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*Everyday Financialization: The Case of
UK Households*

Ariane Hillig

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Department of Accounting and Finance
Faculty of Business and Law
The Open University, UK

Abstract

Since the 1970s the UK government has been promoting private asset ownership while decreasing publicly funded welfare programmes. This asset-based welfare approach calls on households to accumulate assets in order to provide financial security during periods of income shortfall. Drawing on a Foucauldian governmentality framework, the dissertation explores how norms of asset ownership are constructed and embedded in households' discourses and practices. For this purpose, 56 semi-structured interviews with 55 UK households and 60 household members were conducted between 2016 and 2017. The insights gained from the interviews have been supported with an analysis of newspaper articles and put into relation to the wider UK development with the help of household surveys conducted by the government.

The findings presented in the thesis reflect empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions. First, looking to debates within the financialization of daily life literature, the empirical findings indicate that households adopt a financialized subject position, albeit differently interpreted than anticipated by the literature. Households accumulate financial and non-financial assets and avoid debt except for asset accumulation purposes. Second, the empirical insights provide the basis for the theoretical contribution. By shedding light on the interplay between asset norms and everyday practices discussions on governmentality and capitalist relations are extended. To be able to save and invest, interviewed households increase work hours, choose a job solely based on income and make sure to work hard while living a nonmaterialistic lifestyle. Through this it is argued here that power relationships incorporated in capital-labour inequalities are strengthened. Third, a methodological contribution is outlined by showing how the employed holistic approach has helped to reveal household financial identities. By providing qualitative empirical insights instead of relying solely on secondary data, it is shown that asset norms are not absorbed in a non-reflected way but are negotiated.

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List of Abbreviations

AVC	Additional Voluntary Contributions
DB	Defined-benefit (pensions)
DC	Defined-contribution (pensions)
EU	European Union
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
IP	Interview Participant
ISA	Individual Savings Accounts
HI	High Income
MI	Medium Income
N	Number of Interview Participants
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PEP	Personal Equity Plan
SERPS	State Earnings Related Pension Schemes
SIPP	Self-invested Personal pensions
S2P	State Second Pension
WAS	Wealth and Assets Survey

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Since the end of the 1970s, the UK government has focused on a neoliberal¹ agenda pushing forward deregulation of financial and labour markets while concentrating on fiscal and monetary discipline (Cutler and Waine, 2001; Kempson and Collard, 2012). As can be seen below in the statement by Margaret Thatcher, the focus of government policies has shifted away from believing in providing public insurance against potential future risks in the form of ill health, unemployment or income shortfall during retirement to an emphasis on personal responsibility.

I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. *I have a problem, I'll get a grant. I'm homeless, the government must house me.* They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. (Margaret Thatcher cited in [Brittan, 1996, p.89])

As part of the neoliberal turn, social responsibilities which used to be carried out by the state or employer are increasingly carried by individuals. This can be seen for instance in the case of pension provisions and its incorporated risk. State pensions have been reduced and defined-benefit pensions have been replaced to a large extent with defined-contribution pensions. The move from publicly insured risks towards private solutions is referred to as *responsibilization*, a term coined in the literature to express the transfer of responsibilities from one economic agent to the other – for example from the government and employers to the individual (Wakefield and Fleming, 2016).

¹ While there is no single definition of neoliberalism, this study adopts the following: ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade’ (Harvey, 2005, p.2) and which is based on five values: ‘the individual; freedom of choice; market security; laissez faire; and minimal government’ (Larner, 2006, p.201).

Against this backdrop, the British government has been introducing asset-based welfare policies where risk is increasingly constructed as an opportunity instead of a potential loss (Langley, 2006a). Asset-based welfare relies on assets being used in case of income shortfalls; for instance the house is assigned a welfare function by using price increases as a basis for income during retirement either through downsizing or equity withdrawals. Whereas the goal of providing publicly funded welfare has been to reduce income inequality and support consumption during periods of income shortfall, asset-based welfare policies are aimed at increasing economic participation. These rest on the assumption that by accumulating assets rather than relying on income-support, income constrained households gain a stake in the economy and through this can overcome poverty (Sherraden, 2015).

Social policy has thus ‘promoted and institutionalized asset accumulation’ (Sherraden, 2015, pp.6-7). Supported by indirect benefits in the form of tax reductions or subsidies², households are expected to take responsibility over their future with the help of asset accumulation rather than relying on direct income transfers during periods of income shortfall (Erturk et al., 2007; Finlayson, 2009). A responsible household saves and invests in an attempt to protect living standards when retiring, being sick or unemployed (Mandel, 1996). Through mitigating future risks with the help of pensions, savings and investment products, while at the same taking out debt contracts for homeownership, households increasingly interact with financial products, and financial motives enter more and more aspects of everyday life³ (Langley, 2008). This has been referred to as *financialization of daily life* (Martin, 2002) where ‘individuals adopt new modes of self-governance and reflexivity to monitor their investments’ (Lai, 2016, p.3) and ‘the investment idiom becomes the dominant way of understanding the individual’s place in society’ (Davis, 2009, p.6).

² As in the case of the ‘right to buy’ programme introduced by Margaret Thatcher where low income households can buy their council house with a considerable discount (Kempson and Collard, 2012) or in the case of the recently introduced help-to-buy scheme providing government loans to first-time buyers (MAS, 2017).

³ This comprises routine and habitual practices in spaces of home, work and relationships (Langley, 2006a).

The interaction between responsabilization, in the form of a retreat of the welfare state, and financialization, in the form of a growing importance of finance in dealing with the new responsibilities, constructs asset norms. Households are expected to take on responsibility over future risks through accumulating assets and conducting investments. To achieve asset ownership, they are encouraged to adopt ‘finance rationality’, defined as ‘techniques of calculations’ (Greenfield and Williams, 2007, p.415) enabling to ‘self-fund[ing] non-wage work’ (Bryan et al., 2009, p.462). This includes, but is not limited to, financial strategies in the form of diversifying investments and hedging against potential income or wealth losses (Mandel, 1996). At the same time, households should internalize a moral financial attitude, leading them to not take on extensively high amounts of debt as well as to continue servicing debt during difficult times (Beggs et al., 2014). These three components, namely asset accumulation, avoiding debt and finance rationality, are coined here asset norms.

Adopting asset norms has deep consequences for the everyday life of households. By ‘offloading’ risks and responsibilities from the government and companies onto the ‘increasingly fragile balance sheets of workers and their families’ (Hacker, 2008, p.IX), not only more asset ownership is created but households also have to bear increasingly more risks (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a). Despite being expected to adopt finance rationality, the largest component of the household balance sheet, which is for the majority of households human capital⁴ (see Table 1), is not tradable and hedgeable since claims on household income cannot be repackaged and sold and skills cannot be separated from the worker (Campbell and Cocco, 2003). At the same time, it gets ever more complicated to predict life-cycle earnings to properly plan ahead and invest for the future because of living in a ‘snakes and ladders world where earnings, wealth effects and final values are unpredictable’ (Erturk et al., 2007, p.562). Nevertheless, even after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), it has been

⁴ Human capital is defined as resources, i.e. skills and knowledge, of people which are used to generate income (Schultz, 1961), hence, it depicts ‘capital embodied in its labour force’ (Becker, 1976, p. 141).

argued that an increase in financial education and access to finance can improve equality and give everyone the opportunity to build a prosperous future (Shiller, 2012).

Table 1 Exemplary Household Balance Sheet

<i>ASSETS</i>	<i>LIABILITIES</i>
Skills/labour power	Property Debt
Property	Main Residence
Home	Other Property
Other Property	Financial Liabilities
Transaction Accounts	Personal Loans
Bank Account Savings	Student Debt
Savings Certificates and Bonds	Hire Purchase
Investment Trusts/Unit Trusts	Credit Card Debt
Stocks and Shares	Store Cards
Pension Wealth	Business Debt
Business Assets	Overdraft
Home Contents	Overdue Household Bills
Vehicles	Other Debt
Other Assets	

Source: Author's illustration based on Bryan and Rafferty (2015); ONS (2016a)

Research into the financialization of everyday life can be divided into the two sides of the household balance sheet: indebtedness and asset ownership. In the first case, financialization is considered to be a growth engine driven by debt-financed consumption and asset accumulation, of which income and wealth inequality have been a defining feature (Onaran and Guschanski, 2017). Rising household indebtedness is argued to intensify inequalities between capital and labour. Based on widening access to financial products, capitalists are able to extract further profits from households in the form of being able to lower wages, extract interest rate payments and generate income from securitizing households' payments such as mortgage repayments (Beggs et al., 2014; Schwartz and Seabrooke, 2008; Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b). At the same time, the resultant indebtedness intensifies the disciplining mechanism by labour (Karacimen, 2015). Because households want to maintain their lifestyles, they are committed to keeping their jobs in order to comply with debt service obligations (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996). In particular, debt-financed homeownership puts pressure on households as an economic downturn accompanied by a drop in house values or an increase in interest rates can lead to negative equity (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b).

It may, however, be argued that this perspective should be complemented by giving a stronger focus to the asset side of households' balance sheet, which represents a significant aspect of the financialization process. Whereas the literature considered above also takes into consideration homeownership and its associated costs, the main focus is on the impact of relative indebtedness and its debt obligations rather than on assets *per se*. In particular, housing can instead be seen as an investment object used for speculation and asset-based welfare, promising to be a source of income over the life cycle (Smith et al., 2004).

A second strand of everyday financialization literature focuses on households' interaction with assets. According to household finance theory, households use risk management strategies, for instance diversification and hedging, and invest in 'financial instruments to attain their objective' of financial security (Campbell, 2006, p. 1553). By becoming everyday investors, households are argued to take on the role of capitalists and non-capitalists at the same time: accumulating assets and appropriating money from their investments (capitalists) while being workers (non-capitalists [Bryan et al., 2009; Weiss, 2014]). The Foucauldian inspired literature picks up this identification of households as everyday investors and focuses on how 'these new financial identities' (Kear, 2013, p.928), as reflected in practices and discourses, are created. Incorporating the concept of governmentality⁵, this literature shows how diverse discourses (e.g. policy discourses) and calculative tools (e.g. private pension) construct households as entrepreneurs who absorb everyday investor identities, investing in financial assets (Aitken, 2003; Martin, 2002; Langley, 2008). Here, discourse is not understood as solely reflecting 'what people do, think and are in the social world' instead language constitutes meaning, thus, constructs the subject position of the everyday investor (Angermuller et al., 2014, p.6).

⁵ Governmentality emphasizes that 'government of men is a practice which is not imposed by those who govern on those who are governed' but which establishes the environment, conditions and discourses leading to households conforming or resisting created norms (Foucault, 1991a; Foucault, 2008, p.12).

A methodological limitation in this literature strand is that Foucauldian inspired studies explore how policy discourses and institutional changes construct the subject position of the everyday investor (Aitken, 2003; Grey, 1997), but exclude households' interaction with this subject position – despite depicting them as important actors and calling for 'ethnographic studies' to explore households' discourses and practices (Langley, 2006b, p.931). This focus on secondary data in the form of policy and media documents tends to result in arranging 'financial subjects [households] into categories of active and passive subjects, with little unpacking what this means in practice' (Hall, 2016, p.2). In other words, households are seen as either adopting or rejecting the subject position of the everyday investor. Passive subjects, for instance, deviate from the everyday investor subject by mainly investing in property (Langley, 2008) or solely saving in the bank (Lai, 2017).

A recently growing literature acknowledges the necessity to give a voice to households' experiences and examines with the help of qualitative research how the expansion of finance and associated financial motives enter everyday practices, spaces and relations (Chen and Roscoe, 2017; Gonzalez, 2015; Lai, 2017). Reading across the qualitative literature in relation to the role of assets, what is notable is the focus on homeownership (Munro, 2000; Smith and Searle, 2008), its concomitant debt, namely mortgages (Keasey and Veronesi, 2012; Weiss, 2014), and how households see property as key to pension planning (Rowlingson, 2006; Clark, 2012). While these approaches give valuable insights into the financialization of households, much less is known about households' overall interaction with assets, including not one aspect of asset ownership such as homeownership but several aspects such as savings, homeownership and pensions. Moreover, research so far has not adequately accounted for the impact of asset norms on everyday practices.

As a result of these two methodological approaches, analyses of the financialization of daily life have resulted in an apparent contradiction, on the one hand suggesting based on secondary data that households become investors (Martin, 2002) and on the other hand arguing based on empirical data that ‘finance is domesticated’ (Pellandini-Simanyi et al., 2015, p.733), i.e. households reject the subject position of the everyday investor. In this thesis, I therefore seek to empirically explore whether households internalize a financialized subject position by conforming to norms of asset accumulation and how this impacts everyday life. This financialized subject position is identified here as an everyday risk manager who accumulates assets guided by finance rationality, rejects debt except for purposes of asset accumulation and adopts self-governing measures to achieve asset norms.

1.2 Researching Everyday Financialization

1.2.1 Aim of the Research and Research Questions

This study examines how the expansion of finance and associated financial motives enter everyday practices and discourses, entailing three key aspects derived from the gaps identified above. First, a balance sheet approach is employed in which both sides of the balance sheet – liabilities and assets – are considered. Rather than exploring households’ interaction with one aspect of the balance sheet such as homeownership, pensions or mortgages, I seek to explore households’ overall balance sheet composition, accompanied by households’ reasoning behind taking on or rejecting certain balance sheet positions. Households’ overall risk management strategies are incorporated while also exploring how these impact everyday life. Second, a Foucauldian governmentality approach is adopted and complemented with insights gained from primary data. The aim is to investigate through what processes the incorporation of financial ideas is taking place by drawing upon the institutional context and show to what extent households re-articulate the media discourse or how much this discourse and the rising financial responsibility is contested.

To be able to explore how households construct their financial identity, as reflected in their discourses and practices, the following main research question guides the research:

How is household financial identity constructed in response to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization and what is the impact of asset norms on everyday life?

This question entails the proposition that asset norms are constructed which households can adhere to. It thus relates back to the change in UK society set out in the previous section from a publicly funded to an asset-based welfare state where households are called upon to accumulate assets. This main research question is further divided into five sub-questions.

- i.) What are mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization?
- ii.) How do households respond to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization and what is the role of institutional changes and media discourses in constructing household financial identity?
- iii.) To what extent do households adopt a financialized subject position as represented in their financial practices? Are there differences in how medium and high income households engage with asset accumulation?
- iv.) How does the shift towards greater responsibility and the resultant financial practices impact everyday life?
- v.) How do households position themselves? How far do they resist asset norms?

To investigate these research questions, I aim to develop an understanding of household financial identity with the help of a case study. Case studies are considered appropriate when conducting descriptive and explanatory research which does not focus on mathematical proven cause-effect relationships but on drawing conclusions dependent on the context of the research phenomena (Yin, 2003).

1.2.2 Contextualisation of the Case Study

The UK is chosen as a case study due to having experienced a pronounced financialization process, in some ways approaching that of the US, in response to a neoliberal turn (French et al., 2011). In the UK, this was manifested in the policies first implemented by Margaret Thatcher and continued by successive governments including a retrenchment of the welfare state, labour market and financial market deregulation, leading, amongst other things, to a removal of the distinction between wholesale and retail banking. The UK however differs to the US in having in place stricter financial regulation, for example, with regard to subprime loans (Kempson and Collard, 2012; Shabani et al., 2014).

Deregulation policies and the retreat of the welfare state contributed to a rising polarisation of income by weakening the bargaining power of labour and favouring capital income (Bonefeld, 1995). Between 1977 and 2014 the median disposable income of the top 20% of households rose 50 percentage points more than the income of the bottom 20% households (ONS, 2016a). In connection with rising income inequality, household debt-to-GDP doubled between 1988 and 2008 from 66.2% to 120.1% (Eurostat, 2018). While recognizing the central role of income inequality and growing debt levels, concomitant with the financialization, it is argued here that it is essential to not only look at debt but also at household assets to provide a holistic view of households' balance sheet. The role of assets becomes clear when looking at UK's household net financial wealth-to-income ratio. This is positioned in the top five of European Union countries and rose up to 341.60% in 2015; close to three times as much as the debt-to-income ratio, showing steady continuous growth (Eurostat, 2018). Moreover, between 2014 and 2016 aggregate total wealth of UK households rose by 15% up to £12.8 trillion compared to £1.23 trillion aggregate household debt and 50% of households had a total net wealth of £262,400 (ONS, 2018a). Hence, not only household liabilities increased but also assets.

To be able to identify factors influencing household financial identity, a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach is employed. For this purpose, 56 semi-structured interviews with medium to high income households were conducted during 2016-2017 and insights gained from the interviews have been complemented with a review of media documents and UK household survey data conducted for the Office of National Statistics. Medium and high-income households were chosen based on being defined as having sufficient income to pursue an asset accumulation strategy (French et al., 2011) and providing a new perspective to the existing everyday financialization literature with its usual focus on income constrained households (Keasey and Veronesi, 2012; Smith et al., 2004).

1.2.3 Contribution of the Research

Drawing on qualitative insights within a Foucauldian governmentality approach, I present the following three main contributions to the literature divided into being mainly empirical, theoretical and methodological.

First, this study empirically shows by incorporating a holistic view whether households internalize a financialized subject position. While previous studies have empirically focused on specific elements of household balance sheet, this study is the first to provide insights into households' interaction with assets and liabilities in general rather than concentrating on one aspect of the balance sheet. By circumventing the underlying focus on debt and homeownership, key aspects of households' asset accumulation strategy are identified. Moreover, this research extends existing research by revealing not only households' interaction with asset norms but also its impact on everyday practices. In spite of ambiguities inherent in the interaction between finance and everyday life having been discussed before (Langley, 2006b; 2007), this study unveils the impact of these on household financial behaviour by means of primary data. As a result of these empirical explorations, it scrutinizes

the main assumptions made in the financialization of daily life literature and gives insights into households' everyday lives which help to conceptually refine these assumptions.

Second, this study addresses the interconnectedness between asset norms and power relations. In contrast to existing studies employing Foucault's governmentality approach which are focused on institutional changes in a rather neutral way (French and Kneale, 2009; Langley, 2008), this research study stresses the role of capitalist relations in the construction of asset norms. It therefore contributes to the literature by explaining how households' interaction with assets and liabilities is intertwined with social power relations, extending Hardt and Negri's (2009) and Sotiropoulos et al.'s (2013a) elaborations on governmentality and capitalist relationships. When looking at the two literature strands shown above, the question arose whether rising responsibility and the concomitant asset accumulation leads to an improvement of underlying capital labour inequalities in the form of households becoming capitalists and non-capitalists (Bryan et al., 2009; Weiss, 2014), or if asset norms intensify capital labour inequalities (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996; Karacimen, 2015). By incorporating power relationships into a Foucauldian governmentality approach these opposing visions about the impact of asset ownership can be clarified.

Third, by pulling together different methodological approaches consisting of a discursive investigation of media discourses, a quantitative analysis of household balance sheets and combining them with insights from semi-structured interview, a distinctive methodological mixed methods approach is chosen that differs from previous studies. I thus respond to calls by Penaloza and Barnhart, (2011), Chen and Roscoe (2017), Lai (2017) and Robertson (2017) to extend research into the financialization of daily life by combining an analysis of institutional changes with an exploration of the associated outcomes. This methodological approach enables not only new empirical insights but makes it possible to incorporate a

greater degree of agency of households and therefore allowing for different dimensions of how financialization is experienced in everyday life⁶. Such an approach rejects a binary categorization of households into active and passive financial subjects which often results in an overgeneralized depiction of households reacting to finance in a uniform way.

1.3 Composition of the Dissertation

The thesis is divided into eight chapters which are briefly outlined here, offering the reader a guide for the thesis (see Table 2). Following the introductory chapter which has provided the background and rationale behind conducting this research, Chapter 2 explains theoretical explanations underlying household financial behaviour. The literature review provided here first sheds light on determining factors of household indebtedness which is followed up by discussing household financial behaviour from an asset perspective. The chapter then outlines the missing link between the asset and liability side of household balance sheet management and everyday life. The theoretical framework is then based on identified gaps in the literature, including theoretical and empirical gaps. A research paradigm as the theoretical underpinning for the research is introduced at the end of Chapter 2, comprising three levels of analysis: context (institutional changes), language (discourse), practice (financial and everyday practices).

Following the introductory chapter and the literature review identifying the research gap as well as the theoretical research framework, Chapter 3 then presents the research methodology employed. The methodological background of the study includes the three levels of analysis introduced in the theoretical research framework and integrates these into the data collection and analysis methods. For the purpose of investigating contextual factors

⁶ An exception can be found in the exploration of debt behaviour or exploring one aspect of asset ownership. Penaloza and Barnhart (2011), for instance, provide differentiated trajectories households take up in becoming financial subjects with regard to debt while Pellandini-Simanyi et al. (2015) explore the impact of homeownership on relationships and everyday practices.

and everyday practices, data collection consists of primary data in the form of interviews and secondary data in the form of household surveys conducted by the government as well as a document review. As it is recognized that language does not merely represent but constitutes subject positions a discourse analysis which is concerned with detecting how meaning is constructed through language is combined with a thematic analysis.

The findings of the data collection and analysis are stated in the ensuing four chapters, divided into the different categories outlined in the research framework consisting of context, practice and language. First, the institutional context and the surrounding media discourse constructing asset norms are depicted in Chapter 4; which is then followed up by showing how households respond to these mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization in Chapter 5. The particular focus lies on households' engagement with institutional changes and discourses presented in the media. After having seen how households become everyday risk managers who internalize asset norms, a representation of how these discourses are translated into household financial practices and impact everyday life is presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 then shows how the subject position of the everyday risk manager is negotiated, i.e. different forms of resistance are presented. The aim is to unravel how households position themselves discursively and to what extent the everyday risk manager subjectivity is resisted.

In the concluding remarks, these different levels of analysis are combined in an overall framework outlining how the everyday risk manager is constructed, comes into being and is represented in everyday practices and discourses. Finally, contributions of this research are presented by separating between empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions and reflections on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Table 2 Outline of the Thesis

Identification of Research Gap	1 Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Rationale for the Study - Research Aims and Questions - Outlining Contributions of the Research
	2 Literature Review: Financialization of Households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretical Explanations of Indebtedness - Role of Assets in Balance Sheets - Current Stage of Research and Implications for Research Design - Theoretical Research Framework
Methodology	3 Methodological Background of the Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methodological Research Framework - Data Collection Approach - Data Analysis Methods - Methodological Challenges
Analysis and Discussion of the Findings	4 Construction of the Everyday Risk Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanisms of Responsibilization and Financialization - Construction of Asset Norms through Institutional Changes and Discourses - Answer to sub-research question i.
	5 Becoming an Everyday Risk Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Households' Response to Mechanisms of Responsibilization and Financialization - Discursive Engagement with Asset Norms - Answer to sub-research question ii.
	6 Being an Everyday Risk Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insights into Household Financial Practices - Self-governing Measures of Households - Answer to sub-research questions iii. and iv.
	7 Dimensions of Household Financial Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positioning as Everyday Risk Manager - Different Degrees of Resistance - Answer to sub-research question v.
Conclusion	8 Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empirical, Theoretical and Methodological Contributions - Framework of The Everyday Risk Manager - Limitations and Future Research

2 Literature Review: Financialization of Households

2.1 Introduction

Research into the financialization of daily life has taken mainly two directions. Each one is focused on one of the two sides of household balance sheet: indebtedness or asset ownership. Against this backdrop, determining factors of rising indebtedness of households are discussed first (Section 2.2). The discussion in Section 2.2 is further divided into insights from finance theory and political economy explanations of household indebtedness. The section concludes by outlining the impact of debt on everyday life. This is then followed in Section 2.3 by discussing key literature with regard to asset accumulation. Here, the emphasis lies on the construction of the everyday investor on the one hand out of a household finance perspective and on the other hand out of a Foucauldian governmentality perspective. The section ends with giving an overview of qualitative studies researching the interaction between asset accumulation and everyday life. In Section 2.4, the missing link between these two strands of literature is discussed with a specific focus on theoretical and methodological limitations. The lack of a holistic approach is highlighted with respect to researching household financial identity in a way that incorporates households' interaction with institutional changes and explores the overall balance sheet composition.

The gaps and weaknesses of the existing literature are then taken as a justification for the theoretical research framework presented in Section 2.5. The framework aims to repoliticise Foucauldian governmentality approaches taken in everyday financialization studies and show how household financial identity depends not only on institutional changes and discourses but also on capitalist relationships. Three levels of analysis consisting of context (institutional changes and discourses), practice (household financial practices and their impact on everyday life) and language (media and household discourse) are included to explore households' interaction with assets and liabilities.

2.2 Rising Indebtedness of Households

Determining factors of indebtedness are analysed mainly from two methodological angles: (a) a finance theory approach whereby the analysis focuses on the actions of representative agents and (b) a political economy approach whereby the behaviour of individuals is explained with the help of institutional changes. These two approaches are discussed in turn before the section closes with depicting the impact of debt on everyday life.

2.2.1 Insights from Household Finance - Determinants of Indebtedness

In recent decades, publicly funded welfare systems have been increasingly replaced by asset-based welfare systems where households are 'forced to devote resources already early in adulthood to ensure levels of private savings so that personal capital can be accumulated to secure their old age' (Kemeny, 2005, p.62). According to the life-cycle/permanent income hypothesis (based on Modigliani and Brumberg, 1954; Friedman, 1957), indebtedness and savings of households are intertwined with households' life cycle stages. While debt is taken on to secure consumption during income constrained periods, savings are accumulated to be used for consumption in retirement, hence accumulating and decumulating wealth during the life-cycle (Debelle, 2004; Campbell, 2006). This results in young households borrowing, middle aged households setting aside savings for retirement and older households dissaving. In this form of explanation, taking on debt is seen as a natural mechanism to smooth income differences during the life-cycle. The underlying assumption here is that households are utility-maximising, rational agents with optimal expectations with regard to their lifetime income and wealth (Bridges and Disney, 2004).

Despite basing the life-cycle/permanent income hypothesis on assumptions of rational behaviour, it is acknowledged that households might not behave as expected (Merton, 2000). A precautionary motive may impede borrowing in case of rising insecurity, for example due

to having experienced an income shock such as unemployment (Guiso et al., 2002). Some households might also develop self-imposed rules to avoid debt: '[...] a ban on borrowing, the so-called debt ethic. A somewhat weaker rule is to prohibit borrowing except for specific purposes, like houses and automobiles.' (Thaler and Shefrin, 1981, p.397). Whereas these factors lead to lower debt levels than anticipated by the hypothesis, households also hold higher levels of debt. The deviations in case of higher debt levels are assigned to factors such as myopia (Shea, 1995), a lack of self-control and rather poor financial management (Disney et al., 2008). In addition to 'improper' management of household finances, constraints in the ability to borrow sufficient money to smooth consumption and income differences over time, are seen as impeding the implementation of saving and borrowing behaviour according to the life-cycle/permanent income hypothesis (Deaton, 1991).

These factors represent the underlying reasoning of financial literacy initiatives. By widening access to financial services and reducing the information-asymmetry with the help of financial education, households are assumed to make better informed decision. Finance is seen as a helpful tool to democratize society:

The democratization of finance is a route to a good society. Most importantly, it has to be further expanded and democratized and humanized, so that we may reach a time when financial institutions will be even more pervasive and positive in their impact. That means giving people the ability to participate in the financial system as equals, with full access to information and with the resources [...] (Shiller, 2012, p.121)

However, it has also been recognized that financial products might be too complex to adopt appropriate risk management, independent of households' financial literacy:

Deep and wide-ranging disaggregation has left households with the responsibility for making important and technically complex micro financial decisions involving risk [...] decisions

that they had *not* had to make *in the past*, are *not* trained to make *in the present*, and are *unlikely* to execute efficiently *in the future*. (Merton, 2000, p.4)

For this reason, Merton (2003) anticipated that user-friendly products which reduce risks incurred by households would be developed. Quite the opposite, the expansion of financial services did not lead to user-friendly products but in profit seeking behaviour of financial institutions, as seen in the Global Financial Crisis (Dymski, 2009). Nevertheless, financial deepening accompanied by financial education is advocated (Lusardi and Tufano, 2015) and has generated a huge research programme (Collard et al., 2009; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

Even more critical studies outline the necessity to improve financial literacy, for instance Atkinson et al. (2007) criticize the mis-selling of financial products while at the same time developing a financial capability index which is aimed to improve financial education programmes. In line with Merton's argumentation, critical studies also suggest to simplify financial products. Erturk et al. (2007, p.571) suggests that providers should 're-think the design of complex financial products' and Smith et al. (2009) recommend to introduce financial instruments similar to financial corporations. These studies thus indirectly reinforce the belief system that households are able to achieve 'sound' financial management. Yet, even if households act responsibly, there is still uncertainty with regard to economic downturns, tax changes or other unknown events which are not avoidable with the help of financial planning (Langley, 2007).

2.2.2 Impact of Institutional Changes on Household Indebtedness

The political economy approaches provide an alternative explanation of households' rising indebtedness. Rather than seeing finance as a possibility to democratize society, financial deregulation and innovation, in connection with the retreat of the welfare state, have led to rising income inequality, forcing income constrained households to take on debt to sustain

living standards (Montgomerie, 2009). This is assumed to take place in two ways. First, based on the relative income hypothesis debt is used to maintain consumption according to social norms. The relative income hypothesis (based on Duesenberry, 1949) states that consumption is dependent on the next higher social reference group, i.e. lower income households emulate higher income households. These consumption patterns are not easily adjustable in case of growing inequality (Belabed et al., 2013). Second, the concept of ‘defensive consumption’ is introduced (Montgomerie, 2007, p.11). Alongside stagnating wages, increasingly precarious work and less welfare provisions, households take on debt to finance essential goods such as medicine, food and a car to drive to work (Servon, 2017).

Yet, not only is debt used for sustaining living standards in case of income shortfalls but also to accumulate assets as means of welfare provision (Finlayson, 2009), as also recognized by finance theory. Whereas in the case of the debt-financed consumption and finance theory presented above, finance is depicted as passive, i.e. households use it to finance consumption in response to income shortfalls, it is argued here that financialization is instead ‘functionally useful’ for the capitalist system intensifying capital-labour inequalities (Lysandrou, 2016, p.450). A capitalist system is characterized by the pressure to compete and constantly increase capital accumulation, hence, finding innovative approaches to make profit (Forrest and Williams, 1984). By dismantling the welfare state while widening access to financial services, households have to carry more responsibilities and reproductive activities become incorporated into capital accumulation (Lebaron, 2010).

Finance enables the government to withdraw direct financial support while promoting asset ownership with the help of indirect subsidies and financial deregulation (Forrest and Williams, 1984; Schwartz and Seabrooke, 2008). Getting an education and conducting health and pension provisions are increasingly financed directly (with personal debt) or

indirectly (with equity withdrawals) through debt (Allon, 2010; Lebaron, 2010). One key aspect of this is the financialization of housing which has been assigned a welfare function; becoming a site of accumulation that can be used for an ‘individualized life course risk management’ (Bryan and Rafferty, 2014, p.404). Households are expected to get on the property ladder in younger ages with the help of a mortgage which is then paid off when moving up the career ladder. After having paid off the mortgage, the rising housing wealth is used for providing income during retirement (Lowe, 2010). Whereas the government promotes homeownership with the help of indirect subsidies, it reduces direct subsidies and the stock of houses for social welfare provision. As a result, countries with a decline in the welfare state show a rise in homeownership rates (Kemeny, 2005).

Equally important, debt-financed asset accumulation allows capitalists to realise financial profits out of households’ income streams in two ways. First, debt-financed homeownership empowers capitalists to earn interest income. As a result, new ways of including households into the financialization process by offering credit are searched for. Under the phrase of democratizing finance, previously financially excluded groups due to bad credit rates or insufficient income, for instance poor households, women and ethnic minorities, are included in the financialization process albeit at higher costs (Leyshon and Thrift, 2007; Dymski, 2009). Keasey and Veronesi (2012) show that subprime mortgage holders in the UK felt they were encouraged to take on debt by arguing that through this they make a contribution to the economy. These forms of banking strategies reinforce inequalities and extract rent from minorities rather than leading to an improvement of the racial and gender inequality (Dymski et al., 2013).

Second, financial institutions were able to offer subprime loans because of moving high risk debt off their balance sheets with the help of securitization and thus circumventing capital

adequacy requirements while realizing future income streams early (Schwartz and Seabrooke, 2008). Since the end of the 1970s, a strong financial deregulation process took place and the role of banks changed from providing mainly credit for investment and bearing the default risk, to creating off-balance sheet items and focusing on commission and fees (Dymski, 2009). Due to the retreat of the welfare state, pension funds have increased substantially in liberalized countries. The growth in the size of pension funds in connection with declining interest rates led to a surge in high profit investment possibilities. The constant income streams coming from households' long-term financial contracts, for instance in the form of mortgage contracts and pension payments, makes them attractive as an asset base. Therefore, while the dismantling of the welfare state increases the demand for securities, it also secures the supply of them (Cooper, 2015; Lysandrou, 2016).

Financialization is thus a 'development within rather than a distortion of capitalist production' (Bryan et al., 2009, p.460). Finance benefits from the process of responsabilization by not only earning interest rates but also by securitizing households' payment streams. Securitization leads to the incorporation of households' balance sheets into the capital accumulation process. Finance is thus an active part in reshaping capitalist relations where 'homeowners become viewed as financially exploitable' (Aalbers, 2008, p.152) and are constructed as asset class:

Labour can now be constituted as any value-creating activity (anything that enables accumulation and builds capital). [...] Labour becomes (unintentional) capital and hence productive in new ways. (Bryan et al. , 2015, p.318)

It is thus in the interest of the capitalist to establish new forms of debt possibilities to benefit from further profit opportunities and discipline labour as discussed in the subsequent section (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a).

2.2.3 Interaction between Rising Indebtedness and Everyday Life

As shown in the previous section, households are called upon to ‘invest [investing] in their reproduction’ (Federici, 2014, p.235) by accumulating assets and using debt to finance education, housing, and pensions. By promoting investment in social reproduction with the help of debt, equality and individual success is proclaimed since ‘everybody is equal before money’ (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996, p.217). Yet on the contrary, creating finance as an essential part of everyday life deepens the unequal relationship between capital and labour. Instead of solely creating new profit opportunities for capitalists as discussed above, capital-labour inequalities are also intensified from a labour perspective in three distinctive ways.

First, in an environment of rising job insecurity and less welfare provision by the state, growing indebtedness acts as a disciplining mechanism by tying labour to capital not only in the present but also in the future. Workers are committed to keep their jobs to generate income and comply with debt service obligations, resulting in less bargaining power (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996). Because of servicing debt and wanting to avoid additional costs in case of non-payment, workers refrain from striking which would mean a loss in wages for the strike days (Bonefeld, 1995). Out of fear of losing the job and growing job insecurity, lower wages are accepted, as also recognized by Alan Greenspan (1997):

The willingness of workers in recent years to trade off smaller increases in wages for greater job security is well documented [...] deregulation has had similar effects on the intensity of competitive forces in some industries. In any event, although I do not doubt that all these factors are relevant, I would be surprised if they were nearly as important as job insecurity.

The rising insecurity and the increasing possibilities to take on debt thus enable capitalists to reduce wages in the knowledge that workers are able to use debt to sustain their living standard (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b). In the case of high debt commitments and earning low

wages, it leads to an increase in work hours and accepting precarious work situations⁷ to comply with debt service obligations (Karacimen, 2015). Hence, the disciplining character of debt contributes ‘to the persistence of low wages and labour costs’ (Barba and Pivetti, 2009, p.127) and limits social mobility.

Second, when taking on debt the subsequent interest rate payments not only lead to further possibilities for capitalists to generate profits but interest rate payments also reduce consumption out of wages. In case of low interest rates, higher living standards are portrayed as achievable, based on credit rather than wage income. Here, it is recognized that an intensification of capital-labour inequalities does not necessarily contradict improving living standards: ‘the rate of exploitation is not measured by the standard of living, but by the rate of surplus value’ (Heinrich, 2012, p.120). As a result of rising debt levels, households are dependent on interest rate movements. In case of high interest rates, more of workers’ income has to be spent on servicing debt and less on consumption. Since interest rates are determined by debt contracts, independent of work conducted, labour is having ‘its conditions of existence determined by the rate of interest’ (Bryan et al., 2009, p.464).

Third, in case of changes in the financial or economic circumstances, the disciplining power of debt is intensified by undermining labour’s power of resistance. Bonefeld (1995) shows, in his exploration of the debt crisis in the UK in the beginning of the 1990s, how in situations of economic crises social discipline is deepened based on the growing visibility of debt collection agencies and the awareness of neighbours having lost their work. Debt-financed asset accumulation adds a further dimension to this through foreclosures and repossessions (Immergluck, 2011). Relative indebtedness puts pressure on households as they are susceptible to swings in financial markets and house price changes. An economic downturn

⁷ This includes long overtime hours, short-term, non-unionized, casual or low paid work (Bonefeld, 1995).

accompanied by a sudden drop in house prices or an increase in interest rates can lead to negative equity. Because of wanting to ‘continue living in their house’, households accept unfavourable work situations, for example by increasing work hours (Bryan et al., 2015, p.319). Hence, ‘a credit-sustained boom and a policy of austerity belong together’ in ‘the pacification of the class struggle’ (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996, p.216). On the one hand, workers ensure to keep their jobs during the boom phase because of having experienced an increase in living standards. On the other hand, it intensifies the discipline during the austerity phase by experiencing rising insecurity.

Despite the claim of a promotion of equality and personal responsibility, the literature above depicts how the increasing role of finance in wider aspects of society leads to rising inequalities. While capitalists are able to extract further profits based on households’ income and payment streams as well as reduce wage costs, financialization intensifies the pressure on households based on rising debt-financed consumption and asset accumulation. It is argued here that this perspective should be complemented by giving a stronger focus to the asset side of households’ balance sheet, aside from homeownership and its associated costs. Asset-based welfare considerations are not only relevant in relation to the house but also in relation to the overall asset ownership of households including pensions and savings.

2.3 The Role of Assets in Households’ Balance Sheets

Through the promotion of asset-based welfare, households are called upon to become asset owners. This process is argued to have transformed household balance sheets with the liability side increasing based on mortgage debt and the asset side moving towards investments in stocks and pension funds (Guiso et al., 2002). Whereas the literature above has been focusing on the liability side of this transformation, a second strand of everyday financialization literature concentrates on the asset side. This is discussed subsequently.

2.3.1 The Everyday Investor - Determinants of Asset Ownership

With the replacement of publicly funded welfare with asset-based welfare measures, households are increasingly constructed as everyday investors who absorb ‘investor identities’ (Langley, 2007, p.70) in order to mitigate future risks. An everyday investor builds a ‘portfolio of financial market assets that, carefully selected through a calculated engagement with risk, holds out the prospect of returns’ (Langley, 2006b, p.923). It has been stated here that by becoming ‘active investor-subjects’ (Kear, 2012, p.15), households simultaneously take on the role of capitalists and non-capitalists in two distinct ways.

First, households accumulate assets, thus, appropriate money from their investments (capitalists) in addition to their role as workers (non-capitalists [Weiss, 2014]). Widening access to the means of accumulation is considered a ‘major innovation because in all earlier capitalist societies the masses had been subject to the tyranny of earned income as unpropertied subjects, living off weekly or monthly earnings’ (Froud et al., 2010, p.5). Households thus do not have the double freedom anymore of being freed from accumulation and choose to work or starve but now ‘labour is free to accumulate (a re-attachment to capital) and free to convert part of their income into surplus value (interest payments’ [Bryan et al., 2009, p.464]). This means that households need to make decisions between the percentage of wages going into accumulation and servicing debt and the ratio going into financing reproduction. Similar to capitalists, interest rates and financial returns determine current and future consumption, for instance through pension agreements and its returns.

Second, ‘the process of financialization sees the direct incursion of capitalist calculation inside the household’ (Bryan et al., 2009, p.461). Whereas households were always exposed to finance based on household budgeting and ensuring that they could maintain living standards, financial calculations requested from households nowadays have become more

pervasive (Allon, 2014). In light of the recent retreat of the welfare state, households are not only called upon to accumulate assets to circumvent future risks with the help of an asset portfolio but also ‘people are being asked to think like capitalists’ (Martin, 2002, p.12), i.e. manage their assets (for example pension investments) and liabilities (for example personal loans) by adopting finance rationality (Mandel, 1996). According to household finance theory, this means that households use financial strategies to benefit from their investments, for instance diversification and hedging. Households are expected to examine one’s degree of risk aversion, estimate returns with the goal to build an optimal composition of assets while recognizing the influence of interest rates, inflation and taxes (Guiso et al., 2002).

Following the concept of diversification, investments should be conducted in a way where the different assets are uncorrelated, thus, when the value of one investment goes down, the other asset values are not affected. For this purpose, households should invest in long-term bonds whose values move inversely to interest rates, generating wealth when interest rates go down, and include equities in their portfolio (Campbell, 2006). Furthermore, finance theory suggests that households recognize the impact of human capital, i.e. work, when managing their balance sheet. This means that someone whose salary depends upon the workings of the stock market is already highly exposed to the stock market and should therefore avoid investing a high amount of the portfolio into the stocks (Merton, 2000, 2003). Due to higher labour market volatility and less state protection in the form of unemployment insurance, households should also lower their labour market risk exposure by searching for uncorrelated income sources, thus, diversifying work income sources, for example, through combining part-time, salary and self-employed work (Weller and Wenger, 2015).

Quite contrary to the theoretical assumptions made above, there is an argument that households tend to underdiversify their portfolio with even wealthy households not holding

equities as expected by finance theory (Campbell, 2006). An argument put forward to explain discrepancies between finance theory and actual financial behaviour of households is that there is a difference between intentions and actions (Thaler, 1985, 1990). Households might have the goal to save for retirement but then overspend in the everyday consumption and not save enough. They thus experience a conflict between two preferences - having a short-term view ('myopic doer') and a long-term view ('farsighted planner' [Thaler and Shefrin, 1981, p.393]). To overcome this conflict in time preferences, households incorporate mental accounting techniques by structuring their disposable income into categories, for instance separating money between income, assets and future income. Self-control mechanisms in the form of tracking expenditures and controlling spending according to the defined categories are then implemented with the help of different saving accounts or debt products which are used to finance spending rather than using savings (Thaler, 1990).

This echoes the concept of earmarking outlined by Zelizer (1997) who argues that money is not neutral and households assign meaning to it, for example money received as a gift is spent differently than money received through work. Equally important is the earmarking of money for the usage of such, for instance separating money into everyday expenses and saving for financing burial costs. Based on cultural norms, the saving for burial money can lead to a restriction of everyday consumption of food. One of the main differences to Thaler's approach is that the focus lies on cultural and social meanings attached to money rather than having 'two sets of preferences that are in conflict at a single point in time' (Thaler and Shefrin, 1981, p.394). Decisions based on norms are taken without necessarily being aware of them. These should not be considered a deviation from rationality but rather are rational in itself because they help to make decisions in a complex environment. It is thus essential to explore how norms come into being which is taken up by the strand of financialization of daily life literature, extending the here provided discussion into the norms of households.

2.3.2 Everyday Financialization with a Foucauldian Lens

Foucauldian inspired studies use the concept of governmentality to depict how norms become dominant in everyday life. As briefly introduced in 1.1.1, governmentality is defined as an interwoven system of institutions, government and population itself through which interaction the population is regulated: ‘the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power’ (Foucault, 1991c, p.102). Governmentality thus means that power is not exercised in a direct, disciplining way through curtailing actions but by creating the institutional environment and discourses resulting in households disciplining themselves; they conform to created norms (Foucault, 1991a, 2008). Financialization studies using Foucault’s theory of governmentality can be divided into two main methodological frameworks: a discursive and a performative approach.

Research frameworks concerned with the discursive formation of households’ asset strategies, i.e. a language level of analysis, explore how investor identities are constructed through the creation of a prevalent finance discourse. Discourses are seen as transformative; ‘language is not simply a medium in which ideas and intentions are communicated’ (Jacobs and Manzi, 1996, p.543) but they construct the subject position of the everyday investor. Governing through discourse is thus an active process that mediates practices (Hirsto, 2011). A significant part of discourse studies conducted in light of a Foucauldian framework focuses on homeownership and how it has become normalized (Jacobs and Manzi, 1996; Ruonavaara, 1996; Gurney, 1999a, 1999b). Here, it is shown that a normalizing discourse of homeownership is established, for instance by using the term ‘home’ and its associated meanings such as ‘home sweet home’ rather than ‘house’ (Gurney, 1999b). As a result of this normalizing discourse, households feel pressured to earn money to pay for the mortgage or otherwise lose the ‘status as a normal individual’ (Grey, 1997, p.49).

Gurney (1999b) employs a unique approach that combines a discourse analysis of policy documents with statements made by interview participants and their reasoning in owning a house. It is unique due to the majority of discourse studies focusing on policy discourses and discourses of housing studies (Forrest and Williams, 1984; Jacobs and Manzi, 1996; Ruonavaara, 1996) without connecting them to households' perceptions. Gurney's study, as also other discursive studies with focus on homeownership, nevertheless lacks a treatment of institutional settings. As shown by McKee (2011) and Smith (2008), institutional changes are a key factor for households entering the housing market. Rather than solely a normalising discourse transforming households' perception of homeownership as desirable, households feel they have to buy a house due to a less stable rental market. Furthermore, discursive studies with focus on homeownership do not take it a step further and show how the house has been increasingly constructed as an investment, operating as asset-based welfare means.

In a series of interventions, Langley (2006a,b, 2007, 2008) extended the Foucauldian discourse analytic approach with an exploration of the performative effects of institutional changes and financial products on household financial behaviour, i.e. representing the context level of analysis. By employing actor-network theory⁸ based on the theoretical explorations by Callon (1998) and Latour (2005) in combination with a Foucauldian framework, he integrates institutional changes and financial products into an exploration of how the investor subject is constructed. Through performing 'calculations that are embedded in and configured through calculating tools' (Langley, 2006a, p.292), households are argued to be transformed into neoliberal subjectivities. Here, the Foucauldian literature draws as well on the everyday investor subjectivity⁹: 'someone who takes responsibility for his or her retirement is necessarily an investor subject under neoliberalism' (Langley, 2006b, p.923).

⁸ Actor-network theory emphasizes the interaction of humans and material objects where events emerge not only based on discourses but based on interactions of humans, documents, material objects (Latour, 2005).

⁹ Subjectivity means the extent of individuals being influenced and shaped by surrounding discourses such as government discourse, i.e. constructed norms become 'part of people's personal beliefs' (Taylor, 2013, p.101).

This literature strand puts emphasis on ambiguities incorporated in the everyday investor subjectivity. First, similar to the argument made by Erturk et al. (2007) concerning the complexity of financial products, it is emphasized that individuals are unwilling to invest in pensions because of being overloaded with information (Langley and Leaver, 2012). Second, the uncertainty inherent in financial market investments where ‘freedom and security in retirement is simply determined by luck and timing’ results in households preferring property over pensions (Langley, 2007, p.81). Third, the investor identity clashes with further neoliberal identities as in the case of the worker (Langley, 2006b). The increasing precariousness of work in the form of uncertain work contracts undermines the ability of households to make pension provisions over a long time period. As a result of these ambiguities, the ‘technology of the self does not take the form envisaged under neoliberal governmentality’. Instead, households push ‘back the frontiers of what it means to be an investor’ (Langley, 2007, p.81) and deviate from it by investing in property (‘leveraged investors’ [Langley, 2008, p.198]) or being ‘passive savers’ (Lai, 2017, p.927).

In addition to financial market investments, ‘financial services contribute to the process through which individuals are responsabilized and govern themselves’ (Grey, 1997, p.48). For example, by attaching risk profiles to households which then determine premiums of life insurance and annuities, insurance practices in itself lead to self-disciplining mechanisms. Based on the conditionality clauses of the insurance, households adjust their eating and drinking habits to receive a better annuity rate. More recently, annuities have been introduced with a focus on providing better rates to individuals with health issues including smoking or overweight and therefore widening access to annuities. These new financial products however create contradictions. Financial products rewarding unhealthy behaviour stand in contrast to the neoliberal subject of a healthy individual. This in turn increases insecurities and serves to discipline the masses (French and Kneale, 2009).

The Foucauldian inspired everyday literature gives valuable insights into how households are induced to deal with financial matters such as pensions (Langley, 2007; Langley and Leaver, 2012), insurances (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1993; O'Malley, 2000) or financial services (Grey, 1997; French and Kneale, 2009). Nevertheless, little is yet known about households' interaction with asset norms in general including households' identification of key aspects of asset ownership. Moreover, albeit recognizing ambiguities incorporated in investor identities, research so far has not adequately accounted for the interplay between the everyday investor subject and further everyday identities as in the case of the worker.

These gaps are due, in part, to the fact that households' interaction with assets is often implied based on secondary data, rather than explored with primary data (Langley, 2007; Martin, 2002). Despite recognizing that subject positions are manifested 'in [their] reflective, intentional and aspirational practices' (Langley, 2007, p.73) and acknowledging the need for more empirical studies to explore how financialization transforms daily life, qualitative research concerning assets – rather than debt¹⁰ – is the exception (exceptions: Gurney, 1999; McKee, 2011; Lai, 2017¹¹). This sometimes implicitly victimises households and assumes that the spread of finance into everyday life is a top-down approach, i.e. households conform to norms constructed through institutional changes and discourses surrounding them without resisting these. For example, Allon (2010, p.375) assigns agencies to households by arguing that households' practices 'have an implicit rationale and agency of their own' but constructs them as adopting financial behaviour through discourses surrounding them without exploring how these are resisted.

¹⁰ Penalosa and Barnhart (2011) show how credit has become normalized in US households, moving between the constraining and enabling characteristics of credit. With the help of semi-structured interviews and a Foucauldian notion of disciplinary power, they show how the introduction of zero-interest rate credit cards has led to rather credit cards acting as a disciplining mechanism, they have become lifestyle facilitators. Through this process, households regain some freedom by exploiting different offers of credit cards while also acting as a 'debtor 's prison'.

¹¹ These studies as well focus mainly on homeownership or on financial literacy programmes. However, a holistic approach in discussing household engagement with assets and liabilities and the impact of institutional changes and media discourses on it is still missing.

For this reason, there is a recently a growing literature which calls for an integration of qualitative research into governmentality studies (Pellandini-Simanyi et al., 2015; Hall, 2016; Chen and Roscoe, 2017). The necessity to include empirical research can be seen in Lai's (2017) study which shows that households are not passive receivers of financial education programmes. Based on attending financial education seminars and conducting semi-structured interviews, Lai (2017) depicts in her study how households are transformed through state initiatives but also integrate their own rationalities in the form of emotions and moral judgements. Despite not following the advice and investing in the advised financial products, households should not be categorized as 'passive savers or non-investors' (Lai, 2017, pp.927-928) as these households often perform more complicated and pervasive calculations when investing in alternative investments. It is thus not sufficient to take into consideration how norms of financially responsible behaviour are constructed in media and policy discourse to draw conclusions on households' financial behaviour. Rather, it is essential to explore how these changes are perceived and integrated into 'everyday practices or the little routines' (Aitken, 2003, p.293), i.e. representing the practice level of analysis.

2.3.3 The Missing Link: Role of Assets and Everyday Life

While the studies presented in the previous sections assumed a rather straight forward connection of asset-based welfare measures transforming households into either being financially active or passive (see for instance Section 2.3.1), qualitative studies show that the change towards an ownership society is an ambiguous process with contradictory results, as can be seen in the case of homeownership and its changing perception. From one point of view, it is argued that through the introduction of asset-based welfare measures and making it easier to bank on housing, i.e. to withdraw equity, the house has become an investment object rather than a consumption good in the form of a family home (Smith et al., 2009). In contrast, other studies found that the house is mainly purchased to have a home and place of security instead of making financial gains (Easthope, 2004). Ronald (2008) criticizes this

dichotomous view of housing as either investment or consumption good and argues for an understanding of housing as a mix where the home is an investment object and a socially valued living space at the same time (Poppe et al., 2016). This raises the question what influences these contradictory views on housing.

This question can be answered with the help of a recent growing literature incorporating the interaction between social and economic relations, more specifically the interaction between emotions and asset ownership and family relationships and asset ownership (see Table 3 at the end of this section). In the first case, negotiations take place based on the inherent contradiction between the economic value of the house as an asset and the emotional value as a home. This can result in emotions outweighing economic considerations, for example, accepting a higher than anticipated price in a fast moving housing market (Christie et al., 2008) or keeping a house despite needing to downsize (Munro and Smith, 2008). Giving up the house can be difficult based on experiencing a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. Similarly, some households reject equity withdrawals based on the house representing lifetime achievements (Fox O'mahony and Overton, 2015).

In the second case, viewing the house as an investment comes into conflict with family relationships. When taking out equity from the house, this literature shows with the help of interviews that households feel guilty because of harming the inheritance for their children, reflecting the conflict between using the house as asset-based welfare and the bequest motive (Rowlingson, 2006). At the same time, younger households seek help from their parents in order to be able to own a house in an environment of rising house prices (Clapham et al., 2014). Despite being reliant on the help of family members, young households tend to feel uncomfortable in receiving help and feel their autonomy threatened (Druta and Ronald, 2017). This conflict can result in 'an intergenerational contract of mutual support and

assistance' (Heath and Calvert, 2013, p.1131), leading to younger households seeing the payment as a payment for future services such as helping their parents when being ill.

Alongside the interaction between social and economic relations, wealth gains of homeownership influence the perception of the house. Households tend to neglect mortgage debt due to rising house prices, resulting in what Soaita and Searle (2016, p.1087) call 'debt amnesia', i.e. an overestimation of wealth gains and underestimation of mortgage risk. Monthly mortgage payments are compared to previous rental costs instead of the overall debt service costs and rising house prices are articulated without taking into consideration inflation. Instead of referring to themselves as mortgagors, households refer to themselves as homeowners where mortgage payments are contributing to the future. Mortgage debt comes only to the forefront during distressed times such as a divorce (Pellandini-Simanyi et al., 2015). This debt amnesia is argued to be caused by mortgages being too complex and opaque. As a result, more simplified financial products are suggested, thus similar to Erturk et al. (2007), rather than challenging asset-based welfare, these measure would deepen it.

In contrast, more critical studies focus on how asset ownership is immersed in capitalist relations by not only strengthening existing inequalities but also making them acceptable to households. In the case of Israel, households see house purchases as providing security. Yet, through the process of buying houses financed with debt, rising house prices and retreat of the welfare state are intensified: 'Credit dissolves political agency [...] by linking financially leveraged growth to public interest, even when such leveraging systemically undermines common welfare and security' (Weiss, 2014, p.146). Houses are promoted as an asset which can be used in case of income constrained periods, notwithstanding that they cannot guarantee sufficient returns to counteract periods of income shortfalls (Montgomerie, 2009). A similar aspect can be seen in pensions which are depicted as secure investments whilst the

involved risk of their interaction with financial markets and the profit maximizing character are hidden (Weiss, 2015). Finance thus gains from the insecurity of households (as shown in 2.2.3), albeit not being able to guarantee sufficient coverage.

The intensification of inequalities through finance can also be seen in gender inequalities. In spite of a growing interest in understanding the role of gender inequalities in asset management (Montgomerie and Young, 2010; Allon, 2014), the main focus lies on intra-household inequalities based on income differences. It is argued that a relatively higher income leads to a rise in the decision-making power in managing households' money (Pahl, 1989; Vogler and Pahl, 1994). More recently, the perceptions of relationships (Ashby and Burgoyne, 2006) and the impact of social norms (Dema-Moreno, 2009) have been integrated into these studies. Zelizer's (1997) study on the social meaning of money found that specifically in income constrained households, the role of money management is assigned onto women whereas in higher income households this tends to fall onto men. Whereas qualitative research is used extensively here, little is yet known about the impact of asset norms on intra-household imbalances. A notable exception here is the discussion surrounding risk aversion and asset portfolio where it is pointed out that different risk levels in asset portfolios depend on the value of assets in relation to other household members rather than gender-specific risk perceptions (Jefferson, 2007).

Overall despite a growing integration of qualitative research in the financialization of daily life literature, these studies focus either on households' interaction with debt as in the case of mortgage debt and equity withdrawals or on one aspect of asset ownership; in particular homeownership is dominant here (see Table 3). Much less is known about households' interaction with assets in general, including not only homeownership or pensions but also savings and further investments and its impact on everyday life.

Table 3 Overview of Qualitative Empirical Literature

Authors	Country	Participants	Data Collection	Main Findings
<i>The House – Investment and Home</i>				
<i>Cook et al. (2009)</i>	UK	150 UK home-buyers with mortgages	Same as Smith (2008)	Focus on the consumption of mortgages and financial services surrounding them; shows that households are able to use mortgage conditions to their advantage
<i>McKee (2011)</i>	Scotland (Glasgow and West Dunbartons hire)	14 interviews with households who purchased the house through subsidized financial means	Focus on shared equity and shared ownership In-depth-semi structured interviews Purposive sampling Draws on the concept of ethopolitics by Nikolas Rose	Focus on low-income groups where it is not tenure of choice but feeling the pressure to purchase the house for security Exploration of meanings attached to homeownership and forms of resisting dominant policy discourses
<i>Munro (2000)</i>	UK	45 interviews with first-time buyers or recent movers	Mixed Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-scale survey of 800 owners • Semi-structured interviews 	Interaction between labour market risk and mortgage risk Development of an account of people’s motives and expectations with regard to employment risk and housing risk and the resultant financial strategies employed
<i>Munro and Leather (2000)</i>	UK	211 interviews with house owners in three cities (Bristol, Leicester, London)	Mixed Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the 1996 Scottish House Condition Survey • In-depth semi-structured interviews 	Focus on house repair and the potential future deterioration House expenditures are mainly conducted to improve the house for the family rather than investment purposes
<i>Poppe et al. (2016)</i>	Denmark, Norway, UK	18 focus groups based on income and age groups	Focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate focus groups with under 35 and over 50 • Oslo, Copenhagen, Birmingham 	Mix of seeing home as an investment object and as a socially valued home for the family
<i>Ronald (2008)</i>	Japan	37 married homeowners from 19 suburban households (Kansai district)	In-depth semi-structured interviews with topic guide Purposive sampling Grounded Theory	Exploration of micro-economic aspects in owning the home and the changing meaning of the home Depicting multiple meanings of the home rather than the dichotomy between investment and use value
<i>Smith et al. (2004)</i>	UK (Scotland, North England, London)	84 households experiencing long-term ill	Multi-method approach Exploratory semi-structured interviews Self-completed questionnaire supplemented by census data	Exploration of health inequalities – interaction between housing and ill health – housing is central to health inequality Disadvantaged in access to financial products while at the same time social housing is reduced

Authors	Country	Participants	Data Collection	Main Findings
<i>Smith (2008)</i>	UK	150 UK home-buyers with mortgages	Mixed Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone Interviews • 50 participants in-depth semi-structured interviews in 35 home visits • Interviews included brief questionnaire on self-assessed well-being Purposive sampling	Focus on the usage of mortgage equity withdrawals and how new financial products make housing wealth fungible Study shows that households internalized the norm of homeownership
<i>Smith et al. (2009)</i>	UK	150 Mortgage holders (income groups, gender balance, first-time and established buyers)	Same as Smith (2008)	Home seen as an investment object providing security for the future – ‘banking on housing’, importance attached to increasing house values Housing wealth becomes part of the everyday decisions concerning savings, debt, and consumption
<i>Searle et al. (2009)</i>	UK	150 UK home-buyers with mortgages	Same as Smith (2008)	To what degree equity withdrawals are used to spend on health Interconnection between perception of well-being and the meanings constructed surrounding the house
<i>Soaita and Searle (2016)</i>	UK	79 owner-occupiers aged between 35 and 65	Mixed Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured phone interviews (in 2013) • Descriptive analysis of household survey Sampling based on the 2012 Family Resources Survey Thematic and content analysis	Exploration of the meaning of the house; focus on gains and costs associated with homeownership Households tend to overestimate wealth gains and underestimate the risk of mortgage debt, called ‘debt amnesia’
<i>Weiss (2014)</i>	Israel	Middle class households	Observations including informal interviews of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mortgage transactions at 2 banks and 1 private mortgage consultancy • housing-purchase groups Snowball sampling	House purchase seen as providing security for the family – contradiction between dissatisfaction of house price increases and positive effect of this with regard to house investment
<i>Investments for Retirement/Long-term Savings</i>				
<i>Grace et al. (2010)</i>	Australia	11 females, 10 males	21 exploratory semi-structured interviews	Males and females have different risk perceptions in regards of retirement strategies

Authors	Country	Participants	Data Collection	Main Findings
<i>Jefferson (2007)</i>	Australia	30 in-depth interviews with women	In-depth semi-structured interviews with topic guide Grounded Theory	Focus on women's decision-making process in regards of saving for retirement- spending; savings are based on established norms and on money left over
<i>Kennickell et al. (1996)</i>	US	8 high-income and/or high-wealth individuals	Focus groups Recruited and conducted with the help of an external private company in Chicago	Research participants take into consideration life-cycle aspects while putting emphasis on uncertainty in regards of income or health which makes planning difficult
<i>Lunt and Livingstone, (1992); Lunt, (1996)</i>	UK	47 individuals	9 focus group discussions Focus on the change from mass consumption society to flexible accumulation	Relationship is determined by being aware of changing regulations, growing uncertainty/risk, changing incentives to save, scepticism and mistrust Pensions reduce incentives saving for themselves
<i>Weiss (2015)</i>	Israel	Middle class households	Multi-method approach Exploratory semi-structured interviews Secondary data analysis of policy discourse and academic literature Participant observation of consultancies	Households' assumed irrationality and contestation to the financial model is based on insecurity which cannot be solved with the help of financial markets
<i>Family Relations and Finance Rationality</i>				
<i>Chen and Roscoe (2017)</i>	Taiwan	29 non-professional investors and 9 professional investors	Multi-method approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth semi-structured In-depth semi-structured interviews Observational data was collected in four brokerages Thematic analysis of interview data Snowball sampling	Exploration of non-professional stock-market investors Interaction between economic and family relations where hierarchical family relations are intensified through economic relations Earmarking of investments according to social relations
<i>Clapham et al.(2014)</i>	UK	50 young individuals between 16 and 30 years old from four regions in the UK	Mixed Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple-sequence and cluster analysis of British Household Panel Survey Panel is supported by qualitative interviews Re-interviewing of participants in light of the developed pathways 	Exploration of housing pathways of young people from 1999 to 2008 Context factors influencing housing paths: employment situation, reforms of welfare state, access to owner occupation, availability of social housing, growing demand for private rented sector, housing-related support services

Authors	Country	Participants	Data Collection	Main Findings
<i>Druta and Ronald (2017)</i>	UK	23 young households and 17 related older households in the Birmingham area	In-depth semi-structured interviews with young adults and family members Young adults between 25 and 35 who were supported by family members Establishment of housing history of interview participants	Depiction of support received by relatives to achieve homeownership in an environment of rising house prices Receiving financial support results in a negotiation of being autonomous and being increasingly connected to parents Intensifies intra-generational income and wealth inequality
<i>Hall (2016)</i>	UK	6 families in the North West of England	Multi-method approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant observation Informal in-depth interviews Field diaries 	Family relationships and shared experiences become essential in coping with financial difficulties during crisis situation.
<i>Heath and Calvert (2013)</i>	UK	37 interviews with single young adults	Young adults 25 and 35 who received or anticipate to financial or material from family members Establishment of housing history with the help of housing history grid	Meanings assigned to financial support – boundaries between gifts and loans not clear Conflict between gratitude and discomfort Intensifies intra-generational income and wealth inequality
<i>Rowlingson (2006)</i>	UK	40 interviews in 1997 41 interviews in 1999	In-depth interviews and focus groups Interviews are based on two different studies conducted in 1997 and 1999 and were re-examined for the purpose of this research 4 group discussions in 2004	Focus on older generation who is asset-rich but cash-poor Exploration of attitudes towards assets and inheritance Households adopt a balanced approach by having a comfortable standard of life while also being able to provide inheritance
<i>Emotions and Investments</i>				
<i>Christie et al. (2008)</i>	Edinburgh	66 households (same interviews as in Munro and Smith, 2007)	Interviews with households who bought in a rising market In-depth semi-structured interviews	Emotions shape individual decisions and the housing market Rising uncertainty and a fast moving market has led to accepting higher prices Meaning of the home and market conduct are intertwined
<i>Fox O'Mahoney and Overton (2015)</i>	UK	70 equity release customers (sample based on a previously conducted survey)	In-depth semi-structured interviews with topic guide Phone Interviews	Depiction of the contradiction between using the house as asset-based welfare and being emotionally attached to the home Incorporation of within generation inequality
<i>Lai (2017)</i>	Singapore	22 non-professional investors from financial literacy programmes	Multi-method approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant observation at 11 financial literacy workshops In-depth semi-structured interviews 	Exploration of investor decision-making process Investors are influenced by emotions, relationships, moral understandings of financial products and financial products

Authors	Country	Participants	Data Collection	Main Findings
<i>Pellandini-Simányi et al.(2015)</i>	Hungary	38 interviews with mortgage borrowers (low, medium, high income levels, Budapest and countryside) and government officials	In-depth semi-structured interviews Discourse analysis Snowball sampling	Domestication of finance Financial identity is mixed with other everyday identities and becomes dominant in unsettled times, e.g. divorce
<i>Interaction between Relationships and Finance</i>				
<i>Ashby and Burgoyne (2008)</i>	UK (South of England)	18 cohabiting couples 42 married couples	In-depth semi-structured interviews with topic guide Grounded Theory Snowball sampling	View of money management system depends on view of relationship
<i>Dema-Moreno (2009)</i>	Spain	16 dual-income middle class couples and 48 interviews	In-depth semi-structured group and individual interviews Snowball sampling	Financial management systems are often based on social norms and conflicting interests
<i>Pahl (1989)</i>	UK	40 couples and 59 individuals	Mixed Methods Quantitative analysis of Family Expenditure Survey Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	Characteristics of money management systems influenced by the type of relationship – such as cohabiting, young, no children and both full time work
<i>Smock et al.(2005)</i>	Toledo, Ohio US	115 cohabiters from working class and lower middle class between 18 and 36 years old	In-depth semi-structured interviews Purposive sampling according to characteristics given by the census data Racially and ethnically diverse sample	Income constrained households find financial issues as important for marriage Marriage should occur after financial status has changed

2.4 Current Stage of Research Approaches and Implications for Research Design

After having seen key discussions in the literature surrounding household financial practices and discourses, a summary of the current gaps in the literature and its implications for the research design is presented. This is divided into two main aspects: a theoretical gap which builds the basis for the theoretical research framework and an empirical gap representing the underlying reasoning for the methodological background of the study.

