

**SHARED ACCOMMODATIONS:
EXPERIENCES OF HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION IN SOUTH
MANCHESTER**

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Abstract

'Sharing' and being able to 'share' is often considered a positive virtue that we should be able to achieve. More recently, 'sharing' has received prominence as a possible route towards sustainable consumption rather than sovereign ownership by reducing manufacturing and encouraging collaborative, shared consumption of goods (Harris and Gorenflo 2012). But how do we 'share', what does 'sharing' involve, and how do we acquire the skills and knowledge that allow people to 'share' successfully? This thesis examines the 'practice' of 'sharing' in shared accommodation in South Manchester. Aiming to address current gaps in our understanding of how 'sharing' works as a practice of consumption, this thesis uses the context of peer-shared accommodation to consider the negotiation, coordination and practice of 'sharing' non-sovereign goods (goods that are not owned or controlled by any one individual within the peer-group). Based on 31 qualitative interviews across 18 households in South Manchester, coupled with an analysis of 360 house share advertisements, this research explores the process by which residents are recruited into houses and their practices, how sharing is 'done' across different 'types' of tangible and intangible assets, and how issues of conflict within the practice of 'sharing' are resolved (or not). Using 'theories of practice' (Schatzki et al. 2001; Shove et al. 2009; Warde 2005) and the 'housing pathways' approach (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009) as analytical frameworks to view the practice of 'sharing', it foregrounds the importance of interpersonal relationships on the enactment of practice. This thesis explores how 'sharing' within shared accommodation is not an easy or straightforward 'practice', but one that involves skills often acquired earlier in a resident's housing career that allows tacit negotiation and coordination of 'practice' within an often flat-hierarchy that gives rise to some conflicting and irrational forms of consumption. 'Sharing' is contingent not just on 'what' is 'shared', but also with whom, and at what time. The importance of interpersonal relations – or relationality – on the enactment of practice is a key contribution of this thesis, and suggests that further research into 'sharing' and practices more generally should consider the impact of interpersonal relations and the practitioner's 'pathway' in analyses of social practice. This thesis presents a 'contingency model of sharing' within which further research can be deployed to appraise 'sharing' as a diverse set of practices that are practically and relationally contingent, and argues for further research to explore sharing across differing contexts with relational forms in order to better inform a conceptual understanding of 'sharing' more broadly.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dedication

For my mum.

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The Author

Joshua Richards graduated from St Cuthbert's Society, University of Durham with a first-class degree in Sociology in 2006. During the summer of 2005 he was awarded a Junior Research Associate grant to conduct research on media representations of the National DNA Database in crime investigations within the School of Applied Social Sciences that formed part of a wider project on the impact of DNA in criminal investigations. During 2007 Joshua worked as a Research Assistant for Greater Manchester Police where he conducted and analysed force-wide internal consultations on the future of Greater Manchester Police and produced a report entitled *Charting the Way*, which was used to develop improvements within the force. In 2007 he was awarded an ESRC 1+3 studentship by the Sociology discipline of the School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, under the supervision of Professor Dale Southerton, where he has worked on research into the practice of 'privacy' in everyday life, which was presented within his MSc dissertation, and was awarded an MSc in Sociological Research with distinction in 2008. Since 2008 his research interests have diversified from notions of privacy, and how information is shared (and under what conditions), to issues of 'sharing' more broadly, and its role in everyday life, which has been the focus of this PhD. During this time he has enjoyed the benefits of supervision from Dr Wendy Bottero and Professor Alan Warde, in addition to continuing supervision from Professor Dale Southerton. He has presented his work at a number of conferences both in the UK and abroad, and has been a contributor to BBC Radio 4's *Thinking Allowed* on the topic of shared accommodation. He shares a flat with his partner in Manchester, which he finds as equally complex as his participants found sharing with peers.

Chapter One: Introduction

'Sharing' is something that most of us do every day. As we take our morning shower we share a municipal water supply. As we commute to work we may share a bus or train, or share the road if we are in a car or on a bike. We may share an office with other people, or share a canteen at work. We may share knowledge with others, offering other people the benefit of our experience or mistakes, or accept the sharing of such knowledge from others. We share books from libraries, and – in the UK – our wealth with others through taxation to enable a shared health service. We share social spaces, too – the cinema, bars, restaurants, theatres, theme parks, to name a few. More intimately, we may share a home or bed with someone. We share our experiences, our stories and the vicissitudes of life with our friends, family, partners or the world at large, either face to face, or via social networking. The instances of 'sharing' and what we share in the world with others are numerous, and many people seem to 'share' something every day. As children we 'learn to share', often after snatching or hoarding an item from someone else; as we grow older we may share a bedroom with a sibling or a classroom with our peers; and into adulthood we may share university halls, a shared house, a house or flat with a partner, or a residential care home. When people get married they want to 'share their lives' together. The 'sharing' of 'things' appears to cut across the lifecourse.

Contemporary social movements such as *Collaborative Consumption* (2013) and *Shareable* (2013) champion a new 'sharing economy' where we share rather than own in order to produce (and subsequently consume) less, while also maintaining and encouraging notions of community and belonging. Community and commercial organisations have emerged to encourage sharing or 'collaborative consumption' such as *Liftshare.com* (2013) where you can pool automotive resources, and *Incredible Edible* (2013) which encourages communal growing and consumption of food within communities. Sharing, it appears, is on the up.

But how do we share? And why do we share? Is sharing an innate skill, or is something that we learn? And what motivates us to share rather than keep something to ourselves? Does sharing depend on what we share and who with? Do we only share with friends, or will we share with enemies? Can we be compelled to share, or is sharing a choice?

Our sociological understanding of 'sharing' is rather enigmatic, with little attention paid to the 'doing' of sharing – how we actually go about getting things done. Some sociological theories suggest that we share certain aspects of our lives, such as our biographies and stories (Plummer 1995), tastes (Bourdieu 1984; Warde 1997), lifestyles (Bauman 1990; Maffesoli 1996), morals and manners (Lamont 1992), social conventions

(Goffman 1963; Goffman 2005) and space (Tonkiss 2005; Roberts 2007), but the mechanisms, processes or 'doing' of that sharing has been left relatively unexplored, with little attention paid to the transmission, acquisition and negotiation of skills that are required as part of that sharing. Anthropology has considered sharing as an economic form throughout its history, but largely subsumed the 'form of exchange' into issues of gift and reciprocity (Fiske 1993), until recently where it has been suggested that it be a more nuanced economic form than initially thought (Woodburn 1998).

More recently, in tandem with the rise in social movements advocating the 'sharing economy', theorists of consumer behaviour have started looking at 'sharing' as an economic form that can be capitalised upon and exploited. Most notably, Belk (2006; 2007; 2010) and Benkler (2004) have explored the function and form of 'sharing' and how it can be exploited within the realms of the market. However, Belk notes the relative lack of empirical understanding of sharing as a 'fundamental omission in seeking to understanding consumption' as 'not only is sharing critical to the most recent of consumption phenomena like the Internet, it is also likely the oldest type of consumption' (Belk 2010, p.730). The stage has been set for a greater analysis of this 'type' of consumption.

My own interest in 'sharing', which has driven the development of this thesis, was sparked during my research on 'privacy' as a social concept and practice. During the empirical research for my MSc (Richards 2008) the complex issue of 'sharing' information was a dominant theme, and was something that my participants found difficult to negotiate. 'Sharing information' for them was not just about an exchange, but it was predicated on the 'type' of information 'shared', who with, for what reason, and what might happen to that information after dissemination. They suggested that they may have inherent trust with their bank with their financial information; but are less likely to trust such information with their friends. The conditional nature of 'sharing' this one area of their lives – information – was complex, and I was intrigued to explore how complex other issues of 'sharing' were understood sociologically. In relation to that, I was also intrigued that, given the purported 'need' to share in the future (Harris and Gorenflo 2012), how will such sharing function in a wider context if sharing something as ephemeral (but no less symbolically and socially powerful) as information presented such a quandary?

On this basis of this intellectual interest, coupled with a noted gap in our understanding of 'sharing', this thesis makes a contribution to our understanding of sharing, and its 'practice' in every day life. My research into 'privacy' prominently illustrated the need for context (Mishler 1991) when discussing such conceptual issues – a way of talking about the concept of 'sharing' *in practice* rather than abstractly. Participants needed a way to

'talk about' 'privacy', so I looked for a context within which 'sharing' could be talked about and researched *in practice* rather than as an exceptional act or form of exchange. The milieu of 'shared accommodation' was highlighted by my previous participants as having contentious issues of privacy, and is also, as its name suggests, shared, and presented itself as a possible research site.

An examination of the literature on shared housing in the UK suggests a range of shared formations, including 'care homes' for the elderly (Milligan 2009) and the young (Milligan and Stevens 2006), halls of residence (Giddens 1960), and peer-shared accommodation involving young professionals. It is this latter context that is used as a base of enquiry for this thesis, where 'young professionals' proactively choose to live in shared housing with peers. This particular context presents a window into 'sharing' by virtue of the multiplicity of 'things' that are 'shared' – space, kitchens, TVs, and time, for example – and between people who do not necessarily have a strong relational link.

There is a robust base of literature on peer-shared accommodation in the UK, most notably Heath (1999; 2004), Kenyon and Heath (2001), Heath and Kenyon (2001) and Heath and Cleaver (2003) which has lucidly mapped its cultural and social prominence as a form of living and motivations for choosing shared living. Berrington et al (2009; 2010) have also tried to examine its prevalence in the UK in the absence of official statistics that allow us to view peer-shared accommodation as a particular 'unit' of analysis. Outside of the UK, there have also been some useful examinations of shared living, including Raimy (1979) who provided a 'typology' of shared housing forms in the USA; Natalier (2003; 2004) who examined issues of gender in Australian shared accommodation; and McNamara and Connell (2007) who explored the notion of 'home' in Australian shared households. However, they also did not consider the negotiation of 'sharing' itself – how individuals negotiate access and consumption within shared accommodation.

These literatures provide a solid foundation upon which to develop an understanding of shared housing, but often they failed to go 'beyond the front door' (Clapham 2005, p.37) to explore how 'sharing' is actually 'done' or 'experienced'. There are vivid accounts of household configuration and choice, particularly in Kenyon and Heath (2001) and Heath and Cleaver (2003), but the actual household practices and issues of sharing that are encompassed within shared living are left largely unexplored. On the basis of this relative lack of understanding of 'sharing' and its lack of exploration as a practice within a form of accommodation that is entitled 'shared housing', this thesis aims to empirically address some of these intellectual gaps by exploring 'sharing' as a 'practice' using shared accommodation as a vehicle for that exploration as a site where 'sharing' is concentrated and embedded within the milieu.

Using qualitative interviews with 31 occupants of shared accommodation across 18 households in South Manchester, this thesis has utilised the analytical strengths of 'theories of practice' (Schatzki et al. 2001; Shove et al. 2012; Warde 2005) and 'housing pathways' approach (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009) to examine the ways in which 'sharing' was negotiated, coordinated and enacted in shared accommodation. By going 'beyond the front door' (Clapham 2005, p.37) this research explored the fundamental aspects of sharing in shared households:

- What are the processes by which flatmates are recruited both into shared households and into the shared practices of those households?
- How is sharing empirically understood, negotiated, practiced and developed within shared accommodation?
- How does the nature of the relationships and relationality between 'sharers' impact on the perceived 'success', 'failure' or 'willingness' to 'share'?

The research explored the 'sharing' of multiple types of 'stuff' (Miller 2010) – the material aspects that make up our everyday lives – as well as less tangible and more abstract aspects of sharing, such as space and responsibilities. It places the issue of relationality at the heart of the analysis, and considers the role interpersonal relations have on the 'doing' of 'practice'.

The result of this research makes contributions to our understanding of shared accommodation as a prevalent form of living by unpacking the tensions that can arise within shared accommodation between peers, and how it is experienced in both positive and negative ways. Further, it has examined the complexities of 'sharing' 'non-sovereign goods' – those goods that no one person has ownership or control over – and how flat hierarchies can be constraining structures rather than liberating and democratic. It highlights the importance of interpersonal relations in understanding not only the 'practice' of 'sharing', but also in the role of 'practices' more widely, and suggests that we need to move beyond observing 'carriers' of practice (Shove et al. 2012) as vessels that inhabit practice, but as active, creative agents in the development, valorisation and dissolution of practice. Further, it suggests that future understandings of shared accommodation, housing, and 'sharing', need to be considered along a 'pathway' (Clapham 2005) that considers not just where individuals are at the moment of research, but where they are from, and where they wish to go, in order to understand important intra-house and interpersonal dynamics that impact the 'doing' of practice.

The following chapter explores the relevant literature of sharing and shared accommodation. It examines how shared housing as a category is understood statistically and theoretically; the current state of our understanding of living together

with unrelated people; and how we can understand housing and housing formation as more than 'bricks and mortar', but as a dynamic experience. The limits to our understanding of 'sharing' as a form of consumption are highlighted, followed by an examination of how existing examinations of household and domestic 'practices' may contribute (or not) to an exploration of 'sharing' between peers. This chapter provides an overview of 'theories of practice' (Schatzki et al. 2001; Shove et al. 2012; Warde 2005) and 'housing pathways' (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009) and illustrates their value as both a theoretical and analytical tool to understand 'sharing' in both process and context. The gaps in our current understanding of both 'sharing' and shared accommodation are specifically highlighted to illustrate the key areas of concern for this thesis, whilst advancing importance of the key research questions of the thesis.

Chapter three demonstrates how those research questions are operationalized into a robust research design, and details the practical, methodological and theoretical choices made to follow a qualitative approach. The selection, recruitment and demographic characteristics of the participants are outlined, along with the practicalities of the interview process. Crucially, this chapter outlines, through utilising 'theories of practice' and 'housing pathways', how the interview method was used to capture and access 'sharing' as a practice, and the stories of the participants, and justifies the analytical approach that was taken when using the interview data.

The findings and key contributions of the research are then explored in the proceeding three chapters. Chapter four explores the ways in which residents are recruited into shared houses both practically – how they find and choose a room – but also more theoretically, by exploring how the recruitment and selection process recruits individuals not only into a physical house but also into the practices (and associated expectations) of that house. The process of creating and searching through advertisements, viewing a house and being 'interviewed' is explored in depth to illustrate the complexity and importance of this otherwise seemingly relaxed and casual encounter, as one that involves a search for social similars – homophily (McPherson et al. 2001) – through implicit judgements of 'taste' and 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1990). This chapter also considers the first steps of 'learning the ropes' of a new shared house, and how you get to know how things are 'done' through a process of 'mimetic apprenticeship' (Shove et al. 2012).

The practice of 'sharing' is explored in chapter five, where the coordination of practices across multiple types of shared 'stuff' is considered (bills and finance; food and supplies; cleaning and responsibilities; and space) to illustrate both the commonalities of practicing 'sharing' across 'types', but also the tensions that each aspect individually

raises. This chapter explores the coordination of practices, and how this is dealt with in tacit rather than explicit ways, and illustrates the 'shared accommodations' residents make for one another within shared housing that the title of this thesis implies. This chapter also highlights the complexities and irrationalities that are sometimes present in regimes of consumption, where the financial and temporal benefits of economies of scale are declined in favour of independence of schedule and 'taste', and illustrates the tension between being both an independent economic and social entity whilst also being interdependent on their co-residents for the on-going maintenance of their living arrangements. The reluctance to raise issues of divergence in practice – particularly in relation to money – is illustrated, and the importance of avoiding an 'atmosphere' in the house, or 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000) is exemplified as an important element of practice within shared accommodation. It also considers whether shared housing arrangements are considered to constitute one household, many or both due to the complexity of consumption regimes and their organisation.

The final empirical chapter, chapter six, explores how issues of conflict in shared accommodation are resolved (or not) and how the inherent transience of shared accommodation, coupled with an avoidance of an 'atmosphere' or 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000) gives rise to less direct methods of conflict resolution in favour of more subtle regimes of behavioural modification that serve to bolster notions of 'ontological security' (Giddens 1990; Saunders 1990) rather than address the issue of conflict in hand. This chapter highlights the cognitive effort that living within shared accommodation requires, and that it is not something that is done without thinking, but requires attendance to the needs and practices of others within the household. The role of positive and negative experiences of shared accommodation are then subsequently considered to explore how participants narrated shared housing as being a continual, viable option of accommodation, or whether or motivated them to consider another form of household type, such as solo-living or moving in with a partner, that may present a potentially 'easier' form of living.

Within each of the chapters above, the value of considering relationality in conjunction with 'theories of practice' and 'housing pathways' is illustrated to illuminate the importance of interpersonal relations in the coordination and enactment of 'sharing' 'practices'. Chapter seven draws these empirical points together to illustrate the key empirical and theoretical contributions of this thesis. It explores the success of the research design, and makes suggestions for how it could be improved for further study, and how findings could be expanded to other areas of research and current policy developments.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This thesis focuses on shared households as a context and vehicle for a fuller sociological account of 'sharing'. This literature review examines the current literature on 'sharing', in order to demonstrate the current lack of empirical exploration or theoretical analysis of 'sharing' as either a concept or as a 'practice'. The shortage of work on 'sharing' is so marked that, as I indicate here, the current literature in fact contains a number of calls for more research to address this lack of attention. After establishing the dearth of work which addresses 'sharing' directly, the review then turns to a number of key existing sociological literatures which have touched on aspects of sharing, albeit indirectly and which can be drawn upon in developing a sociology of sharing. These literatures most notably include the sociologies of consumption, domestic life and practices (primarily familial), and notions of home and household. The review explores how sharing has been dealt with in these specific debates, and argues that whilst they provide a series of useful insights, the conclusions that can be drawn from this research are inevitably limited because such literatures are focused on specific and selective *aspects* of sharing rather than addressing 'sharing' specifically. Building on the point made in the previous chapter, that context is an important consideration when empirically exploring 'chaotic concepts' (Sayer 1992) such as 'sharing', this review argues that in order to develop a fuller sociological understanding of sharing as concept and as a practice, it is important to consider different kinds of sharing, and different ways of organising sharing. As a consequence, it is argued here that peer-shared accommodation offers a useful and illuminating empirical and conceptual example with which to explore more general issues of 'sharing'. This is because 'shared accommodation' encompasses both many different kinds of 'stuff' which is shared, as well as the coordination of different kinds of sharing practice; but also because (unlike some examples of more 'demarcated' sharing addressed in the literature) 'shared accommodation' as a form of household living provides a good example of 'sharing' as it is embedded in the everyday, habitual routines of personal life. Anticipating one of the conclusions of this thesis, I suggest that shared accommodation affords a particularly revealing case study of sharing practices, because the relatively more transitory and contingent nature of the interpersonal relationships within such households often mean that 'sharing' is more difficult to organise and negotiate - and so is more accessible to the researcher's view. Unlike more conventional domestic arrangements, organised around familial or conjugal relations (and based upon the expectation of long-term commitment and personal obligation), within shared accommodation the household is both much more transitory and more heavily contingent upon the successful

organisation of sharing. To explore 'sharing' using the lens of 'shared accommodation', however, also requires an examination of how existing research understands the 'practices' that occur within 'households', and work in this area is discussed in order to illustrate the current state of our understanding of 'sharing' in the domestic sphere. There are two distinct kinds of literature here: work specifically on the domestic sphere, which primarily focuses on household relations and the division of tasks in familial and conjugal contexts; and work emerging from practice theory, which looks more generally at the organisation of everyday social practices. I first examine how the domestic sphere, as a site of both consumption and interpersonal relationships, can provide a window of understanding into issues of 'sharing' more broadly. In addition, I highlight some current gaps in our knowledge of living within shared accommodation, and argue that as well as providing a platform to explore 'sharing', the empirical focus of this thesis on how various aspects of 'sharing' are practically negotiated and achieved, also contributes to a fuller understanding of the complexities of living within shared accommodation. Practice theory is employed as a core element of the theoretical approach adopted in this thesis, because its analytical framework focuses on the 'doing' of practices in the 'everyday'. I examine the core elements of practice theory (and in particular its analytical focus on the habitual, coordinated and collective nature of everyday social practices, and the important temporal dimension of the processes by which people are recruited into practices, and how practices emerge, develop and change over time) in order to establish the value of this approach as a lens for analysing sharing as a set of practices. Finally, I discuss how bringing together Shove et al's (2012) approach to 'practice theory' and Clapham's (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009) 'housing pathways' approach provide a practically and temporally holistic approach that can examine the research context of shared accommodation as an *in process* and evolving milieu, rather than as a static housing category.

How is 'sharing' understood?

Although sharing is widely seen as an essential component of social life there has been comparatively little research into the topic and, at present, we lack a developed understanding of sharing as a practical social endeavour. This section explores and examines what little research there has been which is directly focused on 'sharing', examines the form this research has taken and its core insights, but also indicates the limitations and virtues of such to such approaches. As noted in the introduction, 'sharing' appears to cut across multiple and varied aspects of social life, and is a skill or trait that is often expected of people from others. It is often clear when other people are *not* 'sharing nicely', such as someone returning a library book late (or even worse, with their notes all over the pages), or someone making excessive noise in an otherwise silent cinema. Such behaviour could be seen as simply having bad manners, going

against a contextual 'norm' (Joly et al. 2008) or as aberrant behaviour (in contrast to the mass of those who do conform). However, as well as the issue of 'behaving' well, or not, there is also the question of sharing involved in these instances: the 'sharing' of a particular book, and, in turn, a library or the 'sharing' of a cinema, its space, facilities, and the experience of viewing that film. Within these two examples there are issues of access to a good or space that is made available mutually with some awareness (or neglect) of the presence and needs of others: above all, a requirement to 'share'. Issues of 'sharing' appear to move beyond simple issues of manners, and, as this thesis will demonstrate, 'sharing' involves processes of negotiation and awareness of the 'rules', of sharing, particularly if instances of sharing are to be successful. As Belk (2010, p.715) notes:

Sharing is a fundamental consumer behavior that we have either tended to overlook or to confuse with commodity exchange and gift giving. Sharing is a distinct, ancient, and increasingly vital consumer research topic that bears on a broad array of consumption issues ranging from sharing household resources versus atomized family possessions to file sharing versus intellectual property rights.

Although Belk is speaking in reference to the academic realm of consumer research, the same confusion and oversight is evident across the academic sphere. Whilst there are multiple examples in social life of scenarios where we see sharing as necessary, it is unclear from existing theory and research how we 'learn' to 'share', or how such sharing is negotiated. Sharing as a practice – as something that one does with others, regardless of our relationship with them – has been under-explored within empirical research, and has also been neglected theoretically, often being subsumed into theories of bartering and exchange (Fiske 1993; Woodburn 1998). Research which focuses *specifically* on sharing as a wider social practice is surprisingly recent, with much of this work focusing on consumer behaviour (Belk 2006; Belk 2007; Belk 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Ozanne and Ballantine 2010) and on how 'sharing' can be viewed and utilised within the realms of commerce and marketing, rather than as an interpersonal trait or practice. Although there is a wealth of research on gifting, reciprocity and commodity exchange (Fiske 1993) within which 'sharing' is often subsumed, others have drawn the distinction that 'sharing' is different in quality and form to these practices (Woodburn 1998). 'Sharing' can be both reciprocal and non-reciprocal as although the act *itself* may not be reciprocated (as often sharing involves 'lending' something that the lender possesses, but the other party does not, negating the need to mirror the exchange in reverse), it may create the *expectation* of reciprocation in the future (a right to borrow something different in the future which may *or* may not be claimed). We must also step outside notions of 'commodity exchange' as 'sharing' often involves a temporary, rather than permanent, transfer of goods, with an absence of payment (as for example in the loan of a tool, or the borrowing of clothes, music or books). These contrasts from legacy assumptions about 'sharing' suggest that there is a greater need

to understand the complexity and diversity of sharing; particularly if, as some commentators argue, increased and more extensive sharing is going to be fundamental to future consumer choices and sustainability endeavours (Botsman and Rogers 2011; Harris and Gorenflo 2012).

Within wider accounts, attention has chiefly focused on *contentious* forms of sharing that are subject to social, political and academic debate. Most prominent has been the example of the sharing of limited medical resources (or 'rationing'), both within the UK and the USA, where it has been noted that the development of resource sharing systems has run into difficulties due to such systems uneasily straddling ethical, political, economic and social concerns (Daniels 2002). However, 'ordinary' or unproblematic instances of sharing have received much less public or academic attention; perhaps it is because sharing is so widespread and fundamental to social life that there have been few studies focused on sharing as an everyday or mundane practice.

More recently, Sennett (2012) has mapped the 'rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation', to argue that living with others (in the widest possible sense) is a craft that requires skill, and a skill that is in decline. Sennett explores a range of contexts, including childhood and the workplace, to explore different aspects of cooperation, and highlights the divisive nature of inequality as a contributing factor to the breakdown, or prevention of, social unity and mutuality. Such an exploration makes a useful initial contribution to a wider understanding of 'sharing', but Sennett's account sidesteps the issue of sharing space or 'stuff', abstracting from the concrete aspects of *what* is shared to focus instead on cooperation achieving ideological ends, to make the broad point that a failure to cooperate can erode wider social structures. Sennett's account is a macro one, suggesting that a resurgence of cooperation could help 'resolve anxiety' (2012, p.280) that has been brought about by modern social life and economic instability. It is important to note that 'sharing' involves a level of cooperation – as it involves an awareness of an 'other' in the relationship and the practice – but this kind of analysis is largely absent from Sennett's account, in favour of broader economic conceptions of solidarity, competition and ritual, as societal models of behaviour. It would be unfair to say that Sennett neglects relationships *between individuals*, as Sennett does provide individual examples of his wider, theoretical ideas. However, the analysis fails to consider the relationship between the individual and the resource being 'shared' (since, as we shall see, the sharing of different kinds of 'stuff' varies significantly) nor – beyond the general framework of 'cooperation' – does it consider how the *quality* of relationships between individuals may impact upon that 'sharing'. So whilst providing some useful general points, this account ultimately does not offer a firm foundation for analysing 'sharing' in the everyday.

It is Belk (Belk 2006; 2007; 2010), who has provided the most comprehensive *theoretical* account of sharing, albeit one focused within the framework of consumer studies. Indeed, Belk argues that sharing is an important part of economic and social life that requires more developed academic attention – both for the purposes of exploiting sharing financially in the market under the guise of sustainability, as well as for a more informed sociological understanding. Belk (2010, p.717) reviews current academic thought on how sharing is defined, but in a partial *mea culpa* suggests that these definitions are not adequate, noting that they are not ‘sufficiently precise’:

Benkler (2004) sees sharing as “nonreciprocal pro-social behavior.” Belk (2007, 126) defines sharing as “the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use.”

Aiming to address this imprecision, Belk (2010) explores a range of perspectives to consider alternative ways of conceptualising sharing within consumer research, and suggests a distinction between ‘sharing in’ and ‘sharing out’. ‘Sharing out’ involves the type of sharing where resources are distributed to others, often without a close personal tie (as for example contributing food to a work BBQ, or giving a newspaper to a fellow commuter once read); in contrast, ‘sharing in’ often infers or instigates an intimate connection, such as ‘sharing in’ the family and ‘initiates and celebrates’ the extension of the ‘self’ to an other, through the ‘act of communion’ (2010, p.726) both in everyday, mundane provision of food and shelter, and also more extraordinary acts such as birthday parties and presents. Belk’s assertion, then, is that sharing is split into two forms: redistribution to non-intimates; and acts of communal consumption that ‘extend the self’ and act as an affirming part of that intimate relationship. Such a consideration of how the relationality (Smart 2007) between ‘sharers’ affects sharing is useful and welcome, but also problematic in several respects. Firstly, the distinction between intimates and non-intimates is not fully articulated beyond ‘the family’, and remains a crude division focused on notions of ‘the family’. Secondly, as this thesis will demonstrate, there are instances of ‘sharing’ that blur the boundaries of intimate and non-intimate, such as those within shared accommodation (who are in close physical and domestic proximity but generally lack close interpersonal ties). Given the apparent significance of the quality and form of the relationships between those who share, such instances of ‘sharing’ that blur the boundaries of intimate and non-intimate are likely to be particularly revealing for our understanding how sharing ‘works’. Furthermore, there are limits to the applicability of Belk’s distinction between sharing ‘in/out’, as this division is undermined by his own observation that those forms of sharing that we may currently understand well, such as familial sharing, are also fundamentally different to consumer models of sharing, due to the ‘taken for granted sharing privileges’ (2010, p.724) afforded to those who are at ‘home’. The notion of ‘taken for granted sharing privileges’ at ‘home’ suggests that there is no need to consult someone to access goods or services in those contexts – even if the goods or services are owned or provided by

someone else, such as a parent or head-of-household – because there is a shared expectation that many elements within the home are automatically to be shared, unless they are clearly demarcated, either physically (such as in someone's particular room) or culturally (such as gendered items). However, such 'taken for granted' sharing privileges are by no means ubiquitous in domestic contexts and 'shared accommodation' is an example of this. In such households, residents share close domestic quarters with people with whom they do not share a familial (or perhaps even amiable) link and so 'sharing privileges' in such situations are often complexly negotiated and unevenly distributed. This raises the question of just how sharing operates in situations or relationships where there are no (or few) 'taken for granted privileges'. Moreover, Belk's examination does not consider the practical processes and negotiations that enable either 'sharing in' or 'out'. Even though, as Belk (2010, p.717) notes, '[s]haring tends to be a communal act that links us to other people'; there has been little exploration into what happens *between* the people who are 'sharing' to understand the social processes involved.

One intriguing aspect of work on sharing is its focus on *ownership* of the element – the 'thing' or 'space' – being shared. For much existing theory there appears to be a sense that for there to be 'true' sharing, someone must have ownership of the object in question. Belk (2006), for example, specifically discounted contexts where individuals did not have an ownership claim over the goods or services being shared (such as communes or cooperatives) from his analysis, instead focusing on those instances (such as familial or organisational contexts), where ownership could be identified and asserted during the course of the act of sharing. It is important to reiterate that Belk (2010, p.715) is specifically considering 'consumer sharing' from the view of understanding consumer behaviour, leaving instances of sharing outside of this context in the empirical and theoretical shadows. However, as the empirical data from this thesis illustrates, there are also instances of sharing where there is either no ownership of the 'good', where that ownership is ambiguous, or where the sharing involves more ephemeral than physical items (such as time). It is argued here that these examples of the sharing of 'non-sovereign stuff' are interesting in their own right, and present an important opportunity to more fully explore the complexity and diversity of 'sharing'.

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) argue that there has been a relative lack of focus on sharing as a practice of consumption (in comparison to sovereign ownership of goods) and rightly present this as a significant empirical and theoretical problem. Using the case study of car sharing, they argue that the complexities of consumer sharing in such a case are fundamentally different to that of owning, as the relationship between the consumer and the object is also different. Those who are 'sharing' or 'accessing' a shared vehicle do not own the vehicle, and the rules that govern the relationship

between the object and consumer are also different, as there is often an 'other' (organisation or person) that manages the relationship and the conditions of sharing. These differences are important both in how we conceptualise 'sharing' theoretically – in relation to power structures and relationality, for example – but also in the complexities that consumers face in the process of practicing such 'sharing'. Bardhi and Eckhardt label such sharing as 'access-based consumption', where consumers transactionally arrange for access to goods and services on a periodic basis (where that transaction may or may not involve some form of payment in return for access). They argue that this mode of consumption has grown in recent times largely due to the growth in online communities and services that mediate access.

Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2012) case study of car sharing serves to illustrate how sharing of a good and service (such as a car share) differs from a situation where a consumer has exclusive access to a product, and provides an intriguing way of thinking about the differences between exclusive versus access-based consumption. However, as this thesis demonstrates, this model is problematically limited when we consider the research context of shared accommodation explored in this thesis. As will be argued within the empirical chapters, whilst access-based consumption clearly does occur within shared accommodation, it is also apparent that the good and service that housemates have paid to access (the house) must be shared through co-residence and co-presence with those others who have also paid for access. Such mutual and co-resident access also entails on-going questions of negotiation and mediation as a part of daily lived experience in the home, and raises broader questions that go beyond models of single access-based forms of consumption (such as a car-share), or of models of relationships based on economic rationality. In addition, with their focus on the relationship between owner and consumer, Bardhi and Eckhardt neglect the process of the negotiation of sharing and the experience of 'sharing' for those that are 'doing' the 'sharing'. Ultimately their account presents a model of utilitarian relationships based on commodity use, rather than a model of interpersonal sharing involving creative, emotive social actors.

