PROJECT WORKING TITLE:

ENGLISH CULTURAL BARRIERS
TO DANISH/MODERN FURNITURE

PHASE 1 REPORT:

THE PLACE OF
MODERN FURNITURE
IN A PROVINCIAL
ENGLISH COUNTY

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Introduction

The background to this project on English furnishing culture is the history of Danish furniture exports to Britain: Important in the '50s and '60s, hanging on in the '70s and '80s, declining strongly in the '90s. Many Danish furniture manufacturers have more or less given up on England, finding it easier to work the strong German market, accessible by road.

The choice may well be sound, especially when Germany comes through its present problems, and in any case I will not presume to be able to produce the answers the furniture exporters need to make the English market work for them once again. Nevertheless, one purpose of this study is to attempt, through a cultural/semiotic approach, to analyse the potential and the problems for Danish furniture in Britain - or rather, for modern furniture of the kind produced not only by Danes, but also by Swedes and Italians and indeed by a few British manufacturers; unadorned, unfussy, functional furniture, sometimes emanating from high design and sometimes from copies or craftsmanship, sometimes well made and sometimes less so, sometimes of high esthetic appeal and sometimes "strictly functional". Modern furniture in this context, then, is the whole range of furniture belonging to this century's simple esthetic rather than previous centuries' adorned and ornamented esthetics; the func-tionalist esthetic with roots in previous times which developed into a "movement" by architects and reformers in Europe and the beginning of this century.

The assumption behind this project is that this is the kind of furniture that Danes like, produce, sell and will go on producing and selling in the foreseeable future. About four years ago, a market report from the Danish Embassy in London concluded that if Danish furniture manufacturers wanted to expand their exports to Britain, they would have to adapt their products to the more traditional British tastes.[1] It seems unlikely, however, either that they would do so, or that they would have success in doing so. Danish furniture manufacturers are nearly all small ventures, and the style they produce would normally have to be the one they sell in every market; most of

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1   *Det britiske marked for boligmøbler*, Udenrigsministeriet, Danmark 1993. A new
     report has appeared in 1996.

them would not have the capacity to develop a range just for the British market. Nor, even if they were to do so, is there any reason to think that the British themselves would not be better at it. I believe that Danish furniture production will develop in a direction which the Danes themselves like, can handle in their production apparatus and can sell at home and in their most important markets. At the moment it is a question whether Britain is going to remain one.

The research project

The overall objective of the project is to explore the extent and nature of English cultural resistance to modern furniture, and there are two distinct phases: Phase 1, which aims to take a broad look at the English furnishing consumer, sort the firmly traditional from the possibly modern-minded and identify "furnishing profiles" of use in further work - and phase 2, which aims to validate and detail results from phase 1 in a closer semiotic analysis. Phase one (here reported) is a survey, based on a questionnaire sent to randomly chosen households in a demographically average English county (Leicestershire); and phase 2 is based on interviews and photographs in 10 homes, selected on the basis of the questionnaire analysis.[2]

Of course the "average" county is as much a fiction as the average consumer, and no average in terms of lifestyle can be pinpointed between the Scottish Highlands and London. By using Leicestershire as the empirical base, the survey attempts to capture one expression of English provincial furnishing, well aware that the lifestyle of e.g. young London professionals will not be represented in the material, nor the impoverished conservatism of some outlying districts. To the extent, however, that Leicestershire can be accepted as an expression of provincial England which is not extreme in any way, it becomes more than a case study, although less than representative of the country as a whole. Ultimately however, as with case-studies and other qualitative analysis, the reader himself is the judge of the limits of the study's applicability outside the county where the data was collected.

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2   In fact a phase 3 is developing as well: a round of interviews with 10 additional English and 10 Danes, to pursue and extend a particular line of questioning from the home visits.

The main purpose of the questionnaire phase is, then, to place "Modern" furniture as a potential for Danish exports in a scheme of cultural analysis which is wider than the traditional market analysis; to identify some British cultural parameters - as they appear in a not untypical English county - which are of importance for the acceptance of modern/Danish furniture.

The survey does **not** attempt to give a complete picture of English furnishing styles; it will not go into the differences between Edwardian vs Queen Anne, "Old charm" vs plain Country Style, nor indeed genuine antiques vs reproduction. Rather, it is an attempt to locate some major fault-lines in the geology of British provincial esthetics of the home, from a cultural/sociological rather than a designer's viewpoint - and always with a view to the speciel fault-lines running between the distinctive English tradition and the modern styles of more general European origins.

The theoretical and empirical interest of this study, then, is focused on the dividing lines between traditional English and modern furnishing styles; on where these dividing lines run in an ordinary provincial domestic setting, and what the choices may mean to each individual consumer.

The methods; quantitative and qualitative

At a superficial level, phase 1 data is derived from questionnaires and thus quantitative, while phase 2 data will come in the form of interviews and photographs and is clearly qualitative. At a closer look, however, it will be seen that also phase 1 owes much to the hermeneutic tradition, and in effect mixes quantitative and qualitative data types and analysis methods.

The questionnaire (see appendix) was sent out to 600 randomly chosen households in Leicestershire - and 78, or 13% were received back.[3] According to seasoned Danish

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3   Names were picked from the Leicestershire telephone directory, on the simple principle of the first private name 15 centimeters down every 7th column. In cases where that meant skipping large chunks of institutional addresses, the 8th column was substituted in order to avoid a concentration of very unusual letter combinations, which might have produced an overrepresentation of immigrant households. A prepaid International Business Reply envelope was enclosed. Interestingly, I tried different tones of covering letter, and even offering a not insubstantial prize. Nothing made any difference to the response percentage.

survey researchers, that is quite poor. According to their English colleagues it is good. According to Americans, it is brilliant. No matter which valuation is put on the percentage, however, it imposes some limitations on the statistical analysis. Percentages, correlations and tests of significance can be conceptually useful, even if the number of cases is small, but only if used in broad brushstrokes and in combinations which convince by adequacy of meaning, and only if one is clear about the extent to which one is saying something about a broader population.

Market researchers conclude confidently for an entire country on the basis of 1000-2000 respondents. That does not mean that 100 is enough for the same analysis of a twentieth of the area or population, however. Quite simply, individual answers are assigned too much weight in very small samples, which doesn't matter too much if they are "normal" answers, but matters greatly if you get more than your average share of eccentrics.

Two factors allow me to proceed on the basis of my 78 cases. The first is the fact that I limit myself to simple questions and procedures and avoid splitting the data into subsets where individual cases come to carry the burden of proof. The second is that my 78 households, as I shall show in a moment, are an excellent mirror of Leicestershire on almost all the important demographic variables measured.

At the end of this report on the questionnaire survey I am not claiming to have said anything definitive and irrefutable about furnishing culture in Leicestershire, let alone larger entities. But I am claiming to have made a very good and empirically founded case for a number of working hypotheses.

The respondents

As stated earlier, Leicestershire was selected as the empirical base for the survey because it is close to the national average from an economic and demographic point of view. Consequently, in the following breakdowns, figures for the region may also be taken to be broadly valid for the country as a whole. I shall proceed to show that

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No reminder was sent out.

the 78 households in the survey sample are very close to the regional (and national) distribution on a number of important measures.

Household composition

Although the home is often thought to be the woman's domain, 33 (42%) of the respondents are men. There are 27 (35%) couples with children (26% in the region)[4], 35 (45%) couples without children (same as the region), 8 (10%) one-person households (27% in the region), and 5 households with other combinations, including some elderly couples with grown children living at home. Although this is a good mix, the sample contained rather more couples with children and fewer one-person households than the region; maybe because singles traditionally haven't conformed to society's "ideal home" picture and think they won't be of interest to a survey. Or maybe, indeed, because they are less interested in homemaking. But however many people it contains, my unit is the household.

Age distribution

The age distribution of all the people living in the sampled households corresponds quite closely to the region's age distribution. (Fig.1) As far as the respondents are concerned, the people who actually filled in the questionnaire, fig. 2[5] shows that the majority of the respondents belong to agegroups where people are typically in the process of establishing or improving their home.

Household class

A number of avenues have been used to establish the respondents' social class. First, gross household income (fig.3) shows a good spread, and appears to be a fairly typical distribution[6] - but 23 respondents did not wish to answer the question on income.

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4   *Regional Trends 30*, HMSO 1995, tables 3.18 and 3.19

5   The black line in the box-plot is the median (equal number of cases on both sides), 50% of all cases fall within the box, and the last 50% (in this case) within the frame.

6   The top three values are "outliers", i.e. values so untypical that the program doesn't count them as part of the general picture. "0" indicates values more than 1.5 box-lengths from the 25th or 75th percentile; "*" indicates values more than 3 box-lengths from the 25th or 75th percentile. See also box-plot interpretation in note 7. There were no outliers in fig.2.