With regard to the theoretical viewpoint, there is a dichotomy between a political economy and Foucauldian governmentality approach to explaining household financial identity. In the political economy perspective exploring rising indebtedness, capitalist power relationships are taken into consideration when analysing the determinants of household financial behaviour. Finance extends into everyday life through credit dependency and asset accumulation and the daily life of households becomes part of the logics of capital accumulation. In contrast, financialization studies in light of a Foucauldian governmentality framework focusing on asset ownership adopt a depoliticised framework concentrating on the transformation of household financial practices (Robertson, 2017). Specifically, insights into the profit-seeking behaviour of financial institutions tend to be missing as it is mainly a description of institutional changes and its transformative effect on household practices as seen in the study by French and Kneale (2009) which does not relate the insights gained concerning annuities back to how these changes increase profits for insurance companies.¹²

A similar aspect can be found in the majority of qualitative research, especially with regard to homeownership where changes in homeownership are discussed in light of income and

¹² A notable exception here is Kear's (2013, p.941) discussion on financial inclusion and literacy programmes: 'For financial capitalism to thrive and grow it must find ways to involve the poor'. Hence, a wider access to financial products and introducing literacy programmes are used to 'manage the poor in asset-like ways'.

wealth inequalities but lack an explanation of the political background instigating the construction of the asset-based welfare. Even qualitative studies surrounding financial inclusion/exclusion who criticize current inequalities (Atkinson et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2004) are mainly devoid of capitalist relations. Because of not acknowledging that the increasing replacement of publicly funded welfare with asset-based welfare is an 'intentional state project reconstituting individual subjectivities' (Robertson, 2017, p.400) aimed at disciplining labour and providing profit opportunities for capitalists, these studies, more often than not, reinforce the current system in suggesting an improvement in financial products or financial education. For this reason, this research follows De Goede's (2004) call for repoliticising financialization research. Finance is seen as a fundamental characteristic of capitalism working within the system and incorporates increasingly more aspects of daily life into the accumulation process (Lebaron, 2010; Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a).

Concerning the methodological framework two main gaps have been identified in the literature. First, the above shown studies focusing on a political economy view provide 'little way of detailed analysis of how housing finance and welfare are enacted in everyday life' (Montgomerie and Büdenbender, 2015, p.399). In a similar line of argument, the notion by the majority of Foucauldian studies is that institutional and media discourses prevail over households' intentions, thus, macro-discourses are transformed into micro-discourses (as exemplary shown above in the case of Allon [2010]). In contrast, it is argued here that policy and media discourses are not monolithic and adopted uncontested, but rather negotiated in everyday life. Even though households are influenced by the constitutive power of discourse and institutional changes, they also acquire agency to conform, non-conform or adapt these discourses. 'Citizens are not 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled with the attributes and potentialities prescribed for them by dominant discourses' (Prior, 2009, p.22). Foucault

(1991b, p.75) himself acknowledges that discourse has its own logic and reasoning and should therefore, not be understood solely as 'prescribing' financial behaviour.

[...] the hypothesis being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances [...] but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and 'reason'.

This view is deviating from a top-down understanding of governmentality which does not leave room for agency where households are transformed without resistance (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

For this purpose, I follow calls to explore everyday experiences and employ qualitative research in order to look 'beyond neoliberal versions of financial subjectification and instead to the multiplicity of diverse economic subjectivities' (Coppock, 2013, p.496). While Coppock (2013, p.496) even goes a step further and argues that financialization of daily life should not only be understood as top-down approach but also as a bottom-up approach 'where the subject is cultivated from the bottom-up through engagement with a variety of practices', it is argued here that it is rather a mutually generative process with institutional factors influencing household financial behaviour but also everyday practices feeding back into institutional settings. Taking the financialization of daily life literature, specifically in light of a Foucauldian framework as a point of departure, I investigate how households interact with finance and if they conform or contest asset norms; allowing for a greater degree of agency, but also acknowledging the influence of households' position in society.

Second, despite including insights into households' financial behaviour, qualitative research tends to either focus on debt or on one aspect of asset ownership (see 2.3.3). This can be seen in the fact that the majority of qualitative research assigns a dominant role to the house and neglects the promotion of and interaction with further assets such as pensions:

With the links between responsible citizenship, personal freedom, and individual economic security repeatedly tied to the ownership of housing, and with housing wealth presented as the only guarantee of personal and economic security in the long-term, homeowners have responded by responsibly embracing risk and acting entrepreneurially, leveraging the only resource available—their home. (Allon, 2010, p.368)

Yet, asset-based welfare not only consist of the promotion of homeownership but rather of the construction of responsible households who mitigate future risks by accumulating assets. To address this gap, a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach integrating a holistic view, i.e. exploring households' interaction with assets and liabilities in general rather than relying on one aspect of asset ownership or on the liability side, is provided.

Equally important, discourse analysis in light of media outlets combined with qualitative interviews is lacking. Media has become an 'informal education apparatus' (as also seen in the conducted interviews) and has thus contributed to the financialization process (Greenfield and Williams, 2007, p.418). However, media discourse analyses providing specifically a holistic view of asset and liability management rather than one aspect of finance such as stock market investments is rare (exceptions: Greenfield and Williams, 2007; Clark, 2012¹³). Therefore, Gurney's (1999b) approach on the normalising discourse of homeownership is extended here by focusing on media outlets rather than policy documents. On the basis of the gaps identified above, this study explores households' financial identity, reflected in households' financial practices and discourses and its interaction with everyday life. More specifically, it is shown with the help of a Foucauldian framework how new social norms support the creation of an asset-based welfare system in the UK.

¹³ Notwithstanding, these exceptions rely on newspapers and do not include interviews.

2.5 Theoretical Research Framework

This subsection introduces the theoretical research framework used to answer the developed research questions. Theoretical frameworks are essential for making sense of collected data by systematically exploring a research phenomenon and for being able to contribute to existing knowledge by developing new insights (Blaikie, 2009). The underlying theoretical assumptions including a Foucauldian governmentality approach and capitalist power relations are introduced first before the research paradigm is presented. This research paradigm constitutes the basis for the assumptions built into the methodology of the study.

2.5.1 Foucauldian Governmentality Approach: Everyday Financial Identities

To understand the interactions between norms of asset accumulation and everyday life, I develop a link to Foucault's concept of governmentality, which is also used extensively in the financialization literature as shown in 2.3.2. Employing a governmentality approach is helpful here due to being able to portray how households adapt their behaviour according to constructed asset norms and how this disciplines practices in everyday life.

Foucault (2007) distinguishes between two mechanisms operating as power technology: a disciplinary mechanism (normation) and a regulatory mechanism (normalization)¹⁴. Disciplinary power seeks to construct 'docile bodies' which are 'subjected, used, transformed, and improved' (Foucault, 1977, p.136) by introducing rules, restrictions, and rewards, hence, households are 'subject to someone else by control and dependence'

¹⁴ *Note:* This deviates from other forms of interpreting Foucault's work where disciplinary power is defined as a previous power which has been replaced such as expressed by Read (2009, p.34): 'If disciplinary power worked by confining and fixing bodies to the production apparatus, neoliberal power works by dispersing bodies and individuals through privatization and isolation.' However, Foucault (2003, p.242) himself acknowledges the interaction between these two forms of power: 'This technology of power does not exclude the former, does not exclude disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques. This new technique does not simply do away with the disciplinary technique [...]'. Nevertheless, the majority of Foucauldian studies surrounding asset ownership concentrate on either disciplinary power (Gurney, 1999b; Grey, 1997; Langley, 2006a); or do not distinguish between disciplinary and regulatory power (Aitken, 2003; French and Kneale, 2009; Langley and Leaver, 2012).

(Foucault, 1982, p.781). It has an individualizing effect and starts from the norm; distinguishing between normal and abnormal and trying to get people to conform to the norm with the help of individual measures such as surveillance, structuring and punishment. In the case of the ‘disciplinary technology of labour’ (Foucault, 2003, p.242), this would mean assigning workers suitable tasks and ensuring worker’s productivity, for example, through supervision. Due to the disciplinary mechanism focusing on defining normal and abnormal based on the norm – Foucault, (2007, p.91) calls this process ‘normation’.

The regulatory mechanism focuses on collective, or ‘massifying’ effects (Foucault, 2003, p.243). It operates on the population¹⁵ and not the individual. Instead of directly prescribing individual behaviour, the desired market results are achieved by creating norms which market participants aim to comply to, such as a focus on risk-return relationships by companies and households alike, hence, the subject is constructed through being ‘tied to his own conscience or self-knowledge’ (Foucault, 1982, p.781; Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a). There is not only normal or abnormal but different levels of ‘normalities’ where ‘the operation of normalization consists in establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality and [in] acting to bring the most unfavourable in line with the more favourable’ (Foucault, 2007, p.91). In case of financial behaviour, this would mean creating the norm of having savings and leading to different ways, i.e. levels of normalities, of achieving them (Foucault, 2003). Due to different levels of normalities constructing the norm, Foucault (2007) refers here to normalization.

Normation with focus on individualizing effects (e.g. disciplinary technology of labour) and normalization with focus on massifying effects (e.g. regulatory mechanism in the form of

¹⁵ Population is not a ‘multiplicity of individuals’ where the goal is to single out the non-conforming individuals and make them conform, but to create norms for the overall population, including capitalists and non-capitalists (Foucault, 2007, p.64)

saving norms) construct an overall norm, for example the norm of asset ownership, which is internalized leading to households disciplining themselves (Foucault, 2008). Households adapt their behaviour according to what they have learned is desirable by reflecting on their actions, evaluating them and adjusting them accordingly; i.e. they self-improve their behaviour by employing ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1997, p.177) which are:

[...] techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves [...]

Power is thus exercised through ‘a mode of action which does not act directly on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or those which may arise in the present or the future.’ (Foucault, 1982, p.789). Foucault (2007, p. 503) coins this ‘conduct of conduct’. The term conduct reflects a dual meaning here being translated from the French terms *conduire et se conduire*: *Conduire* in itself means drive or lead whereas *se conduire* translates as to behave oneself. The former thus relates to the construction of ‘procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals’. The latter is based on the concepts of interests and desires rather than laws and restrictions: ‘through relations of self-mastery’ (Foucault, 1997, p.87).

Whereas regulations influence household behaviour through making some activities more costly than others, implementing rules at the working place or defining illegal activities (disciplinary mechanism), norms operate through the transformation of macro-discourses into everyday micro-practices resulting in self-governing measures (regulatory mechanism).

But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their

bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. (Foucault, 1980, p.39)

Households are, in other words, governed and govern themselves based on two mechanisms operating as power technology – a disciplinary mechanism (normation) and a regulatory mechanism (normalization). This governmental reasoning brings with it an understanding of power not as repressive where households are restrained by power, but rather power is productive of subjectivity.

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘marks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; [...] (Foucault, 1977, p.194)

This should however not be understood as a top-down approach where practices are transformed without resistance. Instead, resistances are ‘present everywhere in the power network’ since ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ (Foucault, 1978, p.96). With the help of discourse, power is transmitted and financial subjects are constructed while at the same time, it is a tool of resistance and implements the possibility of weakening this power relation. Indeed, ‘there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial’ (Foucault, 1978, p.96). Resistances are reflected in creative approaches to resist and represent ‘ruptures’ and ‘innovation’ at the same time (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.59). This possibility to resist may therefore lead to multiple subject positions who ‘conform, diverge and subvert neoliberal visions of the responsible, financially self-disciplined individual’ (Coppock, 2013, p.479). It is therefore a mutually generative relationship between power and everyday practices.

2.5.2 Impact of Capitalist Relationships on Household Financial Identity

Based on the identified gap in the literature to repoliticise everyday financialization studies, I integrate capitalist relations into the investigation of household financial identity. In his elaboration on governmentality, Foucault (2003, p.14) develops a dialogue with a Marxian understanding of capitalist relations which he sees as economic functional ‘to the extent that the role of power is essentially to both perpetuate the relations of power and to reproduce a class domination’. In particular, he focuses on the strategies employed to exert power rather than on the class *per se*: ‘What I would like to discuss, starting with Marx, is not the problem of sociology of classes, but the strategic method concerning struggles’ (Foucault, 2003, p.281). Here, one aspect is of particular interest: the all-encompassing power of capitalism.

In the transformation of society based on the principle of an individualization of risk, the worker is constructed as an ‘entrepreneur’ managing his life according to desired outcomes.

[...] in practice, the stake in all neo-liberal analyses is the replacement every time of homo oeconomicus as partner of exchange with a homo oeconomicus as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings (Foucault, 2008, p.226)

This neo-liberal concept of homo oeconomicus intensifies the inequalities inherent in a capitalist society. Establishing a discourse of individualism where everyone can achieve anything by adjusting their own life undermines the collective identity of the worker and replaces it with an individual identity. Workers are expected to take responsibility over their life and invest in skills and knowledge to enhance their earning capacities. This type of capitalism is argued to enter more and more aspects of everyday life in the form of ‘a set of techniques by which people’s bodies and their time would become labour power and labour time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyperprofit’ (Foucault, 2000, p.86).

Even though Foucault recognizes the capitalist reality of labour exploitation, he emphasizes that power is ‘not an institution, and not a structure’ (Foucault, 1978, p.93):

It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth. (Foucault, 1980, p.98) Power is ‘not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of’ (Foucault, 1982, p.791).

In these statements it becomes clear that despite recognizing inequalities inherent in a capitalist system based on exploitation, Foucault does not take it a step further and integrates the underlying capitalist power relations. Instead reality is stated to be enacted by discourses and ‘a set of practices [...] that effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist’ (Foucault, 2008, p.19). While recognizing the power of discourse and practices in disguising power relationships, this conception of capitalism marginalizes material aspects in the form of income, wealth or regulations and the role of the overall structure of a capitalist system.

To incorporate capitalist relations, the method of abstraction introduced by Brown (2013), Roberts (2012) and Ryner (2006) is applied. This method focuses on a ‘system-wide perspective’, i.e. a perspective based on capitalist power relations (Brown, 2013, p.17). Society has a structure which is not reducible to individuals’ actions. Even though society could not exist without individuals and arises out of individuals’ actions, it constitutes a structural reality exceeding individuals’ understanding of it. Exploitation of labour or the profit-maximising character of finance are just a few examples for a system-wide aspect of capitalism not solely dependent on the individual construction of identity. When exploring a social phenomenon, it is thus essential to relate concrete-contingent elements manifested in empirical explorations back to the underlying capitalist relationships (Ryner, 2006).

Here, Foucault's discussion on discursive power and the all-encompassing, immanent characteristics of power is of relevance. Capitalism is comprised of power relations which are not transparent or external to social relationships but power is immanent.

Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter [...] (Foucault, 1978, p.94)

Through specific power relationships, and form of organisation, abstract power relationships incorporated in a capitalist system are masked with the help of discourses and practices:

which might conceal, justify, and lead to specific immanent contradictions and dilemmas being misrecognized as natural by participants [...] Under these circumstances the immanent necessity of alienation, exploitation and ceaseless accumulation of capital is mystified, hidden and naturalized. (Roberts, 2012, p.38)

For example, the goal of profit maximization might be intentional for a company to extend economic growth, however, at the same time in order to succeed in this endeavour labour exploitation must be enhanced. This latter point is not necessarily apparent or evident to the economic agent itself (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a).

A distinction must be therefore made between intentional strategic power games and the all-encompassing immanent power relationships which are 'nonsubjective' (Foucault, 1978, p.94) – depicting the difference between 'games of power' and 'states of domination'. There is a difference between putting emphasis on dominant agents exploiting dominated agents consciously (agency) or emphasising that the policies of the dominant class are implemented unconsciously by this dominant class (structure [Hammersley, 2008]). Even though dominant classes use diverse strategies and tactics to secure its dominance in society, this is not a conscious project which is imposed upon the dominated class.

[...] we must distinguish between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties – in which some try to control the conduct of others, who in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct to be controlled or try to control the conduct of the others – and the states of domination that people ordinarily call "power." (Foucault, 1997, p.299)

Based on the discussion on capitalist relations provided above, households' financial identity is explored with reference to broader capitalist relations and institutional circumstances of the economy under investigation. Concrete-contingent elements, represented in financial practices and discourses, and abstract forms of power, such as the separation of labour and means of production, are integrated into an analysis of households' financial identity. The goal here is to separate different aspects of the phenomenon of transforming households into everyday investors and explore in-depth how they are produced within broader capitalist relations. In the following exposition, the research paradigm incorporating the Foucauldian perspective and capitalist power relationship is presented.

2.5.3 Research Paradigm: A Material-Discursive Framework

Following calls by Fraser (1997) and Jessop and Sum (2006, p.166), a 'material-discursive' framework¹⁶ is adopted. While materiality relates back to non-discursive elements in the form of institutional changes and capitalist relations impacting household financial behaviour, discursive means that household financial identity is constructed through language. It is recognized here that discourse is not a neutral representation of reality, i.e. 'speech is no mere verbalisation of conflicts and systems of domination' but rather shapes power relationships and constructs subjectivities (Foucault, 1972, p.216). Discourse is thus productive, i.e. producing a way of thinking and making certain behaviours appear natural while mystifying the underlying power relationship.

¹⁶ A research paradigm in this case is seen as identifying 'what should be studied, how research should be done, [and] how research should be interpreted' (Bryman, 1988, p.4).

Discourse – the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others (even if it means returning them), words that the others understand and accept (and, possibly, return from their side) – this fact is in itself a force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but something that brings about effects. (Foucault, 2003, p.XX)

This means that households' financial identity is constructed through financial discourses establishing asset norms. Yet, there are limitations to discursive practices being able to construct social relations (Fraser, 1997) since 'language is always used in context' (Angermuller et al., 2014, p.36).

Non-discursive elements, i.e. material elements, including institutional changes, play an essential role in relations of power and cannot be reduced to discursive formations:

[...] two types of practical formations: the one 'discursive', involving statements, the other 'non-discursive', involving environment. For example, clinical medicine at the end of the eighteenth century is a discursive formation; but as such it relates to a mass and a population who depend on another kind of formation and so bring in non-discursive environments such as 'institutions, political events, economic practices and processes'. (Deleuze, 1986, p.31)

Foucault (1991a, p.58) himself acknowledges the importance of conducting an integrated analysis of intradiscursive dependencies (concepts within a discourse, e.g. including/excluding certain aspects) and interdiscursive dependencies (concepts between different discourses such as a financial discourse and a discourse surrounding motherhood) with extradiscursive dependencies (the interaction between discourses and 'transformations outside of discourse' including 'a whole play of economic, political and social changes').

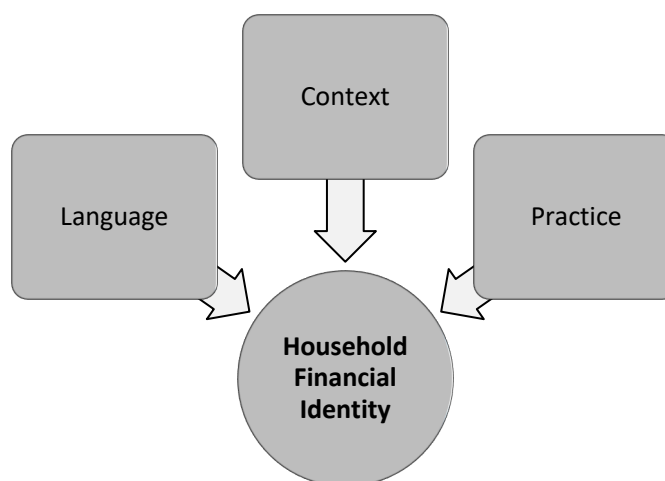
The dominance of non-discursive relations over discursive relations in the framework is based on the argument set out in the previous literature review where it has been shown that

it is important to integrate capitalist relations into an exploration of household financial identity. Economic structure in the form of capitalist relations privileges some economic agents more than others and provides them with access to different discursive strategies (Sum and Jessop, 2013). For example, higher income households might be privileged towards incorporating finance rationality compared to lower income households because of having access to higher wealth which they can distribute among different assets. That means, even if households internalize asset norms, they are limited by non-discursive elements which is supporting the adoption of a material-discursive framework rather than discursive-material framework (Fraser, 1997; Ryner, 2006).

To provide an in-depth picture of households' financial behaviour and to critically engage with how financial subjects are constructed, this study therefore follows the elaborations of Hardt and Negri (2009) and Sotiropoulos et al. (2013a) on governmentality and capitalist relations. With this it is possible to capture the complexities of households' financial identities while not neglecting capitalist relationships. Recognizing the contingency in households' financial identity, the goal is to shed light on how asset norms come into being through the interaction between regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms and how these are then translated into everyday discourses and practices. This necessarily entails with it different levels of analysis which are incorporated in the framework. An integrated analysis of context (institutional changes), language (patterns in speaking) and practices (financial practices) is conducted (see Figure 1), reflecting the levels of analysis presented in the literature review¹⁷. While Section 2.3.2 outlined Foucauldian governmentality approaches focusing on language and context, Section 2.3.3 showed how practices are explored in qualitative studies.

¹⁷ This reflects an adaption of Angermuller et al.'s (2014, p.7) triangle including language, practice, i.e. ways of 'processing language', and the context in which the language is used, by including non-discursive elements.

Figure 1 Material-Discursive Framework



Source: Author's illustration based on an adaptation from Angermuller et al. (2014, p.7)

To reflect the language level of analysis and to illuminate how financial practices come into being, a Foucauldian discourse analytical approach, explained in detail in 3.4.3, is adopted. Here, 'discourses and the genealogy of knowledge need to be analysed, not in terms of types of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology, but in terms of tactics and strategies of power.' (Foucault, 1980, p.77). This form of discourse analysis thus opens up the possibility to study transformations of discourses and revealing the impact of disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms on household financial identity. For this reason, the transformative power of the discourses accompanying institutional changes are explored first before outlining households' discursive construction of asset norms.

The second level of analysis is concerned with the context. Based on the fact that the transformative character of discourse 'relies on institutional support' (Foucault, 1972, p.11), a historically informed institutional background is given. It is shown how through the interaction between disciplinary technology of power and 'regulatory technology of life' (Foucault, 2003, p.249), asset norms are constructed, resulting in incorporating further and further aspects of daily life into capital accumulation. This transformation of society is seen here as a new form of power, a 'power over life', which incorporates social life itself rather

than 'solely' labour in the capitalist accumulation (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.57). Following Langley's (2006b) elaborations concerning the context level of analysis (as outlined in 2.3.2), in addition to institutional changes performative effects of financial products are included. For this purpose, I adopt Pellandini-Simanyi et al.'s (2015, p.739) interpretation of performativity and extend it to asset ownership: 'for performativity-related approaches, the nature of these shifts would emanate from the properties of the mortgage'. Of particular interest here are the impact of the characteristics of financial products, for instance inherent risk-return relationship, on household financial practices.

The third level of analysis is concerned with financial practices adopted by households as a result of the interaction between context level of analysis and language level of analysis.

It is a question of analyzing a 'regime of practices' - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect. (Foucault, 1991b, p.75)

Alongside discourses and the transformations outside of discourses, financial identity is also 'performed into being through the repeated iteration of its basic features' (Aitken, 2007, p.11), for example, activities in the form of investing in pension funds. Households 'who recurrently and routinely perform new and changed form of financial self-discipline' are transformed into financial subjects (Langley, 2008, pp.242-243). The goal is therefore to identify through which practices households regulate their behaviour and conform or contest 'appropriate' practices. That means, the goal lies in identifying self-governing measures and how these result in households becoming financialized.

Finally, due to the immanent character of power being present everywhere accompanied by resistances, it results in an iterative relationship between power invoking and being invoked by social relationships, i.e. financial practices are influenced by daily practices and routines

(Foucault, 1980). For this reason, Zelizer's (1997, 2005, 2011) conceptualization of the interaction between economic actions and social relations is integrated alongside Foucault's concept of power relationships. On the one hand, as discussed in 2.3.1, people attach meanings to money which enable or constrain its utilization in the form of 'paying in certain ways, restricting uses, or determining the proper amount of payments for specified recipients' (Zelizer, 1997, p.28). Social practices thus transform economic relationships. On the other hand, it is emphasized that economic transactions, in this case households investing, are productive by transforming social relationships, i.e. conducting relational work through 'establishing, maintaining, negotiating, transforming, and terminating interpersonal relations' (Zelizer, 2012, p.149). Economic relationships, in this case specifically financial practices, and social relationships build a 'mutually generative relationship' (Chen and Roscoe, 2017, p.579). By integrating these two concepts, I shed light on the interplay between asset norms and everyday life.

2.6 Conclusion

The preceding sections have explored how household financial behaviour and the interaction between assets and liabilities is discussed in the literature. First, it was discovered that the majority of the literature concentrates either on the liability side of household balance sheet or on one aspect of asset ownership, for instance homeownership, while an investigation into households' overall interaction with assets and liabilities is missing. For this reason, I adopt a holistic approach in exploring the determinants of household balance sheet structure including both sides of household balance sheet. This holistic approach thus offers an extension to the existing literature as this is the first study that circumvents the underlying focus on homeownership and instead integrates several aspects of asset ownership.

Second, it has been shown that the Foucauldian inspired literature explores discursive and institutional practices constructing investor subjects, but excludes households' interaction with these, despite depicting them as important actors. While these studies have undoubtedly done much to further the understanding of processes of financial subjectification and include useful insights for an analysis of institutional changes and its accompanying discourse, a holistic approach on the determinants of household financial behaviour including institutional changes, practices and discourse is missing. As a result, a dichotomy between households adopting the investorial subject position (active financial subjects; Martin, 2002) and households domesticating finance (passive financial subjects; Pellandini-Simanyi et al., 2015) has emerged. I argue, however, that it is essential to adopt an integrative, qualitative approach to show how households interact with institutional changes and discourses and to allow different dimensions of household financial identity. Through this it is possible to scrutinize assumptions made in the literature and provide insights into financial identity.

Finally, I outlined the underlying reasoning for employing a material-discursive framework. While the political economy literature strand focuses on a discussion of everyday financialization through rising indebtedness including underlying power relationships of a capitalist society, everyday financialization studies, in a Foucauldian governmentality framework, tend to adopt a depoliticised framework exploring asset ownership and the accompanying discourses. As a result of these identified gaps in the literature, I have argued here that it is essential to incorporate capitalist relations into a Foucauldian governmentality framework. Hence, a material-discursive framework is employed to explore household financial identity. This framework incorporates the concept of governmentality as interpreted by Hardt and Negri (2009) and Sotiropoulos et al. (2013a), as well as three levels of analysis including language, practice and context. These levels of analysis drive the choice of data collection and analysis methods, which will be considered in the next chapter.

3 Methodological Background of the Study

3.1 Introduction

After having presented the relevance and underlying reasoning of the research in Chapter 1 and introduced the reader to key aspects discussed in the literature in Chapter 2, this chapter moves on to questions of methodology. The literature review revealed that while previous studies give valuable insights into the transformative effect of institutional changes and surrounding discourses, there is less emphasis on how households respond to and shape these changes. At the same time, while qualitative research includes households' interaction with financial products, it mostly excludes institutional influences and focuses either on the liability side of the household balance sheet or on one part of asset ownership. I therefore suggest a different methodological approach by combining an analysis of context-related factors with an analysis of the impact of these on households. The empirical contributions of this study lie in providing insights into households' engagement with institutional changes and establishing an understanding of households' management of assets and liabilities.

In Section 3.2, the chapter begins by introducing the overall design of the research project incorporating the before presented research paradigm. To integrate the three levels of analysis, an embedded mixed methods approach with a strong focus on primary data has been chosen. The third section then outlines the main data collection methods. Normalising and disciplinary technologies are explored with the help of collecting documentary evidence and semi-structured interviews are conducted to show how these technologies impact households. The reader is then introduced in Section 3.4 to data analysis methods consisting of thematic and discourse analysis. While the thematic analysis shows the effects of discourse, i.e. the impact of asset norms on financial practices and everyday life, the discourse analysis shows how these come into being. At the end, methodological challenges are briefly discussed.

3.2 Design of Research Project

As can be seen in the overall research design presented in Figure 2, an abductive research strategy, which moves between deductive and inductive, is chosen. This is an integrated concept where theoretical exploration, data collection and analysis are taking place in an iterative way involving reading and going back to the data several times – representing a ‘dialectical’ approach between data collection and analysis (Taylor and Smith, 2008, p.36). This form of research strategy relies on an informed rather than uninformed exploration of themes underlined by a broad understanding of the relevant literature. In an abductive research strategy, the researcher moves between theoretical angle and empirical material in order to detect themes which put emphasis on existing theories and/or questions them as well as provide themes which do not fit existing theoretical explorations (Blaikie, 2009).

Figure 2 Overview of Research Design

Purpose of Research	•Identifying households' financial identity and the underlying mechanisms constructing it
Research Paradigm	•Material-discursive research paradigm
Research Strategy	•Abduction: development of theoretical concepts from everyday financial practices and discourses
Methodology	•Case study based on the UK combining semi-structured interviews with a qualitative document review and a review of household survey data

Source: Author’s illustration based on Easterby-Smith et al. (2008); Blaikie (2009)

For the purpose of representing the three levels of analysis outlined in the research framework in 2.5.3, an embedded mixed methods design is employed. Here, the qualitative method is the guiding methodology and the quantitative method takes over a supportive role (Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2015). By integrating a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach, the gaps identified in the literature review can be addressed. The previous chapter has revealed that everyday financialization studies either focus on institutional changes

shaping financial identity or on rationalities behind households' financial behaviour without outlining the impact of institutional changes and media discourses on these (as summarized in 2.4). The study therefore follows recent calls to incorporate qualitative research into an exploration of everyday financialization and assigning more agency to households by allowing different dimensions of subjectivities (Gonzalez, 2015; Hall, 2016; Lai, 2017). The decision to adopt a qualitative methodology was also informed by an identified lack of qualitative research exploring households' interaction with assets in general rather than one aspect of asset ownership. As a result of these gaps, employing an embedded mixed methods design is deemed beneficial to provide a holistic picture of household financial identity including households' interaction with assets and liabilities while recognizing the impact of institutional changes and media discourses on it.

Even though a solely qualitative focused case study could be helpful in answering the research questions, it is argued here that a qualitatively driven mixed methods approach is more appropriate in this study. This form of mixed methods design is employed when the aim is to place insights gained from a qualitative study into a wider context (Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2015). To answer the research questions comprehensively and integrate the context level of analysis, descriptive statistics are used to support the qualitative data. The quantitative data helps to position statements made by interviewees within the wider UK context. The descriptive statistics should not, however, be understood as being representative and/or generalizable. Instead, they are used to show UK household balance sheet structure in relation to institutional changes whereas the qualitative data provides the potential underlining reasoning for these structures. To further support the context level of analysis, media documents have been reviewed. Through this, it is possible to show the effects of institutional changes and discourses on households' discourses and practices. Moreover, the

risk of subjectivity is reduced with the help of triangulation between quantitative and qualitative methods and in between different qualitative methods (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Before discussing data collection and analysis methods based on this research design, the underlying unit of analysis is introduced. This research follows Crawford et al.'s (2016) argumentation for utilizing the household level in an analysis of wealth. Based on certain assets such as property wealth belonging to the overall household rather than one household member, it is not sufficient to look at the individual. This study therefore applies the concept of households in line with studies such as Christie et al. (2008), Munro (2000) and Smith (2008). A household is defined here as single person/group of persons living together, i.e. sharing the same house/flat and being responsible for taking care of the house/flat together, but not necessarily being related. Domestic activities include consumption, savings, borrowings as well as managing assets and liabilities (Allan and Crow, 2001). I, nevertheless, recognize the potential conflict in referring here to households based on power inequalities between members of the household. For this purpose, I show in the discussion provided in 7.2.4 how asset norms impact relationship dynamics. Here, it is discovered that conflicts based on asset management are solved either unilaterally (with or without the knowledge of the partner) or consensually and thus result in an overall asset strategy.

3.3 Data Collection Approach

As outlined in Chapter 1, one of the main aims of this thesis is to combine an analysis of institutional changes with an analysis of lived experiences reflected in households' practices and discourses. To achieve this integration, a unique methodological approach is introduced: pulling together different methodological approaches consisting of a discursive investigation of policy initiatives, a quantitative analysis of UK household balance sheets and insights from semi-structured interviews. The specific data collection approach is explained in the following exposition.

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Everyday financial practices of households are explored with the help of semi-structured interviews. This kind of interviewing is used for complex issues which might contain ambiguous aspects. It enables the researcher to detect new dimensions of a research phenomenon and to understand how interview participants construct their own reality (Atkinson et al., 2007). In semi-structured interviews instead of having a prepared list of questions and answer possibilities or no questions at all, a topic list/interview guide with general, open questions is used to guide the interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

Due to recognizing the importance of empirical research in the elaboration of households' financial behaviour, Fine (2013, pp.33-34) presents topics for potential household interviews, drawing on consumption studies and extending insights from these to financialization. For the purpose of the conducted study here, the following topics have been of interest and were adjusted to the research project:

- **Construction** of households as financial subjects relates back to exploring factors 'directly or indirectly impacting' (Fine, 2013, p.33) household behaviour
- **Conforming and/or Contesting** integrates here questions concerning households' awareness of their rising responsibility in having to mitigate future risks
- **Contradictory** is defined as 'attitudes to saving and spending' (Fine, 2013, p.34) and **Construed** as the understanding of financial terms and the financial system
- **Contextual** (differential responses to financialization based on specifics of the household) and **Commodified** (changes in society resulting in a behavioural change) are adapted to focus on the impact of asset-based welfare on financial identity

This guideline, and the topics presented by Collard et al. (2009) in a working paper for the Money Advice Trust, were taken as a starting point in developing the interview guide which can be found in Appendix A.

Following Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), who argue that qualitative research should start with piloting the research design in order to assess it and make adjustments, six pilot interviews were conducted in the period of June-August 2016. This study has also benefitted from implementing a break in the data collection. The first phase took place from July until mid-November (31 interviews) and the second stage from mid-January until April (29 interviews). By pausing two months, I was able to go through a first round of analysis and weave these insights into the further data collection process (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

To recruit interview participants, I used purposive sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling process prominent in qualitative research, where the sample is based on a focus defined upfront (Punch, 2005). Due to the distinctive focus on assets, households with the capacity to save and invest were chosen – identified as medium to high income households (French et al., 2011). Following Dema-Moreno (2009), Froud et al. (2010) and Gonzalez (2015), a wider middle income range was applied to include a diversity of occupations. Income thresholds were defined based on the Wealth and Assets Survey (subsequently referred to as WAS), a longitudinal survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on UK households. The middle income group comprises gross income deciles III-VIII and the high income group IX-X income deciles (see Table 4). The household composition was also taken into consideration to ensure that households are grouped in the correct income group. Finally, the goal was to interview retired households in a similar proportion as in the WAS.

Table 4 Household Grid: Targeted Interview Participants

Middle Income (income deciles III-VIII)	High Income (income deciles IX-X)
Average between £18,987 – £55,586 per year	Above £55,586 per year
According to Household Type Single Household £13,400-£31,100 Single Household and one child £17,500-£43,800 Two adults £20,200-£46,800 Two adults and one child £26,700-£60,100 Two adults and two children £32,300-£70,600	According to Household Type Single Household £39,900-£60,200 Single Household and one child £47,900-£77,000 Two adults £58,500-£88,200 Two adults and one child £75,500-£112,800 Two adults and two children £89,800-£146,500

Sources: HM Treasury (2013a); ONS (2018b)

Households were recruited through three different avenues: personal networks, participating in community events, and running adverts. First, in addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was used to recruit interviewees. Snowballing is a specific form of purposive sampling and is based on referrals by either interviewees or personal networks. This was deemed beneficial because of finance being a sensitive topic ('people don't talk about finances' [IP07_HI_F_50¹⁸]). Through using networks from interviewees, trust was established before the interview and participants talked more openly about financial aspects ('This is very brave of me to do this with you' [IP26_MI_F_50]).

Second, community specific events included several meetings of *The Property Hub* (www.thepropertyhub.net) which is an online discussion forum with monthly informal gatherings for people interested in property investments and the more formal meetings of the *Property Investors Network* (www.pinmeeting.co.uk). I also attended one training session of a *Learn to Trade* class in London. A limitation of these events might be that the attending households already have an interest in financial aspects and are thus better informed. This was not the case in this research. Interestingly, households who were not as familiar with financial decisions, for example because of having left these decisions previously to the partner, decided to take part in my research. Further events I attended were related to the local community organized by churches and parish councils, for instance a summer festival, as well as specific events organized by NGOs such as an event for immigrants from Africa.

Third, advertisements of the call for participants (see Appendix B) were made public on the community centre website *The Community Action: Milton Keynes*, in local supermarket notice boards and social media websites of the researcher as well as of the researchers' personal network. An issue in using advertisements might be self-selection bias. It could be

¹⁸ IP stands for interview participant, HI/MI for high or medium income, F/M for gender, followed by age.

argued that only financially literate or persons interested in finance decide to take part in the survey. However, similar to the finance specific events, this does not seem to pose an issue as participants depict a diverse picture from financially interested households to households avoiding or disliking to deal with financial aspects. As a result of these recruitment strategies, I conducted 56 semi-structured interviews with 60 household members and 55 households in the UK between July 2016 and April 2017.

Table 5 Profile of Interview Participants

Distribution of income (Classification based on averages before retirement and on equivalised income for households)	High income (20 households)	Individuals £63,424 Households £119,527
	Medium income (35 households)	Individuals £26,143 Households £42,075
Average distribution of wealth	Net wealth above £500,000	£1,379,887 (19 households)
	Net wealth between £100,000 and £500,000	£301, 113 (25 households)
	Net wealth below £100,000	£31,468 (11 households)
Geographical location of households	South East	52.6%
	Other than South East	47.4%
Area of origin of household members	South East	32.7%
	Other than South East	67.3%
Age dispersion of participants	25-34	23.3%
	35-44	15%
	45-54	20%
	55-64	23.3%
	≥ 65	18.3%
Employment status of participants	In employment	51.4%
	Self-employed	13.3%
	Student	8.3%
	Unemployed	3.3%
	Retired	23.7%
Exemplary occupational categories of participants	Acupuncturist, army officer, CEO, consultant, civil service employee, engineer, graphic designer, growth coordination manager, HR consultant, lawyer, lecturer, pharmacist, procurement officer, project manager, promotional or sales worker, researcher, secretary, security guard, solicitor, teacher and teacher support, treasurer, warehouse worker	
Household Type	Married	56.7%
	Cohabiting	11.7%
	Single	16.7%
	Widowed	3.3 %
	Divorced	11.7%

As shown in Table 5, 19 out of the 55 interviewed households belong to high, 25 to medium and 11 to low net wealth group. The wealth structure of households depicts a similar trend as in the WAS where more than half of surveyed household had a total net wealth of £262,400 compared to 56.4% of interviewed households. Interviewees have a diverse age range with the youngest participant being 24 and the oldest 88 years old and 60% are female and 40% male while 20.5% have a different ethnic background than white. As can be seen in the table, similar to the WAS, the majority of interviewees are in employment (WAS: 52%), followed by retired (WAS: 23%), self-employed (WAS: 7%) and unemployed (WAS: 4%). A potential limitation might be that participants are mainly residents of the South East region (52.6%). Yet, it can be justified with having focused on medium- to high-income households which are predominantly present in the South East and London area (ONS, 2016a) and there is no attempt here to define a generalizable, representative sample. As seen in the studies of the qualitative literature review shown in Table 3, while qualitative research tends to include diversity into the construction of an interview sample in regards of age, income or wealth levels, the residential area becomes only dominant in financial exclusion studies analysing households' access to financial services.

The interviews were conducted with either one or two household members. When speaking to one household member, I ensured that this person is either solely or jointly responsible for financial decisions (Worton and Reynolds, 2015). The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes (with one interview of 2 hours and one just 45 minutes) and the majority of the interviews took place face-to-face: 9 out of the 56 interviews were conducted over skype and one interview was held over the phone. The interviews were audio-recorded because of empowering me to focus on the interview itself and using the flexibility to steer it according to the content of the specific talk (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Where possible interviewees were asked to go through one process of financial action, for instance explain an investment

overview. Furthermore, data concerning their asset and liabilities was collected. After having been given examples of assets and liabilities, interviewees were asked to fill in a provided balance sheet. They could choose if they would like to report this immediately or send the balance sheet per email. 45 out of 55 households either followed the request of providing an overview of their balance sheet or gave the relevant data during the interview. The assets and liabilities from the households were listed as overall assets and liabilities when living with a partner. Even though interviewees provided balance sheets, these had to be complemented by going back to the interview statements and fill in missing information.

While households were aware of the current level of their house as well as further financial assets, knowledge of the overall amount of pension wealth was less dominant. 9 out of the 45 households who provided balance sheets did not know their current pension value and therefore, I estimated it based on the information given during the interview. In case of having provided current pension contributions, the calculations were conducted with the help of the Money Advice Service pension calculator (MAS, 2018). Younger households in this group who did not know the percentage of pension contribution were estimated based on age and comparative households in the sample. Depending on the amount of time having contributed to pensions, households below 30 were thus attributed a pension value between £7,500 and £15,000 and households above 30 were assigned values of £20,000 and £25,000. In 12 of the 45 households, details of their pensions were provided with the help of an expected income when retiring and therefore, estimation of the overall value had to be conducted. I calculated the cash equivalent transfer value with the help of simplified calculations based on three insurance providers specialising in pension advice: Tideway (2018; also referred to in *The Telegraph*, 2018)], Drewberry Insurance (2018; also referred to in *The Financial Times*, 2017), and Glasgow Wealth (2018). To illustrate, an interviewee indicated that at the current state, he would receive a yearly pension income of £18,000.

Tidway and Glasgow Wealth give similar figures with an estimation between £342,000 and £486,000 and £323,000 and £468,000 respectively whereas Drewberry Insurance provides a low value of £224,340, a fair valuation of £280,425 and a high evaluation of £336,510. These numbers were then compared to the median and mean of the corresponding income decile in the WAS. This is was undertaken to ensure a realistic estimation of the overall pension value. In this case the mean value lay at £372,105 and the median at £253,535. A conservative outlook was then taken and the value of the fair valuation band of Drewberry Insurance was chosen. Similar calculations were conducted for the other households.

3.3.2 Collection of Documentary Evidence

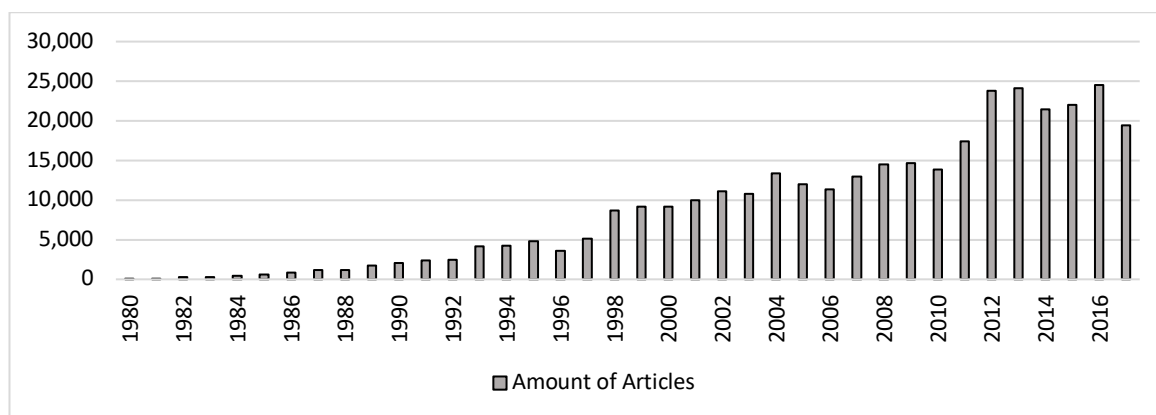
To explore the impact of institutional changes on households, a document review is conducted. Documents are a useful source of information to provide an overview of the wider social context including key events and discourses during the time period under investigation. With the help of a genealogical analysis, the construction of asset norms is studied which is then followed up by analysing the influence of the detected discourses on households. The results of the document analysis thus corroborate interview findings and expose ‘themes, images and metaphors’ which help to understand the phenomenon (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.125).

Before beginning with the data collection, criteria need to be defined which determine which documents to include in the analysis process (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Due to wanting to explore the impact of the surrounding discourse on households’ practices, documents which were mentioned by interviewees are the main focus of the document review. The majority of participants stated that they rely on news outlets as source of information rather than policy documents in the form of government websites. The focus of the institutional background thus lies on discussing policy changes and the accompanying media discourses.

While policy documents help to gain an understanding of the institutional changes, the media discourses shed light on the construction of financial identity in light of these changes.

The choice of media documents is informed by previous media studies as well as interviewees' statements. Berry (2016) argues that it is essential to capture a broad sample of newspapers, for example, by including newspapers with different political viewpoints whereas Davidson (2012) focuses on personal finance magazines. These two aspects are combined here by including centre-left, centre-right and liberal newspapers while concentrating on the personal finance sections of these. With the help of the *Nexis UK* newspaper database and *Proquest Historical Newspapers* database, media outlets were first searched for according to the term personal finance. Personal finance emerged as an important topic in the UK in the 1980s. As shown in Figure 3, while only one article mentioned personal finance in 1980, in 1982 this rose already to 294 followed with a steady increase up until 2016. To ensure to capture a wide range of personal finance sections, this was then followed up by searching for predefined codes with focus on personal finance which included bonds, family finance, financial education, financial services, homeownership, debt, insurances, mortgages, pensions, stocks and shares.

Figure 3 Articles mentioning Personal Finance since the 1980s



Source: Author's calculation based on the NEXIS database, *Filter*: UK newspapers; "anywhere in the text"; Search term: "personal finance"

Table 6 gives an overview of the main topics and sections introduced in the newspapers. As can be seen here, personal finance sections include advice on managing money, investing as well as the introduction of regulatory changes. While *The Guardian's* Weekend Money mainly gives advice on managing money including mortgages, taking advantage of competition in the market, best insurances and on how to deal with financial difficulties, it has a strong focus on shares in 1986 and 1987 right up to the stock market crash at the end of 1987. *The Financial Times* released a 'Quarterly Review of Personal Finance' series from 1990 until 2002 covering diverse topics relating to investment products. The series' main focus lies on providing advice for more financially sophisticated readers who aim to diversify a portfolio and compare products.

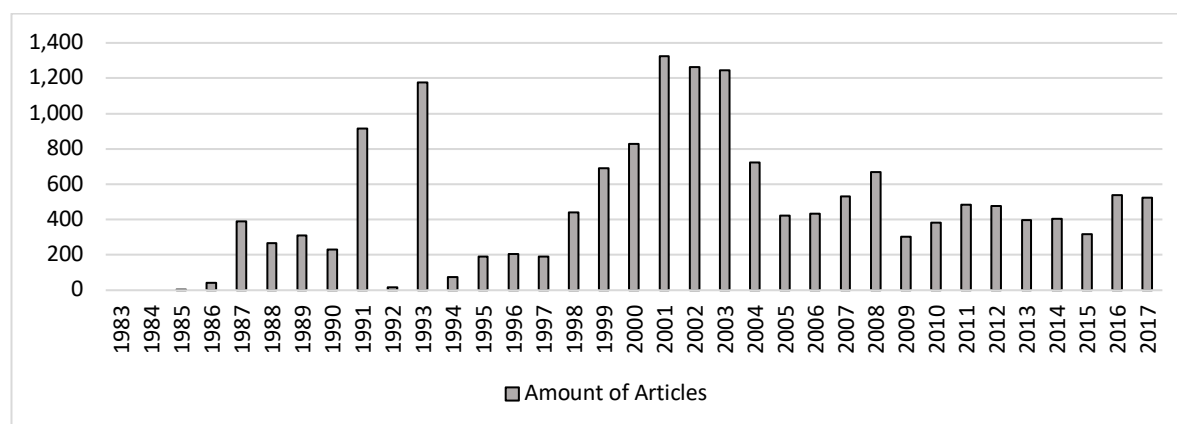
Table 6 Overview of Personal Finance Sections

Newspaper	Years	Sequence	Focus Areas
<i>The Financial Times</i> Quarterly Review of Personal Finance	1990-2002	quarterly	Focus on financial market development and the construction of an investment portfolio. In general, it is reported in an abstract level but also providing case studies which focus on specific personal stories.
<i>The Guardian</i> Weekend Money	1984-1991	Weekly	Follow-up from Family Finance: The focus of the weekend money lies on changes in regulation and advices on managing money.
<i>The Sunday Express</i>	Since end of 1999	Weekly	Celebrities answer different questions about money and expenditures including questions surrounding pensions, pocket money and shares. The questions stay the same.
<i>The Sunday Times</i> Question of Money	Since the end of 1999	Weekly	Question of Money answers personalized questions and helps readers directly by stepping in and contacting financial institutions. It focuses on all aspects of personal finance such as utility providers, insurance products, property and debt.
<i>The Telegraph</i> Wealthcheck	1999-2002	Weekly	Focus on personal stories and case studies which are dealt with by different financial advisers and is supplemented by financial news in regards to new regulations (also contrasting different financial advisers' opinions). The main focus lies however on questions asked by readers.
<i>The Times</i> Moneycentral	Since 2007	Weekly	During this time period the focus lay on questions from the readers and discussion of personal stories. Readers to the rescue, readers give their opinion on how to solve a question and can win a £25 voucher.

Despite genealogical analysis being based on wider historical time spans, following Sanders and Schroder (2008) and Taylor (2013), it is also viable to provide snapshots of particular historical moments which show the 'circumstances of repetition' of a discourse (Foucault,

1972, p.221) and illustrate the main content of the discourse. Snapshots of media discourse construction are provided based on troughs and peaks of the importance of ‘personal finance’ in relation to interview participants’ statements. As can be seen in Figure 4, personal finance has experienced three major peaks based on the mentioning of ‘personal finance’ in the headline of newspapers: 1991, 1993 and the timeframe around the dot-com bubble in the beginning of the 2000s. Based on the provided overview of documents in connection with participants’ statements who mentioned the 1987 crisis, the dot-com bubble and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the following time periods were selected for the document analysis: 1984 as a starting point for the personal finance discourse up until 1993 as peak period with high interest rates, the period around the dot-com bubble, the years surrounding the GFC 2006 until 2008 and the current period including the interview years 2016 and 2017.

Figure 4 Articles mentioning Personal Finance in the Headlines since the 1980s



Source: Author’s calculation based on the NEXIS database, Filter: UK newspapers; “in the headline” Search term: “personal finance”

This choice has been further narrowed down by selecting news outlets which interviewees mentioned as main source of information: *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*. Whereas also further newspapers were named, for instance *The Daily Mail*, only newspapers were chosen which were stated as a source of information by at least five interview participants. Finally, the online source predominantly used by participants is included: *moneysavingexpert.com*. The resultant list of the documents used here can be

found in Appendix I. In the following, reference to these documents is made by labelling policy documents as P plus the number, for instance P01, P02 etc. and media documents as M plus the number, for instance M01 etc. With this procedure, I follow previous studies conducted at The Open University, for instance, Mbalyohere (2015).

A potential criticism of conducting document analysis with the help of snapshots of in time and a selected number of newspapers is that the analysis might be ‘selective, drawing upon apposite extracts to support the argument’ (Carabine, 2001, p.306). This limitation can be circumvented by following two strategies: searching for texts which challenge the previous found insights and contextualising the content with the help of further studies and historical insights (Carabine, 2001). Both these aspects have been adopted here as can be seen in the presentation of the findings in Chapter 4 which not only provides the institutional background in the form of policy changes but also acknowledges contradictory discourses.

It should also be noted that the document analysis is not aimed at providing generalizable discursive formations or at searching for an underlying, totalizing causal mechanism (Carabine, 2001). Instead, it attempts to map relations of power with the help of describing how norms established in the media and institutionally supported are entering everyday life. The aim is thus to depict the interrelationship between media discourses and households’ discourses. For this purpose, it is deemed sufficient here to include newspapers and time periods explicitly mentioned by interviewed households. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of further existing discursive formations in a wider range of newspapers which might have impacted household financial behaviour. This approach to document analysis is in line with previous studies conducting a qualitative rather than quantitative document review (Darcy, 2010; Gurney, 1999b; Hunter and Nixon, 1999; Ruonavaara, 1996).

3.3.3 Review of Household Survey Data

In addition to a document review, secondary information in the form of economic indicators is collected. This is helpful in determining UK household financial behaviour over time and comparing interviewed households' responses to the wider development in the UK. The data collection of the quantitative data consists of three sources.

First, insights from the World Inequality Lab is employed which provides data on wealth and income distribution over long periods of time, in the case of the UK since the 1950s. It focuses on rising income and wealth inequality and seeks to overcome the lack of data on the unequal distribution in the majority of countries. For this purpose, it combines databases such as fiscal and household survey data and national accounts. This database is used to give an overview of net private wealth over time.

Second, the WAS is included in order to establish a detailed picture of UK households' asset and liability structure (see Figure 5). This survey was of interest as it provides insights into the composition of balance sheets and includes a cross-sectional weight extrapolating the survey data to UK household level which has been applied here.

Figure 5 Composition of Wealth Categories

Net Property Wealth	•main residence and other real estate including second homes (time-share and holiday homes), buy-to-let properties, other buildings, land in UK, and other property or land overseas minus any form of mortgage debt
Net Financial Wealth	•money saved in formal financial assets (e.g. current accounts, saving accounts, ISAs, stocks and shares, bonds), informally (e.g. money saved under the bed) minus financial liabilities (e.g. outstanding credit card bills, arrears on household bills, student loans, formal and informal loans)
Pension Wealth	•accrued value of all pensions which are not state pensions, e.g. current occupational defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) schemes, retained rights in DB and DC pensions, Additional Voluntary Contributions, personal pensions, pensions expected through spouse, and pensions in receipt
Physical Wealth	•value of home contents, collectables and valuables, vehicles. This can include antiques, artwork, stamps and personalised number plates.

Source: Author's illustration based on ONS (2018c)

The survey is conducted in a two-year period and currently consists of 5 waves: Wave 1 2006-2008 (30,000 households surveyed), Wave 2 2008-2010 (20,000 households surveyed), Wave 3 2010-2012 (21,000 households surveyed), Wave 4 2012-2014 (20,000 households surveyed) and Wave 5 2014-2016 (18,000 households surveyed). The main focus here lies on the recently released Wave 5 (2014-2016) which is closest to the time period when the interviews were held (July 2016-April 2017). When needed, however, the wealth structure over time is underlining the description of household balance sheets.

This study adopts a unique approach by combining the survey results with findings from the interviews. For this purpose, the data had to be prepared accordingly. The income equivalisation method was taken over for the interviewees' gross household income. The equivalisation method is undertaken to give different values to household members, as they have differing demands on income. Income numbers are comprised of the overall income of households including labour income and further income such as capital income, pension income or rental income which corresponds with the data collected for interviewees. It is then calculated as follows: the first adult is assigned a value 0.67, the second adult 0.33, any children older than 14 years 0.33 and children under 14 years old 0.20¹⁹. Moreover, the categories for the calculations of net values such as household net property wealth or net financial wealth per income decile followed the variable specifications provided by the WAS (see Figure 5) with the exception of business assets. Due to the WAS not including business assets in household wealth and since the share of business assets owned by UK households has been consistently low (since 1998 between 4% and 5% of net private wealth), UK households' wealth is presented without business assets. Business assets were however included for the interviewees' balance sheets as also self-employed households were interviewed who incorporated their business assets into the personal financial wealth.

¹⁹ A detailed description of the methodology of the survey can be found in ONS (2018c).

Third, in order to evaluate human capital, human capital estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics are taken into consideration. Human capital is defined as resources, i.e. skills and knowledge, of people which are used to generate income. Human capital theory assumes that through investment in education the earnings potential is improved (Schultz, 1961). Estimates for human capital are provided since 2004 and the published data shows the results per age group, sex and education. The most recent estimation is from 2015 and the results of this estimation are discussed in relation to the WAS. Its calculation is presented in 3.4.3 as these are adopted to calculate interviewee's human capital.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

In the following, the data analysis approach for the collected qualitative as well as quantitative data is presented. For the purpose of being coherent with the underlying research paradigm, in this case a material-discursive framework, the data analysis methods reflect the interaction between the material and discursive impacts on households' financial decisions. It is therefore based on the three levels of analysis: language, practice and context.

3.4.1 Theorising Discourse: A Foucauldian Analytic Approach

To analyse the collected interview data as well as the documentary evidence, a pluralistic approach including thematic and discourse analysis – the two main forms of discovering themes from qualitative data – is employed. Methods of analysis are considered compatible when being based on 'a similar epistemological orientation' (Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2015, p.248), in this case both belonging to the qualitative paradigm. Combining thematic and discourse analysis helps to address two levels of analysis incorporated in the research paradigm (see 2.5.3). Whereas *thematic analysis* tries to detect patterns in the collected data and gives insights into the practices of households, *discourse analysis* is concerned with the study of language, aiming to explore discursive patterns which are constitutive of social

phenomena (Taylor, 2013). The discourse analyst takes the analysis beyond an initial familiarisation with the data and thematic coding of such by searching ‘for patterns in language in use, building on and referring back to the assumptions she or he is making about the nature of the language, interaction and society and the interrelationships between them. It is this theoretical underpinning rather than any sorting process which distinguishes discourse analyses.’ (Taylor, 2001, p.39). It is method- and theory-driven with both aspects informing each other. Discourse analysis is therefore seen as a useful method here to not only satisfy the language level of analysis but also to depict how the interaction between power and resistance result in households adopting unique financial identities.

Foucault (1980) identifies two discursive forces making certain behaviour appear natural: ‘regimes of truth’ and ‘discursive formations’. Regimes of truth develop an understanding of what are acceptable and unacceptable discourses including evaluative elements rather than clear distinctions between true and false statements (Foucault, 1980, p.131).

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth.

Regimes of truth are constructed through mechanisms determining what is considered true and false – hence, discursive formations are employed. Discursive formations mean that the same kind of discourse based on similar objects, themes or argumentation lines appears in different media and institutional texts, establishing in this case asset norms.

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity [...] we are dealing with a discursive formation (Foucault, 1972, p.38)

The focus lies on rules of formation ‘that systematically form objects of which they speak’ rather than linguistic practices ‘treating discourses as groups of signs’ (Foucault, 1972, p.49).

By means of a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach, it is shown how macro-level discourses surrounding asset norms come into being, ‘establishing what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary’ (Foucault, 1991b, p.76), and how households position themselves within these wider discourses. For this purpose, the conducted discourse analysis consists of: macro-, meso- and micro-level analysis. While the macro-level examines a wider assembly of discourses constructing meaning of a social phenomenon, micro-level discourse concentrates on the language used by households. The meso-level then links ways of using language with the macro-discourses (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000).

First, the macro-level discourse analysis focuses on identifying patterns in discourses represented in media outlets. This is helpful because of being able to ‘reconstruct the function of the text [...] according to its objectives, the strategies that govern it, and the program of political action it proposes’ (Foucault, 2007, p.59). References to household financial behaviour and any of its constitutive parts within the texts are identified and then examined to discover elements giving meaning to asset norms – hence, identify discursive formations (Talib and Fitzgerald, 2016). Questions asked include those outlined in the discourse guide under the rubric genealogical analysis (see Appendix G). Through investigation of these questions, themes are developed that reveal discursive formations and their impact in constituting asset norms rather than perceiving themes as an end in itself as in thematic analysis (Taylor, 2013).