A more recent and potentially more promising conceptualisation of 'sharing' (in a similar vein to 'asset based consumption') has arisen under the term 'collaborative consumption'. This is a term coined by Botsman and Rogers (2011) to encompass a set of consumption practices and behaviours that they see as emerging from the rise of social networking via the Internet. Although not a theory of 'sharing' *per se*, it has gained significant ground as an explanation addressing the driving factors behind the 'sharing economy', and provides the most contemporary, practical explication of 'doing' 'sharing'. By harnessing the Internet's ability to bring distant people together, a range of services have become available that allow 'underused asset utilization' (Sacks 2011) –

the swapping, borrowing or sharing of goods, space, skills or resources between individuals, rather than their sovereign ownership and use, with the goal of enabling a more sustainable future, and also to save money. This, Botsman and Rogers argue, has developed into a 'sharing economy', which operates in contrast to existing economies of asset acquisition and consumption. The sharing economy is argued to occur across three realms: product service systems; redistribution markets; and collaborative lifestyles. *Product service systems* are websites and services that allow access to resource, such as car sharing, bike sharing (such as the London bicycle hire scheme) and film rental (such as Lovefilm in the UK), sometimes but not always as a profit making endeavour. *Redistribution markets* bring donors and seekers together to pass on goods rather than disposing of them, both for free (such as Freecycle) or for a profit (such as eBay). Finally, and of most relevance to this thesis, *collaborative lifestyles* are those services that bring together people who want to share things between one another, such as workspaces, a bed for the night in someone's home as opposed to a hotel, or land for gardens and agriculture. Botsman and Rogers argue that for these forms of collaboration to be entered into and maintained, four pre-requisite conditions must be achieved: critical mass (of people wanting to collaborate and of goods to collaborate with); idling capacity (of products or space, for example); a belief in the commons; and trust between strangers. In sum, there needs to be enough people with enough commodities that other people want, with a desire to collaborate with and trust other people.

This approach offers some useful insights. But while it might be easy to assume that 'sharing' falls within the realms of collaborative consumption by virtue of its intrinsically collaborative nature (if it is to be successful), the focus of the collaborative consumption model is on elective, episodic and extraordinary practices of consumption; rather than the necessary, sustained and embedded practices of consumption that are evident within contexts such as shared accommodation. It is argued here that these necessary, sustained and embedded practices are also vital to a full understanding of sharing. So, for example, someone may choose to share their garden for the purposes of growing vegetables, and may do so for a long period of time, but the level of interaction and negotiation required in such a practice is far less frequent and embedded than that which is required for shared *living*. Initially, to share a garden, one might consider 'ground rules' and partition the plots, but thereafter the sharing is routine and relatively atomised, with people individually tending their plots, rather than engaging in continual group participation. Similarly, consider the example of a person arranging a regular car share, where they offer someone a lift to work every weekday. Whilst this is may be a frequent occurrence of sharing in such people's lives, it is still *elective* in that both can choose to discontinue the sharing at any point; it is an *episodic* form of sharing in that it occurs for brief periods each day; and finally it is an *extraordinary* act both in

comparison to wider societal practices (car sharing is still relatively minimal), but also in regard to the interpersonal practices of the sharing (we may be on better behaviour in someone else's vehicle than in our own, for example). In contrast, the 'sharing' that occurs within shared accommodation is partly elective (in that residents have actively chosen to live within shared accommodation), but nonetheless contains 'necessary' elements (since sharing space and facilities is a necessary part of shared accommodation), as it is sustained (over the length of a resident's tenure), and incorporates 'embedded' sharing practices (such as sharing a bathroom, kitchen utensils, washing machine and even the front door). The model of collaborative consumption therefore does not help us to address the nature of the sharing practices found in shared accommodation.

So although the collaborative consumption model presents a compelling picture of changing social and consumption practices, with information and communication technology providing a catalyst for that change, and seeks to address the sharing of goods and services which are not owned, it nonetheless fails to encompass the full continuum of 'sharing', from episodic to sustained. Furthermore, and a point of considerable conceptual importance for this thesis, if the sharing aspect of shared living is *sustained* and *embedded* (rather than *episodic* and *extraordinary* as in collaborative consumption) then to develop a fully adequate sociological account of sharing we must also consider how 'sharing' is embedded and reproduced (or not) in the habits and routines of everyday life.

Work such as Molotch and Norén's (2010) *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* does go some way to examining the difficulties that people can face when accessing goods and services that they *do not* own with other peers – which this thesis refers to as 'non-sovereign' owned goods. Using the public toilet as a lens with which to explore this issue, the papers in their edited collection illustrate how differences *between* people – in either actual or expected use – can cause conflict and anxiety for users. For example, a transsexual toilet was introduced in a Thai school to prevent bullying of transsexual students by heterosexual boys and to assuage the anxieties of heterosexual girls caused by the presence of transsexual peers (Head 2010). Head argues that this illustrates how sharing a 'public convenience' is not a straightforward case of simply making use of facilities. Rather there are often difficult negotiations based on who else is using the facilities and how the act of sharing may reflect on individuals or groups, with associated issues of negotiating safe access. In the instance of the students' toilet, the issue of sharing became so problematic that the school removed the issue of sharing completely. Communal or common access to a good or service is not necessarily an equalising factor; it can actually service to heighten perceived tensions between individual differences. Within this example, aspects of relationality (Smart 2007) – the

quality of relationship between people – were a key concern: and it is apparent that having shared access to a good or service can be impeded by interpersonal differences.

Sharing, then, is not necessarily an easy task, even though it is considered culturally and socially virtuous (Widlök 2004). Research into altruism, where individuals ‘selflessly’ ‘give’ resources to a person, project or cause, suggests that there is an overarching morality associated with such an act of ‘sharing’ your resources (Andreoni 1990). Such moralities are shared across communities, which was particularly highlighted by Alessandrini (2007) who suggested that, in relation to blood donation, where donors very rarely know the recipient of their ‘altruistic’ act, people were more likely to give blood where there existed a familial or community legacy of doing so, indicating the transmission of the notion of altruism. The idea that we ‘learn’ such virtues is important as it suggests a more constructed rather than innate property of individuals to proactively cooperate with one another.

Literature on the social process of sharing, and how we learn or acquire the ‘skill’ to share is also limited. ‘Sharing’, and ‘sharing well’ – being able to visibly and cordially ‘share’ assets or ‘stuff’ with others – is often considered a social virtue (Widlök 2004) that has its roots in childhood and is deployed throughout our later lives (Belk 2010). Sharing is often seen as a tacit, innate skill, that all are capable of accomplishing – but with some better at it than others. However, the existing literature does not necessarily support this suggestion that sharing is ‘innate’, indicating instead that sharing is something people do when they can recognise an economic or social motivation for doing so, rather than something that is ‘hard wired’ (Eckel et al. 2011; Guillén et al. 2011; Proctor et al. 2013). ‘Learning to share’ is considered a fundamental part of growing up (Belk 2010) and something that takes time to learn, involving a number of processes (what is shared and why) across distinct contexts (where it is shared) (Benenson et al. 2003). Although there are books to read *with* children about the positive benefits of ‘sharing’ through allegory, such as *Sharing a Shell* (Donaldson 2005) and *Share and Take Turns* (Meiners and Johnson 2003), a search for guidance on how to teach ‘sharing’ to children in both academic and parenting publications yields few results, with *Toddlers: the Mumsnet Guide* (Nicholls 2009, p.273) devoting a single page to the subject, advising:

Sharing does not come naturally to little children. Let’s face it, it doesn’t come that naturally to quite a few adults, but children are by their nature selfish creatures – the capacity to empathise and see things from another person’s viewpoint comes only with age and maturity. The urge for everything to be ‘mine!’ is a very strong one in small children, but it’s essential to teach them to share if you are to avoid years of inter-toddler violence.

While brief, this popular form guidance does offer one useful insight in that the capacity to share is seen as one that requires individuals to be aware of the 'other' in the relationship.

As indicated above, existing conceptions of, and research into, 'sharing' leaves a rather enigmatic picture, with little clarity on how 'sharing' is 'done', and less empirical work to substantiate the broader theoretical ideas about what 'sharing' actually consists of. Further, much research has failed to focus on 'sharing' as a routine aspect of social life, being more directed to extraordinary and elective acts of sharing, and to the behaviour of consumers as instrumental agents, rather than as holistic social actors. However, it has been acknowledged that 'sharing' demonstrably occurs outside of the commercial world of 'consumption', with a significant arena of sharing being, as Belk (2010) notes, within of the site of the 'home'. It is to the notion of domestic life and consumption that this review now turns, to explore how such work currently conceptualises behaviours that could be considered as 'sharing'. In so doing, I also consider the value of the domestic arena as a research site for understanding 'sharing' more broadly.

'Sharing' within consumption and domestic life

The question of how people 'share' has been raised – albeit in a particular and limited manner – within the sociology of consumption, though, as previously noted, chiefly in discussions of commodities and the sharing of 'things', such as Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2012) study of car sharing (discussed earlier), or Ozanne and Ballantine's (2010) analysis of toy libraries as a form of 'anti-consumption'. In addition, there have emerged more proactive literatures – perhaps better described as manifestos – that advocate a more positive view of sharing as a prerequisite if we are to survive as a species (such as Harris and Gorenflo's (2012) *Share or Die*, and Botsman and Rogers' (2011) *What's Mine is Yours*, whose conceptual framework was more expansively explored earlier in this chapter). These literatures encourage the divestment of 'stuff' from sovereign individual ownership to community access (with that community ranging in form and size), advocating a collaborative rather than individualistic approach to both acquisition and consumption. So for example, rather than buy individual tools, there should be a community tool library; rather than stay in hotels, there should be a safe arena to advertise spare rooms in residential houses. The benefits of this, it is argued, are environmental, social and financial: we will consume less, while getting to know other people, and also save (or even make) money. Such manifestos argue that we should 'share' more 'stuff' and more often. However, they do not deal with *how* we share – the emotional and practical negotiation that may be required for this to be enjoyable or successful; instead, they focus on its necessity for the goal of sustainability. The fact that some people may not feel comfortable in sharing their home with relative

strangers, or prefer not to have to book ahead to access a drill, is not their concern, and their aims are arguably utopian. As I shall argue in this thesis, 'sharing' is not straightforward, and is not a merely a 'transaction', but rather a social process and practice that involves negotiation across both practical *and* emotional planes. So if more sharing is a necessity for a sustainable future, we need to better understand how successful sharing is negotiated and achieved.

Belk, as we have seen, sees familial sharing as one of the better understood, more extensive and more successful forms of 'sharing'. For him, the sharing that occurs in the family home is a distinct form of 'sharing in', fundamentally different to consumer models of 'sharing out', and characterised as an act of 'communion' and based on intimate connection and 'taken for granted sharing privileges' (2010, p. 726, 724). There are, as I have argued, some problems with Belk's characterisation, however, it is worth looking at work specifically on 'sharing' in the domestic sphere – the household or home – to further develop our account of sharing. This section turns to consider how such research – which primarily focuses on household relations and the division of tasks in familial and conjugal contexts – frames such issues, and sheds light on questions of sharing.

This literature often focuses on the home as a site of both (re)production *and* consumption: of production, through its role in (re)producing the family; of consumption, through its central role in the acquisition and use of goods and services. Consumption can be both a creative realm (involving for example, dinner parties or household furnishings) and a bureaucratic realm (involving the sharing of bills and rent), with the latter requiring us to consider how people share not only interpersonal relations within the 'home' but also finances and economics. These different, and not necessarily overlapping, forms of sharing, requires us to consider the distinction between the 'home' versus the 'household', since it is possible to share space, and finances, but not necessarily to share intimacy. Both home and household are also, as will be explored here, arenas within which consumption – and 'sharing' – can occur both electively and through necessity. In this section then, I explore how 'practices' of consumption within the household home can form the basis of an exploration of sharing as a site of embedded and concentrated forms of practice. However it is also worth noting that interesting complicating factors emerge, because conceptualising the notion of 'household' can become problematic when observing household 'types' beyond familial or solo-living configurations.

Sociologically, the notion of household has varied definitions, but the notion of a shared space and life are common features, as this composite overview provided by Scott and Marshall (2012) illustrates:

A group of persons sharing a home or living space, who aggregate and share their incomes, as evidenced by the fact that they regularly take meals

together—the ‘common cooking-pot’ definition. Most households consist of one person living alone, a nuclear family, an extended family, or a group of unrelated people. The definition is sometimes varied so as to exclude, or include, households of non-related people who may set very variable limits, in practice, to the extent of their income-sharing or common expenditure. (Scott and Marshall 2012)

The household is further specified more in terms of its economic rather than its familial basis by Calhoun (2012), but again the element of sharing is emphasised:

Often held to be the primary unit of social organization. The concept generally privileges common residence and certain basic economic functions (such as food preparation or domestic production) over reproduction and kinship (quintessentially, the family). It is useful in describing societies in which households are not organized around nuclear families—and less useful in the context of nomadic or foraging societies that do not possess fixed domiciles. The term domestic group is sometimes used as a substitute for both household and family. (Calhoun 2012)

The household by most definitions, then, features people living together and, through looking at aspects of consumption, we can see the ‘household’ as a site of both individual *and* collective consumption. But what is it that households ‘share’? The household as a collective entity consumes utilities such as water, electricity, gas and telecommunications (such as the telephone, Internet and television services), which are charged at the household level. The household also consumes community services such as refuse collection, paid for via Council Tax in the UK, and charged for on a household rather than individual level¹. More broadly, the rental of the property itself, through the payment of rent to the landlord, or the purchase through a mortgage, is a form of collective consumption of the property, for those living with others. These forms of consumption can appear more *intangible* than many forms of consumption as we cannot necessarily see, touch or hear what is being consumed; we can see the result of the consumption (the TV is on, the oven is hot), but are not always aware of the consumption as it occurs. However, the awareness of this consumption becomes more acute when a bill is received; particularly one that is higher than was expected.

As well as these intangible, deferred and more abstract forms of consumption, there are the more tangible forms that are conducted both individually and collectively that can be either extraordinary (special, or infrequent) or more mundane (the ‘every day’ or ‘the essentials’). Such items include the food that is eaten, the dishes that are eaten from, the physical television that is watched, the sofa that is sat upon, the toiletries that are used for washing, and the loo roll that is used for wiping. Furnishing and styling the home to individual tastes is a form of consumption (Madigan and Munro 1996) and often

¹ There are some exceptions to this, such as households consisting entirely of students, or houses of religious orders, both of which were not part of the focus of this research. More details on Council Tax in the UK, and the exemptions that are available can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-exemptions> (accessed 9th August 2013).

involves creating a sense of shared identity within the home, as much as providing communal practical and physical comforts (Reimer and Leslie 2004).

The question of how households intersect - or not – with ‘homes’ has been a core issue in the literature on households and homes.

Is home (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world? Home is variously described as conflated with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying. Many authors also consider notions of being-at-home, creating or making home and the ideal home. (Mallett 2004, p.62)

The question of what a ‘home’ *is*, or what ‘home’ *means* is a common question across the literature. As the quotation from Mallett’s review of the literature indicates, notions of ‘home’ are often varied, in-progress, and intersect. Most crucially for this thesis, such literatures emphasise that the home or household is not an isolated or mechanistic site of consumption; it is a dynamic milieu, where instances and practices of consumption *intersect* with the management of relationships – or relationality (Smart 2007) – within its walls. This intersection of practices and relationships within the space of the household is a quality that will be more fully explored later through the use of Clapham’s (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009) ‘housing pathways’ approach, an approach which forms a fundamental part of the theoretical approach of this thesis.

Sharing is interpersonal, since, by definition for something to be shared, it must be shared between people. Whether the objects of sharing are things, responsibilities, space, a ‘home’, relationships, or indeed – as in shared housing – all of the above, the analysis of sharing requires us to pay attention to the interpersonal, and to how the form and character of intimate, personal relationships affects sharing practices. Literature on ‘home’ (and the importance of ‘feeling at home’) has often stressed this interpersonal aspect. McNamara and Connell (2007) examined the idea of ‘home’ within shared housing in Sydney, Australia, and suggested that the notion of home is more associated with relationships *within* the household, rather than the bricks and mortar of the property:

The vast majority considered their current dwelling to be ‘home’, mainly as a result of the intimacy of relationships between housemates, and the attainment of a sense of comfort and equality.” (McNamara and Connell 2007, p.71)

This thesis will further explore this issue to examine the importance of interpersonal relations as part-and-parcel of ‘sharing’ and as a key feature of what makes someone feel ‘at home’. It will also be argued that the quality of interpersonal relations must be understood are a key element of ‘sharing’ both as a concept and as practice.

Another area of social analysis where there has been a good deal of attention to issues of sharing (albeit non-specifically) is in the sociology of family life, domestic and household organisation, ‘practice’, the division of tasks, and gender relations. Much of

this work is focused on familial (Finch and Mason 1993; Finch and Mason 1993; DeVault 1994; Morgan 1996; Morgan 2004; Fiese 2006; Morgan 2011a) or conjugal households (Pahl 1989; Vogler and Pahl 1994; Kaufmann 1998; Kemmer 1999), with a growing literature on solo-living (Jamieson et al. 2009; Klinenberg 2012). The practices and regimes of household organisation examined in such research allow us a significant insight into the complexity of the 'workings' and 'doings' of households, and demonstrate that such practices are by no means 'easy' or straightforward. The management and practicalities of household forms of consumption have been well covered in the literature, but most often from a familial viewpoint, and often adopting a critical perspective on the gender power dynamics of how this division of tasks is organised and negotiated. For example, DeVault (1994) explored the regimes and rituals surrounding family meals and food consumption, whilst Martens and Scott (2006) explored the discourses that surround the use of domestic cleaning products and their relationship with the home. The household management of money has been discussed by Pahl (1989; 1990) and Vogler and Pahl (1994) but, again, within the realms of marriage and couples rather than alternative forms of household. There is also a literature on the sharing of household tasks, including childcare (Gershuny 2003; Dermott 2005) and housework (Kaufmann 1998). These literatures stress the importance of gender and familial roles as a structuring influence on the sharing of goods, money, services and tasks, and indicate the importance of rhythm and routine within the household in order to rationalise an abundance of household 'tasks' into a manageable undertaking, both temporally and economically. Work on family and partnership offers significant insights into (familial) sharing, which can be drawn upon in constructing a sociology of sharing. But the focus in much of this work is on familial domestic arrangements rather than sharing *per se*, and there is little discussion of how non-familial sharing might relate to such familial arrangements (aside from, as Heath and Cleaver (2003) note, a longstanding assumption that shared households are a transition phase for people moving between familial or conjugal households). However, several points emerging from these literatures are worth exploring in relation to a broader discussion of 'sharing'.

The first point to make is that whilst family and personal life researchers have noted that there are strong moral expectations of how finances, obligations and responsibilities should be shared between kin, the practice of sharing on the ground is in effect more messy and negotiated. Vogler (1998) for example has shown that money management between couples takes a strongly gendered form. Her research also notes the variety of patterns of money management between couples. Similarly, the work of Finch and Mason (Finch 1989; Finch and Mason 1993) shows that whilst there are strong ideals of financial assistance within families, in practice the actual flow of financial support is negotiated over time rather than given automatically. So whilst there are strong moral values about the 'proper' way to organise obligation and sharing amongst kin, 'family

practices' (Morgan 1996; Morgan 2004; Morgan 2011a; Morgan 2011b) are rather more complex, and much research has emphasised the fluidity and diversity of family forms, with the 'family' understood as webs of specific relationships and practices through which people define their personal, familial and kinship ties. Drawing on John Gillis's distinction between the 'families we live with' and the 'families we live by' (that is between practices and moral values of what a 'family' is and should be), work on 'family practices' (Morgan, 1996) places the emphasis on how people 'do' partnerships, kinship and parenthood, and how relationships are conducted day to day, referencing, but not straightforwardly following, notions of the proper thing to do.

The second point to note is that work in the family practices tradition emphasises the *dynamic* nature of the 'doing' of family, in which responsibilities and commitments have to be worked at and achieved, change over time, and have a contingent, unfolding quality. So, for example, for Finch and Mason, financial assistance between kin is above all negotiated:

"It is a two- (or more) way process of negotiation in which people are giving and receiving, balancing out one kind of assistance for another ... responsibilities are thus created rather than flowing automatically from specific relationships" (Finch and Mason 1993, p.167).

The third, related point to emerge from the sociology of the family, is an emphasis on the relational nature of social relationships. For example, Smart's contribution to this rethinking of the 'sociology of the family' (2007) emphasises the practices of personal life and intimacy (rather than, say, the structures of the family) and focuses on questions of connectedness and relationality in understanding personal life. She has argued that sociological theorising has underestimated the importance of things, such as shared possessions or homes, in the maintenance and memory of relationships. Summarising these relational approaches to family arrangements, Bren Neale (2000, p.12) argues that that they share a focus on the diversity of personal and family practice, an emphasis on the relationships between individuals (in micro networks), and see practices as being generated through a 'bottom up' relational morality in which people are driven by moral reasoning about 'self' in relation to others, resulting in a politics of negotiated commitments, responsibilities and choices.

These pointers from the sociology of the family suggest that a more general sociology of sharing should attend to the negotiated and contingent nature of sharing within particular contexts and relationships, as well as to how sharing might be informed by general normative values about 'proper' sharing but also taking more 'messy' practical forms. The picture of how 'sharing' is negotiated that has been painted within the literature on the sociology of the family, is a messy one, with valorised ideals of *how* to do things, but a more differentiated reality (Gillis 1997). However, there are notable 'roles' and 'forms' of how certain aspects of household resources and responsibilities should be 'shared'

based around position and hierarchy. While exploring the notion of 'sharing' and 'needs' within families experiencing periods of low income (economic deprivation) Kochuyt (2004) noted that resources (such as food) were distributed to children before adults, due to a sense of role and duty of care and affection as a 'parent', and also to achieve a sense of family unity. Such a 'duty' was also notable in times of affluence, with Cheal (1987) observing the use of gift giving to children to mark and signal the intimacy and significance of the relationship. Within couple households, Kaufmann (1998; 2009) noted the 'power of roles' (2009, p.189) in shaping household organisation, with partners in the relationship each bringing a 'secret blue print' (2009, p.14) based on their own familial experiences and expectations (2009, p.66). In relation to laundry tasks for example (1998, p.181), Kaufmann notes that the women within his study often felt gendered roles trapped them into having expertise over the cleaning of clothes, and that they often assumed men would not want to take an active part, or lacked the practical skill to achieve it to a required standard. Men, failing adequately to learn the required skills (or to demonstrate their previous existence), were then relieved of the task (but not without some resentment). These empirical examples of the sharing of resources and responsibilities within households indicate the presence of a moral economy (Morgan 2001): with tasks organised in relation to notions of what *should* be done by different categories of people, using cultural values, previous familial experiences, and 'roles' as a schema for the negotiation of practice, rather than as an egalitarian sharing economy. This literature then, suggests that there is an apparent reliance on perceived roles (and their inherent responsibilities) to guide notions of familial 'sharing', even if their deployment in practice is not necessarily uniform. Such moral economies of sharing also extend beyond familial households. Natalier (2003; 2004) explored the issue of gender within shared accommodation in Sydney, Australia, and discovered that in all-male peer-shared households a gendered ideology over housework was evident, where male housemates 'behave as though they are husbands even in the absence of women who might act as wives' (Natalier 2003, p.265), deferring housework until it is necessary to do, rather than having a sense of responsibility to clean and carry out household tasks.

Drawing out the implications of this work on family practices for household sharing *outside* of the family or couple household is complicated by a number of points. Firstly, there are less well-established moral values about how to practice sharing, responsibility and obligation amongst non-kin, so the process of negotiation (and the diversity of arrangements) is likely to be even more contingent and complicated in other forms of household, such as shared accommodation. Secondly, because the relational ties amongst non-kin are often more contingent than amongst family and kin, the dynamic and volatile nature of sharing arrangements is also likely to be increased, so the 'doing' of sharing requires more on-going 'work' and renegotiation. Thirdly, the success (or

failure) of sharing within other forms of household which lack familial connection is likely to be significantly affected by the extent to which residents' social characteristics, their habitus and their moral expectations of sharing mesh (or not). Finally, there are contrasts in both responsibilities and definitions of 'sharing': what may be considered 'sharing' amongst non-kin such as offering food to friends or housemates who are around while someone is cooking – may be considered not as sharing but rather as redistribution when, say, a mother cooks for her family.

While the insights offered by existing research on familial or couple relationships are useful, more work is needed to account for the management of 'shared consumption' within non-familial or couple relationships. 'Sharing' and instances of 'sharing' occur necessarily and frequently outside of these relational forms, and without their inherent guiding structures. As will be demonstrated within this thesis, within peer-shared accommodation such shared household consumption can be problematic and far from straightforward. Without the obligations (and sanctions) of familial relationships to manage the administration of that consumption, which existing research suggests are present within familial or couple households, and with fewer clear-cut relational 'roles' (gendered or otherwise) as guidelines for who should organise the purchase or consumption of goods, it becomes an interesting question just how the negotiation and practical coordination of sharing within peer-shared accommodation is achieved and maintained.

Aside from the work by Natalier (2003; 2004), there is little research that looks at how such divisions of labour are considered and negotiated within non-familial households, or mixed-gender shared accommodation. If, as Natalier contends, there is still a gendered dynamic to the sharing of household tasks and responsibilities outside of the notional familial home, it is important to consider how this affects 'sharing' amongst non-kin. While the familial aspects of 'sharing' have been looked at in some depth (albeit indirectly, and often with the analysis framed in terms of issues of re/distribution), the issue of sharing within non-familial relationships has been left under-researched, with a concomitant lack of theoretical development. If sharing is indeed fundamental to both present and future sustainability endeavours, as Botsman & Rogers (2011) and Harris & Gorenflo (2012) argue, then the nature of non-familial sharing needs much more attention, since the properties of sharing within familial relationships cannot necessarily be transposed onto non-familial arrangements. It is this issue which this thesis explores.

From the literature, then, we can see that while there has been a good deal of attention to the everyday practices of households, the reach and application of this analysis has largely been limited to familial arrangements. However, the purpose of this thesis is to attempt to understand 'sharing' more broadly, and to explore how sharing practices take

on a more ambiguous quality when we start to consider household formations beyond the familial. The next section considers the features of (non-familial) shared accommodation as a household form in order to examine how shared accommodation offers a useful empirical example with which to explore the more general conceptual issues of what sharing 'is' and just how 'sharing' is 'done' in practice'.

Using shared accommodation as a research site: the context of shared accommodation in the UK

The literature explored earlier in this chapter focuses on the familial or conjugal context, but nonetheless, demonstrates the value of using the 'home' and 'household' as a site of continual and concentrated consumption in order to explore sharing as a social practice. A household – whether familial or not – encompasses both many different kinds of 'stuff' which is shared, as well as the coordination of different kinds of sharing practice. Consider for example, the range of required practices that form part of the maintenance of a household, from vacuuming to paying the bills, and when living with other people, all these require negotiation – or 'sharing'. Such ordinary practices also provide good examples of 'sharing' as it is embedded in the everyday habitual routines of personal life. However, shared accommodation offers a different angle with which to consider household sharing because of the different relationships such households cover and also because of the potentially more contingent and transitory nature of shared household arrangements. Familial households are based upon familial links with an expectation of commitment and longevity attached to them, and this facilitates mutual obligation and forward planning; by contrast shared households are often made up of people with differing, unconnected pathways of occupation, relationships and goals. How 'sharing' works in this context is intriguing, with the example of shared households offering both differing intra-household dynamics and differing household practices, as each resident moves in and out of the house. It is these differences which enable this research to provide a different viewpoint on how 'sharing' is done and how it is done successfully.

Living with others who are not family is a prominent feature of social life, and cultural representations of such shared housing (and the good or bad flat mate) abound. Narratives of shared living feature prominently in the media, such as the fictional BBC series *This Life* and *The Young Ones*, the US Warner Brother's series *Friends*, and reality TV such as MTV's *The Real World*, Endemol's *Big Brother*, and *Flatmates* on Channel 4 (Kenyon and Heath 2001). Shared living was particularly highlighted in John Birmingham's (1997) best-selling book, *He Died With a Felafel in his Hand*, which was subsequently made into a film (Lowenstein 2001) and which showcased Birmingham's increasingly strange and dysfunctional experiences of shared housing in Australia. In

the UK, Danny Boyle's film *Shallow Grave* (1994) highlighted the 'stranger danger' of shared living, where you can sometimes never know exactly who it is you live with. Whilst the US-made *The Last Supper* (Title 1995) illustrated how shared ideologies can go too far, with a peer-shared household embarking on a systematic culling of individuals they dislike politically, but growing a nice crop of tomatoes in their garden with the remains in the process. On television the genre has grown more recently, with American television offering female-centric narratives of sharing through series such as *Girls* (HBO), *2 Broke Girls* (CBS), and *New Girl* (Fox). Against a backdrop of normative ideals of familial living with parents, a partner or children, it has been suggested that shared households of this type provide a visible picture of shared living as a valid, alternative form of living. It has also been argued that where previously shared living was seen as a necessity due to economic constraint, it is now increasingly seen as an alternative living arrangement that offers distinct social benefits, with issues of economics divorced from narratives of choice (Kenyon and Heath 2001).

While there is a literature on shared housing, which has discussed questions of its role in the lifecourse and household change, its differing forms and configurations (Raimy 1979; Natalier 2003; Natalier 2004), its relative prevalence in wider UK society (Berrington et al. 2009), and its social values and dangers (Despres 1993; Centre for Housing Policy 2011), there remain significant aspects of social life *within* shared houses which have been in large part neglected. The neglected areas, which are the focus of this thesis, are the practicalities and practices of 'sharing' – how individuals actually go about 'sharing' 'stuff' (Miller 2010) and the presence or absence of frameworks to assist in the management of that sharing – and how interpersonal relationships, or relationalities (Smart 2007) *within* shared accommodation impact the relative success or failure of shared living arrangements. Further, there has been insufficient appreciation of the 'shared household' as a dynamic form, and one that is structured and restructured both by the individuals (and their actions) within it, but also is itself an entity constantly in flux, rather than a static social location or category. My contention here is that these issues require a more holistic sociological appraisal if there is to be a fuller exploration of 'sharing' more broadly.

Heath and Cleaver's work (2003) on household formation amongst young adults provides perhaps the best-developed examination of contemporary, UK shared households. They noted a 'relative neglect of independent living arrangements – living alone or with unrelated peers – in the existing literature on household formation' (2003, p.6) and they argued that:

'Such arrangements tended to acquire significance within the literature only in as much as they were deemed to constitute a "buffer zone" between dependency on a family of origin and independence within a family of destination. Consequently, young people who lived in such households were seen as occupying – quite literally – a halfway house. [...] there appeared to be

no existing research which explored these assumptions amongst a broader non-student population' (Heath and Cleaver 2003, p.6).

Providing a corrective to this neglect, Heath and Cleaver's research explored what they argue are the increasingly non-standard domestic living arrangements adopted by young single people in their mid-twenties. Adopting a dynamic approach akin to Clapham's 'housing pathways' approach (which will be discussed further later) they examined the routes of such individuals: from living in and leaving the parental home, to living in student accommodation, through to living in non-student shared households or living alone.

The focus of their research, however, was on the differentiation and polarisation of such housing routes (with a growing division between the arrangements of young, well educated professionals and their less privileged counterparts), and on whether new expectations of independent living were emerging amongst some young people. In their study particular attention was paid to young people's networks of intimacy, and their understandings of 'home' and what it means to 'settle down'. However, whilst providing the fullest account of shared living in the UK (based on a cohort of young professionals similar to that addressed in this thesis), and providing a comprehensive account for the motivations for choosing shared living – or 'elective sharing' – even Heath and Cleaver's account appears to 'stop at the front door' of the shared household.

As previously noted, Natalier (2003; 2004) has considered divisions of labour within shared accommodation. Natalier's research, which takes place within Australian 'share houses', suggests that although gender may not be considered of immediate relevance to the conduct of practice of 'housework' within shared accommodation by virtue of housemates being 'non-intimates', there are still examples of gendered practice, with an overriding sense that housework was 'women's work'. This is a useful finding, and has resonance with Kaufmann's (1998; 1998) ideas of a 'blue print' developed from past, familial experiences. However, the issue of gender is only one aspect influencing how 'sharing' is negotiated; the intersecting issues of time, obligation and need, are, as this thesis illustrates, also important contingent factors that are involved in the 'sharing' of responsibility.