Fig. 1: Household age distribution

AGE	HOUSEHOLD SAMPLE		REGION
	CASES	VALID %[7]	PER CENT
0-4 years	10	6	7
5-15 years	22	12	14
16-44 years	84	47	41
F45-59/M45-64[8]	43	24	20
F60-79/M65-79	16	9	15
80 years +	4	2	4
Sum	179	100	101

Source: *Regional Trends 30*, HMSO 1995, table 3.3

Fig. 2: Respondent's age

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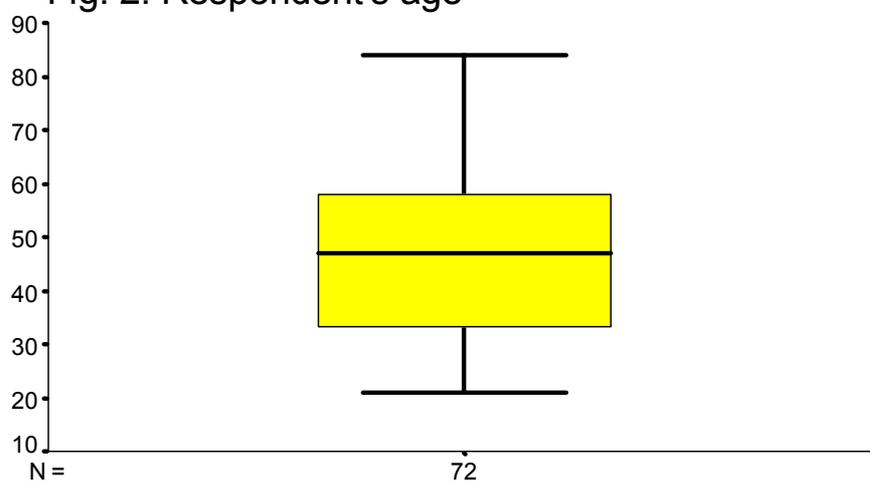
7   Age is unknown for at least 24 people known to live in the respondent households.

8   Females and males have two different age-intervals, corresponding to the difference in state pensionable age, which for women until recently has been 60 and for men 65.

Fig. 3: Pre-tax annual household income
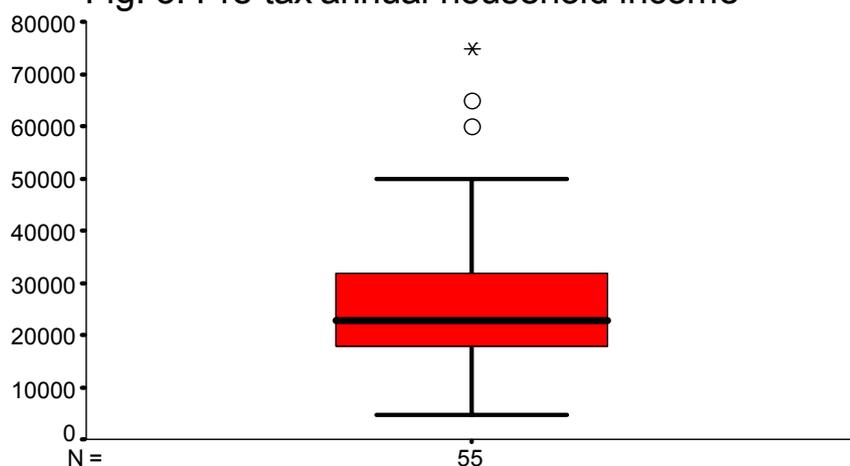
Second, respondents were asked which class values they tended to identify with - and all but 4 felt able to answer. Third, the occupations of the household's adults was important information; and finally I placed each household "manually", weighing all three factors in applying JICNAR's code, with occupation as the central variable, supported by the other two in cases of doubt.[9]

Fig. 4 shows the resulting class distribution. By comparison, the regional figures, slightly "bottom-heavy" compared to national figures, are: A's 4%, B's 28%, C1's 21%, C2's 23% and D's 22%.[10] In other words, the sample has a very modest overweight of the higher social classes, but comes remarkably close to the regional and national distributions.

Fig. 4: Household class
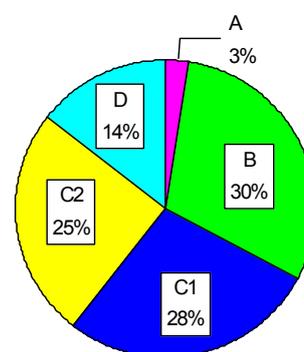
Occupation(s), income, class values:
Combined assessment

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9   JICNARS stands for Joint Industry Committee for National Readership Surveys, and they issue detailed guides on how to apply the code, based on occupations. The code is the most commonly used in market research, and widely recognized in both media and academic discourse. The brief definitions are: A: Professional, B: Managerial and technical, C1: Skilled non-manual, C2: Skilled manual, D: Partly skilled and unskilled.

10   The last 2% are armed forces and a few other unplaceable individuals. Source: *Regional Trends 30*, HMSO 1995, table 3.13.

Location

As previously noted, Leicestershire was chosen for its demographic and socio-economic typicality, which includes the rural/urban spread.[11] Consequently it was worrying to discover that there were inordinately many replies, no less than 52%, from people who said they lived in a rural area.

There are two possibilities: that people from the country are kinder and answer questionnaires - or that people's perceptions of what is town and what is country don't correspond with those of the census. That a substantial part of the answer must be the latter was confirmed by a scrutiny of addresses, which revealed that a number of officially suburban locations had been interpreted by respondents as rural. The English dominant desire to live in the country becomes wishful thinking in suburbia's townscape.[12]

The properties

I asked a number of questions about the properties people live in. In quick succession, fig. 5 shows the predominance of the semi-detached and the detached property type, and Fig. 6 is a neat illustration of the price-levels and aspirations attached to each type of property, and also, to my mind, a convincing illustration that the class-categorisation works.

Fig. 5: Type of properties

Property type	No. of properties
Small prop./flats	3
Terraced house	12
Semi-detached	37
Detached	26

No. of properties

Cases: Valid=78, missing=0

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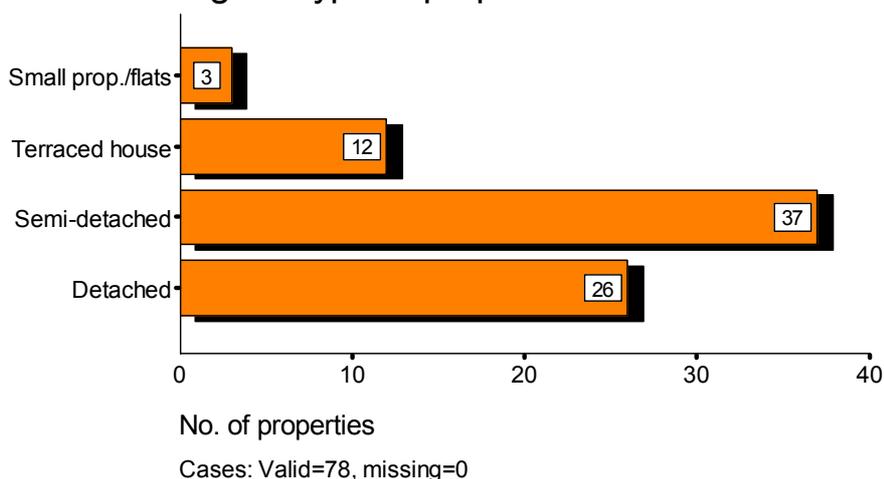
11   In the 1981 census, the latest one available, 10% of the Leicestershire population was classed as rural, against 11% nationally. *Key Statistics for Urban Areas, Great Britain.* HMSO - Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Census 1981. Table 5.

12   In fact it appears not to matter if the rural-urban distribution is typical; first, because it has no bearing on the focus of interest, the choice of furnishing styles. Cross-tabulations of rural-urban location with all variables concerning choice of style, present or future, showed no relationship with location whatsoever. And second, because evidence from Germany suggests that the old-fashioned demographic variables of sex, class and age still matter far more than location. See Iris Schopphoven, "Values and Consumption Patterns: A Comparison between Rural and Urban Consumers in Western Germany". *European Journal of Marketing* vol 25 no.12 1991, pp 20-35.

Fig. 6: Property type by class
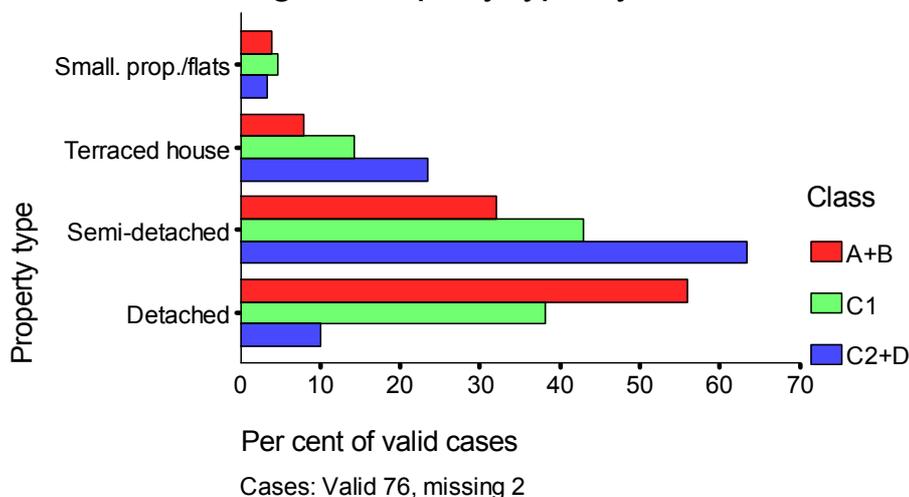
Further, it can be observed that 67 (86%) of the respondents own their own property, which is about 12% above the regional average[13]. The property values as stated by respondents are somewhat above the regional average of dwelling prices, as indicated by mortgages taken out.[14] The explanations could be a mixture of the following: 1) simple pride in one's property and optimism about market value, 2) undue influence of a few very expensive properties[15], 3) a reflection of the slightly top-heavy class-distribution, and 4) a reflection of the fact that many of the respondents are people who have made their homes a priority.

The age distribution of the properties involved corresponds closely to regional (and national) distributions.[16]

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13   As a national average, home ownership has now passed 70%, ranging from around 40% for the unskilled workers to more than 90% for the professional/managerial. Home ownership in the East Midlands (the region including Leicestershire) is a few percentage-points above the national average. (*Regional Trends 30* op.cit. table 6.2)

14   The arithmetic mean of the sample property values is £80,000, corresponding to South East property values in 1994 and much above the region's £55,000. *Regional Trends 30* op.cit., table 6.9.