Second, the transitional link between macro- and micro-level discourse analyses is investigated. Through this, it is possible to interrogate how households take up subject

positions by selecting some discourses over others and revealing resistances (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Meso-level analysis is ‘relatively sensitive to language use in context but interested in broader patterns that go beyond the details of the text’ (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000, p.1133). The focus does not lie on language specific construction of the discourse but on the meaning households attribute to asset norms. Foucault (1972, p.12) emphasizes that discursive formations are not displayed in an open form where individuals can ‘rationally’ evaluate the ‘truth’, rather it comes in a masked form, often resulting in making decisions without being aware of the underlying reasons.

True discourse, liberated by the nature of its form from desire and power, is incapable of recognising the will to truth [...] the truth it seeks to reveal cannot fail to mask it. Thus, only one truth appears before our eyes [...] in contrast, we are unaware of the prodigious machinery of the will to truth, with its vocation of exclusion. (Foucault, 1972, pp.219-220)

For example, in the neoliberal discourse, it is portrayed that every person has the same chances to access wealth if they work hard. By accepting this as truth, it is seen as an individual failure if one is not able to achieve the ideal of being a wealth owning individual rather than taking into consideration the hidden underlying inequalities such as not having access to the same resources. An explanatory account of households’ framing techniques in terms of institutional changes and norms of asset accumulation is provided which is then related back to the before identified discourses and thematic choices in the media (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

Third, in addition to exploring the impact of macro-discourses on households’ financial discourses, a micro-level discourse analysis, i.e. a ‘certain style, a certain constant manner of statement’ (Foucault, 1972, p.33), is applied with the goal to outline how households position themselves. In this regard, two main approaches are employed. First, the discourse analysis conducted here is based on exploring the usage of metaphorical expressions which

is used in Foucauldian discourse studies (Gurney, 1999a; Talib and Fitzgerald, 2015, 2016) and has entered financialization studies (Soaita and Searle, 2016). Analysing the usage of metaphors enables one to ‘grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed, through and on the basis of power’ (Foucault, 1980, p.70). Metaphors reveal how a way of acting is normalized, for instance, when being used to mitigate contradictive forces or by adopting the ‘same play of metaphors’ and ‘descriptive statements’ (Foucault, 1972, p.33) as used in the media. Second, Paltridge’s (2012) concept of silence, or rather absence of themes, as a form of reflecting power relationships is applied where it is analysed what themes and topics are not included in the discourse in order to solve conflicts between everyday identities and financial identities (see 2.3.3).

Here, it is essential not to move beyond the text and ‘avoid mixing up such an analysis with a procedure of psychological diagnosis’ (Foucault, 1991a, p.58). Discourse analysis is not examining the intentions behind a written or spoken text but the quest lies in remaining ‘at the level of appearances’ and ‘describing regularities in a non-interpretive manner’ (Kendall and Wickham, 2011, p.33-34). It is thus necessary to distinguish between meanings and values in contrast to attitudes and beliefs. To value something means defining rules of differentiation based on a dominant view of reality rather than preferring one thing more than the other based on inherent beliefs: ‘to value is to differentiate – to act, choose, or desire’ (Deetz, 1992, p.61). The aim is not to ‘get *behind* the discourse to find out what people really mean when they say this or that, or to discover the reality behind the discourse’ (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.21), but to discover discursive formations and structures through which an interpretation of reality is constructed. To identify rules of formation the steps outlined in Appendix C under the rubric ‘Financial Subject Formation – Stages of Discourse Analysis’ are utilized in the meso-level and micro-level analysis.

3.4.2 Household Financial Practices: A Thematic Analytical Approach

After having seen how language is approached with the help of discourse analysis, thematic analysis is introduced to satisfy the analysis level of practices. As shown in 2.5.1 a theoretical framework based on a Foucauldian governmentality approach is employed. In the case of discourse analysis this provides a nuanced picture of the power relationship involved in asset accumulation by showing how disciplinary and regulatory technologies come into being through discourse. Thematic analysis then reveals the effects of discourse, i.e. how these discourses materialise in social practices. The Foucauldian concept should be seen here as an analytical rather than discursive framework, taken as an aid to explore financial practices and identify technologies of the self, i.e. showing the impact of asset norms on everyday life.

Following Bryman and Bell (2007), the interviews were thematically analysed in three main steps: a) inductively coding of interviews and identifying patterns; b) combining codes into coherent themes; c) distinguishing between common and uncommon themes and refining and integrating themes into wider theoretical aspects. Inductive coding was undertaken first in the interest of avoiding a biased selection of codes based on themes emanating from the literature. In this way, it was possible to gain new insights and provide a rich interpretation and understanding of the collected data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This was then followed by refining codes and integrating them into themes. The goal has been to find similarities and differences in the categories and identify how they are interrelated. After having developed a theme guide, I returned to the transcripts to better understand the meanings households attributed to these themes and to build a connection to theoretical viewpoints (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This iterative process was repeated until a ‘saturation’ point was reached, defined as the point where there are no new themes emerging from the data and no substantive value can be added to the theorisation (Hammersley, 2013). A more detailed description can be found in Table 7.

Table 7 Detailed Stages of Thematic Analysis

<i>Stage of Analysis</i>	Description
<i>Familiarization</i>	Reading and re-reading the data transcripts supplemented by field notes in order to gain an overall view
<i>Coding the Data</i>	Units of meanings (sentences/paragraphs) are identified and grouped into a set of codes developed according to similarity in meanings
<i>Categorization</i>	Differentiating between concepts into categories and sub-categories and defining themes which should lead to main theme list
<i>Re-coding</i>	In the case of contradictory themes going back to the data to enhance the identification of properties
<i>Linking/Pattern recognition</i>	Development of theoretical codes and combination of substantive codes by comparing main theme lists and identifying similarities and differences
<i>Reflection and Interpretation</i>	Evaluation of the themes in light of pre-existing theories and development of a theory linking key concepts or suggesting adjustments to pre-existing theories

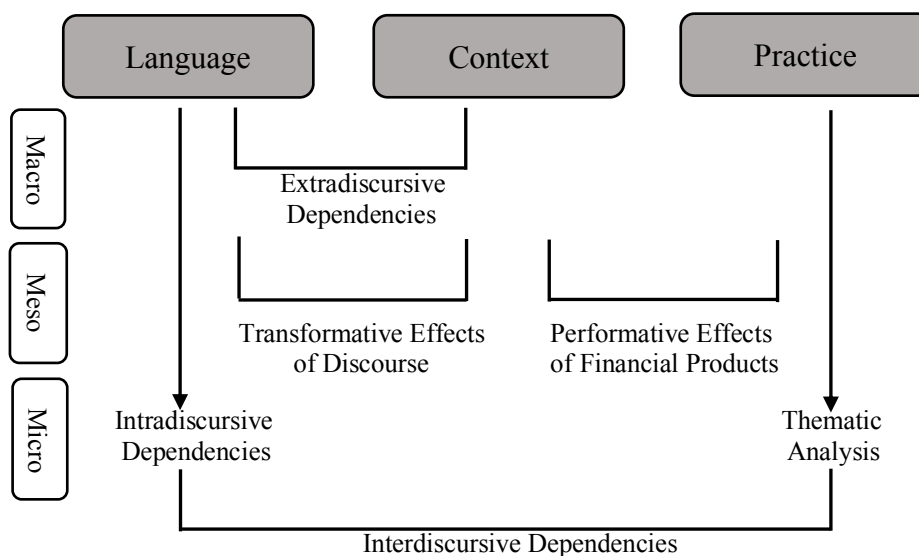
Source: Author’s illustration based on Creswell (2003) and Easterby-Smith et al., (2008)

To be able to analyse interview data, interviews were transcribed, anonymized and then coded with the help of the NVIVO software. Verbatim transcription was chosen to be able to conduct an in-depth analysis. The NVIVO software served as a useful tool to manage the large amount of interview data and being able to make sense of it in an organized, systematic way. An important characteristic of NVIVO is being able to search the data after having defined themes according to formulation and words. It provides data on how many times a code or sub-code is being referenced by interviewees. While this is not used as quantitatively driven evidence, it has proven to be helpful in detecting themes which are widespread among interview participants and themes which are outliers needing to be explored. It thus served as an orientation tool in deciding the importance of a code (Creswell, 2003).

To represent participants’ views and underline main discussion points, quotations have been selected and are provided in the following analysis. These reflect examples of discussion points, but not necessarily the frequency of their occurrence. It should also be noted here that I do not discuss the internal coherence of the responses given but represent their discursive elements even if they these are inconsistent.

After having seen the methods of analysis for the qualitative data and before moving on to the quantitative data, it is deemed beneficial here to provide an overview of how the levels of analysis introduced in the material-discursive research framework correspond to these methods. The research paradigm is based on three levels of analysis, namely language, context and practice. For the purpose of being able to reveal the interplay between these levels of analysis, discourse and thematic analysis are employed here. Through this, an integrated exploration of language in use where discursive elements are put into relation to non-discursive elements, for instance institutional impacts and financial products, can be conducted. It thus satisfies the three dependencies identified by Foucault (1991a) and introduced in 2.5.3: extradiscursive, intradiscursive, and interdiscursive (see Figure 6).²⁰

Figure 6 Methodological Research Framework



Extradiscursive dependencies reflect the intersection between context, i.e. institutional changes, and language, i.e. the accompanying media discourse. By representing the relationship between discourse and the wider social and economic context (macro-level analysis), mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization can be identified. The

²⁰ To briefly reiterate, extradiscursive dependencies refer back to the interaction between discourses and transformations external to discourses while intra- and interdiscursive dependencies are concerned with concepts established within a discourse and their interaction with further discursive concepts (Foucault, 1991a).

meso-level analysis, i.e. the intersection between macro- and micro-level analysis, then shows the transformative effects of discourses and institutional changes. The focus here lies on how constructed asset norms materialize in everyday discourses and practices, i.e. how households respond to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization. For this purpose, discourses but also the influence of extradiscursive elements in the form of institutional changes and characteristics of financial products are taken into consideration. This is reflected in Figure 6 in the case of the transformative effects of discourse, representing the intersection between language and context and the performative effects of financial products, depicting the intersection between practice and context.

As outlined in 2.5.3, performativity comprises here two elements: one relating to financial products and the above shown meso-level and one relating to the micro-level concentrating on how the subject position of the everyday risk manager is ‘performed into being’ (Aitken, 2007, p.11) through self-governing measures. That said, the micro-level deepens the language level of analysis but also shows the effects of the discourse with the help of thematic analysis. This can be seen in the analysis of intra- and interdiscursive dependencies which concentrate on concepts within and between discourses, i.e. on households’ discursive positioning as an everyday risk manager, who accumulates assets guided by finance rationality, and its interplay with further discourses and practices. Thematic analysis then demonstrates households’ distinct financial practices and reveals the mutually generative relationship between social and economic relationships.

3.4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Household Balance Sheets

To widen the analysis level of practices, the qualitative data is supported by quantitative data. The unique approach in this research project is that data from UK household surveys is combined with data provided by interviewees. With the help of the World Inequality

Database and the WAS, the composition of UK household balance sheets is presented first which is then followed up by data collected from interviewees. Through combining UK balance sheet structures with statements and balance sheets of interviewees, the rationalities behind balance sheet compositions can be suggested and a wider perspective in relation to the UK provided. Due to providing an in-depth picture of household financial behaviour and not seeking generalization, the quantitative analysis is mainly based on descriptive statistics (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The focus here lies on the structure of households' balance sheets and the incorporated fragility or stability.

To assess the fragility of balance sheets, risk levels incorporated in household balance sheets are explored. For this purpose, a categorization of assets similar to Guiso et al. (2002) and Campbell (2016) is undertaken. Risk categories can be divided into clearly safe assets, fairly safe assets and risky assets. Clearly safe assets include transaction accounts, saving accounts and government products. In the case of the UK, this incorporates savings products in the form of Cash Individual Savings Accounts (ISA), providing tax-free savings of £20,000 per year, and child savings products. Additionally, the government provides National Savings certificates and bonds to finance national borrowing; including amongst others premium bonds which guarantee not to lose the original investment value and include a lottery element where the interest is based on a monthly draw (MAS, 2018). Fairly safe assets lie in between risky and safe assets and include housing assets, life insurance policies with investment indices, managed and diversified bonds or shares (e.g. stocks and shares ISA), private pensions and unit and investment trusts. Risky assets include stocks and shares, undiversified bonds, business assets, main residence with an underlying mortgage and other real estate such as buy-to-let properties (Guiso et al., 2002; Lowe, 2010).

Since the WAS does not provide separate data for UK bonds and gilts, these are categorized between fairly safe and risky assets. Moreover, pension wealth is analysed in a differentiated way. Defined-benefit pensions (DB) are considered less risky than defined contribution pensions (DC; Campbell, 2016). In addition to categorizing assets into clearly safe, fairly safe and risky assets, the liability side is analysed with the goal of portraying households' resilience in times of economic downturns, for instance the property gearing ratio, depicting the relationship between mortgages and property values, is taken into consideration.

Finally, due to human capital depicting the largest component of households' balance sheets in the majority of households' balance sheets, it is integrated in the analysis of household balance sheets. A recent approach to calculate human capital, used extensively in studies of wealth inequalities, is income capitalization which calculates the future value of earnings based on current income (Saez and Zucman, 2014; Alvaredo et al., 2016). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) takes up this income-based approach in the estimation of UK's human capital. To increase comparability between UK household balance sheets and interviewed household balance sheets, the methodology and measures introduced by the ONS are used to calculate the human capital of interviewees. Based on the methodology description provided by Fender (2011), the equation shown below was employed.

$$LLI_{age}^{edu} = EMR_{age}^{edu} * ALI_{age}^{edu} + [(\sum_{edu}^6 LLI_{age+1}^{edu} * PROB_{age}^{edu}) * ((1 - Mort_{age}) * (\frac{1+r}{1+\delta}))]$$

LLI_{age}^{edu} = lifetime labour income at given education and age

EMR_{age}^{edu} = employment rate at given education and age

ALI_{age}^{edu} = current annual labour income at given education and age

$PROB_{age}^{edu}$ = probability that an individual at given education and age changes to a different educational attainment level in a single year's time

$Mort_{age}$ = mortality rate at a given age

r = labour productivity growth rate

δ = discount rate

Taking over the general measures from the ONS, a labour productivity growth rate of 2%, a discount rate of 3.5% and a retirement age of 64 are included in calculating the future earnings of interview participants. The mortality rates are taken from the National Population Projections Lifetable provided by the ONS. By subtracting the mortgage rates from 1, the survival rates per each year is calculated. The lifetime labour income per individual is determined by taking the annual labour income and multiplying it with the survival rate per each year until retirement, discounted by labour productivity growth rate and discount rate. Due to having detailed information with regards to employment levels and probability²¹ to earn a higher income based on a higher education level in the following year, this information is included rather than a general employment rate or probability levels. After having calculated the lifetime incomes per household by estimating the human capital of household members, these are summed up in a monetary value of the human capital stock²².

While the calculations above are used to give an indication of the role of human capital in households' balance sheets, these numbers should be looked at with precaution due to being based on the assumption that households have increasing income during the lifecycle. This however gets ever more complicated because of the tendency of stable economies to become unstable (Minsky, 2008). This calculation also does not take into consideration institutional changes over time. The increasing precariousness of work situations based on labour market deregulation undermines the human capital calculation by not being able to plan ahead with a secure income (Langley, 2006b; Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b).

²¹ The probability that the individual experiences a change in education levels and therefore, income level, was taken into consideration in two cases where either a business training or a MBA will be finished by next year.

²² The exact methodology and calculations can be found in Fender (2011).

3.5 Methodological Challenges

The collection and analysis of qualitative data carries with it several methodological and ethical challenges which are addressed subsequently. With regards to data collection, it was anticipated that it might be difficult to initiate the talk about financial aspects. It was thus essential to create an atmosphere where the interviewees feel comfortable to talk (Taylor and Lynch, 2016). To address this issue, the interviews began with generalized context questions about the interviewees' background and employment history. In this way, participants were given the time to get used to the researcher and the context of an interview, resulting in being able to talk freely. Moreover, interviews might lead to self-reporting bias, therefore, notes were taken during the interviews describing the actions taken by interviewees, for example pauses or contradictory facial expressions, with the goal to detect possible contradictions and follow these up with further questions (Silverman, 2013).

The difficulty in the data analysis lay mainly in the fact that there is 'no clear and accepted set of conventions for analysis corresponding to those observed with quantitative data' (Robson 1993 cited in [Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p.248]). The 'richness' in qualitative data, which lies in being able to describe a research phenomenon in detail, needs to be approached with a sound judgement. For this reason, the data is analysed through the lens of a theoretical framework which makes it possible to distance oneself from 'taken-for-granted understandings' and develop new insights through the 'stringent application of theory and method' (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.22). Moreover, while qualitative research is not about generalization but developing new theoretical insights, it is nevertheless essential not to adopt 'anecdotalism' and to ensure that exceptions are also discussed as these and not generalized to the overall interview sample (Bryman, 1988, p.77).

Since each single stage of conducting the research is influenced by the researcher's voice (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), the research must be conducted in a critically reflexive way,

including a reflection of one's own influence on the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Based on coming from a country with a publicly funded welfare state (Germany), the interest in this kind of research was incited by seeing the difference in how people approach everyday life in an asset-based welfare system. It was striking to see how the media discourse legitimizes the asset-based welfare approach. When outlining limitations to it the focus lies on how to find solutions for income-strapped households to enter the 'benefits' of asset-based welfare rather than promoting a stronger social system. During the analysis phase my identity helped to see the data from an outsider rather than insider perspective. Being German and female, quite a few interviewees also felt inclined to describe the British system to me which was helpful in gaining valuable insights into the influence of context-related aspects on household financial identity. In two cases, however, it complicated the data collection process as one interviewee with a Muslim background did not talk freely and provided only short answers and one interview participant approached me several times on a personal level.

Besides general methodological challenges concerning case study research, ethical issues have to be considered when collecting primary data. The researcher incorporated the ethical guidelines provided by The Open University and has been granted ethics approval for this research project from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix D). Issues concerning the degree of disclosure and dissemination of results have been taken into consideration. I gained informed consent which has been done with the help of an explanation given before the interview, an information leaflet and a consent form guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix E). I asked the participants for consent to audio-record which was granted in all but one case. The data collected during the fieldwork has been saved on a secure server by The Open University. When disseminating the collected data, it is anonymized and no personal information is disclosed.

Finally, one of the overall ethical goals is to prevent harm to research participants. Against this backdrop, I ensured that the interviews ended on a positive note despite discussing difficult financial situations beforehand. For example, in the case of interviewing a research participant who is currently undergoing a divorce, the interviewee became upset while discussing the impact of the divorce on her financial situation. Therefore, I ended the interview in discussing the training she is currently undergoing and how she is expecting to benefit from it. It is also essential to not cause issues between interview participants within a household. A difficult situation arose when interviewing a couple. While discussing the balance sheet of the household, one member of the household was not willing to reveal to the researcher or to the partner where the assets are invested in. As tensions between the couple seemed to rise, I decided to change the topic. In both cases changing the topic to a more 'neutral' question such as concerning the job has proven to be a successful strategy.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of the research methodology employed in this study. First, I provided insights into the main underpinnings of the research which was then followed up by the data collection and analysis method.

The methodology is based on gaps identified in the literature review presented in Chapter 2. One of the underlying motivations for this thesis is to contribute to the dearth of qualitative research incorporating a holistic view on household balance sheets including assets and liabilities. The other consideration was to contribute to the missing link between Foucauldian inspired studies exploring institutional changes and households' interaction with these institutional changes and discourses. To respond to these challenges and integrate the three levels of analysis incorporated in the material-discursive framework, consisting of context,

practice and language (see Section 2.5.3), an embedded mixed methods design where qualitative research takes over a guiding role was deemed appropriate here.

A unique research approach was chosen based on combining semi-structured interviews with a review of documents and data on UK household balance sheets. This is a unique approach due to positioning interviewed households' discussion within the wider UK environment by means of survey data as well as an analysis of media discourses. In this way, the limitations of the current literature is overcome. Not only are institutional changes and the accompanying discourses depicted, but also how households interact with these discourses and develop distinct financial strategies. The discussion in this chapter gave also a detailed overview of the data analysis methods. In addition to supporting qualitative data with quantitative data, a pluralistic analysis approach has been chosen, combining thematic and discourse analysis. This approach enables me to show the effects of the discourse on households' discourses while also detecting how these materialise in social practices.

The following four chapters, discussing the empirical insights, are oriented along the lines of the methodological framework presented here. Chapter 4 discusses the construction of asset norms and therefore corresponds to the macro-level of analysis, which is then followed up by Chapter 5 showing the effects of these asset norms on households' discourses (meso-level). The subsequent two chapters then concentrate on the micro-level discussion. Before outlining households' negotiation of asset norms and presenting different dimensions of household financial identity in Chapter 7, Chapter 6 outlines households' financial practices and self-governing measures. Here, households' management of assets and liabilities and its impact on everyday practices is discussed.

4 Construction of the Everyday Risk Manager in the UK Context

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes to the first part of the main research question (see Section 1.2.1) and outlines contextual factors in the construction of household financial identity. In particular, it answers the sub-research question i. and identifies mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization incorporated in institutional changes and media discourses. To briefly reiterate, responsabilization expresses the transfer of responsibilities from the government and employers onto households who are called upon to take responsibility over future risks (Wakefield and Fleming, 2016). This refers back to the interpretation of neoliberalism by Foucault, where he argues that households are expected to take on responsibility and self-govern (Foucault, 2008). In order to deal with this rising responsibility, wider access to financial products is established and households are increasingly motivated to accumulate assets and incorporate asset management in their daily life (Langley, 2008; Martin, 2002).

This interaction between responsabilization, in the form of a retreat of the welfare state, and financialization, in the form of a growing importance of finance in dealing with the new responsibilities, creates the subject position of the everyday risk manager. An everyday risk manager, as introduced in 1.1, adopts asset norms, i.e. accumulates assets guided by finance rationality, and rejects debt except for purposes of asset accumulation. Drawing upon a governmentality framework incorporating capitalist relations outlined in 2.5.3, it is argued here that this construction of the everyday risk manager through responsabilization and financialization integrates daily life into capital accumulation. It is shown that the power of capital lies not only on the disciplinary mechanism and its strategies of disciplining labour, but also on further expropriation in the frame of financial networks (regulatory mechanism).

The objective of this chapter is therefore to depict policies and macro-level discourses constructing this subject position, i.e. represent extradiscursive dependencies in line with the methodological framework outlined in Figure 6 in 3.4.2. The findings are drawn from secondary data collection in the form of policy and media documents. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, institutional changes since the 1980s are discussed which represent a key part of responsabilization. In particular, changing policies with regard to labour market regulation and welfare provisions are introduced, comprising the disciplinary technology of power. Second, the promotion of asset ownership during the Thatcherite government and the subsequent Labour government is discussed. Specifically, it is shown how wider access to financial products enabling asset ownership is established and how asset norms are constructed in policy and media discourses. The mechanisms of financialization, namely asset-based welfare measures and the discursive construction of the everyday risk manager, reflect the regulatory technology of life and its ‘massifying’ effect (Foucault, 2003, p.243; Hardt and Negri, 2009). The chapter concludes by summarizing the interaction between these mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization.

4.2 Responsibilization of Households

This section presents first the overall policy focus in the UK since the 1980s before outlining the distinct policies in detail. In this context, the discussion provides insights into the changing role of the welfare state and the labour market deregulation as well as given justifications of key policy figures. This is essential in order to show how institutional changes have influenced the emergence of a discourse in the form of personal responsibility and have suppressed a discourse of collective responsibility in the form of a welfare state.

4.2.1 Changing Focus in the Policy Framework

A desire for economic stability after two World Wars and the unstable interwar period led to the adoption of major reforms. Based on the work by William Beveridge on social policy and on the work by John Maynard Keynes on economic policy including the belief in regulating the economy and providing fiscal stimulus, policies were introduced with the goal to establish ‘social provision against rainy days, coupled with economic policies calculated to reduce rainy days to a minimum’ (P02²³). The Beveridge report called for a comprehensive social system framed as ‘an attack on want’ as well as on ‘disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness’ (P01). Want was tackled by introducing the national insurance system, a means-tested, contributory system aimed at providing financial security in times of sickness, unemployment or retirement. To tackle disease and ignorance, the National Health Service was established in 1948, providing free health insurance financed by government revenues and the Education Act 1944 opened up secondary education for all by abolishing fees. Overall the focus lay on policies mitigating future risks such as ill health, income shortfalls during periods of unemployment or retirement, and providing access to free education.

The government approached the last two aspects mentioned by Beveridge, namely squalor and idleness, with Keynesian policies. Squalor was tackled by setting up a large-scale house-building programme where local councils developed houses (referred to as council houses), evolving into the government being the main provider of rental houses (Disney and Luo, 2017). Concerning idleness, the promise was made to create jobs for all, for which purpose the government intervened as an employer and investor to encourage economic growth. Nationalization of companies which provide an essential good to the population took place,

²³ The current chapter is based on the documentary evidence introduced in Section 3.3.3. Therefore, to briefly recap, references made to policy documents are indicated as P plus the number of the document and references to media documents are indicated as M plus the documents.

resulting in companies controlled by the government as in the case of British Gas Council (Alcock and May, 2014). This was accompanied by deepening workers' protection, i.e. building strong labour market regulations and promoting trade unions (Hall, 1993). Trade union membership has been continuously rising since then and reached its peak in 1979 with over 13 million employees, representing 70% of the working population (OECD, 2018; P30).

Based on the rising importance of trade unions and the creation of a strong welfare state, the overall bargaining power of workers increased. Despite rising living standards, capitalist struggles which are inherent in capitalism eventually emerged. As Hardt and Negri (2009, p.144) argue in each phase of capitalist society 'workers use the means at their disposal to invent new forms of revolt and autonomy from capital; and in response to this, capital is forced to restructure the bases of production, exploitation, and control'. These struggles can be argued to be seen in the rising strike activity leading to a rise in production costs which subsequently were translated into higher prices (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996). In the late 1960s and beginning of 1970s, this was accompanied by 'the most dangerous crisis since the war' with 'five-fold increase in oil prices, an ever-narrowing industrial base' (P05). The slow economic growth in turn caused further costs for the welfare state, resulting in exploitation becoming too costly based on rising production costs and welfare provisions (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996). The neoliberal paradigm is stated to have offered a solution to the rising problems through weakening labour's resistance and strengthening capitalists (Sotiropoulos, 2011). Paradigms are based on shared assumptions and discourses, i.e. regimes of truths which mark out reality and are not challenged 'because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny' (Hall, 1993, p.279). The neoliberal paradigm believes in a capitalist society with minimal government intervention where free markets, strong private property rights and personal responsibility lead to prosperity for all (Harvey, 2005).

Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, played a key role in promoting the neoliberal paradigm. By devoting herself to ‘opposing Socialism’ (P04), social protection is represented as contradicting a free, democratic society and only possible to fully realize in an authoritarian regime. In contrast, the neoliberal paradigm is based on prosperity and freedom:

Our capitalist system produces a far higher standard of prosperity and happiness because it believes in incentive and opportunity, and because it is founded on human dignity and freedom [...] So let us have no truck with those who say the free enterprise system has failed. What we face today is not a crisis of capitalism, but of socialism. No country can flourish if its economic and social life is dominated by nationalisation and state control. (P04)

Entrepreneurial freedom benefits economic development since it is through profits that investments are conducted, establishing better living standards. Thatcher even goes a step further and underlines this point by claiming that the principles of incentive and opportunity present fundamental values of the British society: ‘We are witnessing a deliberate attack on our values, a deliberate attack on those who wish to promote merit and excellence, a deliberate attack on our heritage’ (P04). Since a successful society is based on ‘enterprise, profits and the wider distribution of property among all the people’, deregulation and privatization have been promoted. This was the start of a changing relationship between capital and labour and a new form of capitalist accumulation (Hardt and Negri, 2009).

The discourse centred on entrepreneurial freedom puts the responsibility on the household (Cutler and Waine, 2001). Previously collectively managed risks, for instance the risk of income shortfall during retirement and unemployment, is ‘replaced by risk represented as opportunity or reward for individuals’ (Langley, 2006b, p.921). The emphasis on profits rather than government intervention led to systematic attempts to reverse previously introduced policies by employing disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms. Disciplinary mechanisms entail on the one hand disciplining labour through creating an environment of

less bargaining power and more job insecurity and on the other hand draining labour by putting more costs of reproduction onto households rather than onto a welfare state (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.144-145). At the same time, regulatory mechanisms incorporated in financialization are established which enable households to deal with this rising responsibility while increasing capitalists' profit opportunities. Policy changes with regard to responsabilization are discussed first before presenting mechanisms of financialization.

4.2.2 Liberalization of Labour Market Regulations

Whereas the post-war period up until the 1980s had been characterized by strong trade unions and job security, the period which followed is marked by reducing labour costs and increasing labour flexibility, hence, disciplining workers and weakening their 'insubordination' (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.143). This process entailed three main aspects: promoting of entrepreneurialism in the form of self-employment, decreasing the wage bargaining power of workers in trade unions and deregulating the labour market.

First, self-employment based on becoming a 'wealth creator' who 'leaves the security of employment' is promoted since 'self-employment is the seed corn of the new enterprises' and creates 'jobs of the future' (Thatcher, [P06; P11]). The government 'cut income tax at all levels to reward hard work, responsibility and success' (Thatcher, [P05]). Alongside more flexible business tax rates widening the number of tax-free businesses, personal income taxes were reduced for the highest income earners from 83% to 40% (marginal tax rate was only cut from 33% to 30%). Here, it was stated that this was done at people's request:

We were told that it would help if people who have a very considerable income were able to use a part of that income and knock it off their assessment for tax if they invested that income in a new business [...] All of this has been done with one objective—help new business to start. (Thatcher [P06])

The promotion of self-employment takes place in line with the neoliberal discourse by connecting it to positive aspects without questioning risks involved, for example, self-employed are especially vulnerable to changes due to having no sick or holiday pay.

The subsequent New Labour government further progressed this focus on an entrepreneurial society and wanted to create a knowledge-driven economy which establishes ‘prosperity for all’ based on ‘stimulating enterprise’ (Blair [P22]). As a result, self-employment nearly doubled from 8.7% in 1975 to 15.1% in 2017²⁴. However, this rise in self-employment is not necessarily voluntary but based on a worsening of labour market conditions as can be seen in fewer people having been able to leave self-employment in the previous two decades despite experiencing a 22% fall in real wages (ONS, 2018b).

Second, a key policy aim had been to weaken the power of the 'enemy within', i.e. trade unions, who ‘are out there to destroy any properly elected government’ (Thatcher [P08]). As a result, several changes in the law were implemented which are still relevant today. Regulations were put in place restricting strikes. Strike action can now only take place if the employer is informed and a secret strike ballot is carried out prior to the strike and approved by a majority. Moreover, restrictions on picketing were introduced, limiting the number of employees allowed to build picket lines and banning political strikes. Equally important, regulations promoting non-unionist behaviour were established. Individuals are allowed to keep working during a strike without being disciplined and are able to apply in court to restrain strike actions (P31).

This new stance towards unions was taken over by New Labour. It promised in its manifesto to keep the current trade union legislation and make only minor adjustments. Whereas in the

²⁴ This number is likely to be an underrepresentation of the actual number of self-employed people due to being based on a self-reported survey (ONS, 2018d).

past, Labour had drawn attention to inequalities based on unequal income distribution, class and access to public services, New Labour adopted a pragmatic approach where the essential criteria for policy making is ‘what counts is what works’:

We have rewritten our constitution, the new Clause IV, to put a commitment to enterprise alongside the commitment to justice. We have changed the way we make policy, and put our relations with the trade unions on a modern footing where they accept they can get fairness but no favours from a Labour government. (Labour Manifesto, [P20])

As a result of these policies, union membership went down from 70% in 1979, to 37% in 1996 and to 26.3% in 2016 (OECD, 2018). The changing rights of trade unions and declining union density reduces the means to request an improvement of work conditions.

Third, the weakening of the trade union was accompanied by labour market deregulation, aimed at increasing the flexibility of the labour market and reducing wage costs. This entailed less rights for workers, for example, having to be employed for a longer time period before being able to make claims when being fired under unfair conditions (a rise from six months to two years). In addition to that, wage councils, setting minimum wages, holiday pay and wage premiums on specific shifts in industries with low wages such as the retail sector, were affected (Gregory, 1998). The government first reduced the power of wage councils by not allowing new councils to form and cutting measures to implement agreed wages assuming companies pay fair wages ‘by persuasion rather than coercion’ (P15), only to then abolish them completely. This was done with the belief that minimum wages destroy jobs (‘job destroying notion of a national minimum wage’), exemplifying the prioritization of businesses (‘lift regulatory burdens from the shoulders of those who create jobs’ [P14]).

The New Labour government then promised to keep promoting ‘a flexible labour market’ where ‘flexibility alone is not enough’ but ‘flexibility plus’ is needed (P20). Even when

incorporating the EU directive on working conditions into British law, only the minimum requirements set by the directive were implemented, for instance, the maximum average working week was limited to 48 hours (P21). However, this is not a strict regulation since workers can decide to opt out and work more hours. As shown by Barnard et al. (2003), this option is commonly used to weaken the rights of the worker. The current government as well follows a strategy of making ‘it easier for companies to hire and manage staff’ which ‘should encourage employers to create new jobs’ (Employment Relations Officer, [P29]). This statement makes it clear that the focus has continued to rely on the neoliberal paradigm in regards to the belief that profits create jobs for which purpose companies need flexibility.

The three key moments introduced above consisting of a rising number of service sector jobs in the form of self-employment, weakening of trade unions and labour market deregulation have resulted in a highly flexible and less protected job market. UK represents one of the lowest employment protection amongst OECD countries, ranking fourth after New Zealand, US and Canada and has one of the highest risks of unemployment (OECD, 2015). In addition to weakening trade unions and therefore, having less bargaining power, the structure of the labour market changed where more insecure work relationships were created ‘with the growing trend for people to be more mobile in their employment and change their jobs frequently’ (M14). As outlined by *The Guardian* in 1997, ‘jobs are no longer for life, nowadays they last until Christmas’ (M30). Labour market deregulation thus results in labour being disciplined by rising job insecurity.

4.2.3 Dismantling of the Welfare State

The second form of intensifying the disciplinary technology of power lies in putting more costs of reproduction onto households, i.e. draining labour (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.144)

through dismantling the welfare state. This is based on the belief that only households who have been working hard deserve access to welfare.

[...] many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help [...] That was the objective, but somehow there are some people who have been manipulating the system and so some of those help and benefits that were meant to say to people: *All right, if you cannot get a job, you shall have a basic standard of living!* but when people come and say: *But what is the point of working? I can get as much on the dole!* You say: *Look! It is not from the dole. It is your neighbour who is supplying it and if you can earn your own living then really you have a duty to do it and you will feel very much better!* (Thatcher, [P10])

Going back to the statement presented in the introduction, Thatcher emphasizes here as well that there is no such thing as society which can supply the ‘dole’ but that neighbours work hard for it and therefore, everyone has the moral obligation to provide for themselves.

As a result, incentives such as workfare – also called ‘welfare-to-work’ – measures are implemented which means that welfare payments are attached to obligations (White and Lakey, 1992, pp.195-196). In 1986, the Restart Programme was introduced which established so-called ‘soft’ workfare measures (Jessop, 2003, p.11) including six-monthly ‘advisory interviews’, i.e. in-depth interviews providing guidance in the job search. While these interviews were introduced as opportunities designed to help long-term unemployed back into employment, one key aspect of the interviews was to check that welfare recipients were actively searching for jobs. With the major overhaul of social security in 1989, these measures were then intensified and turned into ‘hard’ workfare measures which not only suggested but prescribed actions. This meant that the requirement was to look actively for new jobs and accept offered jobs whereas in the past it was possible to decline an offered job based on ‘good cause’ which included not wanting to accept part-time work (P13).

With the Jobseeker's Act in 1995, the terminology of unemployed also changed from the passive word of unemployed persons to the active word of jobseekers, reflecting the evolving perception of unemployed persons being responsible for finding a new job. It defined a jobseeker as someone who is available for work, 'is actively seeking employment' and 'has entered into a jobseeker's agreement' (P16) outlining actions to be taken. If 'jobseekers' did not follow the terms set out in the agreement, the benefits are reduced. When the New Labour government took over, the before introduced regulations were reinforced. Blair stated that 'the shift to an economy based on knowledge' has given rise to 'a workless class [...] a large minority is playing no role in the formal economy, dependent on benefits'. Besides including a discourse of inequality and emphasizing the need to help poor people, the policy strategy was centred around 'work and self-improvement', focusing on the effort by the people ('For those of us who can work, work itself is the best answer to poverty' [P17]). Policies were thus implemented aiming at bringing the unemployed back into the labour market even at lower paid or temporary jobs, for instance through subsidized employment (Jessop, 2003).

A similar discourse of neoliberalism can be seen in today's discussion where it is argued that it is essential to have a 'welfare system that rewards work, that supports people who do the right thing' (M66). Rather than questioning potential problems in the overall economy, the responsibility is put on the household. A dichotomy between the responsible, self-reliant hard worker who deserves welfare provision by being a *valuable part* of society and the *undeserving* welfare recipient misusing funds is constructed. This discourse of hard work and responsibility is then used to justify a dismantling of the welfare state and creating 'incentives' for households not to rely on the state but seek 'financial independence' (P20). Measures of workfare have thus been accompanied by a continuous reduction of benefit payments which has led to UK's jobseeker's allowance being ranked as one of the lowest in OECD countries (CIPD, 2015). A single unemployed person without children who has been

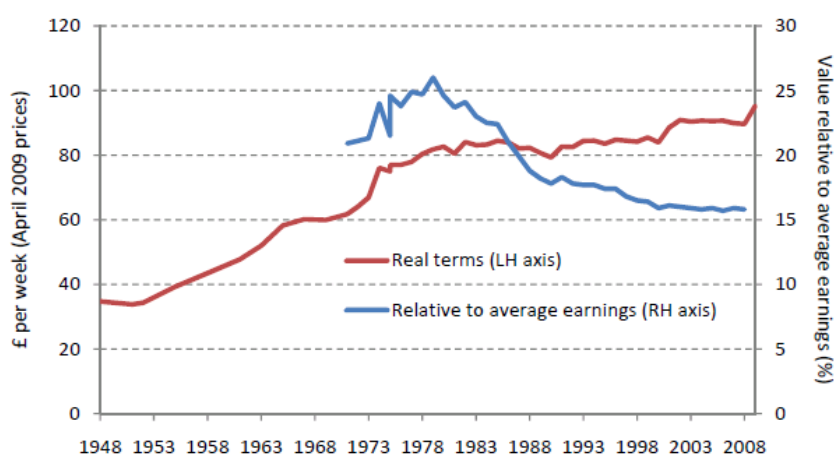
previously employed receives on average net £3,692 a year compared to £10,792 in Denmark (after housing costs are subtracted). Solely, when housing benefits are taken into consideration UK moves up one position (CIPD, 2015; OECD, 2015).

By emphasizing that there is ‘no such thing as public money - there is only taxpayers’ money’ (P07), in addition to welfare measures, education funding, sickness pay and state-funded pensions were reduced. Whereas between 1962 and 1998, there were no tuition fees and maintenance grants were offered for higher education, tuition fees of £1,000 were introduced in 1998 and continuously increased to £9,250 in England (Dearden et al., 2011). This has led to rising student debt levels (see 6.2.2). In the case of income provision during health issues, the main responsibility falls onto companies. Employers are required to provide six months of statutory sick pay based on a flat-rate (£88.45 per week) rather than income-related as in other European countries. This can, however, be topped up by companies with a company-linked sick pay or occupational scheme (European Commission, 2018). In comparison to other European countries, only France and Netherlands have a higher assigned responsibility to the employer. Households who already had 28 weeks of company-related sick pay cannot claim it again and have to ask for sickness benefits. These benefits are one of the lowest among OECD countries, namely 13% of average earnings for six months compared to the majority of countries providing above 50% for 12 months (the exception is Canada with 3.6 months [Gaffney, 2015]). This results in employees working in companies without additional sick pay scheme or without private insurance being in a disadvantageous position in case of long-term sickness.

Finally, the government under Thatcher significantly reduced state pensions. As outlined in 4.2.1, the basic state pension was introduced with the National Insurance Act in 1946 and provides a weekly provision if an individual is above the state pension age and has made

sufficient national insurance contributions. A regular adjustment of the state pension was introduced in 1973 based on average earnings and inflation until 1980 when Thatcher's government adjusted it to adapt solely to price changes thereafter. This has led to a decoupling from pension and wage development (see Figure 7). Despite a continuous increase in state pension provision in absolute terms, there has been a steady decrease of state pension as percentage of average earnings since then. Because of the falling value of pensions, the government introduced a return to indexing the pensions to wage earnings in 2007. In 2011, it was then agreed to increase the pension based on the bigger rise in three components: average earnings growth, retail price increase, 2.5% (Bozio et al., 2010).

Figure 7 Basic State Pension Deflated and Value of Average Earnings, 1948-2009



Source: Bozio et al. (2010, p.13)

In addition to the basic state pension, individuals who made national insurance contributions through work were able to top up the basic state pension with an additional pension in the form of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) between 1978 and 2002. After 2002, this was replaced by the state second pension (S2P) which was introduced to help people set up a pension who cannot work due to disability, caring for someone else or who earn a low income (Disney, 2016). In 2016, additional state pensions were abolished and a single basic state pension was introduced, comprising £164.35 per week in 2018/2019 if one registered after 6 April 2016 and £125.95 when registered before 6 April 2016. This state

pension can then be increased through the previously existing SERPs or S2P. The reduction and restructuring of the state pension led to UK mandatory pension provisions being the lowest among developed countries, covering only 29% of previous earnings compared to an average of 63% in OECD countries. In the future, this is estimated to become worse, reaching 22% of pension replacement rate – pension entitlement divided by lifetime average earnings. Moreover, incentives were introduced for retiring later, for example, a worker can earn 6-8% bonus on the basic state pension provision per year when deferring retirement. Interestingly, UK is one of the few countries of the OECD which does not have a mandatory retirement age, i.e. an age where employees would have to retire (OECD, 2017).

A discursive pattern of connecting institutional changes with hard work and responsibility can be detected in the government's discourse shown above. This is useful in promoting the neoliberal agenda and depoliticising social inequalities while reducing direct labour costs and indirect costs of welfare provision. The pervasiveness of the neoliberal regime of truth can be seen in the Labour party adopting the dominant discourse and even rewriting its constitution. This is also referred to 'routinization of neo-liberalism' (Jessop, 2003, p. 8), namely as establishing the neo-liberal paradigm as a fact with no fallible alternatives. As a result, Labour reproduced many of the introduced policy aims. The question, however, remains why these neo-liberal policies have found such great support despite reducing the income which can be spent on consumption and thus incorporating the potential to harm economic growth. The answer can be found in the growing importance of finance.

4.2.4 The 'Big Bang' and Financial Deregulation

The finance sector has played a substantial role in the transformation of society. Financial deregulation and an expansion of retail financial services to the wider public was seen as a key in establishing 'a prosperous country' based on the 'liberated energies of a free people'

(Thatcher [P12]). For this purpose, a major overhaul of the financial market was initiated with the Financial Services Act 1986 - also called 'Big Bang'. On an international level, limitations in the trading of foreign currencies at the Stock Market Exchange were abolished and the British market opened up for international firms, transforming London into an international financial hub. On a national level, the distinction between wholesale and retail banking was removed and restrictions on mortgage provisions and banking activities lifted (Wood, 2017). The desire for competition was a key driver here: 'The gloves are off, the combatants are in the ring and the fight is about to start [...] desire to see more competition in these markets was the main reason why the Government pressed ahead' (M12).

Following these changes, competition rose and a surge of mergers and acquisitions took place, namely 685 between 1990 and 1995 (Shabani et al., 2014). This was accompanied by rising influx of foreign firms which further intensified competition and resulted in an internationalization of banks, which can be seen in the aspect that more than half of banks' balance sheets are comprised of overseas products (Haldane et al., 2001). This process was enabled, amongst other things, by a relatively light regulatory framework and low taxation based on the belief that markets would 'operate responsibly without unnecessary constraints' and promote 'efficient and competitive business' (Hayes and Hubbard, 1990, p.206). Regulation of should therefore not be all-encompassing ('I don't think it would be right for a regulator to provide a 100% guarantee' [Chairman regulatory body, M25]).

For the household sector, the process of deregulation meant that controls on personal finance, for example, hire purchase, credit and store card restrictions were removed. Additionally, building societies were now allowed to engage in banking activities and offer credit cards, loans and mortgages. The subsequent rise in competition and financial innovation resulted in declining credit standards. Mortgages were offered even up to 100% loan-to-value ratios

and interest-only mortgages were introduced (Shabani et al., 2014). This competition was portrayed in the media as positive forcing companies to innovate and offer more choice ('deregulatory measures help to increase the competitiveness and flexibility' [P25]) while showing households that they are important ('Why they need to keep you happy' [M36]). As a result of deregulation, mis-selling scandals of mortgage and pension products incurred. Subsequently, the Financial Services Authority was established in 1998 whose aim was to overlook financial service offers. It became the single regulator of financial services which was later on split into macro-prudential regulation by the Bank of England and micro-prudential regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority (Kempson and Collard, 2012).

The changing financial sector has been productive in establishing the new regime of truth and intensifying capital-labour inequalities based on incorporating reproductive activities into capital accumulation (Lebaron, 2010). In addition to labour being disciplined and drained by not being able to rely on welfare provisions and having less labour market protection, wider access to financial products as a result of the deregulation processes has enabled capitalists to increase profits in a twofold way.

First, based on being able to take on credit, households can accept lower wages and still sustain living standards (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b), resulting in income inequality. Whereas income inequality has been relatively stable at a Gini coefficient²⁵ of around 0.25 at the end of the 1970s, it started to rise since then, reaching up to now 0.38 reflecting one of the highest income inequality levels in the European Union (McGuinness, 2018). In 2016/2017, 41% of all disposable household income in the UK was held by 20% in the highest income range whereas only 8% was earned by the lowest 20% income earners (P33). At the same time, consumer credit almost doubled from 8% of consumer expenditure per year to 15% in just

²⁵ 'A measure of inequality, where 0 expresses no inequality (e.g. where everyone has the same income) and 1 expresses maximal inequality (e.g. one person has all the wealth and all others have none).' (ONS, 2018b, p. 10)

ten years since 1979 and increased five times between 1990 and 2008. Second, this empowers capitalists to generate further profits. To circumvent capital requirements, special purpose vehicles were set up. It is estimated that 13% of UK banking assets belong to off-balance sheet items (namely \$5 trillion) and issuance of securities increased nine times between 2000 and 2007 including securities based on mortgages, student loans and insurance receivables. Overall assets of financial institutions experienced a 67 times increase between 1980 and 2010 with the greatest growth in banks and building societies (71 times rise), but also private pension funds increased substantially (25 times increase), resulting in assets of the UK financial sector comprising 520% of GDP (Shabani et al., 2014; Wall et al., 2016).

This unequal capital-labour relationship, in the form of disciplining and draining labour while increasing capitalists' profits, is deepened in times of crisis, as exemplary shown in the case of the Global Financial Crisis (Federici, 2014). While labour had to cope with the effects of the crisis, capitalists in the form of banks and corporations were protected by the government. The level of financial help was significantly larger for financial institutions and companies compared to households (£500 billion in contrast to £1 billion support for homeowners [P27]). The assumption was also made that only households who have been financially responsible deserve to be helped, putting the burden onto households rather than on financial institutions. For instance, the mortgage rescue package was related to the condition of being a responsible borrower and 'cannot help those who have borrowed excessively or acted recklessly' (P26). Finally, even the help which was offered to households worsened essentially their position by either having to give up part of their house (through shared ownership) or sell the house and rent it back. Homeowners were allowed to defer mortgage payments for two years. Although forbearance is considered as a tool to prevent foreclosure, it reinforces the existing system by not challenging the responsibility relationship and adding new costs for borrowers (Langley, 2009).

The costs of these bail-outs led subsequently to an introduction and deepening of austerity including social provisioning cuts affecting those the most who were promised a better life through access to financial services (Roberts, 2016). Based on the belief of ‘a strong economy’ being ‘built on sound public finances’ (P32), when the economy recovered, a fiscal austerity programme was introduced which was considered ‘the most drastic budget cuts in living memory’ (M65). It not only reversed previous measures but intensified the pressure through welfare cuts, for example, family tax credits were reduced and stricter rules for receiving employment allowance introduced. Furthermore, £12 billion of services provided by the central government were cut since 2010 (Emmerson, 2017).

4.3 Finance as Saviour? Normalizing of the Everyday Risk Manager

After having seen how responsabilization takes place through liberalization of labour market regulations, dismantling of the welfare state and establishing a discourse of hard work and responsibility (disciplinary power technology), it is portrayed in the following how norms of asset accumulation (regulatory technology of life) are constructed. Because of the state providing less security in case of income shortfalls, households are encouraged to accumulate assets and engage with financial markets, for example, through pension funds.

4.3.1 ‘Share-dealing, Home-Owning Democracy’ - The Everyday Asset Manager

Since the 1980s, discourses and policies were introduced constructing the subject position of the everyday asset manager who accumulates financial and non-financial assets. As the UK was argued to be a ‘capitalist country with too few capitalists’ (Davies et al., 2018, p. 486), the aim was to create ‘popular capitalism’ (Thatcher [P09]). Thatcher (P04) declares the economic freedom to own property as the substantial freedom above any other: ‘A man’s right to work as he will spend what he earns to own property, to have the state as servant and not as master [...] And on that freedom all our other freedoms depend’. This reconstructs

the discourse of hard work and responsibility, mentioned above, and extends it with the entrepreneurial identity of profit-making in asset accumulation. Everyone can become a capitalist by having opportunities rather than being constrained by the state.

[...] you have to give people something to go for. We give them a ladder of opportunity and invite them to climb as high as they can. The sky is the limit and it's working. More and more people owning their own home, owning shares, having a stake in society (Thatcher, [P19])

This statement depicts two key policy measures introduced by the Tory government in establishing a 'property-owning democracy' (P09): share ownership and homeownership.

A large-scale privatization programme of nationalized companies was introduced and company shares were offered to the general public, accompanied by huge media campaigns. One of the most famous media campaigns was connected to the privatization of British Gas. The campaign consisted of informative advertisements outlining the profitability of British Gas and of personal stories where it was emphasized that 'everyone can buy a share of the shares' (Gregory, 1988, p.17). A fictitious everyday person named Sid, who can be the person sitting next to you and the popular slogan 'If you see Sid, tell him' were created (M61). The advertisement campaign is estimated to have reached out to 98% of the population. In addition to advertisement campaigns, incentives were introduced; for example, in the case of British Telecommunications a 10% discount on phone bills when investing at least £250. Even after the 1987 crash, counter strategies are used to ensure continuing share investment: 'When bears prowl in the financial jungle and all hype is abandoned, *fun* shares provide hope' (M19). Here, fun shares relate to everyday activities and include, for example, investing in theatre productions.

As a result, share ownership in the general public increased from 7% to 28% in the 1980s. Shares were often taken up by the employees of the company, for example, 88% of the British Gas shares were sold to employees. Not only more share ownership was created but the government also raised substantial funds in 1992/1993 even up to £8.2 billion with the privatization of British Telecommunications, Trust Ports, Northern Ireland Electricity. In the aftermath of the big privatizations, however, smaller investors started to sell their shares and the share of everyday investors holding stocks fell from 28% in 1989 to 17% in 1997.

The normalization of share ownership was further progressed by focusing on the gains which can be made in equities ('History shows that equities have always outperformed simple savings accounts over the long term.' [M27]) and promoting managed funds which can be seen in the description of a 'Save and Invest' shop (M20), describing it as easy and similar as going to a fashion store and choosing clothes.

It offers a complete range of investment advice, can organise the purchase of shares and unit trusts, and give help on pensions and taxation. The customer can stroll into one of its shops, browse through the displays around the walls which present unit trusts and, if he wishes, discuss his requirements with one of the staff.

New managed funds and trusts are introduced which enable also smaller investors ('an increasing number of fund management companies are offering hedge funds with much smaller minimum investment' [M35]) and households who are retired or made redundant ('Unit trusts were offering defensive stock especially for the retired and redundant' [M21]) to invest. The benefits of managed funds are being able to 'cherry pick funds from three dozen funds' and to 'keep money in a balanced portfolio' (M54). More recently emphasis is put on stocks and shares ISAs 'where you could select more diversified funds' (M70). In the long-term, the trend thus moved towards the majority of shares being directly held by institutional investors and indirect shareholding by the everyday investor.

The second aspect of popular capitalism is creating a homeownership society, allowing ‘more people to have the security and satisfaction of owning property’ (Thatcher [P05]). With the Housing Act in 1980, one of the major reforms with regards to homeownership was introduced: the Right to Buy programme where council tenants are offered to buy their house to a discounted price of up to one third²⁶. At the same time the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 abolished the obligation to hold social housing. In addition to the Right to Buy programme, a ‘right to mortgage’ was introduced (P19). Financial incentives were implemented to encourage households to take up mortgages. Between 1983 and 2000, a mortgage tax relief enabled households to receive full relief on interest payment for mortgages of up to £30,000 (HM Treasury, 2013b). At the same time, previously strict mortgage regulations were loosened as discussed in 4.2.4. Competition was seen as beneficial: ‘Designer mortgages help bridge the gap to your housing dream - Lenders have now been forced to innovate’ (M23). These measures were accompanied by a flexibilization of the rental market. Rent controls were removed and new laws implemented which made it easier for landlords to end a tenancy and evict tenants as well as to shorten the tenancy agreements which in the majority of cases led to tenancy agreements of maximum 6 months (P17). It thus became easier to own a house while renting became more insecure.

The introduction of this policy was accompanied by praising households who through thrifty behaviour become homeowners and marginalising social housing tenants who unnecessarily rely on the state (‘council housing creates its own demand’). It is assumed that households want to own their house rather than rent: ‘People want a home they can call their own. The last Conservative Government encouraged Councils to sell but all too often Labour Councils refused. This brought disappointment to many, many people [...] citizens have the duty to support themselves’ (Thatcher, [P03]). Through leaving the constraints of the state and

²⁶ This scheme is in place today offering a discount up to £108,000 inside and £80,900 outside London (P33).

owning the house, households can take control over their future: ‘Homeownership stimulates the attitudes of independence and self-reliance that are the bedrock of a free society’ (Secretary of State for the Environment cited in [Moore, 2014]). These policies are thus accompanied by discourses constructing the previously excluded as an important part of society by owning a house (Wood, 2017). As can be seen in these statements, here the government as well draws on a discourse of hard work and responsibility, representing a form of subjectification where one’s identity is defined in relation to housing tenure, homeownership is seen as desirable and social housing as negative.

Between 1980 and 1989 1.3 million tenants took up the right to purchase their council house (Adam et al., 2015) while the government’s social housing units were reduced substantially as the municipalities were not allowed to deny the tenants the purchase of the house and the proceeds were not allowed to be used for building of new social housing (Kempson and Collard, 2012). As shown in Figure 8, public housing constituted 32% of dwellings in the UK in 1979 which has decreased to 17% in 2015. While social and private renting declined this was mainly taken up by homeownership accompanied by high mortgage debt, having led to a 650% rise in mortgage debt during the Thatcher era and mortgage debt per GDP rose from 24% in 1980 to 100% in 2013 (Wood, 2017; Eurostat, 2018).

Figure 8 Housing Tenure Shares by Tenure Type – England and Wales, 1918 - 2011



Source: Disney and Luo (2017, p.64)

Finally, to adopt the skills of entrepreneurs in taking on risk and become ‘wealth creators’, it was argued that personal involvement in setting up pensions should be intensified (P14). In 1986, the Personal Pensions Act was introduced which on the one hand, abolished the possibilities of employers to make being part of the company’s pension scheme a condition of being employed and which on the other hand, made it easier to contract out and set up personal pension. To motivate households to take up personal pensions, tax incentives were put in place such as a reduction in national insurance contributions when contracting out from SERP (Cutler and Waine, 2001) and a discourse of opportunity was created. A reoccurring topic is early retirement, portraying the recent changes as possibility to leave the job early: ‘If work was such a wonderful thing [...] the rich would keep it to themselves’ (M28). Besides personal pensions, further investment tools for pensions were set up including the Self-Invested Personal Pension Scheme (SIPP) and the Personal Equity Plan (PEP). Whereas in SIPPs households can self-determine the investments, PEP was a tax incentivised investment tool where households could invest £6,000 per year in a share based investment in exchange for being exempted from income tax on dividends and capital gains tax (P28, P29). While this has been abolished in 1999, PEP was a highly successful scheme with 270,000 taking up the opportunity in the first year (BBC News, 1999).

Moreover, DC pensions gained in importance. Until the end of the 1970s, occupational pensions have been mainly based on DB schemes which is a guaranteed pension income determined by accrual rate, salary level, and length of working for a company, i.e. these schemes are ‘divorced from the investment performance of the pension fund’(Cutler and Waine, 2001, p.104). However, under sluggish economic growth and rising wages these pension schemes came under pressure. It was argued that the strong connection between pensions and companies needs to be loosened in a framework of a more flexible labour market: ‘One aim of a personal pension is that it should be completely portable. The

employee will be able to take it with him from job to job - an essential feature, with the growing trend for job mobility' (M14). Therefore, in 1995 portable pensions were introduced allowing the transfer of pensions between companies. These changes supported the move from the more generous occupational DB pensions towards the less generous DC pensions, reflecting a risk shift from companies onto the households (Kempson and Collard, 2012). In DC pensions, households are responsible for making decisions with regard to the pension plan concerning contribution amount and investment structure.

During her premiership, Margaret Thatcher significantly restructured society and created the image of popular capitalism where everyone has access to asset ownership. A discourse of self-reliance and entrepreneurial spirit has been established to create the asset-owning society based on owning shares, property, and investing in pensions. This is strongly connected to the view of the household as an investor, i.e. an everyday capitalist aware of risks and profit opportunities. It depicts an important correlate of governmentality which works through the notions of freedom, autonomy and responsibility (Grey, 1997). Taking on personal responsibility is one of the key pillars of the asset-owning society where it is emphasized that through accumulating assets, households gain choice and independence.

4.3.2 'Get Ready for Retirement' – The Everyday Saver

Similar to the aim of wanting to enable households to become capitalists, New Labour made the pledge to create a society with 'more successful entrepreneurs, not fewer' (P20). However, a slight shift can be detected in the construction of asset norms. Previously, finance and asset ownership were mainly related to establishing opportunities with which everyone can become an asset manager, i.e. adopt capitalist characteristics. Since the end of the 1990s, policies and discourses were introduced which put more emphasis on financial responsibility and creating a 'stakeholder society – where everyone has a stake in society and owes

responsibility' (Blair, [P20]). The focus lay on the everyday saver who mitigates future risks by accumulating assets. As outlined by Lai (2017) and Langley (2007) this does not entail the saver identity in the traditional sense, i.e. the passive financial subject with solely savings in the bank, but here the house as asset-based welfare tool and pensions are included in the subject position of the everyday saver. Recognizing the limitations of asset-ownership based on households not being able to enter the housing market and not taking up pensions, accessible asset ownership and financial responsibility have become key policy themes.

With regards to housing, New Labour pledged to 'work with mortgage providers to encourage greater provision of more flexible mortgages to protect families in a world of increased job insecurity' (P20). Mortgages were introduced where only a minimum of annual payments is determined and the household can pause or make larger repayments. This enabled households on irregular work contracts to access mortgage finance. These changes to mortgages have been praised in the media as 'flexible friends', establishing a connection to personal relationships, and as a natural step in line with rising competition and a flexible work environment: 'A booming housing market, rising interest rates and changing patterns of employment have forced banks and building societies to develop a breed of flexible home loans' (M31). The changing work environment is taken as given which the financial world needs to adjust to by making mortgage finance accessible for a wider range of households.

In addition to the importance of accessibility of housing finance, the perception of the house as asset-based welfare means was intensified. Already during the Thatcher era, the media constructed the house as an investment tool.

If you are a homeowner your best option is going to look for some way to realise the huge investment you have made [...] You can make a straight trade down [...] But what if you

don't want to move? The answer here is to arrange a home income plan. This involves taking out a mortgage on your house and then using the money to buy an annuity. (M019)

For releasing more of the 'flexible store of wealth', further deregulatory measures were introduced (M40). For instance, the lifetime mortgage was introduced allowing households to borrow against the equity of their house with the help of an interest-only loan which is repaid when moving into a care home or in the case of death (MAS, 2018). It is argued that this helps 'cash-poor but asset-rich pensioners tapping into the capital locked up in their home' (M46). The inherent contradiction between being proud to own one's home and the house being an investment (Ronald, 2008) is overcome by creating the desire to accumulate assets to provide a source of spending: 'Older homeowners said they'd consider an equity-release plan – not as a last resort to generate income, but as a way of using property equity to finance future spending' (M59). Emotional values are connected with investment values 'home sweet secure home' (M11) and households are advised to move up the property ladder ('consider selling up after three years [and] could then make a substantial profit' [M41]).

The pension system was also directed further towards personal responsibility. First, DC pensions became more relevant. During the 1990s, the stock market was rising and companies introduced contribution holidays where they put their pension contributions on hold. Subsequently, the Chancellor announced the removal of tax credits given to pensions:

Many pension funds are in substantial surplus and at present many companies are enjoying pension holidays, so this is the right time to undertake long-needed reform. So with immediate effect, I propose to abolish tax credits paid to pension funds and companies (P18).

The tax relief on dividends which companies were earning when investing pension contributions in the stock market were abolished and companies started to struggle to provide a final salary scheme in an environment of rising longevity. This intensified the move from

DB to DC schemes, especially after the dot-com bubble and falling equity values. Between 2002 and 2003, 17% of DB pension schemes were closed to new members and in 2003 63% had been closed. This in turn led to less pension provision by companies (Langley, 2004).

Second, the government envisioned a stronger responsibility by households and aimed to reverse the relationship between private and state pensions from a 60:40 ratio to a 40:60 ratio (P23). This is based on the belief that ‘pensioners should share fairly in the increasing prosperity of the nation’ (P20; P24) and the ‘pension system should reward work’ (P24). For this purpose, the stakeholder pension has been introduced to give more people with insecure jobs and particularly ‘those on low and modest incomes and with changing patterns of employment’, a chance to access a pension and reduce the reliance on the state (P20). One of the requirements of the stakeholder pension is that it is a DC scheme, explicitly exempting DB schemes as ‘benefits will have to be related to individual contributions plus investment returns on these contributions’ (P24). In addition to stakeholder pensions, the emphasis on flexible personal investments such as PEPs and SIPP was deepened to mitigate rising job insecurity and flexible labour markets: ‘With job insecurity now a part of most people's lives, it may be better to save for retirement through more accessible investment vehicles.’ (M33). Finally, individuals have been gradually allowed to take the saved pension fund as a lump sum when retiring whereas before it had to be invested into an annuity (M32).