Building on the relational focus of existing research on 'the family' household as a prototype to understanding embedded, necessary and sustained forms of 'sharing', this thesis argues that shared accommodation provides a valuable context to further extend our understanding of 'sharing' more broadly. There has been a relative lack of research into the 'practices' of 'sharing' within shared accommodation, yet this form of household provides an example of sharing which challenges the assumption of clearly demarcated 'sovereign' ownership which predominates within theoretical accounts of 'sharing'.

Furthermore, and, unlike family or conjugal households, those sharing peer-shared accommodation must negotiate sharing intimate domestic spaces and routines with people with whom they do not share intimate interpersonal connection or obligation. Such an analysis provides a platform for considering the complexities of 'sharing', and can contribute not only to issues of housing, but also wider debates of sustainability and interpersonal relations, and how issues of relationality are involved in the enactment or inhibition of social practices.

In thinking about the characteristics of peer-shared accommodation as a housing form, it is worth noting that non-familial shared accommodation is a widespread phenomena, although attempting to quantify how many individuals live within shared households is a difficult endeavour, due to problematic issues of definition and a subsequent shortage of useful statistics. Some shared households fall under the category of 'households of multiple occupancy (or HMOs). In law, a 'House in Multiple Occupation' is a house within the private rented sector which is occupied by at least three tenants forming more than one household, and sharing toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with those other tenants (Department for Communities and Local Government 2007). A 'household is defined as:

'either a single person or members of the same family who are living together. This includes people who are married or living together as married (including those in same-sex relationships). It also includes specific relatives who are living together: parents, grandparents, children (and step-children), grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces or cousins. Foster children are also treated as part of their parents' household.' (Department for Communities and Local Government 2007, p.6)

The term 'HMO' would include some shared households of the type focused on within this thesis, but not necessarily lodging arrangements and university-administered student housing, for example, and the diversity of such arrangements immediately raises questions of just what constitutes a 'single household'. This issue will be explored in greater detail here, and in later chapters, but for present purposes, it should be noted that HMOs appear to be an emergent and growing phenomena. However HMOs are also difficult to categorise and quantify due to differing measures used within official statistics.

Recent figures suggest that there are 22.8 million 'dwellings' in England (buildings that can be occupied) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2013a), with between 21,731,000 (Hinton 2010) and 22,102,000 (Department for Communities and Local Government 2013b) households overall in England. However finding detailed statistical information on the prevalence and distribution of *shared housing* within this overall total is difficult, as there are no official statistics that provide enough detail to capture the segmentation of shared housing types in England, and the information that is available can be unreliable (Beesley 2009). The most recent housing projections

(Department for Communities and Local Government 2013b) place their primary focus on households based on a familial configuration (such as dependent children or spouse), with those falling outside of those categories (such as HMOs) being classified as *Other household*:

Other household: a multi person household that is neither a couple household nor a lone parent household. Examples include, lone parents with only non dependent (sic) children, brothers and sisters and unrelated (and non-cohabiting) adults sharing a house or flat. This category does not include households with dependent children. (Department for Communities and Local Government 2013b, p.23)

This lack of clear official statistical information is intriguing in itself, and suggests that 'shared housing' as a category and as a practice perhaps sits rather uneasily as a 'non-standard' set of housing arrangements within regulatory and administrative frameworks which appear to presume and prioritise familial households.

The growth of shared accommodation may be further stimulated by changes to welfare and housing benefit in April 2013 made by the UK government in order to alter the arrangement of welfare support to young people in England, and instituted in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (National Housing Federation 2013). Within this legislation, the issue of shared accommodation for those of 'working age' (Shelter 2013a) has become increasingly pertinent in England due to changes in the benefit system which cap benefit payments (including housing benefit) to single adults to a maximum, cumulative allowance of £350 per week. These changes started in July 2013 in most areas of England (Shelter 2013b). The welfare provision changes reduce the amount of housing benefit available to social housing residents living in accommodation with 'extra' bedrooms (such as a single working-age adult renting a two bedroom property) by 14% for one 'extra' bedroom, and 25% for two or more 'extra' bedrooms. Shelter (Shelter 2013a) provide the following illustrative example of the impact of these changes:

'So, if you have one 'spare bedroom' and your rent is £100 per week, only £86 will count when your housing benefit is assessed. You will have to pay at least £14 to your landlord yourself.'

Such a cap forces people to move out of more expensive, single person occupancy tenancies into shared accommodation that fits within budgetary limits, or to take in lodgers if they are permitted to do so. The legislation presents an expansion of restrictions that existed before these changes in the form of the 'single room rent' that restricted those under-25 to financial support for renting a single room with shared facilities such as kitchen and bathroom (Harvey and Houston 2005). However, such changes can only be obliquely observed through official statistics.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (2013b, p.3) place the total number of 'Other households' in 2011 at 1,632,000 or around 7.4% of total households,

with a projection that they will increase by 20% by 2021 to 1,956,000, or 8% of total projected households. However, a complicating factor of this figure is that 'Other households' can also include student accommodation, care homes where a small group of individuals live together in supported housing, halfway-houses (such as those run by the Probation Service), and houses of religious orders. Whilst there is a requirement for private landlords to register Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) under the 2004 Housing Act, this only applies if the house is three stories or more, is rented to five or more unrelated tenants, and those tenants share facilities. We are therefore unable to use these statistics to differentiate the sharing population in order to assess the social prevalence of 'shared housing' within the overarching category of 'other households'. The most recent work, published by Berrington et al (2009; 2010) has attempted to use the Labour Force Survey to map the terrain of living arrangements for young adults, and suggested that 31% of those not living in a family are sharing with 'non-relatives', with men more likely to continue sharing than women, who it appears may be more likely to opt to move back into the parental home (Berrington et al. 2010, p.19).

Our knowledge of the population that reside *within* shared housing is relatively limited, with little robust data available. Of the data that is available, a survey of users of Sparerroom.co.uk² in 2011 provided an overview of the characteristics of residents of shared accommodation, based on a sample of 10,994 individuals, the highlights of which are detailed in the table below. The full table has been provided in appendix I and was supplied personally to me by Sparerroom.co.uk, and has not been published by them within the public domain. The data were collected using a self-selected sample (users opted to take part), using an online survey on Sparerroom.co.uk during May and June of 2011, and the data are used with permission.

² Sparerroom.co.uk are the '#1 Flatshare (sic) site in the UK' (SpareRoom.co.uk 2013b), providing a specialised flat and house share advertising and search service via the web.

Table 1: Summary of key characteristics of those living in shared accommodation taken from the Spareroom.co.uk census in 2011

		UK %	London %
Gender	Male	40	36
	Female	60	64
Age	Under 20	2	0
	20-24	19	17
	25-29	28	37
	30-34	16	21
	35-39	9	10
	40-49	13	9
	50+	12	7
Occupation	Professional/employed	72	76
	Self-employed	9	10
	Unemployed	3	3
	Student	12	9
	Retired	2	1
	Other	1	1
Highest qualification	O level/GCSE/CSE/NVQ level 1	8	5
	NVQ level 2/BTEC 1st	3	2
	A level/NVQ level 3/BTEC national	17	11
	Degree	43	51
	Higher (e.g. MA, PhD, PGCE)	23	27
	Other	4	3
	None	2	1
House share type	Lodger (living with the owner of the property)	19	15
	Live-in landlord (who rents out spare room to lodger)	27	18
	Flatmate (sharing with others but not landlord)	50	64
	Other	4	3
Main reason for sharing	Financial	54	53
	Social	5	5
	Both	38	40
	Other	3	2
Sharing with...	Friend(s)	20	22
	Friend(s) of a friend	4	4
	Stranger(s)	56	55
	Mixture of the two	20	19

We can see from Table 1³ that the majority of respondents are employed, educated individuals in their 20s and 30s, with many choosing to share for financial reasons, rather than purely social reasons, and with more women opting to share than men. Most people share with 'strangers' – which this thesis refers to as 'randoms' – although a significant proportion do share with friends, or a mixture of the two.

From this statistical overview we can see that shared accommodation is a prominent and growing phenomenon. However, with viewing residents in this statistical form, there is the risk of reducing residents to just being 'consumers' of a housing type, with the dwelling being a product that is obtained. As indicated earlier in this chapter, it is important to consider the concept of 'home', and the relationships, within it as a dynamic rather than static entity, and one that encompasses a range of diverse practices and household configurations. While residents clearly are consumers of some sort (by virtue of renting the a room in a shared house) the water is muddied because of the dynamic nature of relationality that comes into play *within* shared accommodation that creates an idiosyncratic rather than uniform environment of consumption. Individuals within shared accommodation can just as readily – or perhaps simultaneously – be considered friends, enemies, housemates, colleagues or lovers, to suggest just a few possible roles, as well as that of consumers. It is this potential diversity and multiplicity of relational forms that are of value to this thesis as an empirical site to explore sharing.

However, whilst those in shared households exhibit a range of interpersonal relationships, it is very common for those sharing a house to be (at least initially) relative strangers to each other. The management of intimate association amongst people who are primarily housemates rather than friends (or who may have a range of mainly contractual, 'friendly', or 'friendship' relationships) is a further issue affecting 'sharing' in such households. As will be more fully explored in the proceeding empirical chapters, the nature of relationships – or the relationality (Smart 2007) – within shared accommodation are very particular and cannot be easily demarcated within 'conventional' terms. As Heaphy and Davies (2012) note, friendships can be as problematic and confusing for individuals to negotiate as any other type of relationship, and are neither easy nor power-neutral in their formation and maintenance. Morgan (2009) has gone some way to explore the space that exists between individuals that have intimate knowledge, experience and shared biography with each other ('intimates') and those we have no knowledge of ('strangers') and suggests that the term

³ It is important to note the commercial, 'paid for', nature of Spareroom.co.uk, and that the sample used to gain the data was obtained solely from Spareroom.co.uk users subscribed to their mailing list. The figures only reflect the characteristics of Spareroom users, and excludes those who may choose to use a free-to-access service such as GumTree.com. The data may, therefore, present a bias towards those for whom Spareroom.co.uk is an affordable service, with higher levels of qualification and employment type than that of users to a free-to-access service. But while the data in this table should be taken as indicative rather than authoritative due to the research design, it does offer some insight into the characteristics of a significant group of house sharers within the UK.

'acquaintances' is useful in bridging the divide. However, 'acquaintanceship' still lacks some conceptual purchase on the relationships to be found within shared accommodation. Consider, for example, the level of enforced intimacy that a new housemate can experience with relative strangers within a short space of time (such as seeing someone's dirty underwear languishing in the washing machine, or their particularly poor personal hygiene as they watch TV in the lounge having not left the house or showered for three days). Such physical proximity and the sharing of intimate routines moves flatmates immediately beyond the level of an acquaintance, but without the shared knowledge and biography to consider their housemates as friends or intimates. For 'randoms' entering new shared accommodation, there is an ambiguity as to the appropriate role to be played within the lives of other residents. This ambiguity is more fully explored in the empirical chapters, with a particular emphasis on the differing levels of expectations that participants had of their housemates.

Though pre-existing friendships may be the basis of house sharing, and friendship may often result from house sharing, nonetheless housemates are often initially strangers to each other. The question then of the recruitment of housemates – both into house shares and into the practices of sharing in the house – is also a significant one, and one which is examined in some detail in subsequent chapters. The issue of recruitment into the house raises questions of both social similarity and social signalling and matching in the advertisement and selection processes. The issue of recruitment into sharing practices in the household (and across households) also raises questions about how trajectories of sharing practices are negotiated and managed over time, particularly as such practices are viewed as 'mundane' and 'easily forgotten' (Wahlen 2011).

In this section, I have set out some of the empirical characteristics of shared accommodation as a household form, both to provide some context for the research study, to establish shared accommodation as an important area for sociological consideration in its own right, but also to establish the value of shared accommodation as an empirical case study within which to explore 'sharing' more broadly. Shared accommodation allows us to look at a range of shared stuff and sharing practices, as they are embedded in a necessary and sustained way in the domestic habits and intimate routines of everyday household life. Shared accommodation also allows us to examine how such intimate sharing is achieved by those who do not necessarily have intimate relationships, and who might be expected to be bound by fewer obligations or role expectations. It is also worth noting that, in addition to exploring the otherwise neglected forms of 'sharing' which occur outside the realms of the familial context or of sovereign ownership, by adopting a methodological approach which 'moves beyond the front door' of the household, this thesis also makes a contribution to debates on the

everyday household practices of shared accommodation more specifically. This is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Creating a theoretical framework: theories of practice and the housing pathways approach

This section looks further at the range of social practices that must be shared within shared housing., To do so it further examines how existing research has explored the sorts of 'practices' that occur within households, but shifting the analytical lens to now consider them more directly within the framework of theories of practice. What is clear from existing research into 'family practices' is the value of the analytical framework of focusing on practices as a way of viewing the 'doing' of the 'everyday'. As adopted here, using theories of practice (Schatzki et al. 2001; Warde 2005; Shove et al. 2012) as a lens by which to consider behaviour within households entails examining the habitual, collective and conventional nature of practices of sharing. Theories of practice allow us to view not just what is 'there', within a practice as a static moment, but also to consider the temporal dimension, both of how practitioners – or 'carriers' – are recruited into practices, and also to how practices may change over time.

Conceptualised as a way of viewing collections of ordered and practical behaviours (Schatzki et al. 2001; Warde 2005; Shove et al. 2012) theories of practice posit that practices, which are inherently shared, symbiotically structure and reconstitute institutions. Theories of practice are heterogeneous, but as Warde (2005, p.131) argues, common elements in such work includes: a stress on the routine, collective and conventional nature of social practices; a stress on the need to explore the processes by which practices emerge, develop and change; and a stress on the significance of how people are recruited into practices and of the degree of their personal involvement in practices over time. Warde (2005) uses the practice of 'driving' as an example to illustrate this: though all drivers fundamentally do the same thing (make a vehicle move through a process of mechanical commands), there will be individual and collective differences within the practice that differentiate practitioners from one another. For example, different countries may have differing vehicle allegiances, such as Renault in France, or Fiat in Italy; and some may consider the practice of driving a 'sport', whereas others may consider it a simple utility of getting from A to B. However, the fundamental practice remains the same, regardless of idiosyncratic differences; most practitioners respect road laws and conventions, thus establishing and re-establishing the practice of driving. The notion of 'mirror, signal, manoeuvre', which many people are taught when formally learning the practice of driving, becomes a shared ritual and habit of driving. Put simply, the notion of practices allows us to look at the 'regular', 'everyday', 'activities' of individuals within a context (Morgan 2011b, p.6). By using this framework – which sees all social practices as inherently coordinated collections of activity – we can start to

think about the complex nature of 'sharing' and of shared practices. Within the realms of the 'home' this could include sharing the use of the fridge or a washing machine; sharing tasks, such as cleaning; the sharing of commodities, such as toilet food; or the sharing of time, space and the coordination of routines such as the use of a living room or of a shower at given times.

Shove et al (2012) describe practices as being a collection of 'elements' that, when brought together, form a coherent 'entity' which provides behavioural and cognitive resources that people use to communicate and develop with others, and which are constituted and reconstituted through 'performance' – the constant doing and redoing of those elements in the presence of others that renders them an intelligible and normalised social act. Those 'performing' the 'elements' are 'carriers' who constitute the practice, both physically and culturally, drawing them together in a way that allows others to see practices as recognisable behaviours with histories and expectations, rather than just random acts. Further, the actions may involve 'competencies', such as specialist knowledge, 'materials', such as goods and 'things', and 'meanings', such as expectations.

Crucially, the visible performance provides a mechanism for the recruitment into practices – the way in which others are encouraged to take up the behaviour and continue its constitution. Shove et al (2012) using Wenger (1999, p.45) argue that 'practices...are the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise' and that community and practice constitute one another. Practice theorists map the acquisition – or 'learning' of practices – through a process of 'mimetic apprenticeship', which is constructed by material artefacts (Shove et al. 2012, p.70), and argue that people enter a career of practices, and that as an individual learns to master the practices of the community, they take another step on the ladder of seniority, starting off as 'outsiders', and then becoming 'fully fledged members of a community in which this is a normal and not a deviant thing to do' (Shove et al. 2012, p.70).

Shove et al (2012, pp.71–72) further suggest that these are mechanisms that can lead to the development of conflict between those who are 'old hands' – or fully-fledged practitioners – and those who are 'new' to the practice. They suggest that, while not always the case, those with seniority can be seen as 'stuck in their ways', whereas newcomers want to try something new and different, leading to a potential mismatch in the overall shared enterprise. The expectation for continuity in the 'old hands' versus the potential for change in the 'newcomers' appears to present a development which is at odds with the idea of continuity.

How individuals 'learn the ropes' of living with one another – of the rhythms and routines of a household – is an important consideration. As sharing a household (regardless of the relationship between sharers) involves sharing sometimes limited facilities – such as showers, kitchens and washing machines), the routines that enable the practices of sharing to be successfully negotiated (or pre-figure such negotiation) are a window into 'sharing' more broadly. Literature across the disciplines has often focused on familial households and their associated practices and behaviours (Larson and Zemke 2003; Fiese 2006), with a particular focus on the impact on health and wellbeing rather than consumption (Thomas and Bailey 2009). Within homes and households, there can be a noticeable rhythm to life, particularly during the 'working week' where timetables are not just commanded by individuals but by their employers (Hochschild 2003), wonderfully illustrated by the film *Nine to Five* (Higgins 1980). People get up at a certain time, use the bathroom, have breakfast, leave for work, and will return home to a perhaps similarly 'mundane' or implicit routine. Shove, Trentmann and Wilk's (2009) edited collection, *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture*, considers the issue of temporality across a range of practices and contexts, but overall highlights the importance of *routine* to everyday and domestic life. Notably, the authors employ theories of practice as a way of understanding the impact of temporality and consumption, and its on-going role as contributing to the structuration of practices. As will be demonstrated within the empirical chapters of this thesis, the notion of routine is particularly important when considering shared accommodation due to the independent (yet inter-dependent) nature of the lives of the residents within. Within peer-shared accommodation residents may have similar or competing routines, with little or no overt way of discovering what the routines of their peers may be, except by the enforced sharing of them. This is something that is more fully explored in chapter four where household routines, their adoption and conflict are discussed.

Gronow (2012) also suggests employing the concept of 'habits' within social spaces in order to better understand action and routine, with previous experiences acting as a nod to *future* action. Again, this alerts us to how habits entail sharing and also to the importance of habit within sharing practices:

'[Gronow (2012) is] concerned with how habitualisation, "dispositions to act in the same manner in familiar situations", leads to social reproduction. Employing Mead and Dewey to emphasise the practical and social embeddedness of action, he contends that habits are shared through transactions between people and the environment. The capacity for people to find common ground, which makes interaction possible, reflects the powerful human sensitivity to social situations arising from awareness of the attitudes and experiences of others. Mutual intelligibility is a foundation for collective institutions and a basis for regularised social coordination of actions. From the point of view of the individual, experience of social and shared conditions engenders the disposition to act in common ways in familiar situations. Institutions and habits are symbiotic.' (Warde and Southerton 2012, p.17)

The 'common ground that makes interaction possible' appears to be particularly important to homes and households, where often independent actors are brought together with a mutual need, and sometimes desire, to live with one another. They need to learn to live with one another, and understand one another's approach and actions, in order for that to be successful, or, at least, less stressful. This also illustrates the importance of considering the relationship between the environment (such as shared accommodation) and the individuals within it, rather than actions appearing independently of context; so for example, the physical configuration of the accommodation, and its relative amount of 'space' is an important factor to consider about how sharing occurs within that space. Finally, the suggestion that habitual behaviours can be brought over from preceding contexts – 'familiar situations' – perhaps provides an insight into how practices within shared accommodation do sometimes mirror those of familial or student homes. So trajectory across practices is also something to be considered.

In the literature on social practices, then, it is apparent that the temporal dimension to practices is a significant one to consider when addressing sharing as a practice, or as a set of practices. This is significant when considering shared housing as an example of sharing, since people not only have trajectories through the practices of the household (and across households) but the household itself has a trajectory, with changes in the practices and constituencies within it.

In thinking about how the literature on housing and households might contribute to an understanding of shared housing, we must acknowledge the danger of seeing 'households' as static or clearly defined entities. This problem, already identified in official and regulatory frameworks, is also raised by Clapham (2005) in relation to work in housing studies. Clapham argues that the physical and symbolic accommodation of household should not be seen as a static, constraining structure, or as a single household, but rather as multiple overlapping households in dynamic trajectory. Clapham's concept of 'housing pathways' seems particularly pertinent to the subject of shared households, where the question recurs of whether we are looking at a single household, a set of households under a shared roof, or some combination of the two. Clapham also draws attention to the subjective experience of housing.

Clapham (2005) has characterised the arena of housing studies as being dominated by four key approaches that have provided a comprehensive account of housing issues, but have neglected the subjective experience of the individual as a consumer of housing and the dynamic element of housing arrangements. The first of these is the state policy approach, which aims to consider the efficacy and impact of governmental housing policy, but treats the housing consumer as an uncreative actor who is the dumb recipient

of policy with an inevitable outcome. This particular area has become less influential with the retraction of government provision of housing, a greater emphasis on home ownership and the dominance of housing provision by the private sector, and an increasingly individualised society. The second approach is neo-classical economics, which places its emphasis on market based housing issues, such as profit maximisation for companies and utility maximisation for consumers, with the market being the driver behind these two factors. Third is the geographical approach, which considers the spatial distribution of housing. While this factor does consider the complexity of human behaviour, it does so, according to Clapham, from the guise of a positivist regime of universal propositions. Fourth, and finally, sociology makes its contribution through an analysis of the structured inequalities in the distribution of housing, using Marxist and Weberian accounts of constraints on choice. Clapham's main issue with all four perspectives is the universality of the approaches, using broad-brush assumptions about human behaviour that do not consider the detail and diversity of milieu. Clapham's critique, whilst sometimes too crudely drawn, does serve to highlight that which is missing from contemporary housing studies: the subjective experience of those within the households as homes and the dynamic nature of households themselves. Clapham (2005, p.25) also argues for an approach 'which focuses on the household but which avoids the inadequacies of traditional approaches in economics and geography which assume universal and simple motivations' on the part of housing consumers. Crucially for this thesis, he argues that we should stop treating housing as a 'black box' that predictably responds to external stimuli, but instead we must go 'beyond the front door and attempt to understand how different households understand the world and why they act as they do' (2005, p.37).

This thesis adopts Clapham's (2005; 2009) idea of a housing pathway, where attention is given to the individual's housing career as well as to the household as a composite context. Clapham defines this as 'patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space' (2005, p.27), which combines elements of Giddens' ideas of social practices, time-space geography and concepts of housing career, which considers the upward and downward movement in the housing position of a household, focusing on the lifecourse and life-events, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth and changes in occupational circumstances, including unemployment or retirement. In combination with theories of practice, which highlight the significance of temporal routines and trajectories in organising and coordinating practices, Clapham's notion of housing pathways allows us to keep focus on the dynamic nature of individual movements within and across shared housing (and the significance of this for sharing within such households), as well as the dynamic nature of the household itself.

A housing pathway is 'the continually changing set of relationships and interactions that [a household] experiences over time in its consumption of housing' (Clapham 2005, p.27). These interactions include intra-house dynamics, such as those between co-residents, and also interactions outside of the household, such as with letting agents, landlords and neighbours, and the resident's more practical circumstances, such as their ability (or not) to pay their rent due to their occupational status. These considerations are bound up within ideas of identity, and how identity is played out within the boundaries of interactions, such as the idea of the 'good tenant' where people enact and embody ideals of what it means to 'be' a good housemate or neighbour, and which also leads to judgments and even sanction of others when such standards are not met. These are issues that will be returned to and highlighted within later sections of this thesis, but I note here that they form a fundamental part of the mode of analysis adopted in the thesis, and which is more fully described in the next chapter.

Combining the two complimentary frameworks of 'theories of practice' and the 'housing pathways' approach, this thesis can operationalize an empirical study of 'sharing' within the context of shared housing, and appreciate not only what is 'going on' within those households, but how previous experiences have influenced the constitution of the household and the enactment of those practices. It provides a framework within which to explore 'sharing' holistically, as something that is negotiated not only in a single instance, but also on the basis of experience, interpersonal relations and 'critical associations' (Davies and Heaphy 2011; Heaphy and Davies 2012). Moreover, it appreciates the inherent transience of shared accommodation – as a form of accommodation that is often contingent on active attention to practice for its continued maintenance – and how that impacts practices within the household more broadly.

Conclusion

So far this chapter has argued for the merits of using the empirical lens of 'shared accommodation' in order to explore 'sharing' as a concept and as a practice. I have suggested that 'sharing' is complex and differentiated, and that to fully understand 'sharing' we must be attentive to how it may vary according to what is shared, where it is shared and who is sharing. One advantage of looking at shared accommodation is that it allows us to examine how a range of different kinds of non-sovereign 'stuff' are shared, whilst also permitting consideration of different kinds of necessary, sustained and embedded sharing practices. Finally, shared accommodation allows us to address sharing between people who are intimately associated through household proximity but who are not in intimate relationships.

Based on this review, there are some noticeable gaps in the existing literature on how 'sharing' is understood, negotiated, and practiced. The existing research – some by its

own admission – provides a limited account of ‘sharing’, and where such accounts exist they are focused on the realm of consumer research, and use a ‘familial prototype’ (Belk 2010) rather than addressing ‘sharing’ as a broader social practice. Belk distinguishes sharing as redistribution to non-intimates from sharing as acts of communal consumption which affirm intimate relationships. This usefully flags the question of how the relationships between the ‘sharers’ affects how sharing occurs, but I have argued that the distinction between intimate and non-intimate sharing (or ‘sharing in’ and ‘sharing out’) is too schematic, and that further attention must be paid to mixed or intermediate forms of relationship and sharing. Similarly much work has focused on the consumer sharing of sovereign goods, where ownership is clear-cut. It has been argued here, however, that it is also important to understand instances of sharing where ownership is not straightforward or which involve more ephemeral or intangible items. Finally, too much work on sharing has focused on the elective sharing of particular goods or services as exceptional acts of ‘collaborative consumption’, whereas this thesis, has pointed to the need to also explore mundane, necessary and socially embedded forms of sharing, with sharing considered as part of the ordinary routines of everyday life.

The most prominent locations within which selected empirical *aspects* of ‘sharing’ have been explored (albeit indirectly) are the realms of consumption, domestic life and family practices. Within these literatures, significant attention has been paid to certain aspects of sharing (such as the sharing of money, childcare, and household tasks) within familial and couple relationships. Research adopting a family practices perspective usefully demonstrates the often messy and negotiated nature of the domestic organisation of tasks and responsibilities within households, and has indicated that the relationality of household members and their interpersonal commitments and obligations helps to shape such practices. There is, however, no detailed account of sharing practices outside of the dominant familial or conjugal household forms, raising the question of how peer-sharing is organised and negotiated. Moving to think more generally about the social organisation of everyday practices, the literature on theories of practice – which focuses on the ‘doing’ of practices – provides a useful analytical focus on the coordinated and collective nature of everyday social practices, and is adopted here to help address the ‘doing’ of mundane practices of sharing. Practice theory directs attention to practices as ‘entities’ and to how people are recruited into practices and experience trajectories through them, as well as to how the practices themselves change and develop over time. In the empirical context of shared accommodation this directs attention to the process by which flatmates are recruited not only into shared households but also into the sharing practices of the household, and their apprenticeship and career within such practices over time. To further address the significance of this temporal dimension to how sharing practices are organised, the

thesis links practice theory to the 'housing pathways' approach, which frames households not as categories but rather as trajectories, in order to emphasise the dynamic nature of shared households as being an evolving combination of both a physical property and the interpersonal relationships that reside within it.

In light of this review of the literature, a number of questions regarding the nature of 'sharing' stand out as empirical issues for this research study. Although there are some theoretical accounts and indirect explorations of how we may understand 'sharing' within the context of familial and couple relationships, how sharing operates between people outside of these relationship forms is less well understood. Existing research has looked at a range of household practices within which 'sharing' occurs, such as in the division of household responsibilities between family members, or the distribution of resources (such as food and money), but such research does not focus on such household practices as 'sharing' specifically. Furthermore, if – as this thesis argues – 'sharing' differs across varying goods, services, spaces (sharing a car is different to sharing a kitchen) as well as according to the individuals who are 'doing' the 'sharing', then, it is clear that a fuller sociological account must address the mechanisms by which (different types of) sharing occurs. And finally, by its nature 'sharing' is an inherently *relational* concept and practice: something must be shared *between* individuals for sharing to occur, so the nature and quality of the relationships and obligations between those who share is another important angle to explore. So, capitalising on the absence of research outside of couple familial relationships, and the demonstrable growth of 'shared accommodation' in the UK, this research considers the interrelational nature of 'shared accommodation', and how issues of relationships and relationality can impact on – and so either catalyse or inhibit - the 'success' of 'sharing'.

Reflecting the desire to more fully understand the diverse, contextual and relational components of sharing as a practice, this thesis uses the case study of peer-shared accommodation as an empirical context and conceptual vehicle to engage with the following research questions:

- What are the processes by which flatmates are recruited both into shared households and into the shared practices of those households?
- How is sharing empirically understood, negotiated, practiced and developed within shared accommodation?
- How does the nature of the relationships and relationality between 'sharers' impact on the perceived 'success', 'failure' or 'willingness' to 'share'?

Based on this literature review, the next chapter aims to set out how these intellectual questions were operationalized into research strategy, using 'theories of practice' and the 'housing pathways' approach as analytical frameworks that have the ability to

appreciate temporality, change and relationality. It sets out the decisions made to make these currently overshadowed parts of social life 'researchable', and the process (and problems) that this entailed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The previous chapter outlined how current research has considered the realm and practice of shared accommodation, and highlighted the lack of empirical research 'beyond the front door' (Clapham 2005, p.37) to consider the 'doing' of shared living and the practicalities of 'sharing' itself. The importance and value of embracing the dynamic nature of shared accommodation as a milieu that has huge potential for diversity and change was highlighted, and the use of theories of practice and housing pathways as frameworks of analysis were posited as complimentary approaches that could encompass the issue of 'housing', 'practice' and interpersonal relations.

On this basis, this chapter outlines how the research questions defined in the previous chapter have been operationalized into a workable research strategy. The chapter provides an overview of how the research was designed to access 'practice' and the theoretical and methodological justifications – as well as the limitations - of the research design.

Research Questions and Research Strategy

In adopting the notion of 'housing pathways' (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009) the thesis also seeks to explore both the accommodation (the 'shared household') and the individual within it (the 'house sharer') as relational but also as *temporal* entities: created and recreated by virtue of the trajectories of individuals into and out of accommodations, and shaped by their interactions and the intersection of their biographies and trajectories. In addition, the adoption of 'theories of practice' (Schatzki et al. 2001; Warde 2005; Shove et al. 2012) as a lens by which to consider behaviour within shared accommodation enabled an examination of the routine, habitual, collective and conventional nature of practices of sharing in shared households; exploring the processes by which sharing practices emerge, develop and change within shared households; and examining the significance of how people are recruited into practices and of their degree of personal involvement in practices over time.

In turning these overarching research questions outlined in the previous chapter into an empirical research strategy, the key concern was how to address the following issues empirically:

- How is sharing variously negotiated and practiced over time within shared accommodation?
- How do individuals perceive, conceptualise and value 'shared accommodation' within the context of their lifecourse and housing pathway?
- How do changing configurations of individuals (and experiences within shared households) affects these perceptions, conceptualisations and values?

The nature of these empirical questions (focusing on questions of perception, negotiation, understandings and values) seemed to call for a qualitative research strategy. The decision was therefore taken to adopt a primarily qualitative interview approach, selecting members of shared households to interview about: the practical organisation of arrangements for sharing within their households, their relations with their housemates and their perceptions of the process of sharing, and their previous experiences of sharing within their current, or previous households.

31 residents from 18 shared households were interviewed about the practical arrangements of shared living in that household, and their experiences and history of shared living. The shared households were all taken from the Chorlton and Didsbury areas of Greater Manchester, areas selected for their reputation as being 'good areas' to find shared accommodation. The method of selecting the sample for interview within these areas, was through a three-fold method of mailshots, snowball recruitment, and contacting house share advertisers through GumTree.com. The achieved sample comprises 31 individuals from 18 shared households, with 20 women and 11 men participating. The majority of participants were ethnically 'white', under the age of 30, and largely middle class in terms of both their educational attainment and current occupation (or career aspiration). [See later section of this chapter for more detail on the sample.]