15   Without the 2 most expensive properties in the sample, the mean drops to £70,000. The median is £60,000, the mode £50,000.

16   Property ages, approximate figures:

	0-24yrs	25-49yrs	50-99yrs	100+ yrs
Sample	23%	37%	25%	15%
Region	26%	32%	18%	24%

Respondents: summary

In conclusion so far, I have established that the 78 households comprising the data set are in fact a very good fit with the region (and the country) on the most important demographic and socio-economic variables, notably class, sex and age. Consequently I shall proceed, with caution, to look for broad patterns in their responses to furnishing preferences.

The furniture

The questionnaire operates with three categories of furniture: Traditional, country and modern. Although these terms are very broad there is an obvious danger that people will not connect the same thing with the same term. To get as accurate a term-usage as possible, three picture sheets illustrating the three categories were included in the questionnaire (see appendix). In the selection of the illustrations, the question of design merit or esthetics was deliberately ignored, and care taken only to get as broad a mix as possible, so that every respondent would have something to relate to. In other words, it doesn't matter if the respondents agreed with my sorting of pictures into traditional, country and modern, as long as they could "find themselves" in at least one of the examples.

The first question on style choices was: "Please look at the 3 picture sheets and tick the style and picture codes that <u>best</u> fit your **living/dining room** furnishing style. If your style is a mixture you may tick as many pictures as necessary."

Country	23%	31%	19%	27%

Source: *Regional Trends 30*, Op.cit. table 6.3

Traditional style

Traditional furniture can be elaborate or simple, antique or reproduction. The upholstered pieces are often massive, the wooden furniture mostly held within a known and loved rather elegant register. "English furniture", especially the 18th century classics, was also held in great esteem in Denmark a generation ago.

From the picture sheet's attempt to capture this wide range, the least chosen picture is the Chesterfield set (T2), but in fact all the pictures get taken up by the respondents, most overwhelmingly the heavy upholstered sofa (T1). (See fig. 7)

Fig. 7: Traditional picture choices

T – 7
T1 – 34
T2 – 4
T3 – 25
T4 – 9
T5 – 19
T6 – 13

Count

Multiple choices allowed
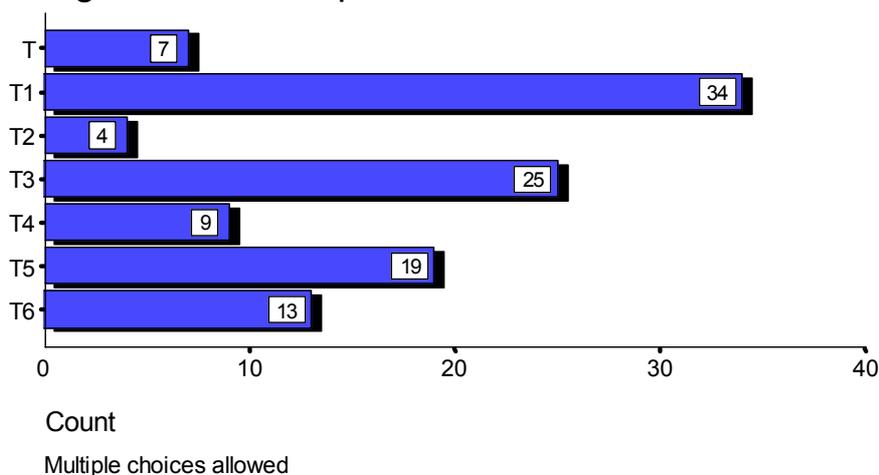
Country style

A special variant of traditional British furnishing is "Country style", whose dominant features are rustic and romantic. "Country style" is not a third main category next to traditional and modern, but rather a popularly inspired variant of the same tradition, emanating from the longing of the long since urbanised British for rural idyll. In the traditional British version of country style you mostly find dark wood, but light or antique-stain pine has had a boom period.

Fig. 8: Country style picture choices

C – 1
C1 – 12
C2 – 5
C3 – 13
C4 – 2
C5 – 1
C6 – 2
C7 – 16

Count

Multiple choices allowed

In fact the most popular picture from my country style selection (see fig. 8) is the light pine dining room (C7)- which happens to be Danish. The simple pine bench (C6), also Danish, draws little response - not enough "country" about it - as do the simple wooden chair (C5) and the rattan furniture (C4). But the dark-wood rustic dining room (C3) and the Laura Ashley style furnishings (C2) both draw response.

Modern style

As "modern" I count the products of this century characterised by a simple functionalism or the creation of a new aesthetic, rather than the continuance of an older aesthetic. Much of it is strictly utilitarian, while other pieces are design-led.

Not many chose these pictures at all (fig. 9), but the two most popular were the simple, upholstered three piece suite (M2) and the rather tradition-inspired dining room (M6) - both very moderate expressions

Fig. 9: Modern style picture choices

in the possible range of modern furniture. The other examples that count for a little are the mixed rattan and upholstery sitting group (M4), and the two pictures with very standard armchairs, cloth and leather (M3 and M9).

The limits of acceptance of modernity are apparently quite narrow. The more high-tech dining room (M5) was taken by only 1 - by mistake as it turned out in a later interview - the high-tech sofa (M1) by 1, and the two bottom left armchairs (M7 and M8) by nobody. The light wooden-framed armchair (M8) is a type you will find a lot of in Danish homes, being a cheapish imitation of a Wegner chair. The sculptured

leather armchair (M9) is an example of a very expensive designer chair, Finn Juhl's "Chieftain chair", designed in the 1940s, but still in production.

Living/dining room style choices

Taken together, people's answers about how their living/dining room is presently furnished look like this (fig.10): Traditional, or traditional and country, account for the large majority of homes. Pure modern is very rare, only two households. Modern in combinations with the other two account for a further 12, making 14 homes in all which include modern furniture in their living/dining area.

That is not a lot, but in a country of 56 million people it is not insignificant either. From a Danish exporter's point of view, it means there is a market - but it is almost in the nature of a niche market, drowned out by the sea of traditional and country. The question is the size and shape of this market, whether we can say any more about when and why modern/Danish furniture is acceptable to British people.

Central vs peripheral rooms

The furnishing choices looked at so far concern the living and dining rooms, the heart of the home where guests are received and identities most clearly expressed. In a metaphor used by Alexander, Ishikawa & Silverstein,[17] the room used to entertain is the central "word" in the syntax of the home, just as the individual rooms will often have a central "word" - a fireplace, a bay-window, or a prominent piece of furniture like a grand piano or a fine sofa. The rooms where guests are received have the clearest symbolic value, say most clearly "who we are" in this house. In Goffman's terms these rooms are a front region in impression management[18], and it is natural to assume that this is also where most money is spent on furniture.[19]

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17   Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S. and Silverstein, M., *A pattern language: towns, buildings, construction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. See e.g. section 127, 129, 141, 181 a.o.

18   Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books, USA 1959.

19   Reasoning on the same lines is found (p.439) in Clare Cooper, "The House as Symbol of the Self", in Harold M. Proshansky et al (eds), *Environmental Psychology*, 2nd ed. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, London 1976, pp 435-448, as well as (p.323) in Edward O. Laumann and James S. House, "Living Room Styles and Social Attributes: The patterning of material artifacts in a modern urban community", in *Sociology and Social Research* vol 54 no. 3 1970, pp 321-342,

Fig. 10: Living/dining room furnishing style

Central vs peripheral price levels

Fig. 11 illustrates the point. 22 out of the 78 respondents said that they made no difference in the price level at which the different rooms were furnished - but they were the minority, and the majority clearly focused on the living/dining room as their priority. The master bedroom came next, and then the picture blurs a

Includes modern

14

Includes country — 38

65 — Includes traditional

Valid cases 76. Multiple choices allowed

Living/dining room furnishing style

Modern

Trad,+mod,

Count,+mod,

Trad,+count,+mod,

32 — Traditional

Trad,+count, — 22

8 — Country

Cases: Valid=76, missing=2

little. Not many have a study/library, but a number out of those who do give it top priority. "Other bedrooms" are mostly ranked medium to low in price level, as are children's rooms.

Fig. 11 also illustrates the importance of the missing answers. Every sentence, however short, has a central word - just as every dwelling, however small, has a living/dining room, and nearly every dwelling has one bedroom. Quite clearly, a number do not have two bedrooms, however, and studies are rarer still. Children's

and (p.306-307) in Irwin Altman & Mary Gauvain, "A Cross-Cultural and Dialectic Analysis of Homes", ch.11 in Lynn S. Liben et al, *Spatial Representation and Behavior Across the Life Span; Theory and Application*, Academic Press, London 1981.

rooms are less significant in this connection as they are, after all, a temporary requirement in most families.

Central vs peripheral furnishing styles

If, then, the central rooms carry the central message of identity, it would be logical to hypothesise that this is also where you find the clearest expression of the inhabitants' culture, and the strongest cultural barriers against other forms of expression. If true, it follows that other style-statements are more likely to be made in the more peripheral rooms. If, for example, you have declared yourself as traditionalist in your central rooms, or as "tasteful Eclectic", you may show your broad horizons by going modern in the peripheral rooms, or in your second home if you are rich enough. Or, rather than going consciously for a different style, you may simply relax your requirements on style and accept more of a hotchpotch. You can afford to do so because the central statement about who you are is placed in the centre of your home, in the living/dining rooms.

This hypothesis is partly confirmed. Fig. 12 shows how the valid answers were distributed, at the same time as the missing answers remind us of the modesty of most homes. For each room, a goodly number have not furnished differently than the living/dining room, but conversely, a not inconsiderable minority do vary their furnishing styles. In the present context particular interest attaches itself to the considerable number who claim to furnish their peripheral rooms in a more modern fashion than their living/dining room. Not surprisingly perhaps, this is particularly pertinent for children's rooms.

