavily dominated by the South East, North West, and West Midlands. This reflects both the more limited growth of working-class suburbia in regions dominated by depressed heavy staple industries or agriculture and the uneven regional coverage of oral history archives. Council tenants represent a very broad range of urban working-class occupations (though workers in very low-wage or insecure jobs are under-represented). Owner-occupiers were more concentrated among workers with relatively high earnings and/or secure jobs: the sample being heavily dominated by vehicle and engineering industry
workers, public transport and utility employees, non-engineering factory workers, and workers in building-related trades.xciv

i This research was funded by ESRC grant no. RES-000-22-0152. Thanks are due to Ismael Al-Amoudi, Sue Bruley, Fatima Cardias Williams, Alan Crisp, Judy Giles, Len Holden, Steve Humphries, Audrey Kaye, Chris Pond, George Speight, and Lesley Whitworth for their help with my research. I would also like to thank the staff of the Age Concern Reminiscence Centre, Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre, Borthwick Institute, Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Coventry Record Office, East Midlands Oral History Archive, Essex Record Office, Gunnersbury Park Museum, Imperial War Museum, Mass Observation Archive, Museum of London Archive, National Archives, National Sound Archive, North Kingston Centre, Nottingham Local Studies Library, Ruskin College Library Archives, Southampton Oral History Project, Tameside Local Studies Library, University of Bangor Archives, and York City Archives. Any errors are my own.


iii See Appendix.

iv Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship, op. cit.*; Willmott and Young, *Family and Class op. cit.*


vi Zweig, *op. cit.* 205.


viii J. H. Goldthorpe and D. Lockwood, ’Affluence and the British class structure’, *Sociological Review*, 11, 2 (1963); Goldthorpe et. al., *op.cit.*

ix There is an extensive literature in this area. For a summary of the early literature, see Goldthorpe et. al., *op. cit.* 12-14. A good review of more recent studies is provided in A. Taylor, *Working Class Credit and Community since 1918* (Houndmills, 2002), 13-45.


National Archives (subsequently NA), LAB17/7, ’Weekly expenditure of working-class households in the United Kingdom in 1937-38,’ unpublished report, Ministry of Labour, July 1949. This is probably an over-estimate, as it excludes families experiencing long-term unemployment. It also includes some families with heads of household in middle-class occupations but earning less than £250 a year. However, given that annual earnings below £250 were generally restricted to young white collar workers, men in this group generally married relatively late, and owner-occupation almost always occurred on or after marriage, their inclusion is unlikely to substantially distort the results. For an estimate of the rate of owner-occupation in around 1931, see G. Speight, ’Who Bought the Inter-war Semi? The Socio-economic Characteristics of New-house Buyers in the 1930s’, Univ. of Oxford Discussion Paper in Economic and Social History No. 38 (2000), 14.

NA, LAB 17/7, ’Weekly expenditure of working-class households in the United Kingdom in 1937-38,’ unpublished report, Ministry of Labour, July 1949. The average number of wage/salary earners per family was 1.75.

M. Bowley, Housing and the State 1919-1944 (London, 1945), 266.

Of 38 accounts in the Life Histories Database, involving moves to owner-occupation during the 1930s (and for which sufficient information was available) no fewer than 34 were new developments. Almost all of these were located in the suburbs.
Analysis of oral history and other autobiographical accounts indicates a significant rate of tenancy by working-class families on new private suburban estates.

This Committee was established by the Local Government Board, which was also responsible for implementing its recommendations.


Burnett, *op. cit.*, 225.

Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre, (subsequently Bexley Local Studies), New Ideal Homesteads brochure, *Super 1933 Homes. Barnehurst Estate, Barnehurst, Kent* (1933).


xxxvi P. Scott, 2008, ‘Marketing mass home ownership and the creation of the modern working class consumer in interwar Britain,’ Business History (forthcoming).

xxxvii Bourdieu, Distinction, *op. cit.*, 243.

xxxviii Interview with Mrs Grindrod, conducted by Mike Harrison, c. 1975-76. Copy available at Thameside Local Studies Library.


xl Coventry Local Studies Library, unpublished Coventry Sociological Survey report on the Brandon Road Residential Unit, 1952.

xli Transcript of interview with Mr Pennington, conducted by Mike Harrison, c. 1975-76. Copy available at Tameside Local Studies Library.

xlii J. Walsh, Not Like This (London, 1953), 57. Emphasis in original.


ibid, 528.