In focusing the research on how people *talk* about their sharing experiences (rather than, say, direct ethnographic observation), the thesis also has to take into account the following issues:

- How do residents *narrate* the process and experience of living within shared accommodation?
- How is the notion of 'sharing' narrated?
- What factors (be they tangible, intangible or interpersonal) impact on the practice of 'sharing' and its perceived (and narrated) success or failure?

To partly address these issues using a separate empirical source, a sample of 360 shared-accommodation advertisements was also collected from gumtree.com. The purpose of collecting and analysing these adverts was to explore the most popular mechanisms of recruitment to shared households, in order to examine how practical issues of sharing and co-residency were addressed in recruitment processes; as well as to examine the most common values and meaning of 'sharing' as expressed through adverts. This additional data source provides a viewpoint on common public discourses of sharing and co-residency, and one that allows the thesis to locate and contextualise how the interview sample narrated and framed these same issues. These advertisements were analysed and categorised by 'key types', as illustrated more fully in

chapter four, using a system broadly derived from qualitative comparative analysis (Rihoux and Ragin 2009) to distil the advertisements into manageable categories in order to highlight the dominant traits that can be observed in house share advertising.

Area of study and sampling strategy

Chorlton and Didsbury were chosen as the target areas in which to recruit interview participants, due to their high concentrations of shared accommodation. Once these areas were chosen, an initial sampling strategy was developed using (i) mailshots to 'likely' shared households in the areas, (ii) approaches via advertisements for shared housing in the areas on the GumTree website, and (iii) additional snowball sampling from the contacts of network participants who also resided within Chorlton and Didsbury.

Didsbury is an area of two parts, with East Didsbury – or 'Didsbury Village' – providing the more established, chain businesses, and 'West Didsbury' offering a more independent, smaller feel. Didsbury Village is home to many chain brand restaurants and bars, such as Zizzi, as well as branches of high street brands such as Boots, M&S and ALDI, while it is also interspersed with smaller businesses that have become locally famous, such as the bar Saints and Scholars, and the restaurant Mud Crab Café. Slightly further south into East Didsbury is the *Parrs Wood Entertainment Centre*, which offers a multiscreen cinema, bowling alley and a gym, amongst other venues. Didsbury Village is a popular night out for a range of audiences, but less so for the local population who tend to prefer West Didsbury. In contrast, West Didsbury, which is a 10-to-15 minute walk from Didsbury Village, or a short bus or tram ride, has a number of independent, but locally infamous bars and restaurants, such as *The Metropolitan*, which is known for its upper-middle class pricing, even if the customers do not always match that profile; Simon Rimmer's award winning vegetarian restaurant, *Greens*; and an array of smaller, locally-run restaurants and bars. Both areas are well served by public transport, and recently welcomed Manchester's light rail tram system, Metrolink, into the area (although this was not open at the time the research was undertaken), offering links further south to *Parrs Wood*, and also north to Chorlton, the city centre, and Rochdale and Oldham.

Chorlton offers a more 'bohemian' and 'independent' environ to Didsbury. Like Didsbury, it is made up of two wards, Chorlton and Chorlton Park, with most of the local amenities and businesses being situated within Chorlton, and Chorlton Park having a higher concentration of residential properties. It offers a multicultural resident and visiting population due to its neighbouring areas of Whalley Range, Moss Side, Stretford and Withington. The area, like Didsbury, tends to call itself a 'village' with 'Four Banks' – so called due to it being a crossroad with bank branches on each corner – acting as the 'village centre', and different areas spurring off from there, with primarily shops and services to the east and west, and bars and restaurants to the north and south. It offers

a café culture, with independent bars serving coffee and cake during the day, and staying open serving alcohol late into the night, with nearby fast food vendors offering similarly liberal availability. Most notably in Chorlton are the presence of ‘cooperative’ businesses, including *Unicorn*, the local cooperative vegan grocery store, and *Busy Bee Toy Shop*, ‘Britain’s first toy shop co-operative’ (Busy Bee Toy Shop 2013), as well as independent microbreweries, such as *The Horse and Jockey*. The neighbourhoods are generally green and leafy, but the area also has two main arterial roads for the wider city flowing through it, meaning that there is also a great deal of traffic. The area is well served by public transport, including both buses and Metrolink, the tram system. This assists in easy commutes to the city centre, about 15 minutes away.

Table 2 below illustrates the primary characteristics of the four wards from which the sample was gained. The table illustrates that according to composite profiling (ACORN) that Chorlton and West Didsbury are predominantly populated with young, affluent professionals, with Chorlton Park and East Didsbury being less so. While the latter two areas appear to be qualitatively different in population types, shared accommodation was present, particularly in the border areas. For example, those who live on the border of Chorlton often refer to their accommodation as ‘ChoBo’ – short for Chorlton Borders – to indicate their proximity. All four areas have higher concentrations of ‘two or more adults, no children’ within which those living within shared accommodation will be included, and low areas of social housing, in comparison to Manchester City Council’s overall average. Unfortunately, as with wider statistics on shared accommodation, as discussed in the previous chapter, the level of detail is relatively low, and shared accommodation is subsumed into wider household types.

Table 2: Characteristics of sample locales with Manchester as a comparison measure, adapted from Manchester City Council (2011)

Area/ Characteristic	Chorlton	Chorlton Park	West Didsbury	East Didsbury	Manchester
Dominant ACORN profile (2011) ⁴	Well-off professionals, larger houses and converted flats.	Low income, older people, smaller semis.	Prosperous young professionals, flats.	Older professionals in suburban houses and apartments.	Single parents and pensioners, council terraces.
Lone pensioner	12.8%	13.6%	12.4%	13.4%	14.7%
Lone adult under pension age	26%	23%	30.6%	18.4%	24.7%
Two or more adults, no children	33.9%	27.6%	38.7%	33.5%	24.6%
Couple with dependent children	15.2%	13.6%	10.7%	18.5%	13.6%
Other households with dependent children	2.4%	2.7%	1.3%	2.3%	3.3%
Households with non dependent children	5.7%	8.7%	3.7%	8.3%	8.2%
Lone parent with dependent children	4%	10.7%	2.7%	5.5%	11.2%
Private housing	90.3%	73.3%	91%	91%	68.7%
Social housing	9.7%	26.7%	9%	9%	31.1%

Source: Adapted from Manchester City Council (2011)

Figure 1 below provides a graphical overview of both the locations of the sample locales and also their ACORN profiles in relation to their neighbouring wards.

⁴ 'Acorn segments postcodes and neighbourhoods into 6 Categories, 18 Groups and 62 types, three of which are not private households. By analysing significant social factors and population behaviour, it provides precise information and in-depth understanding of the different types of people.' (CACI 2013)

Predominant ACORN type, 2011

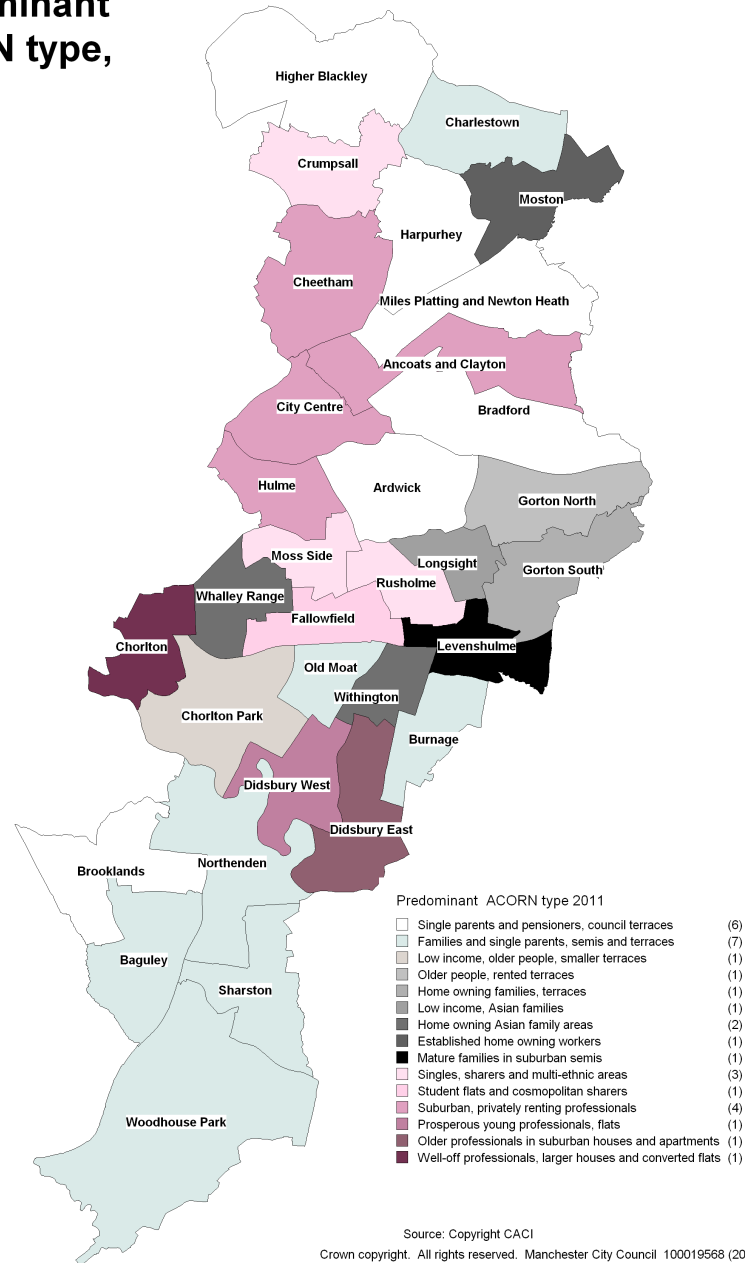


Figure 1: Predominant ACORN type, 2011, with map showing location of sample locales

Source: Manchester City Council (2011)

Sampling Strategy

The sampling approach adopted was that of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and was aimed at directly accessing those people who were currently within shared housing. A sampling frame indicating all the shared households in the areas selected was simply not available, and in any event was unnecessary given the qualitative and small-scale nature of the proposed study. Instead, the aim was to identify an opportunity sample of shared households in Chorlton and Didsbury, using a

combination of approaches through web adverts, flyers to households and through snowball sample contacts.

Having identified and contacted nearly 1000 prospective shared households using the methods outlined below, the initial aim was to try and interview all (or a majority of) residents within a shared accommodation both individually and as a group. This proved difficult, however, particularly due to the differing and independent schedules of individuals within shared accommodation. Instead, it was decided to try and interview as many people within a single household as possible, but also to try and interview any individuals within shared accommodation to gain their experiences.

Participants were selected for interview on the following broad criteria:

- That they lived in shared accommodation of two or more people (including themselves);
- That they were 'unrelated' except through friendship;
- That they were not undergraduate students (unless they were mature students living with non-students);
- That they could be of any gender, ethnicity or age over the age of 18;
- That and they lived within the chosen areas of Didsbury and Chorlton.

These criteria were adopted as they allowed for a broad range of participants, whilst also not engaging with student shared-households, which are considered out of the scope of this study due to their different genesis, maintenance and time-specific qualities (Kenyon 1997). Student shared households were considered substantively different to non-student, peer-shared households due to student households becoming established in different ways, with students often choosing who to live with well in advance of moving in with each other rather than finding an already established house to move in with. Further, student housing often has a prefigured expiry of a year, with residents either leaving university or moving in with others in their final years. The exception to this is where student sharers extend their tenancy on a property from their second into their third years. Finally, while students usually live independently within their shared households, they still have an appeal to authority in the form of university authorities to deal with any practical or interpersonal issues that are not necessarily available to peer-shared households. These qualities contrast with peer-shared households, where individuals usually enter a pre-existing property rather than finding a new house as a pre-decided group, with a view to living there until they need to move on, and with little appeal to authority should interpersonal differences occur.

Recruitment of the sample

Participants in the study were recruited through three strategies:

- Mailshot to addresses deemed likely to be shared accommodation;

- Approaching advertisers directly via the GumTree website asking them to take part in the research;
- Snowballing from participants recruited via the mailshot or GumTree.

Table 3 indicates the number of participants recruited by each strategy:

Table 3: Recruitment strategies for interview participants, N achieved

Mailshot	GumTree	Snowballing
9	11	11

The initial mailshot was developed after obtaining the edited electoral roll from Manchester City Council for Chorlton, Chorlton Moat, Didsbury West and Didsbury East. From there, households were chosen as ‘most likely’ being shared accommodation by selecting households with three or more people resident with differing surnames. Households with two residents with differing surnames were discounted at this stage, as they were also likely to be a cohabiting couple. In total 800 letters were sent to the four wards to households that matched these criteria; a copy of the letter is available in appendix II. In total, three households (nine participants) responded to the mailshot.

Due to the low response rate to the mailshot approach, a second method of recruitment was developed to use the shared-households adverts available on GumTree. Each day, new advertisements are posted to GumTree advertising rooms in shared houses, and are demarcated by geography. Participants were recruited by the researcher responding to the advert explaining that while I was not interested in the room, I would be interested in them taking part in the research, using the email contained in appendix III. A total of 11 participants were recruited using this method.

A further 11 participants were recruited through ‘snowballing’ – referral by other participants. It is a well-known feature of snowball sampling (Morgan 2008, pp.816–817) that it tends to identify further contacts that share social characteristics with that of the initial sample. Here I was seeking to identify those who were similar in their shared-household residential status, but it should also be noted that the snowball contacts shared certain other characteristics with their snowball referrers, namely they may work in similar fields, or that they will share similar interests, which formed the basis of their original association. The differing methods of recruitment did not overly impact the diversity of household types (discussed below) in terms of one method recruiting more sets of friends than others, or one recruiting more ‘random’ households, with the exception of snowballing, which recruited a greater number of tenants within owner-occupied property (sharing with their landlord) than those who were peer-sharing.

Overall, recruitment for the research was problematic and lengthy, and it took nearly twelve months to recruit and interview the participants. Factors that may have impacted this could have included poorly worded advertising material that failed to engage and motivate potential participants and convince them of the value of the research, but it was also difficult to arrange times with people that were convenient; often, people found it difficult to find a time to put aside two hours to take part in the research.

Characteristics of the sample

In all, 31 people from 18 households were recruited to the sample using the three methods of recruitment, 11 men and 20 women (see Table 4). The lower number of men recruited was due to a lower response rate rather than a deliberate aim of recruitment, and was not necessarily representative of sharers within the sample areas as this was not a feature of the sampling method. Appendix IV provides some ‘pen portraits’ – brief, qualitative overviews – of the research participants.

Table 5 shows the age breakdown of the sample, and demonstrates that the sample was overwhelmingly under the age of 35, with only 3 of the 31 sample participants over this age. Table 6 indicates that the sample was also very well educated, with over 93% having participated in higher education. Table 7 indicated that in terms of their occupations, most participants were employed and considered to have ‘professional’ occupations, which is in line with both geographic expectations, and the demographic data available from SpareRoom.co.uk (2011).

Table 4: Gender Composition of the Sample

Male	11
Female	20
Total	31

Table 5: Age Composition of the Sample

Age Range	Male	Female	Total
22-25	2	6	8
26-30	4	10	14
31-35	5	1	6
36-39	0	1	1
40+	0	2	2
Total	11	20	31

Table 6: Educational Composition of the Sample

Higher Education?	Yes	No	Total
Male	10	1	11
Female	19	1	20

Table 7: Occupational areas of participants

Occupational area	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Professional	8	16	24
Retail/Clerical	2	1	3
Postgraduate student	1	3	4

Bearing in mind that this thesis seeks to explore not only the individuals within shared households (the ‘house sharers’) but also their accommodation (the ‘shared household’), what is the composition of the households in which the ‘house sharers’ reside? Table 8 shows that the majority of the sample were in households in which all residents shared common tenancy status, with 6 of the sample in households characterised as ‘owner-occupier’ where a resident owner is also renting out rooms to tenants. Table 9 breaks this down a little to explore the ‘household type’, with five different broad household types being identified in the research:

- shared houses made up of friends that have come together to live with one another;
- shared houses of ‘randoms’ who all found each other through means such as websites and are sharing a property;
- friend/randoms hybrid households where some people are friends, but have since had to recruit randoms to fill gaps where other friends have left in order to maintain the tenancy of the property;
- owner-occupied shared households where the owner is resident and shared with one or more tenant, usually in order to afford to own the property;
- the ideologically led-shared house, which is akin to the first three types, but differs in that it is led through an ideological belief in sharing or cooperative living as a more sustainable form of living than living on one’s own.

Table 8: Housing Tenure Status of Sample's Residency

Tenure	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Tenant	9	16	25
Owner-occupier	2	4	6

Table 9: Household Type of Sample, stratified by Gender

Household Type	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Friends	3	2	5
Friends/Randoms	1	4	5
Randoms	4	4	8
Owner-occupied	4	6	10
Ideologically led	0	3	3

Table 10 shows the size of the household that the sample were sharing, with most people sharing with three or four people within the household.

Table 10: Number of Residents in Current Shared Accommodation, Stratified by Gender

Number in current household	Male	Female	Total
2	0	2	2
3	6	7	13
4	4	8	12
5-6	1	3	4

Finally, because the thesis also seeks to explore shared housing as a *temporal* entity: created through the trajectories of individuals into and out of accommodation, Table 11 shows the time duration that the sample participants have spent in their current shared accommodation, which illustrates a varied pictures of occupancy, with the largest periods of occupancy being between one and two years, or over five years.

Table 11: Time in Current Shared Accommodation, Stratified by Gender

Total time current in shared accommodation	Male	Female	Total
Under 1 year	1	4	5
1-2 years	4	6	10
2-3 years	3	4	7
3-4 years	1	0	1
5+ years	2	6	8

Of course, the significance of time spent in shared accommodation is also shaped by people’s interactions over that time, and how this fits into their overall biographies and trajectories – and it is this that needs to be teased out further in the interview materials.

I now turn to examine the aims of the interviews and the interview process itself.

The Interviews

The broad strategy this research has adopted is to use interviews as the primary research instrument. The aim was to employ qualitative, semi-structured interviewing as the best means to explore how participants understand their experience of shared living. The interview strategy took a biographical approach, in that questions about previous housing experiences were used both to allow the participant time to 'settle in' to the interview process, but also provide a wider context about their housing trajectory and for questions about their aspirations for their future housing tenure. This approach was also intended to provide a basis for comparison between their previous and current experience of housing, and to allow for analysis of any patterns in housing trajectories across participants. The overall aim of the interview was to understand how individuals within shared accommodation understood their current position, roles and responsibilities and how these coalesced (or not) around their wider life choices and aspirations.

An aide memoire was used to guide the interviews (appendix V), which provided broad structure for the interview itself. It took a temporal and spatial approach, in that it asked participants to consider their time in accommodation in a biographical fashion, asking them to reflect on their previous housing experiences before moving into their current property, then moving on to the current residence and their experiences, before asking about their future aspirations and overall feelings of shared accommodation. This aimed to look at narrations of practices *in context*, and understand how practices may differ across differing contexts. For example, how 'sharing' may have differed for people within student halls of residence, versus peer-shared households, or how practices may differ based on their position within the household, such as being an owner-occupier, or a tenant. This was designed to assist in the analysis of the data using the housing pathways and theories of practice hybrid approach, by considering context and temporality, whilst also talking about specific issues. In terms of practices, and accessing practices through speech, a number of key areas were considered, such as asking about how space was shared, how use of the kitchen was negotiated, and if goods were shared, and how the residents organised group activities, if they did so. These topical areas were aimed at accessing the 'doing' of shared living – how things were organised and how individuals felt about that organisation. The overall structure was followed in each interview, with a great deal of scope to move away from the topics listed in the aide memoire, but also return to the core topics to ensure comparison across cases. This freedom to deviate allowed the participants to tell stories and experiences of their shared living experiences beyond the clinical practicalities of living – such as when and how they cook their meals – and talk about their feelings regarding the practice – such as how interpersonal relations between participants may inhibit or encourage certain household or individual practices.

The interviews lasted between 45-90 minutes each, largely depending on the available time of the participant rather than the conversation being difficult to develop. They were mostly conducted within the homes of participant, with the view that they would be able to illustrate particular features of the property that were pertinent to the interview. Where this was not convenient, or the participant did not feel comfortable with me conducting the interview in their home, they were conducted on University premises, with the exception of one participant, where it was held in café in Manchester. Participants were shown a Participant Information Sheet (appendix VI) and asked to complete a consent form (appendix VII), which was also verbally explained to them, particularly the right to withdraw at any time. All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, with no other participants present, with the exception of the interview in the café where other customers were present, although it was a quiet Saturday morning, and we were largely isolated from the other customers, and the ideologically-led houseshare that opted for an extended group interview. By carrying out the interviews individually, and without others present, this avoided any potential scenarios where individuals may have felt uncomfortable raising certain issues, particularly interpersonal issues, which involve other participants. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and securely stored on an encrypted laptop. The sound files were subsequently transcribed, with each interview yielding between 3,000 and 12,000 words depending on the length of the interview and speed of speech. Specialist dictation and voice recognition software was used to assist in the transcription, with manual quality checking to ensure clarity of recognition. The specialist software (Dragon Dictate) was not always used due to excessive background noise in some interviews, so these were transcribed manually. The transcripts were subsequently anonymised, removing all references that may be able to identify individual participants, with each participant being given a pseudonym, occupations changed to non-specific areas without reference to employers, and any notable stories that are very idiosyncratic being omitted. These measures did not impact the analysis or reporting of the findings, or require any material to be removed.

I found the interviews largely enjoyable, with the conversation flowing naturally once the participant had some awareness of the aims of the research. Often, they admitted they chose to take part because of a 'nightmare' situation they had experienced in the past, or, as one participant disclosed, they valued the opportunity to talk about themselves and their shared house experience with someone without judgment, as they do not often get to reflect on their experiences with someone outside of the situation. There were some instances where participant responded to questions with statements such as, 'I hadn't really thought about that', suggesting the tacit nature of some behaviours and practices within households. However, once given opportunity to reflect, participants

were able to explore the topic in reasonable depth, often using particular instances from the past to illustrate their point. Where interviews were held in the residence of the participant, this was sometimes while other housemates were present, and took place in the lounge or kitchen. This did not cause any overt problems, or cases of inhibition, but did mean that my presence meant that other residents were excluded from the shared area while the interview was taking place. There were occasions of people 'sneaking past' the lounge during the interview to access another room, or something within the lounge, but these did not disrupt the interviews to any great extent. On a small number of occasions, the interview took place in the individual participant's bedroom, and this was usually to avoid the shared space being dominated by the interview, allowing others access. When this was suggested, I was careful to double check that the participant was happy for me to proceed with the interview in their bedroom, and to always ask where it would be appropriate for me to sit. The greatest difficulty during the interviews was ensuring that as much data was gained within the (often limited) time available with the participant. When organising the interviews, I was keen to stress that the interviews, including explaining the research and obtaining consent, could take up to two-hours, and it was sometimes difficult to negotiate a window of opportunity within the busy lives of the participants. I was careful to keep an eye on my watch to ensure that interviews were well paced, particularly to avoid a speedy conclusion, allowing there to be time for any questions from the participant.

There were two notable interviews that I felt did not go as well as the others. Firstly, was with a male participant in his own home, where he talked about some behaviours surrounding housemate recruitment that I found uncomfortable to listen to, which involved recruitment (or, rather, discrimination) on the basis of race. The second was with the participants in the ideologically-led house share, one of which was particularly combative when I asked open questions to explore her personal and ideological motivations for the practices within the household. This particular house did also not want to be interviewed individually, instead opting for an extended group interview that lasted over two hours in two sessions on the same evening.

While these two interviews were uncomfortable to undertake, upon reflection of the data, they still yielded some interesting sociological points, and illustrated the diversity present within the sample population. I was also careful to ensure that my experiences within the interview did not impact upon my analysis and reporting of the data, and consultation with my supervisors, and checking their interpretation of the data was particularly useful here.

Three interviews went especially well, with the participants being very eager to narrate their experiences in a very verbose and eloquent way. All three participants in these

instances were all researchers by background, and so felt they had some insight into the process they were embarking upon, and were consciously trying to provide me with data that they felt useful. I was happy for them to do this, and was open to them explaining their experiences in whichever way they felt comfortable, and they provided some of the longer and subsequently richer interviews that form the basis of this research.

There were no discernable differences between data gained within the residence of the participant versus the University or a café. While undertaking the interview in the residence of the participant allowed them to physically point out certain aspects of their accommodation, when distilled to textual form for reporting within this thesis, conducting the interviews outside of the residence did not detract from the data. Visiting shared residences did allow me to get a 'feel' for the quality and types of accommodation that were available to and chosen by sharers, which were mostly manageably clean and organised, although they may well have cleaned before my arrival. Overall, the interviews provided some crucial and comprehensive insights into shared living, with the shorter, more time constrained interviews providing more practical reflections on shared living, and the longer interviews more likely to provide deeper insights into the interpersonal relationships that were at play that may have intersected with what they often perceived as tacit practices.

In thinking about the broader implications of interviewing people in shared households about their experiences and perceptions of their situation, it must also be recognised that the issue of sharing with others is by no means a neutral question. Sharing has both a moral dimension to it, but also a strongly interpersonal one. In asking people about how they shared with others, I had to be very conscious of the broader social and ethical consequences of asking people to be reflective about such matters. In analysing the data, I had to reflect on how the moral and interpersonal sensitivity of questions of sharing might have shaped what people said (but also what they did not say). For example, it may be unwise to assume that positive stories of sharing were always as glowing as they appeared to be, as individuals may feel pressured to present themselves as positive and virtuous individuals. Further, where they narrated particularly bad experiences, it was important to remember how their view of individuals might have impacted their view of a wider situation; they may suggest that a house was a terrible place to live because of a particular bad relationship with one person, and this has overshadowed the whole experience. However, within the interviews, the participants seemed open to criticism of both their own actions, as well as the actions of others. I also had to be wary of the ethical consequences of asking people about such matters. This is discussed further below.

The ethics and politics of conducting research on shared housing

'Sharing' can be a difficult issue to talk about, perhaps especially when you are living with the people with whom you are sharing. In some cases, my participants were sharing with the house-owner of their accommodation, in other cases they were sharing with friends, or with 'randoms', but in all cases there were potential personal and interpersonal consequences of 'sharing about sharing', and of what people felt willing and able to talk about. Similarly in some households, there were strong normative assumptions about the appropriate (and inappropriate) ways of sharing, and in many cases the breach of such assumptions had led to conflict of both implicit and overt kinds. In asking people to participate in the research, I therefore had to ensure that my approach adopted the appropriate ethical safeguards.

Research was carried out according to the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2002). Particular attention was paid to sections 34-37 regarding anonymity, privacy and confidentiality; and sections 10-30 to ensure that all possible efforts are made to ensure the comfort and safety of the participants, and that my responsibilities as a researcher were met.

Participants were issued with an overview of the research (appendix VI) when they were invited to take part, which included my contact details, and again at the interview. This information clearly stated that they could withdraw at any time, including after the empirical research had taken place, without prejudice. Participants were asked to sign a consent form before the research took place. All of the participants gave consent to take part (see appendix VII) and no one declined to answer any questions or leave the interviews once they had begun.

All of the data was anonymised through the use of pseudonyms as soon as it was collected and transcribed, with only relevant personal data for the purposes of context (such as age, gender and general occupational area) being stored. All data, sensitive or otherwise, has been securely stored either electronically, using encrypted, password protected files, or in a secure filing cabinet to which only I have access.

Minimising harm

During the interviews, where more than one resident within a property was interviewed, I was particularly conscious of ensuring that any information from one participant was not divulged to another participant. For example, where one participant disclosed a dislike or a tension with another housemate, I made sure that I did not reveal that information in subsequent interviews with the housemate. Similarly, where I was met with questions from a housemate that alluded to someone mentioning a tension, I would neither confirm nor deny any knowledge of the fact. During the pre-interview discussion, I made it

overtly clear that anything they mentioned would not be discussed with other housemates. The most negative stories were told about housemates that the participants were no longer living with (often because of the negative stories), but where more than one resident was interviewed within a residence, they appeared open to discuss their relationships with others. There were instances where participants suggested that I would already know about a certain issue, such as one housemate being annoyed with another, or a certain incident, but I was quick to ensure that I did not either confirm or deny any knowledge, usually by suggesting that they talk a little more about the issue. There were also cases where participants would divulge incidents and suggest that another housemate would have probably already mentioned a certain issue, such as never washing up, or throwing cigarette butts into the garden, where I would have to say I was unaware. While this involves a modicum of deception on my part, omitting to tell the participant what I was or was not aware of, this allowed me to respect the confidentiality of the participants while also maintaining a more personable interview style. If I was to respond with, 'I am unable to discuss what X discussed with me', it may have led to a more clinical and less open interview style, which I was eager to avoid.

The politics of research and reflexivity

It has long been established that interviews are always relational social encounters, and there is always a question of the power dynamic within such encounters (Mason 2002; Kvale 2007; Kvale 2009). In conducting the interviews in this study the issue of power dynamics was an interesting one. I was of similar age and educational status to the majority of my participants (though in important respects – see below – certain of my experiences were very different). Nonetheless, as a white, educated man entering people's homes to discuss their domestic situation, there is always a question of the privilege of the researcher. In practical terms, and as explained above, the interview encounters varied a great deal in terms of the nature of the social encounter and the degree of 'rapport' between us as research co-participants. This was particularly true in relation to the ideologically-led house share where the participant viewed my knowledge of her ideological housing choice (cooperatively led) to be insufficient to fully understand her responses, but I was keen to express that I was there to understand their choices, and welcomed their explanations rather than assume any knowledge.

As a biographical point, my own experience within shared accommodation has been limited to my own undergraduate student experience. In my first year I shared with other 'randoms' allocated by the university to share a three bedroom flat; in my second year I shared with peers who I had not lived with in my first year. Both of these experiences were positive, and I enjoyed them. In my final two years at university I took the role as a 'proctor' – a senior student in student halls – in order to benefit from cheaper rent and

free catering. Here, my role changed, as I was in a position of authority, and often seen as an arbiter rather than a housemate. After leaving university, I moved in with my partner, and so have never lived in shared accommodation with non-students. While not specifically relevant to the substantive findings of this research, this is an important reflexive point to make, as it indicates the lack of embedded or cultural knowledge I may have gained from immersing myself in that environment personally. I am an ‘outsider’ looking in on shared households, and relying on the interpretations of my participants, rather than attempting to recognise properties that I may have experienced personally experience. This, I feel, has allowed me to give primacy to the voices of my participants, and listen closely to their stories, rather than listening to echoes of my own biography.

Analytical framework: how did I analyse the data?

The data was analysed manually by first reading through the transcripts and highlighting potential ‘concepts’ that appeared substantively and then harvesting selections of quotes that reflected varying themes on these areas. These themes, which were structured around the ‘shared accommodation cycle’ (Figure 2) then fed into the structure of my chapters.

Figure 2: Shared Accommodation Cycle



A process of ‘coding’ was adapted from the work of Charmaz (2006, pp.42–71) which suggests a staggered approach of analysis that leads to the building up of families of codes, and thus quotations. This allows the researcher to move beyond the told story, to a more theoretical account of how such narratives can be used to interpret social life.

This mode of analysis was developed with an aim to consider inferred meanings and understandings around the notion of 'sharing' and the experience of shared accommodation. In line with narrative analysis (Bryman 2001, p.401), the approach was designed to be:

'sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts'.

By taking narrative into account, there was an intention to be sensitive to how previous experiences of living (shared or otherwise) had influenced both participants' current accounts and future aspirations.

The framework of analysis, building on the approach adapted from Charmaz (2006), took two key elements into account when 'reading' the data: the notion of theories of practice (Shove et al. 2012); and an understanding of housing pathways (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009). The notion of theories of practice, as discussed in the literature review, allows us to consider how otherwise disparate actions can be viewed together to form a more cohesive and understandable 'practice' within social life. Throughout the analysis of the interview transcripts I was able to view the repeated themes that were highlighted by participants as important to the enactment and negotiation of shared living, including issues of proximity, temporality, domesticity, and aspirations, coupled with interpersonal concerns such as agreement, conflict and differing expectations of relationality and how practices 'should' be enacted.