Starting from scratch

So far we have dealt only with what people's present furnishing is like. Next, we must look ahead, to future choices. Many furnishing choices are of course made under constraint of what is there already and of the money available, so I asked a free-flying question: "If you were to start from scratch, with sufficient money to choose your style freely, which would it be?"[20] The question did in fact allow for

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20   Methodologically, it is a moot point how far there is correspondence between what people say

mixed styles as answers, like the one on present choices, but very few used the opportunity, ticking instead just one of the three main styles.[21]

It is not, of course, possible to compare directly with present choices in all rooms, since fig.10 asks in absolute terms (Which style?) and fig. 12 in relative terms (comparison with living/dining room). But we can see (Fig. 13) that the pattern is repeated of a greater willingness to use modern furniture in peripheral rooms, except the study, which, where it exists, is clearly considered central rather than peripheral. The children's rooms are confirmed as the most modern.

Static tastes

This picture is good news for manufacturers of children's furniture, and of course the manufacturers of bedroom and dining room pine furniture are a separate issue, but there doesn't appear to be a tremendous shift under way. Also Fig. 14, which compares present and fresh choice for the living/dining room area, confirms that the distributions between traditional, country and modern appear static. When people even in a "make-believe" situation of free choice would reestablish the same distribution between modern and traditional, it is not simply convenience or financial restrictions which uphold tradition, but genuine choice.

Overall, then, there is no sign at all that traditional furniture will not go on being the British core identity signifier for core rooms, for the majority of people. Danish and other manufacturers of modern furniture will have to contend for the exceptions, and for the furniture of the peripheral rooms. This has obvious implications, as we have

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they will do when asked hypothetically, and what they actually do when the situation arises. In the present case the situation is in fact not likely to arise, as few people ever have to start their furnishings from scratch, let alone with unlimited means. Consequently I am primarily using the question to ascertain the respondents' degree of satisfaction and identification with their present choices. Any predictive element in the question is linked not to these individuals, but to an assumption that their answers are likely to reflect awareness of fashion trends.

21   Two respondents wanted mixed modern and traditional, one for living/dining room and one for master bedroom. They were coded as modern. Six respondents wanted a mixture of traditional and country, in different rooms. They were all coded as traditional.

also seen that the peripheral rooms are less expensively, and presumably less carefully furnished.

Defining the segments

We must now try if it is possible to get at least some of the way towards a characterization of the groups who are exclusively traditional-oriented and the groups who do or would like to include some modern furniture.

Modern vs traditional

The basic distinction, do people use modern furniture or not, is easy to make, and the two groups are of approximately equal size. 41 respondents furnish in purely traditional and/or country style,[22] while 36 had modern furniture in one or more of their rooms now. Very few have only or even predominantly modern furniture - the majority of the 36 have modern elements in a traditional setting, and mostly in peripheral rooms.[23]

Collectivists vs individualists

The next distinction is far more complex, but it is time to approach the most difficult and interesting of the hypotheses behind this survey, namely that it is possible to identify a difference in furnishing style between collectivistic and individualistic subcultures in any given national culture. James S. Duncan has worked with the symbolic value of things in collectivistic primitive cultures[24], and Gerry Pratt has in an interesting way applied the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic

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22   Include 6 cases who furnished in a more modern style in the children's room only.

23   Future choices, i.e. the "if you were to start from scratch" question, has not been used here. It is interesting as an indicator of future demand, but not viable as an indicator of people's present furnishing culture.

24   The central thesis of a difference in the significance of the home in individualistic and collectivistic cultures was presented in James S. Duncan, "From Container of Women to Status Symbol: the Impact of Social Structure on the Meaning of the House", in James S. Duncan (ed.), *Housing and Identity; Cross-cultural Perspectives*, Croom Helm, London 1919, and developed with anthropological examples in James S. Duncan, "The House as Symbol of Social Structure; notes on the language of objects among collectivistic groups" in Altman, Irwin and Carol M. Werner (eds), *Home Environments; Human Behavior and Environment, Advances in Theory and Research* pp 132-151. Plenum Press, New York 1985.

"social worlds" to a western culture, namely two suburbs of Vancouver.[25] One set of respondents belonged to a network with deep roots in the area, a collectivistic culture with faith in an "objective good taste", a furnishing style like their parents, and like each other. They were well-to-do people who used an interior decorator, but most of them used the same one, who stood as guarantor of the group's perception of "objective good taste" and ensured the cultural coherence of the homes she had decorated.

Set against this subculture, Pratt identified a different network, of wealthy cosmopolites who lived in a different suburb of Vancouver. These she describes as individualistic people whose main furnishing influence was from the media, and who strove to express their individuality and personality in their homes. Consequently they tended to frown on the use of interior decorators, but if they did use one, it had to be their own "discovery", and at least a couple of them liked to give the appearance that the decorator's ideas were really their own.

Staying with the wealthy, it would probably be possible to identify both groups in Britain as well. The "objective good taste" of the wealthy collectivist British would no doubt turn out to hinge on the 18th century furniture classics like Chippendale and Hepplewhite. This subculture's style, its approximations and imitations, are an impregnable wall for expensive Danish and other modern furniture. These people are secure in their taste, deeply rooted in their culture, and it would appear at first glance that it would be be a waste of time for modern furniture producers to try to convert them - except, of course, that the previous evidence has shown that convinced traditionalists may be willing to make an excursion into modernism in some of their peripheral rooms, notably the children's.

Wealthy individualists would appear more promising, however, as, by Pratt's definition, they strive to find a different expression for themselves in their homes, and consequently might be expected to leave the traditional mold. In fact, in theory

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25   Gerry Pratt, "The House as an Expression of Social Worlds", pp 135-180 in J. Duncan (ed.), *Housing and Identity: Cross-cultural perspectives*, Croom Helm, London 1981.

there is no reason why this should hold only for the wealthy. If collectivists and individualists exist as subcultures with different mental orientations to the sign-value of their homes, it would appear that they should exist equally well among people with ordinary incomes. If they do, they might offer a valuable navigating aid into people's motives for one furnishing choice or another.

On the basis of this line of reasoning I expected that individualists, if I could pinpoint them, would be concentrated in the groups that mix their furnishing styles and include modern furniture.

Collectivists and individualists in Leicestershire
The questions in the questionnaire which were designed to capture Pratt's collectivist and individualist parameter were:

1   How much of one's personality could be seen from the furnishings[26]

2   Whether one was influenced by

    a   family tradition

    b   advertisements

    c   home improvement magazines[27]

3   The extent of likeness of one's furnishings to

    a   parents

    b   in-laws

    c   friends[28]

4   Whether one's furnishing style was a result of a conscious choice or just "emerged"[29]

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26   For the exact wording of this (Question 4.3) and following questions, see Appendix. It should be noted, however, that the questionnaire has been designed for ease of use by the respondent rather than the analyser, and that categories have in many cases been subsequently created or combined.

27   Appendix question 6.5

28   Appendix, question 3.8

29   Appendix, question 3.5

In this bunch, the central variable for identifying a collectivist turns out to be 3a, likeness to parents, which correlates significantly with 2a, 3b, 3c and 4.[30] In more commonsense language, a person who furnishes in a style similar to his parents will also be more likely to say that family tradition is a furnishing influence, to furnish in a style similar to in-laws and friends, and to say that their style "just emerged" rather than was consciously chosen. This profile certainly bears a strong resemblance to Pratt's collectivist "social world" as described earlier. Question 2c above, use of magazines as inspiration, is significantly and negatively correlated with 2a, 3b and 3c,[31] translating to the statement that a person who acknowledges family tradition as an influence and furnishes in a style similar to his in-laws and friends is less likely to use home improvement magazines as a source of inspiration.

In the Leicestershire material, this central "collectivist" variable also correlates significantly with a number of other variables which are not meant to be part of the definition, but which add to the portrait without any contradictions: The person who furnishes in a style similar to his parents also inherits more of his furniture than others[32], is also more likely to dislike modern architecture[33], to say that the "grounds" are more important status-markers in other people's eyes than the house itself, the address or the furnishings[34], and are more likely to live in the country[35].

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30   Throughout this analysis, Spearman's rank order coefficient is used, a variant of Pearson's which is only valid for interval data. Correlations (r-values -1 to 0 for negative correlations and 0 to 1 for positive correlations) and significance levels (likelihood of getting result by chance) are:
Likeness to parents with family tradition: rho=0.70, sig.=0.000
Likeness to parents with likeness to in-laws: rho=0.39, sig.=0.012
Likeness to parents with likeness to friends: rho=0.36, sig.=0.008
Likeness to parents with "just emerged": rho=0.32, sig.=0.019

31   Family tradition with use of home magazines: rho=-0.23, sig.=0.056
Similarity to in-laws with use of home magazines: rho=-0.33, sig.=0.038
Similarity to friends with use of home magazines: rho=-0.32, sig.=0.008

32   rho=0.35, sig.=0.009

33   rho=-0.34, sig.=0.019

34   rho=0.29, sig.=0.055

35   rho=0.29, sig.=0.040

His preferred shopping venue is department stores[36], and he prefers informal entertainment.[37]

So far the collectivists - but can a similar "central variable" for the individualists be identified? Going by Pratt's Vancouver results, I expected no. 1 above, the question about personality, to be central[38] - but in this material it is not, possibly due to ambiguity in the question context.[39]

Instead, the variable which appears to be at the centre of the individualist profile is no. 4 above, the conscious choice of one's furnishing style. It is conceptually sufficiently related to the "personality" question to be able to take its place in the testing of Pratt's profiles, and turns out to be fairly useful. It correlates significantly with 3a and 3c above, as well as with a number of supporting variables. Again in plain terms, a person who says that their furnishing style was consciously chosen is, according to the data, more likely to furnish differently from parents and friends[40], inherit less furniture than others[41] and are more likely to have bought the lot themselves[42], and like to give dinner parties.[43] Possibly the most telling of all, these people are significantly more likely on their own initiative to have filled in an open question on "other furnishing influences" with "My own good taste" or words to similar effect![44] So again we see that the extra correlating variables support the individualist profile in the same way as the collectivist profile was supported above.