What is striking in these developments is an emphasis on personal responsibility and having no choice than to accumulate assets which is also taken up in recent governmental publications. Norms are created which portray that money should be saved and invested and a nest-egg built in order to keep living standards during periods of income shortfalls.

Everyone needs to plan for their retirement [...] Putting money aside for your retirement can seem difficult, especially when there are so many other things to pay for. But with a bit of planning, you can help yourself to get ready [...] (P28)

Risk is being regarded here as an unavoidable truth which the households have to tackle with ‘careful planning and saving now [which then] would provide a regular stream of tax-free income in the future’ (M37). While it was recognized that employees work in increasingly insecure work relationships because of ‘a changing labour market that requires greater flexibility and mobility of labour’ (P24), these labour market conditions are taken as given. The overall guideline is that ‘those who can save have the responsibility to do so’ (P24).

To this end, new savings products have been introduced to give financial independence to income constrained households. A Child Trust Fund was set up providing families with newborns on top of child benefit with a tax-financed lump sum of at least £250 in an account accessible at 18. Furthermore, a Savings Gateway incentivising households to save by adding to each pound saved 50 pence was set up and later replaced by a tax-exempt Individual Savings Account (ISA [P25, P34]). These measures were accompanied by widening access to financial advice aimed to raise the awareness of the necessity to plan for the future. In just three years starting in 2005, 3,900 independent advisors were available and free advice services were established in the form of the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Pension Advisory Service (Collard et al., 2010). Overall it becomes clear that rather than questioning the current state of the welfare state and economic system, the focus lies on how to improve the current system with the help of financial education programmes and easier accessible financial products. Asset-based welfare thus depoliticises social inequalities and is less about removing them as emphasized in Labour’s manifesto but more about duties.

Summing up, policies favouring asset ownership and a discourse surrounding financial responsibility have been established since the 1980s. The main focus lies on constructing individuals as active investor identities rather than passive receiver of welfare. Tory and Labour governments stated the aim of creating a society with more capitalists, i.e. more self-reliant entrepreneurs. Whereas the Thatcher government concentrated on opportunities and widening asset ownership to the general republic, subsequent governments extended this discussion by emphasizing the need to take over responsibility and save with the help of asset-based welfare measures. The implemented policies and accompanying discourses establish a regime of truth in which it is seen as ‘normal’ that households take over responsibility by accumulating assets on which they can draw upon during difficult times.

4.3.3 The Everyday Risk Manager – Free and Constrained

Responsibilization in the form of households having to take on more responsibilities over future risks (disciplinary technology of power) and financialization in the form of households using finance and accumulating assets to manage these responsibilities (regulatory technology of power) come into being with three main discursive formations in the media²⁷: an entrepreneurial discourse, an agency discourse and a non-agency discourse.

The entrepreneurial discourse calls on households to adopt asset norms, i.e. become everyday risk managers accumulating financial and non-financial assets guided by finance rationality and avoid debt except for asset accumulation purposes. By referring to the necessity for every form of corporation ‘from multinational corporations to village tennis

²⁷ It is acknowledged here that a more detailed genealogy over a longer time period might have revealed further influences on the construction of household financial behaviour in the media. Nevertheless, these years and news outlets are the ones particularly mentioned by the interviewees, for which reason it is deemed sufficient here. This is based on a common approach in selecting data for discourse analysis as outlined in 3.3.3 where the researcher narrows down a wider selection of documents in order to conduct discourse analysis.

clubs' to produce a financial report, *The Guardian* Weekend-Money (M22) advises households to adopt similar practices:

We all have assets and liabilities. Listen them in the form of a balance sheet enables you to discover your true financial position. More important, you can spot areas where you have been over-spending and others where extra effort and further investment are most likely to add to your wealth.

As exemplary shown in this article, the house value can be determined by 'studying the price of similar properties in your area as shown in the local estate agents' or the 'value of stocks and shares, unit trusts and other investments' can be obtained from the companies they are held with. The article then lists different items for the liability side and gives a description of how to calculate the net worth. Questions are raised about how to improve it:

Should you extend or improve your house? Will it increase its value by more than the cost of the work? Or is the house too big for you already, now that your children have left home? Perhaps you should sell it and move to a smaller one?

How are your investments performing? Should you make any changes? Do you have an insurance policy maturing shortly? Most important, do you have sufficient liquid funds or assets easily transferable into cash to meet foreseeable expenses?

Households are called upon to: 'never put all your eggs in one basket no matter how strong that basket appears to be' (M18) and invest 'into low-risk and high-risk ventures. Relatively low risk investments include government securities and income bonds from leading UK life assurance companies [...] Higher risk investments worth considering are those involving stocks and shares' (M04). Before investing in higher risk assets, several requirements need to be fulfilled first, for instance 'rainy-day money isn't supposed to be exposed to any risk'

since one is 'always supposed to be able to get it in an emergency' (M27) or in another instance the following criteria are outlined for households to decide if they invest in stocks:

* You want more than a savings account offers. * You can face up to bad days on investment markets without worry. * You can afford to lock away your spare cash for five years at the least. * You are prepared to lose money occasionally. (M55)

Households are encouraged to take 'sensible steps to protect their finances' if they 'haven't already taken some' (M62). By referring to if households haven't already taken some sensible measures, setting up insurances as hedging and building a savings cushion is depicted as the normal way to deal with the future. For instance, the beneficial role of having an insurance in the case of losing a job is emphasized: 'When Harry Hogg was laid off [...] just over a year ago, the blow was softened slightly by the fact that he had insurance' (M43).

Households are not only motivated to adopt finance rationality, i.e. financial strategies including diversification and hedging, in the interest of achieving asset ownership, but also to exercise financial self-discipline.

The UK has a nasty debt habit [...] some of today's parents are debt-bingers relying on plastic as a crutch to fuel unsustainable lifestyles. While we need to accept that debt used correctly is a powerful enabler, too many still get burnt. The challenge is what and how we teach our children to stop passing on bad messages and break the cycle of debt (M72)

In this message, very strong positive (powerful enabler) and negative terms (nasty debt habits) are used to call for action and providing a rationale in having good debts (such as education loans and house) and avoiding bad debts (financing unnecessary consumption). Moreover, since 'affordable debts today may be a burden tomorrow' (M39), it is advisable to repay the mortgage earlier if the mortgage terms allow this without punishment ('pay off the loan as soon as you can: It's not the most expensive debt but it's the biggest' (M44).

The subject position of the everyday risk manager who adapts to the entrepreneurial discourse is constituted with the help of ‘discourses as [are] tactical elements’ where there ‘exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy’ (Foucault, 1978, pp.101-102). Two overarching, seemingly contradictory discursive formations accompany the entrepreneurial discourse: an agency and a non-agency discourse.

In line with the policy discourse, an agency discourse is constructed which equates asset accumulation with gaining freedom and control over the future. Personal involvement is seen ‘as desirable in its own right not just as a means of reducing the dominance of institutions’ but to ‘broaden the appeal of the free enterprise’ (M08). Households are depicted as having been liberated from too strict financial regulations (‘the days of mortgage famine, it seems, are over’ [M02]). It is implied that they have a ‘desire for independence’ and demand more ‘freedom of choice’ (M02). With regard to pensions, it is argued that ‘the only democratic and just position is to give the employee freedom of choice to determine his/her own pension arrangements’ (M01). As a result, the new ‘pension freedoms’ are praised as ‘undoubtedly a progressive development - giving people choice and control’ (M69) and enabling households ‘to ensure that this money is working as hard as it can’ (M63).

Yet, the discourse surrounding freedom does not only empower households but also functions as an enabler of power. By giving autonomy to households, the subject position of the everyday risk manager is made desirable and households choose to adopt asset norms.

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving [...] may be realized. (Foucault, 1982, p.790)

Finance is depicted as something which is good for everyone, referring to house equity withdrawals as ‘mid-life joy’ (M13) with which one can finance ‘moving to a cottage in the country or a place by the sea’ (M18).

We all have dreams about freedom from the world of work. My own dream is to travel across the US from East to West by motorbike. Yours could be to see the world on a Swan Hellenic cruise or to just live out your days in comfort and happiness. Whatever your dream you will need an income and this is most likely to be your pension. (M49)

The subject position of the everyday risk manager is thus articulated by connecting freedom and control over the future to opportunities.

In contrast to the discourse of freedom and excitement, a non-agency discourse of having no choice (‘you have no choice’ [M17]) than to submit to asset accumulation is established since it is ‘more difficult to become complacent’ (M35). It functions through relating back to the fears of households and scaremongering based on outlining what would happen if one does not invest (‘Employees wanting a decent income in retirement must make private provision for themselves or through their employer’ [M14]). Questions such as: ‘Scared? You’re meant to be.’ (M48) are asked, only to then introduce financial strategies as a solution. By using familiar terms in the form of ‘co-op stamps’ or ‘pot of noodles’, the fear of old-age poverty is made relatable and private pensions are promoted (M29).

But after considering retirement on a state pension last week, (a social whirl of Pot Noodle soirees, coupon chic and Co-op stamps) what choice do any of us have? Sweet 16 and street cred is fine. But 65 and on the street is not. Private pensions are now a simple bare necessity.

Even when acknowledging uncertainty, households are advised to take on financial products: ‘No one can accurately predict which will do best over the next few years [...]. It is obviously

advisable to try to identify trusts or management companies with a consistent record' (M25). Normalization of asset ownership takes place by accepting that there are 'problems of the past and uncertainties of the future', 'yet signing up with a company pension scheme if one is on offer is undoubtedly one of the best ways of making provision for the future' [M45]). By using words such as 'undoubtedly' and 'obviously', it is depicted as the normal solution to deal with uncertainty or otherwise being punished with higher costs:

There's nothing to stop someone eligible for a personal pension plan taking one out now, regardless of all the changes that may be in the pipeline. Every year's delay in taking out a pension plan will cost you money as the premium rises according to your age, and your contributions will have a year less in which to earn an investment return. (M17)

This discursive formation of non-agency therefore relies on constraints where 'truth isn't the reward of free spirits [...] nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. '(Foucault, 1980, p.131). The financialized household is constrained by having to take on financial products and accumulate assets or otherwise being punished with higher costs and not having financial security during periods of income shortfalls. The dichotomy between portraying agency and gaining freedom while on the other hand outlining the costs of non-complying thus results in normalizing asset ownership.

Running through these discursive formations is a distinction between conforming or desirable behaviour and non-conforming behaviour. As outlined by Foucault (1972), discursive formations are not only constituted through what unites them but also by the marginalisation of others. As shown above, previous policy discourses continuously referred back to responsible households working hard and saving and therefore, deserving to be helped in difficult situations and households who are irresponsible and cannot expect society to provide for them. A similar pattern can be found in the media discourse. Irresponsible

households are portrayed as lacking self-discipline, for example, by taking on too much debt, possibly resulting in eventual defaults on their debt ('the cardinal sin, if you cannot do this [pay off your credit card bill], is to fail to pay even the monthly instalment' [M03]) and not planning ahead for which reason auto-enrolment workplace pensions were introduced in 2012: 'Auto-enrolment is great, as it relies on inertia. But people still make poor choices [...] people give up protection before giving up television subscriptions' (M67). Similar to the government discourse, non-compliance is ascribed to the irresponsible behaviour of the household rather than to changes in society and its unequal development.

While Foucault (1978) argues that power is transmitted with the help of discourse which transforms real practices, he also puts emphasis on resistance as discussed in 2.5.1. The resistance discourse detected here concentrates on the limitations of responsabilization and the possibility of financial markets to step in for previously existing provisions by the state:

Pensioners do not go away because they are no longer the responsibility of the state [...] We can have a higher tax burden, or a higher dividend burden. To pretend that the latter is virtuous while the former is not is disingenuousness of a high order. The system is a mess. As consumers we are sold plans on promises of returns that are increasingly unattainable while a viable state system is allowed to wither on the vine. The funds that invest on our behalf thus make impossible demands upon British companies, weakening the performance of the economy. And at any stage we are vulnerable to being ripped off by fraudsters and dodgy salesmen. There is a remedy. This is our money. It should and could be spent as we want. That is not down to us. Some pension fund activism is long overdue. (M25)

By investing in order to circumvent risks such as poverty in old age, households bet on the good performance of a company in terms of generating profits and thus indirectly increase the pressure on firms (as also recognized in the literature [Sotiropoulos and Lapatsioras, 2012; Weiss, 2015]).

Despite criticizing the government and its ‘lies’ that going into deficit or introducing a higher tax burden is worse than having to rely on dividends, solutions do not include a fundamental change in the system but are ‘quick to compromise’ (Foucault, 1978, p.96) by suggesting further financial products. Rather than moving away from this regime of truth, the current asset-based welfare approach is seen as ‘normal’ and further measures are introduced in case of difficulties, for example, lower mortgage costs for ‘key workers’ such as teachers or NHS workers (M58) or the more recently help-to-buy scheme aimed to help young households to get on the property ladder by providing government loans to first-time buyers (MAS, 2017). The media thus reinforces the existing regime of truth.

But before you start forming a disorderly queue outside your local building society, it's important to be aware that these mortgages will be available to only a select few first-time buyers - just 4,000 a year between now and 2010. (M50)

This regime of truth however ‘isn’t outside power, or in lacking power’ (Foucault, 1980, p.131) but enables the government to dismantle the welfare state and push forward the process of responsabilization in offering financial solutions to deal with the uncertainty.

4.3.4 Personalization of Asset Accumulation Norms

For households to pick up asset norms incorporated in the discursive formations portrayed above, discursive strategies are employed which give meaning to the subject position of the everyday risk manager. On the one hand, because of recognizing that ‘people like to personalise their investments’ (M42), experts, celebrities and everyday persons are used to portray authority and build trust. On the other hand, a connection to the everyday life is established and it is recognized that finance is not necessarily an enjoyable topic for everyone. Through these discursive strategies, which are explained in more detail below, asset ownership becomes normalized and terms such as ‘spreading the risk’ become familiar discursive ideas (M52).

In constructing regimes of truth, Foucault (1980, p.131) emphasizes not only the importance of ‘techniques and procedures’ in the form of financial products and discourses, but also the role of experts who claim authority in portraying the truth. This can be seen in the case of the newspapers using experts. Regular as well as invited pension and funds’ managers give advice on how to develop an asset strategy. In particular, in light of crisis situations, ‘star managers’ are asked to suggest ‘defensive strategies’ (M56). Even though these experts are portrayed as knowing the answers, they ‘are also human beings: they can make mistakes’ [M24]). Based on outlining the human character of ‘star managers’, a connection to the everyday person is established. They themselves are in the learning process but are nevertheless able to earn returns, as depicted in the statement below by a financial expert.

Wow said my wife, calculating that the portfolio had increased by 79.48% in only three months. [...] I am just a private investor trying to demonstrate that someone can make a profit without specialised information accessible only to professionals (M33).

In recent years, Martin Lewis has been gaining in importance in the UK as a financial expert with his website *moneysavingexpert.co.uk*. The site adopts a more sceptical view of financial institutions and claims to ‘fight your corner with journalistic research’. The average UK household is stated by Lewis to be able to gain a pay rise of up to 25% based on finding ‘tricks to beat the system’ and becoming an ‘active, savvy customer’ (M73).

Alongside experts, celebrities are interviewed and asked about their handling of financial affairs. By including celebrities, a connection between household financial behaviour and the behaviour of their favourite star is built. This normalizes the discussion of financial matters. To further increase the engagement of households with finance and asset ownership, readers have the opportunity to submit questions to the newspapers and personalized stories are presented. Whereas *The Daily Telegraph* introduced a section named ‘what the experts say’ which gives households the possibility to send in questions and financial advisers give

advice, *The Guardian* introduced a section on personal effects where readers are asked to contribute by asking questions and giving advice.²⁸ Thus, personal involvement is increased.

Moreover, artificial case studies are created, for instance a made up family called ‘The Plowshares’ in *The Financial Times* (M26). Not only does the name directly relate back to share investments but also everyday stories are connected with asset accumulation:

John is in his study, perusing the six-monthly interest statement from his wife's building society account. He is appalled to see just how little the return on their rainy-day money has become. Pushing aside piles of papers, he eventually finds a calculator. After a fair amount of cursing and scribbling on the back of an envelope, he discovers that the £22,000 which the couple prudently left in the building society (in Alison's name, for tax purposes) is now getting interest at only half the percentage rate that was applicable when they put the money into the account two years ago. Later that evening, he and Alison are eating supper and discussing life in general. [...] Better news on the work front has made him quietly confident that things may be improving generally. He tells Alison: *I've been thinking about our rainy-day building society money. We've got over £20,000 which is only earning 6% interest at the moment, while our equity investments through unit trusts made just over 30% last year. I think that we should move some of the savings money over to equities.*

Several aspects are mentioned here which connect to the everyday life and are also picked up in the wider media discourse. First, the discussion surrounding finance is portrayed as a ‘normal’ activity which households should integrate into their daily routines, for example, discussing finance during supper.

²⁸ An example of a personalized story can be found in Appendix G.

Second, finance is connected to personal traits which are helpful in becoming a successful everyday risk manager. The statement ‘perusing the six-monthly interest payments’ shows that it is essential to be active. Even when having set up a pension plan, ‘it is vital to keep an eye on your scheme to check it is performing to target’ (M32) since brokers are ‘advisers not instructors’ who ‘flog you their own, usually uncompetitive, products’ (M45). When experiencing debt problems, one should talk to the bank rather than ‘sweeping debt problems under the carpet’ (M26) and being ‘an ostrich’ (M60). Using these metaphors establishes a connection to daily discourses and puts emphasis on the severity of inaction. Another personal trait which comes alight in the statement is being prudent. A change in the asset strategy is justified with experiencing an improvement in the workplace. In general, the media emphasizes to be cautious (not to ‘invest all your money in the latest whizz scheme [...] it is best to be methodical’ [M05]) and patient which means ‘remaining calm despite the disappointing recent performance’ and ‘take a long-term view’ (M64). Here as well the reference is taken to everyday activities: ‘Stock market investment is like growing asparagus: you should have always started five years ago’ (M38).

Third, terms such as ‘cursing and scribbling’ indicate that finance is not easy. The media acknowledges the complex character of finance which ‘is no longer a matter of stashing away coins under the bed [...] because of its complexities and the various changes in the law’ (M29). Articles are started with slogans such as ‘Confused?’ (M47), ‘Baffled by the stock market?’ (M15) or ‘managing your money in the 21st century is much harder than it should be’ (M69). Succeeding in managing money does not come naturally but needs to be learned: ‘Humans come in two forms, one can manage its money and enjoys budgeting; the other can’t and doesn’t. Most people belong to the second category’ (M06). By acknowledging that it is difficult and not necessarily enjoyable (‘there’s no way of making this palatable, or amusing. It’s both indigestible and dull, but here it goes’ [M29]), the media

establishes a connection to households alongside pointing out that it is inevitable to be active ('Using the pension freedoms? You could run out of money after just 16 years.' [M71]).

Becoming an everyday risk manager, requires self-control and practice.

Frankly, I always find a systematic routine of daily physical exercise difficult to maintain. I know it's good for me, and I always feel a satisfying sense of self-control whenever I carry it out. Yet a thousand and one excuses regularly crowd it out. I suspect that many people's attitude to their personal finances, and I wouldn't exclude myself here, is similar (M07)

Including oneself into the group of being less interested in finance while also suggesting ways of overcoming establishes a personal connection to the reader ('it's hard enough to earn, so when you've got some cash it makes no sense to fritter it away. We all do it but there's no reason we shouldn't change' [M57]). Through being disciplined ('financing a dream retirement takes discipline' [M68]) and adopting asset norms one is rewarded with opportunities, for instance a pay rise as outlined by Martin Lewis: 'Fancy an easy pay rise? Start a pension and you've got one. Not only will the government top up your pension pot, but if you're employed, your employer may also have to help' (M73).

In addition to personalizing investment with the help of experts or establishing a connection to the everyday life, the financial discourse is recontextualized in the family discourse. Owning a house and saving a pension is presented in the same line as getting married and having children, i.e. the natural step when getting older: 'At my age, I should be thinking about getting a mortgage, a pension, a wife, a Volvo, two kids of my own and a Labrador' (M29). This interdiscursive relationship creates values which people can relate to rather than an abstract economics theory. Working hard and being a home capable of 'balancing the books' are seen as key success factors to be rewarded with financial security.

My policies are based not on some economics theory, but on things I and millions like me were brought up with: an honest day's work for an honest day's pay; live within your means; put by a nest egg for a rainy day; pay your bills on time (Thatcher, P06)

Financial values should be taught already early on in the childhood 'to stop this cycle of bad money management and general ignorance about money [...] since it's never too early to start learning how to handle money responsibly – children should know about ISAs as well as iPods' (M60). In this statement, the responsibility is again put on the households with an in-built assumption that households who struggle financially are responsible for this situation. For this purpose, 'DIY guides' for children (M44) are introduced aimed at raising 'enterprising' and 'financially astute children' (M09). Christmas presents in the form of financial products ('the gift of starting young – financial investments are a better bet than quickly forgotten toys' [M41]) are mentioned and banks are presented which offer financial products for children with the help of toys and other gimmicks to 'encourage children to become savers and to learn to be responsible' [M53]).

Along these enacted aspects of connecting an emotional picture (toys and children) with an objective, rational concept (asset norms), households are called upon to use business principles in dealing with family affairs, for instance, in the case of giving mortgage money to newlyweds which might later on split: 'It may seem unfeeling to use business principles when dealing with your own family but in the casual climate of today's relationships ought you to do otherwise?' (M10). Furthermore, a contrast is built between co-habiting and married couples, emphasizing that staying unmarried is costlier ('the system for co-habiting couples is a real hotch-potch' [M51]). The costs of a wedding are compared to the costs of not getting married with regards to inheritance, tax implications and pensions. At the same time, the implications of a separation on asset ownership are outlined ('a pension, too, is an asset accumulated during a marriage, and that both parties have a claim on it' ([M27])).

Finally, a clear emphasis is placed on the financial implications of death in the family. Without a life insurance ‘dependants might find themselves homeless, as well as bereaved, if the worst came to the worst for the breadwinner’ (M34). Additionally, jokes are integrated to encourage households to think about sad events which they might naturally avoid to do:

All my wife and I need now is a protection policy that provides for bodyguards to appear whenever our children consider putting soap on the stairs or crushed foxglove leaves in our tea in the hope of benefitting financially from all our insurance policies. (M16)

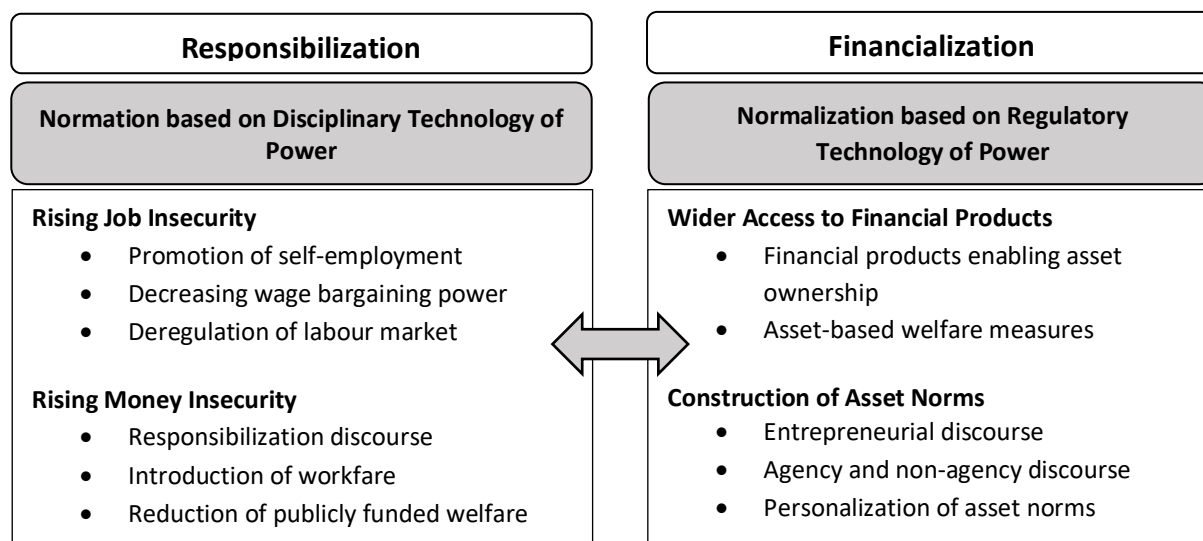
In this way a family discourse including children, partnerships and divorce becomes intertwined with the financial discourse surrounding the concept of ‘unfeeling’ which calls on households to adopt an objective, rational approach. Summing up, the everyday risk manager is constructed with the help of discursive strategies which personalize the rather abstract and complex financial world by using experts, personalized stories while also integrating the financial discourse into relational aspects.

4.4 Concluding Remarks and Summary

This chapter has explored the context level of analysis of the research framework introduced in 2.5.3 and contributes to answering the first part of the main research question, namely how households construct their financial identity in response to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization. For this purpose, insights into institutional changes were provided and a macro-level discourse analysis with the help of media documents conducted. It has been shown here how households are called upon to take on responsibilities over future risks (responsibilization) while finance is introduced as a solution to deal with these responsibilities (financialization). Going back to the governmentality framework introduced in Section 2.5.1, I argue here that the discussed changes can be best understood

as the interplay between disciplinary (normation) and regulatory (normalization) mechanisms, establishing the subject position of the everyday risk manager (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 Construction of the Everyday Risk Manager²⁹



Regarding responsabilization, the analysis established that two disciplinary mechanisms are contributing to the pressure to accumulate assets: job and money insecurity. Job insecurity is established by deregulating the labour market and reducing the bargaining power of trade unions. Alongside a weakening of labour power in the form of creating a flexible labour market with less employment protection (see 4.2.2), the welfare state has been continuously reduced (see 4.2.3). The findings have revealed that, amongst others, unemployment benefits have been attached to stricter obligations (workfare, i.e. ‘welfare-to-work’ measures) while sickness pay, state pension as well as further benefits, for instance housing benefits, were reduced. As a consequence, stability in the form of a secured, stable income has been replaced by insecurity which can be seen in the UK having one of the lowest employment protections (rising job insecurity) and social service provisions amongst OECD countries (rising money insecurity). This transfer of responsibilities from the employer and state onto households is accompanied by a discourse of having the responsibility to provide for oneself.

²⁹ To briefly reiterate, while normation focuses on individualizing effects, e.g. disciplining labour, normalization has a massifying effect, e.g. norms of investments for capitalists and labour alike.

In synergy with normation, normalization (regulatory technology of power) creates an environment which induces households to accumulate assets (see Figure 9). The financial market has been deregulated and the subsequent rise in competition and innovation has led to a wider access to financial products (see 4.2.4). At the same time, policies have been introduced which help households to accumulate assets as in the case of the right-to-buy programme or flexible pension products in the form of portable pensions (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). Replacing direct cash transfers with asset-based welfare measures has been accompanied by three discursive formations constructing asset norms (see Figure 9). The entrepreneurial discourse calls on households to accumulate financial and non-financial assets (including bonds, stocks and shares and unit trusts), avoiding debt except for asset accumulation purposes and integrating finance rationality (including diversification and hedging). This subjectification of households depicts a difference to the theorized everyday investor subject (Langley, 2006b). Rather than property investment being a deviation from an envisioned investor subject who develops a portfolio based on financial market assets, it is part of the everyday risk manager constituted in the media.

The above portrayed changes in society are made desirable through a dichotomous discourse between agency and non-agency and a personalization of asset norms as discursive strategy (see 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). Whereas the agency discourse focuses on creating opportunities where everyone can become an entrepreneur, i.e. adopt characteristics of capitalists, the non-agency discourse puts emphasis on households having no choice than to adopt asset norms or otherwise risk old-age poverty. By employing personalization strategies, a connection to everyday life is built. Through offering financial solutions to deal with rising insecurity, the regulatory technology of power '[...] does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 2003, p.242).

Disciplinary and regulatory power technologies establish a regime of truth in which it is seen as normal that households take over responsibility by working hard and accumulating assets. The pervasiveness of the new regime of truth can be seen in changing policy regimes adopting the same approach (see 4.2). Conservative and Labour governments stated the aim to create a society with more capitalists (4.3). Whereas the limitations of becoming an everyday risk manager are well pointed out, for example that young homebuyers experience difficulties to step onto the property ladder, instead of questioning underlying inequalities new financial products are introduced to enable households to pursue asset accumulation, for instance with the help-to-buy scheme. The immanent character of power, a power which is everywhere including institutional settings, becomes apparent here (Roberts, 2012).

Despite being promoted as an opportunity, there has been evidence presented here that asset norms act as a power technology intensifying capital labour inequalities. Through the financialization of social reproduction, capitalists can earn higher interest income based on debt-financed asset accumulation and securitization of households payment streams (see 4.2.4). While previous studies have focused on these rising profit opportunities for capitalists (see 2.2.2), the focus in this chapter lay on labour. It has been argued here that labour market deregulation and the retreat of the welfare state discipline and drains labour. Government and employers put more responsibility onto households by reducing direct labour costs and indirect costs of welfare provision while at the same time creating an environment of rising job and money insecurity. Financial market deregulation and construction of asset norms enable these processes by offering financial solutions to deal with the rising responsibility. Through developing a discourse of asset norms providing security and opportunities, the intensification of capital labour inequalities is hidden. The question however remains how households engage with these context level changes in the form of responsabilization and financialization which is answered in the next chapter.

5 Becoming an Everyday Risk Manager

5.1 Introduction

As outlined in Section 1.2.1, the first part of the main research question is concerned with the impact of institutional changes and the accompanying discourses on the construction of the everyday risk manager. While Chapter 4 has partially given an answer to this research question and identified mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization, this chapter complements these insights and concentrates on households' engagement with these mechanisms. More specifically, it provides answers to the second sub-research question ii., namely how households construct their financial identity in response to institutional changes and media discourses. Here, it is recognized that 'power comes from below' (Foucault, 1978, p.94) where – as outlined in Section 2.5.1 when introducing the Foucauldian governmentality framework – one's identity is co-constructed based on power relations and everyday discourses. For this purpose, households' discursive interaction with asset norms is explored first before presenting the effects of these discourse on their financial practices.

By employing a Foucauldian discourse analysis, an 'embedded, embodied, and situated analysis' (Langley, 2006b, p.921) of how norms of asset ownership become accepted as routines in everyday life can be conducted. This necessarily entails with it a meso-level analysis of discourses outlined in 3.4.2 and reflects the counter-part to the macro-level discourse analysis conducted in Chapter 4. Besides exploring the transformative effects of discourse, i.e. the interplay between financial discourses of households and media discourses, the chapter illuminates the performative effects of financial products, specifically, how the characteristics of financial products shape the subject position of the everyday risk manager. The chapter therefore focuses on the intersection between context and language as well as between context and practice level of analysis (see Figure 6 in 3.4.2) and unpacks how households are transformed into the everyday risk manager based on

discursive practices and its interaction with non-discursive elements in the form of institutional changes and financial products. The here conducted analysis therefore responds to the identified gap in the literature where it has been recognized that previous studies mainly focus on institutional changes and secondary data rather than combining these insights with primary data (see Section 2.3.3).

Along these lines, the interplay between disciplinary mechanisms of responsabilization, namely labour market deregulation (see 4.2.2) and the retreat of the welfare state (see 4.2.3), and regulatory mechanisms of financialization, namely wider access to financial products (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.2) and asset norms (see 4.3.3), and its impact on households' discourses is revealed. Section 5.2 first discusses households' discursive representation of institutional changes followed by households' engagement with the three discourse formations presented in the media before outlining the performative effects of financial products. The particular focus in these discussion points lies on identifying how households respond to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization. Section 5.2 then closes with showing the influence of personalization strategies discovered in 4.3.4 and exploring households' main information channels. In 5.3, the chapter concludes by bringing together aspects discussed and describes how households are transformed into everyday risk manager.

5.2 Disciplinary Mechanism: Rising Insecurity Acting as Enabler of Asset Norms

After having discussed the construction of asset norms in Chapter 4, it is revealed here how households' discourses are impacted upon by these institutional changes and macro-level discourses. The particular focus lies on the interaction between regulatory mechanism, i.e. asset-based welfare measures, and disciplinary mechanism, i.e. rising job and money insecurity. For this reason, the results from the meso-level discourse analysis are presented.

5.2.1 Households' Understanding of Institutional Changes

The interaction between institutional changes and households' discourses was evident in three key moments with a particular focus on mechanisms of financialization, namely widening access to asset ownership introduced in 4.3. The first key moment interviewees recall is the promotion of direct share ownership in the 1980s (see Section 4.3.1) when 'it was just made very easy' to invest since the 'Thatcher government wanted people to become share owners, so all you had to do was put your hand up' (IP32_HI_M_60). Even households who 'would not call themselves [myself] savvy' and as incorporating 'lazy sort of financial management', ended up 'accidentally making [made] money from shares' (IP49_MI_F_52). Despite having benefitted from the privatization in the first place, direct share ownership was retrospectively articulated as a one-off financial practice rather than having become normalized. When being asked if interviewed households would invest again in stocks and shares directly, a common answer has been: 'No, no, not now, I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to take a risk' (IP49_MI_F_52). Instead privatization is seen as having been 'a bribe to everyone to invest' while 'Thatcher was selling off all the family silver. She was selling off British Rail, British Telecom and all the rest of it' (IP32_HI_M_60). A criticism put forward here is that marketization failed people while enabling companies to increase profits ('paid back through higher, higher bills' [IP28_MI_M_62]).

The second key aspect is concerned with the creation of a property-owning society promoted by Thatcher in the 1980s (see Section 4.3.1) and deepened by successive governments (see 4.3.2). Households frame homeownership as the norm ('There is a lot of kind of just preconceived acceptance that buying is the thing to do' [IP26_MI_F_50]) and contrast it with renting as losing money ('renting is just, you're throwing money away' (IP59_MI_F_32) or as Soaita and Searle (2016, p.1103) call it 'dead money' and 'a means of dispossession'. Here, the same metaphors as in the media are used such as 'throwing money down the drain'

(IP42_MI_F_24; M57) and normalization of homeownership is expressed with rhetorical questions ('Why doesn't anyone want to buy a house?' [IP42_MI_F_24]) leaving no room for choosing to rent ('I could have stayed at home and not moved out' [IP45_MI_F_27]).

This discourse is supported by non-discursive elements in the form of less council houses, subsidized homeownership and less secure rental markets. Since 'there were no pit houses left, there were no council houses left, Thatcher sold them all', interviewees emphasized the need to 'get on the property ladder' (IP03_MI_M_52). Yet, while households benefitted from the discount of the right-to-buy scheme ('I actually got this for half the value which is about £79,000 in the end' [IP31_MI_F_50]), the deregulated rental market allowed landlords to increase rents substantially in spite of not providing secure housing: 'there is less security you know, the person who owns it might decide to sell it and then what do you do you're paying a lot of money for something that you're not guaranteed' (IP26_MI_F_50).

Our rent was £750 a month for this one bedroom flat and then we get a notice and they want to be up to £1,260 a month which is something like nearly a 50% or 40% increase. We could not afford that on my hourly paid wages and what Annica was bringing. It was just stupidly expensive, it's a £500 increase which was not feasible for such crappy accommodation. We started to look around, we'd saved a bit of money. (IP36_MI_M_41)

The statement above also sheds light on the impact of a deregulated mortgage market on households. Households who 'never thought they [I] would own a house' (IP31_MI_F_50) have been able to buy one due to new deregulatory measures: 'Maggie Thatcher has just altered all the rules for borrowing money and suddenly it became very easy to get a mortgage [...] when I bought a house' (IP03_MI_M_52). Wider access to financial products thus makes it easier to become a mortgager ('the rent was more expensive than my mortgage repayment' [IP54_MI_M_34]) than paying the increased rent.

The third key moment relates back to the increasing privatization of pensions as discussed in 4.2.3 and 4.3.2 which outlined first the reduction of state pension provisions and second the promotion of private pensions. The reduction of final salary schemes ('gradual backing out from the final salary scheme so everything became money purchase') and the limitations of pension freedoms are foregrounded by interviewees: 'They eventually got into auto-enrolment, of course, but of course, it seems too little and too late' (IP16_HI_M_65). By introducing DC schemes, pension income is reliant on the performance of the funds without having a guarantee for generating sufficient retirement income (Langley and Leaver, 2012). This ambiguity is picked up by participants: 'there had been cases where people consolidated their pensions into one big pension system and that system either failed or its investment hasn't worked very well' (IP21_MI_M_65). They repetitively refer back to pension scandals ('a big pension and misselling scandal' [IP28_MI_M_62]) where 'pension schemes although supposedly ring-fenced had actually been raided by the company and pensioners are left without their money' (IP16_HI_M_65). In spite of this negative view, households articulate the necessity to develop a 'safety net' (IP10_MI_F_46) due to having less security through the state ('pension is important for everyone because the state pension is not gonna be enough' [IP18_MI_F_46]) and less access to DB pensions: 'unless you've got a really good final salary pension scheme [...] but if you haven't then you need to look out and do something for yourself' (IP28_MI_M_62).

Finally, the above mentioned 'no-debt' ethic of the everyday risk manager is as well based on distrusting financial institutions ('Because debt is valuable to them, they love it, they want you to have a credit card.' [IP03_MI_M_52]) and criticising the financialized consumer society: 'after the deregulation of financial services in the 80s if you were a fool to be in debt before but after that you were a fool not to have credit' (IP28_MI_M_62). Households reject the neoliberal consumer subject put forward in advertisement, described by Langley (2007,

p.84) as someone ‘who expresses and communicates their freedom, aspirations, and individuality through commodity ownership and acts of consumer choice’.

IP_21_MI_F_65: oh there was an advertising campaign for the Mastercard *Access takes away the waiting out of wanting*. [...] IP_21_MI_F_65: That was probably when you hear some of the financial messes that some people seem to getting themselves into

‘Trying to be a responsible adult’ (IP07_HI_F_50) is given as reasoning for not taking on debt for consumption. Accumulating assets creates ‘security that if something were to happen we can buy some time to make the right decision for our future rather having been forced into snap decisions’ (IP34_HI_F_55). In contrast, when taking on debt in the case of difficulties, ‘you haven’t got much choice’ when the bank manager says *I want you to do that*’ (IP32_HI_M_60). Becoming an everyday risk manager thus solves the ambiguity between the subject positions of the neoliberal consumers and investors (Langley, 2007).

As shown above, the need to establish financial security while expressing distrust of financial products is seemingly omnipresent. Households state that they aim to establish financial security due to rising money insecurity (‘people don’t have money security anymore’ [IP02_MI_F_48]), originating from less state provisions (‘if you are not working the money the government will give you is not sufficient’ [IP38_MI_M_56]), and less job security (‘no one’s jobs are secure’ [IP36_MI_M_41]), emanating from labour market deregulation. Whereas in the ‘old times [...] you could just walk out one job, literally just walk out of one, into another’ (IP34_HI_F_55), now even public sector jobs are not secure ‘and those are what I considered the more secure jobs’. Since there are no more ‘jobs for life’ (IP17_MI_F_43) in an environment of less welfare provision, security is established through asset accumulation, ensuring ‘that when I can’t work and I don’t have, you know, a regular income that I still have a regular income but from a different source’ (IP31_MI_F_50).

This illuminates how the regulatory technology of power in the form of asset norms makes use of the disciplinary technology of power in the form of responsabilization. Previous everyday financialization literature with a Foucauldian lens (see 2.3.2) has stated that the contradiction between the subject position of the neoliberal worker having no income security and the everyday investor having to plan ahead (Langley, 2006b) leads to households rejecting to invest. Given that households draw on notions of job insecurity to justify asset accumulation it is argued here that rather than the neoliberal worker identity being external to an investment identity, it is immanent in the construction of the everyday risk manager. Despite households experiencing rising money and job insecurity, it does not prevent investment but is taken as underlying reasoning for accumulating assets. The disciplinary technology of power thus constructs the asset norms and softens the ambiguities inherent in the financialized subject position.

5.2.2 ‘We all have to do it’: Transformative Power of Discourse

While interviewees draw on a discourse of security as anticipated by the literature (Munro, 2000), the interview data above suggests a more complex notion of it. Normalization of asset norms based on the regulatory technology of power is on the one hand depicted as helping to deal with institutional changes, as in the case of homeownership (‘you are expected to have the house, for this you need a mortgage’ [IP45_MI_F_27]), and on the other hand as disadvantageous for the everyday person, for instance in the case of pensions (‘people are out to make their own money’ [IP13_HI_M_76]). This coexistence of antagonistic modes within the same power technology is further discussed here. Going back to Foucault’s (1978, p.95) understanding of resistance where ‘the strictly relational character of power relationships [...] depends on the multiplicity of points of resistance’ which ‘play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations’, it is shown here how resistances support power relations whereas Chapter 7 then discusses adversary resistances.

As revealed in 4.3.3, asset-based welfare policies were accompanied by a discourse of opportunities where everyone can become an asset owner while at the same time emphasizing that households have no choice than to provide financial security for themselves. Strikingly, the subject position of the everyday risk manager comes into being by also drawing on a discourse of agency and non-agency, albeit differently interpreted. Agency and non-agency discourses are used to express a critical view of finance ('It's a façade, it's a scam' [IP03_MI_M_52]), showing among the 'plurality of resistances' (Foucault, 1978, p.95) that households 'can never be ensnared by power, they [we] can always modify its grips' (Foucault, 2003, p.280).

An overarching discourse of agency can be found here where asset accumulation is framed as key to gain freedom ('gives you freedoms and it gives you choices, you wouldn't otherwise have' [IP58_HI_M_49]) accompanied by individual choice, for instance by employing value terms such as 'fortunately' as well as metaphors: 'Thank God that they got rid of the obligations to taking an annuity because that would have been complete suicide' (IP16_HI_M_65). Not having 'to ask anybody's approval' (IP01_HI_F_52) is depicted as essential in pursuing asset ownership ('I wanted to be free to decide what I want to do' [IP20_MI_F_58]) for which reason people should be empowered by 'educating [them] better in what their options are and then let them choose what they want to do' (IP09_HI_F_50).

While the agency discourse is reconstructed here, it is not seen as gaining the possibility to be a 'wealth creator' (see 4.3.1) and being able to fulfil 'dreams' (see 4.3.3) but being able to be independent ('financially independent no matter what happens' (IP07_HI_F_50) and keep control ('It seemed good to have control of your money' [IP39_MI_F_36]).

I wanted some financial security [...] My mom wasn't an independent person and I really

wanted to have financial independence, and not rely on anybody [...] so as soon as I could
I bought a property [...] it's giving me financial freedom now (IP17_MI_F_43)

Emphasis is placed on taking over responsibility rather than transferring the control over to financial institutions even when this means being responsible for losses: 'I look for mi³⁰ own advice and if I fall flat on my face it's my fault and if we make a success it's our success' ([IP53_MI_M_77]). By using metaphorical expressions such as 'falling flat on your face', success and failure depends on the households itself. The underlying reasoning for control goes back to a critical view of financial institutions ('I never really trusted financial institutions' [IP16_HI_M_65]). Financial institutions are even seen not as managers of your investments but becoming the owners ('the owner is on them').

[...] you're putting your money into their hands essentially and hoping that they're gonna do things with it and return with more but I guess as soon as you put it into their hands the, the, the owner is on them really, isn't it? And it's, it's out of your control (IP45_MI_F_27)

The discourse of agency transforms household financial practices. Because of distrusting financial institutions ('there's some very greedy people out there' [IP08_HI_M_65]) and wanting to achieve financial security, the everyday risk manager does not solely rely on one form of investment but conducts several investments, for instance, setting up a private pension in addition to the workplace pension ('patchwork of pensions' [IP04_HI_F_59]). By comparing having just one investment to 'gambling': 'if you're gonna piss about and give lumps of money every month then I'd rather not just go and put it all on black. I'm not a gambler' (IP40_MI_M_43), emphasis is put on wanting to ensure not to lose 'money that you've worked really hard for' (IP50_MI_F_42). Resistances thus not only represent 'ruptures' but also 'innovation' (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.59), reflected in adopting an

³⁰ The quotation is based on a verbatim transcript for which reason the Northern accent is maintained here.

elementary form of diversification. Elementary form of diversification means that households' discourses reflect the logic of the concept, yet they apply it in a rather unsophisticated way. A typical expression used here is the metaphor: 'keep eggs in different baskets' (IP27_MI_F_59) as also used in the media discourse shown in 4.3.3.

Accompanying the agency discourse, a non-agency discourse transforms households into everyday risk managers. Reflecting on institutional changes (as discussed in the previous subsection), households justify conforming to norms of the everyday risk manager with not wanting the 'wheels to fall off the cart' (IP07_HI_F_50) 'because you don't very often get a break in life, do you? No one ever says *Look here's free money* but if you can generate some money by owning something' (IP36_MI_M_41). The discourse of non-agency is established through repeating the commanding verb 'have to', which denotes an obligation by households to conform even when resenting asset norms:

[...] you sort of feel like you have to play the game that's the thing for me, well, but I've got on it because otherwise I won't be able to and everyone else is doing it. [...] I sort of resent that. I am having to buy a house but everyone says it's the right thing to do and you sort of go, is it? [...] that's the sort of thing I have going on in the back of my head all the time. That's the sort of thinking, well other countries don't and why you sort of feel like you've been sucked into this perspective. Well you've got to have this because that's what's going to give you security in the future. (IP56_HI_M_34)

Not only is asset ownership viewed critically but also having to use financial products in order to obtain it: 'financial products aren't necessarily set up to do you a massive favour but sometimes you just have to have them. It's when you have to have them that they're not particularly advantageous' (IP36_MI_M_41). When having a family, this is further deepened because of being 'locked in the rat race' (IP17_MI_F_43), for example, by setting up insurances because of wanting to provide for the family.

You buy into one financial package that means you have to buy into these other financial packages and all that probably does is increase your reliance on those financial packages rather than actually giving you the income to do what you want to do. (IP56_HI_M_34)

Using metaphorical expressions as being ‘sucked into this perspective’, ‘locked in the rat race’ or having to ‘play their game’ (IP02_MI_F_48) foreground the critical view of finance and position them as ‘passive subjects’ or in a powerless position, trapped in having no other choice than to succumb to the treadmill of asset ownership.

Despite negatively reflecting on asset accumulation (‘it was a way of the government feeling less responsible for’ [IP01_HI_F_52]) and the concomitant financial products, households pursue asset ownership to be financially secure. Similar to the media discourse outlined in 4.3.3, the fear of old-age poverty acts as an enabler in households adopting the subject position of the everyday risk manager which shows the impact of scaremongering.

I need to be able to provide for my future, so that I am, I don’t like the idea, you know, when you see these things on television of, you know, some little old lady poverty stricken somewhere, I’d hate the thought. (IP44_HI_F_58)

Asset norms are thus discursively resisted but households are ‘quick to compromise’ in action (Foucault, 1978, p.96). While the contradiction between being critical and feeling the need to accumulate assets is overcome by the disciplinary technology of power, i.e. through rising money and job insecurity, metaphorical expressions are used to mitigate the inherent contradictory forces. By being able to express dissatisfaction with having to accumulate assets, households smooth the contradiction between conforming and criticising asset accumulation. Resistances are therefore ‘possible, necessary’ (Foucault, 1978, p.96) in normalizing asset ownership.

The pervasiveness of the new regime of truth based on asset ownership becomes evident by not only incorporating an agency and non-agency discourse but also a discourse of hard work and responsibility as portrayed in the policy discourse (see 4.2.3 and 4.3.1).

We all have to do it. Not everybody will do it. There are some people that don't own their houses and they are burdens to the state so to speak and those people will never have anything. They might get a little bit of money, every single week to do something with [...] then you've got people that [...] work really hard to have what they've got, but no one cuts them a break. (IP36_MI_M_41)

Through criticizing that hard-working people do not receive sufficient income, people who rely on the state are victimized. The above shown reference to old-age poverty is further used here to emphasize that households would only openly resist the system when ‘actual English grannies, old people, sat on the street with a begging bowl. I am not talking about junk derelicts, drug abusers, I am talking about genuine people who’ve worked hard all their life’ (IP03_MI_M_52). A difference is drawn between the ones who deserve it, namely hard working people, and the ones who don’t deserve it, drug abusers who are not hard working. Households thus recycle the political discourse without being necessarily aware of it, illuminating the ‘masked’ character of discursive formations (as discussed in 2.5.2 and 3.4.1) where discursive formations underlying capitalist relations are hidden.

5.2.3 Performative Effects of Financial Products

Along with institutional changes and discourses, the everyday risk manager subjectivity is shaped by financial products. Features of assets and their perceived risk levels are determining the components of the asset strategy. Comparing shares to gambling is used as justification to exclude direct share ownership resonating earlier research ([Lai, 2017]; ‘I’d never play the stock market or anything like that. [...] I think of as gambling actually, I think it actually is’ ([IP59_MI_F_32]) whereas property investment is included in the asset

accumulation strategy due to being perceived safe ('money is [being] safe in bricks and mortar' [IP01_HI_F_52]). Property is referred to as the 'gold standard' (IP53_MI_M_77) in investment due to giving a guaranteed value: 'regardless of what the economy seems to do historically, property, if you can ride it out, doubles in value every ten years' (IP07_HI_F_50). In contrast, directly investing in shares is considered to be uncontrollable because of its fluctuations and having no security as in the case of managed funds ('when they went down a penny I'd be going *Oh no*' [IP06_HI_F_79]).

Strikingly, the everyday risk manager emphasizes not liking the gambling factor of stocks and shares even comparing it to betting on horses ('I don't ever go to a casino, no I never bet on horses' [IP29_MI_F_25]) while at the same time enjoying the lottery factor of premium bonds: 'premium bonds because although you're not guaranteed the necessary return, you might end up winning the million. That's a bit like a lottery ticket.' (IP36_MI_M_41). Since government products are considered secure in comparison to stocks and shares, households enjoy the lottery factor without risking money they worked hard for.

Interviewees continuously refer back to having to have sufficient money to invest in riskier assets, emphasizing that not every income level is compatible with investing in assets other than houses and pensions, thus, illuminating income constraints: 'I'd like to get into it and she said *Yeah, no worries when you got the money going serious [...]* me taking 200 quid would be nothing' (IP41_MI_M_28). Similar to the media discourse outlined in 4.3.3, emphasis of households' discourse lies on being able to 'lock away your spare cash' and being 'prepared to lose money' (p.122). Notwithstanding, interviewees extend the arguments provided in the media discourse and connect it directly to income limitations. Whereas the everyday risk manager presented in the media is someone who invests in stocks and shares if wanting to earn more than 'a savings account offers' (p.122), interviewed households

clearly distinguish themselves from this kind of investment which is considered to be mainly used by wealthier households. This suggests a limitation of discourses transforming households' financial identity. Instead, characteristics of financial products in connection with income constraints are shaping household financial practices.

In addition to income constraints, limited access to financial products determines household financial identity. While stocks and shares as financial investments are excluded from households' asset accumulation strategy due to inherent fluctuations, interviewees feel constrained in pursuing further asset accumulation in the form of homeownership and pensions (as discussed in 5.2.1). With regards to mortgages, it is emphasized that there are too many limitations, for instance not being able to change the contract ('The only thing I can do is to move or to sell it and move to another house, yeah, otherwise I can't change the contract' [IP38_MI_M_56]) or being limited because of the partner. The partner is even constituted as a liability with the help of drawing an analogy to a child: 'it's a cost to me, I forgot what term they used, it's basically like having, like having a child, it's a burden on you in terms of financial term. So that actually impacted me negatively' (IP54_MI_M_34).

As a result of these limitations, households employ the above portrayed agency discourse and praise flexibility, for instance 'a flexible pension scheme whereby [...] depending on what stage of your life you're at and how you felt you could need the money or not, you know, you could put more into your pension for later on or less' (IP21_MI_M_65). Arguments for competition are put forward in the interest of increasing flexibility ('more flexibility and freedom for some of the products' [IP17_MI_F_43]), mirroring the media discourse outlined in 4.3.3. Having more mortgage providers is equated with beneficial rates: '[...] there was only one mortgage provider [...] and of course, that meant that their rates were not terribly competitive (IP08_HI_M_65). The concept of competition is enacted with

the help of a comparison to other countries ('we have no rule variety') and assigning strong adjectives to the term competition, e.g. 'real competition' (IP36_MI_M_41). Interestingly, a parallel can be drawn to the policy discourse provided in Section 4.3.2 where rather than solving underlying inequalities further deregulation of financial products is requested. At the same time, it illuminates once again the interaction between discursive and non-discursive elements. Whereas media discourses are adopted, households are restricted to perform the everyday risk manager subjectivity due to limitations inherent in financial products.

Another key aspect influencing households' financial identity is interest rates. The current low interest rate environment ('this quarter of a percent is so disgraceful' [IP06_HI_F_79]) incites households to adopt the subject position of the everyday risk manager and accumulate assets. Whereas previously savings were also seen as a form of safe investment ('safe in terms of putting money into savings account' [IP16_HI_M_65]) since money saved could accumulate based on interest rates being higher than inflation rate ('savings could be investment [...] but really at the moment savings do virtually nothing in terms of making additional money' [IP11_MI_M_42]), the focus of interviewed households is now on finding investments and 'getting a return on capital' (IP20_MI_F_58). Even households with low savings complain about the interest rates: 'you know it's depressing to know that you don't get much of keeping the money in the bank, it just sits there and it's the same amount every year' (IP57_MI_F_50).

As a result, a self-defined threshold is set ('I wouldn't want more than £20,000 of just cash in the bank [IP54_MI_M_34]) after which investments are searched for ('it was a better, better return than having the money in the bank' [IP49_MI_F_52]).

The problem was last year it was too, 2016, it was when that ISA had matured and the money was available to me. They just weren't any value, honestly, in my opinion they were worth

nothing like, you know, 0.3, 0.4, I just wasn't interested in that. So I took it out and then invested it into bonds (IP41_MI_M_28)

The low interest rates thus support further asset accumulation resulting in including bonds in the investment strategy. The underlying reasoning for including bonds is also related to its inherent characteristics. With bonds, it is possible to earn a higher return than in bank accounts ('bonds that are not gonna go crazy but just perhaps the next step out of cash' [IP04_HI_F_59]) while not risking too much: 'I get every month as an income and because they're making enough money they're not I am not going *oh my god, I am losing money* whereas with shares I probably would be' (IP06_HI_F_79).

Not only do low interest rates support further asset accumulation but also finance rationality. On the one hand, households apply a wider form of diversification in the case of bank accounts. With the aim of earning the most amount of interest rate on existing savings, households diversify their saving accounts and shop around ('it's a very small amount of money but you just scabble the interest where you can' [IP20_MI_F_58]):

My salary goes into Barclays, as soon as it goes into Barclays, £500 goes into Nationwide because with Barclays if my salary goes in there I get paid £5 a month for it just going in there. And then I get a small percentage of interest and then £500 goes to Nationwide a month and for that going in there I get 5% interest up to £2000. Another £1000 goes into Santander and that's what pays our mortgage but also because I am putting it in there I get 3% [...] several bank accounts because one feeds the other automatically (IP11_MI_M_42)

On the other hand, interviewees weigh up rates between savings, mortgages and as well as further debt products and develop strategies to exploit interest rate differentials, for instance the possibility to have access to interest-free credit is used to earn interest on it ('one of those 0% deals and then you put the money into another bank account and you collect the interest')

[IP02_MI_F_48]). When debt costs are lower than savings rates, they avoid using the savings but take on debt to cover expenses:

I think every, every time I'm spending my savings to live in a slightly worse house than I could buy, you know. If anything, if I didn't work for two months or something like that then that could be £2,000 [...] it's best for me not to touch it at all than to, you know, touch a little bit because then, then it opens, opens the floodgate if that makes sense. (IP59_MI_F_32)

This echoes a practice outlined by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) where households use credit cards rather than savings as a self-disciplining mechanism despite paying high interest rates. However, in the current interest rate environment, it does not cost households to use debt based on zero interest credits. It is thus not solely due to a lack of self-control but also feeling the pressure to accumulate assets. Strikingly, higher income households use the possibility of 'intelligent finance' mortgages, enabling them to 'access money to give you the flexibility of doing something you want to do rather than tying up the savings' (IP01_HI_F_50).

Based on the discussion provided above, households' discourses reveal two performative effects. One relates directly back to the characteristics of financial products. What this analysis has shown is that households pursue asset ownership by taking into consideration risk into their strategy, with savings considered the least risky and stocks and shares being clearly risky. Interestingly, this results in a ranking of assets from the lowest to the highest resembling the risk categorization put forward by Campbell (2016) and Guiso et al. (2002) and reiterated in the entrepreneurial discourse outlined in 4.3.3: savings, property, pensions, bonds, and stocks and shares. The other one is concerned with the development of interest rates shaping households' asset accumulation strategy. The low interest rates therefore contribute to performing the everyday risk manager by deepening the engagement with assets and intensifying financial rationality.

5.2.4 Authoritative Discourse: Rules of Evidence

After having seen the transformative effects of discourses and the performative effects of financial products, the questions remains how financial concepts enter households' discourses. For this reason, 'the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true' (Foucault, 1980, p.131) and what is taken as trustworthy source, i.e the rules of evidence are investigated.

One of the personalization strategies discussed in 4.3.4 focuses on introducing financial experts in the media to establish authority. This is taken up by interview participants who assign authority to experts presented in newspapers 'I used to be an addict of *The Daily Telegraph* Saturday financial thing. Because you would have people there, so I'd read that' (IP19_MI_F_73). A key expert mentioned here is Martin Lewis ('I do like to listen to Martin Lewis' [IP11_MI_M_42]) serving as justification mechanism for financial decisions. As can be seen in the statement below. One's description ('for me') is immediately followed up by a declaration that Martin Lewis would describe it in a similar way ('like Martin Lewis').

So you know you always for me and you know if you'd ask for something like Martin Lewis he would always go, you know, you go for the, the, the best ones first which are the ISAs. [...]

because they're safe, your money is, you always (IP34_HI_F_55)

By establishing him as the 'guru' ('Martin Lewis is the guru now' [IP49_MI_F_52]) and a really 'tight guy' ('Martin Lewis is a celebrity, the really tight guy' [IP54_MI_M_34]) distance to the normal person is created and authority assigned. The website of Martin Lewis is used either as an information source when looking for something specific ('I think that the approach he has is quite interesting [...] I'd go and have a look at if he's talking about something' [IP25_MI_F_51]) or the newsletter is used: 'it caught my attention a couple weeks ago' [IP02_MI_F_48]).

While these statements show the influence of media on households, media is also viewed from a critical perspective, for instance in the case of TV shows focusing on second houses:

No one ever makes a loss on those, those programmes [...] so yes, they have to pay the property taxes which can be quite high or relatively high. Then you actually have to, on these, in these properties you have to pay what's known as a homeowner's association fee. [...] that's \$4,000 a year. The tax is \$2,000 a year [...] before you get to the repairs. And there's always repairs [...] it's not easy money. And as I was saying earlier I am at the moment, I'm just about to break even so I got all that, I got all those, yeah, they are investments some of them are assets, some of them are poor assets because they're not earning, so they are assets but they're worth crap but you've got this, you've got these shows saying *oh well you'll be able, just go and buy a property in Florida and you'll be able to rent it six months of the year and you know everything will pay for itself*. But that's not going to happen, it just doesn't work that way (IP60_HI_M_55)

Several discursive strategies are used here to criticize the media. While making this statement, the interviewee became upset about the media portraying an easiness in becoming a landlord and ignoring potential difficulties such as having a lot of costs. This expression of emotion can also be seen in omitting words, for instance the word rent: 'you have to get at least and then'. Moreover, rhetorical questions are raised, for instance appearing to answer the question if homeowners have to pay taxes 'so yes, they have to pay property taxes'. Another discourse households draw upon in criticizing the media is a discourse of hysteria created by the media ('built through media hysteria' [IP56_MI_M_34]). In case of Brexit, it is emphasized that 'the papers, all of them, are talking about it *oh disaster*, but on the street, I don't see anything' (IP32_HI_M_60). If everyday life is not affected ('on the street') and being able to remain comfortable ('I'm not rolling money in') are seen as defining the reality of a crisis: 'I can honestly say, I do watch news and think I don't know what they're talking about because I'm not rolling money in but we're ok' (IP49_MI_F_52).

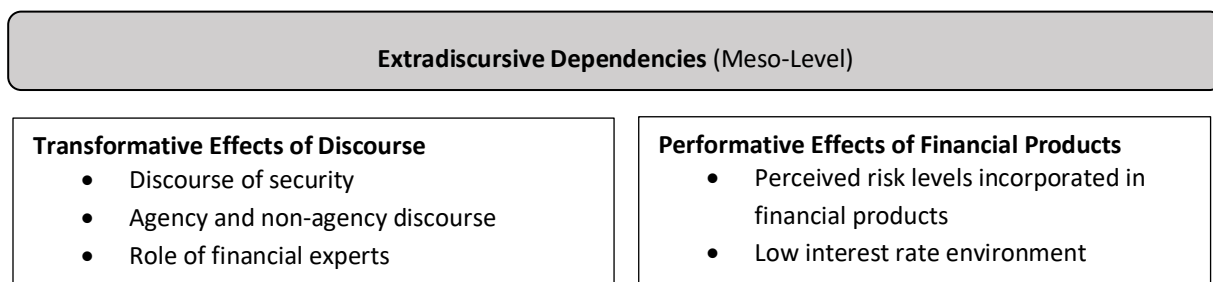
In the case of distrusting media, personal relationships become more important and advice from financial advisors is sought for. An underlying discourse of having to have sufficient money to be able to go to a financial adviser ('I always view a financial adviser as someone to deal with if you got assets' [IP40_MI_M_43]) and for the adviser to be interested in you can be found ('I got the feeling he was much used to dealing with people who had much more money than me' [IP39_MI_F_36]). The advisor is therefore called upon when making bigger decisions such as how to use pensions ('my pension at the moment I am in the middle of trying to sort out, I've got a fella' [IP26_MI_F_50]) or having inherited money ('I just went to an adviser and said *Look I got this money what should I do?*' [IP31_MI_F_50]).