The notion of housing pathways requires us to consider the home not as a static, physical structure, but rather as one that is both structured by, and structuring of, the residents within it. The biographical approach taken in the interviews allowed the appreciation of previous experiences, and how they impacted a participant's current evaluation of their living experiences, along with how it may affect their future personal and housing aspirations. By asking the participants to reflect on their previous housing experiences, and then ask them to narrate their current experiences, contrasts could be drawn on the qualities of living within shared accommodation that are idiosyncratic or differ in form and practice due to the nature of shared living.

The goal of combining these two approaches was to foreground the participant's understandings of interaction between the residents and the 'home', and the co-created social structure between the residents and within the home. It further allowed recognition that the practices that are documented may be contingent on the temporal placement of both the individual and the household in time. Rather than making the assertion that all shared households will have analogous practices, instead, the

approach adopted here acknowledges that differing households may have practices that echo one another, but differ depending on the configuration of the household at the time, and also have the potential to change in the future.

As indicated in the section on sample composition, five broad household types were identified in the research:

- shared houses made up of friends that have come together to live with one another;
- shared houses of 'randoms' who all found each other through means such as websites and are sharing a property;
- friend/randoms hybrid households where some people are friends, but have since had to recruit randoms to fill gaps where other friends have left in order to maintain the tenancy of the property;
- owner-occupied shared households where the owner is resident and shared with one or more tenant, usually in order to afford to own the property;
- and the ideologically led-shared house, which is akin to the first three types, but differs in that it is led through an ideological belief in sharing or cooperative living as a more sustainable form of living than living on your own.

It is important – both methodologically and substantively – to highlight that these differing household types have not been gathered by design, but were observed as variations *within* the sample. Given the necessarily small size of the same (31 individuals over 18 households), it is interesting to note the idiosyncrasies that exist in what can be oversimplified as a homogenous group. As a sub-category within the wider discourse of housing, the variation that is present is tangible, and worthy of further study.

Summary

The choice of methodological approach illustrated above has enabled me to explore the experiences of 'sharing' and of shared living through their own words and stories. The qualitative interviews yielded some rich data expressed in the participants' own terms. The mode of analysis allowed an appreciation of those experiences in context, by understanding their stories as in process, having been built upon previous experiences which then go on to influence their future choices, whilst giving primacy to the voices of the participants.

The choice of method can be critiqued for my insight into shared living and its associated practices being mediated by the voices of my participants: the approach lacks direct observation of residents and their behaviours, and I am reliant on my participants to narrate their stories honestly, highlighting the intricacies of their lives. The

study also relies on qualitative interviewing to successfully interrogate the experiences of the participants and their meaning, asking questions that highlight the key points of shared living. Thus, there may be some elements missing from the analysis as participants may not have considered a pertinent or interesting point, or there may be elements below the realms of practical consciousness, where the everyday and mundane are taken for granted so much that participants themselves may not appreciate its idiosyncratic nature in contrast to other forms of living. There have been instances where I have had to read between the lines to understand the issues at play, as they have not necessarily been overtly referred to. Further, and as suggested above, participants may have been reluctant to divulge views and opinions that may have reflected badly on them or their fellow housemates, thus presenting an overly positive view of shared living. Whilst it may be argued that direct observational methods, such as ethnography, may provide better access to the enactment of practices by virtue of actually *seeing* the practice in motion, the presence of a researcher may inhibit those practices and the observed behaviour.

The sample can be critiqued for being limited in both geographic and demographic diversity, due to its focus on two affluent areas of South Manchester, and a particular 'type' of participant: predominantly white, middle-class, well-educated, employed individuals. This, therefore, excludes many diverse populations from the sample, such as those who are in receipt of benefits rather than working (which may subsequently limit the available accommodation to individuals), and a direct appraisal of other intersecting issues of stratification, including ethnicity and gender. However, as mentioned earlier, the sample was theoretically derived using methods that were not using gender and ethnicity as a selection measure, and the participants were self-selecting by opting to take part in the research. The sample gained contained a diverse group of people in terms of their experiences and household types despite the superficially homogenous sample, as discussed above.

Overall, the research has yielded some important points regarding 'sharing' and its associated practices that can contribute to further research in the area. While there are limitations in terms of generalizability and representativeness, this research talks about a very specific population within South Manchester rather than those living within shared accommodation *en masse*.

The results of the analysis will now be laid out in the proceeding three data chapters, followed by a discussion of the findings of the research in the final chapter. The findings are discussed in a similar way to the approach taken in the interview, starting with how people find a property and are recruited both into the property and into the practices within that shared accommodation (chapter four), followed by an overview of the

practicalities and practices of 'sharing' (chapter five), and then a discussion of conflict and negotiation within shared accommodation, and how their experiences have impacted their future housing choices (chapter six).

Chapter Four: Recruitment into practices: finding and learning to live in shared housing



Figure 3: David, Juliet and Alex in *Shallow Grave*, preparing to interview potential housemates

SCENE: In the living room each of the candidates is interviewed individually with the same seating arrangements as before (i.e. the trio on the sofa and the applicant on the chair). What we see are briskly intercut excerpts from each of these interviews. We do not get the responses to the questions, although we may see some facial reaction.

All of David's questions are to the Woman.

All of Alex's questions are to the Goth.

All of Juliet's questions are to the Man.

DAVID
All right, just a few questions.

ALEX
I'd like to ask you about your hobbies.

JULIET
Why do you want a room here?

DAVID
Do you smoke?

ALEX
When you slaughter a goat and wrench its heart out with your bare hands, do you then summon hellfire?

JULIET
I mean, what are you actually doing here? What is the hidden agenda?

DAVID
Do a little freebase maybe, from time to time?

ALEX
Or maybe just phone out for a pizza?

JULIET

Look, it's a fairly straightforward question. You're either divorced or you're not.

DAVID

OK, I'm going to play you just a few seconds of this tape -
- I'd like you to name the song, the lead singer and the
three hit singles subsequently recorded by him with another
band.

ALEX

When you get up in the morning, how do you decide what
shade of black to wear?

JULIET

Now, let me get this straight. This affair that you're not
having, is it not with a man or not with a woman?

DAVID

Turning very briefly to the subject of corporate finance --
no, this is important. Leveraged buy-outs -- a good thing
or a bad thing?

ALEX

With which of the following figures do you most closely
identify: Joan of Arc, Eva Braun or Marilyn Monroe?

JULIET

It's just that you strike me as a man trapped in a crisis
of emotional direction, afflicted by a realization that the
partner of your dreams is, quite simply, just that.

DAVID

Did you ever kill a man?

ALEX

And when did anyone last say to you these exact words: 'You
are the sunshine of my life'?

JULIET

OK, so A has left you, B is ambivalent, you're still seeing
C but D is the one you yearn for. What are we to make of
this? If I were you, I'd ditch the lot. There's a lot more
letters in the alphabet of love.

DAVID

And what if I told you that I was the antichrist?

Excerpt from *Shallow Grave* (Boyle 1994)

The scene quoted above, taken from *Shallow Grave* – one of the most popular films that feature house sharing as part of its plot line – is an extreme parody of the house share interview scenario: people living in a shared house sitting in a position of power and judgment, asking probing questions to consider whether or not they would be compatible should they choose to let the interviewee move in. While the questions asked by Alex, Juliet and David appear mocking, farcical and even rude or insulting, they do highlight an important issue of shared living: you may never really know who it is that you may

end up living with – the answer to the question ‘Did you ever kill a man?’ may actually be ‘yes’, but are you realistically going to ask that to a perfect stranger?

The process of finding a room within a shared house and subsequently moving in can seem like a straightforward process: take a look at some adverts, make some calls, view some rooms, and choose the one where you like both the house and the people. However, participants told a more complex story of how finding a room within a shared house is a laborious process for both the searcher and the advertiser. Rather than just being a chance encounter where you may end up getting on with one another, the recruitment process takes a discriminatory and necessarily instrumental approach where both the searcher and residents make an assessment about whether or not they could successfully live with one another. Further, the process does not only recruit individuals into accommodation, but also into a set of practices and routines, so acts as a structuring activity. However, the process is one that is couched in what we might consider to be interpersonal niceties: both interviewers and interviewees are polite, amenable and attempt to make a good impression on the random stranger that has entered the building. While it is instrumental, it is also personal, and is one of the first examples within the house share landscape of the clash between instrumentality and economic rationality on the one hand, with intimacy and interpersonal relationships on the other; social positions and motivations that are often considered as at odds with one another, but are frequently necessary bedfellows in order for house share arrangements to be successful.

This chapter explores this process and considers the means by which people advertise, the adverts themselves, and the interviewing process that takes place when people view a room in a shared house, and how these experiences go on to structure how the living arrangements will proceed. It will take each section of the process in turn to consider the structuring nature of the process, and how it may have affinity with other contemporary social practices such as job-seeking and online dating. Starting with the process of looking at and placing house share advertisements, this chapter will explore how both advertisers and seekers use advertisements as a way of setting expectations for behaviour and lifestyle through the use of indicative language and behaviours within the advertisements themselves, and how the range of services available to both advertisers and seekers can also work to structure the presentation of the house to potential housemates. Following this, the process of viewing a room will be explored, with reflections on what will be called the ‘(inter)viewing process’ to demonstrate how a room viewing is actually seen as an ‘audition’ for a role in the house. Finally, these two elements will be considered, along with the initial stages of living within a house, to illustrate how these structuring processes assist in the initial and on-going negotiation and alignment of practices, routines and temporalities, to consider how shared

resources are used and accessed by competing parties without an overtly structured regime – or, in other words, how to avoid a queue for the shower at 7am.

Using theories of practice (Schatzki et al. 2001; Warde 2005; Shove et al. 2012) as a lens by which to consider behaviour within shared accommodation entails examining the routine, habitual, collective and conventional nature of practices of sharing in shared households; exploring the processes by which sharing practices emerge, develop and change within shared households; and examining the significance of how people are recruited into practices and of their degree of personal involvement in practices over time. This chapter focuses in particular on the process of recruitment into practices, and how recruitment into households is also partly organised as a structured process of recruitment into (shared expectations and values of) shared practices.

In what follows, I suggest that the process of recruitment into shared households exhibits strong signs of ‘distinction’ (Bourdieu 1984) at work, in which lifestyle and status cues serve to channel people in different directions simply by the operation of ‘taste’ and ‘social comfort’. ‘Taste’, for Bourdieu, reflects the habitus or internalised dispositions, in which taste:

‘functions as a sort of social orientation, a ‘sense of one’s place’, guides the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices of goods which befit the occupants of that position’ (Bourdieu 1984, pp.466–467)

Here habitus - operating at the level of taken-for-granted assumptions, and preferences for social familiarity - guides individuals towards different kinds of households and housemates. Bourdieu argues that similarities of lifestyle are inseparable from processes of social interaction, noting that ‘the surest guarantor of homogamy and, thereby, of social reproduction, is the spontaneous affinity...which brings together the agents endowed with dispositions or tastes that are similar’ (Bourdieu 1990, p.71). Differential association - the fact that who we associate with is affected by our social location – has long been seen as a key aspect of the reproduction of social relationships (Bottero 2005). Differential association, in which ‘similarity breeds connection’, refers to the powerful relationship between social *association* and social *similarity* (McPherson et al. 2001, p.416; Bottero 2005). A wealth of evidence shows that friendship and sexual partnership exhibit clear patterns of homophily (occurring between those with the same or very similar social characteristics), and that ‘birds of a feather flock together’. In this chapter I argue that we can see the process of recruitment into shared housing as being just such a process of ‘distinction’: with clear elements of ‘screening’ and symbolic signalling leading to social sorting and differential association – though this is often organised on a tacit and implicit basis. The implications of this emphasis on social similarity in shared household recruitment are also apparent. If the process of recruitment into a shared household serves, as we shall see, as a process of signalling

and selecting of ‘social similars’ then there are also potentially significant consequences for *recruitment into the shared practices* of the household, since housemates are often looking for people with shared expectations of lifestyle and how to share. This is by no means a perfect process of alignment – as subsequent chapters will explore – but nonetheless, the recruitment process into shared households is in large part about the attempt to acquire housemates with whom one *can* share.

There are several reasons for this complex process of signalling and distinction in recruitment into shared households. Sharing is by no means straightforward and, in particular, the ‘sharing’ of non-sovereign ‘stuff’ is often a subtle and laborious process which has to be worked at and negotiated. As previously noted, Belk (2010) argues that the forms of sharing that we may currently understand, such as familial sharing, typically occur within ‘taken for granted sharing privileges’ (2010, p.724) afforded to those who are at ‘home’. However, much sharing does not occur within such ‘taken for granted sharing privileges’. Within shared accommodation – particularly where people are sharing with people with whom they do not share a familial or even an amiable link – there are fewer ‘taken for granted sharing privileges’, and negotiations can be more complex. Furthermore, as many of my research participants indicate, the housing pathways of those in shared housing are often littered with previous, unsatisfactory experiences of shared housing. The process of recruitment into shared households can therefore be seen as one way in which housemates attempt to manage and negotiate the process of recruitment into shared practices.

Advertisements and advertising: first impressions, setting expectations, and attracting the ‘right kind of person’

Unless moving in with friends or acquaintances, the most common route to finding a room within shared accommodation is to scour the Internet for advertisements, either on generic sites, such as GumTree, or on more specialist sites, such as easyroommate.com, or spareroom.co.uk. Within the private rental house share market⁵, advertisements provide the primary means of making potential tenants aware of available rooms, with the Internet being the main medium by which to place these adverts. Whereas previously people would have scoured ‘Rooms to Let’ advertisements in local papers, specific advertising papers such as *Loot*, or local shop windows for details and numbers to call, the Internet has provided a platform for this search to be

⁵ Within other markets, such as cooperative house shares, which operate on a different basis to the private rental market, waiting lists are often in place for rooms so advertising is generally not needed. Cooperative house shares normally require an investment into the cooperative so the resident is both member and resident of the co-op rather than just a tenant. More information is available at <http://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/> (accessed 12th August, 2013).

centralised, streamlined and commercialised. Within the UK, a number of specialist websites have been specifically launched in order to fill rooms within shared houses, such as sparerroom.co.uk and easyroommate.com. Within my sample, the most popular website on which to advertise was GumTree.com, a site

‘started in March 2000 as a local London classified ads and community site, designed to connect people who were either planning to move, or had just arrived in the city, and needed help getting started with accommodation, employment and meeting new people’ (GumTree.com 2010).

Like the others, [GumTree](http://GumTree.com) now offers a national service where people can advertise rooms to let and also advertise that they are looking for a room, but has also gone on to now be a more general ‘noticeboard’ site, offering goods for sale, and also becoming a platform for dating. The other, more specific service, within the UK private rental market are Sparerroom.co.uk, and Easyroommate.com, which offer a bespoke service, which is tailored toward the young professional searching for a room, with the aim of matching people together. Easyroommate.com describes itself as ‘the worlds (sic) largest flatshare site’, with ‘manually moderated’ advertisements, meaning that each advert is checked before it is published (EasyRoommate.com 2012). Sparerroom.co.uk describe themselves as the ‘#1 Flatshare (sic) site in the UK’, with someone finding a flatmate on the site ‘every 3 minutes’ (SpareRoom.co.uk 2013b).

In contrast to sites that are specifically about advertising and finding accommodation, [GumTree’s](http://GumTree.com) site is less prescriptive on what needs to be in the advertisement, and consequently, the contents of the adverts can be more diverse, from the minimal, to the more verbose (a selection and analysis of which will be provided later in this chapter). Whilst Sparerroom.co.uk and Easyroommate.com have various items of information that are *required* to be provided such as details of the kind of housemate you are looking for, the room and contract terms, [GumTree](http://GumTree.com) requests very little specific information leaving the advertiser to provide more specific details of what is on offer.

The importance of the contents of the advert should not be understated: this is the first window into the world of the people and property you may end up living in, so what it says, or does not say, is important. Hunt & Hutchinson have some general advice when putting together a house share advertisement, suggesting that putting some effort into the advert will yield better results than knocking something out in ‘five minutes during a break at work’ (2009:40). They suggest that you ‘take your time’, give it a ‘catchy title’ as “‘Double room” says what you’ve got but “Bright double in friendly and spacious garden flat” says so much more’; ‘price your room to the best effect’ making it clear if bills are included, to avoid people assuming that the price is ‘a bit steep’; ‘know your local market’, such as employers in the region, and market it accordingly; sell the house and its facilities, not just the room, as people will be looking for more than just a room; and ‘mention the area’, too. While the advice is relatively basic, it does suggest the

depth of consideration that the reader is assumed to apply when reading advertisements. Rather than just reading it as a statement of fact, these pointers suggest the range of issues that searchers will be considering when reading an advert.

Types of house share advert

As discussed in chapter three, a sample of 360 house share advertisements were harvested from GumTree. Using GumTree’s facility to filter by specific location, only advertisements from both Chorlton and Didsbury were harvested in order to consider a range of advertisements that are relevant to the research sample.

The house share adverts within my sample of 360 can be broadly placed into six categories, as indicated in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Typology of house share advertisements based on a sample of 360 house share advertisements gathered from GumTree covering Chorlton and Didsbury

<p>Landlord <i>minimalist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague location • Cost details • Contact details 	<p>Housemate <i>minimalist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague location • Cost details • Contact details
<p>Landlord <i>verbose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific location • Cost details, including bills • Existing housemates • Contact details 	<p>Housemate <i>verbose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific location • Cost details, including bills • Existing housemates • Contact details
<p>Letting agent <i>generic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague idea of location • Cost details • Contact details • Details of existing housemates, of varying degrees of detail • Benefits of renting through the agency • Often a lot of ‘copy and pasted’ content about the area 	<p>Housemate <i>personal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific location • Cost details, including bills • Existing housemates’ details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professions ○ Interests ○ Characters • Type of house share <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ‘friendly’ • Type of housemate they (do not) want • Contact details

This broad typology of GumTree⁶ house share adverts serves to demonstrate the differences in approach to renting out a room when given ‘free reign’ to craft the advertisement, rather than a more consistent approach that more specialist websites encourage or demand.

⁶ It is important to recognise the distinction between GumTree adverts and those on specialised sites due to the free-form nature of GumTree adverts: as discussed earlier, GumTree’s mandatory data for adverts is substantially less than SpareRoom.co.uk, so the onus is on the advertiser to provide detail rather than the site hosting the advert.

Amongst my participants, a majority of them used GumTree due to its free status as opposed to other sites⁷, and GumTree was also a popular choice to search for a room – 27 out of the 31 participants talked about their recruitment methods, with 15 saying that they used GumTree as their main method.

Based on the broad typology in table 12 (above), table 13 (below) provides some examples of the type of advertisements that fall within the categories.

⁷ It is also worth bearing in mind that the methodology applied to recruit participants involved responding to GumTree advertisements and asking advertisers to participate in the research, possibly leading to a greater number of GumTree users within the sample.

Table 13: Examples of house share advertisements based on the typology in Table 13 taken from a sample of 360 house share advertisements from GumTree covering Chorlton and Didsbury (typographical errors as original advertisement)

<p>Landlord <i>minimalist</i></p> <p>Chorlton Large double room Double room in lovely house.Share with 2 friendly professionals.Dining kitchen, lounge, double glazed, parking, sunny gardens, internet etc. <Contact through GumTree link></p>	<p>Housemate <i>minimalist</i></p> <p>House share in Chorlton Friendly, social, chilled out 6 person sharehouse in the centre of chorlton. Smokers wlecome Email me with enquiries. <Contact through GumTree link></p>
<p>Landlord <i>verbose</i></p> <p>GREAT SINGLE IN LUXURY CHORLTON HOUSESHARE - INCL ALL BILLS, BROADBAND, CLEANING This is a really neat single room in a good location, with IKEA furniture, single bed, good storage and tv aerial point. The RENT INCLUDES all bills, a regular weekly cleaner, gardener and wireless Broadband (amounting to over £70 per month) which means there is nothing else to pay and the house is always kept clean and tidy. The house is conveniently located on the Whalley Range side of Chorlton, just a few minutes walk from local bars (Hilary Step and Jam Cafe), shops and main bus route (no. 86) and is only 10 minutes walk from the shops and bars in the centre of Chorlton. The other tenants are all guys, very friendly and respectful so will probably suit another male. Professional only please. Call XXX on 07xxx to arrange a viewing.</p>	<p>Housemate <i>verbose</i></p> <p>ROOM AVAILABLE IN BEAUTIFUL, BRIGHT TWO-BEDROOMED FLAT IN CHORLTON Room available in stunning eco-friendly Urban Splash apartment block on Barlow Moor Road.</p> <p>Sharing with 31 year old female [organisation] researcher</p> <p>Good sized room with double bed, cupboard space, desk and bookshelves.</p> <p>Open plan sitting room with kitchen and dining room upstairs</p> <p>3rd and 4th floor flat with balconies and great views overlooking Chorlton Park and hills beyond</p> <p>Good security - Free on-street parking always available - Bike store</p> <p>Wireless internet and freeview TV (and a piano!)</p> <p>£350 per month plus bills.</p>
<p>Letting agent <i>generic</i></p> <p>Excellent ROOMS with ALL BILLS INCLUDED available in Didsbury Excellent ROOMS with ALL BILLS INCLUDED available in 6 bedroom semi detached house share, situated in a popular area of Withington. This house is well presented and has plenty of liveable spaces with 6 good sized bedrooms, fully fitted kitchen with all white goods, hob, oven, fridge, freezer and washing machine. A very nice place to live, 2 minutes walk to bus stop for access links to the City Centre & Universities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delightful standard of décor • Close to all local amenities • Gas central heating • Double glazed • Excellent public transport links <p>2 double rooms available for £350pcm included all bills. 1 large double room for £385pcm included all bills.</p> <p>[Photos provided]</p>	<p>Housemate <i>personal</i></p> <p>2 girls and 2 cats seek big personality to fill big room Double room available to rent in a gorgeous, massive and amazingly located house in Chorlton. I say double, it's the size of my last flat. Huge.</p> <p>We are two professional women, aged 24 and 25, looking for someone fun and interesting to fill the space our current housemate will leave.</p> <p>The house comes with 'that' virgin package which costs £30 a month and gives you more bandwidth than you need. Also, telly. GCH, washer, dryer, microwave etc. Oh, and two cats.</p> <p>People with cat allergies are encouraged not to apply on the grounds that it will probably itch a bit.</p> <p>Rent is £232 per month exc. bills. Generally, our monthly outgoings don't exceed £320 to cover everything.</p> <p>No one boring, please. Putting my foot down if you're a heroin addict though.</p> <p>Please contact for photos of the house.</p> <p>EDIT: Sorry! It's unfurnished as well. BYO stuff etc.</p> <p>Cheers [Names]</p> <p>p. s. we're not a couple. But we are gay.</p>

As indicated above, the approaches taken when placing adverts vary; with more information about the potential residents being available from the personal housemate placed advertisements than from either a landlord or agent.

The 'housemate personal' advertisement provides the most information available to potential housemates, indicating a number of characteristics they are looking for (someone 'fun and interesting'), but also inviting the potential housemates to exclude themselves from applying on the basis that they may not fit the bill, such as 'no one boring please'. The advert appears to be set up to pre-screen applicants, and the final 'p.s.' appears particularly significant: the disclosure of their sexuality within the advert may discourage applicants from approaching them, avoiding any potential issues of homophobia or discrimination. The advertisers have taken time to describe the house and the characteristic of the house share in depth.

In contrast, the 'housemate minimalist' advert provides little information for the searcher, beyond the points that they are friendly and easy going, that the potential housemate can smoke, and that it is in the centre of Chorlton. This advert requires the searcher to make more effort to find out more about the house share.

The 'housemate verbose' advert straddles the divide between these two categories, providing some details, but not giving too much detail away. The 'core' details are there, such as bills, and elements that may 'sell' the property to potential sharers: for example, the mention of 'Urban Splash' which is a relatively prestigious property developer in Manchester that has a number of developments within Chorlton and Didsbury and are known for their particular, clean style of design. It offers more than the minimalist advertisement, but does not invite the potential seeker to exclude themselves from the running at this point.

The landlord and letting agent advertisements tend to focus far less on the individuals *within* the house share, and more on the facilities, locality and transport links. They are more likely to use the word 'professional', usually to exclude those who they do not consider 'professionals', and provide photos. As with the 'minimalist' and 'verbose' housemate advertisement types, more work is required of the searcher to find out more about the house and its characteristics, both in terms of housemates and the approach to 'sharing' with others.

Whether or not the types of advert people deploy impacts upon the response is unclear; the demand for rooms in the two areas of South Manchester is consistently high according to SpareRoom.co.uk's 'rental index' (SpareRoom.co.uk 2013a) so people may

be forced to look at as many rooms as they can from those available regardless of the advert. However, it is clear from those of my participants that have advertised for a room that they do put some effort into crafting an advert that would attract a certain type of person.

Lauren (35, researcher) and Samantha (25, engineer) discussed their experience of advertising on GumTree and how Lauren perceived Samantha's advertisement that she placed when looking for housemates versus what Samantha intended to portray:

L It was substantially different from all other ads. I've looked at GumTree for other ads, for other people later on because we were looking for other housemates, not only a year ago, but this year.

I Yeah

L But I've very rarely seen anything like it. It was very different. It was very personal. And, it included things like only a really cool person would include, like I like to host coach surfers. <Looks at Samantha> You look a bit questioning...

S I wasn't trying to make it dead personal, I tried to make it structured, and like mention items that were key for me and I wanted other people to recognise themselves in, which obviously worked.

This exchange within a group interview with House Six illustrates the tension between what the advertiser was intending to portray (key issues regarding what she wanted from the house and housemates she wanted to live with) and how others perceived it.

While it seems obvious, advertisers do tend to be very positive about the housemates, often exclaiming how sociable they are, or how tidy they are. Similarly, no one ever writes advertisements that are overwhelmingly negative – 'Person wanted to help pay rent in clinical and distant household where we don't often speak to each other or tidy up' is unlikely to attract anyone. What does appear clear from the more verbose and personal adverts is that advertisers and seekers are looking for a sense of what McPherson et al (2001) term 'homophily', where people seek housemates who are 'homogeneous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics' (2001, p.415). McPherson et al contend that

[h]omophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in roughly that order. (McPherson et al. 2001, p.415)

With a baseline of 'professional', the adverts appear to be focused on attracting people of similar social lifestyles through coded cues. By looking for housemates who share common characteristics with existing residents there is a process of categorisation and social sorting as a means of aligning expectations and practices through social similarity. This sense of 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984) can be observed particularly in the 'housemate personal' example advertisement where they express an interest in people who are not 'boring', but being a 'heroin addict' takes that a step too far.

Louise (24, project manager) was the most detailed in her description of how she used adverts as a screening and expectation management tool; as a means of ensuring homophily and exercising distinction. Louise had a predetermined idea of who she wanted to attract and who she wanted to discourage, and knew certain 'cues' or 'signs' to express or look for when considering an advertisement.

L So in the first instance I would use the advert to describe the implicit house rules I would be signing up to. When I was looking for a house I would naturally look for people who were like-minded. For example, I would discount living in a commune, a strictly vegetarian house, houses where everyone was in their mid to late 30's – as they didn't match me or what I was looking for and I wouldn't want to sign up to those 'rules'. But from experience I would also discount all male or female houses, I would discount anyone in their very early 20's or people who described the house as a 'party' house – as I would feel by moving in there I would be signing up to their rules which didn't suit me. The rules and arrangements of the house are further clarified at the interview. When I was recruiting for housemates I would always describe briefly who lived in the house, with ages and jobs – saying we were looking for someone similar. I didn't want someone in their late 40's or unemployed. I would always make it clear in the email or phone conversation following the ad and at the viewing how the bills were paid, how the housemates interacted, that we all get on, but have separate friendship groups and don't live in each others pockets; that the cleaning was shared. I would always make it clear to housemates I worked for the [X] – implicitly implying I did not want drug users moving into the house and it wasn't a party house. I would also ask them questions to get a feel if they would 'fit' into the house and if they fitted in with the implicit rules.

As suggested by McPherson et al (2001), Louise was concerned with issues of age, gender and belief, by discounting those in their late 30s or very early 20s, single-sex households, and those who are 'strictly vegetarian'. Further, she was concerned with behaviour from both an interpersonal and economic perspective: she avoided 'party houses' as she did not want that kind of lifestyle, and also did not want potential drug abuse within the house to impact her employment. There was a sense of distinction – or judgement of taste (Bourdieu 1984) – within Louise's narration, in that she was concerned with housemates 'fitting' into the environ of the house, and that drug users and those who liked to 'party' were not the sort of people she anticipated living up to those expectations.

From both the example Louise and the discussion involving Lauren and Samantha, we can observe the level of effort and emphasis placed upon the importance of adverts as the start of the selection and 'judgment' process of homophily and distinction, and see how this process works as means for encouraging the 'right' kind of people to enquire about the property whilst informing and discouraging those who might not 'fit in'.

Trust and authenticity

Trust in the authenticity of the advert is an important consideration for people who are searching for accommodation as no one wants to waste time on a property that is not

going to be suitable, or to be misled about the type of house and lifestyle of the housemates. House searching is a time consuming process, so being able to have a level of trust in the integrity of the adverts is important. Trust appears to be endowed in two ways: firstly, through the use of photographs as evidence of the quality of the house and its facilities; and second, through the use of clear narratives and explanations that provide some form of qualification for the claims they are making.

However, one exchange within an interview illustrated that such levels of trust should not be assumed unnecessarily. Andy (27, retail) explained a situation where he advertised a room that did not strictly exist to be rented as he just wanted to 'see what sort of response we could get'. Andy had placed an advert without any real intention to allow anyone to view it; he was merely interested in the response.

A I'd done it as the landlady hadn't really brought anyone round, and I put the advert out there to see what sort of response we could get, and... But I hadn't really sort of mentioned what I was doing before I did it to the other housemates, so until I got a response, I wasn't going to ask people to come round. That's why when the guy responded I wasn't very happy with letting him come round as I hadn't cleared it with everyone in the house.

However, as he went on, it seemed to take a more sinister turn, suggesting that Andy's notions of homophily and distinction were particularly extreme with regard to issues of ethnicity.

A I think actually on that advert I edited it about three times as people kept responding... I feel sometimes on GumTree that people tend to respond to adverts with responses that are trying to tell you something, and I put on there that they had to provide a picture, and when I told the housemates about that they were like, 'You can't do that!' But I didn't want to get someone who was obviously like, erm... I don't know... I haven't got anything against skin colour, but I didn't want anyone too foreign moving in, so I asked for a photo so that I could tell. I did get a good response, and I put in the advert that they had to tell me a bit about what they were doing, so I had an idea about what they were like before they came round and have a look. I felt like, you see... I didn't see the point of showing them round when if they wouldn't get on with anyone, or I didn't want anyone that would get on with other people more than I would like them to. Most of them didn't really respond to that, they would just say, 'I'm interested, give me a call on this number' so most people didn't respond to the requests within the advert.

It was through the 'staged' advert that Andy was recruited as part of the study (via responding to adverts on GumTree and asking them to participate in research) so I too was 'duped' by Andy's advert. This exchange does highlight a number of important issues regarding the use of house share adverts, whilst affirming the contention that seekers and sharers desire social similarity. The need for those responding to advertisements to be vigilant to such insincerity is clear – as may be argued for any online interaction. Ellison et al (2006) note that within online dating profiles the issue of 'honesty' is far more complicated than within the offline world, and that people go to some effort to present an 'ideal self' within their profiles that may be somewhat different

to the reality. The process of writing an online profile for a dating agency and perhaps, by extension, a house share advertisement, allows the writer time to consider the person that they wish to reflect as well as attract, which can lead to inconsistencies. While some online services do check advertisements before they are published and available to users to view, there is only so much they can do to check the authenticity of the advertisement, save for interviewing the users and physically visiting the property. The striking difference between online dating and house share advertisements, however, is the greater likelihood of actually meeting the author of the advert (as most house shares tend to interview multiple people before making a decision) and the lack of the intermediary 'getting to know you' period online, where messages are exchanged, beyond those of answering basic questions and organising viewing. There is less opportunity and time for authors who have exaggerated aspects within the advertisements to mitigate the expectations of the respondent to the reality of the house and its inhabitants.

While it may seem far-fetched that people would embellish their advertisements to mislead people, the example from Andy above does illustrate that it would perhaps be unwise to accept everything in housing adverts as fact. Innocent inaccuracies, such as the geographic location of properties, have been noted, with properties in very different, but neighbouring districts to the two catchment, being labelled as lying within the areas of Chorlton and Didsbury, when they are in fact outside. Eyles (1987) notes how real estate advertisements are used as much to create an ideological sense of the area, and how wholesome or bohemian it may be, as they are to present the bare facts of the property, such as the number of rooms and its condition.