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36   rho=0.32, sig.=0.019

37   rho=0.31, sig.=0.026

38   Pratt op.cit. p. 163 talks of the individulists using home furnishings as "an expression of individual creativity."

39   For instance, a number of people who were clearly *not* involved in furnishing or home-making in any way answered that it showed a great deal about their personality!

40   Parents: rho=-0.32, sig.=0.019
        Friends: rho=-0.23, sig.=0.053

41   rho=-0.32, sig.=0.009

42   rho=0.25, sig.=0.029

43   rho=0.27, sig.=0.035

44   rho=0.22, sig.=0.053

In order not to confuse the issue, however, I shall stay with the variables designed to test Pratt's individualist - collectivist profiles, and conclude they do appear to apply to the Leicestershire respondents. Leicestershire individualists, like Vancouver individualists, appear to furnish differently from friends and family in a style which is their own choice but influenced by the media, while collectivists furnish in a style similar to family and friends in a more gradual and unconscious way, with family tradition as their main acknowledged influence. The collectivist-individualist dimension is undoubtedly there, in a British variant.

Who is who?

So far, I have established that a number of variables correlate in a way which suggest the existence of a collectivist and an individualist group. But who is who among the respondents?

In order to assign individual scores for individualism or collectivism, a scale was built on the basis of the active variables discussed above, giving or subtracting "points" for each answer. For example, a respondent was given a point in the individualist direction for acknowledging magazines or advertisements as an influence, and a point in the collectivist direction for acknowledging family tradition as an influence, or for saying that their furnishing style "just emerged". The result was a scale spanning the individual case scores -4 (strong collectivist) to +4 (strong individualist).[45] At least where respondents score strongly in one direction or

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45 The core of the SPSS syntax in the scale building was as follows:
   if (var058a=2) colind=colind+1.
   if (var058a=1) colind=colind-1.
   if (var059a=2) colind=colind+1.
   if (var059a=1) colind=colind-1.
   if (var060a=2) colind=colind+1.
   if (var060a=1) colind=colind-1.
   if (var121=1) colind=colind+1.
   if (var125=1) colind=colind-1.
   The new variable, colind, goes from -4 (strong collectivist) to +4 (strong individualist).
   Var058 to Var060 contain question 3.8 "parents", "in-laws" and "friends" respectively, with value 1 corresponding to answers a-c, value 2 answers e-g. Var121 and Var125 contain question 6.5 a (magazines) and e (family tradition), with 1=ticked, 2=empty.

another, it can help to identify the "modern-minded" as opposed to the "traditionalists" among the respondents.

Involvement; playing the semiotic game?

Writing in the new *Journal of Material Culture,* Colin Campbell makes the observation that analyses of consumer behaviour from both the economist's utility viewpoint and from the postmodernist symbolic viewpoint take for granted that the consumer's purchases are always expressions of deliberate choice, and proceed to interpret them on this basis, transferring without question analyses of the meaning of products to analyses of their use.[46] As he demonstrates with clothing cases, consumer behaviour is far from always synonymous with deliberate consumer actions, and he argues that much consumer behaviour does not engage the consumer in symbolic consumption in any direct identity-creating or even identity-affirming way.[47]

Clearly the same caution is in order in the world of furniture consumption. Some homes are deliberate statements of identity and can be read as such without regard to financial restraints. Other homes are statements of identity within more or less severe restraints or compromises between occupants; while other homes again are not interpretable on the same terms as symbolic consumption and do not make an identity statement, for personality or financial or other reasons. Compared with Denmark, and reputedly also with Germany, it is my contention that there are relatively more English homes in which the furnishings are not a central identity signifier; that where the norm in Denmark is to see the home as an extension of oneself and expend considerable resources on one's home and furnishings, there is a sharper divide in England between those who are personally involved in their home-making project and those who are not. Those who are involved invest at least as much of themselves and their resources in their homes as Danes do, indeed often

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46   Colin Campbell, "The Meaning of Objects and the Meaning of Actions; a Critical Note on the Sociology of Consumption and Theories of Clothing". *Journal of Material Culture Vol 1 no. 1, March 1996, pp 93-105.*

47   There is overlap but not correspondance between the marketing term "high involvement purchasing" and symbolically meaningful consumption as identity-creating consumer action in semiotic terms, as used by Campbell and others.

more; but a substantial minority in England "opt out" and exhibit a degree of high disregard for their domestic surroundings which is rare in Denmark.

It is, of course, possible on the surface to do a semiotic reading of a home which has been assembled without very many deliberate choices - but it is less interesting, and in any case a different exercise. On this reasoning, and combining with the distinction between users and non-users of modern furniture, the assumption was that the people who exhibited interest and involvement in their home-making project, and who included some modern furniture in their homes, would be my primary target group for closer analysis.

The component variables in the distinction between what we might term "involved" and "relaxed" respondents are:

1   The respondent's degree of interest in interior decoration.[48]

2   Whether the respondent would be prepared to wait for delivery of a chosen piece of furniture.[49]

3   Whether the respondent puts design or quality above price when choosing furniture.[50]

Case-values were computed using the same principle as above, giving or subtracting points for each answer. Thus a point was given for "involvement" if the respondent declared himself very interested in interior decoration, another point if he was prepared to wait for a chosen piece of furniture, and a third if he said that design or quality was most important. Points were detracted for answering that one was not interested in interior decoration, would expect delivery straight away, and for answering that the price was more important than either quality or design. The respondents grouped convincingly into an "involved" and a non-involved or "relaxed" group.

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48   Appendix, question 6.1

49   Appendix, question 3.14

50   Appendix, question 3.11

Five furnishing profiles

Combining high and low scores for the involvement variable with the use of purely traditional or (mixed) modern furniture produces four groups; "involved traditional", "relaxed traditional", "involved modern" and "relaxed modern". But bringing the individualist-collectivist dimension into play makes it five, because there are two radically different profiles subsumed in the "involved traditional" group; the same furnishing result achieved, so to speak, through two different mindsets. As will be demonstrated in the following pages, Pratt's distinction between collectivist and individualist "social worlds" was there in the British material - but not tied to the same furnishing ideals as in her Canadian study!

The final fine decisions on which respondents belonged to which profile have been made "by hand", assessing each case on their scores on the variables explained above, and in cases of doubt consulting the personal comments added on the questionnaire by the respondents. In most cases these resolved classification ambiguities very conclusively.

Summary

The search for meaningful categories of furnishing mindsets has produced a collectivist/individualist dimension, similar to Pratt's in important respects. However, in the British material a very important function of this dimension is to distinguish **two sets of traditional** furnishers from each other - not, as in the Canadian study, to distinguish a collectivist traditional group from an individualist more modern group. Pratt's wealthy and modern-minded individualists presumably also exist in Britain, if we look in more "cosmopolitan" areas - thus London yuppies are said to be more likely to go for individualised modern furniture - but I didn't find any in my Leicestershire sample. What I did find was that there is a distinct individualist variant of tradition, the deliberately chosen and personally invested tradition. In semiotic terms, very different semantic fields are here attached to the same signifiers.

In addition, the collectivist-individualist dimension adds interest to two other furnishing profiles, in that "Eclectics", the involved group who have some modern

furniture, are mostly individualists, whereas the "Mixers", the uninvolved group with modern furniture, are mostly collectivists. Why this should be so may become clearer as I proceed to draw the five furnishing profiles in more detail. So far, what we know about them is:

The "Keeper" profile ("shared tradition"): 10 cases

Collectivists, and involvement high. Present furnishing style   traditional and/or country in all rooms.[51]

The "Finder" profile ("keen tradition"): 14 cases

Individualists, and involvement high. Present furnishing style traditional and/or country in all rooms.

The "Eclectic" profile ("keen change"): 20 cases

Mostly individualists, with high involvement. Modern style mixed in with traditional and/or country style somewhere in either central or peripheral rooms.

The "Follower" profile ("passive tradition"): 17 cases

No clear individualist or collectivist profile, and involvement low. Present furnishing style traditional and/or country in all rooms.

The "Mixer" profile ("functional change"): 16 cases

Mostly collectivists, with low involvement. Modern style mixed in with traditional and/or country style somewhere in either central or peripheral rooms.

A note of caution: It has to be borne in mind that the response percentage to the questionnaire was modest, and hence that the people who answered must be assumed to be more than averagely interested in the subject. In "real life", involvement must generally be assumed to be less. I would, in other words, expect the 3 involved groups to be overrepresented in the survey material and the 2 relaxed groups to be

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51   If only children's rooms are (partly) modern, this has not been deemed enough for a
        respondent to be considered "Eclectic" or "Mixed".

underrepresented - but I would expect to be able to identify similar furnishing profiles with similar characteristics in Britain's provincial population as a whole. The fact that the nature and size of the sample does not permit conclusions about the **number** of people in each furnishing profile detracts nothing from the validity of the observed **structure**.

Operationalizing the furnishing profiles

The last step in this quantitative part of the research will be to investigate whether the profiles do more for us than confirm that the distinction between collectivists and individualists is possible and meaningful in a British context. The question that remains is whether the profile categories can be used in conjunction with other variables to paint a more varied picture of the provincial British population's furnishing mindsets?