Resonating the media discourse presented in 4.3.4, financial advisers are recognized as 'product sellers' (IP07_HI_F_50) who not necessarily act in your interest ('never seemed to get the returns they [the Mum] were promised' [IP56_MI_M_34]) but 'give [her] advice according to their products' [IP25_MI_F_51]). For this reason, households advice to take financial consultants of any form 'with a pinch of salt, it's not like, you not just gonna totally believe in them and you do need to shop around' (IP37_MI_F_29). As can be seen in this statement, it is seen as the 'obvious' or 'normal' behaviour to not simply take on but also double check the advice given. For the financial advisor to gain authority, interviewed households put emphasis on the importance of being independent ('prefer someone independent' [IP41_MI_M_65]) and creative with options ('they haven't got that discretion when they press the buttons on their computer' [IP32_HI_M_60]). At the same time, the financial adviser should not be a 'city slicker' (IP08_HI_M_65), developing a clear demarcation between financial and ordinary persons. Running through these statements above, when reflecting on the role of media, is a critical role of not only of financial institutions but also of financial experts in the form of media experts and financial advisers.

5.3 Summary and Concluding Remarks

After having seen in Chapter 4 how asset norms are constructed through mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization, this chapter has revealed how asset norms come into being. It therefore provides answers to sub-research question ii., namely how households respond to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization, and is one of the first studies to show how macro-level discourses constructed in the media (rather than policy discourses [Gurney, 1999b]) are incorporated in households' discourses. Through integrating the language level of analysis based on interview data, it was possible to confirm, yet also challenge previous assumptions made in the literature based on secondary data.

Figure 10 Becoming an Everyday Risk Manager



The analysis presented here corresponds to the meso-level discourse analysis and has explored the transformative effects of discourse and performative effects of financial products as introduced in the methodological framework (see 3.4.2). As shown in the previous section, the personalization strategies in the media including experts and building a connection to the everyday life (see Section 4.3.4) are also reflected in households' rules of evidence, i.e. identification of perceived trustworthy sources. Through these households engage with the subject position of the everyday risk manager, revealing the transformative power of institutional changes and discourses as assumed by the Foucauldian inspired everyday financialization literature (see Section 2.3.2). The dominance of the finance discourse can be seen, amongst others, by employing 'same play of metaphors' (Foucault, 1972, p.33), for instance in the case of diversification.

At the same time, it emerged out of the analysis that despite households engaging with the everyday risk manager subjectivity, they redefine this subject position in a twofold way. First, they turn the agency and non-agency discourse represented in the media into their own discourse by integrating a critical perspective. Freedom of choice is not seen as a possibility to climb up the social ladder but to gain control (agency discourse) and reflecting on institutional changes in the form of rising money and job insecurity (disciplinary mechanism), households emphasize that they have no choice than to accumulate assets to provide financial security for the future (regulatory mechanism [non-agency discourse; Figure 10]). Metaphorical expressions are then used to smooth the contradiction between viewing financial institutions critically while having to use them to accumulate assets.

Second, households justify adopting a differing asset strategy. Characteristics of financial products in connection with a discourse of wanting to establish financial security and not wanting to lose money one worked hard for shape the asset accumulation strategy. Due to stocks and shares fluctuating too much they are excluded and property is included in the strategy. Whereas this confirms the discovery made in Chapter 4 that institutional changes and media discourses incorporate property in the asset accumulation strategy (see Section 4.4), it deviates from the subject position constructed in media and policy discourse by excluding stocks and shares. At the same time, the current low interest rate environment intensifies the internalization of asset norms by inducing further investments and adopting financial strategies to exploit interest rate differentials (see Figure 10). As can be seen in these two elements, one reflecting the discursive level and one based on the interaction between discursive and non-discursive, households do not simply absorb asset norms constructed but critically reflect on them (as argued by Coppock [2013]).

Notions of distrust based on the profit-seeking character of financial institutions and the consequent justification of asset accumulation are a common discursive pattern amongst interviewees. Given that households draw on a discourse of security in justifying asset accumulation, it is argued here that while investment choices might be limited by ambiguities incorporated in adopting a financialized position, as expected by the literature (Munro, 2000), rising insecurity acts as an enabler of asset norms. This depicts an extension to the existing literature. Rather than, as assumed by the literature (Langley, 2008; Lai, 2017), rejecting to invest based on ambiguities inherent in investing such as pensions not being able to guarantee sufficient income, rising money and job insecurity immanent in the disciplinary technology of power function as enablers in normalizing asset norms (regulatory mechanism) and overcoming ambiguities. After having seen how households engage with the pressure to accumulate assets as reflected in their discourses, the following chapter reveals if and how the adoption of the everyday risk manager subjectivity is reflected in financial practices.

6 Being an Everyday Risk Manager in the UK

6.1 Introduction

Based on a Foucauldian framework, it was shown in Chapter 4 how the interaction between regulatory mechanisms, in the form of asset-based welfare measures, and disciplinary mechanisms, in the form of rising job and money insecurity, create norms of the everyday risk manager (macro-level). This has been followed up by revealing how households respond to the rising pressure to accumulate assets discursively (Chapter 5). After having gained insights from the context and language level of analysis, this chapter now looks at the practice level of analysis and explores the ‘regimes of practices’ (see 2.5.3). Whereas the previous chapter has integrated the intersection between practice and context in the form of performative effects of financial products constructing the subject position of the everyday risk manager (meso-level), this chapter is exploring how asset norms are lived in everyday life (micro-level). It thus moves on from the exploration of the processes of becoming an everyday risk manager to insights into being an everyday risk manager in the UK.

This chapter contributes to answering the second part of the main research question which looks at the impact of asset norms on everyday life. More specifically, the analysis presented here gives answers to sub-research questions iii.) and iv). As stated in 1.2.1, sub-research question iii. aims to identify if households adopt a financialized subject position, i.e. conform to asset norms, as reflected in their practices. Here, I shall argue that the particular form of asset accumulation and finance rationality is influenced by income constraints resulting in differences between medium and high income households. This is then followed by sub-research question iv.) which investigates how the pressure to accumulate assets enters everyday spaces of consumption, relationships and work.

Looking to debates in the everyday financialization literature, of specific interest here is the question if households through the process of asset accumulation also adopt characteristics of capitalists by gaining more control over their financial future (see 2.3.1) or if these forces discipline labour and restrict everyday life (see 2.2.3). With the help of responding to the methodological gap identified in 2.4, where it was recognized that previous studies tend to focus on one component of household balance sheets, this chapter contributes to this debate by providing insights into households' interaction with assets and liabilities. To analyse the impact of asset norms on everyday practices, the concept of performativity from a micro-level perspective, i.e. insights into how households are transformed into financial subjects through self-governing measures, and Zelizer's conceptualization of the mutually generative relationship between economic and social relationship are incorporated (see 2.5.3),.

The chapter's discussion is structured along three aspects. First, to show the wider development of households' practices I will consider the composition of UK households' balance sheets by using secondary data in the form of the Wealth and Assets Survey (WAS [see Section 6.2]). Second, interview findings complement this data. Interviewees' balance sheet structure and rationalities behind financial decisions are presented in Section 6.3 and compared to the UK households' balance sheet structure. While the survey data underlines the interview data, it should not be understood as a generalization but more as a helpful mechanism to position participants' statements within UK household balance sheets and provide a development over time. Hence, while it offers interesting insights, it is not seen as an inference but as part of the qualitative research. Third, the impact of asset accumulation on everyday life is discussed in Section 6.4. In Section 3.4.2, the methodological framework introduced thematic analysis as a useful analysis tool to show the effects of discourses for which reason this is adopted as the main analysis method here for discovering financial and everyday practices of interviewed households.

6.2 UK household Balance Sheet Composition

In this subsection, UK households' balance sheets are analysed. First, I briefly introduce the general composition and the development through time. This composition is then shown in light of income differences with a specific focus on medium to high income households and then thirdly, a detailed depiction of households' asset portfolios and the incorporated risk levels is given. Finally, a discussion of the role of human capital is provided.

6.2.1 Introduction to UK Households' Balance Sheets

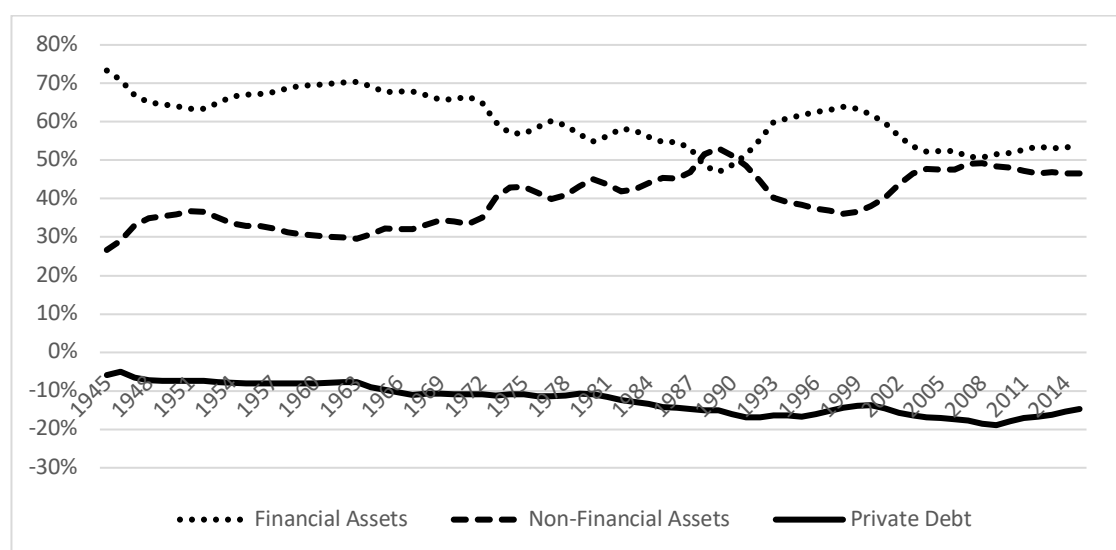
Based on a restructuring of the welfare state into an asset-based welfare system, households are expected to take on financial responsibility by accumulating assets and using financial markets to hedge against future risks, i.e. become everyday risk manager. These policy changes outlined in Chapter 4 have played a crucial role in changing the structure of household balance sheets. The aim of this section therefore is to show the overall development of UK private wealth and its components first before moving onto to discussing the balance sheet composition of households in the following subsection.

When having a look at the components of private net wealth, what becomes apparent is the continuous rise of financial liabilities, especially since the 1980s. Whereas the share of financial liabilities in gross private wealth rose only by 2.7 percentage points in twenty years (from 8.1% in 1959 to 10.8% in 1979), it increased by 4.3 percentage points in just ten years (from 10.8% in 1980 to 15.1% in 1991). Yet, compared to non-financial and financial assets, this share is nevertheless relatively low (see Figure 11). With an average of 32.6% share of gross wealth, non-financial assets³¹ (mainly housing assets) remained comparatively seen stable between 1945 and 1972 but then increased exceptionally in the following years,

³¹ Non-financial assets include business assets, agricultural land and other domestic capital but are mainly comprised of housing assets.

reaching its peak in 1989 with 53.1% of gross wealth. In comparison to the previous 30 years, this reflects a change in the structure of gross wealth as non-financial assets grew. This sits in line with the promotion of homeownership and the introduction of the Right to Buy programme in 1980 as outlined in Section 4.3.1. Afterwards non-financial assets only lost their relative importance in the aftermath of the 1987 crisis which was a time period marked by economic turbulences, rising inflation and high interest rates. After 1998, non-financial assets recovered and reached nearly pre-crisis levels (49.2% of gross wealth). When looking at housing assets as share of national income, Table 8 at the end of this subsection shows that they grew exceptionally from 193% of national income to 293% in just ten years from 1999 up until the GFC in 2009. Prior to this, the biggest jump in housing assets took place between 1979 and 1989, increasing by 84.1 percentage points.

Figure 11 Components of Gross Private Wealth in % share since 1945 in the UK



Source: Author's illustration and calculations based on WID (2018) and based on constant prices in 2015

The relative share of financial assets in overall private gross wealth depicts the mirror image of the development of non-financial assets. The share of financial assets of gross private wealth was considerably higher before the deregulation process. This is due to homeownership being less dominant up until the 1970s than during the time period when homeownership was promoted. However, when exploring the development of financial

assets in percentage of national income, it is noticeable that financial assets increased substantially as well. Since the deregulation process financial assets in relation to national income rose from 162% in 1979 to 211% in 1989 and then making the biggest jump in the following ten years, up to 377% in 1999, compared to an overall net private wealth of 512.7%.³² A major share of financial assets is taken up by life insurances and pension funds as well as currency, deposits and bonds. Whereas equities and fund shares had been rising up until the dot-com bubble in the 2000s, even reaching a similar level as currency, deposits and bonds, they have been continuously declining thereafter (see Table 8).

From the 1950s onwards, life insurances and pension funds increased steadily from 13.2% of national income up to 38.1% in 1970, followed by a rapid increase of more than double this amount in a similar time period of 20 years to 102.3% in 1990. The strongest increase, however, took place between 1989 and 1999, rising overall by more than 100 percentage points from 102.8% of national income to 210.1%. Afterwards it has remained relatively stable around the 200% percentage mark (see Table 8). The strong importance of pensions can be explained by the above discussed fact that households have to provide for their own pensions due to the retrenchment of the welfare state. This can be also seen in the tremendous growth of specialist providers in the form of pension funds and insurers. Pension funds, life insurance and unit trusts have risen from £181 million in 1982 to £3.4 trillion in 2010, of which pension and insurance funds represented 90% (ABI Analysis, 2017). The second largest group of financial assets, currency, deposits and bonds, has slowly increased from 74.8% of national income in 1988 to 106.9% in 2013.

The here provided aggregated descriptive statistics have given insights into changes in household balance sheets since the deregulation process starting in the 1980s. Having

³² While there might be an argument that price effects have impacted this development, Figure 11 based on constant prices shows that this is a general development of private gross wealth.

provided the long-term development of private wealth has shown that there has been a move towards asset accumulation since the 1980s. Within total wealth, that means a shift towards a more balanced representation between financial and non-financial assets. Whereas in 1945 two-thirds of the gross private wealth was composed of financial assets, a nearly equal distribution between financial (53% of gross private wealth) and non-financial assets (47% of gross private wealth) can be detected in 2015. The components of private wealth then revealed that the two components growing the most were housing and pension funds. Despite a decline during the GFC, housing and pension funds in percentage of national income have picked up again and have been rising since then whereas equities and shares have declined.

An important caveat of the analysis conducted here is however the role of rising income inequality. As mentioned in the introduction (see Section 1.2.2), rising income inequality has been accompanying the deregulation process. The top 1% income share increased by nearly 5 percentage points from 10.75% to 15.42% from 1995 to 2009. By comparison in a similar time span in the years prior to the deregulation process, and especially prior to the financial deregulation starting in 1984, the top 1% income share increased by only 0.12% (1970-1984 [WID, 2018]). This in turn has an impact on the possibility to accumulate assets, i.e. changes in aggregate data could be driven by changing financial behaviour of the top income earners. Aggregate statistics do not reveal these inequalities for which reason the following sections will not only discuss the structure of household wealth but also include the composition of household balance sheets in relation to different levels of income.

Table 8 Components of Net Private Wealth as Percentage of National Income

Year	Net private wealth	Non-financial assets	Housing assets	Business assets and other non-financial assets	Agricultural land	Other domestic capital	Financial assets	Currency, deposits, bonds	Equities & fund shares	Life insurance & pension funds	Liabilities
1988	370.04	236.50	207.81	28.69	7.10	21.59	199.76	74.84	30.89	94.03	-66.22
1989	396.19	255.12	225.38	29.75	7.49	22.26	211.12	76.17	32.18	102.77	-70.05
1990	389.19	244.75	215.26	29.49	6.98	22.51	218.15	78.53	37.30	102.32	-73.71
1991	378.95	232.07	203.76	28.31	5.97	22.34	224.20	81.35	40.75	102.10	-77.32
1992	370.04	213.42	188.32	25.10	5.18	19.92	237.60	83.17	42.34	112.09	-78.02
1993	381.28	197.88	174.96	22.92	4.98	17.94	260.26	83.08	48.35	128.83	-76.87
1994	377.16	188.29	165.95	22.34	5.22	17.11	264.20	80.64	51.35	132.20	-75.32
1995	371.78	179.83	157.43	22.41	5.60	16.80	267.07	81.04	52.96	133.07	-75.12
1996	377.99	176.73	154.01	22.73	5.73	17.00	274.33	80.76	54.46	139.11	-73.08
1997	426.97	190.11	164.80	25.31	6.57	18.74	313.97	84.77	62.44	166.76	-77.11
1998	467.42	197.84	172.42	25.42	7.07	18.35	348.52	84.91	67.46	196.15	-78.95
1999	512.70	218.71	193.71	25.01	7.32	17.69	376.81	87.00	79.71	210.09	-82.82
2000	520.27	230.28	206.28	24.00	7.20	16.80	373.06	84.90	83.33	204.83	-83.07
2001	518.40	244.30	220.24	24.06	7.14	16.92	362.23	86.84	71.07	204.31	-88.13
2002	506.17	262.66	239.05	23.61	6.76	16.85	337.30	87.34	52.35	197.61	-93.78
2003	506.93	282.29	259.30	23.00	6.40	16.60	323.84	87.24	45.03	191.57	-99.20
2004	518.41	298.29	275.40	22.89	6.54	16.35	325.80	88.84	47.86	189.11	-105.68
2005	523.58	301.07	278.28	22.78	6.75	16.03	330.44	89.78	49.36	191.30	-107.92
2006	536.62	310.37	287.04	23.33	7.19	16.15	339.06	93.30	51.37	194.40	-112.81
2007	540.66	324.10	300.73	23.36	7.76	15.61	333.59	94.66	50.14	188.79	-117.03
2008	521.29	318.03	293.81	24.21	9.31	14.90	323.37	98.94	40.87	183.55	-120.10
2009	528.48	319.04	293.29	25.75	10.49	15.26	334.07	105.73	40.42	187.92	-124.63
2010	529.42	313.05	287.40	25.65	10.49	15.16	332.36	100.66	47.57	184.13	-115.99
2011	541.77	311.35	284.62	26.73	11.46	15.27	342.53	99.94	46.01	196.59	-112.11
2012	564.00	317.11	289.54	27.57	12.21	15.36	359.72	104.23	41.19	214.29	-112.83
2013	567.01	321.24	293.74	27.49	12.66	14.84	356.99	106.97	39.96	210.06	-111.21

Source: Author's illustration based on WID (2018); *Note:* Data is shown here since 1988 as this is the first year where all categories are represented in the dataset

6.2.2 Structure of Household Wealth

After having seen the growing importance of assets, the structure of these different categories is discussed in detail with the help of the WAS. In line with the results shown above, the two biggest components of UK households' balance sheets are property and pension wealth. Whereas the share of property wealth in households' balance sheets has slightly declined since 2006, it still remains relatively high at 35.8% (see Table 8). Perhaps most importantly, pension wealth has gained dominance instead and is responsible for half of the growth in overall wealth between Wave 3 (2010-2012) and Wave 4 (2012-2014). This is attributed to the introduction of automatic enrolment to workplace pensions in 2012.

Table 9 Composition of Household Wealth in the UK

<i>Years</i>	<i>2006-2008</i>	<i>2008-2010</i>	<i>2010-2012</i>	<i>2012-2014</i>	<i>2014-2016</i>
Total Assets (net) in £billion (nominal)	8,426	8,955	9,444	11,114	12,778
Property Wealth (net)	41.9%	37.7%	37.4%	35.2%	35.8%
Financial Wealth (net)	12.4%	12.2%	13.8%	14.5%	12.8%
Pension wealth	34.3%	38.8%	37.4%	40%	41.7%
Physical Wealth	11.4%	11.4%	11.5%	10.4%	9.8%

Source: Author's illustration based on the WAS Wave 5 (ONS, 2018a)³³

Following this brief summary of the main assets, a presentation of the risk levels incorporated in households' balance sheets is provided in order to identify the degree of diversification and the ability to mitigate potential asset price falls. As outlined in the entrepreneurial discourse in the media, households are expected to accumulate assets and integrate a balanced overall risk level in their balance sheet structure, i.e. establishing an optimal composition of assets (see 4.3.3). Through this process, they are argued to become everyday capitalists by being involved in the wealth creation process and adopting finance rationality (as outlined in the literature in 2.3.1 and in the policy discourse in Chapter 4). To

³³ Total assets is comprised of property wealth (net), financial wealth (net), pension wealth and physical wealth. The composition of the variables can be found in Section 3.3.2 when having introduced the WAS (see p.74).

identify to what degree households' balance sheets correspond to these assumptions, the composition of households' balance sheets is explored. Table 10 at the end of this subsection shows on the one hand the ownership rates, i.e. percentage of households holding this asset, on the other hand asset or liability share, i.e. percentage of a balance sheet component of overall value of asset/liability side. Furthermore, it indicates the risk levels inherent in each balance sheet composition. The discussed risk levels are based on the categorization introduced in 3.4.3 which are: clearly safe assets (transaction and savings accounts, government products), fairly safe assets (housing asset, life insurance policies, managed bonds and shares, pensions, unit and investment trusts) and risky assets (stocks and shares, undiversified bonds, business assets, main residence with underlying mortgage, other real estate).

Taking into consideration solely ownership rates, UK households' asset structure leans towards clearly safe assets: 93% of households have a current account in credit, 79% of households have physical wealth in the form of home contents, 66% own their main residence either with or without a mortgage and 57% have a savings account (see Table 10 at the end of this subsection). Moreover, 68% of employees are currently contributing to a workplace pension (ABI Analysis, 2017). However, when having a look at the share of these assets in the overall net wealth, the relative importance changes. Although the main residence with 34.7% of total gross wealth and pension wealth with 38.5% of total gross wealth remain highly relevant, balances for the other categories are relatively seen low with savings and currents account representing 2.6% and 1.1% of asset values (see Table 10).

Given that pensions and property remain highly relevant, it is not surprising that households' balance sheets are mainly comprised of fairly safe assets as shown in Figure 12 which summarizes the overall diversification of UK households' balance sheets. Since several

assets can be categorized as fairly safe or risky depending on their performance, two scenarios are presented (as introduced in 3.4.3). One scenario is based on a positive outlook and thus, classifies the assets which lie in between fairly safe and risky as fairly safe assets (see Scenario A in Figure 12) and one overview is constructed in light of bad conditions, thus, these assets are categorized as risky assets (see Scenario B in Figure 12). The dominating assets here are fairly safe assets, comprising 70.5% of overall assets in the fairly risky scenario A and 56.4% in the risky scenario B. The overall the degree of diversifying risk levels in UK household balance sheet is therefore low as the asset portfolios lean towards less risky but also less return assets in both scenarios.

Figure 12 Diversification of UK Households' Portfolios

<i>Scenario A Fairly Risky</i>				<i>Scenario B Risky</i>			
Assets	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky	Assets	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky
Property Wealth	0.0%	68.7%	31.3%	Property Wealth	0.0%	68.7%	31.3%
Financial Wealth	49.8%	33.4%	16.8%	Financial Wealth	49.8%	32.7%	17.5%
Pension Wealth	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	Pension Wealth	0.0%	89.0%	11.0%
Physical Wealth	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Physical Wealth	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Overall Risk Level in Asset Portfolio	14.8%	70.5%	14.7%	Overall Risk Level in Asset Portfolio	14.8%	56.4%	28.8%

Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2018a)

The majority of housing wealth falls onto the main residence, reflecting 84.9% of overall property wealth. Out of the households who own their main residence, 50% own it outright and 50% have a mortgage on it and 73% of households' liabilities are based on mortgages for the main residence. Hence, half of the households who own a main residence hold a risky asset. Property aside from the main residence consists of buy-to-let properties (51.3% of other properties) rather than second homes (25.9% of other properties) and other buildings, UK and overseas land (22.9% of other properties). Debt in connection with buy-to-let properties is the second largest category of liabilities, indicating the role of the house as an investment object (ONS, 2018a).

Households' biggest asset category after property wealth consists of fairly safe pensions. While pensions in payment make up 18.2% of overall assets with 30% of households owning these, current pension contributions make up altogether 15.4% of overall assets in spite of 68% of the working population contributing to a pension (see Table 10). The shift between strong pension provisions for the older generation compared to less pension provision for the younger generation as discussed in 4.2.3 becomes clear here. The main aggregate pension wealth lies in DB rather than DC pensions, representing 32.4% of all pension assets.

The holdings of financial wealth depict a relatively even mix between liquid and illiquid assets, comprising mainly fairly safe assets. Instant-access transaction and savings accounts make up 45.9% of financial wealth compared to more long-term assets such as bonds, shares and trusts (excluding government products) representing 42.5% of financial wealth. Strikingly, despite financial wealth being dominated by clearly safe assets in the form of savings products (4.3% share of overall assets), the asset category of shares represents the second biggest financial asset group (3.2% share of overall assets). Yet, half of the shares are comprised of stocks and shares ISAs which are considered to be fairly safe.

Concerning the liability side of the balance sheet, the role of debt aside from property-related debt is relatively small (10.5% of all household liabilities). Out of the 23% of households who have negative net financial wealth, only 11% have negative financial wealth more than £5,000. Notwithstanding, 47% of households have non-mortgage borrowings including formal loans (34%), student loans (19.8%), hire purchase agreements (19.1%) and credit card and charge debts (18.4%). The debt category which increased significantly in the last four years is student debt, rising by 38% between Wave 4 and 5 and surpassing the amount of liabilities based on credit cards despite the number of households being significantly lower (6% of households) compared to credit card and charge debt (24% [ONS, 2018a]).

It could be argued that a focus on fairly safe assets in households' balance sheets is a responsible strategy when wanting to finance one's living base through investing. The strong focus on property and pension wealth, however, has instead created fragile balance sheets. The share of liquid assets in the form of transaction and savings accounts is low while 50% of households owning a house have a mortgage on their main residence, making them highly reliant on economic (house price changes) and financial (interest rate changes) markets (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013b). If households experience an income shock, they cannot easily sell their house or go further into debt since they want to 'continue living in their house, work, pay the bills, and consume' (Bryan et al., 2015, p.319). Furthermore, pensions cannot be easily cancelled due to being long-term contracts where in the majority of the cases it is only possible to withdraw money in the short-term with a substantial loss. This depicts an extension to previously held risks by households. Whereas without a focus on asset accumulation, households would have risked losing everything and not being able to sustain themselves, asset accumulation has introduced the possibility to move into negative equity and lose the living base in case of not having sufficient pension provisions.

Table 10 Proportion of Households holding Assets and Liabilities

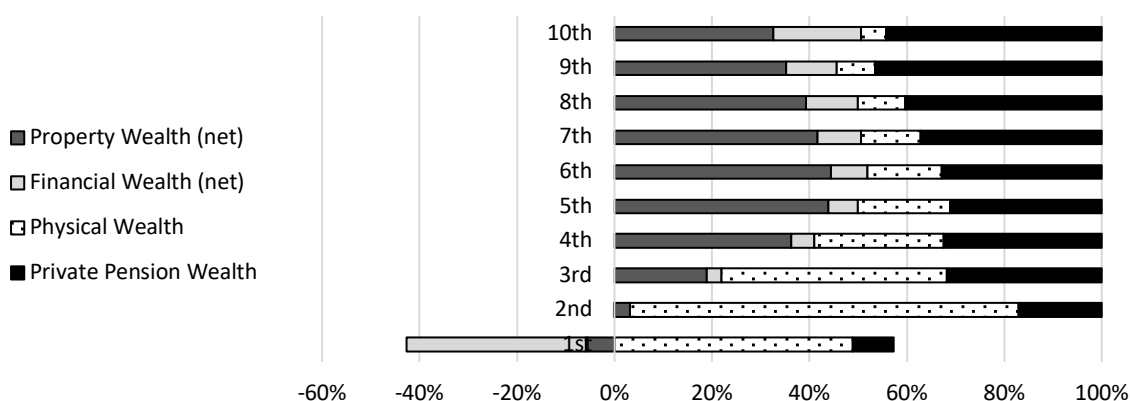
Share of Total Assets	Assets	Ownership Rates	Asset Share	Ownership Rates	Liability Share	Liabilities	Share of Total Liabilities
Property Wealth 40.8%	Main residence (FS-R)	66%	34.66%	33%	73.00%	Main residence	Property Debt 89.5%
	Other Houses (Second houses FS-R)	4%	1.60%	1.6%	3.00%	Other Houses (Second houses)	
	Buy-to-let (R)	5%	3.17%	3.2%	11.4%	Buy-to-let	
	Other Property (R)	5%	1.41%	0.7%	1.47%	Other Property	
Transaction Accounts 1%	Current Accounts in credit (CS)	93%	1.05%	0.1%	0.60%	Equity Release	
Savings Products 4.3%	Savings Accounts (CS)	57%	2.64%	16%	3.17%	Formal loans	Financial Liabilities 10.5%
	Cash ISA (CS)	41%	1.56%	1%	0.27%	Informal loans	
	Other Children's Savings (CS)	13%	0.08%	6%	2.32%	Student Loans	
Bonds 1.4%	National Savings certificates and bonds (CS)	19%	0.45%	15%	1.62%	Hire Purchase	
	UK and overseas bonds/gilts (FS-R)	1%	0.09%	24%	1.69%	Credit and charge cards	
	Fixed term bonds (FS)	8%	0.85%	13%	0.38%	Overdrafts (in use)	
Shares 3.2%	UK Shares (R)	11%	1.20%	4%	0.04%	Store cards and charge accounts	
	Stocks and Shares ISAs (FS)	12%	1.26%	5%	0.08%	Mail order accounts	
	Employee Shares and Options (R)	6%	0.58%	5%	0.11%	All household arrears (excl. mortgage arrears)	
	Overseas Shares (R)	2%	0.17%	2.4%	0.77%	New Loans (Formal and Informal)	
Other financial assets 1.7%	Investment trusts, unit trusts etc. (FS)	5%	0.79%				
	Child's trust funds (FS)	17%	0.06%				
	Insurance products* (FS)	4%	0.38%				
	All endowments (FS)	1%	0.11%				
	Other financial assets (FS)	1%	0.34%				
Pension Wealth (FS) 38.5%	Current defined benefit plans (FS)	29%	12.47%				
	Current defined contribution plans (FS-R)	22%	1.46%				
	Personal pension (FS-R)	12%	1.25%				
	AVCs (FS)	1%	0.06%				
	Retained rights in defined benefit pensions	14%	3.60%				
	Retained rights in defined contribution plans (FS-R)	17%	1.30%				
	Rights retained in personal pensions (FS-R)	1%	0.08%				
	Pensions expected from spouse/partner (FS-R)	1%	0.15%				
Pensions in payment (FS)	30%	18.17%					
Physical Wealth (FS) 9%	Home Contents (CS)	79%	7.14%				
	Collectables and Valuables (CS)	12%	0.35%				
	Vehicles (CS)	17%	1.54%				

Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2018a); *Note:* Data based on cross-sectional household weight; CS= clearly safe; FS = fairly safe; R = risky; * insurance products are insurance products which include an investment component, solely life insurances are not included in the WAS, Other financial assets include other investments, informal assets, ISA type unknown. Other property includes overseas property, land UK, buildings. Other houses include second houses/flats in the UK to live rather than rent out as in the case of buy-to-lets.

6.2.3 Distribution of Income and Wealth

For a more accurate depiction of household balance sheets of UK households, the wealth structure is put into relation to income deciles. Data from the WAS reveals that wealth is more unequally distributed than income, with a Gini coefficient for asset wealth of 0.62 far exceeding the Gini index of 0.38 for equivalised disposable income (McGuinness, 2018). The wealthiest 10% of households hold 44% of aggregate household wealth. Heterogeneity of household balance sheet structures is apparent in Figure 13. Housing and pension assets constitute the biggest asset group for middle income groups whereas high-yielding financial and pension wealth dominate the top 20% income earner’s portfolio.

Figure 13 Breakdown of aggregate total wealth per Income Deciles, UK Households



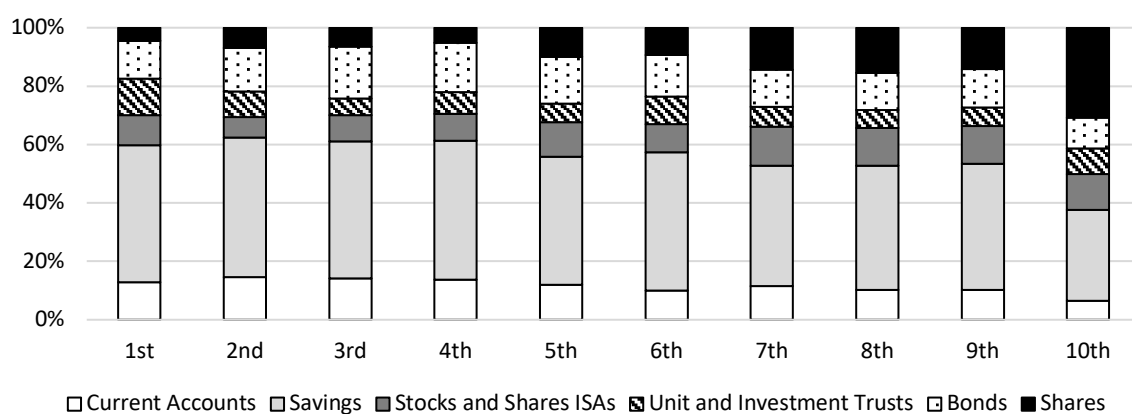
Source: Author’s calculation based on ONS (2018a)³⁴

The most unequal distribution can be found in net financial wealth where 77.2% is owned by the top 20% income earners and the Gini index increased from 0.81 in the first wave (2006-2008) to 0.91 in the recent wave. Shares are mainly held by households in the 10th income decile (30.9% of financial assets falls onto shares here) despite direct share ownership becoming relatively more important in the 7th income decile (see Figure 14). In contrast, the biggest share in the middle-income group comprises savings accounts. There is however a strong focus on managed investments, specifically in the form of stocks and

³⁴ The composition of the variables can be found in Section 3.3.2 when having introduced the WAS (see p.75).

shares ISA (13.5% in the 7th decile) and bonds (on average 16.9% between 3rd and 5th decile compared to 11.8% in high income deciles). Going back to the performative effects of financial products discussed in 5.2.3, the composition of financial assets can be argued to be based on the risk levels of financial products. Here, it was shown that interviewees perceive managed products as having less risk than direct investment in stocks, which also require a higher income. Middle income households thus rely on managed investment products, low yielding bonds and liquid assets while high income households invest in high risk-return financial instruments, adopt diversification and can generate sizeable capital income.

Figure 14 Share of Selected Financial Assets per Income Deciles, UK Households

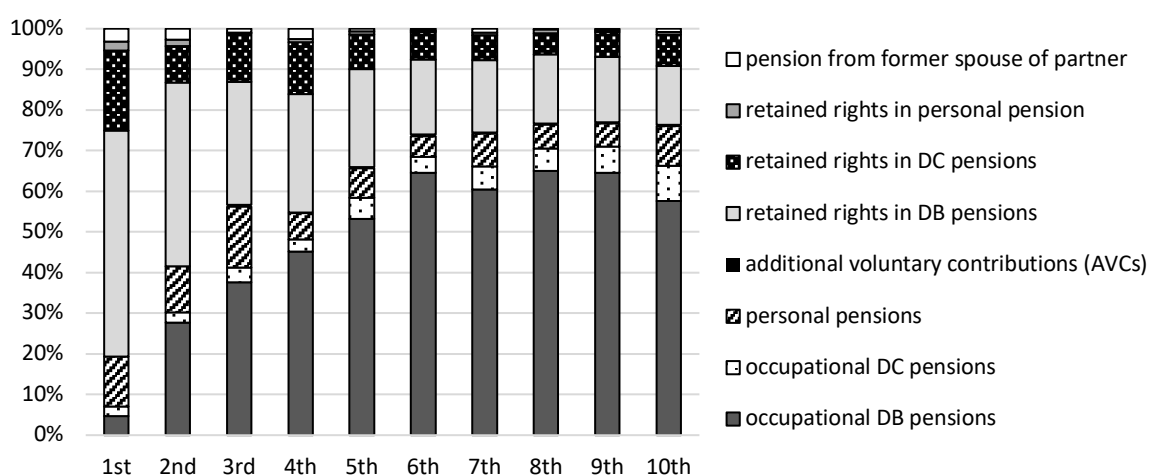


Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2018a), *Note:* Categorization is taken over from WAS.

A similar picture can be seen in the case of pensions. Pension wealth is the second most unequal asset category. Out of the four components, it was, however, the only category which experienced a decline in its Gini coefficient from 0.77 in 2006-2008 to 0.72 in the recent wave which can be partly explained by the introduction of auto-enrolment workplace pensions. Overall average pension values of the 9th decile and 10th decile amount up to £394,756 and £606,305 respectively. In contrast, the average pensions in the medium income group range from £74,195 in the lowest income decile (3rd decile) to £185,116 in the 6th decile and reaching £284,895 in the 8th decile. When comparing the share of pension contributions, excluding pensions in payments, higher income households tend to have

access to DB pensions whereas middle income households rely on retained rights in rather than current DB pensions (Figure 15). As outlined in Section 3.4.1 and 4.3.1, DB pensions provide more security and households are then able to take on risks in other areas of investments, for example, investing in shares. Higher income households thus have not only higher pension provisions but also less risky pensions. Middle income households also rely relatively seen more on personal pensions as the largest share can be found in the lower range of the medium income group (3rd decile).

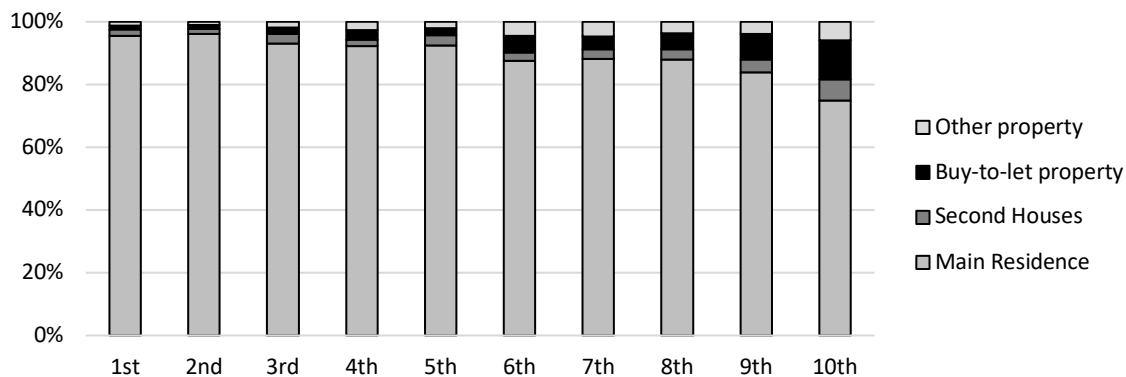
Figure 15 Share of Components of UK Household Pension Wealth per Income Decile



Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2018a)

The third group of assets is property wealth. Here, the Gini coefficient has increased from 0.62 in the first wave to 0.67 in the recent wave with homeownership rate continuously increasing with the income decile. 50% of households in the 3rd income decile own their house compared to 67% in the 5th and 85% in the 8th decile. Values of properties differ substantially. Perhaps most important here is that the property wealth of medium income groups consists primarily of the main residence. Figure 16 shows that other types of real estate, including rent-earning buy-to-let properties, second houses (houses/flats in the UK to live rather than rent out as in the case of buy-to-lets) and other property (overseas property, land in the UK, buildings), constitute on average around 10% of property wealth for middle income households in deciles 5 to 8, compared to 25% for the top income decile.

Figure 16 Net Property Wealth Composition per Income Deciles, UK Households

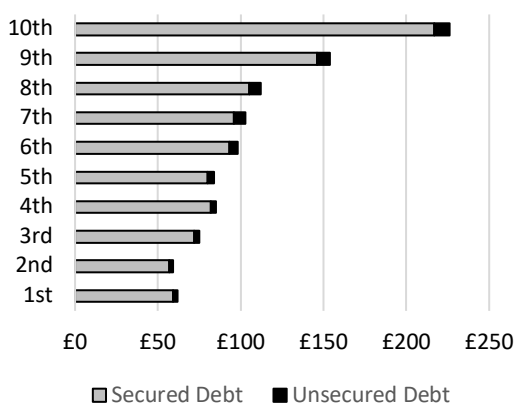


Source: Source: Author’s calculation based on ONS (2018a)³⁵

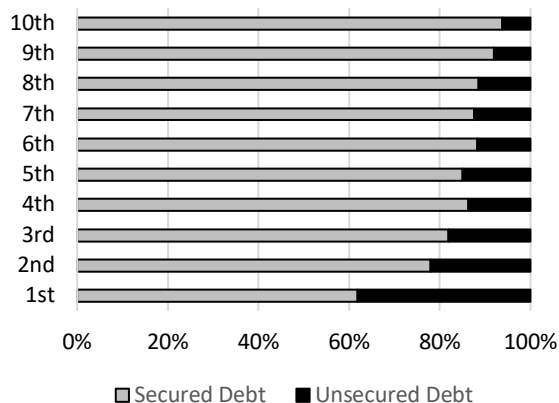
Yet, property wealth of both medium and high income groups is underpinned by high levels of mortgage debt (see Figure 17). Nevertheless, the importance of debt is high in the higher income range (Panel A) while relatively seen unsecured debt is higher in medium income households as reflected in the share of household debt (Panel B). The debt-to-equity ratio is continuously rising from 5.6% in the 3rd income decile to its peak of 10.4% in the 9th decile.

Figure 17 UK Household Debt Composition and Mean Holdings per Income Deciles

Panel A Mean Holdings (in thousands)



Panel B Household Debt Composition



Source: Author’s illustration based on ONS (2018a) and households who hold this kind of debt.

³⁵ Other property includes overseas property, land UK, buildings. Second houses include second houses/flats in the UK to live rather than rent out as in the case of buy-to-lets.

The above portrayed heterogeneity of household balance sheet structures has a profound impact on levels of risk. Risky assets comprise on average 11.2% for the medium income group and 14.9% for the high income group in Scenario A and 14.5% and 21.9% in Scenario B. As can be seen in Table 11 in Scenario A this is due to rising risk levels in property as well as financial wealth per income decile.

Table 11 Diversification of UK Household Portfolios per Income Decile

Scenario A Fairly Risky

Assets	Property Wealth		Financial Wealth			Pension Wealth	Physical Wealth	Overall Portfolio		
	Fairly Safe	Risky	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky	Fairly Safe	Clearly Safe	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky
1 st	92.9%	7.1%	62.6%	33.1%	4.4%	100%	100%	21.9%	73.6%	4.5%
2 nd	91.4%	8.6%	64.3%	29.2%	6.5%	100%	100%	19.5%	75.4%	5.2%
3 rd	86.5%	13.5%	64.8%	29.0%	6.2%	100%	100%	18.2%	74.7%	7.1%
4 th	79.8%	20.2%	64.8%	30.3%	5.0%	100%	100%	16.2%	74.4%	9.5%
5 th	80.9%	19.1%	58.2%	31.9%	9.9%	100%	100%	16.3%	74.9%	8.8%
6 th	73.0%	26.9%	60.0%	31.0%	9.0%	100%	100%	16.4%	71.9%	11.7%
7 th	71.4%	28.6%	55.0%	31.4%	13.7%	100%	100%	14.3%	72.7%	13.0%
8 th	70.8%	29.2%	54.7%	30.6%	14.8%	100%	100%	13.3%	74.1%	12.7%
9 th	65.5%	34.5%	54.8%	31.8%	13.4%	100%	100%	14.2%	71.5%	14.3%
10 th	63.2%	36.8%	38.4%	32.3%	29.4%	100%	100%	18.2%	64.0%	17.8%

Scenario B Risky

Assets	Property Wealth		Financial Wealth			Pension Wealth		Physical Wealth	Overall Portfolio		
	Fairly Safe	Risky	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky	Fairly Safe	Risky	Clearly Safe	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky
1 st	92.9%	7.1%	62.6%	32.7%	4.7%	80.7%	19.3%	100%	21.9%	69.9%	8.1%
2 nd	91.4%	8.6%	64.3%	28.7%	7.5%	90.9%	9.1%	100%	19.5%	72.9%	7.6%
3 rd	86.5%	13.5%	64.8%	28.7%	6.5%	90.6%	9.5%	100%	18.2%	71.8%	10.1%
4 th	79.8%	20.2%	64.8%	29.3%	5.9%	89.9%	10.1%	100%	16.2%	70.6%	13.2%
5 th	80.9%	19.1%	58.2%	30.8%	10.9%	91.3%	8.7%	100%	16.3%	71.4%	12.3%
6 th	73.0%	26.9%	60.0%	30.5%	9.4%	93.4%	6.6%	100%	16.4%	69.3%	14.4%
7 th	71.4%	28.6%	55.0%	30.9%	14.1%	91.0%	8.9%	100%	14.3%	69.0%	16.7%
8 th	70.8%	29.2%	54.7%	30.2%	15.1%	92.2%	7.8%	100%	13.3%	70.6%	16.1%
9 th	65.5%	34.5%	54.8%	31.5%	13.7%	90.5%	9.6%	100%	14.2%	67.3%	18.5%
10 th	63.2%	36.8%	38.4%	31.2%	30.4%	93.7%	16.3%	100%	18.2%	58.1%	23.8%

Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2018a)

While the share of risky assets in portfolios increases the higher the income level, the biggest jump takes place between the 5th and 6th income decile due to having riskier house assets (i.e. main residence with an underlying mortgage). When having a look at the risky Scenario B, the picture slightly changes. Risky financial assets significantly rise between the 4th and 5th income decile, even reaching a share of risky financial assets of 10.9% in the 5th decile,

followed by a slight decline in the 6th decile and then rising again. As discussed above, this is mainly due to stocks and shares ISAs gaining in importance. Strikingly, the highest share of risky pension wealth can be found in the 1st and the 10th income decile. In the 1st income decile this is due to the fact that this household group holds the lowest amount of DB pensions. In the 10th decile it is attributed to having more diversified pensions.

In sum, heterogeneity of household wealth structures suggests that differing access to financial means impacts household balance sheet composition along the income distribution. In this context, middle income households are unique in their dependence on housing and pension wealth whereas high income households rely on diversified asset portfolios including high-yielding financial assets, buy-to-let properties and secure DB pensions. Rather than promoting social upward mobility, the increase in asset ownership associated with financialization processes only seemingly reduced potential future risks for middle income households. The strong focus on property and pensions has created fragile balance sheets because of diversifying less and relying on debt-financed asset ownership. Financialization and deregulation connects the future of medium income households to economic and financial markets characterized by uncertainty (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a). Moreover, even though medium income households increasingly invest, they do not gain more control over their conducted investments, for example, investment in pension funds, does not give them control over how the money is employed (Atkinson, 2015). This is because they do not have access to high-yielding financial investment assets in which they directly manage their asset portfolio but rather rely on managed pension funds.³⁶

³⁶ While the conducted analysis here illuminates that responsabilization and financialization impacts households to a differing degree, it should be noted that the analysis has been based on averages of income deciles. This does not exclude the possibility of heterogeneity not only on the level of income deciles but also in between income deciles including a diverse set of households' asset strategies. Nevertheless, it indicates a tendency and gives insights into income limitations in establishing a diversified asset portfolio.

6.2.4 The Role of Human Capital in Household Balance Sheet

An important caveat of the above conducted analysis is that it does not account for human capital in household asset structure. It has been argued however that human capital³⁷ is of profound importance in shaping future income and wealth accumulation possibilities (Becker, 1976; De Gregorio and Lee, 2002; Alvaredo et al., 2016). Having shown the important role of differing asset holdings in understanding social stratification, the analysis of wealth is therefore now complemented by intangible assets, namely, human capital. To gauge the impact of human capital on household balance sheet composition, the calculations provided by the ONS as outlined in 3.4.3 are integrated into the discussion.

Between 2014 and 2015 human capital rose by 4.8% and the overall value of human capital in the UK reached for the first time since the GFC a higher level than the pre-crisis level, namely £19.23 trillion compared to £19.19 trillion in 2008. Overall a rise in human capital can be seen since the 1990s which can be partly explained by a change in the overall skill level of workers. One third of workers had a degree in 2015 compared to just 10% of employees in 1985 and the percentage of 25-29 years old graduates rose from 13% in 1993 to 41% in 2015. This is, however, partly offset by a decrease of a wage premium for university graduates as a result of the rising skill levels, namely from 45% in 1995 to 34% in 2015 according to the Bank of England (Abel et al., 2016). When incorporating human capital into UK household balance sheet composition (see Table 12), the relative share of property and pension wealth declines from 40.8% to 17.2% in the case of property and from 38.5% to 16.2% in the case of pensions. Hence, as expected by finance theory discussed in 2.3.1, human capital represents the largest asset of households' balance sheets.

³⁷ Human capital represents an estimation of the future value of earnings based on current income (see 3.4.3)

Table 12 UK Household Balance Sheet incorporating Human Capital 2015

Assets		Share	Share	Liabilities
Human Capital (2015)		57.9%	2.3%	Loans from the Student Loans Company and Bank
Property Wealth		17.6%	89%	Aggregate Mortgage Debt
Financial Wealth		4.9%	8.1%	Aggregate Financial Liabilities (excluding student loans)
Private Pension Wealth		16.2%		
Physical Wealth		3.8%		

Source: Author's calculation based on ONS (2016b;c)

Given that human capital comprises such a large share of household balance sheets, it is essential to explore financial strategies employed by UK households to mitigate a potential fall in the value of human capital. As discussed in Section 2.3.1, the difference to other forms of capital is that human capital is not tradable and not hedgeable in a traditional sense since claims on household income cannot be repackaged and sold. For this reason, finance theory suggests that households can use either tradable assets and/or acquire insurances to secure themselves in case of not being able to work (Benzoni and Chyruk, 2015).

Tradable assets can be employed as a hedge because of moving with the economic cycle in contrast to idiosyncratic human capital risk such as ill health which is not primarily connected to economic downturns (Benzoni and Chyruk, 2015). As mentioned above medium income households rely on housing and pension wealth whereas higher income households hold a diversified asset portfolio. Middle income households are thus less resilient to income shocks because of not being able to easily dispose of assets without affecting their living base (Bryan et al., 2009). When combining the values of current, transaction and savings accounts, more than 50% of households in the 3rd income decile own £2,800 and £4,600 in the 5th decile, covering two months of income. 50% of the households would thus run into difficulties when experiencing longer term income shocks and are likely to have to take on debt (ONS, 2018a).

There is also insurable risk (Campbell and Cocco, 2003). Self-financed insurances such as a private critical illness insurance or government- and company-sponsored insurances such as unemployment insurance and sickness pay can be used to hedge against a loss in future labour income. As depicted in Chapter 4, the government sponsored insurances have been continuously rolled back while life and critical illness insurances have been promoted. UK has been growing into one of the biggest insurance and long-term savings market in the world after US, Japan and China and the largest in the EU, generating over a 5th of total EU premium income. 29% of households had some form of income protection privately (mortgage or income protection, life insurance), representing 80% of the working population. Moreover, one third of employees contributes to a group cover including critical illness, life insurance or income protection (ABI Analysis, 2017; ONS, 2018d).

Overall the risk in household balance sheets is relatively seen high because of incorporating risk based on illiquid assets and uninsurable risk in the form of labour income. Rather than becoming ‘active players in the market for risk’ (Bryan and Rafferty, 2014, p.408), households tend to prefer illiquid investments. Due to incorporating a large share of uninsurable risk in the form of labour income risk in their balance sheets, it might be seen as rational by households to mainly invest in less risky assets such as pension and housing. However, these are illiquid assets which build the basis of UK households’ everyday life and would therefore not be easily tradable in case of seeking emergency funding. Whereas a growing part of medium income households would be negatively affected by unexpected expenses, higher income households who hold a higher proportion of tradable assets and different risk levels and therefore, can counteract an economic shock.

6.3 Rationalities behind Balance Sheet Composition

After having seen the construction of asset norms in Chapter 4 and households' discursive interaction with asset norms in Chapter 5, the goal in this subchapter is to depict if and how households adopt a financialized subject position as reflected in their practices. This is the second part to identifying to what extent households internalize a financialized subject position and responds to the sub-research question iii. For this reason, self-reported balance sheets of interviewees complement the analysis of UK households' balance sheets discussed in the previous subchapter. These are on the one hand compared to UK households' balance sheets and on the other hand households' reasoning behind holding certain assets is provided.

6.3.1 Households' Three-pronged Asset Strategy

As also conducted for UK households in Section 6.2.2, a balance sheet is presented at the end of this subsection showing ownership rates, asset and liability shares and the categorization into fairly safe and risky assets (see Table 14). This balance sheet depicts the data received for 45 of the overall 55 households as 10 of the interviewed households did not provide the necessary information. Accompanying the balance sheet is a discussion of the underlying rationalities for the presented balance sheet structure, revealing how constructed asset norms materialize in financial practices. Yet, before presenting the composition of interviewees' balance sheets, the incorporated risk levels are outlined and compared to UK households. As shown in Figure 18, interviewed households' balance sheets also lean towards fairly safe assets. Contrary to finance theory, dominating categories here are savings, property and pension wealth rather than further financial assets (Merton, 2000). However, the share of risky assets is significantly higher than in the case of UK households which is mainly due to participants holding a higher share of mortgages on the main residence and DC pensions (see Table 14). This higher share of risky assets is in line with interviewed households' developed asset accumulation strategy as discussed subsequently.

Figure 18 Diversification of Interviewed Households Portfolio

Panel A Fairly Risky Scenario

Assets	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky
Property	0.0%	50.9%	49.1%
Financial Wealth	68.6%	28.4%	3%
Pension Wealth	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Physical Wealth	30.0%	0.0%	70.0%
Overall Risk Level in Asset Portfolio	5.7%	63.8%	30.5%

Panel B Risky Scenario

Assets	Clearly Safe	Fairly Safe	Risky
Property	0.0%	50.0%	49.1%
Financial Wealth	68.6%	28.4%	3%
Pension Wealth	0.0%	63.0%	37.0%
Physical Wealth	30.0%	0.0%	70.0%
Overall Risk Level in Asset Portfolio	5.7%	51.9%	42.3%

Source: Author’s calculation based on the provided balance sheets by interview participants (n=45)³⁸; Note: Business Assets are included in Physical Wealth as they mainly include property and retail goods

The constructed norms of the everyday risk manager, established through institutional changes and dominant media discourses, have a ‘massifying’ (Foucault, 2003, p.243) on households (‘it was just sort of what everybody did’ [IP11_MI_M_42]). 48 out of the 55 interviewed households, coming from different family backgrounds and belonging to different income brackets, stressed the need to accumulate assets in order to not suffer from poverty in case of unemployment, ill health or retirement (‘getting a return on capital [...] it’s just about trying to have some security and stability, you know, I just suppose there is always that fear that you sort of think, yeah, you could lose everything and you just wanna hedge’ [IP20_MI_F_58]).³⁹ Asset norms are translated by interviewees into a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy consisting of savings, homeownership and pensions (see Table 13). Because of perceiving stocks and shares as too risky and property as guaranteeing a return, as discussed in 5.2.3, stocks and shares are excluded from the asset strategy and property is included, deviating from the entrepreneurial discourse (see 4.3.3).

The first step in the asset accumulation approach is to save: ‘I think I am somebody who believes you do have to save for the future’ (IP04_HI_F_59). The average savings of interviewed households, lying £16,302 (excluding an outlier with savings of £532,000), is

³⁸ In the following analysis *n* depicts the number of interview participants represented in graphs, for instance, n=45 means the data presented in the table is based on 45 interviewed households’ data.

³⁹ The 7 households who do not save belong to the non-asset manager identity discussed in Section 7.3.5.

in line with average savings reported in the WAS of £16,081 for income deciles 3-10. Interviewees define two categories of savings. On the one hand, savings are accumulated for rainy day funds ‘because you never know what’s around the corner’ (IP13_HI_M_76). These funds are set aside for the purpose of avoiding debt (‘rainy day funds really so and I never liked to borrow’ [IP20_MI_F_58]) and being able to keep assets in case of unexpected expenses (‘I wanted to maintain a level playing field’ [IP25_MI_F_51]). On the other hand, since ‘money devalues over time’ (IP27_MI_F_59) due to low interest rates, as discussed in 5.2.3, the main goal of savings lies in using them as a means to generate income, either through investment in a house (‘buy a house or something that could be used as a means to generate some money’ [IP10_MI_F_44]) or further investments (‘I’ve got some savings, I want to do something with it’ [IP35_MI_F_26]). As a result, similar to UK households, 73% of households have savings but these only comprise 4.5% of assets (see Table 14).

Table 13 Three-pronged Asset Strategy of Households

Theme	Illustrative Quotations
Savings Rainy Day Funds	It’s important to have a certain amount of flexible cash so in case something crops up, so the car crops up, how do get there, how do we sort that out, those sorts of things (IP11_MI_M_42) When we bought the house, I didn’t have anything after that for a while but then after a while we, I, started to save up again, build a pot, I always got a pot (IP35_MI_F_26)
Investment Purposes	We were starting to accumulate savings so what were we going to do with them? Well we’ve decided then to buy another house, sold the one we were in and moved into a larger house. (IP01_HI_F_52) I said we could buy that [...] it was a better, better return than having the money in the bank, we’re getting’ (IP49_MI_F_52)
House Property Ladder	Well I would have it for a few years, thinking maybe it’s the first house (IP39_MI_F_36) It’s still in the same area but we did buy again. We had a mortgage on that but that one rose quite considerably in value so we used the money that we got for that to buy this, the bigger house (IP52_HI_M_41)
Downsizing	Our house is an investment and I think we always said it, that that’s our pension sort of thing. [...] if you have a need to downsize then you could have some capital in it (IP18_HI_F_46) We’re going to realize our investment is the best way to put it [...] the investment is the sort of money we put into the house in the first place (IP21_MI_F_65)
Pension	It was the highest return but it was also the highest risk. My view was because I haven’t been able to pay into pension perhaps during my mid-twenties that being able to do it now was a way of catching up in a way (IP56_HI_M_34) I have an occupational pension, yes I do, and that will start actually when I am 60. And I also bought AVCs [additional voluntary contributions] quite, quite heavily to make sure that absolutely everything has been thought of. (IP12_HI_F_59) [moving jobs] My highest priority was looking after my pension rights (IP33_MI_M_88)

Second, when accumulated savings are sufficient for a house deposit, interviewees step on the property ladder. The importance of property can be seen in property wealth of interviewees comprising 58.4% of overall assets (see Table 14).⁴⁰ Whereas the focus on homeownership is not a new phenomenon (Gurney, 1999), its perception has changed – as shown in 5.2.1 the house has become an investment object (‘our house is an investment’ [IP51_HI_F_36]). Almost all participants (42 out of 55⁴¹) justify owning a house not with wanting a home for life but with financial arguments: ‘You’re paying a lot of money for something that you’re not guaranteed and no kind of financial gain in the end’ (IP26_MI_F_50). The first house is often a starter house which is used for five or ten years and then one moves up the property ladder with the goal of making financial gains.⁴²

[talk between a couple: IP41_MI_28] We wanted to move up the ladder (F) wanted to grow (M) [...] the other house was only ever sort of a five year house (F) so moving to this [the new house] would be a bit longer term (M) yeah so it’s like a ten year house (F)

After having stepped on the property ladder, they articulate the desire to take advantage of rising property values for the purpose of generating income in the future. It is noticeable that households know the current value of their investment and can estimate the future value:

[...] our aim really is, as I mentioned earlier our house was 414 when we bought it, looking at recent estimates, it’s already 445 or something like that. In just nine months it’s gone up £30,000 in value but actually by the time we come to sell, it hopefully, it’s worth half a million and we might buy a house worth £300,000 [...] so we then have £200,000 worth of cash (IP11_MI_M_42)

⁴⁰ This is higher than the average of income deciles 3-10 of UK households (40.8%) which is partly due to 52.6% of interviewed households being from the South East which has, based on higher house prices, a median property wealth of £170,000 compared to £100,000 in England (ONS, 2018a).

⁴¹ Numbers are given in line with studies having conducted thematic analysis, e.g. Cook et al. (2009). The numbers are arrived at by going through the coding of interview transcripts and identifying the ones with the same codes/themes, for instance, in this case the theme was *Financialized Homeownership* including the codes *Moving up the Property Ladder*, *Bricks and Mortar as secure Investment*, *Property gives Guaranteed Value*.

⁴² Only seven of interviewed households have not changed or do not aspire to change their house.

In contrast to previous studies (Rowlingson, 2006; Smith, 2008), the preferred method to use the equity in the house is not equity release ('I could remortgage this. I don't think that's a good invest' [IP06_HI_F_79]; see also Appendix F) but downsizing.

The anticipated returns are then earmarked as pension income: the third pillar of households' asset strategy. For the everyday risk manager, it is essential to build sufficient pension provisions ('if you want to have a pension, you gotta do something' [IP28_MI_M_62]) either in the form of moving up the property ladder, conducting further investments ('some kind of asset that would bring a revenue stream for me' [IP54_MI_M_34]) and/or by setting up pension investments. 38 out of the 45 households who provided a balance sheet have some form of pension provision and pension wealth comprises one-third of households' gross wealth. Becoming clear in the following statements is the normal behaviour of making pension provisions where participants expressed the need to catch up and a discomfort when not having been able to put money aside for pensions:

I'm catching up because you should start a pension as soon as you can, so 28, you should have started earlier, so I wanted to gain money as quickly as I can (IP39_MI_F_36) [...] this is the first time in my life when I have not paid a pension (just realizing it). It does feel quite odd [...] it does feel like I know that that's where the brunt's being felt [IP25_MI_F_51]).

Similar to the categorization provided by Campbell (2016), households consider public ('it probably won't perform amazingly but it won't lose money' [IP04_HI_F_59]) and DB pensions ('not as good as they used to be, they used to be final salary pensions' [IP41_MI_F_28]) to give more security than private and DC pensions.

In addition to the asset side, 44 out of 55 households adopt a 'no debt' ethic except for valid reasons ('our view of money must be about right because we don't owe anybody anything' [IP03_MI_M_52]), reflecting the rejection of debt-financed consumption outlined in the

entrepreneurial media discourse (see 4.3.3). A typical answer of households to the question if they have any debt was: ‘we are living within our means’ (IP41_MI_F_28) [...] ‘So if we wanted something we would tend to like save a bit more for it’ (IP52_HI_M_41). Debt is seen as bad because of not being able to get ahead of yourself: ‘I don’t like owing money and I don’t like living or working just to live [...] And then you know I’m not really getting ahead of myself’ (IP45_MI_F_27).

Similar to a rule outlined by Thaler and Shefrin (1981; see 2.2.1), key exceptions are the mortgage, car and student loans. Since the mortgage can be used to build up an asset ‘to provide for family’ (IP10_MI_F_44), it is seen as acceptable debt in addition to the car loan (‘A car and a mortgage, never for anything else’ [IP27_MI_F_59]). Yet, even when taking on a loan for a car purchase, households often justify this decision (‘to buy this car because it was only a year after buying the house I had no savings left at all’ [IP39_MI_F_36]). The second highest form of debt after mortgage debt is student debt with 15.6% of interviewed households having student debt, comprising 3.17% share of the overall debt (see Table 14). Half of the interviewed households up to 36 years old had on average a student loan of £19,001, some even going up to £38,000.