Savage et al (2005), who also considered Chorlton as a research site, suggest that aspects of identity, such as class, are encoded – and reproduced – in spatial practices, such as through neighbourhood and neighbourhood reputations. Most poignantly, they recognise the allure of homophily amongst the residents of Chorlton whom they interviewed, demonstrated through a desire for a 'cosmopolitan identity' (2005, p.206), as a key factor in their attraction to the area. Thus, it could be argued that sharers target specific geographic areas in order to increase the likelihood of social similarity with those in the locality. This suggestion was certainly borne out within my interviews, and was particularly highlighted by Lauren (35, researcher) who, when I asked why she and her housemate considered Chorlton as an area to live in Manchester when moving to an area, she replied, 'Because we were told it's where "people like us" live in Manchester'.

The role of advertisements in setting expectations and attempting to attract or discourage certain 'types' of people can best be articulated visually. Figure 4, below,

illustrates the shared accommodation 'cycle' that participants of this study have articulated.

Figure 4: Shared Accommodation Cycle



This cycle, which this thesis will frequently return to, illustrates how each element and experience of living within shared accommodation can influence choices and expectations when making future decisions. In this instance, how the design of the advertisement can be influenced by previous experiences (examples of which are more fully explored later in this chapter) and how the advertisement can be used instrumentally to set expectations for the 'tone' of the potential house share environment. This 'cycle' fits well within the conceptual framework of Clapham's 'housing pathways' approach (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009), leveraging the 'in process' nature of housing careers and the developing nature of social relations *within* households. The cycle highlights and acknowledges that individuals do not jump from residence, with those residences existing as static 'shells' that they inhabit, but that they reflexively consider the choices that they make based on past experiences and future aspirations, and that they have influence upon the accommodation within which they reside.

In summary, from this exploration of house share advertisements, and the emphasis that housemates can place on the crafting and meaning of those advertisements, there is a tangible demonstration of the allure of homophily, which is achieved through the exercise of distinction and judgment. Although the search for homophily, and the exercise of distinction, is not in itself surprising – both McPherson et al (2001) and Bourdieu (1984) demonstrated the prevalence of such judgments – the acquisition and

use of available resources (the house share advertisements) to achieve homophily is an important property in the prefiguring of expectations, behaviours and household practices. Advertisements can act to both attract and discourage potential housemates, indicating to potential sharers the qualities that are desired, whilst also indicating those behaviours that are unwanted, and acting as a precursor or 'stage setting' for the next stage in the recruitment process.

(Inter)viewing: viewing a house, meeting potential housemates, and auditioning for a role

Once a searcher has found an advert that appeals to them, there will normally be some phone calls, text messages or emails in order to arrange a viewing of the property. Some houses will arrange these at the convenience of the searcher, or if there is a lot of interest, will arrange an 'open day' or evening where prospective tenants can come along to view the property and meet the new housemates. This process, often termed a 'viewing', allows the searcher to view the room, and other aspects of the house, as well as meet the existing residents to see if they would be people they could live with. Similarly, it allows existing residents to assess potential residents to see if they will fit in with the existing housemates, lifestyle and routines. This process appears to be relatively straightforward on the face of it: the searcher turns up, and both parties make a decision about their relative suitability to live with one another. However, when considered more deeply, it suggests a more complex set of circumstances that involve social, emotional and instrumental labour and decisions by both parties to make a considered decision about their living arrangements for a potentially substantial amount of time in the future. Rather than being a seemingly passive act, it is instrumental. People are trying to make a strategic decision over how acceptable they are to each other, coupled with the room and property itself.

Although it is called a viewing, it can be interpreted as an informal interview that involves both implicit and explicit factors that both the interviewer and the interviewee are considering when looking at the property and each other. The viewer is not just looking at the property, but looking at the people and the atmosphere; and both parties are trying to find some common ground and similar views; the sense of homophily that was discussed earlier in this chapter. However, this is not an easy or straightforward process; it appears to be a swift and sometimes stressful process. Jim (31, civil servant) reflected on this point, illustrating the 'unnatural' element of the experience, and how even after the process, you are still very much in the dark as to what the individual is really like.

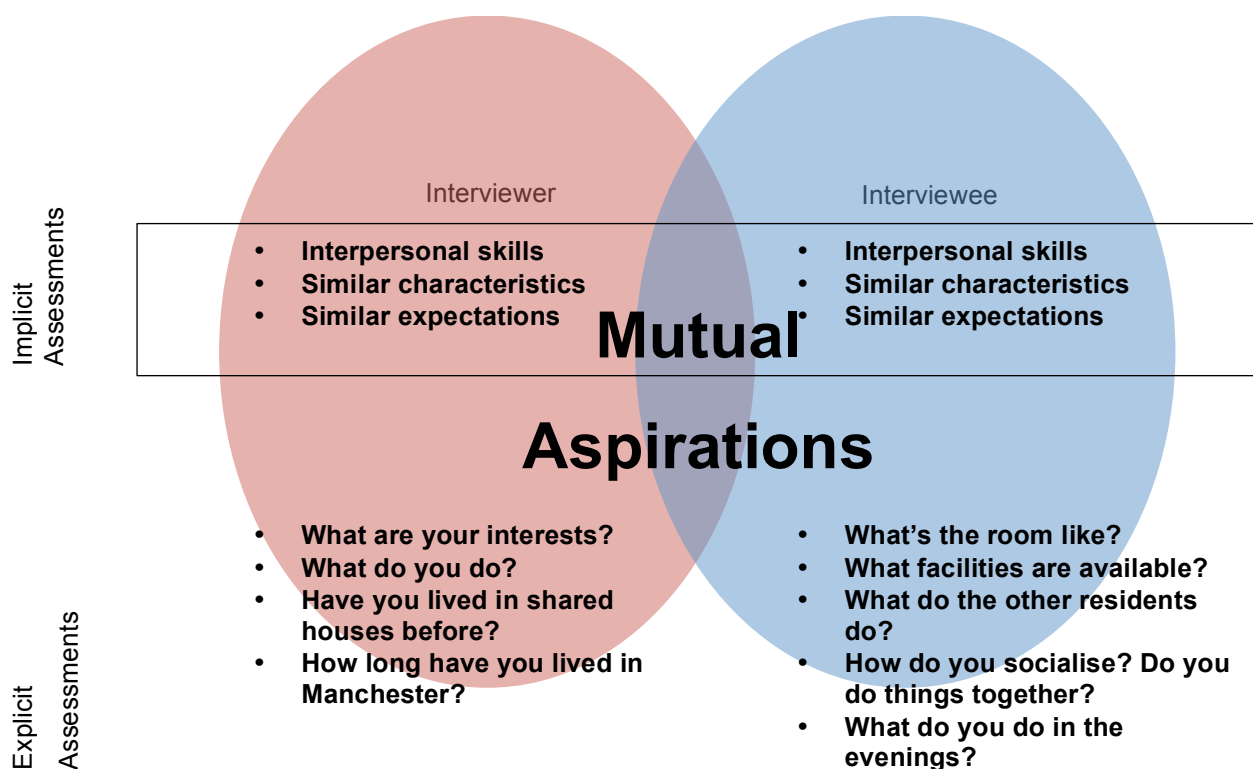
J Well, you expect it, because it's an unnatural kind of experience and position to be in. And it is for them [the interviewers] as well in a way, and you just have to bear that in mind. I know, because I've been on the other side of it as well, where you've been on the other side of it, and you're showing people around. I'm used to it, I'm used to people questioning me about stuff, because I've been in the situation a few times, so you just ask lots of questions, ask about people, ask what they like, what they don't like, what do they do? Do they socialise as a house? Those kinds of things. You don't really know about these things until you actually move in, or until someone moves in, they can have all the front in the world and be as nice as pie, until they moved in you don't really know; they could be a nightmare, they could be brilliant. You don't know.

Jim's narration illustrates the limits that interviewing can offer: it's an 'unnatural kind of experience', and people can have 'front' – or a façade – but the reality may be very different. The judgments made are based on a brief meeting that can impact upon the household for many months to come.

The distinction is made between interview and (inter)view due to the socially ambiguous nature of the event. It is labelled as a 'viewing' or 'house viewing' by searchers and residents alike, but there is a common understanding that it is a process of selection where each party will make an assessment of their mutual potential for living together successfully, and without major disruption to current living practices and habits.

Figure 5, below, illustrates the intersubjective, transactional, judgmental and sometimes ambiguous nature of the (inter)viewing process with an aim to achieve the mutual aspiration of finding someone you wish to live with.

Figure 5: Visual conceptualisation of the (inter)viewing process



The implicit factors that people use for assessment include interpersonal skills, such as their ability to hold a conversation and maintain eye contact; the kind of skills that may judge the person as socially competent and not awkward to be around. Similar characteristics include styles of dress (such as formal or casual) and sense of humour, and whether these are mutually compatible – since the aspiration is to end up with someone one can talk and laugh with, as well as not feel awkward around them. Finally, there is the issue of whether potential housemates have similar expectations, judged initially on how well they can negotiate the viewing process and then more broadly on the kind of lifestyle they lead and their viewed forms of acceptable behaviours, in conjunction with the more explicit questions that are asked. In regard to these implicit assumptions, Imogen (31, media) said:

I Nearly 80% of my assessments are made when I first meet people. How are they dressed? How do they shake my hand? Is it a firm handshake? Often, I've already made up my mind if this is the kind of person I could live with and end up going through the rest of the interview out of politeness.

These factors were generally similar between both the interview and the interviewer, and both are likely to be making assessments. However, there were reports that some people were not so conscious of how they were representing themselves to others, or were completely mismatched:

P We got some really bizarre applicants. One that came along and said, 'I don't really like paying bills'. We were like 'Seriously, you're having a laugh?! You've made all this effort, you've come all this way, to say that you don't like paying bills and you think we're gonna say "OK, come and live with us, we'll pay for ya!"'

P [A man] that came in that sat down and was just so rude. Just opened the door, 'hiya', comes in sits down, like slouching back, legs wide open, slouching, I just feel like he would not be very considerate at all. I could never imagine him cleaning a toilet for example.
(Polly, 29, healthcare)

The explicit assessments that are made feature some questions that housemates want answered to get to know the other person and check compatibility. On a superficial level they appear chatty and amiable, but they can be loaded with hidden inquiries to more practical questions. To use the examples given in figure five (above), the possible side meanings are indicated in table 14, below.

Table 14: Illustrations of how seemingly explicit questions can have implicit meanings within the '(inter)view' process

Original question	The intentional purpose of the question
What are your interests?	Are you an interesting person, or are you boring?
What do you do?	Do you have a job? Can you pay the rent and bills on time?
Have you lived in shared houses before?	Do you know how to share with other people, or are you new at this?
How long have you lived in Manchester?	Am I going to have to be your friend and are you looking for a friendship group, or are you fairly well connected already?
Do you have a partner?	Is it just going to be you that is living here, or are you coming with a plus-one that will be here all the time not paying rent?
What's the room like?	Is it large or a shoe box?
What facilities are available?	Do you have a washing machine?
What do the other residents do?	Do you all work 9-5, or is someone going to be coming home at 4am after working in a bar and wake me up?
How do you socialise? Do you do things together?	Do you all like each other? Do you do things together? Or is it a rather clinical house?
What do you do in the evenings?	Can we watch TV together, or am I going to be sitting in my room? Do you have parties every night?

The need to know the answers to these questions is clear: one needs to know whether or not the person one is recruiting is financially and socially sustainable, and the person moving in wants to know if they are moving in with a house that will fit their needs, or if it is going to be a 'party house'. It could be suggested that such questions may better be asked directly, and a more specific and informative answer be yielded in response, but there needs to be some awareness for the social distance that sits between the resident and room-searcher: they are often, at best, faint acquaintances, who have known each

other only through electronic interactions and the brief moment they have met each other in this interview, and so to ask very personal and in depth questions is not normally considered socially acceptable, particularly in a situation where social acceptability is being so highly assessed.

Laura (26, scientist) gave an example of how she used explicit questions to find more implicit meanings during her interviews:

L I was mainly saying, what do you do at the weekend, do you see each other? I didn't want to be left in her house by myself. They said that they all go down to the pub. Some houses when I spoke to them about how much they spent time together they said that every month or so we'll do a bowling night... That's not really what I want. I've got my friends at work, and no real way to make friends in Manchester, so used it as a way to make friends.

Laura's questions were aimed at finding out if she was likely to be able to develop a friendship with people, rather than just people who live with one another. Laura was looking for shared accommodation to provide a basis for friendship and a social group as well as the more pragmatic elements of somewhere to live.

In contrast, some participants were keen to use such questioning to ensure that they were not going to have to develop close friendships, as Imogen (owner-occupier, 31, media) explained:

I I don't need a friend. I've got... In a sense I've got too many. I need someone who am happy to say, I think that's really important, and maybe you know our lives could kind of cross over if there were interest points, like, in this particular instance this guy liked going into the countryside and doing walks and cycling. Fantastic, maybe one weekend I could go and do that with him, great. But, erm... I don't need to know, you know... they're friends. I just need to know that they're nice people and I feel comfortable with them being in my house. Yeah, I don't need a friend. A nice thing maybe later on, somebody you grow fond of. Like some people you were at university with. Some of them you're still in touch. But, yeah. I'd prefer that the person feels that they could go to their room and do their stuff, and I could go to my room and do my stuff, umm..

Imogen was keen to judge within the (inter)viewing stage whether or not the individuals viewing the property would live independently, therefore allowing Imogen to be equally as dependent, while also having a sense of security that they could live in the same property without any issues.

Although Laura and Imogen were looking for contrasting characteristics within potential housemates, they still used the same implicit regimes to judge if they had mutually similar expectations of how the living situation would 'work'. Ultimately, people are looking for common ground between each other, and they are doing this over a very short space of time. They are asking intimate questions of people that they don't know, and people are often on their 'best behaviour'. They have to use this process

instrumentally to ensure the stability and wellbeing of the shared house, and the relationships, routines and practices that are already present within it.

The role of past experiences

As well as potential ideals for the person they want to live with, the role of past experiences was also an important factor. Where participants had particularly bad housemates in the past, they had these experiences in mind when considering new housemates in the future, or where they had lived in a less sociable house previously, they may want to live in a more active and personable house in the future.

Nicola (29, teacher) explained that she originally moved into her current house with Rachel (31, project manager) and two other people she knew from university, who had since moved out and bought their own home, leaving her and Rachel to find new housemates to fill the rooms in the four bedroom house, or look for a flat together. They opted to fill the rooms with 'randoms' as they enjoyed living within shared accommodation. They recruited two new female housemates after interviews, but on reflection it did not go as well as hoped, which has subsequently influenced their decisions when choosing housemates.

N We wanted new people that were friendly, wanted to go out, and people that they wanted to be friends. Happy to have a chat at the end of the night, happy to bring friends round, happy to sit in the lounge with them. But [the previous housemates] were quite scathing in terms of [saying things like] 'you're still sat on the sofa'. They had different outlooks as to what Saturdays were for.

Rachel explained further in her interview how these different outlooks between herself and Nicola and the new housemates impacted upon how they felt about their house and their own behaviour:

R After she [old housemate] moved in we invited her and [the other new housemate] to the pub but they both cried off. I was disappointed, as I would have made the effort myself. I really hoped that the housemates were going to be friends, but because of that we got the idea that they were just going to be housemates [...] I thought about buying a house because I thought that I was starting to become inflexible. The experience with them made me reassess how I felt about the house. When [Nicola] and I were in the house on our own it was fine, but if the others were in the house I became conscious of what we were saying, if we were talking too loud, and if we were laughing did they think that we were laughing about them. Whereas [X] was still polite, there was a feeling you could have a chat but they [had] very different lives.

Although the behaviour of the new housemates was not abusive or obstructive – at worst they commented that Nicola and Rachel spent a little too much time on the sofa – the subtle changes to how Nicola and Rachel were used to behaving, and subsequent feeling of judgment from new housemates, meant that they reflexively reassessed their own behaviour. This experience with these two housemates meant that when those housemates were due to move out (and they happened to move out at a similar time) Nicola and Rachel were more determined to find replacement housemates that were

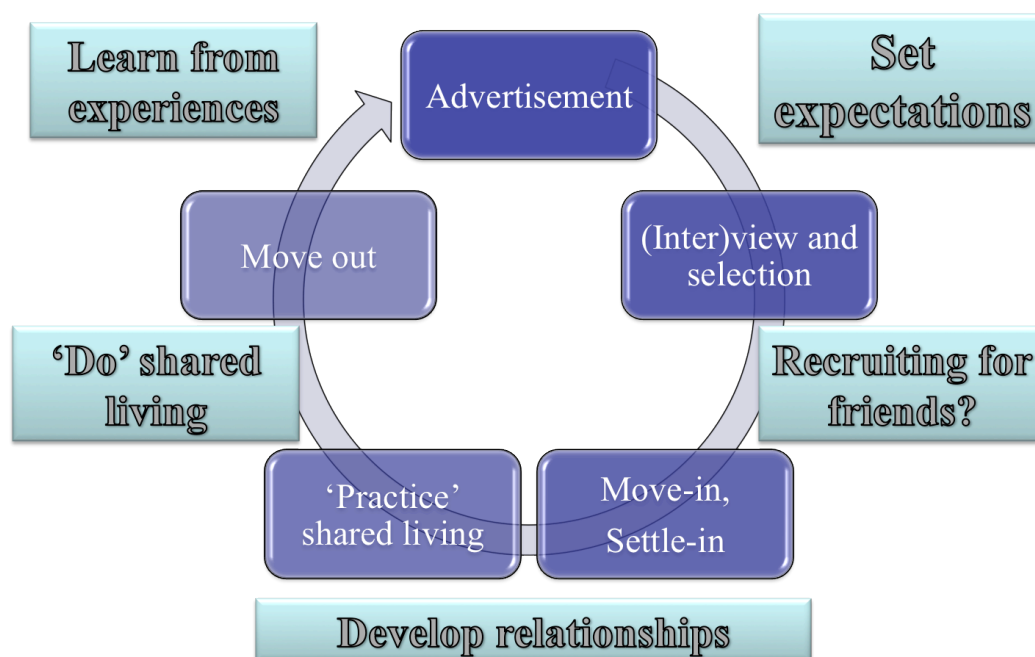
more aligned to their style of living and their interests. Nicola spoke to one of the original housemates that lived in the house with them for advice on '[w]hether or not interviews worked, whether they were interviewed [and] what to ask' to try and not make the same mistakes again, although she described the interview process as 'really embarrassing'. They decided to focus their recruitment on people who were more likely to be aligned to their interests, and focused on:

- musical tastes, including live gigs;
- going out, such as going to the pub;
- what they wanted the house to be – a home, or just somewhere to stay;
- and whether they would watch television as a group.

These were all aspects that their previous housemates had not fulfilled and led to the sense of ambivalence toward living in their current property, so hoped that an injection of new housemates would resolve this. Subsequently, they recruited Joanne (29, writer) who Rachel described as 'deceptively quiet' during interview, and Laura (26, scientist) who can recall hearing Rachel and Nicola scream 'someone normal!' as she was walking away from the property after her interview. Since forming part of the house, all four housemates have since been to festivals together and gone on holiday together, including a one-month group road trip across the United States, and feel they have bonded as a group.

Experiences from previous living situations can, therefore, influence future decisions to more proactively match the expectations of potential sharers and attempt to ensure a more 'successful' living arrangement where those expectations coalesce. To return to the visualisation of the shared accommodation 'cycle' (figure 6, below) we can see where the role of the (inter)viewing and selection process fits into the wider process.

Figure 6: Shared Accommodation Cycle



As discussed earlier in this chapter, advertising often sets the tone for the type of house share that is being offered, and the subsequent meeting of potential housemates is used to ascertain if they have mutually agreeable expectations of how they wish to live, and further, whether or not they are 'recruiting for friends', and the level of intensity they are looking for in the relationality that is played out. The importance of this element in the recruitment of individuals in terms of their perceived qualities will now be discussed, followed by an exploration of how this relates to practice – and recruitment *into* practices – later in this chapter

Interview or audition?

As mentioned previously, the idea of being on your best behaviour during the interview process was underlined by some participants characterising the process as an 'audition' rather than an interview: a situation where people play a role in the hope that they get accepted to play that role long term.

W I think we will take our time to *audition* people. I know people that have kind of interviewed the housemates, not kind of sat them down, but had a chat with them whilst you were showing them around the house, you know talk about it while you were showing them. That kind of thing.
(William, 24, retail, emphasis added)

Another participant noted:

I Would you be apprehensive about bringing a random into this house then?
P Yeah. We *auditioned* a few people for it, and it just didn't work out. It would have been a real compromise to live with someone else.
(Pete, 31, trainer, emphasis added)

I asked one participant why he characterised the interview process as an audition:

I Can I just ask why you felt the interview was an audition?

C That was [an old housemate] right? Well, because I felt that she was asking very personal questions. Like, you know, do you sleep around? That was the second question that followed.

...

C I don't mind house sharing, but I don't want to go through the whole cycle again, if that makes sense. Of kind of going through the audition. It's so tedious. Feeling like you have to constantly... It's like going for a job interview really. And I think that's the thing that I'm trying to avoid.

By referring to it as an audition, there appears to be an assumption that there is a gap between the image or persona presented, or being presented to them, and their 'authentic' self, which has been crafted to meet the perceived expectations and ideals of the existing residents. While such an idea has distinct echoes of the dramaturgical metaphor that Goffman (1969; 2005) suggested where we act a 'role' while being aware of a social pressure to present the best possible self, it is also a more important point about the interaction itself, and the potential dangers it presents about the potential difference between the person you believe you have recruited to live in your home, versus how that person will actually behave once resident. To refer back to Polly's reflection on how there are some people where you could 'never imagine him cleaning the toilet', there can be others who may offer a gloss of social aptitude but when they move in are more difficult to live with than anticipated. Polly felt able to observe that this individual was not going to be using a toilet brush at any point soon, but illustrates an important point that housemates have to infer from the behaviour they do present at interview whether that person is likely to reach what they consider to be a minimum expectation of behaviour. Further, this has to be done without asking them to actually perform the task and judge their performance.

The risk presented here is both social and instrumental: residents want to be able to get on with these people on a personal and interpersonal level while also being able to enact and practice living with one another in a way that allows minimal intrusion on the daily routine and activities by the others who live within the household. If someone is recruited into a property that is incompatible in either way (socially or practically), perhaps through poor or differing social skills and expectations, or through an inconsistent or inconsiderate mode of living within the property, then there is the risk of what were previously harmonious (or mutually cooperative) living arrangements being disrupted, which may impact upon how people live within and experience shared living.

The (inter)viewing process presents a difficult situation for people to judge one another: it is difficult to tell if someone is being 'genuine' or 'authentic', and is who they seem, or if they are playing the part in an elaborate 'audition'. The interview process follows an often formalised routine, in that it has a standard structure – come in, have a look

around, sit down, have a 'chat' and ask some questions – but the participants within the practice actively informalise the process to allow it to appear less constraining and be more 'themselves'. This presents a tension between efficiency and wanting to avoid wasting time, but also wanting to ensure that you appear 'normal' rather than 'anal' or bureaucratic, portraying a positive notion of the shared accommodation as a 'home'. The former tension assisted through a selection routine that follows an analogous process to that of online dating (Ellison et al. 2006) and job interviews (Stevens and Kristof 1995) where people present themselves in a positive light through 'impression management' (Goffman 1969; Stevens and Kristof 1995) against a range of idealised behaviours and practices, such as a willingness to pay bills on time, or contribute to the running of the household. The latter tension, of appearing relaxed and 'homely', is achieved through casualization of language, and the asking of pertinent questions (such as 'do you have a job that will mean you can pay the rent?') through indirect means ('where do you work?'). This informalisation and casualization of this process is encouraged due to it taking place within the context of the 'home' (Powell 2010), which is a space of comfort and relaxation rather than formality, and where you are meant to be 'yourself' rather than an interviewer assessing candidate.

This rushed and enigmatic process of selection will be further reflected on in the section below, which explores how economic or pragmatic pressures can influence recruitment decisions and be 'at odds' with interpersonal or 'gut' instincts.

Gut instinct, bad decisions and economic necessity

While many people took their time in choosing their potential housemates, some people found themselves in positions where, due to financial necessity – needing someone in the house in order to make sure rent, mortgage or bills could be paid – they made a rushed decision, or one that went against their 'gut instinct' when inviting someone to move in, that had ended badly. The assessments of both implicit and explicit ideals discussed above are not easy ones to make, and in fact can be considered quite 'messy', not least in part due to the fleeting nature of the interaction.

Polly (29, healthcare) explained how difficult it is to make a decision over a housemate, particularly when a group of people are involved in the decision:

I When you're interviewing a housemate, what sort of attributes are you looking for in a housemate?

P Ummm... Someone that's easy to talk to that doesn't, that's not really nervous to talk to. [...] Someone easy to talk to that doesn't like, that you don't have to force conversation with or where it flows quite easily. Umm... Someone that's umm.. Don't know, that 'gut feeling' you know.... The times when I've gone against my gut feeling and made excuses for people in terms of like... Or made excuses to want to live with people, and times when I've made mistakes with [a previous housemate] and stuff like when you're at the end of your tether, and you end up living with people who are a little bit bonkers, umm... And then [that previous housemate] came along and we were like 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, she'll be

fine', but actually I did have a bit of a gut feeling, 'maybe not perfect, I'm not sure'. [...] And then you let your guard down, and that's when it can go wrong. That happened with [previous male housemate]. I got on with [him] and I liked him, and didn't have a bad gut feeling about him, but [a previous female housemate] did, and [Name] and [Name] were the ones that didn't get on with [him], so, really should have just said... Be more forceful about that, not sure about that, not happy with it... Looking for someone that you can trust straight away, that I don't know how you get really because there are some people that are very charming but aren't in the end...

Polly identifies the 'gut feeling' that she has about the potential success of new housemates, and how this can be problematic, particularly when other housemates may have conflicting views. Polly is speaking here with the benefit of hindsight, but she is clear that any misgivings she had about some housemates were realised in the end. However, such an instinct had to be weighed against the views of other residents when making decisions, particularly in haste. There is a sense of vigilance, which she describes it as letting 'your guard down', and there is an element of self-protection necessary when making these decisions.

Steve (31, accountant) described a time when he was under financial pressure to take in a new lodger but due to the time of year, there was a little interest in his advert:

I OK. When have been the times when it's not worked out so well?

S Err... Well, when [previous housemate] was here I advertised on easyroommate.com, erm... It was around Christmas time, and it was purely for financial reasons. I needed to get somebody in. I advertised and this girl, [X], came round who was 19 years of age, and I was like... When she left me and [previous housemate] both went, 'No,...'.

I So you interviewed her with [previous housemate]?

S Yeah, we interviewed together, and we were both like, 'No, this isn't going to work'. But then three weeks later... Because usually when I've advertised on easyroommate in the past, I've had quite a few responses, but I think it was that time of year. Because it was December...

I It was a bit of a low period?

S Yeah, and most people aren't even thinking about moving in, in December. It might have even been the November when I was advertising, and I just said to [previous housemate], 'well, what do you think if we see her again and just see how it goes?' So we saw her again, and we both decided, 'yeah', so she moved in, but what we didn't know is that she had mental health problems. Erm... And that was just a complete nightmare. I mean, me and Adam ended up falling out numerous times about it because there was just so much tension in the house.

In a similar way to Polly, Steve had an instinct that it was not 'going to work', but due to necessity had to take someone in against their better judgment to ensure financial stability. While this initially appears to be at odds with the previous assertion that during the recruitment and (inter)viewing process that there was a mutual desire to live with people that would be various elements of each other's personalities and lifestyles, the idea that they went *against* their better judgment and still allowed these people to move in illustrates that those desires for mutual compatibility do exist. However, practical and

financial factors, as well as disagreements within a group, can lead to such requirements being overridden.

As well as the recruitment of an individual into a room in a house, the process is also recruiting that person into a set of practices *within* the house that are enacted and maintained by the current residents that help ensure its continued existence as a nice place to live. The process of (inter)viewing, then, as Polly highlighted, requires the residents and room seekers to judge if their own notion of household practices – how things are ‘done’, and how things are ‘shared’ – can match one another enough without causing significant disruption. Polly, for example, suggested that the interviewee was unlikely to meet expectations of practice in terms of cleanliness. It is this element – recruitment into practices – which this chapter now moves on to, and considers how people ‘learn’ how to share with one another successfully. In this, and subsequent chapters, issues of household practices will be considered, and how they are intrinsically interrelated with issues of relationality – the nature of relationships *between* residents (Smart 2007). Further, it will consider how the ‘sharing’ is actually ‘done’, with reference to issues of consumption, commodities, and the messy nature of ‘stuff’ (Miller 2010) that people own and use.

Learning the ropes: the skills of sharing and fitting in

Sharing is intrinsic to this very environment, with the assumption of sharing preceding the act in itself by virtue of the milieu’s commonly understood economic and moral structure – things in a shared house which are shared range from physical space, to appliances, utilities, relationships and time. However, this act, practice or notion of ‘sharing’ within something colloquially called a ‘shared house’ is not a simple or straightforward concept. While there may be expectations of having to share, or having shared access to certain goods, the practice of sharing is negotiated, with boundaries being negotiated and demarcated through continual and communal negotiation.

Recent manifestos for investigations into sharing have been narrowly aimed at the arena of consumer behaviour (Belk 2010) and of how an understanding of the act and practices of sharing are carried out is necessary for a better understanding of consumption in an age of environmentally-aware, sustainable consumerism (Harris and Gorenflo 2012). But this narrow view will fail to engage with the wider issue of sharing, and how we relate not only to goods that we economically acquire, but also how we negotiate the delicate issues of temporary sovereignty over no-mans-land in other areas of social life.

This notion of 'sharing' is not a single 'procedure' or set of rules, but involves, as Shove et al (2012) contend, a range of varied elements that, when viewed together, form an entity, or perceivable action and intention. 'Sharing' within shared accommodation is not simply a case of doing certain tasks, such as the washing up, or indeed *not* doing certain tasks, such as hogging the bathroom, but it is the performance of a continued and consistent set of elements that others recognise as successfully sharing with one another. How, then, residents acquire the knowledge and skills to perform this entity of elements – or wider practice – is of central importance to an understanding not only of what sharing is, and how we can identify it when it happens, but how it can be maintained successfully.

As explored above, many house practices and routines are signalled to the new housemate during both the advertising and the (inter)view process, and elements such as personality, temperament and lifestyle are implicitly and explicitly involved in an assessment as to whether or not a newcomer to an established house may fit in to existing conventions. However, there are also many practical aspects that are not overtly discussed at this preliminary stage, such as who uses the bathroom at certain times in the morning, when cleaning of certain areas should be done, and by whom. The reasons why people do not organise this before are perhaps obvious: such intricate and formal details are not normally discussed when you intend to have what is intended to be a casual or informal relationship with someone – a 'friendship'. To endow the relationship with such a formalised structure in its infancy may render the relationship mechanistic or clinical, rather than one that is hopefully based on mutual affinity and amiability. However, the importance of these practical elements cannot be ignored for long if the shared house is to maintain itself both physically, in terms of cleanliness, hygiene and being able to cook and wash, or interpersonally, to avoid people becoming aggrieved with one another.

Learning the ropes of a pre-existing house share's routine, habits, preferences and practices may seem relatively straightforward - a case of watching and learning – and one might wonder how different people's behaviours may actually be. Shove et al (2012) describe practices as being a collection of 'elements', that, when brought together, form a coherent 'entity' and which are constituted and reconstituted through 'performance' – the constant doing and redoing of those elements in the presence of others that renders them an intelligible and normalised social act. Those 'performing' the 'elements' are 'carriers' who constitute the practice both physically and culturally, drawing it together in a way that allows others to see practices as recognisable behaviours with histories and expectations.

Shove et al (2012) using Wenger (1999, p.45), argue that 'practices...are the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise', and that community and practice constitute one another. Practice theorists map the acquisition – or 'learning' of practices – through a process of 'mimetic apprenticeship', which is constructed by material artefacts (Shove et al. 2012, p.70). In what follows I explore this process of 'learning the ropes' of sharing through mimetic apprenticeship. I will also begin to explore the potential pitfalls in the process: pitfalls created by the highly intimate, interpersonal nature of shared practices in shared households. These latter issues will also be examined in greater detail in later chapters.