Local roots

In Pratt's profiles of collectivist and individualist subcultures, the degree of rootedness in the local culture was a central feature. Consequently questions on the number of years the respondent had lived in the area as well as questions on the number of family and friends living locally were included in the questionnaire.

The questions on family and friends living locally yielded nothing of interest, presumably because the questions are too imprecise. The question on years in the area did not add to the collectivist-individualist

Fig. 15: Furnishing profiles by years in area

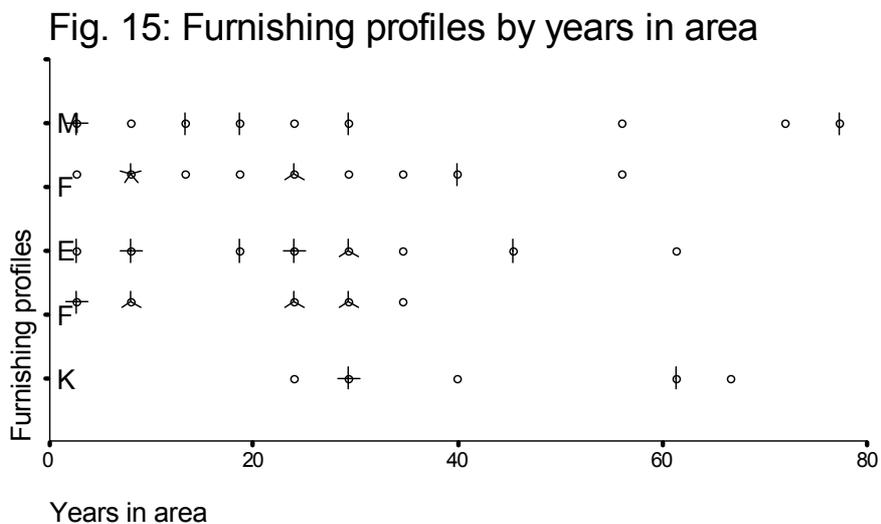dimension, but turned out interesting after the profiles had been formed.

Fig. 15, a simplified scattergram showing how many years people with the different furnishing profiles had lived in the area, reveals why this variable added nothing to the dimension as a whole - namely because it is only of significance in the distinction between Keepers and Finders; while Followers, Eclectics and Mixers were consisted evenly of mobile and more stable residents, Finders were markedly more mobile than Keepers.[52] In other words, although Keepers and Finders are both traditional in their furnishings, the distinction between locally rooted and more mobile subcultures is parallel to Pratt's Vancouver study, and reflected in the answers to this question.

Furnishing and architecture

In Pratt's Vancouver study, the individualist group lived in a neighbourhood dominated by modern experimental architecture. In England, I often hear the argument that "traditional furniture goes with traditional buildings". In Denmark, this is not a generally accepted tenet, rather the contrary; there seems to be a vogue for furnishing old buildings in modern or ultra-modern style. The link between furniture and architectural style preference must, in other words, be assumed to be culturally conditioned.

Splitting the furnishing profiles on likes and dislikes of modern furniture does add to the assumption of a link in British culture between acceptance of modern architecture and modern furniture (fig. 16). The three groups that furnish entirely in traditional or country style show the strongest rejection of modern architecture - but the enthusiasm is hardly overwhelming in any group.

As a nation, the British have never accepted modern architecture, at least not for private dwellings. Broadly speaking, architecturally modern housing is low-status, compared to more traditional or "vernacular" houses.[53] The high-rise concrete flats of

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52   "Years in home" yielded the same pattern in a weaker version.

53   Tim Brindley, "The Modern House in England 1945-1975", paper for *Ideal Homes* conference, University of Lund, Sep. 1994. Unpublished.

the sixties, sadly inspired by Scandinavian models, were an even greater social and technical failure in Britain than in Scandinavia, and it served to confirm the British in their already held conviction that they should continue to build low-rise and traditional housing. Prince Charles' periodic attacks on modern architecture may not endear him with the architectural profession, but meet with considerable sympathy in the population at large.

There is no easy way of testing the assumed link between architectural and furnishing preferences, as

Fig. 16: Profiles and modern architecture

architecturally modern private dwellings are extremely difficult to find. Even in a New Town like Milton Keynes, a thriving socially balanced community built since the '60s, private housing is overwhelmingly built in traditional, vernacular styles, even down to beams and thatched roofs on some luxury villas. Ultra-modern and ex-perimental architecture is proudly displayed in the shopping centres and public spaces, but the middle-class private space, their own most valuable asset, is firmly traditional.

Inheritance

In a country which to such an unusual degree maintains its preference for tradition, and where "family tradition" according to these respondents is their most important source of furnishing influence[54], you would expect many respondents to inherit some of their furniture. However, this does not appear to be the case.

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54   If you select those respondents who have inherited more than 10% of their furniture and test what the chances are that they are the same people who say that family tradition is an influence on their furnishing choice, you get a Chi square significance of 0.9! Since +/- 1 signifies complete independence (i.e. **not** the same people), the two variables appear to be totally unconnected.
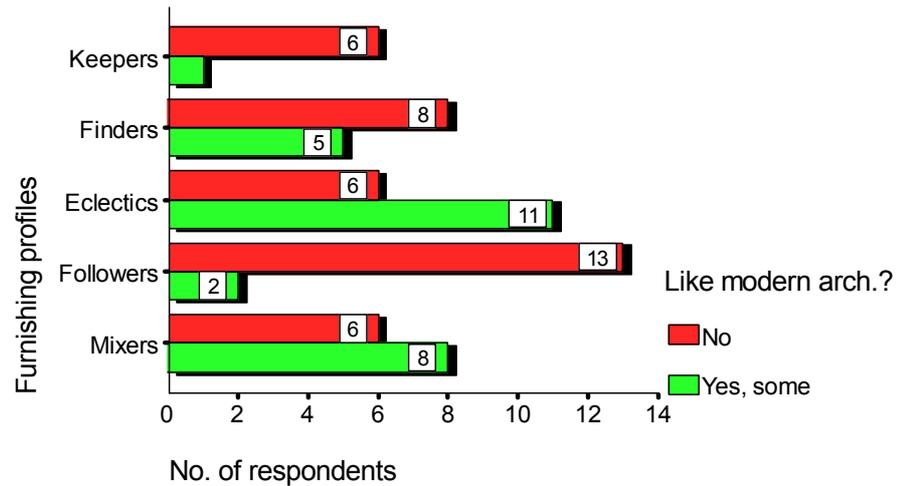
Fig. 17 - Ways of Acquiring Furniture

Per cent of furniture	Was Inherited by:	Was Bought by:	Otherwise acquired by:
0 - 9%	53*	3	64
10 - 29%	15	1	9
30 - 49%	2	2	1
50 - 69%	3	5	1
70%+	3	65	1

*Figures indicate cases/households (76 valid cases)
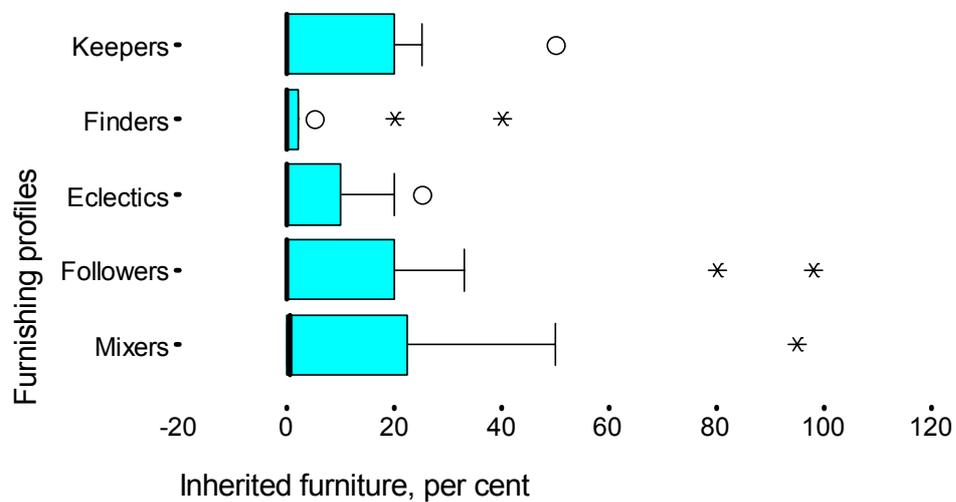
Fig. 18: Furnishing profiles and inheritance

Fig. 17 shows very clearly that the majority buy almost all their furniture themselves. A number inherit a modest amount, a few inherit substantial amounts. And the "otherwise acquired" column shows that the answers are not due to a confusion between inheritance and "handing down".