Table 14 Balance Sheet Composition of Interviewed Households

Assets		Value in £	Ownership Rates	Asset Share	Ownership Rates	Liability Share	Value in £	Liabilities
Property Wealth 58.4%	Main residence (FS-R)	13,260,995	77.80%	37.09%	40.0%	59.78%	2,512,040	Main residence
	Buy-to-let (R)	5,232,900	24.40%	14.64%	6.7%	21.35%	897,000	Buy-to-let
	Other Property (R)	2,385,000	13.30%	6.67%	6.7%	13.61%	572,000	Other Property
Transaction Accounts 0.2%	Current Accounts in credit (CS)	75,704	NA	0.21%	11.1%	1.12%	47,000	Formal loans
Savings Products 4.5%	Savings Accounts (CS)	1,298,197	73.33%	3.63%	15.6%	3.17%	133,009	Loans from the Student Loans Company and Bank
	Cash ISA (CS)	300,350	22.20%	0.84%	11.1%	0.11%	4,618	Credit and charge cards
Bonds 1.3%	Premium bonds (CS)	115,000	6.70%	0.32%	13.3%	0.39%	16,250	Other Liabilities (dentist fees, phones)
	Other Bonds (FS)	350,700	15.60%	0.98%	6.7%	0.47%	19,876	Car Loans
Shares 0.5%	Stocks and Shares (R)	79,760	11.10%	0.22%				
	Stocks and Shares ISAs (FS)	83,300	8.80%	0.23%				
Other Financial Assets 1%	Insurance products (FS)	15,500	2.20%	0.04%				
	Other Financial Assets (Awaiting inheritance sell)	335,000	4.40%	0.94%				
Pension Wealth 31.9%	Defined benefit plans (FS)	750,073	15.60%	2.10%				
	Defined Contribution Plans (FS-R)	4,096,367	46.70%	11.46%				
	Pensions expected from spouse/partner (FS-R)	127,938	2.20%	0.36%				
	Pensions in Payment (FS)	6,436,143	24.40%	18.00%				
	Pensions in Payment (DB)	5,726,143	13.30%	16.02%				
	Pensions in Payment (DC)	710,000	11.10%	1.99%				
Physical Wealth 0.7%	Home Contents	55,600	0.13%	0.16%				
	Collectables and Valuables	20,500	0.05%	0.06%				
	Vehicles	164,000	0.38%	0.46%				
Business Assets 1.6%	Business Assets	566,000	13.00%	1.59%				
Total Assets		35,749,027					4,201,793	Total Liabilities
							31,547,234	Net Worth

Source: Author's calculation and illustration based on the provided balance sheets by interview participants (n=45)

6.3.2 Keeping Control with the help of Diversification

While the above shown discussion mainly focused on the first part of asset norms, namely asset accumulation and avoiding debt, this section sheds light on the second part: finance rationality. To briefly reiterate, as introduced in 1.1, finance rationality is defined as incorporating financial strategies with the aim of ‘self-funding non-wage work’ (Bryan et al., 2009, p.462). According to finance theory (see Section 2.3.1) and the entrepreneurial discourse presented in the media (see 4.3.3), households are expected to calculate an optimal composition of assets, minimizing the overall portfolio risk. This would mean that assets are uncorrelated and equities and long-term bonds are included in an asset strategy (Campbell, 2006). The discursive engagement of interviewees with asset norms discussed in 5.2.2 already suggested that while households’ discourses reflects the concept of diversification, they apply it in an unsophisticated way. This section now deepens this discussion.

Due to risk being omnipresent in investment (‘everything’s got a risk in it’ [IP36_MI_M_41]), interviewed households mentioned that they take into consideration risk in their asset strategies in order to not lose money that one worked hard for (‘with anything there are risks and I suppose more so when you’re parting with money that you have earned’ [IP45_MI_F_27]). Yet, while interviewees take into consideration risk, diversification does not take place as expected by finance theory and media discourse. Households avoid investing in stocks and shares due to the perceived high risk inherent in these (as discussed in 5.2.3; stocks and shares comprise only 0.2% asset share – see Table 14) and only invest in bonds after the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy introduced in Section 6.3.1 is achieved. Moreover, they do not calculate the optimal composition of assets according to their risk preferences but aim to mitigate a potential fall of asset value by adopting diversification in the wider sense.

Three main forms of an elementary diversification were detected here: investment in managed funds, diversifying pension income sources and work income diversification. First, in trying to reduce risk in pension provisions, households mainly invest in managed products in the form of stocks and shares ISAs, managed bonds and pension funds: ‘There’s no point in you’re going like specific companies as such, you get like a mixed fund’ (IP35_MI_F_26). This means that in case of a downturn of one asset value, it can be balanced out with the win of another asset: ‘If you've got something going down a bit over here, it's not everything. It's probably going up over there’ (IP19_MI_F_73). Because of investing mainly through managed funds, the risk of home bias, i.e. the tendency to mainly invest in domestic equities, is reduced (Bekaert et al., 2017) while at the same time it reflects ‘naïve diversification’ (Benartzi and Thaler, 2007, p.87). ‘Naïve diversification’ is identified as households selecting managed funds based on heuristics rather than sophisticated calculations. The choice offered by the provider influences then the extent of diversification. Households decide on an asset mix according to their desired risk level, with the provider investing in various countries (‘60% of it was invested in the Far East and 40% in Europe’ [IP25_MI_F_51]) and products accordingly (‘the investment goes something like 20% shares, 20% savings, 60% property. [...] I took a very middle ground’ [IP40_MI_M_43]).

Second, households separate income sources for retirement: ‘We’ve got rental income. We’ve got state pension. I’ve got my civil service pension.’ (IP08_HI_M_65).⁴³

[...] feels a bit safer to have it than not have it [buy-to-let property] because lots of pensions and the terms of pensions has changed, doesn’t it? (IP10_MI_F_44) ‘I currently pay into a pension with work [...] but I would like to set up a private pension to pay into, just so, that I’ve got just a little bit of a buffer’ [IP45_MI_F_27]).

⁴³ The chosen strategy depends on the trust in the financial sector which is discussed in Chapter 6.

On the one hand, interviewees hedge against a potentially less well performing pension by investing in a second property ('this house we've bought is a pension' [IP49_MI_F_52]). 24.4%⁴⁴ of households who provided a balance sheet and 29.1% of overall households have a buy-to-let property which they rent out (see Table 14). On the other hand, households set up several pensions. Over one third of interviewed households compared to 12% of UK households have set up a private pension because of wanting to mitigate a potential fall in the value of one's pension. Even income constrained households diversify pensions by having a private pension in addition to the workplace pension ('At work I pay pension and I made a pension for myself' [IP38_MI_M_56]). Moreover, when moving jobs, pensions are kept separate: 'I had different jobs and each job gave me a pension and I left them separate. This is the case of don't put all your eggs in one basket' (IP21_MI_M_65).

Finally, it has been argued in the literature (shown in 2.3.1) that income diversification can be used to enhance resilience in the face of changing economic circumstances. This concept of income diversification relates to a general understanding of diversification where according to Weller and Wenger (2015), rising labour market uncertainty induces households, in addition to the primary source of income (typically wages and salaries), to find further non-wage income sources such as business income, capital income or public assistance. Interestingly, this theoretical concept can be found in interview participants' statements. Since 'it's good to have separate sources of income' (IP54_MI_M_34), they, for instance, set up a business as back-up plan to test it out ('if I got in and I see that it's good then I can stop the security work, just try, keep on trying' [IP38_MI_M_56]) or to fall back upon in case of recent issues at the workplace:

There were some changes happening in my job and I thought I knew there was going to be

⁴⁴ This reflects a higher share of buy-to-let property than UK households and can be partly explained by having focused on medium to high income households. As portrayed in 6.2.3, buy-to-let and other property become more important the higher the income of the households, specifically starting to be relevant in the 6th decile.

a restructure and although I didn't think that my post would be made redundant I thought it could be, you know, so what can I do to make some money (IP10_MI_F_44)

Moreover, part-time jobs are taken on because 'if you can have even a very small streams of income in different places that's really positive' (IP54_MI_M_34) and 'if anything happens you're never just left without a penny' (IP40_MI_M_43):

I write pantomimes, comedy sketches and things. So that's not large income streams but I get performance rights for that from my publisher, I think it's a couple of hundred pounds a month just coming in from that which is nice. And also I have a small side business training Santa's at Christmas. It's what I do for the past six years and that's on top to the full time work, running a business, also I do a lot of amateur theatre [...] (IP40_MI_M_43)

Coming through in these statements is that when taking up additional work commitments, it is often not directly connected to the current job, for example setting up a 'street food business' when being a 'local government officer' [IP41_MI_F_28]. Based on being uncorrelated, the risk of both income sources being affected at the same time is relatively low. The additional income sources are thus taken as financial security.

Bringing the last two sections together, it has been revealed that by trying to provide security in an insecure future and reduce overall risk levels, households adopt a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy ('I want capital growth' [IP13_HI_MI_76]) and an elementary form of diversification, i.e. households' discourses reflect the logic of the concept, yet they apply it in a rather unsophisticated way. Looking to debates in the Foucauldian literature, these empirical insights suggest that households do adopt a financialized subject position, albeit in the form of the everyday risk manager. While 'investment as a technology of the self does not take the form envisaged' (Langley, 2007, p.81) by finance theory where households develop a 'portfolio of financial market assets (Langley, 2006b, p. 923), this should not be

seen as deviating from becoming financialized because of not adopting the everyday investor subjectivity. Instead, it is part of the financialized subject position of the everyday risk manager. The everyday risk manager invests, amongst other reasons, in property due to distrusting the financial system (as discussed in Chapter 5). Yet, it is not the sole investment. Rather the everyday risk manager translates asset norms into a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy consisting of savings, homeownership and pensions. Interviewed households also deviate from the everyday investor identity and from the entrepreneurial discourse established in the media by not following the traditional concept of diversification but adopting an elementary form of diversification in the form of managed funds, diversification of pension income sources and income diversification. Nevertheless, the interview data has revealed that households have internalized asset norms and want to achieve financial security through accumulating assets and adopting finance rationality.

6.3.3 Impact of Income Constraints on Households' Asset Strategy

Based on accumulating assets and adopting finance rationality, even though in this case in the form of an elementary form of diversification, it can be argued that households move towards becoming entrepreneurs, i.e. capitalists, in a society of popular capitalism, as presented in the policy discourse (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). As expected by the literature (see Section 2.3.1), households appropriate money in addition to their role of workers which suggest that they become capitalists and non-capitalists at the same time (Weiss, 2014). A fruitful question however remains if this is a similar development for middle and high income earners alike which is answered in the following.

The interview data reveals that the degree of adopting finance rationality in the form of diversification is dependent on risk preferences and income. The following risk preferences were identified in the interview data: avoiding risk since introducing risk means losing

money, seeking calculative (informed) risk and seeing risk as exciting. Households in the first category try to avoid risks, equalizing risk with the ‘possibility of failure outweighing [outweighs] the probability of success’ (IP59_MI_F_32) and therefore focusing on safety and avoiding financial investments aside from pensions (‘financial investments to me, it’s just a smack of a little bit of risk’ [IP26_MI_F_50]).

The majority of households with this risk avoidance approach can be found in income quintile 2, thus, income constrained households. They express a desire to save but not having the possibility to do as much as wanted: ‘from time to time I have to draw them [savings] out, if necessary, if they’re needed elsewhere, yeah, but I do actively have the desire to save’ (IP57_MI_F_50). The average share of financial assets out of overall assets here lies only at 1.81% (see Table 18 at the end of this subsection), significantly below the share in UK household balance sheets (11.6%) and in interviewed households’ balance sheets (7.3%), while pension values are also relatively low (16.6% compared to overall interviewed households [31.9%]). However, the share of property out of overall assets is higher (67.2%) than in overall interviewed households (58.4%). This might not be such a big difference *per se*, but when having a look at the structure of property wealth, it becomes clear that while overall interviewees’ property wealth includes also buy-to-let properties (14.9%), the property wealth in this category solely consists of the main residence, resulting in a property gearing ratio, i.e. debt in relation to property value, on the main residence of 62.8%.

Table 15 Balance Sheet of Interview Participant (Medium Income)⁴⁵

Assets	Liabilities
House £67,900 (shared ownership)	Mortgage £49,620
Savings £100	Credit card £150
Current Account £500	Student loan £37,520
Car £2,100	
Estimated imputed pension pot: £10,000	
Total Assets: £80,600	Total Liabilities: £87,290
	Net worth: - £6,690

⁴⁵ Total assets, liabilities and net worth are added to the balance sheets by the researcher. Moreover, numbers are slightly adjusted to ensure anonymity without deterring the original meaning of the balance sheet.

As can be seen in the exemplary balance sheet above, income constrained households struggle to keep a positive net worth not only due to low savings and high mortgage debt but also due to student loans. The highest level of student debt can be found in this group, resulting in low net worth and a high level of risk, for example, in this case a negative net worth of -£6,690. This leads to an asset portfolio comprising 42.2% risky assets in the fairly safe and 56.3% in the risky scenario, compared to 30.5% and 42.3% in overall interviewees' balance sheets⁴⁶. Thus, despite focusing on safety, risks are introduced in the balance sheet.

The majority of interviewed households fall into the second risk and income category (quintiles 3 and 4), namely calculative risk, i.e. taking on affordable, informed risk. While recognizing that one needs to risk something to accumulate ('I think if now your aim is to gain more money then I think risk is, you will need to take risk' [IP18_HI_F_46]), it is emphasized that one should 'only risk money you can afford to lose' (IP19_MI_F_73). Risks that 'jeopardizes your family's security' (IP10_MI_F_44) or 'affect your everyday life' (IP45_MI_F_27) should be avoided. It is thus necessary to take on informed risks: 'I always think about things in terms of what could go wrong with it, you know, what's the best way of doing things' (IP21_MI_M_65). Interestingly, this is reminiscent of the personality traits employed in the discursive strategies discovered in the media (see 4.3.4) which puts emphasis on being cautious and informing oneself before making a financial decision.

The adoption of calculative risk rather than risk avoidance can be seen in fairly safe assets dominating the asset groups, namely between 70.8% (fairly safe scenario) and 64.9% (risky scenario) in the income quintile 3 and 70.7% and 54.1% in the income quintile 4. Households in this category diversify to a larger extent than in the previous category. This entails buy-

⁴⁶ Please note that the risky scenario deviates from the definition of the risky scenario in the UK by only including DC pensions depicted in one scenario as fairly safe and in one scenario as risky. This is due to the fact that it became clear through the interviews that households only hold managed bonds rather than directly invest directly in bonds. Bonds are therefore considered in both scenario as fairly safe.

to-let property which can be specifically found in income quintile 3 rather than in higher income quintiles as also in the case of UK households. Similarly, additional managed, medium-risk financial investments gain in importance (see Table 18). Due to higher income levels, households in this category can afford to lock away money in stocks and shares ISAs and bonds which are used for earning an additional income: ‘We’ve invested £50,000 we’ve been taking an income from it every month’ (IP21_MI_M_65) and premium bonds are chosen because of being secure, tax-efficient assets: ‘We both have our capacity investment in premium bonds which are sort of government bonds but tax free’ (IP01_HI_F_52).

Whereas the differences in the extent of the role of finance rationality in the last two income quintiles are not as pronounced and should be considered fluid, depending on having temporarily income constraints (‘you move through different life stages and you’re aware that you have less earning capacity’ [IP20_MI_F_58]) or changing circumstances (‘my attitude to risk has changed as I’m not working now’ [IP25_MI_F_51]), the last group clearly distinguishes itself. Belonging to the fifth income quintile or higher end of medium level income, these are households who have the financial means and the confidence (‘I would consider myself financially literate’ [IP13_HI_M_76]) to invest in riskier assets and incorporate the full extent of finance rationality. That means, households in this category are able to access high-yielding financial assets such as stocks and shares rather than solely relying on managed funds (mirroring the picture provided for UK households in 6.2.3).

Strikingly, they explicitly integrate inflation concerns into their construction of an asset portfolio since ‘you may not be getting the return on investment that is in line with inflation’ (IP44_HI_F_58) and try to hedge against a devaluation of money through index-linked pension funds or property investments (see Table 16). These households have chosen investments in different locations in order to diversify the risk of changing house prices, for

instance seeing the risk in the domestic market ('we see sort of domestic property markets likely to continue dropping' [IP04_HI_F_59]) and thus investing in foreign properties ('my property in New Zealand, they're investments' [IP60_HI_M_55]).

Table 16 Balance Sheet of Interview Participant (High Income)

Assets	Liabilities
Home Value - £660,000	No mortgage
Property 1 £95,000	No mortgage
Property 2 £100,000	£75,000
Property 3 £85,000	£65,000
Property 4 £400,000	£260,000
Property 5 £90,000	£68,000
Property 6 £105,000	£90,000
Property 7 £140,000	£110,000
Pension Value £235,000	
Total Assets: £1,910,000	Total Liabilities: £668,000
	Net Worth: £1,242,000

As a result, high income households' risky asset share is the second highest (33.4% in the fairly safe scenario and 45.6% in the risky scenario). While mortgage debt still plays an important role with a gearing ratio of 19.4% for the main residence, it is far from the level in the second quintile (63% gearing ratio).

Overall the interview findings show that households adopt finance rationality when constructing their asset strategy, albeit to a differing degree (see Table 17 which provides a summary of the previously discussed aspects). Whereas middle income households are more passive in their diversification, choosing managed funds; high income households are more active and also develop an asset portfolio themselves.⁴⁷ As shown in the Table below, lower income households mainly use managed funds in the form of workplace pensions as a risk

⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it should be noted that the income classification presented here are understood as tendencies as in some cases risk preferences play a more substantial role in defining households' financial strategy than income levels. There are households in the higher end of the medium income group who could follow a stronger finance rationality but adopt calculative risk due to not being 'brave' enough to conduct further investments: 'I am still thinking should I draw money out and buy a property to rent but suspect I never will [...] because I don't think I ever have the bottle to risk most of my money' (IP20_MI_F_58).

management strategy and are in the stage of aiming to buy or have just recently purchased a house. These households therefore tend to rely on high secured debt in addition to student debt, reflecting fragile balance sheets in spite of wanting to avoid taking on risk. The majority of households can be found in the middle income range which are households who take on risks to achieve asset accumulation but make sure to inform themselves and risk only what they can also afford to lose. The focus thus lies on providing financial security for the future. As a result, the balance sheets in this income category focuses on fairly safe assets, mainly comprising debt-financed property and pensions.

Table 17 Interaction between Risk Management Strategies and Income

<i>Economic Background</i>	<i>Lower to Medium Income</i>	<i>Medium to High Income</i>	<i>Higher End of Medium Income to High Income</i>
<i>Risk in investment approaches</i>	<u>Possibility of Failure</u> Risk Avoidance Focus on tangible and controllable investments	<u>Calculative risks</u> Focus on affordable and informed risk Medium to low risk investments	<u>Taking on risk is exciting</u> Focus on capital growth Directly investing, medium to high risk investments
<i>Risk Management Strategies</i>	Focus on managed funds (workplace pension) Diversification of Income Streams	Managed funds and diversification of pension income (mainly pension funds; stocks and shares ISAs) Diversification of Income Streams	Traditional diversification including stocks and shares and buy-to-lets Diversification of Income Streams

Source: Author's illustration based on the interview data underlined with provided balance sheets

The last income group is based on high income households who can afford to take on higher risk. As expected by finance theory, these households directly invest in stocks and shares and actively manage their own asset portfolio. Additionally, one can find households in this category who have substantial buy-to-let portfolios. This is also reflected in their attitude towards risk as they enjoy investing and focus on capital growth. As a consequence and in line with the argumentation provided for UK household balance sheets, it can be argued that the vision of the everyday investor subject who becomes an everyday capitalist fits the interviewed higher income earners rather than middle income earners.

Table 18 Balance Sheet Composition of Income Quintiles 2- 5

Income Quintiles	Asset Share				Liability Share				
	2 (n=6)	3 (n=11)	4 (n=13)	5 (n=15)	2 (n=6)	3 (n=11)	4 (n=13)	5 (n=15)	
Main residence (FS-R)	67.15%	47.16%	42.3%	32.12%	71.8%	47.14%	90.06%	50.93%	Main residence
Buy-to-let (R)	N/A	13.18%	2.58%	18.58%	N/A	40.57%	N/A	27.00%	Buy-to-let
Other Property (R)	N/A	2.62%	6.42%	8.26%	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.46%	Other Property
Current Accounts in credit (CS)	0.53%	0.17%	0.56%	0.21%	1.25%	2.86%	1.53%	0.86%	Formal loans
Savings Accounts (CS)	1.04%	2.95%	5.52%	3.38%	24.22%	5.71%	8.41%	N/A	Student Loans
Cash ISA (CS)	12.74%	N/A	1.04%	0.68%	0.65%	0.87%	N/A	N/A	Credit and charge cards
Premium bonds (CS)	N/A	N/A	0.16%	0.46%	0.21%	2.87%	N/A	0.21%	Other Liabilities (dentist fees, phones)
Other Bonds (FS)	N/A	2.17%	0.05%	0.92%	1.83%	N/A	N/A	0.55%	Car Loans
Stocks and Shares (R)	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.35%					
Stocks and Shares ISAs (FS)	N/A	0.64%	N/A	0.19%					
Other Financial Assets	N/A	0.25%	5.26%	0.07%					
Defined benefit plans (FS)	2.45%	6.35%	1.15%	1.18%					
Defined Contribution Plans (FS-R)	14.12%	5.88%	16.6%	12.18%					
Pensions in Payment (DB)	N/A	8.59%	7.15%	20.77%					
Pensions in Payment (DC)	N/A	2.38%	7.88%	0.35%					
Home Contents	N/A	0.38%	0.16%	0.08%					
Collectables and Valuables	N/A	N/A	0.33%	N/A					
Vehicles	1.96%	0.51%	0.83%	0.30%					
Business Assets	N/A	6.77%	2.30%	N/A					
Total Assets	£408,045	£6,297,108	£6,088,038	£22,868,536	£239,493	£350,050	£654,000	£2,796,250	Total Liabilities
					£168,552	£5,947,058	£5,434,038	£20,072,286	Net Worth

Source: Author's calculations based on interview participants' provided balance sheets and interview.

6.3.4 Influence of Human Capital on Financial Decisions

After having seen the impact of income constraints on households' ability to accumulate assets and adopt financial rationality in the form of diversifying assets, this discussion is extended here by including the impact of human capital on households' asset structure. When applying the human capital methodology suggested by the ONS as outlined in 3.4.3, interviewees' balance sheets includes a human capital of £51,780,091 of working households and £54,968,128 of working households, students and unemployed, representing 59.2% and 60.6% of the overall asset portfolio and an average human capital stock per household of £835,163 in the first case and £774,199 in the second case. This is in line with the human capital share of UK households' assets presented in 6.2.4 (57.9%).

The largest asset share of human capital can be found in income quintile 2, namely 89.38% as shown in Table 19 at the end of this subsection. Households in this income quintile are at high risk because of having a high mortgage on the main residence (62.8% property gearing ratio) while at the same time depicting a relatively high share of human capital. Nevertheless, they try to secure themselves by including insurances on a low income, for example, with the help of an unemployment insurance and 'pay every month in case you are sick or you are not working and they'll help you, you see, to give you money' ([IP38_MI_M_56]; yearly gross income £21,600, single, mortgager). The only other income quintile with a similarly high human capital share is income quintile 4 (71.50%). Despite being higher here, households in this category carry less risk than households in income quintile 2. Not only is the property gearing ratio lower (22.9%) but they also hold higher levels of savings and conduct further investments which can counterbalance a potential fall in human capital (see Table 19 at the end of this subsection).

In addition to savings and investments being used to hedge against a fall in human capital, interviewed households, as also in the case of overall UK households (see 6.2.4), use insurances to protect themselves against the impact of a reduced human capital. A key insurance mentioned by the majority of interviewed households is life insurance which is based on two triggers. First, by becoming a homeowner, life insurance becomes relevant to offset the risk of family members losing the house because of not being able to pay the mortgage: ‘if I’ve become severely ill or I think, when I think it’s terminally ill then I’ve got that, so that would cover my family for the mortgage’ (IP35_MI_F_26). It is also used to make sure the house is transferred onto the partner in case of death in such a way where the partner can upkeep the property, thus, providing a certain level of income/lump sum.

We have life insurance in place. My fear has previously always been up to this point, should the worst to happen and I passed away and I die, Mike would be left within a situation where he would have to sell the home because he wasn’t the one that was earning (IP04_HI_F_59)

Second, becoming married or having a family acts as a trigger because of wanting to ensure financial security for family members. This is a widespread phenomenon where also lower income households point out the need of having a life insurance: ‘I have one insurance which is the life insurance for in case something happens to me where you know to look after my children’ (IP57_MI_F_50; yearly gross income £25,800; 3 children). These two triggers of life insurance show the mutual relationship between economic and social relationships (Zelizer, 2012) where asset ownership leads to wanting to provide more security for family members but also social relationships result in a economic relationship.

A second key insurance is health insurance in the form of critical illness. This is set up to provide for oneself when being ill and to counterbalance the potential value loss in human capital as a result of being sick: ‘The critical illness cover again something could happen that could stop me from working and I want to make sure I don’t end up in a financially bad

situation' (IP26_MI_F_50). Critical illness cover as well has two main triggers. First, it is triggered by wanting to secure being able to pay the mortgage:

My notice period is three months. So I sort of know [...] I can't really guarantee anything beyond that, hence, the sort of you know life insurance, critical illness insurance, redundancy insurance, those kind of things that I felt were necessary (IP56_HI_M_34)

It is also used to secure yourself 'because you're single, you need something that's gonna pay your mortgage if you're ill, doesn't matter if you die, but if you're ill, you needed to be still able to live in the house, so critical illness cover' (IP39_MI_F_36). Second, it is triggered by ill health: 'had cancer actually along the way, that was painful, painful financially 'cause I didn't have insurance, so basically I just had my savings, so my savings just got completely absorbed by a year and a half being ill' (IP07_HI_F_50). This interviewee then emphasized that she would advise her friends to get a critical illness cover ('I definitely agree with critical illness cover'). These financial approaches show that in addition to adopting an elementary form of diversification, hedging in the wider sense is adopted by incorporating insurances into their financial strategies.

Finally, finance theory also assumes that households take into consideration human capital in their portfolio decisions as discussed in 2.3.1. Whereas interviewees did not pay attention to their form of occupation and invested accordingly, they did take into consideration the ability of work to counterbalance potential investment losses. First, older households reflect on their past investment strategy and point out that they have switched into medium or low risk investments because of not being able to balance it out with work: 'If we lose any of this we've got the opportunity to recoup is practically nil isn't it? The idea either of us going back to work assuming we could find work you know' (IP21_MI__M_65). In contrast, younger interviewees tend to take on higher risk because of being able to balance it out in later stages of life, echoing finance theory:

At the moment, because I'm still relatively young [...] I've put that into, you can choose a number of portfolios with them, and so I put that into a relatively high risk portfolio at this point which can produce the highest returns but also has the highest risk. But I sort of felt as I probably got 25 30 years of work still to go that if there were losses (IP56_HI_M_34)

Despite recognizing that the risk of losing is higher, it is argued to be less risky in the long run due to being relatively young which can be switched into a less risky fund in later stages of life ('it's gonna be thirty years until I retire, so I will probably move it in maybe 10 or 15 years, maybe make it to a lower risk' [IP39_MI_F_36]).

Second, despite most households adopting naïve diversification as shown in Section 6.3.2 (Benartzi and Thaler, 2007), some households actively take into consideration current changes in income or wealth situation and adjust their risk level in the portfolio accordingly. Because of switching from employment into self-employment, the following household changed from high risk investments into lower risk investments.

That was a higher risk but actually by now changing it and what I'm saying now is that I don't want as high a risk, I don't want that return, or I'd like the return, but I'm not prepared to go with the risk. So I've actually reduced the amount of investment I'm putting into the Far East. I brought that back to less riskier fund (IP25_MI_F_51)

Moreover, some interviewees in the higher income range invested in their own company in order to keep the job. Despite contrasting finance theory with that behaviour (Merton, 2000, 2003), it can be argued to be a reasonable decision as the main focus lies on keeping the job or gaining enough time to be able to find another job as in the following example. Due to not being 'in a position to go out in a job market and say I was thoroughly well', private money is taken out through a flexible mortgage and invested in the company to keep it afloat for a longer time period until being healthy enough to look for a job ('borrow some more money to actually invest in the business [...] it was only about £10,000' [IP16_HI_M_65]).

Table 19 Balance Sheet Composition of Income Quintiles 2- 5 including Human Capital

Asset Share					Liability Share				
Income Quintiles	2 (n=6)	3 (n=11)	4 (n=13)	5 (n=15)	2 (n=6)	3 (n=11)	4 (n=13)	5 (n=15)	
Human Capital	89.38%	51.70%	71.50%	56.34%	71.8%	47.14%	90.06%	50.93%	Main residence
Main residence	7.13%	22.78%	12.00%	27.00%	N/A	40.57%	N/A	27.00%	Buy-to-let
Buy-to-let	N/A	6.37%	0.72%	20.46%	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.46%	Other Property
Other Property	N/A	1.27%	1.78%	0.86%	1.25%	2.86%	1.53%	0.86%	Formal loans
Current Accounts in credit	0.06%	0.08%	0.16%	0.12%	24.22%	5.71%	8.41%	N/A	Student Loans
Savings Accounts	0.11%	1.43%	1.57%	0.55%	0.65%	0.87%	N/A	N/A	Credit and charge cards
Cash ISA	1.35%*	N/A	0.30%	0.30%	0.21%	2.87%	N/A	0.21%	Other Liabilities
Premium bonds	N/A	N/A	0.05%	0.20%	1.83%	N/A	N/A	0.55%	Car Loans
Other Bonds	N/A	1.05%	0.01%	0.40%					
Stocks and Shares	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.15%					
Stocks and Shares ISAs	N/A	0.31%	N/A	0.08%					
Other Financial Assets	N/A	0.12%	1.50%	0.03%					
Defined benefit plans	0.26%	3.07%	0.33%	0.52%					
Defined Contribution Plans	1.50%	2.84%	4.73%	5.32%					
Pensions in Payment (DB)	N/A	4.15%	2.04%	9.07%					
Pensions in Payment (DC)	N/A	1.15%	2.25%	0.15%					
Home Contents	N/A	0.18%	0.05%	0.04%					
Collectables and Valuables	N/A	N/A	0.09%	N/A					
Vehicles	0.21%	0.25%	0.24%	0.13%					
Business Assets	N/A	3.27%	0.66%	N/A					
Total Assets	£3,840,737	£13,037,624	£21,370,801	£52,380,693	£239,493	£350,050	£654,000	£2,796,250	Total Liabilities
					£3,601,244	£12,687,574	£20,716,801	£49,584,443	Net Worth

Source: Author's calculations based on interview participants' provided balance sheets and interviews; *One interview participant recently received an inheritance of £52,000.

6.4 Disciplining Effect of Household Asset Norms on Everyday Life

The previous two sections have shown that households increasingly interact with financial products in the interest of achieving asset ownership. The following subsections shed light on the interaction between asset norms and everyday life and provide an answer to sub-research question iv. The particular focus here lies on performative practices at the micro-level, i.e. to reveal how self-governing measures result in households performing the everyday risk manager subjectivity, and on the mutually generative relationship between social and economic relationships (introduced in research framework in 2.5.3).

6.4.1 Dichotomy between ‘Spoken for’ and ‘Guilt-free’ Money

The interview data has shown that households follow a three-pronged asset strategy and adopt finance rationality, albeit to a differing degree than anticipated by finance theory. Being an effective everyday risk manager, who accumulates assets to provide financial security in the future, becomes a way of being – ‘a means for the acquisition of the self’ (Martin, 2002, p. 3); even going as far as connecting self-confidence to it:

If I’d had no savings and had an overdraft I would feel like I was failing a little bit as a person, so it’s a little bit self-confidence linked to that (IP39_MI_F_36) [...] I have property. It’s not income but at least it’s on paper going up. [...] If I haven’t made enough money to retire on when I’m 65 then I failed and I don’t deserve a pension. (IP54_MI_M_34)

This shows the normalization of asset ownership where households assign responsibility on themselves if they have not achieved asset ownership. As introduced in 2.5.3, households are argued to internalize financial subjectivities through ‘routinely perform[ing] new and changed forms of financial self-discipline’ (Langley, 2008, p. 243). The goal here is therefore to identify through which practices households regulate their behaviour and through this become an effective everyday risk manager, i.e. identify self-governing measures.

As outlined in Section 6.3.1, the first step in the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy is savings. In an effort to achieve sufficient savings, money is categorized into *spoken for money*, i.e. fulfilling the three-pronged asset strategy and *guilt-free*, i.e. money to play with and which one can afford to lose. This extends the concept of mental accounting introduced by Thaler (1990) where households develop a system of mental accounts distinguishing between spending and asset accounts. Interviewees also separate between spending and asset accounts ('as long as you got enough to live on then anything extra is obviously going towards, I mean, your future' [IP42_MI_F_24]), however, the asset account is further divided. Households earmark money according to how it was earned, i.e. the origin of money determines spending possibilities (Zelizer, 1997). Money which has been gained through working hard (*spoken for money*) is avoided to be invested in risky assets ('what I earned, hard earned, I couldn't bear the idea of putting any at risk' [IP58_HI_M_49]). When making money from an investment, it is possible to invest it in higher risk assets (*guilt-free money*: 'You can blow it if you want' [IP36_MI_M_41])

To achieve saving goals for the *spoken for money* category and restrict consumption, as suggested by Clark (2012), interviewees tend to run additional accounts and transfer money automatically into a fixed, non-accessible savings product: 'I like to pay into my savings account £1000 a month, I put into the joint account £600 a month, what's left is for me' (IP42_MI_F_24). This might be for instance an account where it 'is actually a bit a pain in the arse to get to' due to having to 'send an email request off for the money and it might take five days for them to enact it' (IP40_MI_M_43). Moreover, savings products are chosen where you would lose money when taking out part of the savings earlier than the agreed time period ('I can pull it out if I have to but if I do it now, it would have been at a loss' [IP31_MI_F_50]). By taking out fixed savings products, it is made sure that this money is distinguished from everyday money, even leading to forgetting about it: 'I didn't really think about the money for 5 years, because that was the whole point.' (IP14_MI_F_65).

While fixed saving accounts⁴⁸ are helpful in restricting one's spending and being able to accumulate savings for future investments, households at the same time emphasize that they need to be able to access emergency money in case of needing it, for instance for paying for a house repair ('even though I am not renting anymore, I'd have to repair what goes wrong' [IP31_MI_F_50]) or car repair, hence, having access to rainy day funds: 'I needed to be able to access it whenever I needed to because if something went wrong with my car or you know something happened' (IP45_MI_F_27). For this purpose, semi-accessible savings accounts ('it's a bit more fluid, so you're able to access it a little bit easier' [IP56_MI_M_34]) or separate accounts are used for rainy day funds ('wanting the money away from the current account, so just keeping it separate' [IP59_MI_F_32]). The two functions of savings briefly outlined in 6.3.1, saving for short-term security (rainy day funds) and saving for long-term security (asset accumulation), have thus led to a dichotomy between wanting to be liquid in case of emergencies or changes in the circumstances and locking money away.

After having secured the *spoken for money* through semi-accessible and long-term savings accounts, additional *guilt-free* money can be invested in riskier assets. Riskier investments are identified as investments in addition to the three categories identified in the three-pronged asset strategy, namely bonds and stocks and shares (as discussed in 5.2.3). The number of households who currently hold bonds is relatively seen high (15.6%) in comparison to UK households (9% of households). Concerning stocks and shares, households who came in touch with them tend to either be high income households ('very much on the basis that I can afford to, obviously don't wanna lose but can afford to lose' [IP23_HI_M_32]) or have inherited shares ('my sister and my brother and myself inherited some shares' [IP08_HI_M_65]) or hold company shares ('We could also buy shares at the time within the company' [IP17_MI_F_43]).

⁴⁸ Despite not coming through in the balance sheets as households tend to have listed only overall savings rather than separating them into exact financial products, the interview statements are taken as evidence.

To sum up, since incorporating risk is associated with losing money, it is emphasized that it is essential to have a certain level of security. As a consequence, households divide the asset account into *spoken for money* and *guilt-free money*. The *spoken for money* is based on the before presented three-pronged asset strategy and risky investments are only undertaken if there is sufficient ‘guilt-free’ money available which one could afford to lose:

The risk if you've got the money, it doesn't matter so much. But if you don't have the money, then that might be the difference between you keeping or losing your house [...] if I was on £50,000, £60,000 a year, and we had everything paid for and you've got this money burning a hole in your pocket, you speculate, don't you? And you have a bit of fun doing it and it's like a hobby. But I don't think I could do it to make money, no. (IP36_MI_M_41)

In an effort to conform to asset norms, households adopt self-governing measures including conducting investments according to the earmarked category and setting up fixed, long-term savings product and semi-accessible accounts.

6.4.2 Self-disciplining Consumption Strategies

As discussed above, to achieve asset norms, households’ budget with the help of spending and asset categories. Whereas the former section has concentrated on the asset category by implementing self-disciplining saving measures, this section explores the spending category. Contrary to ‘privileging current consumption over future consumption’ (Clark, 2012, p. 1192), the fear of an uncertain future is driving interviewees to lead a non-materialistic lifestyle, emphasizing that: ‘You should be able to discipline yourself, you [I] need to think a little bit longer term’ (IP41_MI_M_28). In the interest of ‘deferring [defer] the sort of richness today to look for the future’ (IP04_HI_F_59), the spending category is divided into essential (e.g. food, clothing, council tax, house insurance, medical bills) and non-essential spending (e.g. expensive holidays and clothes, cars). This categorization into non-essential and essential spending, attaches meaning to the categories in two distinct ways.

First, non-essential spending is to be avoided. Almost all interviewees (45 out of 55 households) give priority to amassing property and financial wealth instead of using money on ‘frivolous’ lifestyles in the form of buying ‘flash technology’ (IP21_MI_M_65) or an expensive car even when being able to afford a more luxurious car (‘we don’t drive Mercedes or any Ferarri some things like this, we drive Hyundais’ [IP18_HI_F_46]).

[...] I have a nice car but I wouldn’t spend thirty thousand on it. You know it’s that kind of, why would you do that rather than buying a house [...] it will not earn you money back on it, so sort of almost limit how much you spend on it. (IP56_MI_M_34)

Here, non-essential spending shares characteristics with risky investments, i.e. *guilt-free money*. Holidays as one-time events fall into the category ‘free money’ as this can only be done after essentials are secured (‘we don’t do big holidays, we would rather put money aside’ [IP18_HI_F_46]) and are cut when there is uncertainty (‘decided not to have a holiday [...] post Brexit I thought I get a bit conservative’ [IP11_MI_M_43]). Furthermore, when having made money from an asset rather than having earned it through hard work, it can be spent on non-essential spending:

I made that money myself from an asset, so I don’t need to put that into the running of the house or vet’s bills or whatever. I can actually just say *Right, that’s it. I’m going to go out and buy something to eat or something, and not feel bad about it.* (IP36_MI_M_41)

Second, households reduce essential spending and emphasize the need to ‘live cost effectively rather than spend money on unnecessary brands’ [IP18_HI_F_46] because ‘if you don’t spend money, it accumulates’ (IP14_MI_F_65). Specific events such as saving for a house result in a further reduction of lifestyle factors. ‘To get the house that they [we] wanted’ (IP09_HI_F_50), households restrict themselves in their everyday life, for instance through ‘just eating beans’ (IP07_HI_F_50) for a whole week or relying on the ‘parents’

plastic garden furniture’ and ‘mattresses on the floor’ because of ‘having no money for furniture’ (IP09_HI_F_50). In case of wanting to own a buy-to-let property as source of retirement income, some households even live themselves in a shared accommodation while paying off the mortgage with money made on renting out the house:

I bought a second property because I wanted my retirement fund [...] I'm renting just a room in a flat [...] I think because I've also in the past when I first bought my first flat in Hastings, when I said I paid £98,000, I was only earning 20-something thousand a year. That was huge mortgage for me and the only way I felt comfortable was to rent out. (IP17_MI_F_43)

The desire to own assets results in developing a budget which even becomes integrated into one's own reasoning, being proud of having achieved to restrict oneself in spending:

We would budget to see if we could buy a house or something that could be used as a means to generate some money [...] look at everything that we spend in a year and then allocate what we think is there like the bare minimum that you can spend but also give yourself a bit of a buffer because sometimes, you know, you do so well, sometimes you might think, or I don't know, that jumper is really nice but I've allocated myself this amount of money and if I buy that I'm going over a little bit. But sometimes it's nice to be able to do that rather than thinking constantly I can't, it's nice not to spend money as well but it's quite nice to sometimes think [...] if I really, really wanted to I could get jumper [...] (IP10_MI_F_44)

This statement exemplifies two things. First, self-governing measures are adopted to discipline consumption. One way of keeping a budget is earmarking spending money further (Zelizer, 1997), thus, categorizing essential (‘bills account’) and non-essential spending (‘fun account’) through different bank accounts and restricting the non-essential spending.

I have my main account that my wages come into and all my bills go out of and then I have another account which I call like my fun account, so some of my wages I got a standing

order. So I transfer a set amount of money into the social account and I know if I wanna go out for dinner with my friends or, you know, whatever it has to come out of that account and if I get to the end of the month and there is no money in that account, I can't go out. I can't do the fun things. (IP45_MI_F_27)

This concept is extended in partnerships by separating joint account (bills account) and personal account (fun and saving account). Second, reward systems are set up to motivate oneself, for instance through buying something that is not necessarily needed but wanted or being frivolous and generous to others: 'my sister's got kids, and I just like to blow loads of money on them' (IP51_HI_F_36).

In addition to budgeting, households emphasized the need to keep track of spending:

I itemized everything in a spreadsheet from all the cards, just everything, just so I can see. And I've started totalling some of that up and things just like parking at the hospital since June has cost me £80, just for different appointments and things. I just can't believe some of it [...] things that you think are just little two or three pounds (IP31_MI_F_50)

For some spreadsheets are a helpful tool to evaluate the current situation and identify spending categories which need to be reduced. For others, spreadsheets are too laborious ('I need a system that's really quick') and they switched to a different approach, for instance using a blackboard noting down the daily expenses: 'I know, I won't do, I won't sit down every night with a computer and fill out spreadsheets but if it's something that is really visual I am really quick than I am more likely to do it' (IP26_MI_F_50). Also, different financial products in the form of cash cards or credit cards are used:

Daniel has his current account his wages are paid into and then he moves money over to his cash card and then he pays for, so he always has to move money throughout the whole month you know which sort of makes him keep tabs on his money. (IP41_MI_F_28)

Overall households show a different type of consumption behaviour as envisaged by the everyday literature. Contrary to the assumption that households conduct debt-financed consumption as discussed in 2.2.2, they follow a ‘no-debt’ ethic identified as not taking on debt except for accumulation purposes. This strategy questions the relative income hypothesis where households emulate the higher income group (Belabed et al., 2013). Interviewed households emphasize that they do not aspire to own ‘flashy’ goods, instead, they prefer to spend the money on asset accumulation rather than consumption. Consumption is thus not only reduced or increased by debt commitments, their respective level of interest rates and the resulting wage residual (Bryan et al., 2009), but also based on norms of asset ownership. Interviewees implement self-disciplining measures to achieve asset norms. With the help of earmarking the asset category into *spoken for* and *guilt-free money* and the spending category into essential and non-essential spending, households force themselves to save and restrict their consumption. These self-governing measures result in performing the everyday risk manager subjectivity. Asset norms thus exert ‘power over life’ (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p. 57) by impacting saving and consumption behaviour.

6.4.3 Interaction between Finance and Caring

After having seen the self-disciplining practices which households employ when performing the financialized subject position of the everyday risk manager, the iterative relationship between economic and social relationships is explored (as introduced in 2.5.3). Not only do asset norms impact directly on saving and consumption behaviour, but also transform further social practices in the case of caring. Caring is understood here in a wider sense by providing support in achieving asset ownership, i.e. using relationships in connection with return maximizing strategies to help younger households. There is a strong awareness of institutional changes with the older generation feeling ‘very privileged’ (IP06_HI_F_79) based on having benefitted from house price increases, better pensions and stable jobs:

We're, the baby boomers, who have done pretty well out of having regular jobs in the past, having plenty of employment (IP28_MI_M_62) It's like young people who are going to struggle and I think it's people like me that have had these gilt edged pensions, a final year salary schemes, I mean I couldn't have hoped for better (IP48_HI_M_58)

This results in social relationships interacting with economic relationships.

Caring helps the younger generation to achieve asset norms in an indirect way. An underlying theme in the discussion surrounding human capital has been the importance of being able to increase it through education ('I had a very good education which enabled me to get a good job' [IP08_HI_M_65]), emphasizing the limitations in not having a degree ('glass ceiling [...] it's impossible to get there in terms of promotions because at that point, I didn't have a degree' [IP36_MI_M_41]). Due to rising student fees and less availability of maintenance grants, as depicted in Section 4.2.3, parents support their children's studies either by financing living costs and rent ('help him out with living expenses' [IP11_MI_M_42]) or 'help her start paying off her student loan when she leaves' (IP40_MI_M_43). The extent to which parents can help their children is however negatively affected by rising tuition fees which lead to savings not being sufficient:

I saved all my child benefit [...] and I thought that would cover his tuition fees [...] and then the tuition fees went from 3 grand to 9⁴⁹ so that got blown out of the water (IP20_MI_F_58)

Likewise, parents from all kind of different backgrounds want to make sure that they provide financial security to their children directly. Whereas the bequest motive in the form of wanting to give onto the children is not a new phenomenon (Zelizer, 2011), the scope and purpose of the traditional bequest motive is modified. The traditional bequest motive relied

⁴⁹ As shown in 4.2.3, tuition fees were first introduced in 1998 and then substantially increased in 2012.

on affluent families passing on their assets and therefore, deepening existing wealth and income inequalities. In contrast, ‘inheritance is now relevant to the majority of families’ (Finch and Mason, 2000, p. 2) based on wider homeownership. The findings from the interviews show that this argument needs to be extended further to include overall asset ownership based on parents helping children to achieve asset ownership as discussed subsequently. Interviewees provide help for their children with regards to the three main aspects of asset ownership: save for a house, buy a house and pension provisions.

First, parents take over a carer role by helping their children indirectly to put up a house deposit due to realizing the inequality between generations: ‘in the early 1990s, the houses were 40 50 60 thousand pounds [...] and my son is looking at £180,000’ (IP11_MI_M_42). Several younger interview participants mentioned moving back with their parents with the purpose to save enough for a house deposit (‘so we decided that we wanted to buy we moved home again for six months with our respective parents’ [IP41_MI_F_29]). Even in the case of asking children to pay rent, the rent is decreased in order to be able to save:

[...] had the conversation with my Mum and Dad: *You know, I wanna move out, I wanna have my own place, I need to save up for it.* So there I was paying them rent anyway, so they say: *Well you pay us like less than you would do if you were gonna go and rent somewhere and then you, you save the rest of your wages and stuff.* (IP45_MI_F_27)

When not being able to save enough, they also act as a guarantor for children to get on the property ladder (‘we had to help them by guaranteeing the mortgage’ [IP09_HI_F_50]).

Second, parents help children directly through gifting (‘obviously from gifting from our parents, and then we took out a mortgage with our salaries’ [IP35_MI_F_26]) or lending money (‘we’d saved a bit of money for a mortgage anyway and we borrowed some money, my Mum gave us some’ IP36_MI_M_41]). This has also been recognized by previous

studies where it is emphasized that younger households suffer from rising house prices, for instance in 2009 80% of first-time buyers had to rely on family support to put up a house deposit (McKee, 2011). In some cases, it led to integrating their own inheritance to help ('I had inheritance from my mother [...] topped up my two sons and gave 10,000 to each of my grandchildren, purely to use towards deposit for the house' [IP19_MI_F_73]).

Third, parents plan tax efficient inheritance with the purpose of increasing children's investments and pension pot for retirement:

[Dad speaking directly to child] I remember when I was in Scotland and you made a statement that you never have a pension and my reply to you was I provide you a pension. Do you remember? Well you have a pension now. (IP53_MI_M_77)

This includes strategies for maximizing inheritance income, for example, by setting up a company ('effectively they own them now so there will be no inheritance tax issues [...] they own the company outright' [IP60_HI_M_55]), gifting children during the life time ('They want us to have the money and use the money now and see where it goes, rather than giving us the money when they passed away.' [IP29_MI_F_25]) and investing money during the life time to help children with pension provisions ('I've made several investments for children and grandchildren in a variety of things' [IP13_HI_M_76]).

Interestingly, this takes place in a two-way direction as children also calculate inheritance income into their asset strategy ('I'd be totally brutal my parents have a few quid' [IP02_MI_F_48]). Instead of feeling uncomfortable about receiving help from family or an inheritance as shown by Heath and Calvert (2013) or Durat and Ronald (2017), households partly rely on this income ('my grandparents are still alive [...] so you sort of know at some point we may end up with another 50 60 70 thousand pounds' [IP56_HI_M_34]) and calculate inheritance income into a future pension income:

My parents have assets and they don't really have a mortgage and their house is probably worth 400 500 thousand and there is only me and my brother. So my hope would be when they shuffle off the old coil that that will almost be a partial of my retirement. [...] you don't wish for it but the reality is probably some time in the next 20 years when I'm thinking about getting to retirement age [...] I got that in the back of my mind (IP40_MI_M_43)

This money is then earmarked as *spoken for money* and should not be wasted or invested in risky assets: 'Me investing in – if I invest so much money – like the money that my granddad gives me into something that loses all of the money. I would feel awe.' (IP29_MI_F_25).

The concept of mutually generative relationships between economic and social relationships by Zelizer (2011, 2012), outlined in 2.5.3, becomes clear in the form of caring discussed here. Social relationships are productive in transforming economic relationships by using relationships to achieve asset ownership. This side of the caring role is, however, becoming ever more difficult because of having less old-age security which is needed in conducting intergenerational transfers (Rowlingson, 2006). Similarly, economic relationships are productive in transforming social relationships by changing the perception of inheritance.

6.4.4 Intensification of Disciplinary Technology of Labour

Having seen how asset norms embed themselves in family relationships, in the following it is discussed how asset norms exert power over work relationships. The subject position of the everyday risk manager draws on notions of hard work ('We work very hard and as for myself, for what we want' [IP32_HI_M_65]) and discipline leading to financial reward in contrast to making fast money ('I would still probably prefer to work harder with a few risks rather than take loads of risks' [IP11_MI_F_42]). Contrary to the policy discourse which depicts being a hard-working citizen and an everyday investor as the opportunity to become an everyday capitalist (see 4.3.1), households distance themselves from 'money people':

[...] money people keep coming with wonderful schemes somehow which are gonna produce magical income and millions of pounds, just like that, without me doing anything at all and we know damn well nothing comes without hard work (IP21_MI_M_65)

In the case of not having earned the wealth ‘through any hard work of my own’ (IP14_MI_F_65), it does not feel right (‘more comfortable than we’ve ever been, it doesn’t seem right’ [IP21_MI_F_65]) and asset ownership is assigned to luck (‘I have to say I’m well off [...] I’ve been lucky to have been able to accumulate money’ [IP14_MI_F_65]). Being a landlord and making profit on other people’s income in order to earn pension income can lead to a conflict where the subject position of the everyday risk manager needs to be justified by emphasizing that one worked hard for it: ‘I am embarrassed, almost embarrassed by the fact that I am okay [...] but I did work quite hard for it’ (IP17_MI_F_43). As discussed in 5.2.2, households position themselves as passive subjects who have no choice than to invest, for example, by taking in a lodger because of not being able to finance it.

[...] we are hard-working people, we can pay a mortgage, there is no doubt about it, what we did, we took in a lodger, it’s an old-fashion way, isn’t it, taken someone else they’re pay off your mortgage [...] we didn’t have any choice (IP03_MI_M_52)

To comply with asset norms, households bind themselves closer to work in three ways.

First, work hours are increased with the goal to accumulate sufficient assets. Young households want to get through university as fast as possible, find a job and then increase work hours to secure savings: ‘I’d rather just be working and earning the most amount of money so that I can prepare for the future now’ (IP42_HI_F_24). In some cases wanting to achieve financial security has led to locking away too much money and as a result of this having to pick up more working hours (‘we work a lot, don’t we?’ [IP41_MI_F_28]):

It was a lock away ISA but I probably shouldn't have locked away that much money at the time because obviously we were still in a flat at the time. We weren't struggling in like we couldn't feed ourselves but I just had to pick up a lot more hours (IP41_MI_M_28)

As shown above, to finance a house is the second guiding principle here ('I work to pay the mortgage, so if I didn't have to pay the mortgage then I would not need to work so much' [IP25_MI_F_50]). Due to rising job insecurity, households put more pressure on themselves to pay off its finance as fast as possible: 'Every month, the mortgage gets cheaper, so that if we were to find ourselves unemployed, our monthly burden would be lighter for overpaying. That's why we do it, because no one's jobs are secure.' (IP36_MI_M_41). A similar aspect can be seen in the case of pensions where work hours are increased with the goal of setting aside sufficient pension provisions: 'We just work loads of hours, lots of weekends [...] basically anything extra we can pick up [to] be able to retire in normal age' (IP41_MI_F_28). The rise in work hours is either accomplished with the help of the main job or a side job.

Second, as discussed in 6.3.2 income diversification is adopted. To mitigate the impact of uncertain work contracts on the ability to conduct investments (Langley, 2007), households develop different strategies to secure an income flow at all times such as setting up a business aside the main job as back-up plan, thus, increasing the workload and pressure on themselves ('our savings are jumping quite quick because we're working hard [...] had a part-time job' [IP02_MI_F_48]). In case of difficulties, some interviewees emphasize that they are resilient ('I think I'm pretty resilient' [IP14_MI_F_65]) and look for a job quickly ('my fall back would be to get another job quickly' [IP10_MI_F_44]) independent of liking the job or not:

I don't feel like we're in danger of losing the house or anything like that and I feel like even if, even if I had to change jobs if one of my jobs stopped or something I feel like I could get another job you know I'd do anything whatever I am not proud I don't mind (IP26_MI_F_50)

Others calculate in the redundancy bonus before making the decision to leave, even if not liking the work: ‘I just thought I get my redundancy now which is what I did but yeah I hated the last year’ (IP31_MI_F_50). The redundancy is also used to live on until a new income source is found (‘I’m going to be using my redundancy money but when that runs out I can then at 55 start to draw on my pensions’ [IP60_HI_M_55]) and to accumulate assets: ‘He had a significant lump sum that came from departing [...] that was really significant because we had considered building our own house on another couple of occasions’ (IP04_HI_F_59).

Third, work is selected based on being able to fulfil asset norms. Less interesting jobs are chosen because of offering more work hours and having a better pay which will help building up pension savings and provide for the family: ‘really interesting but such a low pay [...]’. They were desperate for me to stay but again I just couldn’t afford’ (IP31_MI_F_50). Work is selected based on higher income, even leading to a career change from an occupation they were interested in (photographer) and studied to an occupation which provides sufficient income for asset accumulation (teacher): ‘I would have loved to have gotten a job in doing something creative but I knew I wanted to obviously move out and have a house’ (IP45_MI_F_27). In addition to focusing on income, the possibility to be promoted is taken into consideration since this as well is assumed to lead to a higher income in the end: ‘Something else as well which was on my mind at the time [...] it was very few people that got to move up to the six senior positions’ (IP36_MI_M_41).

Even though households earn higher incomes through being promoted or choosing a job based on income, the higher income levels are connected to working hard: ‘you have to earn the money that they’re paying’ (IP39_MI_F_36) since ‘nothing comes without hard work’ (IP21_MI_M_65). It is used as a hedge against potential redundancy by helping the company to succeed and ensuring to keep the job in case of difficulties: ‘Well work as much as I can,

I guess, I just have to make sure I keep working hard and I still have my job because nothing's guaranteed, so I wouldn't wanna get sacked' (IP35_MI_F_26). Interviewees seem to draw a connection between providing hard work and earning the rewards for such ('because we worked hard at it and maybe sacrificed certain things we are in that position that, you know, if push comes to shove you know we would be alright' [IP44_HI_F_58]).

The above presented analysis adds a new dimension to the discussion surrounding the interaction between labour relations and asset norms. Asset accumulation in itself, rather than only debt commitments (Karacimen, 2015), intensifies the discipline from labour, thus, strengthening capital-labour inequalities. Going back to the argument that households show similarities to capitalists through accumulating assets (Bryan et al., 2009; Weiss, 2014), it is argued here that asset norms should rather be understood as power technology, i.e. strengthening existing power relationships incorporated in capital-labour inequalities. By 'trying to make an additional security for the future' (IP11_MI_M_42), households employ technologies of the self in the form of increasing work hours, choosing a job solely based on income and making sure to work hard. The interaction between the regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms thus, on the one hand, constructs the everyday risk manager and on the other hand the resultant asset norms intensify the disciplinary technology of power. An everyday risk manager lives the paradox of being called upon to incorporate characteristics of capitalists while at the same time being disciplined through asset accumulation.

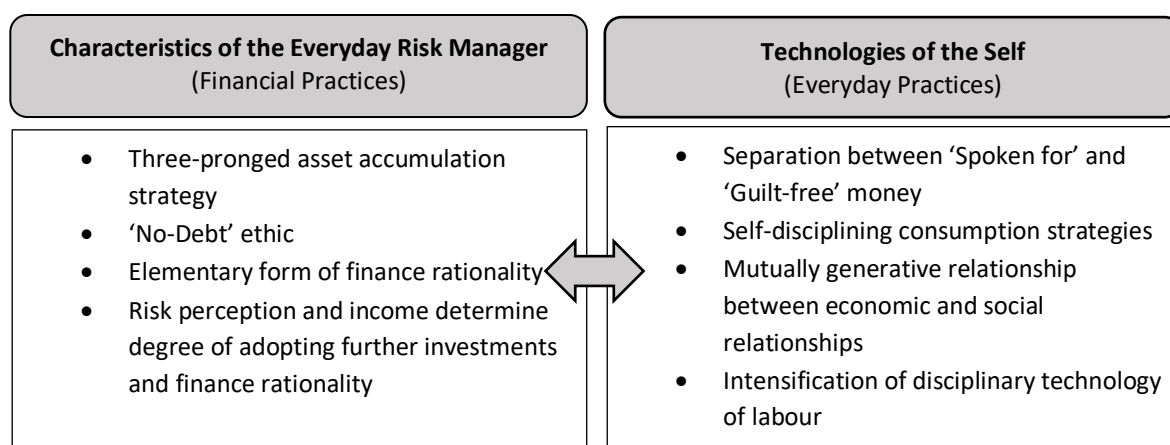
6.5 Concluding Remarks and Summary

While Chapter 4 provided insights into the context level of analysis, i.e. insights into how institutional changes and media discourses construct asset norms (macro-level) and Chapter 5 has then revealed how these outside forces shape the discourses of households (meso-level), this chapter illustrated the practice level of analysis. In other words, it outlined the

effects of these discourses and institutional changes on households' financial practices (answering sub-research question iii.) and their impact on everyday life (answering sub-research question iv.). The particular focus lay on identifying what it means to be an everyday risk manager. By having thematically analysed the interview data and combined it with survey data from the WAS, it was possible to not only contribute to the discussion surrounding a financialized subject position (see 2.3.2) but also to the discussion concerning households becoming capitalists and non-capitalists at the same time (see 2.3.1).

The empirical findings detected here suggest that households do adopt a financialized subject position, reflected in financial and everyday practices (see Figure 19). Households translate asset norms, constructed through the interplay of regulatory (normalization) and disciplinary mechanism (normation), into a three-pronged asset strategy consisting of savings, homeownership and pension provisions (see 6.3.1). To be able to achieve asset ownership, they adopt an elementary form of diversification and hedge against potential income or wealth losses (see 6.3.2 and 6.3.4). Moreover, debt is avoided with the exception of debt for accumulation purposes, for instance a mortgage. These three aspects represent the financial characteristics of the everyday risk manager as interpreted by households.

Figure 19 Being an Everyday Risk Manager



To achieve asset norms, technologies of the self are adopted and asset norms enter everyday practices. Self-governing measures are incorporated in four distinct ways (see 6.4): using financial products to force oneself to save, living a non-materialistic lifestyle, using relationships as an enabler to achieve asset norms, and binding oneself closer to work. Hence, macro-discourses have entered micro-practices through financial practices and self-governing measures reflected in everyday practices (Figure 19). The everyday risk manager thus adopts asset norms and employs new forms of self-governance to achieve these.

These empirical insights allow me to extend the theorization of the everyday investor. Rather than conforming to the identity by developing a portfolio of financial assets (Langley, 2006b), the everyday risk manager accumulates financial and non-financial assets. Here, investing in property is not a deviation from a financialized subject position, but it is part of the everyday risk manager subject. Not only does the policy discourse include the asset-based welfare character of the house (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.2) but also interviewed households view the home as an investment. Nevertheless, household financial practices deviate from the asset norms created in the media. While the media calls on households to include stocks and shares, bonds and unit trusts into their asset strategy, households' asset strategy includes savings, pensions and homeownership (*spoken for money*) and further investments (*guilt-free money*) are only conducted when having fulfilled this three-pronged asset strategy. Second, instead of adopting financial strategies in the traditional sense of establishing an asset portfolio, households adopt an elementary form of diversification and hedging including managed products and insurances rather than calculating an optimum level of risk and return and constructing the relationship between assets accordingly.

Moreover, it is revealed how the disciplinary technology of power not only constructs asset norms (see Chapter 4) but is also deepened by asset norms. It has been argued in the policy

discourse, as also in the literature (see 2.3.1) that households adopt characteristics of capitalists through accumulating assets and employing finance rationality (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). The empirical insights, however, have shown that rather than these similarities leading to households becoming capitalists and non-capitalists at the same time (Bryan et al., 2009), practices of the everyday risk manager reinforce existing power relationships.

First, the economic background privileges some economic agents more than others in adopting capitalists' characteristics. While middle income households are unique in their dependence on housing and managed pension wealth, high income households have access to high-yielding financial assets including stocks and shares, and rely on diversified pension and property portfolios (see 6.2.3). The difference in balance sheet structures thus result in an increase of medium income households' risk. Second, the above discussed technologies of the self reveal how the 'real subsumption of society within capital' takes place through incorporating social life itself rather than 'solely' labour in the capitalist accumulation (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p. 142). Asset norms discipline practices in everyday life including everyday spaces of consumption, relationships and work. Households are thus governed and govern themselves based on becoming an everyday risk manager – resulting in an iterative relationship between power relationships and everyday practices. Perhaps most importantly here is that medium and high income households alike adopt self-governing measures.