For a summary of these post-war studies see, ‘Suburban neurosis up to date’, (leading article) *The Lancet* (18 January 1958), 146-7.


McKenna, *op. cit.*, Appendix 13, interview No. 30.

Young and Willmott, *Family and Kinship, op. cit.*, 162.

Durant, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

M. S. Soutar, E. H. Wilkins, and P. Sargant Florence, *Nutrition and Size of Family. Report on a New Housing Estate – 1939* (London, 1942), 42. Similarly Olechnowicz, *op. cit.*, 52, found that migrants to the Becontree Estate had high standards of material display - unwanted second-hand furniture, collected by charities, being rarely accepted by any but the poorest tenants.


Coventry Record Office, Acc. 1662/3/130, Coventry Oral History Project interview with Mr Batchelor.


Whitworth, *op. cit.*, 156.


Kaye, *op. cit.*, 461.

McKenna, *op. cit.*, Appendix 13, interview No. 1.
lxviii Durant, *op. cit.*, 89.

lxix Giles, *op. cit.*, 319.

lxx Durant, *op. cit.*, 88.

lxxi Notes of interview with Alice Pond, June 1985. Supplied to the author by Chris Pond.

lxxii Coventry Record Office, 1647/1/72, interview for project on the social history of car workers, deposited by Paul Thompson in 1986. Female, born 1908.

lxxiii Age Concern Reminiscence Centre, interview conducted for 'Just Like the Country' project, c. 1987, with members of the Breeze family.

lxxiv See Scott, Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*

lxxv McKenna, *op. cit.*, Table 5.

lxxvi Soutar, Wilkins, and Florence, *op. cit.*, 51; McKenna, *op. cit.*, 244.


lxxix For a more detailed analysis of this data, see Scott, 'Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*


lxxxi McKenna, *op. cit.*, Appendix 13, interview No. 3.

lxxxi Scott, 'Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*, provides a much more detailed analysis of the links between working-class owner-occupation and family limitation.

lxxiii Mass Observation, *Britain and her Birth-rate* (London, 1945), 59; Scott, 'Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*

lxxiv For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Scott, 'Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*

lxxv Interview with Mr and Mrs Connor, conducted by Audrey Kaye in 1989 for her doctoral thesis, *op. cit.*; Scott, 'Did owner-occupation…’, *op. cit.*, discusses similar motivations among working-class owner-occupiers.

lxxvi Bourdieu, *Distinction, op.cit.*, 180-3. However, as noted in the Appendix, clerical and other white-collar workers were largely excluded from the Life Histories Database sample.


lxxxix Goldthorpe and Lockwood, op.cit.; Goldthorpe et. al., op.cit.

xc For further details see UK Data Archive, AHDS History, SN 5085, P. Scott, `Analysis of 170 Biographical Accounts of Working-Class People who Moved into Owner-occupation or Suburban Council Housing during the Inter-war Period’ (2005).

xci 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 to both local authority and owner-occupied housing, and one interviewee who described house moves both with her parents and following her marriage.

xcii Two low-paid ‘white collar’ workers were included, a clerk and the manager of a small shop. The shop manager earned less than £3 a week at around the time of his 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, as a dressmaker, and from money he earned at weekends in a jazz band). They thus earned less than many factory workers and lived on estates where such workers were also resident.

xciii Three regions - Scotland, Wales, and the Northern Region - were not represented in the sample. These had relatively low levels of working-class suburbanisation.

xciv For a more detailed discussion of the occupational composition of this group see Scott, ‘Did owner-occupation...’, op.cit., Appendix.