Fig. 18 is a visualisation of the inheritance pattern in the five furnishing profiles.[55] Three things stand out: 1) the firmly "bottom-heavy" boxplots, reflecting the majority who inherit nothing, 2) the outliers indicating the few exceptions who inherit a lot, and 3) the "Finders" who appear to inherit even less than the others, despite their firm commitment to traditional furnishing styles. Tenuous as this may be, it underscores the picture building up of a "Finder" group which puts a lot of effort into getting things right, but which does so conciously and usually without the benefit of either material or cultural inheritance.[56]

Gender

Interestingly, male and female respondents are not equally distributed on the five furnishing profiles. Cross-tabulating for gender, fig. 19 emerges. It shows

Fig. 19: Furnishing profiles and gender
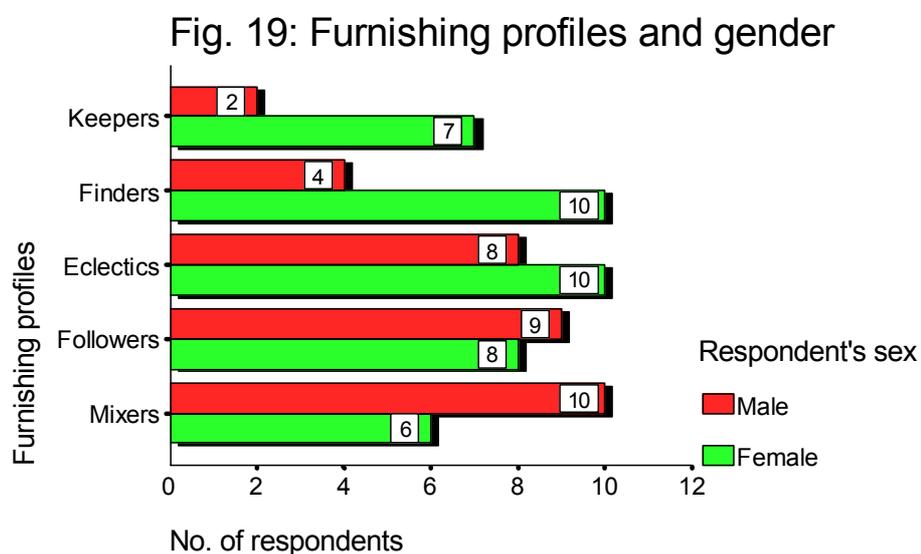
that the women dominate among Keepers and Finders (the two involved traditional profiles), are more or less level with the men in the Eclectic group, and become the minority in both the relaxed profiles, Followers and Mixers.

I had asked for the questionnaire to be filled in by "the adult in your household who is most interested in decorating and furnishing the home." By convention, women in Britain are the homemakers - and it appears that they do invest more of their identity in the project than the men - and, perhaps not accidentally, the dominant British

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55   There is <u>no</u> observable link between amount of inherited furniture and conventional social class in this material.

56   Finders are also the group who are most firmly opposed to having any modern furniture in any of the rooms, if they were to start from scratch.

furnishing tradition is an extraordinarily feminine one, frilly and flowery. Implementing it, many would say, needs a woman's touch.

The women hold their own in the Eclectic group, which is defined not only by its break with tradition but also by involvement; but in the two relatively uninvolved groups the men take over.

Age

As fig. 20 shows, the furnishing profiles also vary in terms of age-distribution - and again it is the marked difference between Keepers and Finders that is

## Fig. 20: Furnishing profiles and age

Respondent's age
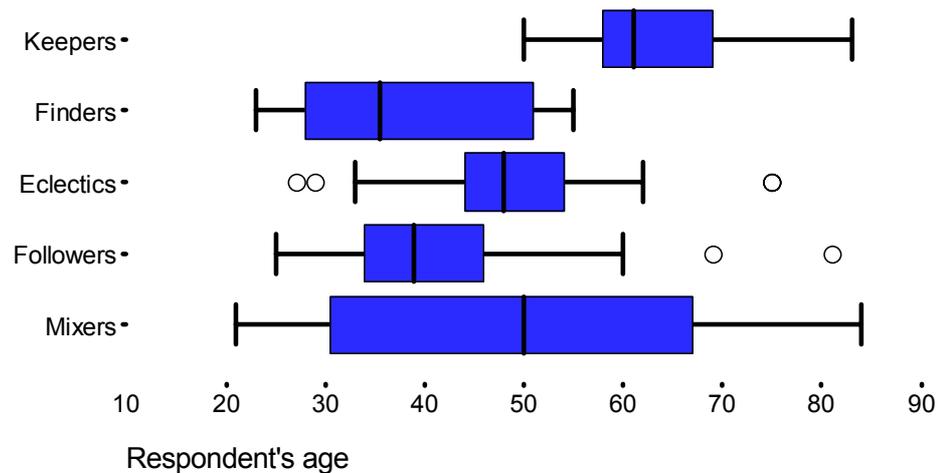
most interesting. It has to be remembered that these variables now brought into play as part of the profile characterization were **not** part of the original definition - so that, in fact, every point on which the profiles turn out to be significantly different adds to their credibility as distinct groups of people. In this case we can note that Keepers are older, in fact nobody under 50, while Finders in fact have the lowest median of all the profile groups and are very much, as a group, of energetic years.

Class and "housing capital"

There remains one important part of the characterization to be dealt with: The inevitable question of social class. The data-set as a whole has already been categorized in JICNAR's terms - but how does this correspond with the five furnishing profiles now created?

The even distribution in the simplified scatterplot of fig. 21 suggests that class is more or less completely independent of the profiles. And so it is, in the usual British class

Fig. 21: Furnishing profiles and class
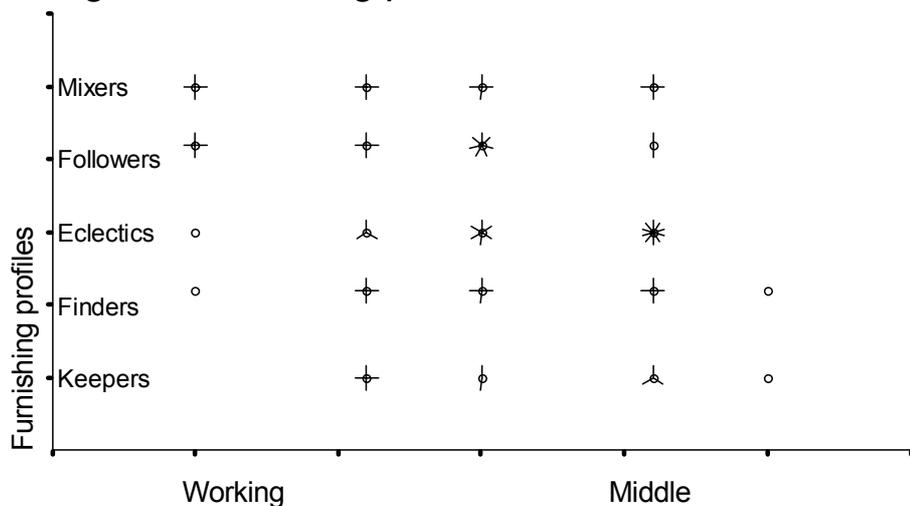
classification terms of A, B, C1, etc. If, however, we paraphrase Bourdieu and consider not simply social class as made up of occupation, but the whole range of "housing capital" made up of traditional class/income, supplemented by type and

size of property as well as tenure (ownership or not) - then one arrives at a rather more interesting picture.[57] Fig.22 is of course "incorrect" in so far as the two axes of the

Fig. 22: Class and housing capital
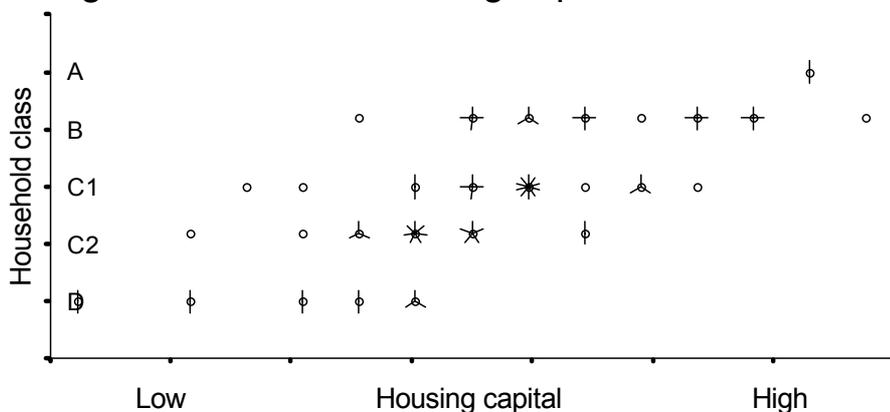
Housing capital, composed of income, class, tenure, property type, no. of rooms, with missing values as means

scatterplot both incorporate the variable "income", but the aim is precisely to show that the relationship between the two axes is not a simple one-to-one; taking into consideration the extended aspects of the respondent's "housing capital", including

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57   The variable "Economic capital" was created by first establishing the fact that the constituent variables work together as a "dimension" (Cronbach Alpha with 5 variables = 0.7), secondly calculating the case values of the new variable on the formula (Var1/5 + Var2/5 ... +Var5/5)=Newvar. The variables: Property type, Tenure, No. of rooms, income, household class. All are 5-point ordinal (or interval) scales with the exception of tenure, which is dichotomous. In order to make sure that tenure carries the same weight as the other four variables in the final value of "Economic capital", its values have first been weighted by 2.5.

both conventional class, income and "housing class" aspects, it is demonstrated that C2s and Ds can be in a stronger housing class position than B's.

Finally applying the housing capital dimension to the five profiles (fig.23), a pattern emerges which is indeed very informative. Far from being independent, it turns out that there are quite significant differences. In particular, it is noteworthy that the weak in terms of housing capital are found solely in the two uninvolved profiles, the Followers and the Mixers, while all three involved profiles span the middle to strong housing capital classes.