Interestingly, households internalize asset norms resulting in restrictions in everyday life despite emphasizing that 'the future it's just sort of this thing in the cloud, isn't it, really nobody knows what the future is gonna be' (IP20_MI_F_58). Hence, the question remains why households aim to accumulate assets. Analysing governmental reasoning therefore needs to 'identify the ways in which processes of ideology and power find their way into the little stories of everyday life.' (Parker, 2015, p.140) which is discussed in the next section.

7 Dimensions of Household Financial Identity

7.1 Introduction

Having seen the impact of contextual factors in the form of mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization on households' discourses (Chapter 5) and practices (Chapter 6), this chapter sheds light on the way households negotiate the subject position of the everyday risk manager. These previous chapters have revealed how macro-level discourses are translated into everyday discourses and how through self-governing measures households perform the subject position of the everyday risk manager. This chapter now deepens the language level of analysis and illuminates mechanisms of resistance. It thus contributes to the sub-research question v. and reveals how households position themselves and unveils how far interviewed households resist asset norms. The missing part of the micro-level analysis (see methodological frame in Figure 6 in 3.4.2) is therefore illustrated here.

Running through the discussion presented in the last two chapters is an omnipresence of a critical view of finance and finance people: 'the big managers and the college people, they can speculate with our money on the stock market and make theirselves big bonuses' (IP53_MI_M_77)'. This was shown on the one hand in discursive practices outlined in 5.2.2 where a discourse of non-agency is adopted to smooth the contradiction between accumulating assets and criticising the profit-seeking behaviour of financial institutions. On the other hand, 6.4.4 revealed that households' practices in the form of making sure to work hard is used to distance themselves from the money people who speculate with other people's money. As can be seen here, in both instances households draw implicitly on an everyday investor subject who is personifying the financial person. For this reason, this construction of the everyday investor as the 'other' subject from whom one needs to distinguish oneself is explored. This is essential because discursive resistances towards the everyday investor shape the everyday risk manager subjectivity.

Moreover, going back to the ambiguities presented in the literature (see 2.3.2) in the form of not being able to calculate away uncertainty and a financialized subject position contradicting everyday identities in the form of the worker, this chapter focuses on how households deal with these ambiguities by developing distinct asset accumulation strategies. It is recognized here that while subjectivity is always influenced by the environment one lives in, this is not deterministic in constructing household financial identities. Far from fully succumbing to asset norms, households negotiate the subject position of the everyday risk manager, resulting in unique dimensions of household financial identity. These dimensions of household financial identity are understood here as representing ‘differential normalities’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 91), i.e. different ways of achieving asset accumulation. By outlining levels of normalities, a further gap identified in the literature is addressed (as identified in 2.4), namely acknowledging that there are not uniform financial subjectivities and illuminating ‘diverse economic subjectivities’ (Coppock, 2013, p. 496).

The chapter is organized as follows. Section 7.2 focuses first on intradiscursive dependencies (as outlined in the methodological framework in 3.4.2), i.e. the construction of financial concepts and asset ownership in households’ discourses. In particular, the engagement with the subject position of the everyday investor and its influence on the everyday risk manager subjectivity is explored (7.2.1 and 7.2.2). These intradiscursive concepts are then followed by outlining interdiscursive dependencies in the form of contradictions between everyday identities and a financialized identity (7.2.3) and interdiscursive dependencies between the financial discourse and a relational discourse (7.2.4). Finally, in 7.3 I shall argue that households’ negotiation of the subject position of the everyday risk manager results in different dimensions of financial identity. The chapter concludes by bringing together the insights gained from the micro-level discourse analysis.

7.2 Negotiating the Subject Position of the Everyday Risk Manager

After having seen how the interplay between institutional changes and discourses impact households' discourses and practices, this section focuses on the micro-level discourse analysis and shows how households negotiate the internalization of a financialized subject position. The contradictory role between being expected to accumulate assets to provide for the future while criticising the profit-seeking behaviour of financial institutions transforms intra- (concepts expressed within a discourse) and interdiscursive (relationships between discourses) dependencies.

7.2.1 Discursive Retelling of Finance? Positioning as Everyday Risk Manager

According to viewpoints discussed in finance theory as outlined in 2.3, households are expected to absorb 'investor identities' to mitigate future risks (Langley, 2006b, p. 923). In Section 4.3.3, it was then illuminated how the media constructs an entrepreneurial discourse calling on households to adopt asset norms and through this become everyday risk managers. Rather than establishing the everyday investor as someone who accumulates financial assets (as expected by finance theory), it contextualises the everyday risk manager as someone who accumulates financial and non-financial assets including the house but also stocks and shares, incorporates financial strategies to achieve asset ownership and avoids debt except for purposes of asset accumulation. Interestingly, households position themselves against the financial person who, according to interviewees, is personified in the everyday investor subjectivity, investing in financial assets and taking on risky assets. Instead, as shown in 6.4.4, they identify themselves as hard workers who take on less risk. As a consequence, this rejection of the everyday investor culminates in reshaping the everyday risk manager subjectivity established in the media. This form of discursive positioning is first discussed here in relation to the employment of financial terms and then in relation to a natural inclination of being a financial or non-financial person (7.2.2).

Interviewees describe assets as having an ‘inherent value’ (IP23_HI_M_32) which is related to anything that is ‘economic’ (IP44_HI_F_58) or ‘monetary’ (IP45_MI_F_27), i.e. anything which ‘has money worth’ (IP37_MI_F_29). A recurring figure of speech used here is ‘something that appreciates and puts money in my pocket’ (IP27_MI_F_59) ‘or into my account. An asset, an asset to me it has the word written on it, it’s money into my account’ (IP57_MI_F_50). By using metaphors, for instance ‘it has the potential to sort of wash its face’ (IP12_HI_F_59), the normalization of an appreciating value (‘anything that increases in value’ [IP25_MI_F_51]) generating income for the future becomes clear. Rather than acknowledging the depreciating feature of an asset (‘if it’s not deteriorating’ [IP12_HI_F_59]), the focus lies on the investment side of assets.

However, when being asked directly how households would define an investment, they equate investments with financial investments, in particular stocks and shares: ‘I don’t really have any investments, you know, I don’t really have stocks and shares and all of those kind of things’ (IP56_HI_M_34). In contrast to an asset which is ‘something solid’ which you are able to see (‘It’s something you can see and it exists’ [IP17_MI_F_43]), investments are established as being distant (‘something externally managed’ [IP56_HI_M_34]) and incorporating risk (‘investment is risk’ [IP18_MI_F_46]). By using metaphors such as ‘I don’t have a shit load of money to invest’ [IP25_MI_F_51]), the difference between the everyday investor and the risk manager becomes clear. Households identify themselves as everyday risk manager and distance themselves from the everyday investor: ‘I don’t consider myself to be an investor, you know, to be earning enough to be you know like thinking about that really’ (IP50_MI_F_42).

As a result, discursive strategies are employed to overcome the contradiction of investing and using financial products despite being critical of financial institutions. Whereas interview participants mention that they have an insurance which would step in and pay off

the mortgage, they do not identify these as a form of mortgage protection insurance since mortgage protection schemes are portrayed as scam.

I guess all this stuff is kinda a payment protection insurance, in a way, I don't think of it as that. My mortgage has a decreasing life term against it. So if I die, it will just basically, it won't be a lump sum to my wife but it will just pay the mortgage off. But I figure that I don't see that as PPI because those things only kick in if I die or seriously debilitate at which point they're not gonna argue the case that I made myself voluntarily dead. (IP40_MI_M_43)

Households thus distance themselves discursively from financial investments and products which have become a routine in daily life ('I'm very anti-insurance' [IP53_MI_M_77]).

By adopting the subject position of the everyday risk manager rather than the everyday investor, a distinction is made between accumulating assets to make money to live a comfortable life ('it's important to have enough to be able to live comfortably' [IP23_HI_M_32]) and accumulating assets to improve 'social standing' (Langley, 2007, p. 77) as in the case of the everyday investor ('We're not enthusiast about making more money, for instance, you know we'd rather, we're happy where we are' [IP21_MI_F_65]). While 'you have to make your money work' [IP34_HI_F_55]), emphasis is placed not on growing further but keeping the achieved level of wealth ('having enough money to be happy and comfortable but actually beyond that not to be bothered really' [IP23_HI_M_32]). Drawing on affirmative words ('naturally') and rhetorical speech ('thank you very much') the normal behaviour of not being too ambitious is outlined:

I'm quite comfortable, thank you very much. I'm very happy with that. I'm not -- definitely got billions or millions or even hundreds of thousands but I've got enough for me to live the lifestyle that I want. Now I can't buy a new car every few years but then naturally that doesn't interest me. (IP19_MI_F_73)

The repetition of ‘comfortable’ and contrasting it to a ‘millionaire’ as opposite emerged as discursive pattern in households’ statements. Money is defined as being there to provide independence but one should not be greedy:

I think money is-- I don't know. Money is there to enhance your life I guess. That's why I invested in my house, on my car, on my kitchen. But I'm not the sort of person where like *Oh I want to be a millionaire, I want all the money.* I just want enough money to be comfortable. [...] I think money is just a way of keeping you—you shouldn't be greedy for it, do you know what I mean? I don't think it's the be all and end all. (IP29_MI_F_25)

Asset accumulation is seen as a necessity which does not bring happiness aside from providing financial security (‘In an end in itself, it doesn’t serve purpose’ [IP58_HI_M_50]).

The statement above further shows the pervasiveness of asset norms based on adopting the discourse of investing (‘I invested in my house’) without necessarily being aware of it. The house is described as an investment property rather than home (‘We will sell our current property at the beginning of next year and move there’ [IP08_HI_M_65]) and improvements such as ‘putting new double glazers’ are expressed as ‘an investment in the home really more than anything’ (IP44_HI_F_58). Whereas the house and pensions (‘you need your pension as an investment’ [IP17_MI_F_43]) are constructed as investments, further financial investments, for instance stocks and shares, are rejected. This construction of the everyday risk manager deviates from the media discourse by not only excluding stocks and shares investment but also by not aiming to fulfil dreams, instead wanting to establish security.

7.2.2 Enabler and Constraints of the Everyday Risk Manager

Having established the difference between everyday investor and everyday risk manager in households’ discursive construction of investments, enabler and constraints of their speaking positions are explored. As outlined in 3.4.1 discursive formations are constituted not only

through what unites them but also through an ‘exclusion governing discourse’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 11). This includes to ‘know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything’ (Foucault, 1972, p.216) and the marginalisation of others, distinguishing between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Both aspects can be seen in enabling or constraining households’ speaking positions.

Similar to the personalization strategy adopted in the media discourse where finance is framed as rarely coming naturally and requiring efforts (as discussed in 4.3.4), a dichotomy between a financial and an ordinary person emerges in interviewees’ discourses. Households speaking from the subject position of the everyday investor, i.e. a financial person, see dealing with finance as natural (‘it’s just part of our brain’ [IP12_HI_F_59]) and enjoyment.

[...] so we always get the FT weekend and on Sunday morning, we always sit down and look at our shares and decide whether we keep them or sell them or when we’ve going to sell them, what are we going to buy instead, that’s kind of a little Sunday morning thing, tea or coffee, bacon butters and the FT, we are sad, don’t we? (IP09_HI_F_50)

By asking the question ‘we are sad, don’t we’ after explaining the enjoyment in selecting shares, the ‘others’, the ones who do not follow this approach are depicted as being ‘normal’. The normal constrains speaking openly about the enjoyment to engage with riskier assets and as a result statements are hedged. This can also be seen when drawing on the discourse of growth which is immanent in the subject position of the everyday investor. Referring to ‘think, mean, suppose’ highlights the transition from the normal to the financial approach.

I think, I mean, I suppose actually when I looked, when I had my cash ISA, well I still got my cash ISA, but I was looking of getting that converted into stocks and shares and I suppose that’s me trying to take a risk [...] (IP35_MI_F_26)

Being an everyday investor, in other words, seems to require discursive justification due to the predominance of the everyday risk manager subjectivity.

At the same time, the everyday investor talks from a position of superiority distinguishing between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (‘most people don’t understand money management’ [IP34_HI_F_55]). A distinction is made between being ‘reasonably intelligent’ and knowing about financial things and the ‘normal, ordinary men on the street’ (IP01_HI_F_52):

[...] you know what I am reasonably intelligent, I am not highly inhuman, [...] but I do think how normal ordinary men on the street are doing that. How do other people know about, you know, I’ve done a business degree that’s why I do a spreadsheet, you know, if you’re the normal men in the street and maybe the wife is a teacher and maybe the husband, you know, works in an industry or works in a call centre how did they know what they should choose?

This leads in the marginalisation of the others, going as far as victimizing them, either intentionally (‘there’s a wealth of information and yet people spend more time going on to Paddy Power or Foxy Bingo for arguments’ sake’ [IP60_HI_M_55]) or unintentionally, alongside positioning oneself as superior in financial knowledge: ‘they don’t go down the path with every intention of going down that path [...] most of them wouldn’t know. Not that – they’re smart friends – but they still wouldn’t know’ (IP34_HI_F_55).

The ordinary, non-financial person on the other hand positions herself against this investor subject (‘I’m not a financially investment oriented sort of person’ [IP16_HI_M_65]):

I think if you haven’t got the natural, you know, gifting in finance, which I haven’t, it’s even less incentive to. I want to do it I just gotta be a good girl and gotta get down do it [...] ‘cause I think because I am frightened by finance and I don’t feel confident about finance and because I know I am not very organized with finance (IP26_MI_F_50)

Several aspects become clear in these statements. First, similar to the media personalization strategies (see 4.3.3) finance is connected to personal traits, in this case being organized or having a natural gifting for it. Second, as expected by the literature (Erturk et al., 2007),

finance is depicted as being too complex ('I don't really know what's happening inside, I don't know, maybe it's just me' [IP10_MI_F_44]) resulting in less confidence in dealing with it. An analogy is drawn between finding the best financial investment and being in a minefield ('very confusing, lots of confusion [...] it's just a mine field' [IP31_MI_F_50]).

Third, instead of complexity leading to not investing in pensions as expected by the literature (Langley and Leaver, 2012), it further intensifies the need to have to be a 'good girl' and get the head around it ('gotta get down to it'). As discussed in 5.2, this is due to wanting to establish financial security. Similar to the media discourse, a reference is made between growing up and the natural step of having to start accumulating assets ('You have to grow up [...] you can't assume everything is there for you' [IP41_MI_M_28]). However, it is also based on wanting to avoid rising costs (as also incorporated in media discourse discussed in 4.3.3). When not having stepped on the property early enough, the rising costs are outlined:

I wish I had gone on the property ladder much earlier because you know haven't built up our equity in a property, yes, we've got savings but actually been paying a huge amount of rent.

So we should have been a bit braver in terms of actually just getting on (IP23_HI_M_32)

The ordinary, lay person ('from our point of view as lay persons' [IP04_HI_F_59]) thus positions herself as not 'very economically minded' (IP59_MI_F_32) but as still taking the necessary steps ('I've got my head above the water' [IP26_MI_F_50]).

This as well as the previous section have illustrated how asset norms are not absorbed in a non-reflected way but are negotiated. Interviewed households tend to distance themselves from the everyday investor who conducts financial investments and position themselves as the everyday risk manager. Due to not identifying as financial person, asset norms constructed in the media are adjusted by excluding stocks and shares which are established as immanent in the investor identity and rejecting financial strategies according to finance

theory due to finance being too complex. By doing so, they reject the direct terms of investment not realizing that they have internalized asset norms.

I mean this conversation literally just came up because the house went on sale over the weekend and we went out for lunch on a Sunday and as we're driving past you know we were saying: *Gosh, we should maybe think about another future investment* (IP51_HI_F_36)

Power is argued to be specifically strong if it operates 'on a much more minute and everyday level' (Foucault, 1980, p. 60), in particular in the case when asset norms enter one's own desires without necessarily being aware of it. This can be seen in the case above where it is emphasized that one is not a financial person ('I'm really ignorant') but then when driving to lunch, a potential house for a buy-to-let purchase is seen without searching for it.

7.2.3 Debt or Asset Amnesia? Discursive and Non-Discursive Interaction

After having seen how households frame financial concepts and position themselves, this section concentrates on how conforming to asset norms despite rejecting the everyday investor subjectivity results in conflicts, reflected in the interaction between internalizing a financialized subject position and downplaying the resultant assets and debts. The particular focus lies on the concept of 'debt amnesia' introduced by Soaita and Searle (2016, p. 1087; introduced in Section 2.3.3) where it is stated that households assign silence to the mortgage due to overemphasizing its benefits. It is argued here that this concept should be extended and instead be described as asset amnesia based on components incorporated in asset norms and downplaying wealth as a result of positioning oneself as everyday risk manager.

Rather than seeing a 'normalization of debt' in the UK (Soaita and Searle, 2016, p.1098), households reject debt *per se* except for purposes of asset accumulation (see Section 5.2.1). Being part of the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy outlined in Section 6.3.1 determines debt being perceived as not real debt. For instance, student loans are framed as

not real debt, emanating from the fact that they are considered an acceptable investment in the future ('I mean with student loans, it's perfectly acceptable' [IP20_MI_F_58]).

[...] like my, my student loans from university as well I don't even count that as real debt because I haven't been told to start paying it back yet. But yeah it's just kind of, it's funny with debt how, yeah, telling you what they're taking it away from when they actually charging you for the debt then it feels like real debt (IP59_MI_F_32)

Characteristics of student loans, i.e. being taken directly from the salary, intensify this perception: 'I see all of those student loans that he'll have to take out as a future tax upon his earnings as opposed to a big debt that he's gonna own' (IP11_MI_M_42). Alongside student loans, interest free credit is framed as not real debt.

It doesn't feel like real debt unless they're taking money away from you (IP59_MI_F_32) It doesn't feel like real debt in itself because as long as you pay it off in the interest rate period, you don't necessarily take on debt in itself. (IP29_MI_F_25)

In the current interest rate environment households are offered an extensive range of interest-free credit which is taken on to achieve asset ownership by either not 'tapping' into savings or by exploiting interest rate differentials (see 5.2.3). Asset norms thus impact the depiction of debt as can also be seen in the case of homeownership.

Mortgages are depicted not as debt *per se* ('I don't think of those as debts') or 'real debt' but acceptable borrowings ('I think of those as very measured risks' [IP01_HI_F_52]). This results in an omission of mortgage debt, or what Soaita and Searle (2016, p. 1087) call 'debt amnesia', when being asked about debt in the past: 'I don't like the idea of owing people money even, even my Mum and Dad, you know they've helped, they've helped out with, you know, some of the things which had to do with the house' (IP45_MI_F_27). The interviewee mentions that she does not like debt, however, at the same time she has a

property gearing ratio of 72.3%. A similar picture can be seen in portraying the rejection of unacceptable debt behaviour: ‘I know somebody, £30,000 they owe, I couldn’t live like that, that to me is worse, I couldn’t live, that’s just I don’t know, I just get panicky’ (IP31_MI_F_50). Despite pointing out that having £30,000 debt would be unacceptable, she has had taken out a mortgage of £79,000. Some interviewees even expressed their bewilderment at mortgages being put down as negative in calculating a credit score (‘so they put having mortgages down as negative’ [IP07_HI_F_50]).

The goal of asset ownership outweighs the debt perception, not realizing potential risks involved: ‘I know what I bought it for. I know it will never going to get lower than that again’ (IP26_MI_F_50). Households feel secure because they have the ‘tangible’ (IP12_HI_F_59) asset standing against the debt (‘you’ve got a real asset set off against the debt’ [IP13_HI_M_76]). Even when recognizing potential risks, these are downplayed based on being controllable (‘it’s something that is undeniable, it’s controlled by me’, see 5.2.3):

I have recognized just how financially secure I am [...] I know the property market could crash. But it’s just something that I understand, I suppose better than the financial products. So I see that asset as a more favourable asset than the alternative of ploughing your money into something that has let people down in the past (IP24_MI_F_42)

Despite emphasizing that she feels secure, this interviewee has two relatively high mortgages based on a low stipend of £13,500, a rental profit of £4,500 per year and no liquidity buffers. She is also currently buying another property leading to a property gearing ratio of up to 34% accompanied by an income gearing ratio of 65.3%, which is highly risky and an indicator of financial fragility. The discussion above extends the concept of debt amnesia. Whereas households do outweigh potential benefits of homeownership (Soaita and Searle, 2016), this is due to a normalization of asset ownership. The components of debt-financed asset accumulation including mortgages but also student loans are considered not real debt.

Not only debt is omitted but households also downplay wealth. As discussed in 6.4.4, through adopting the subject position of the everyday risk manager, there emerges a conflict between being a hard-working, non-financial person and being successful in asset accumulation without hard work. This contradiction results in downplaying one's own wealth, for example, referring to oneself as poor despite having a net wealth of £182,000: 'I'm quite poor' (IP_54_MI_M_34). When having earmarked the money as *spoken for money*, this conflict is solved by referring to its assigned function in fulfilling asset norms: 'while I've got, wohoo, I got £20,000 savings, yeah, I'm like ok that's a house that's it' (IP42_MI_F_24). When exceeding the three-pronged asset strategy, wealth is downplayed. For instance, an interviewee de-emphasizes her stocks and shares investment substantially, classifying them as low whereas the relatively seen value is quite high: 'I mean it wasn't very much, it wasn't very much money' (IP44_HI_F_58). The amount identified as not very much accumulates to £60,000 and makes up half of the participant's net financial wealth.

In case of positioning oneself as everyday investor but being constrained to openly talk about it, one's own wealth is downplayed with the help of a class discourse, referring back to being middle or working class despite being clearly in the wealthier income and wealth range:

I guess we come from slightly cultural family mindsets of your money being save in bricks and mortar, it's a recently common expression in, you know, I suppose middle class families, you know, that your money is save there (household annual income £200,000; net wealth £1,503,000; single mother's pension £48,000; net wealth £2,588,678)

Here, as well the discourse draws on the metaphor of 'bricks and mortar' which is depicted as one of the identifiers of being middle class. Being middle class brings with it certain consumption behaviours where financing luxurious living standards is rejected: 'I don't drive a very good car, I'm not interested in having a car that clearly says: this person is wealthy' (IP08_HI_M_65). As can be seen above, everyday identities, for instance in the

form of being an ordinary, hard-working citizen, contradict actual financial practices, resulting in the discursive justification of financial practices and omission, i.e. absence of themes of financial practices. Based on the discussion provided above, I argue that households' omission of debt and assets is related to an 'asset' rather than 'debt amnesia'.

7.2.4 Interdiscursive Dependencies: Dichotomy between 'Feeling' and 'Unfeeling'

Not only intradiscursive dependencies influence households positioning as everyday risk manager and result in conflicts, but also interdiscursive dependencies. Concerns of asset accumulation manifest themselves in social relationships evolving into mutually generative relationships, as indicated in the interaction between asset norms and caring (see 6.4.3) as well as work relationships (see 6.4.4). This analysis of the interaction between finance rationality and everyday practices is extended here and sheds light on how 'social relations shape and are shaped by discursive practices' (Angermuller et al., 2014, p.36).

Finance rationality based on a non-emotional, return maximizing logic interacts with social relationships in a two-fold way. The concept of unfeeling constructed in the media (as shown in 4.3.4) is incorporated into households' discourse, emphasizing that in financial decisions 'emotions don't count, family don't count' (IP37_MI_F_29). It is thus seen as acceptable that parents ask children to pay rent because of providing a service:

So, I had to really nag him [the son] to give me rent. You know, he doesn't think he needs to. Why would he? When he can't use the shower, he thinks he's making sacrifices. *Well, you don't pay any rent or any bills.* I said, *and you think, you have rights. You don't have any.* So I think he's realized and he started paying me rent last month. (IP27_MI_F_59)

In contrast, feelings domesticate asset norms (Christie et al., 2008). Houses are bought to a higher price than budgeted because of being close to family and friends ('all my friends are there' [IP51_HI_F_36]). Moreover, as pointed out by Fox O'Mahony and Overton (2015),

giving up the family home can be difficult ‘we had a moment where we said psychologically are we ready to move and we said yes the market, the house market was in a good position’ (IP13_HI_M_76). Here, rational factors (a good market) are combined with emotional factors, depicting the dichotomy between ‘unfeeling’ and ‘feeling’.

This dichotomy between feeling and unfeeling reshapes relationship discourses. For instance, an interviewee described the emotional stress it has caused her in negotiating a contract defining a potential division of assets in case of a split while highlighting the need to adopt a non-emotional approach rather than solely relying on trust.

It’s a risk not only financially with the house but also with our relationship [...] where this is us coming together to spend the rest of our lives together in this house before we even started, we’ve had to have the conversation what’s gonna happen if it goes wrong [...] you know people don’t stay together forever but I think it was the amount of times we had to go over it and deal with these various different things and it almost felt like we’re broken up already, like we almost saying: *oh when we break up this is how we’re gonna split it up.*

These discourses involved in the negotiations have transformative power. After numerous discussions surrounding the contract, it felt not anymore like if they break up but ‘like we almost saying: *oh when we break, this is how we’re going split it up*’ (IP45_MI_F_27).

In addition to discourses changing the perception of the relationship, the conflict between a non-emotional and emotional discourse transforms practices. To provide financial security for the family, a wedding is planned to ensure that the partner is

[...] entitled to my pensions and all the life insurances [...] it’s less about romance, it’s more about security if I’m honest. So as unromantic as that sounds but that’s the truth [...] this is gonna show how unromantic I am. We were having a conversation on Valentine’s day [...] I just said: *Look there is nothing stopping us now, so why don’t we actually get married?*

Mainly because I was thinking if I died, if I got, you know, in a car crash or something like that, I just didn't want it to be difficult for her to access the financial benefits.

By continuously referring back to being 'unromantic' and having this conversation on 'Valentine's day', social norms come in conflict with asset norms. Whereas getting married might have been the natural next step in the relationship (as can be seen in the described causality: 'we've got engaged 'cause we've been together for a few years'), the financial concerns led to getting married which is justified by drawing on a discourse of security and honesty ('that's the truth' [IP56_MI_M_34]). Asset norms are thus productive in transforming relationships depicting how power works within everyday life.

While taking into consideration the wealth aspects from a partner is not a new phenomenon, the scope and focus of monetary concerns have shifted. Rather than focusing on living a more comfortable life by marrying into a rich family (Zelizer, 2005) or being financially secure first before marrying (Smock et al., 2005), interviewees look for a partner with whom they are able to insure against risks through investing. In becoming a financial unit ('to be one financial unit, that's why I'd want to get married' [IP51_HI_F_36]), the pressure of asset norms is eased and the investment potential widened. It is then possible to conduct further investments because of being able to risk money without affecting *spoken for money*:

[To the question if they would like to invest further in property or private pensions] I don't have a partner, so if I was to have a partner by that time then maybe I would (IP37_MI_F_29) if my boyfriend and myself are married for example and then it became joint money then I would probably invest (IP42_MI_F_24)

In contrast when being single, the pressure of asset accumulation is intensified 'because I'm single, I am not, there isn't [...] someone else to pay' [IP25_MI_F_51]). This confirms

previous literature which outlined that two-household earners are more likely to conduct investments than a single unit household (Langley and Leaver, 2012).

The focus on asset ownership not only transforms the perception or construction of households but also alters intra-household imbalances, traditionally conceptualised based on relative income where it is argued that relatively higher income leads to a rise in decision-making power (Vogler and Pahl, 1994). While an in-depth analysis of intra-household imbalances is beyond the scope of this thesis, it was striking how asset norms interact with intra-household discourses and practices, i.e. ‘micro-powers’ in the household (Foucault, 2007, p. 504). Sharing core financial values is seen as a key ingredient for a successful relationship: ‘if you have a different view about it to than your partner that could be a kind of fracturing dynamic to the relationship’ (IP12_HI_F_59). In the case of not sharing core values, compromises are agreed upon ‘for matrimonial loveliness’:

I was trying to convince my wife, we should buy a second house as an investment [...] so we sort of compromised on moving to the larger house hoping that if things got 10% up, the bigger the house is an increase in value (IP11_MI_M_42)

While a discourse of equality is dominant, it is often one partner making the decisions: ‘every new thing I bounce off her and say look I am thinking about doing this, what do you think?’ (IP13_HI_M_76). Despite ‘bouncing’ everything off her, he closes the statement with saying that if he is satisfied, the investment is conducted. This can be argued not to be an issue if imbalances in decision-making power are used to counter-balance inequalities, for instance, by ensuring that the partner catches up with pension provisions: ‘The properties we have are pretty much all in my name because I don’t have as big of a pension as him’ (IP09_HI_F_50) or by adjusting the task divisions accordingly. Due to earning the main income, one partner finances the purchase of assets whereas the other partner decides on the investment:

He earns much more than I do. [...] In our family I am the one that knows about our finances, so you know, I produce our investment spreadsheet, I do our budgeting for our house renovation [...] sometimes we buy bonds or something like that, just if I've got money that I think oh we're not doing or haven't got a project on (IP01_HI_F_52)

However, it is arguably an issue when the discursive power of asset norms reproduces inequalities in relationships. Despite not legitimizing, for instance the discourse of the breadwinner, when this discourse is being acted upon, it becomes real (Vogler and Pahl, 1994). Gender 'typical roles' are being drawn upon where money management (Zelizer, 1997), including budgeting and online accounts, is left to females ('I don't know I left it to my wife' [IP52_HI_M_41]) and males adopt the responsibility over asset management: 'I do the day to day accounts, he does the forecasting' (IP34_HI_F_55). This inequality in decision making can result in hiding aspects from the partner ('I don't tell Amy everything about money, it's better, it's better she doesn't always know' [IP41_MI_M_28]) which is justified first and foremost with asset norms and not wanting to stand still while the discourse of equality in the form of wanting to improve the lifestyle of both of them is subordinated: 'I don't want to work all my life. I don't think you [the wife] have to work all your life either.' (IP41_MI_M_28). Strikingly, instead of this behaviour being based on representing the breadwinner of the family, the partner who is 'cagey about his money' might even earn less: 'my salary is more than his' (IP51_MI_F_36) or the partner earns the same amount of money (IP41_MI_M_28). Forms of asset management thus reproduce gender inequalities in decision making independently of partner's income status.

Because of refusing to share details on investments ('I don't even know this information' [IP41_MI_F_28]), the unequal relationship results in conflict as shown in Appendix H. While the wife first indirectly uses discursive strategies to provoke a comment on the hidden

information, for instance with statements such as: ‘you’ve got more probably assets than I do’ and ‘cause he doesn’t know’, this discourse turns throughout the interview into expressing open distrust with the help of the metaphorical expression ‘many bags in the corner’ (IP41_MI_F_28). To avoid an open conflict as this, some households adopt an implicit form of hiding, justified by asset norms and not wanting to stand still.

I don’t need necessarily take on the extra expense of moving house, to a similarly sized house because I’m not in a position to upgrade [...] she would be happy with that but [...] do you just need to do that to say standing still? [...] we have conversations about it and I set her a list of *I would move if you can show me that we can do this, this, and this* because that’s really safe because she will utterly fail to do any of those. So that’s great. (IP15_MI_M_32)

Hence, not only relative income levels lead to intra-household inequalities, but also asset norms intensify intra-household inequalities. To achieve asset norms, the partner’s investment wishes are ignored because of being the main provider of finance for the asset purchase or hiding financial aspects from the partner based on pre-set division of tasks. Notwithstanding, equal or unequal asset management result in one household asset strategy.

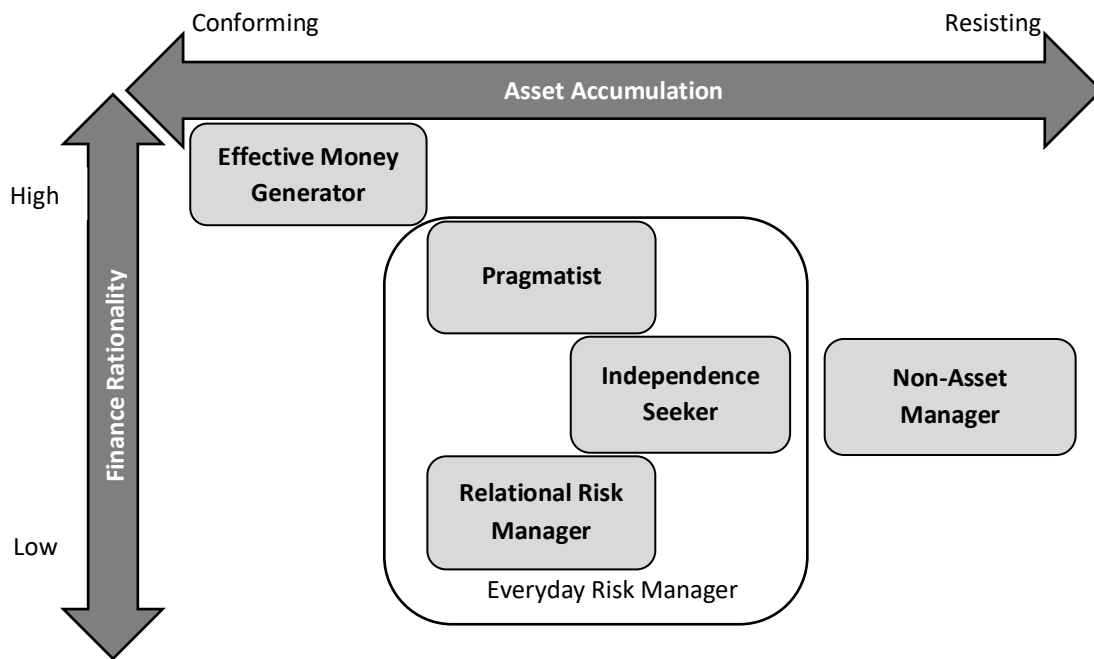
The previous sections have revealed households’ positioning as everyday risk manager. Here, the critical discourse of financial institutions portrayed in the last two empirical chapters has been taken as a starting point to show how households distance themselves from the everyday investor investing in financial assets and position themselves as the everyday risk manager. Interestingly, despite rejecting the idea of investing, the adopted discourses revealed the discursive construction of investments not only in relation to asset accumulation and its components (see 7.2.1 and 7.2.3) but asset norms and their financial discourse also manifested themselves in relationships (see 7.2.4). Hence, in addition to accumulating financial and non-financial assets and adopting self-governing measures, the internalization of a financial discourse contributes to households adopting a financialized subject position.

7.3 Resistance: Different Levels of Normalities

As shown above, ambiguities inherent in adopting a financialized subject position, in the form of uncertainty in pension investments and not being able to plan ahead because of rising job insecurity (Langley, 2006b; 2007; introduced in 2.3.2), are overcome with the help of the disciplinary technology of power. That means, the subject position of the everyday risk manager is held together by drawing on a non-agency discourse; households emphasize that they have no other choice than to accumulate assets to provide financial security. While the resistances discussed above have thus been ‘quick to compromise’ (Foucault, 1978, p.96) in conforming to asset norms, other resistances ‘play the role of adversary’ (Foucault, 1978, p.95). Due to not being able to calculate away uncertainty with the help of insurances and pensions (‘I don’t have any faith in these things’ [IP36_MI_M_41]), some households seek to amend (independence seeker) or subvert asset norms (non-asset manager). This has led to distinct levels of ‘normalities’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 91), i.e. dimensions of financial identities.

The practices of these different levels of normalities are classified based on the degree of adopting asset norms as shown in Figure 20. A high degree of internalizing asset norms relates back to following the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy and investing in stocks and shares as expected by finance theory and the entrepreneurial media discourse. In contrast, resisting asset norms means avoiding to invest. Finance rationality is then concerned with the risk management strategies outlined in Table 17 discussed in 6.3.3. That said, a high degree of finance rationality means these are households who see risk as exciting and follow extensive degree of diversification. In contrast, a low degree refers to not, or only to a minimal degree, integrating financial strategies. As can be seen in Figure 20, here three household financial identities are considered to represent the subject position of the everyday risk manager. The different levels of normalities accompanied by its immanent discourses and practices are explained in the following.

Figure 20 Dimensions of Household Financial Identities



7.3.1 Effective Money Generator

The effective money generator calls on the everyday investor subjectivity who invests or aims to invest in financial assets and extends it with accumulating non-financial assets. Households belonging to this financial identity have tried out or inspire to use a diverse set of investments including riskier investments in the form of directly investing in stocks and shares ('you have to speculate to accumulate' [IP09_HI_F_50]). 'A good cross-section' of assets is developed, i.e. 'shares, property, pensions, insurances, all those other things' (IP32_HI_M_60; [see Table 20]). As discussed in 6.3.3, for households to become effective money generators, material constraints need to be removed and they need to have access to *guilt-free money*, i.e. 'money to play with' (IP35_MI_F_26). This interaction between risk taking and being able to afford to lose money is taken up in discourses ('The less we had, the less risk we took' [IP34_HI_F_55]). Households identifying as effective money generators thus belong to the high income category. Based on amassing monetary profits and being ready to take on risks, effective money generators can be argued to adopt characteristics of capitalists and become capitalists and non-capitalists at the same time.

Table 20 Balance Sheet of Effective Money Generator (High Income)

Assets	Liabilities
House	
ISAs	
Current and small savings accounts with Nationwide	
Building Society Savings Accounts	
National Savings Certificates	
HSBC Investment Bond	
Several Investment Bonds	
Renewables Energy Fund	
Growth Fund for grandchildren	
Co-Funds - variety of stocks and shares and bonds	
Inheritance Tax Portfolio	
Self-Invested Pension managed by HL	<i>Comment by Interviewee: Apart from the SIPP all are joint names or we have matching assets</i>

This identity positions herself as financial rather than non-financial, ordinary person as discussed in 7.2.2. Since deviating from the ‘normal’ approach, the effective money generator draws on a range of discourses that could be thought of bolstering its practices. A discourse of growth, centring on climbing up the social ladder based on taking on risks (‘if you want to seriously improve your financial position you have to take some risks’ [IP23_HI_M_32]), is accompanied by an agency discourse. Competition is established as a measure of success, even resulting in figuratively competing with parents:

We’re not unrealistic but we’re aspirational (IP41_MI_F_28) The bigger the house the better [...] better than them [parents] yeah we beat them, that’s the goal. (IP41_MI_M_28)

The agency discourse in the form of growth and opportunity is thus dominant resulting in putting arguments forward for less state regulation: ‘it’s a bit too much nanny stating in terms of you’ve got to do this and you’ve got to do that’ (IP09_HI_F_50). Weaving through these discourses is the notion that finance and asset accumulation are enabling mechanisms to go further. It is constructed as enjoyment (‘I get a buzz off investing money’ [IP41_MI_M_28]) where investing in shares is seen as exciting (‘that emotion thing that would be nice like I’m richer today than I was yesterday’ [IP35_MI_F_26]).

Perhaps most importantly to notice here is that, as outlined in 7.2.2, the wealthier one becomes, the more one is constrained in speaking about finance. Doing well is equated with the possibility of losing friendships over finances because of jealousy.

Apart from your good self, we don't talk about finances to anybody else. We're also not poor people, we might look it, but we're not poor people. Everyone wants you to do well as long as you're not doing better than they are. You just have to be careful [...] (IP32_HI_M_60)

This aspect can also be seen in some high income households not wanting to share exact numbers corresponding to their assets and liabilities, as seen in the balance sheet above. This conflict leads to households justifying higher wealth levels with having worked hard to become wealthier: 'we've worked our way up, we worked hard for our money [...] you always trying to get that one step better' (IP35_MI_F_26).

7.3.2 Pragmatist

In contrast to the effective money generator, the pragmatist identifies herself as ordinary, non-financial person adopting the everyday risk manager subjectivity (see 7.2.2). That means interviewees in this category depict themselves as not very good at finance, so being the counterpart to the financial person: 'I don't think I ever been very good at finances, I've always found them a bit scary' (IP56_HI_M_34). Despite this declaration, households adopt the above portrayed asset norms consisting of a three-pronged asset strategy and an elementary form of finance rationality. It is realized that one needs to take on risks to make gains ('you will need to take risk' [IP18_HI_F_46]), however, the emphasis lies on taking calculative risk (see 6.3.3) rather than seeing risk as excitement. Those households can be considered intermediate financially active households who use financial products yet remain sceptical of them and thus avoid direct investments in undiversified, unmanaged products. The majority of interviewed households fall into this category which is closest to the financial and everyday practices outlined in Chapter 6.

Commitment to provide financial security is the consistent glue that holds this identity together. Rather than aiming to improve the social standing by amassing monetary profits, the focus lies on accumulating assets to provide financial security.

I got the mortgage, I owed them £70,000 and now I already owe them half [...] feels like a start towards a little bit of security in the background, I pay into a mortgage, I pay into a pension 5% and my company puts 5% as well but I am pretty much aware that that's not going to be enough for how I'd liked to live when I retire so putting money into that is thinking it's definitely going to be some kind of security for the future (IP39_MI_F_36)

The discourse of non-agency (see 5.2.2), i.e. having no choice than to pursue asset ownership to mitigate future risks ('I always felt the world could be much harsher so I tend to be a saver' [IP04_HI_F_59]), is employed extensively to justify accumulating assets. In this context financial products which households have to deal with are seen as the 'necessary evil' (IP42_MI_F_24) while being cautious of profit-seeking financial institutions: 'the fees that you're charged are quite hidden' (IP20_MI_F_58).

As shown in 5.2.2, a discourse of keeping control and being independent is interweaved with the discourse of security to enact this identity of the pragmatist ('I want to have some sort of peace of mind that this lump sum is kind of still there so to speak' [IP50_MI_F_42]). Due to being 'fairly cynical' of finance, a wider form of diversification is applied, for instance having several bank accounts. Comparing the bank requesting one to pay back debt as stealing money shows the categorisation of financial institutions as not trustworthy.

I generally keep eggs in different baskets [...] I don't like to have it all in one place [...] keeping your savings in a different bank account to where you have your current account because if you go overdrawn, you don't want them stealing the money from your savings account [...] I never really trusted financial institutions (IP16_HI_M_65)

7.3.3 Relational Risk Manager

As the name of the identity indicates, it is brought to life by the prominence granted to emotions and feelings when making financial decisions. Households speaking from this identity integrate one part of asset norms in the form of accumulating assets but do not conform to the other part in the form of finance rationality. Instead they base decisions on relationships and emotions. Going back to the dichotomy of feeling and unfeeling depicted in Section 6.4.3, the concept of feeling thus outweighs unfeeling here, i.e. personal relations are used in making financial decisions and become more important than economic relations.

In line with the everyday risk manager, the relational identity positions herself as a non-financial person ('I just haven't got memories for figures' [IP26_MI_F_50]). As a consequence, households drawing upon this identity focus on an avoidance strategy leading to a weak form of resistance by transferring the responsibility onto another person. A bank service is selected based on relationships with financial advisers rather than financial terms.

I am lucky because I always been able to get hold of Gemma [...] when I walk into the bank she says *Hello* so I am a friend so I probably get pretty good smart service [...] they're pleasant in a way that banks have gone very distant [...] (IP06_HI_F_79)

Taken time spent on explaining a mortgage are taken as reasoning for choosing a mortgage provider: 'I didn't bother to do a lot of comparisons [...] the fact that they gave me two hours and sat down and we went through everything in fine detail' (IP31_MI_F_50). Moreover, friends' advices are taken on. This leads in some case to success ('We were good friends and he said to if you got any spare money, buy as many as you can [...] it must have increased by 50%' [IP33_MI_M_88]) and in other cases to losses ('I did go to a financial advisor through a friend of mine who actually I think gave me the wrong advice' [IP44_HI_F_58]). Despite realizing that she should have been more cautious, the interviewee continued to rely on friends' advices.

Due to feeling outweighing the concept of unfeeling, this identity places a strong emphasis on the caring role outlined in Section 6.4.3, helping friends and family plays a dominant role even when recognizing that they might misuse it:

[...] he [son] broke up with his girlfriend so he's come back home to save a deposit up. That was June, I've been paying out him rather than him saving a deposit up, that's the situation and he's gone on holiday for the second one this year (IP31_MI_F_50)

This sometimes also leads to even buying flats for family members as shown below. Even though one wanted to provide for family members, it is emphasized that they are not very good in dealing with money which is excused with not being naturally a finance person:

I've funded a house for Bruno [ex-husband] and it was in joint names [...] Then he decided he wanted to go off. His son died unexpectedly and it just sort off shook him up. He was going to live on a boat. He sold up [...] I own this flat where Bruno lives and he wouldn't be able to, he wouldn't get anywhere for £350. So I'm doing him a big favour and he could have over his life saved money, but he's not a saver. Some people are, some people aren't. (IP14_MI_F_65)

The focus on helping others is reflected in their balance sheet as shown below where the interview participant specifically earmarks the assets according to the family members. The productive character of relationships on asset norms thus can be seen here.

Table 21 Balance Sheet Relational Approach (Medium Income)

Assets	Liabilities
House Northampton £387 000	Interest only mortgage against the house, though taken out to buy my daughter's flat £134 000
90% share of flat in Hastings £83 000	
100% of value of my daughter's flat in Hastings £132 000	
1 1/2 acres of land in Essex value £50 000 to £500 000 depending on whether it gains planning permission	
Savings £130 500	
1/3 share of deceased mothers' house in London, awaiting sale: £310 500.	
Money still owed for the purchase of the business £29 500.	

When being a landlord and renting out to friends, the tenant is included into the will for inheriting the house:

I have got some other property, I have 'cause I didn't sell my house when you know when we moved in together and everything so I actually rent that out to a friend of mine. [...] if I was to die that house goes to him and you know everyone's aware of that. I willed that to him. (IP44_HI_F_58)

Overall this identity values relationships more than adopting finance rationality. These findings echo previous research where 'intimacies', i.e. rationalities in the form of emotions, are argued to outweigh economic relations (Lai, 2017). Yet, rather than this being a generalized phenomenon, it emanates mainly from the identity of the relational risk manager.

7.3.4 Independence Seeker

While pragmatists are critical of finance, resistances function here as 'support' of the financialized subject position (Foucault, 1978, p.95). In contrast, the independence seeker takes up a more active rather than subtle resistance. The ambiguities inherent in accumulating assets as an everyday person, result in not only discursively resisting them (5.2.2; 7.2.1) or downplaying assets and debts (7.2.3) but also in amending practices. On the one hand, the independence seeker aims to solve the contradiction between being hard-working and an everyday risk manager by wanting to escape the deepening of the disciplinary technology and sets up one's own business. On the other hand, because of distrusting financial institutions and not being able to calculate away uncertainty with the help of financial products, households resist by placing a stronger emphasis on a property portfolio or developing innovative asset strategies. In both approaches the independence seeker draws on a discourse of agency to resist in contrast to the effective money generator who talks from a position of opportunity when employing the agency discourse. The two approaches immanent in the identity of the independence seeker are discussed subsequently.

The Entrepreneur

The entrepreneur aims to liberate oneself from the disciplinary technology of labour ('I didn't want to carry on doing the same thing for the next 20-30 years' [IP25_HI_F_51]). Using metaphors such as wanting to avoid to become 'kind of great machines of society' puts emphasis on resisting the disciplinary technology of labour (IP54_MI_M_34):

School I see as training young kids to be kind of great machines for society [...] It's always, you know, you have to be able to do your Mathematics and your English and your Science because you need to be, I don't know whatever it is, a profession which [...] is safe.

That said, the agency discourse of freedom, choice and gaining back control is dominant here: 'Being in charge of yourself and being able to say, *Yes, I'll do that bit of work*, or, *no, I won't do that*- fantastic' (IP08_HI_M_65). Due to running their own company, not being reliant on wage but on profit from the company, it could be argued that this identity lies closer to capitalists characteristics: 'I always worked for myself and invested in myself, consequently I got a more capitalist outlook' (IP53_MI_M_77). The capitalist outlook can as well be found in discourses surrounding staff which are 'marvellous and they're bleed you dry the rest of the time' (IP01_HI_F_52). Comparing staff to 'bleeding you dry' connects it to reducing profit which is taken as the reasoning not to hire workers. On the surface it thus appears to be a liberating identity adopting capitalists' characteristics.

However, upon further analysis it also appears to be disciplining based on the inherent uncertainty in the business. Being self-employed is accompanied by a high work load ('[...] you work very long hours') as well as restricts households' asset accumulation strategy because of wanting to put enough money away for unexpected expenses in the business. This goes as far as not identifying savings as yours: 'in my head that's not my money', using expressions such as 'tax man' distances oneself from its ownership ([IP51_HI_F_36]):

I don't consider that savings because I consider that the tax man's money [...] I don't invest because and my family they go mad cause they're like you've got 25 grand and I won't put it into anything because I wanted it there if the tax man comes to me and say you owe this

This identity also justifies not having sufficient pension provisions: 'I've got very little pension provision 'cause when you're self-employed, it's the last thing you tend to put money by for' (IP20_MI_F_58) because of needing to access the money when needed.

Likewise, it is realized that one should take on debt to grow ('you should be owing money if you're in business different than personal finance' [IP03_MI_M_52]). A focus on growth is established ('want to push on and make money') where a standstill is seen as the worst case scenario: 'we were running faster and faster to stand still'. This results in an entanglement between personal and business finance ('Me and my wife got our personal money invested in that company' [IP53_MI_M_77]) which can be seen below where business and private assets are listed in the same balance sheet. In case of difficulties, the business debt then functions as disciplining mechanism: 'the personal debt was basically to fund the business because I wasn't earning enough money' (IP55_MI_M_65).

Table 22 Balance Sheet Independence Seeker (Medium Income)

Assets	Liabilities
Business houses £315,317	Business Liabilities towards owner (£256,007)
Cash Bank £26,000 (Business Savings)	Net Value Business £59,310
Private Savings £50,000	Retained Earnings: £29,000
House 1 Value £200,000	
House 2 Value £300,000	
Car £4,000	

Overall, despite wanting to gain freedom ('I'm quite an independent person' [IP20_MI_F_58]) by 'escaping' traditional working life, the interplay between personal and business finance result in increasing pressure on households. In the end, households adopting this identity usually work more hours ('I had to work damn hard' [IP55_MI_M_65]).

The Defiant Investor

Because of not being able to mitigate uncertainty with the help of investing ('you just don't know what's really gonna happen' [IP44_HI_F_58]) and a strong distrust in the profit-seeking characteristics of financial institutions ('a money-making industry with the private sector' [IP28_MI_M_62]), the defiant investor amends the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy. Evidential discourse based on experience ('I've known about male practice in the personal finance' [IP58_HI_M_49]) and metaphorical expressions ('down the tube') are prevalent in describing the inherent distrust in the financial system (IP07_HI_F_50):

My Mum invested in Heineken, that went down the tube, my brother invested in Standard Life, that went down the tube, and I am like well then what's the point [...] I am not gonna put 70 quid a month into something for the next years only to be told that some CEO is you know banging some secretary and it's all gone tits up and you haven't got any money.

Whereas in previous identities this distrust has led households to discursively justifying the three-pronged asset strategy, the identity enacted here seeks to gain more control by either placing a stronger emphasis on property and/or conducting alternative investments.

For the purpose of not just 'giving money to somebody who's going to give you a bit of money', but rather doing 'something with your money' (IP08_HI_M_65), property investment is conducted, resulting in 'leveraged investors' (Langley, 2008, p. 242). The defiant property investor intensifies the discourse of having control when investing in property ([see 5.2.2] 'I wanted a retirement fund to have some control' [IP17_MI_F_43]):

So I've only ever really invested in real estate which is not a risk-free category at all as asset class for sure but what it does give you, it gives you tangibility [...] (IP58_HI_M_49)

This trust in property goes as far as taking on debt to visit a property buying class: 'I'm about to start a very expensive course, and they've allowed me to defer payment till after the

divorce. And it's for a year, and it's just property power buying.' (IP27_MI_F_59). This focus on investing in property can result in an unbalanced balance sheet and a higher risk as exemplary shown in Table 23. This balance sheet incorporates no savings, insurances or pensions despite integrating a gearing ratio of 46.12%.

Table 23 Balance Sheet Defiant Identity (High Income)

Assets	Liabilities
House values Wallingford £665,000	£305,270 mortgage
Flat in East London £810,000	£375,000 mortgage
No Savings	
No Insurances	
In workplace pension but not officially worked enough for the state pension	

Interestingly, the agency discourse is used as justification. To illustrate, an interviewee made sure that she was in a better financial position than her mother in order to be 'free' ('when I was much younger I was very motivated to become financially secure'), leading to the development of a buy-to-let-property portfolio. Perhaps most importantly here is that despite emphasizing that 'once you've got a mortgage [...] you are locked in the rat race that creates their [financial institutions] wealth', this interviewee herself has two variable, interest-rate only mortgages, describing them as liberating rather than constraining: 'They give you a bit more flexibility and freedom' (IP17_MI_F_43). A similar aspect can be seen in using peer-to-peer lending to circumvent financial intermediaries:

[...] people are lending to each other, so we don't touch the banks if we don't need to. You don't touch the banks. If you've got big a project you just put up on the crowd-funding thing [...] I've got a friend, we go to cricket together with. He's got redundancy money and he takes a little bit every year so as not to go over his tax bracket, and I said *Richard, why do you do it?* He said, *Because I have to pay tax otherwise. Well Richard you could lend me the money, and I can pay you 8% interest, 10 max, 12 whatever, you know.* We get lots of our money from other people by offering them high interest rates (IP27_MI_F_59)

Finance rationality is still integrated here by focusing on making profit from lending to other people ('why wouldn't you want 8% instead of 0.25%?'). These examples show the strong promotion of hidden meanings of finance prohibiting households from developing alternative approaches and resisting to accumulate assets and adopting finance rationality.

Alongside property investment, households aim to circumvent the traditional banking system ('I try to keep it away from the banks as much as possible') through investing in alternative investments ('I was going to buy silver, as in troy in ounce of silver, the coins every month' [IP36_MI_M_41]). This is based on a strong distrust in the current system:

I've told Esther Do not touch pensions, do not even go close to them. I said Don't trust them I said You're better off buying gold bars and keep them in Switzerland and then wait 40 years to see what the price of gold is [...] but don't, don't trust the government, don't trust pension companies, I'm quite bitter about it actually (IP55_MI_M_65)

For this reason, rather than following a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy, more emphasis is placed on tangible assets such as property or alternative investments ('to have a lot of gold, jewellery and ornaments and stuff' [IP37_MI_F_29]) while still contributing to the workplace pension. The defiant investor thus sees finance as negative while it is at the same time acknowledged that accumulating wealth is a necessity to be free.

7.3.5 Non-Asset Manager: Everyday Saver and Revolver

Similar to the independence seeker, the non-asset manager expresses a strong distrust in the financial system. Institutional and financial changes are questioned to be in the interest of the ordinary person as exemplary shown in the case of repayment holidays introduced during the financial crisis. Here, it is emphasized that this process was made very easy while at the same time it is realized that in the end the banks benefitted from it by earning interest rates:

2008 I had a repayment holiday when the government sort of said to all the banks: *If people ask you to have a break, you bloody well give them one.* That's what they said at the time because the recession had kicked in and everyone was having a bad time and I rang them up and said *Look can I have a repayment holiday, just for a little bit to make sure we're good?* And they're absolutely by default within five minutes faxed over a form saying *Sign this and you can have a year off.* [...] you're not blind about it, you don't think about it but you still accruing interest, that probably put another £6,000 onto my mortgage (IP40_MI_M_43)

Yet, in contrast to the independence seeker, the non-asset manager refuses to follow an asset accumulation strategy and takes up an adversary resistance (Foucault, 2003) which results in two dimensions reflecting the deviations from the everyday investor subject discussed in the literature: passive saver (Lai, 2017, p. 927) and [credit] revolver (Langley, 2008, p.16).

The passive saver is someone who subverts the discourse of asset accumulation as a means of welfare and works from a basis of deconstruction. This identity clearly makes a difference between homeowners and homebuyers with a mortgage, hence, defying 'asset amnesia'.

[...] the house isn't your own anyway even when you've got a mortgage, obviously you're paying it off and hopefully, you know, you live long enough that it will be yours in the end but the downside of that is, you know, you risk in other ways that, you know. If you lost your job, yeah, you gotta worry over the mortgage and having the house taken from you completely and then there's the other aspect of it. If anything goes wrong in the house, you are responsible for it, the maintenance of it whereas if it's rented, you know, all that's taken away from you and if you decided to move the flexibility obviously is there with renting whereas it isn't with selling or buying (IP50_MI_F_42)

Risks such as losing your house are taken into consideration and maintenance costs are not depicted as an improvement of investments but as an extra burden. Moreover, buy-to-let properties are seen as additional work rather than the possibility to earn further income:

‘being stuck, paying the mortgage, living somewhere or trying to get tenants in somewhere [...] I’d rather not do that’ (IP37_MI_F_29). Interestingly, when providing reasoning for not wanting to buy a house, the identity draws on a discourse of flexibility and freedom, hence, reworking the agency discourse into a resistance discourse. Flexibility such as being able to move around and not having the responsibility of having to maintain are a few aspects mentioned here.

The revolver identity relates back to the construction of the consumer subject, wanting to express their autonomy with the help of debt-financed consumption and exploiting different credit cards offers (Langley, 2008). Debt is seen as the possibility to finance their lifestyle:

I had American Express, Visa, HSBC card, I had another one [...] I had probably four or five bank accounts, credit cards, which had anywhere between 5 and 10,000 pounds on them. So I owed lots of money [...] you don’t have to spend so much money of your own so that when you can use that money to go on your holidays [...] I kind of use one to pay off the other in the end, assuming I was quite good at it and I never, I never missed payments or anything but I did have, I had loads of debt but I managed to also well you rob Peter to pay Paul you take money out to give to something else and you balance it off. (IP48_HI_M_58)

By using figurative speech (‘rob Peter to pay Paul’), it becomes clear that this identity does not pursue asset ownership. Strikingly, this results in adopting an entrepreneurial discourse without necessarily being aware of it, for instance by diversifying credit cards as much as possible to exploit interest rate differentials (‘the system is there to be exploited’ [IP02_MI_F_48]). The revolver is very good in organizing the different credit cards and rolling over debt if necessary. This is taken as an argument for not being ‘scared of debt’ since it always has been ‘manageable’:

I'm not scared of it so it's all just sneaks up a bit and you think oh no it's always manageable and I can still pay for things, and cover the payments on it and in a way I think both of them are pretty much at the top end now what capacity they have (IP40_MI_M_43)

Even when running into difficulties, the interviewee above did not try to solve the issue but ran away: 'we left each other, me on a horse riding out of town but the posy wasn't behind me' (IP48_HI_M_58). The non-asset manager tries to resist an asset accumulation strategy by choosing to rent and using debt to finance a comfortable life. Notwithstanding, households adopting this identity still have pension provisions.

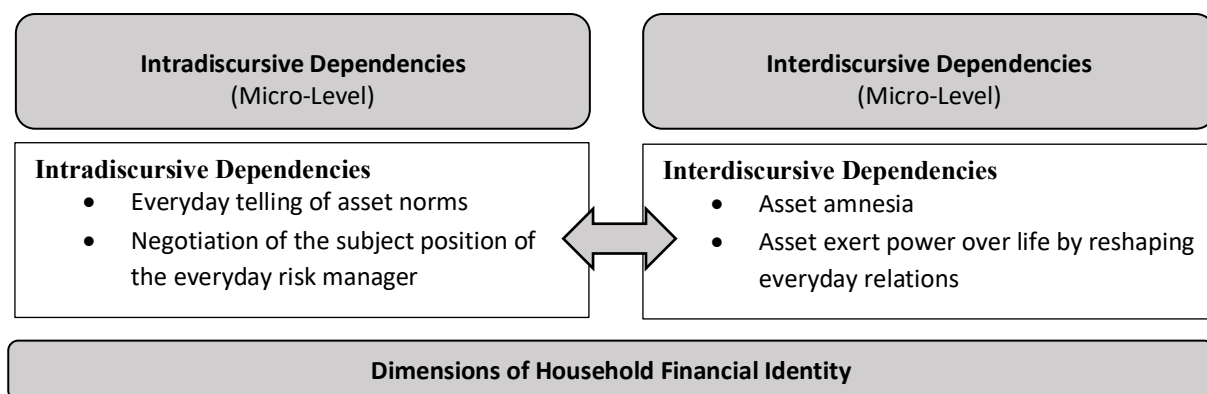
These levels of normalities can be argued to have led to an intensification of the regulatory mechanism in the form of introducing automatic enrolment of workplace pensions and higher taxation rules on property in order to 'bring the most unfavourable in line with the more favourable' (Foucault, 2007, p.91). As discussed in 4.3.2, the measures are justified by stating that they help households to provide security for the future rather than relying on income support. However, they also intensify the asset accumulation norms.

7.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks

After having seen how households respond to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization in Chapter 5 and then seen the effects it has on financial practices and everyday life in Chapter 6, this chapter has extended the discussion and provided the missing part to the micro-level analysis. While the meso-level discourse analysis illuminated discursive formations in households' discourses in relation to macro-level discourses constructed in the media and the micro-level thematic analysis in Chapter 5 showed the effects of these discourses, the micro-level analysis conducted here deepened the language level of analysis (see 3.4.2) by giving insights into intra- (concepts within discourses) and interdiscursive (concepts between discourses).

Running through the previous chapters was a continuous occurrence of a distrust in financial institutions in households' discourses either because of their profit-seeking behaviour and/or because of not being able to reduce uncertainty. The contradictory role between being expected to accumulate assets to provide for the future while being critical transforms intradiscursive dependencies (see Figure 21).

Figure 21 Negotiating the Everyday Risk Manager Subjectivity



In the everyday retelling of finance households distinguish themselves from the everyday investor, i.e. the financial person, and position themselves as the ordinary, non-financial person. As has been illustrated in 7.2.1, this emanates from an understanding of financial investments being part of the everyday investor rather than the everyday risk manager. Alongside realizing the need to incorporate norms of asset accumulation, households also emphasize that this is not for purposes of climbing up the social ladder but for providing security and living a comfortable life, again distancing themselves from an envisioned everyday investor identity. As a consequence of these discursive strategies, not only the inherent risk in stocks and shares investments contribute as an underlying reasoning to exclude this form of investment but also the rejection of the everyday investor identity results in rejecting stocks and shares as part of the everyday risk manager subjectivity. Strikingly, despite rejecting investment as a concept, interviewed households incorporate investment terms and concepts into their discourses, reflecting the pervasiveness of asset norms.

Adopting asset norms in spite of not being a financial person results in conflicts between everyday and financial identities, representing interdiscursive dependencies. Discourses mitigate the inherent contradiction in the financialized subject position. Being successful in asset accumulation clashes with the worker identity which is overcome by downplaying one's own wealth when not having earned it through hard work. Asset norms also exert 'power over life' (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.57) by reshaping discourses within relationships. To achieve asset norms, the concept of unfeeling, becomes entangled with relationships and is productive in transforming relationships (Zelizer, 2005, 2011), by changing the perception of the relationship but also intensifying intra-household dynamics. Interestingly, in spite of distancing oneself from the everyday risk manager and viewing financial institutions out of a sceptical perspective, the financial discourse enters everyday life.