However, it is not a road that always runs smoothly, and the process of 'learning the ropes appears' to be something that requires a certain amount of pre-existing knowledge in order to negotiate this new field of coalesced practices (Shove et al. 2012), routines (Larson and Zemke 2003; Fiese 2006; Wahlen 2011) and habits (Gronow 2012); ideas and concepts that were discussed more theoretically within the literature review.

The advantage of 'pre-existing knowledge' of the practices of 'sharing' was highlighted overtly by two participants who has moved into shared accommodation from a previous configuration that was in direct contrast: an international participant who had moved to the UK; and someone who had previously moved from being in a long term relationship, living exclusively with her partner. Both of these participants had not previously had to share with non-intimate others, and the contrast between their previous living arrangements and sharing with others was apparent. They highlight acutely the benefit of pre-existing knowledge to knowing 'how' to 'share'.

Fiona (41, healthcare) had moved from Germany to England in 2000 to start her PhD and had previously lived in rented accommodation in Germany on her own. She explained that in Germany renting is the dominant housing choice, with a general expectation that, unless extremely wealthy, most people would rent for the foreseeable future. Fiona found the aspiration to property ownership and the idea of the 'property ladder' difficult to understand, and the lack of rights coupled with the poor quality of rented accommodation available in the UK surprising because of the different prevailing views in Germany.

When Fiona initially came to the UK she rented an expensive, poor quality flat in South Manchester from a landlord whom she described as taking little or no interest in the maintenance of his properties, instead buying the properties, renting the properties, letting the properties run down and, then selling the properties at auction. In order to get move into higher quality accommodation she decided to look into shared housing due to

the higher quality accommodation being available at a lower cost, due to the overall cost being shared between residents, rather than solely by one individual.

The relationships that Fiona encountered within shared houses were particularly problematic due to not knowing the 'rules of the game'. Whilst many of the British participants appeared to have reasonable ideas of what behaviour to expect and how to conduct themselves within a shared house, for Fiona this was not so straightforward. The difficulty arose not only in the practical aspects, such as how to share 'things' like the washing machine or cupboard space, but also in how to negotiate these aspects of social life within the shared house on an interpersonal basis – how to approach people, how to resolve issues, and how to express when she was not so happy about things. Some of these were extreme, such as how to deal with one exhibitionist housemate who would wander around naked, but also quite mundane. Fiona outlined a situation where another housemate had become angry when things in the fridge had been moved so that Fiona could defrost the freezer and consequentially had mixed up some of the housemate's items. This mix up, which resulted in the other housemate becoming irrationally annoyed with Fiona, was difficult for Fiona as she was unaware of how precious her housemate felt over her refrigerated items.

F I had no idea it would be like this in a shared house. I just didn't know what to say, you know?

I Was it a completely new learning experience?

F Yes, definitely. No one tells you and I didn't know this person very well. It was all new to me. But now I know from talking to other people that this is what it's like, but I had no idea of that.

It is important to note that Fiona is certainly not socially inept; she spoke of her experiences with understanding and compassion but was shocked at the stark differences in living arrangements. The importance of this point is two-fold: first, to highlight a cultural difference in living arrangements (albeit a single and anecdotal one), and second, that, given that British resident respondents did not express the same difficulty in understanding the 'rules of the game' of house sharing, this may suggest a prevalent conception of what to expect and how to conduct yourself within a shared house situation. Further, this tacit knowledge fed into conflict when others were not seen to be 'playing by the rules'.

Polly (29, healthcare) recounted a story where a new housemate had entered the existing house share that she was living within after filling a room that someone had left. This new housemate had no previous experience of living within shared accommodation, and required some guidance in how to negotiate this contrasting form of living.

P [X] when she first moved in, she'd been engaged to this lad, she'd been with him for 10 years, she'd been with him since she was 18 and she'd only ever lived with him, and, erm, when he called it off, and just before they were going to

get married, she was going to start nursing and came to Manchester, and she needed to share. It was the first house share that she'd ever lived [...]

But, erm, when [she] moved in she liked... She wasn't sure about things... She was like 'Ummm, is it alright to put things in the kitchen?', so I was like '[X], look, if you're going to move in here you're going to have to get over that because it's your house, your kitchen, if you want to put some stuff in then put some stuff in, and don't ask.' And she went, 'Oh! OK! OK!'

I Suitably chastised!

P <Laughs> Yeah. Otherwise she'd spend the whole time going around feeling like it wasn't her own home and that would be awful.

I Yeah

P And she's just taken it like a duck to water!

In both of these situations where the housemates found shared living initially problematic, it seems to be the lack of pre-existing experience or knowledge of *how* to share that made such a transition problematic. This makes two suggestions about the quality of shared living: first, that it is in contrast to other arrangements and requires some different skills or ways of negotiating that living arrangement; second, given that other participants did not explain similar problems in learning 'how to share', are there other forms of living that act as a transitional skills development process that render it easier to live within shared accommodation? The analytical and theoretical strength of 'housing pathways' (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2009) is illustrated here, as it allows us to consider not only the *current* living configuration, but where that individual has come from both personally and practically, and whether certain 'pathways' are more advantageous than others when 'sharing'.

The first question – the differences between shared living and other forms of living – will be dealt with in more depth in the next chapter, where the notion of sharing will be placed in contrast to other forms of living, including couple and familial homes. The second question, of alternative 'pathways' and 'transitional' forms of living will be considered now, as this appears to be a key issue in how we readily accept and adapt to new practices, and help others adapt to our own. Looking at the research sample (table 15, below), the vast majority of the participants, apart from Fiona, had previously had experience of sharing with others, and the vast majority of those experiences were within the context of higher education within the UK, where it is very common to live in shared accommodation at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and across all years of study (Rugg et al. 2004).

Table 15: Experiences of sharing across the research sample

	Yes	No
Previously shared (outside of family)?	30	1
Experienced Higher Education in the UK?	30	1
Previously shared in Higher Education?	29	2

This observation is both illustrative and problematic. It is illustrative in that it *may* suggest that people who choose to live within shared accommodation are more likely to do so if they have lived within shared accommodation in previous epochs of their lifecourse (i.e. as a student). However, the theoretical nature of the sample, and its severely restricted number, make such an allusion difficult to justify, or statistically significant. It is also problematic, as this analysis of sharing, and adopting sharing practices, is also limited to primarily those who have experience of such housing configurations previously, with an absence of substantial consideration of the contrasting experiences of Fiona and of Polly's housemate. However, what is easier to discern is that those people who had shared previously did not experience the same problematic transitions into sharing as reported above. The demographic data from SpareRoom.co.uk's census (2011) discussed in the literature review (and available in appendix I) further suggests that those that who have been through higher education, are also more likely to share, with 66% of sharers in the UK having a degree or higher qualification, increasing to 78% when considering London alone.

The role of previous sharing experiences

As with the advertising and interview stages of the shared accommodation 'cycle', the role of previous experiences was important in influencing current and future sharing choices. During interviews, many participants reflected on their experiences of shared living while being students, and I asked many of them what those experiences were like. Often, this took the form of a standard trajectory of living in halls in first year, and then living in a shared house in second and third years of their undergraduate degrees⁸.

There are some key distinctive differences between living in shared accommodation as a student, and living in shared accommodation outside of education:

1. People often *expect* to share during their time at university;
2. When living in halls of residences in first year, where people are allocated rooms by accommodation departments at universities, there is an expectation that you may end up living with many random people, which may or may not be successful, with an appeal to university authorities if things do not work out;

⁸ Three of the 31 participants were students while living in shared accommodation but were postgraduates rather than undergraduates

3. Each period of accommodation is normally limited to 9-12 months maximum, so if you do not get on with a housemate, there is a fixed 'end date' on how long you would need to live with them for, which can make things easier to cope with;
4. Expectations of behaviour within student accommodation are often different to those within shared accommodation outside of education, so late night noise, parties and disturbances are more expected and tolerated, as are differing levels of cleanliness;
5. Students within shared accommodation often spend short spells at 'home' during term time (such as weekends), and longer periods during vacations, rather than living in the accommodation continuously.

Rugg et al (2004) have described the role of student accommodation as 'supervised leaving of the parental home and a 'sheltered' spell in the private rented sector' (2004, p.22) which 'constitutes an essential education in housing that enhances the housing and labour opportunities of graduates compared with other young people who have not studied away from the parental home' (2004, p.22), and that 'the student housing pathway offers a template for a style of shared housing that continues to be evident after graduation (2004, p.31).' Within their research they suggest that such a stepped and gradual entrance into the housing market, coupled with the environment of university life and accommodations, endowed participants with skills that were not present in those that made a leap from parental to independent living, such as the development of cooperative social skills, and the awareness of other financial pressures such as bills. Rugg et al point to Kenyon and Heath's (Heath and Kenyon 2001; Kenyon and Heath 2001) work which suggests that this extension of the university lifestyle is part of the destandardisation of housing trajectories, and that the 'post-graduate student housing biography automatically offers at least two locations where settlement is viable in terms of an understanding of the rental market, and the probability that there are known peers available and willing to share' and the 'pattern of shared rented accommodation with a friend (as opposed to partner) as a first step from the parental home is rare among non-students, which constitutes a substantial restriction in affordable housing and labour market options' (2004, p.32). For Rugg et al, student accommodation provides a transition period into 'adult living' that is not always available to those who are not students. Taking this into consideration, plus the contrasting experiences offered by the participants illustrated above, it can be argued that the student living experience can play a part in the skills development needed for successful sharing, as well as offering sharing as a potential choice.

Gronow's (2012) suggestion discussed in the literature review that habits can be transferred from similar contexts to another, may, therefore, endow individuals who have been thrust into sharing during their university years with greater transferable knowledge

of practices, and experience of aligning routines than non-sharers. They have a greater 'feel' for the 'rules of the game', to adopt Fiona's phrase, which very closely echoes the phraseology of Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'practice' in the 'field' – or context within which the practice is being performed. How, then, might this greater 'feel' assist in successful shared living? It is this point which is now discussed in relation to routines and practices when entering a new property, and how both new and old housemates align both practices and expectations.

Avoiding the queue for the shower at 7am: aligning routines and practices both implicitly and explicitly

Having the skills to share, or at least experience of it, does not always mean that future sharing experiences will be successful, however. As indicated earlier in this chapter, it is important for interpersonal factors to coalesce around each other, as well as practical elements, and when such qualities and expectations are not in unity, they can lead to some serious disagreements and disharmony that can cause severe friction within a household, perhaps even leading to the abandonment of the house. Issues of conflict and tension will be discussed in greater depth in chapter six; at this point we are concerned with *how* practices are aligned (or not).

While some residents, such as Louise, mentioned earlier, made some 'implicit practices' relatively clear early on, by strategic use of the advert, and making certain things clear during interview, many practices and routines, such as knowing when it is convenient to use the bathroom (and not *inconvenience* another resident), or whether it is acceptable to take someone's milk if you have run out, are less clear. This part of the chapter will attempt to outline how some of these more subtle aspects of shared living are picked up during the first few days and weeks of living within a shared house, and the relative success of transmitting and receiving these routines and practices to new housemates.

Once searchers have found a room and people that they like (and they like the person searching), and they have moved in, there is a period where you are getting to know how things 'work' in the house that they are living in, and settle in to practices and routines that existing housemates have already established, such as when people usually use the shower in the morning, or whether it is acceptable to only put a single sock in the washing machine (which it rarely is, but does occur, much to the annoyance of others, as Jon (35, designer) told me!). But how do individuals figure out the routine of others, and align their routine and needs with theirs?

It is rare for house 'rules' or routines to be explicit. Within my cohort, none of my participants in their *current* accommodation had expressly written rules, instead narrating a more relaxed approach to organisation. To return to Polly's (29, healthcare) experience of a housemate who was unused to living in shared accommodation, there is

an assumed, tacit sense of how aspects of the house share are organised. While Polly was trying to be helpful, and make her feel 'at home', there was a sense of frustration that her new housemate was asking about such things, and that these are issues that should already be understood. Polly's comment that 'she's just taken it like a duck to water!' further underlines the point of the tacit nature of household organisation: shared living, or the ability to live successfully within shared accommodation, is something that should be as innate as a duck swimming on water.

The unwritten and unstated nature of recruitment into household practices was something that was echoed throughout the interviews, not through an overt statement from participants that 'learning the ropes' was unspoken, but by the absence of narration. With the exception of Fiona's and Polly's stories, none of the participants spoke of particularly troubling experiences of getting to know 'how things work' in the house. In fact, there was a conspicuous absence, or silence. As previously noted the vast majority of participants had previous experience of sharing earlier in their lives through attendance at higher education, which possibly catalysed the assimilation to new routines and practices through knowledge of 'how things should work'. Participants were explicitly asked about routines within the house as part of the interview, and often they could describe the routine they had, but not how the routine had come about. This has concordance with Wahlen (2011) who suggests that as domestic routines achieve longevity they are less likely to be consciously attended to, instead becoming more tacit.

Louise (24, project manager) did discuss her approach and experiences of getting to know a new routine, or adapting to disruption. She describes a relatively passive approach, in that she would make changes to her own routine, rather than proactively encourage others to change theirs to suit her, even if it is a new housemate entering the house.

L [W]hen I'm a new housemate I'm really conscious of the kitchen and bathroom use, and because of the flexibility of my job I would get up super early to use the bathroom first so not to interrupt everyone else's routine – plus I don't like conversing over breakfast with people, I would rather just get up, get ready and go to work without having to speak to anyone. I would also cook my tea earlier so not to impact on anyone else – until I've learnt their routines and how it works. When someone moved into my existing house I didn't find they behaved in the same way. So for example a few of our new housemates would get up at their normal time and be in the bathroom for half an hour – which is absolutely fine once you know when other people aren't waiting to use it. This was especially obvious when someone had lived on their own before a shared house – so fine you need half an hour, but that means you're going to have to get up quarter of an hour earlier as you're making the rest of the house late otherwise.

For Louise, the element of flexibility appears to rest on her shoulders, rather than on those of other housemates who may be interrupting her own (desired) routine. Louise

appears to change her own routine in relation to the routine of others, rather than directly asking someone to change it for her.

The adoption of practices that pre-exist in shared accommodation appears to be relatively passive, with individuals observing and 'fitting in'. This notion was echoed by Matt (26, administrator) who said it 'fell into place' rather than being consciously attended to.

M You just try and get on and fit in with everyone else with showers and stuff. It normally just falls into place after a while.

For new housemates entering a pre-existing house share, there appears to be a need to 'watch and learn' rather than specifically ask about when they could take a shower or use the cooker. However, it is worth reflecting that while participants narrated this as a very passive and tacit experience, it is perhaps the routine and mundane nature of the activities themselves that lend them this character.

This undefined, unconscious and assuming approach was further underlined by Ashley (23, postgraduate). Ashley had taken the time to think about her shared living experiences before her interview, and was discussing it with her housemates the evening before the interview. During these discussions she discovered that the assumptions about how the house was organised were not necessarily shared with everyone, but until it was overtly raised, not everyone was aware of these shared, implicit routines.

A Sort of take it in turns [with the cleaning]. It's quite easy as you know who cleaned it last. I sort of thought we took in turns, but I was talking about it last night, but [another housemate] wasn't aware we took it in turns, she was quite surprised.

Ashley's housemate's surprise indicates the level of assumption that can be made over every day and mundane household practices. As they are 'every day' and not 'exceptional', participants may not see this is problematic; they just 'get on' with the practice of every day life. This assertion is supported by a greater narration of experiences of where there is an exception to practice that needs to be addressed, where this is disruption to the every day. Steve (31, accountant) illustrated this where issues with the shower and hot water required an overt negotiation over who can shower and when.

S Recently we've had to make a morning routine because of the heating system, if we all go consecutively, now the heating's come on because it's winter, if we all go consecutively within like five minutes of each other to have a shower, the third person is left with ice cold water <laughs> It's not ice cold, that's an exaggeration, but it's not a nice temperature, so we recently spoke about that, and we decided to try and leave about half hour between each one. But Craig gets up at 6, I get up at 6.30, and Daniel gets up at 7, so it's working at the moment.

This overt and conscious alignment came about due to circumstance rather than a natural desire to create a routine, but the alignment was easily organised once it was discussed. However, before the *need* to organise the routine, there was no discussion.

Overall, the participants narrated a relatively relaxed approach to household practices and organisation, with a 'watch and learn' approach to 'fitting in' with existing routines, rhythms and habits. This was not necessarily sustained continuously throughout the experiences of some participants, with tensions and grievances amounting as time went on, which is discussed in greater length in chapter five. However, the initial stages of practice assimilation and routine alignment appear to be developed tacitly, using existing shared experiences and 'know how' to fit in with others. Some issues of organisation were highlighted in the (inter)viewing stage of recruitment, but others are less tangibly transferred to new occupants, expecting them to take to living life in their new home as a 'duck to water' rather than ask for help and assistance from their housemates.

The common assumption among the research sample was that alignment of routines and practices was something that was informal and casual, rather than a formalised process. This tacit and unspoken nature can present a difficulty, particularly when routines that were at once aligned become disrupted, or when interpersonal differences override pragmatism. As will be discussed in chapter five, the unspoken nature of many elements of shared living, such as routines, rules and expectations, make it uncomfortable to address when conflict arises, or when things go wrong. Although the majority of participants found the assimilation of mundane routines unproblematic, there does appear to be a sense of pre-existing skill and knowledge that allows this to happen.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the mechanisms by which individuals find a room in a shared house, how they go through a process of selection, and how the initial stages of shared living are negotiated. At all points, the processes have been far from simple and straightforward, but instead have complex and subtle structures. Much of the negotiation over mutual compatibility both practically and interpersonally is couched in a regime of explicit questions with implicit assumptions, and sweeping judgments made on the basis of a search for homophily. Such a desire for social similars is not unreasonable – people want a pleasant living experience – but the processes by which this is achieved do not necessarily present the best possible way of achieving this end, instead presenting an 'unnatural' interviewing situation, coupled with the assumption that once a searcher has moved in to a property they have the 'skill' and ability to 'fit in' with how the house runs. In some cases there were instances of recruiting an individual to a

property against a 'gut instinct' or their better judgement, because of an economic necessity to fill the room that undermined issues of interpersonal homophily. Within each stage of recruitment, there is a sense of 'expectation setting', with the qualities and character of individual houses being implied through advertising and the (inter)viewing process, with the hope that it will either encourage the 'right kind' of applicant, and discourage those who may not live up to those expectations. There is evidence of Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'distinction' at play, making tacit judgements of the 'habitus' of the other and their ability, as we shall see in the next chapter, to play by 'the rules of the game'.

Theoretically, we can see the importance of housing pathways in an assessment of successful shared living. There is evidence to suggest that previous shared living experiences can endow individuals with skills that allow a greater ability to 'learn the ropes', with those without that knowledge commenting that they did not know the 'rules of the game'. In relation to theories of practice, and practices of 'sharing', the recruitment to, and adoption of, practices is a less clear pathway, with overt assumptions being made of new residents that they should know what to do, and 'how things work', and take to it as a 'duck to water'. There is a sense of the 'innate' about the skill of sharing, but this is not always the case, with implicit assumptions being unmasked as misunderstandings when brought into the light of day. Potential 'sharers' are assumed 'carriers' of practice; an assumption that is not always correct, as the following two chapters explore.

On the basis of this swift form of recruitment and selection, what happens when people move in? How does 'sharing' work, and what tensions (if any) arise? The next chapter explores what it is that is actually shared within shared accommodation, and how is this negotiated. Once someone moves in, how are the practicalities of the 'every day' negotiated to ensure that everyone has 'fair' or 'mutual' access to the house and its facilities, and what role do interpersonal relations – or relationalities – play in this process? Can you 'share' with people that you do not like or get along with? It considers the enactment of practices of the house *in process* rather than at its infancy, and how aspects of shared accommodation are negotiated. The chapter will further problematize the notion of 'sharing' by exploring the tension between seemingly independent individuals living within a necessarily interdependent environment, and the issues that can arise because of this tension. It will explore this by examining some key 'features' of shared accommodation, looking at the sharing of utilities and bills; food and supplies; tasks and responsibilities; and space and time; and how they present some common 'forms' of practice, but also present nuanced tensions that require context dependent negotiation rather than a 'universal' practice.

Chapter Five: What is shared in shared households?

Whilst research has managed to identify specific *instances* of sharing, how individuals that are sharing actually 'do' the process of 'sharing' has been rarely examined. The previous chapter looked at how individuals were recruited *into* shared accommodation in the hope that they would be 'skilled' at the 'practice' of sharing, and how expectations for standards of 'practice' were implied during this recruitment process. There was an implied 'hope' that those recruited into households would be able to 'fit in' both interpersonally and *in practice*. This chapter looks in some detail at the 'doing' of 'sharing' in shared households once those new recruits are in the house, looking at the sharing of utilities and bills; food and supplies; tasks and practices; and space and time. In the chapter I employ some of the key concepts of practice theory to examine how sharing practices in shared households can be usefully understood as a collection of 'elements', that, when brought together, form a coherent 'entity' which are constituted and reconstituted through 'performance' – the constant doing and redoing of those elements in the presence of others that renders them an intelligible and normalised social act. In the previous chapter I looked at recruitment into shared houses as a process of recruitment into the practices of shared households. This chapter focuses more directly on the everyday routines of shared households, and the habitual, collective and conventional nature of the sharing of facilities, space and practices in shared households. In doing so I also examine how such sharing practices emerge, develop and change within shared households. But again, one key issue that I repeat from the previous chapter is that sharing is inherently relational and interpersonal: so the form and quality of the interpersonal relationships within which sharing occurs fundamentally affects the nature and success of sharing within shared households. In some versions of practice theory, those 'performing' the 'elements' of practices are 'carriers' who constitute the practice both physically and culturally, drawing it together in a way that allows others to see practices as recognisable behaviours with histories and expectations. This emphasis usefully foregrounds practices as coordinated 'elements' or sets of behaviours; however, it also means that the interpersonal aspect of practices (in which 'carriers' are also creative interactional agents engaged in relational negotiation of performances) is somewhat neglected. Yet as this chapter (and the next) demonstrates, the form and quality of the interpersonal relationships in which practices are 'carried' strongly shapes the performance of practices, and ultimately the meaning of practices as entities.

The form and quality of interpersonal relations within shared households are particular and distinctive. This chapter explores how shared households – much more so than

many other households – are organised along lines of both interdependence and independence simultaneously (or inter/independence) in which a shared house is one household which also contains several households. Shared households are also formed out of groups of people whose primary relational ties are that of being housemates and whose relationships are generally framed as being peer (or non-hierarchical) relations, unless the owner is also resident. The chapter examines the issues this creates for organizing the sharing of the non-sovereign aspects of the shared household - which include facilities, space, practices and routines – as well as the tensions and conflicts this can create in the negotiation of sharing. As my sample demonstrates, the practice of 'sharing' non-sovereign 'stuff' is a subtle and laborious process rather than a simple one, which is reliant on implicit negotiation rather than explicit organisation. This chapter also explores how the organisation and coordination of practices within shared households is itself particular and distinctive from that of many other common household types. There are many mundane aspects of living within any type of property that we often do on 'autopilot' without thinking, forget about, or take for granted: cleaning, paying bills, getting in the 'big shop', for example, and this is no different within shared accommodation. Many every day tasks need to be carried out within shared accommodation, but instead of having a coordinated and united strategy for how this will be achieved, there is often a more fragmented and individualised approach, with each housemate doing or paying for 'their bit'. As Belk (2010) suggests, familial sharing often occurs within 'taken for granted sharing privileges' (2010, p.724) afforded to those who are at 'home'. Within shared accommodation – particularly where people are sharing with relative strangers – there are fewer 'taken for granted' sharing privileges, and negotiations can be more complex. Whereas within a familial home or a couple living together family members *might* pool resources and decide on what food to buy for the week, put their clothes in the washing machine at the same time, or explicitly negotiate who cleans what and where, such matched or convergent strategies are often absent within house shares, with individuals all having the same domestic and financial considerations, but working independently to achieve them rather than working together. Even in familial or couple households where tasks are individually led along gendered lines on behalf of the rest of the household, which is apparently the more common (DeVault 1994; Kaufmann 1998), there is an overarching coordination that ensures some level of expedience and efficiency is achieved in contrast to individual members completing tasks on their own – an economy of scale. In contrast, this is not necessarily present within peer-shared households, with individuals attending to their own needs and wants – cooking their own meals, buying their own food, washing their own dishes – while at the same time contributing to the communal responsibilities of the house, such as rent, bills and cleaning.

While this may sound quite a divergent and incongruous approach to a living arrangement that is nominally 'shared', it reflects one of the key qualities of shared housing that has been previously identified – that often, the individuals within the shared house are independent of one another, with no ties other than that they share a house, but are yet bound by an interdependence that goes along with ensuring that the tenancy and utilities that supply the house remain paid for and maintained, as well as issues of maintaining co-presence within the household and co-use of facilities. This presents a tension within shared accommodation of an explicit role of independence, but with an implicit assumption of interdependence, along with the frustrations that go with this when individuals often do not live up to their interdependent commitments. Further, this is complicated by the particular interpersonal aspects of shared households: close proximity without (necessarily) intimacy; flat hierarchies and no clear authority structures; and the inherent transience of arrangements that can discourage the overt resolution of conflicts in favour of more subtle, indirect processes of behavioural modification. It is worth reiterating that housemates in a shared household are often relative strangers, thrown together in an intimate domestic situation. Though shared households are sometimes formed out of existing friendships, they are often collections of 'randoms', and though friendships do often form between housemates, so do enmities, or a simple failure to connect at anything beyond a (relatively) cordial co-presence. The management of sharing within such relationships offers very different challenges to that of familial or institutional sharing. And of course, it is also worth pointing out that friendship relations themselves offer their own challenges in the management of sharing, since friendships can be 'critical associations' (Davies and Heaphy 2011) which offer distinct issues in comparison with partnership or familial relations.

In this chapter I argue that the very particular nature of the power relations and reciprocal obligations of shared households strongly affects the organisation and sharing of practices within such households. A further issue in the organisation of practices of sharing in shared households is the perceived transience of the arrangements, which affects how conflict and disagreement over shared practices play out. Many residents of shared accommodation do not foresee sharing as a permanent arrangement, instead seeing it as a comfortable but temporary situation before they can live on their own or move in with a partner. Both this potential transience and the particular nature of interpersonal relations between housemates (as relations between peers with a flat hierarchy) means that the organisation of practices is often conducted in a tacit and implicit manner, with a reluctance to engage in explicit negotiations or to 'rock the boat' when conflicts or disagreements do arise. Of course, all shared practices have a strong tacit component to their organisation and reproduction, but as this chapter explores, this is often taken to extremes in the context of shared households.

As discussed in chapter two (literature review), Heath and Cleaver (2003) have provided the fullest account of shared living in the UK based on a similar cohort of young professionals, with few others making a direct contribution to an analysis of shared living. However, even this account appeared to 'stop at the front door' and interrogate the subjective experience of the milieu. Outside of comedy non-fiction, there is little work, as yet, that has investigated the acts and practices of living within a shared house, and the benefits and stresses that come with that, and this thesis argues that it is these aspects of shared living that are worthy of analysis. Issues of sharing, relationality, intimacy, trust and self-disclosure cut across the career of a shared house resident, and rather than being simple issues to negotiate, they are complicated and subtle processes that play out both consciously and unconsciously.

The participants within my research sample made a conscious and advantageous choice to live in shared accommodation over moving home with parents or living on their own due to social and economic concerns. Social, as the majority enjoyed the freedom of independent living while at university, and wished this to continue; and economic, due to relatively limited financial resources early in their careers, coupled with a desire to live in attractive, popular and affluent areas, which they would otherwise be unable to afford if they lived on their own. As illustrated by Kenyon and Heath (2001) in their research, there is a dominant narrative of choice among those who live in peer-shared accommodation, with the arrangement affording them a lifestyle that they desire, whilst also freeing-up economic resources. It is the issues of resources that is particularly highlighted in this chapter, with a focus on the organisation – or 'sharing' – of resources, and how this is managed. Resources within shared accommodation are not just economic (money), but also involve use of space, time and 'assets' such as food and furnishings.

Within this chapter I want to highlight the independent/interdependent tension, as I feel this is both an odd and stressful situation that is manifest in multiple ways: the sentiments of 'why should someone else jeopardise my personal security because they can't be bothered' versus 'I don't care, I'm only here for six months'. These are attitudes and feelings that can work against each other rather than achieve a common good. In many ways, these people are the vanguard of Giddens (1994) and Beck's (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) individualisation – forging individual biographies of their own choosing; but they are entirely dependent on each other for the success of this. Yes, you can bolt from a shared house, but this is a stressful and strenuous task – moving is not a quick or easy task, unless you have little to move; plus many people are contractually obliged to stay. While Finch and Mason (1993) discuss the tension – or balance – between dependence and independence between 'kin' or family, this is premised on the notion of familial assistance and reciprocity, rather than requiring the

other residents meet their obligations practically and interpersonally to ensure you have somewhere to live (i.e. pay their rent, and are relatively personable).

Heath and Cleaver (2003, pp.98–108) and Heath (2004) suggest that peer-shared households ‘exemplified the key features of “neo-tribalism”’ (2004, p.171) as outlined by Maffesoli (1996) – ‘proximity, shared space (both physical and symbolic) and ritual’ (Heath 2004, p.167). As neo-tribes they produce and reproduce a cohesive sense of security and sociality. Indeed, there was certainly evidence of aspects of this across the sample of this research. However, this thesis contends that the ‘commitment to the communal ethic’ (Heath 2004, p.166) has been over stated, due to (i) the inherently transient nature of living within shared accommodation (which can facilitate swift exits from shared accommodation rather than a commitment to ‘ride it out’ where things go wrong), and (ii) evidence of ambivalence toward a communal ethic, with participants narrating that the tension between independence and interdependence creates a more complex relationship with one another than one of a community, and demonstrable avoidance of overt organisation and resolution of problems within the ‘community’.

However, before moving on to explore the interpersonal dynamics of shared households, it is first worth exploring two questions. Just what is it exactly that is ‘shared’ in shared households, and how does the sharing process differ from other household types? In what follows, I focus on four interconnected aspects of what is shared in shared household, looking in turn at the sharing (or not) of utilities and bills (and the vexed question of money); food and supplies; tasks and practices; and space and time. Living within shared accommodation entails *sustained* and *embedded* forms of consumption – and requires tacit skills and implicit assumptions about how to share facilities, space and practices. In exploring this, and following practice theory, I examine the sharing of facilities, space and practices in shared households as coordinated entities of shared practice, whose performance entails the coordination of everyday routines, habits and conventions. However, as we shall see, sharing in all of these domains is crucially affected by:

- the form and quality of the personal relationships in households;
- values about acceptable standards of living/behaviours;
- issues of access and authority; and
- the issue that just because something is ‘shared’, does not make it easy to ‘share.’

This thesis will demonstrate that issues of communality are tense and ambiguous, and undermine a sense of a cohesive community or a consolidated sense of camaraderie and mutual responsibility.

Setting the scene: what is shared in shared housing, and how is it different to other forms of living?

Although methods of recruitment have been covered within the previous chapter, the character and nature of living within shared accommodation and how it contrasts with other forms of living has not yet been discussed in any depth. To understand why an analysis of 'sharing' *within* shared living is important sociologically, it will be useful to provide an overview of the key aspects of what is shared, the typical 'regimes' of 'sharing', and how it contrasts with other forms of living arrangement. The importance of this is to establish what is particular about the living arrangement that may give rise to routines and practices that are observed.

This brief overview will look at four key areas of consumption and domestic practice: how bills are organised and paid; the acquisition and consumption of food; the organisation and responsibility for cleaning; and how physical space is demarcated as sole or shared access. In addition, it will consider a broad conceptualisation of the hierarchy of authority that may be in place, and how that may interact with processes of consumption. As the focus of this thesis is on shared accommodation, this overview is necessarily broad in order to highlight the key differences, rather than provide a detailed account of the minutiae of each context in order to highlight the idiosyncrasies of shared accommodation. The diversity *within* the broader categories, such as differing household configurations, is therefore not ignored, but the overview has deferred to the dominant discourses available from the literature. The household types that will be considered in addition to shared accommodation are familial and couple households; solo-living arrangements; and student halls of residence. These were chosen as familial and solo-living represent the dominant alternatives to shared accommodation, and halls of residence were included to illustrate the similar regimes that are in place that may contribute to habits, routines and practices that are transferred to shared living after university. Table 16 (below) provides an overview of the characteristics of the areas of consumption and domestic practice, and how they are organised by household type, which will form the basis of discussion.