Fig. 23: Furnishing profiles and housing class

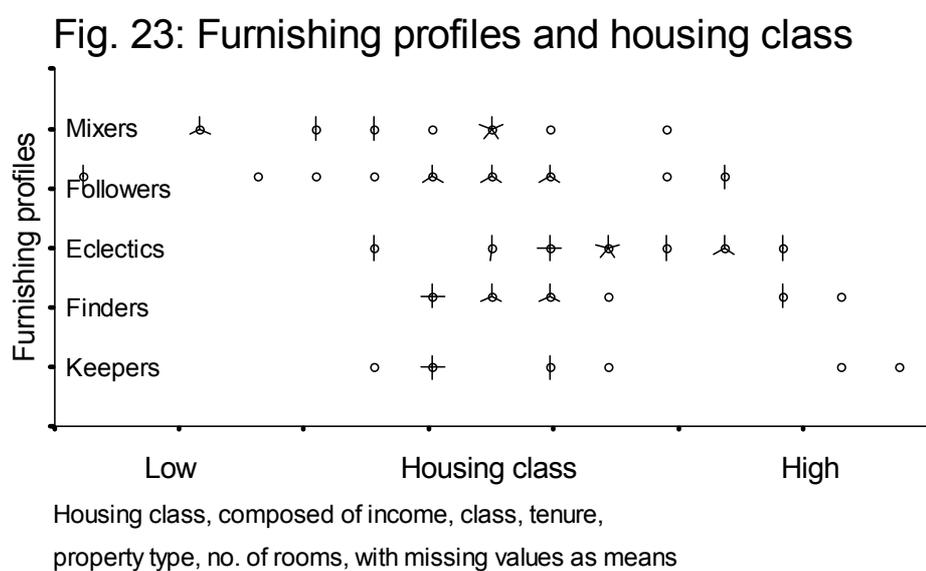Housing class, composed of income, class, tenure, property type, no. of rooms, with missing values as means

Conclusions

It is now possible to draw a more detailed portrait of the five furnishing profiles identified earlier, using both the 3 original distinctions that went into the profile definition, and the additional variables they have been tested against later. This should not, of course, be taken to mean that each individual coded into a profile conforms to the entire set of characteristics. No social categories are ever that clearcut.

Categorizing principles

The three distinctions used to create the profiles are

a   the dimension of collectivism vs individualism

b   the present use vs non-use of modern furniture somewhere in the dwelling

c   the degree of involvement in the home-making project.

A collectivist was defined as someone with all or most of the following characteristics:

-      Major furnishing influence from family tradition
-      Furnishing style is similar to family and friends
-      The home's furnishing style "emerged" rather than was chosen.

An individualist was defined as someone with all or most of the following characteristics:

-      Major furnishing influence from home improvement magazines (and advertisements)
-      Furnishing style is different from family
-      The home's furnishing style was consciously chosen.

A respondent has been termed "involved" if he/she answered to most of the following:

-      Very interested in interior decoration
-      Prepared to wait for delivery of chosen items of furniture
-      Values design <u>or</u> quality above price when choosing furniture.

The profiles can now be defined as follows:

Keepers:

Traditional and/or country style all the way through their present furnishing choices.

Collectivists.

Have lived in area longer than Finders.

Involvement in home-making project high.

People of mature age, 50+

Majority of women.

Housing capital medium to high.

This profile could also be termed *Shared tradition.*

Finders:

Traditional and/or country style all the way through their present furnishing choices.

Individualists.

Have lived in area shorter than Keepers.

Involvement in home-making project high.

People of energetic age, no more than 60.

Majority of women.

Housing capital medium to high.

This profile could also be termed *Keen tradition.*

Eclectics:

Modern furniture occurs somewhere in present furnishing choices, mixed in with traditional and/or modern.[58]

Mostly individualists.

Involvement in home-making project high.

All ages, with the concentration in '40s and '50s.

More or less equal numbers of men and women.

Housing capital medium to high.

This profile could also be termed *Keen change.*

Followers:

Traditional and/or country style furniture all the way through their present furnishing choices.

No clear individualist or collectivist profile.

Involvement in home-making project low.

All ages, but most under 50.

More men than women.

Housing capital the whole range, evenly spread.

This profile could also be termed *Passive tradition.*

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58   Children's rooms are not enough to be deemed either Eclectic or Mixer, if there is no other modern furniture in the house.

Mixers:

Modern furniture occurs somewhere in present furnishing choices, mixed in with traditional and/or modern.

Mostly collectivists.

Involvement in home-making project low.

All ages, evenly spread.

More men than women.

Housing capital medium to low.

This profile could also be termed *Functional change.*

Marketing implications

It is noteworthy that the entirely modern profile is conspicuously absent. Only one respondent declared that the house, including central rooms, was furnished in purely modern style - and one respondent makes no profile. Had the survey been conducted in London, or perhaps in one of the conurbations, the modern element would undoubtedly have been stronger. On the other hand, this would have said as little about Leicestershire as Leicestershire says about London - and in terms of data, it would have been remarkably more difficult to say anything at all of a generally valid nature. No doubt Ikea know what they are doing when they place all their outlets in the big conurbations. My endeavours, in so far as they have a commercial purpose at all, have been more concerned with exploring the parts of the country that Ikea does not reach, and which small Danish furniture exporters may be tempted to try.

Ikea's image-building in England appears to have been extraordinarily successful. In particular, their switch from a working or lower-middle-class outlet in Scandinavia to a middle-class in-place in England is remarkable. In Denmark, the middle class certainly do use Ikea as well, but usually, I would contend, a little apologetically. In England, I have noted almost a note of triumph in some middle class voices recounting their Ikea successes. Ikea's metamorphosis was complete, it appears, on March 21st, 1996, when "Parsons on Class" on BBC2 confidently declared: "Culture

is as middle class as Ikea and Chardonnay." That may be so, in London. In Leicestershire they have no Ikea, not would an Ikea be likely to do well.[59]

What the survey tells the manufacturer of modern furniture with a desire to sell to the English provinces is this:

Do consider marketing children's furniture. Even in homes which are otherwise totally traditionally furnished, the children's rooms will often be modern.

Do consider marketing bedroom furniture, or furniture for other peripheral rooms. There is clearly a willingness to be more modern, away from the representative constraints of the living and dining rooms.

Don't, in either children's or other peripheral rooms, be too expensive. The majority differentiate the expense they are willing to incur in the different rooms, and peripheral rooms where modern furniture is most common are also the most cheaply furnished.

Don't be too extreme in design-expression. The modern furniture which is acceptable as complements to the traditional range is moderate in expression and would not be likely to win any design-awards for innovation.

Do consider marketing pine dining-room furniture. The English tradition is more chunky than the Danish, but as a variation on a known and popular theme the Danish version appears to be acceptable. A considerable number selected a Danish pine dining room from the picture sheets.

And don't hold your breath waiting for a new dawn to break for modern furniture in provincial Britain. The signs are that dominant tastes are becoming ever more firmly

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59   This situation may of course change if IKEA continues to gain ground, but at the moment their six

        outlets are hardly enough to change furnishing the furnishing culture in the country at large.

entrenched in the elaborate nostalgic mode, light-years from the dominant Danish cultural expression.

The attempt to create a navigating aid to modern furniture users through the collectivism-individualism dimension was only partly successful. I did not, as expected, find individualists as a whole more open to modern - but I found that individualists come in two dominant varieties: the kind who mix traditional/country and modern - the Eclectics - and the kind who are determinedly committed to England's native tradition - the Finders. It appears to be the latter group, along with the Keepers, who define and maintain the dominant esthetic of the provincial English furnishing tradition.

Sociological implications

For a sociologist, the most interesting outcome of the research so far must be the general applicability to a normal (non-elitist) population of the collectivist-individualist distinction to different ways of thinking about the home, along with the demonstration that the furnishing choices of the groups involved can take different forms in different cultural settings.[60] Some "Eclectics" may conform to Pratt's Canadian individualist profile, but for a "Finder", whose aim is to follow the socially accepted good taste (traditional) of the Keepers, being like one's friends - but usually unlike one's family - becomes confirmation of being right; because the mutual choice, the goal for the Finder's individualism, is really sameness.

You can, of course, then ask whether the individualist end of the distinction is rightly named. More correctly in this variant, perhaps, would be a term denoting the

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60   National cultural difference between Canada and Britain is not necessarily posited as the sole cause of the difference observed.   A metropolitan (Vancouver) vs a provincial (Leicestershire) setting could influence results, as well as Pratt's more "serious money" in opposition to the ordinarily well off Finders in my sample. As Laumann and House (op.cit.) demonstrate with 1960s data from Detroit, the *nouveaux riche* upwardly mobile people tended to furnish in modern style, while the "*ancien riche*" of static high status and income furnished tradtionally. Using a larger data set and a different procedure, however, they found that a socio-economically more mixed population of upwardly mobile people tended towards traditional furnishing choices. Their findings salomonically slot into the debate on the processes of social emulation between Veblen's "trickle down" theory and Riesman's (among others) notions of a new social stratum which took its models from professional "tastemakers" rather than the old ruling class.

presence or absence of collectivism. For ease of reference, however, let the term individualist remain, shorn of the psychological necessity to be unique, but with the observable necessity to be different from one's origins and open to outside influences remaining.

The second point of interest is the use of the variables on interest and other "involvement" indicators to form the basis for a distinction between those consumers you can read meaningfully in semiotic terms and those you can, at best, read superficially. Interpreting the purchase or possession of artefacts as symbols or signs does not, perhaps, always presuppose a consciousness of the culturally accepted sign-value on behalf of the user - but the interpretation is drastically different when that consciousness is present from when it is not. An exploration of the implications of this distinction must wait till the next phase of the research.

The third and last point of sociological interest to emerge out of this phase of the research is the discovery that "housing capital" as a combination of traditional social class and housing class is a more meaningful categorization to use in connection with the furnishing profiles than would be traditional class categories. Combining the information on "housing capital" from the questionnaires reveals the fact that some middle class respondents are bested by manual working class respondents on combined "housing capital", presumably reflecting a mindset on the part of the working class respondents in question which gives great priority to the home and allocates relatively many of their scarce resources to the homemaking project. Involvement does correlate with resources, as seen in fig. 23 - but the spectrum of housing capital represented within each profile also shows that involvement in the homemaking project is not determined by resources. Consequently, and importantly, the furnishing profiles created by the involvement dimension are not "really" socio-economic profiles in disguise - they are profiles of different mindsets, influenced by, but not determined by their socio-economic situation.

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