Finally, this research has responded to calls in the literature (see 2.4) and deviates from an understanding of governmentality as a top-down approach, where the government transfers responsibilities onto households without being resisted. By having adopted a micro-level discourse analysis, it was possible to show that rather than households either become active or passive financial subjects, households adopt different levels of normalities. Far from fully succumbing to asset norms, households react as discerning actors and develop different ways of dealing with finance and investing, resulting in five financial identities, depending on the degree of conforming or resisting asset accumulation norms constructed by the media. While the majority of interviewed households are quick to compromise and identify themselves as pragmatists, i.e. everyday risk managers, other households develop stronger forms of resistances by amending the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy (independence seeker) or rejecting asset norms (non-asset manager). Strikingly, in spite of resisting, the non-asset manager still adopts a wider form of finance rationality and is good in managing different debt products.

8 Conclusions and Reflections

8.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, the main findings of the conducted study are summarized and linked to the theoretical research framework. Prior to addressing the research questions, it is essential to briefly reiterate the theoretical underpinnings which have informed the research. Following calls by Chen and Roscoe (2017), Lai (2017) and Robertson (2017), this study aimed to provide a holistic view of households' engagement with assets and liabilities, combining an analysis of institutional changes with an exploration of households' interaction with these. As a result, a material-discursive research framework incorporating context, language and practice was adopted. This means that the research is based on the supposition that households' financial identity is both discursively constituted and performed through social practices subject to institutional influences demarcating the limitations to adapt or resist asset norms.

The chapter first summarizes the key findings presented here which is then followed up by outlining the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of this research in Section 8.3. On an empirical basis, this research revealed that households indeed adopt a financialized subject position, albeit differently interpreted than anticipated by the literature. On a theoretical basis, it has been argued here that the newly gained insights show that asset norms exert power over life by strengthening the disciplinary technology of labour and reshaping everyday practices. On a methodological basis, the findings confirm that it is essential to provide a holistic approach to analysing household identities combining a context level of analysis with discourses and practices of households. Finally, this chapter outlines limitations of the research and introduces potential future research avenues based on these limitations.

8.2 Bringing it Together: Stages of Becoming an Everyday Risk Manager

This study set out to fill the gap in the literature in developing a holistic account of household financial identity. To achieve this research objective, the following main research question was developed (see 1.2.1): How is household financial identity constructed in response to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization and what is the impact of asset norms on everyday life? To answer this research question, an embedded mixed methods design was employed and the main research question was broken down into five sub-research questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and supported by a document review of newspaper articles as well as quantitative data in the form of a survey of UK households. This research design was chosen because of being able to represent the three levels of analysis integrated in the research paradigm (see 2.5.3): context (institutional changes), language (discourse) and practice (financial and everyday practices). While the discussion throughout the thesis has systematically addressed the sub-research questions, the aim here is to summarize key findings in light of the stages of turning into an everyday risk manager.

The first level of analysis, i.e. the context level, was presented in Chapter 4 outlining the construction of asset norms (first stage in Figure 22). This chapter has particularly attended to sub-research question i., aiming to identify mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization, and has focused on extradiscursive dependencies, i.e. the interplay between discursive and non-discursive elements. With the help of exploring institutional changes since the beginning of 1980s and conducting a macro-level discourse analysis (i.e. extradiscursive dependencies), three key moments have been identified constructing the everyday risk manager: liberalization of labour market regulations, dismantling of the welfare state and financialization in the form of financial deregulation and construction of asset norms. 4.2.2 showed that the wage bargaining power of workers was continuously reduced through changes in the law aimed at establishing a flexible labour market. At the

same time, the welfare state was dismantled by introducing workfare and reducing publicly provided welfare provisions in the form of pensions, sickness pay, and unemployment benefits (4.2.3). For households to deal with the rising responsibility, access to financial products was widened (4.2.4) and asset-based welfare measures in the form of tax reductions and incentivised savings, mortgage and pension products were introduced (4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

Figure 22 Stages of the Everyday Risk Manager



These institutional changes were accompanied by the construction of asset norms in the media with the help of three discursive formations (see 4.3.3). The entrepreneurial discourse calls on households to accumulate financial and non-financial assets and adopt financial strategies to achieve these. This is supported by an agency discourse depicting asset accumulation as the opportunity to gain freedom while also emphasizing that households have no choice than to provide financial security themselves (non-agency discourse). The dichotomy between portraying agency while on the other hand outlining the costs of non-complying establish a ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 131) where it is seen as normal that households save, own a house, and conduct financial investments.

The interaction between context and discourse as well as between context and practice level of analysis has then shown how these come into being (see stage 2 in Figure 22). Chapter 5 has therefore responded to sub-research question ii. and revealed how households respond

to mechanisms of responsabilization and financialization. The focus lay on how macro-level discourses are translated into everyday discourses (meso-level discourse analysis). Reflecting on institutional changes in the form of rising money and job insecurity, households emphasize that they have to accumulate assets despite being critical of finance (5.2.1). This conflict between internalizing asset norms and distrusting financial institutions is reflected in households' discourse, integrating non-agency and agency discourse albeit differently interpreted. Accumulating assets and freedom of choice are not seen as a possibility to climb up the social ladder but to gain control (5.2.2). Characteristics of financial products then shape the asset strategy. Due to stocks and shares fluctuating too much they are excluded and property is included in the strategy. At the same time, the low interest rate environment intensifies the internalization of asset norms by inducing further investments and adopting strategies to exploit interest rate differentials (5.2.3).

After having seen how asset norms are constructed and how households engage with these, the last stage of the analysis is concerned with characteristics of being an everyday risk manager (see Figure 22). This entailed with it an exploration of households' everyday practices and a micro-level discourse analysis. To answer the sub-research question iii., namely to what extent households adopt a financialized subject position as reflected in their financial practices, UK household balance sheets were analysed first before positioning interviewees' balance sheets within this wider development. It was established that UK households' balance sheets have changed significantly since the 1980s, depicting an extension based on assets (6.2.1). Aside from human capital being the largest share of households' assets, households' balance sheets mainly rely on fairly safe assets with a strong focus on property and pensions. At the same time, debt levels, specifically unsecured debt, are relatively seen low (6.2.2). The statements of the interviewees then hinted at the potential underlying reasoning for this balance sheet composition: asset norms are translated by

households into a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy. The first step is accumulating savings for rainy day funds and investment purposes, followed by homeownership where the house is assigned a welfare function and third pension investments are conducted (6.3.1). To achieve the three pillars of the asset strategy, households avoid debt except for purposes of asset accumulation and are guided by an elementary form of finance rationality, meaning that they rely on managed financial products, diversify pension investments and work income sources (see 6.3.2) and own life and critical illness insurance (see 6.3.4).

However, financialization and the concomitant asset accumulation are not experienced in a homogenous way (6.2.3 and 6.3.3). Over three quarters of UK financial household wealth is held by the top 20% income households and stocks and shares investments are mainly concentrated in high income households. In case of the interviewed households a similar picture can be found with direct investment in stocks and shares being the exception rather than the norm. Due to stocks and shares being considered a risky investment, investment in stocks and shares only takes place after having secured the three pillars of households' asset accumulation strategy. Pension investments also contribute to this differing access to assets. DB pensions tend to be concentrated in the higher income range in the case of UK households. Because of securing a regular income, DB pensions enable households to risk more in investments. Higher income households are thus privileged towards incorporating finance rationality in the form of diversified portfolios.

In an effort to achieve asset ownership, medium and high income households alike adopt technologies of the self (see 6.4), representing the interaction between asset norms and everyday practices and providing the answer to sub-research question iv. First, asset norms impact saving and consumption practices (6.4.1 and 6.4.2). Not easily accessible bank accounts are employed to be able to save while at the same time households adopt a non-

materialistic lifestyle. Second, asset norms interact with family relationships, resulting in a mutually generative relationship (6.4.3). Personal relationships help to achieve asset ownership and economic relationships are productive in transforming social relationships. Third, work relationships are impacted upon (6.4.4). To be able to save and invest, households increase work hours, choose a job solely based on income and make sure to work hard. Asset norms thus enter everyday life through self-governing measures.

Despite internalizing asset norms, a critical view of finance is running through the different stages which is reflected in the micro-level discourse analysis. Chapter 7 deepens the language level of analysis and answers sub-research question v., namely how households position themselves as financialized subjects while resisting asset norms. Households distinguish themselves from the everyday investor, i.e. the financial person, and position themselves as the ordinary, non-financial person, despite investing in assets (7.2.1 and 7.2.2). This intradiscursive conflict between the everyday and the financial identity evolves into misrepresenting non-discursive elements. In one instance, being successful in asset accumulation contradicts the worker identity, resulting in downplaying one's own wealth. In another instance, debt is labelled not as 'real debt' due to financing assets (7.2.3). Not only do intradiscursive dependencies impact the discursive construction of assets and liabilities but they also become intertwined with everyday discourses (interdiscursive dependencies). In addition to the relationship between economic and family relationships highlighted in Chapter 6, the concept of unfeeling constituted in the media transforms discourses and perceptions within relationships (7.2.4). Finally, the analysis showed that households do not simply adopt asset norms but develop five distinct financial identities depending on their distrust in the financial system (7.3). Whereas the majority of interviewed households internalize the identity of the pragmatist, whose identity is closest to the subject position of the everyday risk manager, others integrate alternative investment strategies.

8.3 Contributions to Knowledge

Having summarized the main findings, the following sections link these insights to the gaps identified in the literature (see Chapter 2). The contributions outlined here build on the introductory statements made in Chapter 1 and are therefore divided into empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions. While the empirical contributions extend previous discussions in the everyday financialization literature, the section on theoretical contributions brings these insights together in a Foucauldian governmentality framework integrating capitalist relations. Finally, methodological contributions are outlined with a particular focus on how the unique research design has helped to gain these new insights.

8.3.1 Empirical Contributions to Knowledge

Employing a holistic approach in terms of including assets and liabilities and exploring households' everyday practices and discourses has led to scrutinizing and conceptually refining assumptions made in the financialization of daily life literature. Looking to debates in the everyday financialization literature over whether households internalize financial subjectivities (see 1.1), three main empirical insights suggest that households do adopt a financialized subject position, albeit differently interpreted than anticipated by the literature.

First, by exploring the balance sheet composition in general rather than one component of it and integrating insights into households' everyday practices, it was revealed that households follow a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy: they set aside savings, acquire a house and invest in pensions while debt is avoided except for purposes of asset accumulation. To be able to conform to this three-pronged asset strategy, interviewed households employ technologies of the self in the form of using non-accessible savings accounts, restricting their consumption and increasing work hours and/or choosing a job solely based on income. At the same time, pension and work income sources are diversified. Going back to the definition

of financialization of daily life introduced in 1.1, households thus interact with financial products through accumulating financial and non-financial assets and financial motives enter everyday life through ‘new modes of self-governing measures’ (Lai, 2016, p.3).

These empirical insights challenge previous theorizations of a financialized subject position. Whereas property investment has been presented as ‘pushing back the frontiers of what it means to be an investor’ (Langley, 2007, p. 81: see 2.3.2), it has been argued here that rather than property investment deviating from an everyday investor subject, it is part of asset norms constituted by government initiatives and embedded in everyday life. As shown above, not only does the policy and media discourse include the asset-based welfare character of the house but also interviewed households view the home as an investment. Yet, it is not the only investment but part of an asset strategy. An everyday risk manager accumulates financial and non-financial assets.

Second, whereas previous research has discussed ambiguities incorporated in adopting a financialized subject position, for instance, not being able to invest because of an increasingly unstable income (see 2.3.2), research so far has not empirically accounted for these ambiguities in light of overall asset norms. With the intention of filling this gap, the interplay between asset norms and everyday life was explored. As expected by the literature, households experience rising job insecurity in an environment of less welfare provision (Munro, 2000). That said, however, while fluctuating incomes may indeed undermine their ability to accumulate assets, the interview data has shown that insecurity acts as an enabler of the everyday risk manager subject. Moreover, asset norms manifest themselves in households’ practices (for instance through self-governing measures) as well as discourses without necessarily being aware of it, as shown in the case of integrating investment terms despite being critical of finance, and enter relationships.

These empirical insights therefore contradict previous studies which have argued that through the conflict between a financialized identity and everyday identities, for instance, in the form of workers (Langely, 2007) or being a partner, ‘finance is domesticated’ (Pellandini-Simanyi et al., 2015, p. 733). Rather than financial discourses and practices being tamed by everyday identities, asset norms manifest themselves in everyday life and create a mutually generative relationship, extending Zelizer’s (2005, 2011, 2012) exploration of money and social relationships (see 2.5.3) to asset ownership. For instance relationships enable asset ownership but asset norms also change relationships, or work relationships construct asset norms while also intensifying these. These insights reinforce the argument that households adopt a financialized subject position, reflecting the dominance of the ‘investment idiom’ (Davis, 2009, p. 6) where being an effective everyday risk manager becomes a way of being.

Third, households’ financial identities do not fit a binary categorization into active (everyday investors [Martin, 2002]) or passive neoliberal subjects (domestication of finance [Pellandini-Simanyi et a., 2015]) but represent differing dimensions of household financial identity. Whereas the majority of interviewees adopt the subject position of the everyday risk manager, others amend or subvert the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy due to not being able to calculate away uncertainty with the help of investments. Some households follow a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy but leave the financial decisions to others (relational identity). Others place a stronger emphasis on developing a property portfolio and use peer-to-peer lending to circumvent financial intermediaries (independence seeker). Interestingly, even the non-asset managers, i.e. the ones who refuse to engage with asset norms, adopt finance rationality in their way of dealing with debt or contribute to pensions.

While it is true that some households place a stronger emphasis on property (leverage investor [Langley, 2008]) or focus mainly on savings (everyday saver [Lai, 2007]), it is argued here that this should not be seen as a rejection of a financialized subject position but reflecting households' engagement with inherent ambiguities between investing and everyday identities. Strikingly, the above shown financial identities reflect in one form or the other elements from the subject position of the everyday risk manager who follows a three-pronged asset accumulation strategy. It is therefore argued here that they should instead be seen as distinct forms of identifying oneself with asset norms, i.e. 'differential normalities' (Foucault, 2007, p.91).

Approaching this study from an empirical angle has thus allowed me to extend previous discussions in the everyday financialization literature, especially with regard to the subjectification of households. The empirical insights show that households adopt a financialized subject position through conforming to asset norms, adopting self-governing measures and integrating a financial discourse.

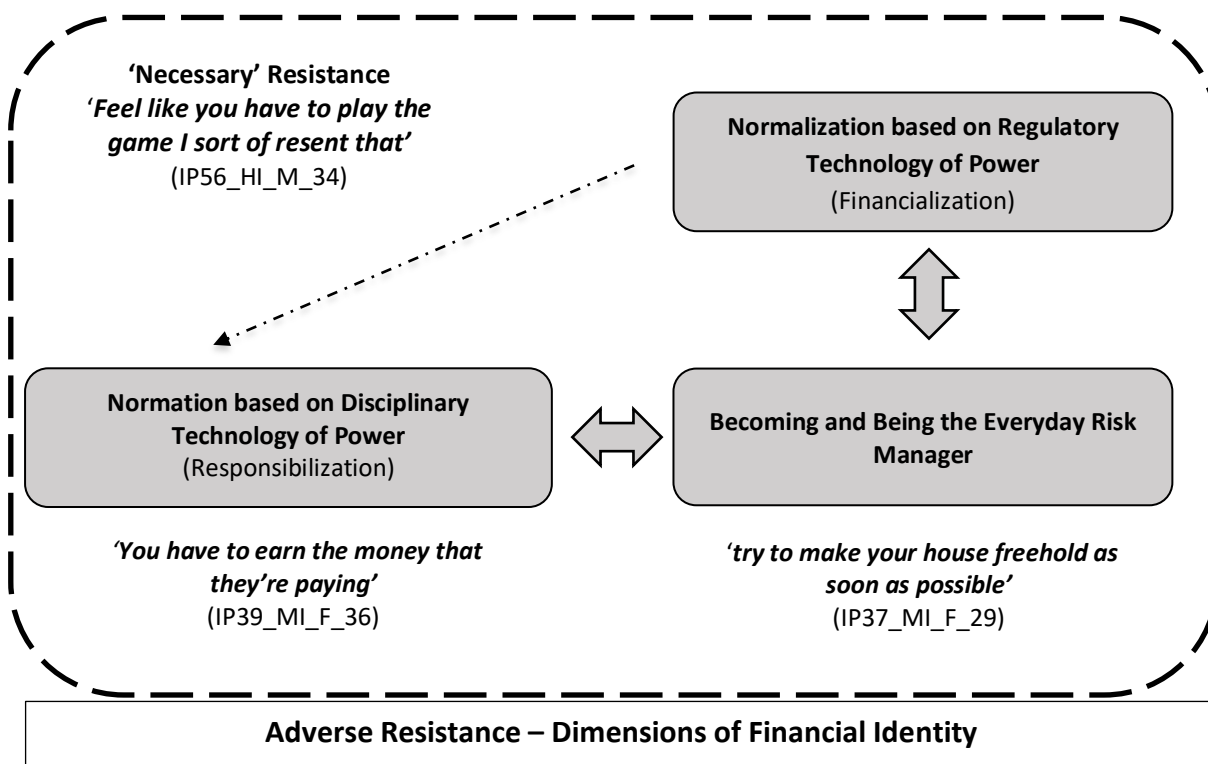
8.3.2 Theoretical Contribution to Knowledge

After having summarized the empirical findings and its impact on conceptualizations of everyday financialization, this section focuses on the theoretical contributions and thus responds to the second suggested contribution outlined in 1.2.3, aimed at showing how asset norms are embedded in power relations. For this reason, the gained insights are presented in a material-discursive framework. This enriches Hardt and Negri's (2009) and Sotiropoulos et al.'s (2013a) elaborations on capitalist relations within a Foucauldian governmentality approach by extending them to asset norms. Employing this integrative framework helps to clarify the opposing views on the impact of asset ownership on households, namely if

households adopt capitalist characteristics (Bryan et al., 2009; Weiss, 2014) or if asset norms intensify capital labour inequalities (Bonefeld and Holloway, 1996; Karacimen, 2015).

There has been evidence presented throughout the thesis which suggests that the construction of asset norms has intensified capital-labour inequalities which is summarized here. Through the interaction between disciplinary (responsibilization) and regulatory technology of power (financialization) norms of the everyday risk manager are constructed (see Figure 23). Normation based on the disciplinary technology of power entails two key mechanisms (8.2): job insecurity (deregulation of labour market) and money insecurity (retreat of the welfare state). In synergy with normation, normalization based on the regulatory technology of power, including wider access to financial products and the discursive construction of asset norms, establish a regime of truth in which it is seen as ‘normal’ that households take over responsibility by accumulating assets.

Figure 23 Framework of the Everyday Risk Manager



Source: Depiction developed based on conducted interviews in connection with Foucault (2007) and Sotiropoulos et al. (2013a, p.166)

While the media discourse portrays to households that everyone can become a capitalist by accumulating assets, the construction of asset norms also enables the government to dismantle the welfare state and putting more costs of reproduction onto households (Hardt and Negri, 2009). At the same time, this transfer of responsibilities from the government and employer onto households creates new profit opportunities in the form of increasing interest income and securitization (Sotiropoulos et al., 2013a), as shown in the case of the UK in 4.2.4. Asset norms thus act as a power technology. Yet, the question unexplored in the literature is the impact of asset ownership on labour and everyday life. For this purpose, households' discursive engagement with asset norms and everyday practices have been integrated (see *Becoming and Being the Everyday Risk Manager* in Figure 23).

Power is understood here not as repressive but as productive in transforming society and strengthening capitalist relations: '[...] it doesn't only weigh on us a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). By choosing to accumulate assets instead of being directly forced, power relationships are strengthened. As summarized in 8.2, it was shown that households pick up the dichotomous discourse between agency and non-agency. Running through households' discourses is a constant form of resistance which sees finance as profit-seeking institutions. Notwithstanding being critical, households adopt norms of asset accumulation in order to provide security in an insecure future. The contradiction between being critical and feeling the need to accumulate assets is overcome by the disciplinary technology of power, i.e. through the creation of an environment of money and job insecurity. The desire for establishing security also defines the asset accumulation strategy. The everyday risk manager accumulates assets to be independent and adopts a wider form of finance rationality, i.e. does not rely on one form of investment but conducts several investments. These resistances are therefore 'necessary' in shaping and enacting the everyday risk

manager (Foucault, 1978, p. 96) while the disciplinary technology of power, i.e. rising incesurity, solves the ambiguity between the financial and everyday identities.

Being an effective risk manager becomes a way of being where not being able to achieve asset norms is seen as failing as a person. As a consequence, households adopt self-governing measures and restrict themselves in everyday spaces of work, consumption and relationships. Hence, the interaction between the regulatory and disciplinary mechanism constructs the everyday risk manager and the resultant asset norms deepen the disciplinary technology of labour and reshape everyday practices (see Figure 23). Whereas disciplining mechanisms in the form of self-governing measures entail middle and high income households alike, asset ownership takes place in a differing way. The here conducted analysis has shown that the increase in asset ownership only seemingly boosted the ‘capitalist’ status of middle income households based on rising house prices and future capital income through private pension wealth. In contrast, high income households have access to high-yielding financial assets and diversify to a strong degree (summarized in 8.2). Material (economic background) characteristics constrain conforming to asset norms.

Despite policy and media discourse representing accumulating assets as liberating, technologies of the self lead to everyday practices being transformed while not being able to calculate away uncertainty. These contradictory forces inherent in the subject position of the everyday risk manager result in some households amending the three-pronged asset accumulation strategy, representing resistances which are ‘adversary’ (Foucault, 2003, p.280) to power relationships, for instance by avoiding pension investments. As a result, different level of normalities emerge. These different levels of normalities call forth further policy measures for instance introducing automatic enrolment of workplace pensions and higher taxation on property (see 4.3.2 and 7.3.5) in order to induce households to invest in

pensions and less in property. These measures aim to induce households to become everyday risk managers and thus intensify the regulatory technology of power (see Figure 23).

Previous literature has argued that through accumulating assets, households develop similarities with capitalists. By extending explorations on governmentality by Hardt and Negri (2009) and Sotiropoulos et al. (2013a) to asset norms and exploring everyday practices, it was possible to reveal that asset norms strengthen capital-labour inequalities (i.e. deepen the disciplinary mechanism). This depicts an extension to the previously portrayed approach of debt-financed asset accumulation (Bryan et al., 2015; Immergluck, 2011). Not only is debt productive in disciplining labour but also asset norms, despite contrary claims in the form of adopting capitalists' characteristics in the media (see 4.3.1) and literature (Bryan et al., 2009; Weiss, 2014). This disciplining mechanism even extends beyond work and consumption practices and enters everyday practices, through the mutually generative relationship between asset norms and relationships. Households live the contradiction of accumulating assets and being disciplined at the same. Interestingly, whereas there are differences between high and medium income households in their financial practices, the disciplining character of asset norms is all-encompassing.

8.3.3 Methodological Contribution

The discussion provided here relates back to the third contribution and shows how the employed methodology has enabled me to gain the previously presented insights. It was highlighted in the literature review that Foucauldian inspired studies exploring household financial behaviour have tended to focus on one side of this phenomenon, namely on the investigation of institutional changes. The conducted study thus enriches the existing body of literature by employing a qualitatively driven mixed methods design, following suggestions of recent studies to integrate primary data into Foucauldian inspired studies (see

2.4). Three levels of analysis were included: context (institutional changes), language (discourse analysis) and practice (everyday practices).

Conducting a context level (institutional changes and discourses) analysis showed how through the interaction of disciplinary technology of power (responsibilization) and regulatory technology of power (financialization) norms of the everyday risk manager are constructed. This level of analysis was helpful because of being able to reveal the intricacies in the construction of asset norms and households' interaction with these while not neglecting capitalist relationships. As a result, the productive power of asset norms (see 8.3.2) and the pervasiveness of the asset-based welfare system have been detected. For instance, rather than questioning the asset-based welfare system further deregulatory measures are introduced by Conservatives and Labour alike (see 4.3.2), therefore, intensifying financialization and its underlying inequalities. As discussed in 2.5.2, capitalists use strategies, in this case responsibilization and financialization, to secure its dominance in society but this is not necessarily a conscious project (Foucault, 1997).

The intersection between language and context level of analysis responds to a further identified gap in literature (see 2.4) where it was discovered that while the everyday financialization literature includes policy discourse analysis and its perception by households (Gurney, 1999b), a similar analysis concerning households and media is missing. This is therefore one of the first studies to show how macro-level discourses constructed in the media are incorporated in households' discourses (meso-level discourse analysis). Conducting a discourse analysis and relating it back to the context level enabled me to detect households' internalization and negotiation of asset norms. Despite distrusting the financial system and the change in society, households adopt asset norms and integrate aspects of policy and media discourses without necessarily being aware of them. The discourse analysis

showed that terms and concepts from the responsabilization discourse (hard work and responsibility, see 5.2.2) and financialization discourse (for instance investment discourse, see 7.2) are picked up and enter everyday life, even when openly criticising the government. Conflicts between everyday and financial identities are then overcome with discursive practices on the micro-level. Financial discourses are thus a key factor in adopting a financialized subject position.

During the practice level of analysis (financial practices and their impact on everyday life), it was then revealed that these norms are taken up by households and amended according to their safety needs and view of the everyday investor. The conducted literature review in Chapter 2 has revealed that previous studies have tended to focus on either the liability side (Bonefeld, 1995; Karacimen, 2015) or on one aspect of asset ownership (Christie et al., 2008; Clark, 2012) whereas an empirical investigation of assets and liabilities and households' interaction with these is missing. By placing a stronger focus on the balance sheet construction in general instead of focusing on one aspect of asset ownership or the liability side has enabled me to extend the theorization of the everyday investor subject as well as show the impact of asset norms on everyday practices (summarized in 8.3.1).

A further methodological contribution in the case of practices consists of having combined a quantitative analysis of UK household balance sheets with interviewed households' balance sheets. This unique methods design made it possible to position households' statements within the wider UK context which suggested that financial strategies are not unique to interviewed households but represent a wider development in UK society. While this approach should not be seen as a generalization of the interview data to UK households, it nevertheless helped to show that the insights gained here tend to be a wider development instead of being solely concentrated in the balance sheets of participants.

Alongside the possibility to detect household specific practices and discourses, previously made comments on the methodological implications of employing the concept of governmentality, as outlined in 2.4, are confirmed but also challenged. The insights gained through employing these different levels of analysis confirms arguments put forward by Sum and Jessop (2013) that the concept of Foucauldian governmentality should not be understood as a top-down approach. Households' construction of financial identity does not take a binary form of either becoming or rejecting a financialized subject position (Hall, 2016) but it entails different dimensions of financial subjectivities, as expected by Coppock (2013). Yet, the empirical insights also lead to a rejection of an understanding of households' financial identities emanating solely from households' practices and discourse, i.e. representing a bottom-up understanding of governmentality (Coppock, 2013). Despite having discovered multiple subjectivities, interviewed households do adopt a financialized subject position reflected in their practices and discourses. This, therefore, extends previous literature by allowing a higher degree of agency while not neglecting the impact of capitalist relations.

In general, the unique methodological approach here in the form of combining a discursive investigation of media discourses, a quantitative analysis of household balance sheets and combining them with insights from semi-structured interviews has enabled me to give insights into the construction, becoming and being of the everyday risk manager instead of focusing on one level of analysis. This is the first study of this kind and highlights the importance in incorporating a holistic approach in studying households' financial identity.

8.4 Limitations of the Research

This study has focused on bringing together different methodological approaches in exploring household financial identity which were helpful not only in identifying household

financial practices and discourses empirically but also providing new theoretical insights. Nevertheless, a qualitatively driven mixed methods study brings with it limitations. First, a potential limitation of the interviews conducted here might be that 75% of the 60 interview participants have a degree or a level above which stands in contrast to the structure of survey participants in the WAS where 25% have degree level qualifications and 75% some form of other qualification or no qualifications. As pointed out by Guiso et al. (2002), there is a correlation between income and education levels. Due to the focus on medium to high income households rather than on overall income levels, the interview sample has a tendency to lean towards high educational status. Despite this differing demographics in terms of education, contrary to the statements outlined in the literature where higher educational status would translate into a diversified portfolio including stocks and shares, the interviewees' balance sheets concentrated on property and pensions.

Second, this study was conducted in the UK context with medium to high income households. The data collected, in particular with regard to the context level, show that the institutional changes in the UK have a significant impact on household financial practices. The same research in another country might bring about other results as institutional changes and discourses differ. Furthermore, it is realized here that medium and higher income households have different underlying socio-economic backgrounds than lower income households. This limits the view on households in general, for instance, the question remains if lower income households are also aware of and deal with the rising responsibility.

Third, the evidence collected from this study shows that interdiscursive dependencies seem to play a role in intra-household imbalances. Because of having interviewed only four couples from households together or separately in interviews, the discourses provided here reflect mainly the discourses of one household member who is jointly or mainly responsible

for the financial decisions with regard to asset management. While differences in intra-household asset management were emerging, this would need to be followed up with a more in-depth analysis of these differences by incorporating both partners in the interview process.

Fourth, this study has limited the analysis of newspapers to the media outlets mentioned by interview participants. Whereas these newspapers represent the three major political orientations in the newspaper market, other newspapers might have engaged with the political discourse and asset accumulation in a different form. Alongside the kind of newspapers, the analysis is based on snapshots of the overall time period and the peaks and troughs of personal finance emerging in newspapers. Critics might argue that this limits the kind of interpretation conducted here. Yet, it was possible to develop a connection to interviewees by choosing time periods which participants mentioned.

8.5 Future Research

Based on the limitations identified above, the following future research avenues are suggested. First, due to a focus on medium to high income households, lower income households were excluded in the analysis above. Future research could explore how lower income households deal with the pressure to accumulate assets, in particular, in light of income constraints. Here, it would be interesting to see if income-constrained households tend to lean towards the identity of the non-asset manager or if they aim to adopt the pragmatist identity and intensify technologies of the self.

Second, it is deemed beneficial to extend the unique methodological approach to investigate household financial identity in different countries than the UK. In particular, countries which do not fall into a similar categorization as in the case of the Anglo-American context. Future research may explore how financialization takes place and impacts households in countries

with a still relatively seen strong welfare state, for instance in the case of Germany. A comparative approach could be adopted then in order to depict the differences in disciplinary and regulatory technologies and their influence on household financial identity.

Third, as mentioned above, the interviews hinted at the impact of asset norms on intra-household imbalances. Due to the results of the interviews, it is argued here that the role of asset management on intra-household inequalities would need to be addressed in the future. This could be done by conducting an ethnographic study including participant observation with household members separately and together and through this research financial practices and discourse of household members

Finally, the documentary analysis could be extended here. This study has been unique in combining documentary evidence in the form of media discourses with statements from interview participants. It might be helpful to follow these up with a longer time span in order to corroborate results or detect if there are differences in the documentation of asset-based welfare. Therefore, the document analysis could benefit from including further newspapers and a larger number of years in order to substantiate the here presented findings.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

This study has explored households' interaction with asset ownership and its impact on everyday life. In doing so, I join the growing collection of authors who engage with the Foucauldian governmentality concept to explore households' subjectification as financial subjects. Different from these existing studies however, I provide qualitative empirical insights into the asset strategies of UK households, problematizing the depiction of households as either everyday investors or passive financial subjects. By adopting a holistic approach, this study has shown how essential it is to give a voice to financial actors rather

than making assumptions based on institutional changes and policy discourse. With the help of a unique methodological approach combining survey data, with media documents and interviews, it has been possible to develop a connection to wider institutional changes and to show how households react as discerning actors.

Due to the interaction between regulatory mechanism, in the form of asset-based welfare measures, and disciplinary mechanism, in the form of rising job and money insecurity, norms of asset accumulation are created. These norms are internalized and a three-pronged asset strategy developed. Rather than seeing a focus on property investment as a deviation from an envisaged investor subject, it is part of the everyday risk manager who accumulates financial and non-financial assets to create financial security in the future. Due to integrating capitalist relations, I have demonstrated how asset accumulation intensifies the discipline from labour, thus, strengthening capital-labour inequalities and reshaping everyday practices. Despite asset norms exerting power over life, households reflect critically on them and develop forms of resistances feeding back into the regulatory mechanism. My findings highlight the importance of developing a holistic approach in exploring household financial behaviour.

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Appendices

Appendix A Interview Guide

- Provide a short introduction into the topic and data security according to the information leaflet
 - There will be no right or wrong answers
 - No ramifications for anything you say
 - It will take about an hour or hour and a half
- Confidential - the information in the interview will not be shared with any third party
Information will be used for a report reflecting the views and experiences of all interviewed people; no individual will be identifiable from the published results of the research
- Ask for permission to record

Background

- Would you like to tell me a little bit about you (age, family circumstances, job, living arrangements, relationship status)?
- - Are you a homeowner, mortgagor or renter?
 - May I ask what your highest educational qualification (e.g. college) and current employment status is?
- How much would you say is your monthly income individually and as a household together? Is the figure provided before or after tax?

Construction of Households as Financial Subjects

A. Conforming and/or Contesting Asset Norms

Q.A1 In regards of your work, could you give me a brief overview of your employment path and how it developed?

Q.A2 Is there anything big or an event which you intend to do in the next years? How would you say you prepare for it?

Q.A3 What does risk mean to you?

Q.A4 When you look back in time, were there times you consider that you took too much/too little risk?

Q.A5 What would happen if you lost your job or became ill?

B. Contradictory and Construed – Management of Assets

Q.B1.1 What does the term asset mean to you? Could you provide me with an example and describe its features?

Q.B1.2 What kind of assets do you have and why? How do you intend to use those assets?

Q.B2.1 As you mentioned earlier, you are currently renting, could you briefly tell me about your reasons for choosing to rent and what your future plans are and why?

Q.B2.2 As you mentioned earlier, you are the owner of the house, could you provide me with a short story how you arrived at this status (including any financial circumstances) and what your future plans are and why?

Q.B2.3 What kind of mortgage do you have on your main residence (e.g. endowment, interest-only, repayment)? How many years do you have left to pay? What is the amount of monthly repayment?

Q.B3 When you think of the term investment, what does it mean to you?

Q.B4 Could you give me an example of an investment you took out, reasons for it and how you went about it?

Q.B5 When you think about risk in relation to investments what comes to your mind?

Q.B6 When you think about risk in relation to savings what comes to your mind?

Q.B7 What would you say is your view of money/financial products?

Q.B8 How would you say your view of money/ financial products is similar or different compared to your 1) parents or other family members 2) friends?

Q.B9 How do you inform yourself about financial products or money? Can you give me an example?

Q.B10 In general, when you think about your past, why have you taken out loans in the past?

Q.B11 When thinking about your last financial product such as personal loan, mortgage or pension, how did you conduct the process including the reasons for it?

Q.B12 Have you had difficulties in obtaining credit and why? How did you solve them?

Q.B13 Do you ever check your credit rating?

- If yes: Has the credit report hindered/simplified past decisions? How has it affected you?

- If no: What do you think is that and what are your views on it?

Q.B14 So after having talked about your mortgage etc., where would you put in those different points into the following balance sheet/I took the liberty to note down the assets and liabilities you mentioned...Would you say there are some assets missing?

<u>Assets</u>	<u>Liabilities</u>

Q.B15 In connection with this portfolio, do you have a household budget where you plug in your daily expenses? Would you mind providing a ranking of the different items on there? Or could you provide me with an example?

C. Contextual and Commodified – Context and Changing Circumstances

Q. C1 In your current position, would you say you feel better or worse off than in the past? What would you say are the reasons for this?

Q.C2 Would you say your perception of money/finance and your interaction with financial products such as consumer credit has changed in the past and could you briefly explain why?

Q.C3 When thinking about the financial crisis in 2008, how has it affected you? How did you experience it?

Q.C4 Has the economic downturn affected your plans, e.g. have you had to change jobs or postponed plans such as taking out a mortgage and buying a house?

Q.C5 How has the referendum and the possibility of a Brexit affected you? How did you experience it?

Q.C6 Where do you see yourself, your family and your financial path in the future? Why?

Q.C7 If you would need to give financial advice to your friend, what would it consist of and why?

Closing

Any further comments you like to make or question you would like to ask?

Thank you and future contact possibilities.

Appendix B Call for Participants

Would you like to help a research student in pursuing her project? Do you have an hour to spare?

Then Ariane, a research student at The Open University, would like to ask for your help with her research about the role of finance in everyday life. The aim of the research is to find out what individuals like you think about the role of finance in your life and to explore your everyday activities including financial practices. The interview will take place at your home or any location that is convenient for you. Everything that you tell Ariane will be in confidence. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. She will write a report of the study but no individual will be identifiable from the published results of the research. If you do decide to take part in the interview, Ariane will give you a small report summarising the research findings of the study. The results will give you a chance to get a summary of how other households deal with finance and get tips on sources of financial advice. For further queries and taking part in the research please contact Ariane at ariane.hillig@open.ac.uk or at **+44 (0) 1908 659403**.

Appendix C Discourse Theme Guide

Genealogy Analysis – Development of a discourse through time (Macro-Analysis)

- What discourses and/or events provided models or ideas that influenced the functioning of the discourse under analysis and in what ways?
- What words in the discourse have a social history that is significant for assessing the role of the financial discourse within current power relations?
- What was happening at the time of the first discussions of financial responsibility that might have had an effect on the development of the discourse, and associated discourse?
- What policy and institutional changes might have influenced the development of the financial discourse and suppressed competing discourses?
- What other discourses were affected and how?
- What is it that guides the discourse? Why was this discourse created in the first place?
- What dominations are established, perpetuated or eliminated?
- In whose interest/autonomy/responsibility is the construction and advancement of the financial discourse? Who benefits?
- Whose interest/autonomy/responsibility are ignored/and or rejected in the construction and advancement of the financial discourse? Who would not benefit?
- Are there competing ways of talking about the discourse?
- What power relations exist between this discourse and others?
- What mechanisms are in place for a resistance discourses?

Source: Adapted from Rawlinson Three Axes of Analysis cited in (Powers, 2013, pp. 9-11)

Financial Subject Formation - Stages of Discourse Analysis

<i>Stage of Analysis</i>	Description
<i>Discourse Formations</i>	Identification of the different ways in which discursive objects such as finance is constructed in the text.
<i>Discourse</i>	Locating various discursive formations of the object within further discourses.
<i>Positionings</i>	Taking a closer look at the subject position (e.g. financially knowledgeable/ non-financial person) which discursive formations within the text and within the wider discourses offer.
<i>Practice</i>	Exploration of the ways in which discursive constructions (use of financial terms) and non-verbal practices (financial practices) and the subject positions (e.g. financially knowledgeable/non-financial person) contained within them open up or close down opportunities for action.
<i>Subjectivity</i>	Exploration of the relationship between discourse and subjectivity. Discourses make available certain ways of seeing the world and certain ways of being in the world – such as adopting an identity of a financially knowledgeable person.

Source: Adapted from Willig (2013, pp. 131-133)

Appendix D Ethics Approval by HREC



From Dr Louise Westmarland
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Email louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk
Extension 01908 652462

To Ariane Hillig, Department of Accounting and Finance

Project title Evaluation of the role of finance in everyday life
HREC Ref HREC/2016/2317/Hillig
AMS ref
Submitted 01/06/16
Decision date 09/06/16

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given favourable opinion by Chair's action on behalf of the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.
2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to the any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is may be effected).
3. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.
4. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and their frameworks for research ethics.
5. At the conclusion of your project, by the date stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final> report.

Kind regards,
Dr Louise Westmarland
Chair OU HREC <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>

Appendix E Information Leaflet and Consent Form



The Open University
Business School

Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Tel +44 (0) 1908 655 888

Fax +44 (0) 1908 655 898

www.open.ac.uk/oubs

Research Project Information

Topic: Evaluation of the role of finance in everyday life

What is the aim of this research?

The research project is being undertaken as part of my PhD thesis, and is thus for academic purposes only. The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the role of finance in the daily life of households in the UK. The study will focus on and explore people's experiences with financial practices and products in their everyday life.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This research is carried out by Ariane Hillig, a research student from The Open University. Ariane has received training in carrying out research in this regard and is conducting this research in fulfilment of her PhD research.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The researcher will be conducting interviews during the period from August 2016 to April 2017. The interviews will take between an hour and an hour and a half and would be conducted at your home or another location if you prefer, at a date and time that is convenient to you. To ensure your safety, the researcher will carry photographic identification.

What will the interview be like?

During the interview process, the researcher will ask you a few questions about your current and past experiences with financial products and about daily activities involving money and personal finances. There are no right or wrong answers, the researcher is interested to hear your views and experiences.

Will there be any costs for the research participants?

The research project is fully-funded by The Open University (UK), and is to be undertaken only for the purpose of completing a research doctorate degree (PhD) and possibly writing a research article. The research participants therefore, shall not bear any costs during the research process.

Is it confidential?

Your participation and everything discussed in the interview will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information about you or any information you provide in the interview will be passed to anyone outside the research team. The researcher will write a report of the findings from this study that reflects the views and experiences of all interviewed people, but the report will not mention the names of any individual who takes part in the research and no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the interview is voluntary and a participant has every right to refuse participation. You are free to withdraw participation before the interview data gathered from you is anonymized and analysed.

What happens now?

Over the next few weeks, Ariane will contact you by telephone to ask if you would like to take part and, if so, ask you a few questions about yourself. It is necessary to have a cross-section of people with different experiences are included in the study and for this reason we cannot guarantee that the researcher will see everyone who volunteers to take part, although we would hope to include most.

Contact Details

If you have any other questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Ariane Hillig (Researcher)
Tel. UK +44 (0) 1908 659403
E-Mail: ariane.hillig@open.ac.uk

Dr Dimitris Sotiropoulos (Supervisor)
Tel. UK +44 (0) 1908 655208
E-Mail: dimitris.sotiropoulos@open.ac.uk



Research Student
 Department of Accounting and Finance
 The Open University

Consent form for persons participating in a research project

Evaluation of the role of finance in everyday life

Name of participant: _____

Name of principal investigator(s): Ariane Hillig _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.
2. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
3. I understand that my participation will also involve participant observation of the recently visited seminar of _____ and the researcher might use parts of my talk during this seminar.
4. I acknowledge that:
 - a. the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymized at the point of transcription point on _____. After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - c. the project is for the purpose of research;
 - d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored at the Open University in Milton Keynes and will be destroyed after five years;
 - f. If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
 - g. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.
 - h.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped/video-recorded **yes** **no**
 (please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings **yes** **no**
 (please tick)

Participant signature:

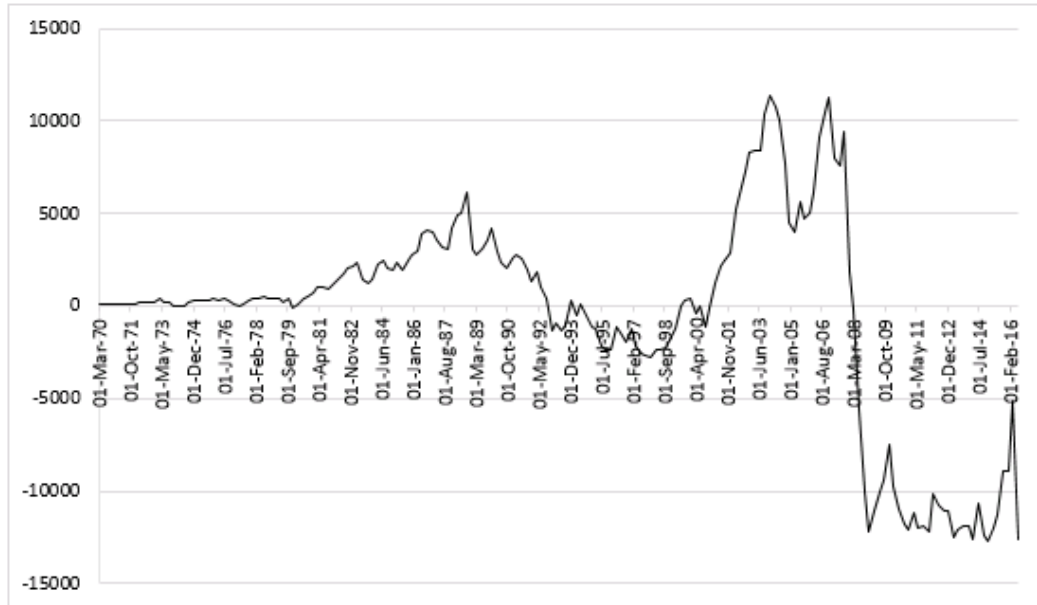
Date:

 Ariane Hillig (Principal Investigator)
 The Open University
 Walton Hall
 MK7 6AA

 Dr Dimitris Sotiropoulos (Supervisor)
 The Open University
 Walton Hall
 MK7 6AA

Appendix F Housing Equity Withdrawals

Quarterly Changes to Housing Equity Withdrawals, in Sterling millions, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Author's illustration based on BoE (2016)

Appendix G Personal Effects: We want your expert opinion

My wife and I are about to come into just over £1m from an inheritance. The thing is, we're terrible with money. We spend the last few days of each month eating beans on toast. We're both aged 35, have a mortgage, loans and a sizeable credit card bill. We're terrified we'll fritter away our good fortune. What should we do?

BYLINE: Nikki Hardwick, Dave Peddie, St John Burkett, Deirdre Mason, Anne Rylatt, Diana Bruce, Andrew Moore and Matt Harrington

SECTION: GUARDIAN **MONEY** PAGES; Pg. 2 |

Pay off credit cards and loans and see if you can pay off your mortgage early (it might be worth any penalty). Put anything left into a high interest account with restricted access. Keep a few grand aside to blow on fun things - stop worrying and enjoy it! So many people would love to be in your shoes. *(Nikki Hardwick, London)*

I inherited £50,000 in my 20s and spent most of it on sorting out my partner's debts. Some we used sensibly, the rest just seemed to disappear. Don't spend it until you have a clear plan to use it in a way that will benefit both of you. You may think it will give you stability, but it won't. It will just encourage you to spend more, thinking that you can always afford it. *(Anonymous)*

Pay off your debts, then take £100,000 and form a trust to invest the money ethically and distribute the income to your favourite charities. After that, take off for a few weeks' holiday to think about the future. If you do chuck it all down the toilet, at least you will have done some good with it first. *(Dave Peddie, Birkenhead)*

We too came into a substantial amount of money - and spent it. We cleared our debts and asked each member of the family what they wanted. We looked at moving to a bigger house, decided we liked it where we were, and built an extension. We are now pretty much back where we were, and just as happy. With a comparatively small mortgage, I can afford to pay more into my pension - early retirement is the next goal! *(St John Burkett, Peterborough)*

My daughter recently inherited a sizeable sum. She has a history of depression and eating disorders tied in with excessive spending when she comes into funds. It breaks my heart to see her literally trying to buy happiness despite the family trying everything to help her. She's already blown several thousands on "must have" items most of us regard as luxuries. Now she is spending part of her inheritance on rehab and therapy. *(Anonymous)*

Earmark at least £300,000 for a pension plan and take advice from an independent adviser. Consider some gilt-edged investments and a series of bonds that mature every five or 10 years. Keep around £100,000 easily available for improvements to the house, a decent holiday or two and some fun. Above all, don't squander your windfall on technojunk that depreciates from day one, and don't give up your jobs. *(Deirdre Mason, London, winner of this week's £25 National Book Token)*

Don't touch the capital. With a return of at least 5% you would have a pre-tax income of £50,000. Engage an independent financial adviser (through personal recommendation) to recommend investments and tutor you in budgeting, but question them closely about their independence and the commission they will receive if you follow their advice. They are obliged to disclose these. *(Anne Rylatt, York)*

£1m isn't enough to give up work for ever - but you have the luxury of financing a change of direction. Perhaps your overspending up to now has been because you don't like your lives. Or you could have fun frittering it away and treasure those memories over future cans of baked beans. *(Diana Bruce, Derby)*

Don't rush into anything and above all don't go lending the money to family and friends, as you will never see it again. I recommend you keep your affairs to yourself and don't go announcing your windfall to one and all; this will inevitably make others jealous and wanting, human nature being what it is. *(Andrew Moore, Sevenoaks)*

The Charities Aid Foundation helps people who can afford to give £10,000 or more to set up their own charitable trust. That way you will have an invested tax-free fund from which you can make donations whenever you wish. *(Matt Harrington, Tunbridge Wells)*

Appendix H Extracts from Interview 41 – Discussion between a Married Couple

Extract 1

Interviewer: Ok and do you have any other assets besides the house?

IP41_MI_F_28: cars?

IP41_MI_M_28: cars, savings, ISAs

IP41_MI_F_28: You have savings.

IP41_MI_M_28: investments

IP41_MI_F_28: You have investments, I don't bring very much to the table.

IP41_MI_M_28: Yeah, Amy does not.

IP41_MI_F_28: Yeah, I've got a car, we've got cars on finance actually.

IP41_MI_M_28: Yeah, the deal is Amy organizes life and then I make sure we save properly for it, that's it and it works. So it does, I save for a rainy day, so yeah.

IP41_MI_F_28: Yeah, tight one unless you buy anything, yeah, you've got more probably assets than I do.

Extract 2

Interviewer: And why did you choose bonds now?

IP41_MI_M_28: Because ISAs aren't worth anything at the moment so, so do I---So I had which recently just expired I set up five years ago.

IP41_MI_F_28: Five years ago

IP41_MI_M_28: Yeah, five years ago which was like time a fixed rate, couldn't touch the money I put in there, was a very, very good return, I set it up and then I left it because of the stuff, is locked for five years in. We don't have to worry about anything else. I had other sort of ISAs going, I had bonds going, the problem was last year it was to 2016, it was when that ISA had matured and the money was available to me. They just weren't any value honestly in my opinion, they were worth nothing like, you know, zero point three zero point four. I just wasn't interested in that so I took it out and then invested it into bonds and then that will then be taken and I'll invest that into stocks eventually. But yeah ISAs at the moment in my opinion absolute pointless. That is my opinion for the point that there's no return on them. Over two years I'm making thirty quid it might as well go; I might as well go to bookies.

IP41_MI_F_28: Don't

IP41_MI_M_28: No I wouldn't do that so yeah

Interviewer: And do you know in what kind of bonds you invested?

IP41_MI_M_28: Yes

Interviewer: Would you like to tell me about it?

IP41_MI_M_28: No

IP41_MI_F_28: 'cause he doesn't know (laughing)

IP41_MI_M_28: I do know because that's through Angela but I don't want to.

IP41_MI_F_28: OK

IP41_MI_M_28: It's legal, it's fine.

Extract 3

IP41_MI_M_28: That is completely through her. That is something we spoke about when I was, you're right, when I was younger, so over three, four years ago with her because we only see what like once or twice a year anyway. But I said that I wanted to do what she had done. She retired very early and again was sort of just living off what she did an awesome hobby and I said Ah sounds very good I'd like to get into it and she said yeah no worries when you got the money going serious and I said ok fine as I I just scribbling away until I've got enough to go that's what I want her to investing now. She 's she's she's very much someone who's all in or not at all to me taking 200 quid would be nothing, she'd laugh at me. And go no go away. And I'm like aw cheers. So yeah, but yeah.

Interviewer: Did she say how much you would need?

IP41_MI_M_28: She gave me an idea yeah which is doable, so it's alright.

IP41_MI_F_28: I don't even know this information.

IP41_MI_M_28: yeah, yeah

IP41_MI_F_28: He doesn't tell me.

IP41_MI_M_28: No, I don't tell Amy everything about money, it's better, it's better she doesn't always know. (sighing by partner and he is laughing) I tell her the savings and stuff, the day to day stuff you know about, that's alright.

IP41_MI_F_28: Many bags in the corner

IP41_MI_M_28: No, not at all just hopefully I don't know just like I said, I don't want to work all my life. I don't think you have to work all your life either.

Appendix I Overview of Selected Policy and Media Documents

Code	Policy Document/Speaker	Date given	Title of Speech/Document
P01	Sir William Beveridge - Economist	11/1942	Social Insurance and Allied Services
P02	Labour Party	1945	1945 Labour Party Election Manifesto
P03	Margaret Thatcher - Shadow Secretary for the Environment	01/07/1974	The owner-occupier's party – Article for <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>
P04	Margaret Thatcher - Party Leader	10/10/1975	Speech to Conservative Party Conference
P05	Margaret Thatcher - Party Leader	11/04/1979	Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979
P06	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	05/05/1981	Speech launching Business Opportunities Programme (Small Businesses)
P07	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	24/05/1983	TV Interview for BBC1 Nationwide (On the Spot)
P08	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	19/07/1984	Speech to 1922 Committee (“the enemy within”)
P09	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	10/10/1986	Speech to Conservative Party Conference
P10	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	23/09/1987	Interview for Woman's Own (“no such thing as society”)
P11	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	1987	1987 Conservative Party General Election Manifesto
P12	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	25/05/1988	Speech to Conservative Women's Conference
P13	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	05/08/1988	Speech Opening British Day at World Expo 88
P14	Margaret Thatcher - Prime Minister	23/03/1985	Speech to Conservative Central Council
P15	House of Commons – Business and Transport	17/01/1995	A Minimum Wage
P16	The National Archives	1995	Jobseekers Act 1995
P17	Tony Blair – Prime Minister	02/06/1997	Speech at the Aylesbury Estate, Southwark
P18	Gordon Brown – Chancellor of the Exchequer	02/07/1997	Budget Speech
P19	Housing Policy Area	1997	The Housing (Right to Acquire) Regulations 1997
P20	National Archives	1997	Labour Manifesto: New Labour because Britain deserves better
P21	UK government	01/10/1998	Working Time Regulations 1998 – No. 1998/1833
P22	Tony Blair – Prime Minister	12/1998	Our Competitive Future - Building the Knowledge Driven Economy
P23	Department of Social Security	12/1998	A new contract for welfare: Partnership in Pensions
P24	House of Commons Library	19/02/1999	Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill
P25	HM Treasury	12/2004	Promoting Financial Inclusion
P26	The National Archives	07/04/2010	Billion pounds package for housing
P27	House of Commons Library	03/06/2011	The economic crisis: policy responses
P28	Department for Work & Pensions	04/2013	Pensions the Basics
P29	Jo Swinson - Employment Relations Officer	05/09/2013	Changes to TUPE rules cut red tape for business

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P30	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	05/2017	Trade Union Membership – Statistical Bulletin
P31	House of Commons Library	2017	Trade Union Legislation 1979-2010
P32	Theresa May – Prime Minister	2017	Forward Together: Conservative Manifesto 2017
P33	House of Commons Library	22/03/2018	Income inequality in the UK
P34	Government Publications	2018	Gov.uk
	Media Documents	Date	Document Description
M01	Financial Times – Phillip Oppenheim	23/02/1984	Freedom of Choice in Pensions
M02	Financial Times – Robin Pauley	22/06/1984	Pension rules widely disliked, survey shows
M03	Guardian - Lawrence Lever	15/09/1984	Don't be a financial slob/ Advice on writing letters to your bank
M04	Guardian – Rosemary Burr	22/09/1984	Beware of your best friend's broker: What to do with middle-aged wealth
M05	Financial Times – Jason Grisp	10/10/1984	The rulebook makes for risk-taking
M06	Guardian – Margaret Dibben	13/10/1984	Going by the book? Guardian Family Guide
M07	Guardian – Michael Meacher	29/10/1984	A guide for the money minefield / Review of 'The Guardian Money Guide' by Margaret Dibben
M08	Financial Times	08/11/1984	The wooing of the small investor
M09	Guardian – Stephanie Cooper	29/12/1984	First of the big spenders / Suggestions for children's Christmas money
M10	Guardian – RB Cannon	28/12/1985	Not quite one of the family / Financial implications of modern relationships
M11	Financial Times – Hugo Dixon	10/01/1987	Home Sweet Secure Home
M12	Financial Times – Hugo Dixon	14/02/1987	Building Societies, Men of Mutuality Look to Profits
M13	Financial Times – John Edwards	21/02/1987	Mid-Life Joy
M14	Financial Times – Eric Short	25/04/1987	Personal Financial Planning: Portability Poses Difficult Choices/ Tax-free Lump Sums Banished
M15	Financial Times – John Edwards	09/05/1987	Learn The Facts of Life
M16	Financial Times – Kevin Goldstein-Jackson	30/05/1987	Inheriting the Windfall
M17	Guardian – David Worsfold	13/06/1987	Take some of it with you
M18	Guardian – David Worsfold	20/06/1987	Money raising begins at home
M19	Guardian – Jennie Hawthorne	27/06/1987	Popular Capitalism: Laugh like a drain as it goes down the tube
M20	Financial Times – James Buxton	12/09/1987	Shake-Up for Edinburgh
M21	Guardian – Rob Cannon	05/12/1987	Indigo as you please – The Money Show
M22	Guardian – Mark Tidbury	05/12/1987	Looking at your own performance
M23	Guardian – Nick Pandya; Jill Papworth	02/09/1989	Designer mortgages help bridge the gap to your housing dream
M24	Financial Times – Richard Waters	26/10/1990	A bitter portfolio - Hindsight; The cautionary tale of one angry investor
M25	Financial Times – Tim Dickson	26/04/1991	First clarify your aims - Choosing an Investment Trust
M26	Financial Times – Beverly Chandler	29/01/1993	FT Quarterly Review of Personal Finance

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M27	Financial Times	16/07/1993	FT Quarterly Review of Personal Finance
M28	Financial Times – Philip Coggan	22/10/1993	FT Quarterly Review of Personal Finance
M29	Guardian – Sean Langan	18/01/1997	Easy Money Personal Finance for the Uninformed: You grow up, sell out and get a pension
M30	Guardian – Simon Read	15/02/1997	High Street Offers Poor Returns in Poor Areas
M31	Guardian – Lina Saigol	15/11/1997	House party ends with a hangover: Now flexible friends point way ahead
M32	Guardian – Rupert Jones	15/11/1997	You pays yer money and takes yer choice
M33	Financial Times – Kevin Goldstein-Jackson	29/01/2000	Hard work gains honest profits
M34	Daily Telegraph – Melanie Wright	05/01/2001	Give your dependants their independence
M35	Daily Telegraph – Tessa Thorniley	24/01/2001	There’s no place like home – so hang on to it
M36	Guardian – Margaret Hughes	24/02/2001	On reflection: Margaret Hughes Editor
M37	Daily Telegraph - Nina Montagu-Smith	23/06/2001	An animated life, but entrepreneur turns back on Peter Pan, Nina Montagu-Smith meets a couple who want to work less but have made no pension provision
M38	Daily Telegraph – Tessa Thorniley	15/09/2001	Steady growth in the Knott garden
M39	Daily Telegraph - Nina Montagu-Smith	15/09/2001	Time to exercise prudence - Affordable debts today may be a burden tomorrow
M40	Daily Telegraph	06/10/2001	Pensions are not the only way
M41	Daily Telegraph – Nina Montagu-Smith	08/12/2001	Saver can savour property prospect - After years of putting money away, Belinda Rowley can now consider buying her own home
M42	Financial Times – Kate Burgess	22/07/2002	Star managers' culture reaches new heights: Investors are increasingly putting their faith in the ability of individual fund managers to buck the falling markets
M43	Guardian – Rupert Jones	31/08/2002	Money: Mortgage insurance
M44	Guardian – Jill Papworth	14/09/2002	Pay off the loan as soon as you can: It's not the most expensive debt but it's the biggest.
M45	Guardian – Money Pages	14/01/2006	moneysavingexpert.com: How to find the best mortgage and save up to £725 on fees
M46	Guardian – Miles Brignall	28/01/2006	Equity release schemes: For cash-poor but asset-rich pensioners, tapping into the capital locked up in their home can appear attractive
M47	Daily Telegraph – Faith Archer	08/04/2006	Pensioners caught in credits maze lose pounds 10m every day
M48	Guardian – Martin Lewis	03/06/2006	moneysavingexpert.com: A black and white guide to a grey area
M49	Daily Telegraph – Malcolm Cuthbert	02/09/2006	Fresh pension regime puts destiny in your hands
M50	Guardian – Rupert Jones	30/09/2006	Money: Are they really unlocking homes for key workers?
M51	Daily Telegraph – Liz Phillips	18/11/2006	Breaking up is so hard to do in modern marriages
M52	Daily Telegraph – Faith Archer	23/12/2006	Take stock of the benefits from a swift shift into shares
M53	Guardian – Rupert Jones	07/07/2007	Children's savings: Britannia goes for long-term growth
M54	Daily Telegraph – Liz Phillips	18/08/2007	Hard enough to lose a loved one without probate delays
M55	Guardian – Money: The Investor	15/09/2007	Why I put my money in managed funds – Simon Woodroffe/Shares – How to...get started
M56	Daily Telegraph – Kara Gammell	22/09/2007	Silver Lining Investment Strategies on How to Profit From the Stock Market Storms

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M57	Guardian Money	25/09/2007	Are you throwing your money down the drain?
M58	Guardian – Rupert Jones	20/10/2007	Affordable housing: Get yourself a leg-up on to the property ladder
M59	Financial Times – Matthew Vincent	03/11/2007	Don't leap into the unknown
M60	Daily Telegraph – Mark Anstead	03/11/2007	The best way to handle money when George was 'an ostrich'
M61	Financial Times – Lucy Warwick-Ching	24/11/2007	1986: British Gas privatisation and the search for Sid
M62	Daily Telegraph – Emma Simon, Paul Farrow	12/07/2008	Storm proof your finances - It's not too late to take some action to protect your home
M63	Daily Telegraph – Nina Montagu-Smith	22/09/2008	Should you invest in your Serps in a Sipp?
M64	Daily Telegraph – Ian Cowie, Rosie-Murray West, Emma Simon, Emma Wall	11/10/2008	The best thing to do is take the long-term view as the effects of the credit crisis start to ripple through the economy
M65	Financial Times – Daniel Pimlott, Chris Giles, Robin Harding	20/10/2010	UK unveils dramatic austerity measures
M66	Guardian – Nicholas Watt	02/04/2013	Osborne distances himself from Thatcher legacy over disability benefits
M67	Daily Telegraph – James Quinn	24/08/2013	It doesn't matter if you have 10 pension pots if the default scheme is good, says Scottish Widows chief Toby Strauss
M68	Daily Telegraph – Teresa Hunter	21/06/2016	How to save - whatever your age; Financing a dream retirement takes discipline
M69	Daily Telegraph – James Daley	20/05/2017	The small print sleuth - Forget mis-selling, the biggest danger that consumers face now is 'mis-buying'
M70	Daily Telegraph – Laura Suter	10/10/2017	Ask an expert: Laura Suter helps answer your questions on paying tax on savings accounts and ISA regulations. And can you put your shares in your children's names?
M71	Daily Telegraph – Teresa Hunter	14/10/2017	Using the pension freedoms? You could run out of money after just 16 years;
M72	Telegraph – Heidi Blake	16/07/2018	Grants, loans and tuition fees: a timeline how university funding has evolved
M73	Martin Lewis	2018	Moneysavingexpert.com