Table 16: Overview of household types and how different responsibilities are 'shared'

	Familial/couple	Solo	Halls of Residence	Peer-shared
Bills	Single/shared responsibility between heads of household	Single responsibility	Included in rent	Shared responsibility/ Distributed
Food	Single/joint responsibility between heads of household	Single responsibility	Individual	Individual
Cleaning	Single/joint responsibility between heads of household	Single responsibility	Included in rent	Shared responsibility/ Distributed
Space	Demarcated by 'heads of household'	Single responsibility	Own room, plus shared space with mutual access	Own room, plus shared space with mutual access
Hierarchy	Familial/joint	Self	Institutional	Flat

In terms of household bills – gas, electricity, water, and so forth – there is a great deal of literature on the management of money within marriage and relationships, most notably Pahl (1989), Vogler and Pahl (1994) and Vogler (1998). Pahl (1989, p.78) notes that across a range of literature, the dominant form of organisation that has been found has either been declared (1994) by participants as either shared between those within the relationship, or organised largely controlled by the wife. Within the table above, head of household is used to denote either husband or wife. In this instance, the organisation of bills and their payments is handled either jointly by the couple, or often delegated to the wife. In solo-living arrangements – where individuals live on their own – the responsibility for bills falls on the individual to pay, whereas in halls of residence these are often included in the rent. In shared accommodation, the view is somewhat more distorted, as will explored in detail later in this chapter. Bills and the payment of them can be configured in multiple ways, with either one resident dealing with all of the bills, or each resident taking a bill, or the operation of a 'kitty' from which all bills are paid. However, the organisation and payment of them is not necessarily uniform or straightforward and, as will be illustrated later, the billing regimes of suppliers are not wholly adequate for shared accommodation.

Food purchase, storage and distribution – or shopping, shelving, cooking and eating – is also varied. DeVault (1994) noted that this was largely dealt with by the female of the household, and food purchasing and preparation remains gendered work, with Stapleton and Keenan (2009) suggesting that such gendered arrangements were still prevalent. The storage of food is communal within the household, with access to food largely open, but sometimes mediated by a parent in the case of a child accessing food. Within solo-living, again, this role falls to the individual resident, with many enjoying the freedom associated with cooking for themselves in contrast to having responsibility for food and associated tastes of others (Klinenberg 2012, p.94). Within both shared accommodation

(from this research sample) and student halls (from my past experience, as little data exists), the dominant form of acquisition was individual, with each resident having their own cupboard within which to store food, and their own shelf in the fridge. Food consumption was equally as individualised with most people cooking for themselves, with group meals being the exception rather than the rule. Some households did have some shared common goods, such as bread and milk, but this, again, was rare, although sharing the odd food item, such as eggs, stock cubes or pasta, was more likely if this was previously agreed. Within this research cohort, there was one clear exception to this rule, which is an ideologically-led house share, which will be discussed as an atypical case later in this chapter.

Cleaning of the household is something that, again, has largely fallen along gendered lines in both classical (Oakley 1974; DeVault 1994) and contemporary (Davis and Greenstein 2013) literature, and as an issue within household that involves issues of power within relationships. Women have largely undertaken this role rather than men with an attached concern for cleanliness and hygiene in relation to respectability in the eyes of others (Berner 1998). Within solo-living arrangements, this again falls to the individual occupant, but accounts within Klinenberg (2012) suggest that the solitude afforded by solo-living also allows freedom to clean up as and when you want, without concern of the gaze or judgement of others, unless you have visitors. In student halls, this issue is largely dealt with by cleaners provided by university, who vacuum and clean common areas as well as bedrooms, with some tasks, such as washing up of dishes and the washing of clothes the responsibility of the individual student. In shared households the distribution and delegation of cleaning is not such an easy arena to map, with many participants in this research reporting that there was no overt arrangement for how household cleaning would take place, but it was more implicit. Individuals are generally responsible for washing up their own plates, and handling their own laundry, but the common areas (lounge, kitchen, bathrooms) were more problematic, where no clear or formal arrangement existed. Some households avoided this issue altogether by organising a cleaner. Natalier (2003; 2004) noted in her research on shared housing in Australia that the division of labour can still be managed along gendered expectations, with men, even in all-male households, deferring the housework as something that they were not expected to do, and there are hints within this research that this may also be at play to some extent within this research sample.

The issue of space, how it is demarcated and by whom, and who has the right of access, has some differing properties within the home. Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999) note that the physical home provides both a private sanctuary from the outside world (a back stage) whilst also operating as a public space when entertaining or in relation to other members of the household (a front stage), with

domestic walls and doors allowing individuals to retreat in order to conceal elements from each other, which Munro and Madigan (1993) acknowledge can be an enigmatic property of 'privacy' in the private sphere. In terms of the familial home, Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999) note that the entire house is often shared, with some limits being placed on access by children, such as the parents' bedroom, or a child's bedroom becoming more private as they enter their teenage years, but with right of access still resting firmly with the parent. In solo-living arrangements, the public/private dichotomy is less problematic when you are in seclusion, until you have guests around, in which case, as with other forms of living, it becomes a public sphere of display and performance. In halls of residence, the space is clearly demarcated by the institution with the individual student having their own room (unless they are sharing), which is lockable, and the remainder of the space being 'common'. Access to other students' rooms is at the authority of the resident, allowing access as they wish. Within shared accommodation, the arrangement is similar to that of halls of residence, but within the research sample, very few had locks on their room that could allow them to physically bar access to others (particularly in the event that the resident was not present), so there is a stronger reliance on trust in relation to other residents. Kitchens, lounges and bathrooms are generally always shared, but the nature of sharing those areas is as much reliant on the quality of interpersonal relationship as the availability of the space, as will be discussed in greater length later in this chapter.

Finally, the issue of hierarchy among the differing household types is important to highlight. Within familial households, the practical aspects of organisation have, as discussed above, generally fallen to women, with the future issues of gender and power dynamics being particularly problematic (Hartmann 1981) in relation to the production and reproduction of inequality, with age also playing a part, particularly in the case of a 'wilful child' (Heer 1963, p.133) who may rage against the exercise of power. However, in general, there exists a structure where one or two people have overt and clear responsibility over the financial and practical running of the household, which is normally the male or female 'householder', who also exercises some control and command over access to goods and services to children, normally because they (the householder) are paying the bill. The hierarchy is generally quite clear. In solo-living environments, the authority rests solely within the realms of the individual, who can make household choices as they see fit. Within halls of residence, the hierarchy may appear to be somewhat more cooperative; however, there is always the appeal to university authorities when things go wrong, and their ability to intervene should problems or risk-taking arise (Fulcher and Fulcher 1998). The students are not 'on their own', per se, but normally under the care of wardens, proctors or resident tutors, or at the very least security guards to ensure the building does not burn down. Further, the institution is dealing with the more bureaucratic aspects of bills and utilities, this removing the need

to negotiate these tasks. Within peer-shared accommodation, however, the power dynamic is more ambiguous, without an officially demarcated 'leader' or 'head' of the household, and each individual instead having equal role and responsibility in the running of the house. No individual housemate generally has more power than another on a sanctioned level, but equally, no one has less responsibility to ensure obligations such as bills are met. In terms of the organisation of household resources and practices, this creates a more problematic structure within which to negotiate those roles and responsibilities. Natalier (2003; 2004) suggests, some of this division of labour may fall along gendered expectations; however, findings within this thesis suggest there is also evidence of unwanted, inherited responsibility based on length of tenure, coupled with a wider lack of desire on the part of residents to take on financial and contractual obligations. Further, while residents may appeal to a landlord to intervene in some issues, there was an evident reluctance to do so, often seeing landlords as largely ineffectual in dealing with matters beyond bricks and mortar, and many aspects, such as bills, falling directly on the shoulders of residents contractually. The hierarchy within peer-shared accommodation is less pronounced and therefore more challenging than other forms of living arrangement, with residents having equal responsibilities and often an equal reluctance to accept them. In terms of household arrangement, this independent yet interdependent relationship between residents, both practically in relation to their economic independence and patterns of consumption, and personally due to their (hopefully) amiable relationality yet lack of personal obligation to one another, raises the question of whether shared accommodation is one household, many households, or a hybrid of these two extremes. Familial households are viewed as single economic entities bound by familial ties and obligations, and solo-living households are single economic entities responsible only to themselves. Shared accommodation, on the other hand, is more fragmented, with individuals within it responsible to both themselves and one another, and this creates and adds to the problematic tension of independence and interdependence.

For the purposes of clarity, as mentioned in chapter two (methodology), five sub types of shared accommodation were identified within the research sample:

- I. shared houses made up of friends that have come together to live with one another;
- II. shared houses of 'randoms' who all found each other through means such as websites;
- III. friend/randoms hybrid households where some people are friends, but have since had to recruit randoms to fill gaps where other friends have left in order to maintain the tenancy of the property;
- IV. owner-occupied shared households where the owner is resident and the house shared with one or more tenant, usually in order to afford to own the property;

- V. the ideologically-led shared house, which is akin to the first three types, but differs in that it is led through an ideological belief in sharing or cooperative living as a more sustainable form of living than living on one's own.

The majority of the participants (18) lived within the first three types of household (I, II, III), which are considered 'peer-shared households'. The final two household types, owner-occupied shared households (10 participants, of which six were owner-occupiers and four were tenants within owner-occupied shared housing) and the ideologically-led shared house (three participants) had differing forms of organisation. Owner-occupied shared housing operated broadly along the same lines as peer-shared housing, with the exception of bills, which were dealt with by the owner-occupier, and the owner-occupier had somewhat more authority and responsibility than the tenants over issues within the house. Within the sample, as is discussed later in the chapter, the owner-occupiers often felt a tension between being the resident landlord and being a housemate, and had to negotiate the two. The ideologically-led house share also largely operated on the same lines as peer-shared accommodation, but they had an overarching ideology of cooperative and mutual sharing as their guiding principle, and organised food purchasing and consumption on a communal level, and dealt with household issues via house meetings. These two exceptions to the more prevalent peer-shared household type are useful examples of diversification in practices and highlight the presence of tensions within peer-shared households more lucidly by comparison, and will be used illustratively to capture those differences.

Finally, it would be useful to illustrate more practically what it is that is 'shared' in shared all types of shared accommodation. Table 17 below has been compiled on the basis of the interviews and my observations within the properties, and gives an overview of the various features that are typically 'shared' rather than 'owned', or require negotiation.

Table 17: Overview of what is 'shared' in shared households in relation to space

Space	'Stuff'	Utilities	Time	Responsibilities
Kitchen	Cooker Kettle Microwave Washing machine Sink Crocery Cutlery Dining table Ironing board Iron Toaster Utensils Cleaning equipment Food	Electricity Gas Water Council tax	Eating together Cooking together	Cleaning Purchasing of group provisions
Lounge	TV Hifi DVD player Furniture Hoover Books/DVDs	Electricity Gas Broadband Council tax	Watching TV/films Socialising	Cleaning
Bathroom	Toilet Shower Sink	Electricity Gas Water Council tax		Cleaning Purchasing of group provisions (eg. Toilet roll)
Corridors		Electricity Gas Telephone Council tax		Cleaning
Garden/drive	Garden furniture BBQ Parking (depending on the house)	Electricity Water	Socialising	Maintenance (unless landlord provided)

Now that a rough landscape of shared accommodation has been mapped out, along with a contrast to alternative forms of living, this section will now move on to discuss how residents within shared accommodation actually 'do' 'sharing', and will explore the complex nature of negotiation that needs to take place to practice sharing 'successfully'. The issue of independence and interdependence will be empirically explored, along with an examination of just where shared accommodation fits as an object of economic organisation – as one household, many, or both.

Paying the bills

Different houses adopt different approaches to paying bills. Owner-occupiers tend to take charge of the bills and charge a set monthly fee to lodgers; whereas peer-shared houses tend to operate differing ways of paying the communal bills, often based on longevity within the household. While it may be assumed that bill payment would be a relatively straightforward process whereby residents pay what is asked of them, within shared accommodation it can give rise to a range of apparently irrational ways of distributing liability and responsibility. It is my argument here that this is due to a

distorted or absent distribution of power between individuals and an overriding 'norm' of mutuality and shared responsibility.

This section provides an overview of the ways that bill payments are organised within different household types, and outlines how paying a utility or other company for services used is not a straightforward process, but one that requires some complex, often non-verbal negotiation between housemates.

The organisation of bills and housing taxation (council tax) within the UK is largely organised by utility companies and local authorities on the basis of what we might consider to be a 'standard' household: a single person, a couple, or a family living together, where householders have either sole or joint responsibility for the financial management of the house, and for all those residing within it. The billing of services is organised to cater for these household types, where there is often an individual within the household that deals with the bills. However, within shared accommodation, responsibilities over who is responsible for the financial management of the household is far from formalised, and the organisation of products and services toward a 'head of household' system can present difficulties in the democratisation of responsibility between housemates.

Within the UK, utility companies do not provide payment arrangements that would mean that individuals would pay their 'share' of the bill; bills are issued to the person *willing* to be named on the bill. While all members of the household can be named on the bill (and thus be jointly liable for payment and non-payment) this does not reduce the level of liability for the individuals: if four out of five people pay their 'share' each month, the utility company will still demand the final 20% of the bill from those who have paid. If those people choose not to pay then they run the risk of damaging their own future credit worthiness as the utility company will report to credit reference agencies (agencies that provide a record of an individual's financial history and behaviour) that all residents named on the bill have not paid, not just the single individual who did not pay their share. This, in turn, impacts upon an individual's future choices with regard to financial products and services: if they have a poor credit history due to non-payment within the shared house, this will be looked upon unfavourably in future credit applications. Similarly, council tax regulations state that those within a household (where that household is classed as a taxable residential dwelling) are 'jointly and severally liable' for council tax within the property, so will require all those within the property to ensure that the whole amount of tax is paid, even if one individual does not pay.

These issues contribute to the tension that has been mentioned throughout this thesis that individuals are both personally and financially independent from and interdependent

upon one another for the on-going success of their living arrangements. While they have their own income and lives, they are also intrinsically personally and financially interdependent on one another to ensure that rent and bills are paid now, both to ensure the on-going tenancy and supply of utilities, but also to protect their future choices. The combination of the structure of service provision and billing in the UK, coupled with the tension between independence and interdependence, lays the foundation for some novel and sometimes complex ways or 'systems' of organising payments that aim to mitigate these difficulties, and at the same time give rise to other problems such as 'awkwardness' and 'creating an atmosphere', which will be discussed later in this chapter.

On first glance, there are some ways that may be foreseen as being rather logical or rational ways of organising the payment of rent and bills. One of these is a system whereby tenant's bills are included in their rent, in the way they are included in Halls of Residence at University. An apparently straightforward way of dealing with household finances, in this system, utilities and council tax are bundled together with rent into one fixed monthly payment that allows the tenant to know what they are paying each month. However, this is an infrequent model due to the variable nature of bills; it presents a financial risk to the non-resident landlord if the residents use more gas, electricity and water than anticipated when setting the rent, and as they are non-resident, cannot identify which individual resident or residents may be responsible for the use. Similarly, it can offer poor value to the tenant if they are a prudent user of utilities. This model of payment was not present within the research cohort, but was advertised as a feature within a minority of room advertisements. A key benefit of this infrequent model, as will be explicated in the examples below, is the absence of required interaction *between* residents regarding household finances; as liaising with suppliers and dealing with bills is undertaken by the landlord, residents do not need to negotiate this element of shared living between one another.

Another system is the use of a 'shared bank account', where each person pays in an amount each month to cover the cost of rent, bills and council tax, and bills paid out centrally from there. This appears to be a reasonable approach, but sharing a bank account with others also means having your past and current financial history linked in a similar way to having everyone's names on bills described above, with those listed on the shared bank account being listed with credit reference agencies while that account is active, which means that your financial choices (such as applying for and obtaining credit for a car, for example) may be limited by the poor financial history of their peers. If residents apply for credit while sharing a bank account, the credit company will search the financial histories of both the applicant, and anyone they are financially associated with, so if your housemate has a history of not paying their credit card, you are likely to be turned down for a car loan, or even a mobile phone contract. This link is severed as

soon as you cease sharing financial products (close the bank account) with the other housemates, but can be a potentially limiting factor in the choices individuals can make over financial products and services while the link is active. Further, the record of the bank account, and its related conduct, is kept on each individual's credit file for six years after the relationship ends; if the account was ever 'delinquent' (such as overdrawn over any agreed limits, or bounced payments due to members of the group failing to pay in their share of the monthly bills before the payments were due), the record of this delinquency will be carried by each individual even if their conduct had been good.

For some types of shared accommodation this shared responsibility and liability works well. Nadia (29, housing officer) has a joint mortgage with her flatmate, and has a joint bank account that goes along with that. As they have the liability of a mortgage together the shared responsibility of keeping a bank account in order is seen as an easy and necessary burden. Plus, as they are already linked through the investment in a property, the shared bank account makes the division of finances a very simple way to deal with everyday finances. However, for those housemates who are renting, the potential damage those shared links (and the hidden histories that their peers may be hiding) can make to potential future choices can be significant, and so it is perhaps understandable why the level of responsibility they choose to take on is limited in order to limit any potential damage by financial links. However, Nadia was the only case within the research cohort to have a shared bank account, and that was due to having a mortgage rather than using a bank account as a way of organising shared bills.

In a similar way to joint liability for bills, while the possibility of using a bank account to organise bills seems straightforward, it carries with it some inherent risks to those involved. However, there are some more frequent forms of managing finances within shared households, which were more dominant within the research cohort, that appear less straightforward, but aim to mitigate some of the tensions that have been highlighted above.

One model of organising arrangements can be identified within owner-occupied housing, where the owner-occupier of the property is renting out a room or rooms to tenants. Within this model, which is similar to the model illustrated above, the owner-occupier will take responsibility for all the bills, and then charge the tenants within their property a set amount each month, regardless of usage. This model allows the tenants to budget effectively as they know how much they will need to pay, but leaves the owner-occupier with the liability for any costs due to excessive usage. However, in contrast to the system above, as the landlord is resident within the property, the issue can be raised more directly with any resident deemed responsible for excessive usage, as the owner-occupier may be able to identify the tenant responsible. This system has embedded

within it a power relationship between the owner-occupier and the tenant, whereby the owner-occupier takes responsibility for the bills, and their associated liability, and the tenant defers to the owner-occupier over issues of use and access.

Steve (31, accountant) explained how he organised bills in his house in the way described above, but even this way of organising bills can bring about tensions:

I Just thinking practically about the house, how are things like bills sorted out in the house?

S Just a flat... They pay a flat fee and that includes everything.

I And does that work out for you OK?

S Erm... It does... The only thing was there was an issue with the water. Daniel was having baths every day and a shower, and I kept telling him, 'Dan, you do realise this is going to come through and it's gonna be a massive bill because we're on a water meter. It will come through, and the bill will be massive, you do realise?' He said, 'It's going to be fine, it's going to be fine', and it came through and it went from £25/month to £75/month. And I was just like <gasp> and I absolutely exploded and had a an argument with Daniel and Daniel's like, 'I'll pay you back', but I knew he didn't have the money, so he didn't, and it just went, d'you know?

In this situation, the owner-occupier has to take responsibility for not only the bills, but also ensuring that the house is as harmonious as possible, which means taking a 'financial hit' to protect the social cohesion of the house. For Steve, it was easier to just let the issue go than to follow it up with Daniel, although Daniel was aware that he had a sense of responsibility for his own usage, even if he did not have responsibility for the payment of the bills:

D We just pay Steve one lump sum a month. He sorts it all out.

I That sounds really quite easy then?

D Until the gas bill lands, or the water bill lands, and, I love showers, I hate being dirty, so I'm a bit of a water fiend, so in that respect I've actually been told you can have two showers a day that's it. It's quite hard to stomach when you're 29 years old. I want to have as many showers as I want. You can't really do that our fairness to Steve paying the bills.

I You're on a water meter here then?

D I think so yeah. Steve takes responsibility, he gets the bill we pay him, he sorts out. In that respect, it's easy financially, to budget, and work things out, but you have some restrictions placed on you, because you not taken responsibility for the bills, therefore you kind of have to to, you know...

I Has Steve ever said anything to you about having too many showers?

D Numerous times!

I And how did you react to that?

D I decide to roll over and play dead, and say yes. Yes. Because stuff like that you can't really, if bills are too big, you know, stop taking the piss, you just have to abide by it really.

Although both Steve and Daniel believe that this arrangement is 'easy financially' there is clearly a more complex situation at play that requires Daniel to be mindful of his own practical usage of utilities, the consequential cost of that usage, and the impact that this may have on his relationship with Steve if it is deemed excessive. It is not simply a case

of taking a shower; it is a case of being aware of the economic and social consequences of that shower. The most mundane of activities can become a destabilising issue for the household.

Different models exist where there is an absence of a hierarchy or power relationship, where the residents are co-tenants, without the presence of a landlord or owner-occupier. Within these houses of friends or 'randoms' – peer-shared households – each person objectively bears an equal burden of responsibility and power to ensure bills are paid, with no one tenant generally having an explicit responsibility to ensure that this is organised.

Jim (31, civil servant) explained the two key regimes that exist in shared accommodation where you are living with others that have a broadly flat hierarchy (i.e. no one person has more or less power or responsibility than any other):

J What you tend to find in a lot of places is that it falls to the people who have lived there for a long time and they'll look after the bills and take payments from other people. But in some places they'll have, you'll have a bill each and then you'll just swap money between you if you need to. It can be one of those things that causes problems; money always seems to.... Erm... But if it's run smoothly, then it's usually OK.

The first regime is the 'one bill each' model. Within this model, which is most popular within houses that come about due to friends sharing together, or where there is a house of 'randoms' where no single tenant has been resident for a long period of time, each tenant takes a bill, pays it, and then the difference each individual has paid is worked out between residents. In most cases, one bill – council tax – outweighs all of the other bills, and each resident with a lower bill pays an amount to the resident who takes charge of the council tax. Table 18 (below) illustrates this arrangement.

Table 18: Bill distribution and payment within the 'one bill each' payment regime

Resident	Tom	Dick	Harry	Mary	Sue
Bill	Gas	Electricity	Water	Council Tax	Phone/broadband
Monthly cost	£40	£32	£27	£120	£35
	Total monthly cost = £254; divided between 5 = £50.80				
Difference to pay or receive	£10.80	£18.80	£23.80	-£69.20	£15.80

In this example, Mary will receive the 'top-up' payments to cover the difference between her shared payment, and the amount she has to pay to the council each month. For example, Tom will pay his £40 to the gas supplier, and then £10.80 to Mary to cover her shortfall on council tax, equalling a total payment of £50.80. Often, the amounts that Mary needs to recover will be noted on the fridge, rather than discussed and requested individually.

At first sight this appears to be a very convoluted way of dividing up bills due to having to make two payments, or having to receive lots of money from other tenants. However, this does save one individual from having to deal with the sometimes lengthy admin that goes along with running all the utility accounts, and divide up the administrative labour involved; it also divides up the financial liability, by asking each resident to take on some liability each month. This system smears usage across the residents; irrespective of actual usage, they all pay an equal amount.

The other regime introduced by Jim is the system where one tenant will take responsibility for the bills. In contrast to the model above which divides up amounts and liability between residents, this model involves one tenant paying all of the bills and then (attempting) to recover the standardised shared amount from other residents. This tends to happen where one resident has lived in a property for a long period of time, and has ended up having to take on bills as other residents have moved out and new residents have not taken on a bill as they enter a property.

For example, using the same figures as above (table 18) Mary could pay all bills from her bank account each month, at a total of £254 per month, and then ask the other housemates to pay her £50.80 each for their share. This leaves the liability of all bills with one resident who has the responsibility for not only ensuring they are paid each month (and having to ensure that she can afford to pay the whole amount each month) but also requesting payment from other residents and chasing them when necessary.

Louise (24, project manager) explained how she reluctantly ended up in the position of handling all of the bills, and attributed this to her longevity within the house. This extended excerpt from the interview explains how Louise had to deal with the differing notions of responsibility and individual housing pathways of her housemates in the negotiation of household finances.

I Did you feel as though you had more authority in the house the longer that you lived there?

L Yes, in my last house I basically felt like the mother to the house – which wasn't through choice, more that as I had lived there the longest I had responsibility for the bills, I was the only one who would speak to the landlord, I did the majority of the household chores etc. This was a gradual process as people moved out – they took communal stuff which I would replace and the bills would be transferred into my name. So eventually after about a year all the communal goods were mine and the bills were all in my name. Once this happened everyone was very reluctant for it to change – apart from me. My other housemates refused to have bills transferred into their names, for a number of reasons, one was committing insurance fraud [insurance fronting – claiming he was living at his parents to get a cheaper car insurance quote], another claimed he would be moving on soon, one would say he didn't get paid monthly so couldn't guarantee the direct debits wouldn't bounce. So the responsibility fell to me, so they would all transfer money to my account. They liked this arrangement but I resented it as all metre readings were my responsibility, and then the subsequent mobile phone bill of ringing suppliers; I

inherited bills based on estimates rather than actual readings and it was up to me to sort it all out; and if there any problems with the utilities I had to ring the supplier, leave meter readings. I was the one who would have to take a day off work when a meter needed replacing, which I kicked off about with my other housemates, as I didn't think it was fair that it fell to me. In the end I moved out before the metre ever got fitted. Basically, if things went wrong the attitude was 'tell Louise and she will have to sort it'. In my other house shares this was always shared amongst the housemates as we would all have one bill each, but in this instance as I had lived there the longest it fell to me.

Rather than being a straightforward process, the involvement of interpersonal relations in the enactment of the practice required her to 'sort it'. The housing pathway trajectories of her housemates made the coordination of the practice problematic. Her housemate's insurance fraud, inability to pay monthly bills, or their desire to move on had an direct impact on Louise's choices on how to coordinate the bills.

Given the complexity of the 'one bill each' regime, one might see why other housemates might prefer someone to take the lead with the bills as it resolves it to a single payment for the majority of the housemates. However, it leaves one housemate with the responsibility to organise the payment of bills and the related financial liability that goes along with that; the collection of payments from individual housemates, and the potential for the accrual of debt by other housemates due to non-payment; plus an overall need to manage this while maintaining a co-operative and harmonious atmosphere within the house. The organisation of bills in this way may appear mundane, but the potential for conflict and debt places a great deal of stress on the individual laden with the responsibility.

This is another indicator of how shared accommodation is a difficult hybrid of both single and multiple households, and how service providers organise their products for more 'traditional' housing formations, which leaves those within shared houses with difficult decisions to make and the use of complex regimes to disperse the responsibility and liability that goes along with those products. In many situations, utility products are simply not designed to be easily consumed in housing formations other than solo or familial living where the responsibility is more easily demarcated and shared along the lines discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

These latter two systems – one bill each, and one person with sole responsibility - are the ones more readily advocated in Hunt & Hutchison's (2009, pp.98–109) *Essential Guide to Shared Living*, but they advise caution, as '[h]aving money conversations with people you're close to can make things awkward, especially if one of you is a little lazy (to put it nicely) when it comes to paying up (2009, pp.98–99).' Such caution is advisable as responses from participants within this research suggest that talking about

money is difficult within most relationships, regardless of 'closeness' with the issue of debt being a problematic topic to discuss.

'You owe me money': the elephant in the room

Due to the complexity of many of these bill-paying regimes, it is unsurprising that sometimes things go wrong. Similarly, it is unsurprising that sometimes people will not pay their 'share', due to either a lack of funds or a deliberate determination not to, and this too gives rise to problems above and beyond the complexity of the administration of the bills. Dealing with such problems, however, is not always easy. This section illustrates the hidden fears associated with asking for money, even if it is legitimately owed to you, and how financial sacrifices are made in order to preserve an overarching sense of wellbeing in a household rather than an 'atmosphere'.

Jim (31, civil servant) explained the quandary that is associated with dealing with issues of money, and noted that it involved walking a tight-rope of making a legitimate request, versus being confrontational.

I Do you think bills are easy things to talk about in houses?

J They should be. Mmm... I think, actually, having said that, if I go back to my last house, one of the girls there wasn't good at paying, she took her time paying up, and that can cause annoyance in terms of... Maybe it was the way I was brought up, but I wouldn't owe people money and then go out, spending your cash on something else if you owe people money – you pay them. She didn't do that, she would leave it owing. I know [that a previous female housemate], the girl that had been there a while beforehand, had been stung by the previous housemates for quite a bit of money on the bills, she'd really lost out, so... So, yeah, that wasn't so good. You just kind of casually remind people, which is difficult, because you don't want to be confrontational about it because you've got to remember that you're living with these people, you see them every day nearly, and you don't want to create a bad atmosphere in the house, so you have to try to and be tactful while at the same time casually reminded that they owe you money.

Jim is explicit about the concern over creating a 'bad atmosphere' and the difficulty this creates when dealing with issues of money within a house. Even though the individuals may owe him money that he rightly deserves, he still feels some anxiety over raising it with them because of the potential for the individual to create that 'bad atmosphere'.

Imogen (31, media) echoed this concern when she was discussing the kind of person she wished to live with and also the distinction between owing housemates money and owing a partner some money. Imogen made the distinction between being on your own, as in individual, in a shared house, and being in a couple, and that if you are able to share the 'awkwardness and embarrassment' of talking about bills with a partner, this makes it easier to manage. However, as an individual in a shared house, it is harder for Imogen to deal with, and she would rather absorb the financial loss to avoid a perceived awkward situation.

I I'm aware I need a certain kind of person, they need to be bright, interesting, have enough money for things like bills, bills won't be a problem, because whenever bills are involved, if there's ever awkwardness, I end up paying. I don't want to know about [it], I'm not going to argue about fifteen pounds, whether it's fair or unfair, I'll end up paying. That's OK when you're in a couple, with somebody else, and you're sharing that awkwardness and embarrassment [of asking for money], and on the financial side of it, but not on my own.

Both Jim and Imogen indicate that even if a person legitimately owes you money, asking for that money back has an inherent risk of bringing about a bad atmosphere or awkwardness within the relationship and accommodation that outweighs the benefit of having the money returned to you. As an individual within a shared house, the benefit of a cohesive, stable and amiable relationship within the house can be more important than receiving money you are owed. Imogen suggests that being in a partnership with someone would provide a social buffer to any potential awkwardness as you would have an ally, but the condition of being an isolated – and isolatable – individual makes that awkwardness difficult to tolerate.

This, then, contributes to the lack of overt discussion over money due to the potential to ignite this 'awkwardness' or 'atmosphere'. Pahl (1989, pp.139–142) noted a similar issue between couples when negotiating over money, with a sense of 'secrecy' over how decisions were made. One of her female respondents described a feeling not unlike that of Jim's – finding a moment, and not wanting to seem confrontational when asking for more housekeeping money from her husband.

'I ask, there's no problem, but I don't actually like asking. I do choose my moment and work my way round to it. He is normally OK but he might want to complain for an hour and a half or so, but he lets me have it if I say I really need it.' (Pahl 1989, p.142)

Despite being in an 'intimate' relationship, there was reluctance to raise the issue of money. Harris (2006, pp.524–525) describes the overwhelming power and pain of embarrassment, or perceived embarrassment when addressing issues of finance that encourage such a reluctance to be forthcoming, which Sabini (2000, p.217) describes as a 'sticky situation'. Within a sticky situation, the imagined sense of embarrassment that could be caused by raising the issue of debt or money is so strong, that individuals actively seek to avoid it, deferring the embarrassment and avoiding what participants within this study have labelled 'an atmosphere' or 'confrontation'. Although it is unclear what it is about money and finance that is so taboo that it generates such a sense of foreboding, the apprehension is tangible.

The organisation and negotiation of finances within shared accommodation is demonstrably complex both practically and interpersonally. Although it is largely unavoidable – bills need to be organised and paid – there are some observable

contradictions in how it is approached, with differing regimes of arrangement, with 'one bill each' or 'one person paying' being the most prevalent. The tension between independence and interdependence is recognizable when contrasting these two approaches: the former, recognising that each individual resident has a responsibility to 'do their bit' in terms of household management; and the latter acknowledging the communal nature of shared living, despite the responsibility that is laid on the shoulders of the bill payer. However, neither regime avoids issues of apprehension and embarrassment when dealing with money, with both modes of organisation giving rise to the possibility of a 'sticky situation' that presents a *possibility* of a negative atmosphere within the house or a confrontation. Despite the overt awareness that issues of money will have to be dealt with when entering shared accommodation, there is still a sense that any practical discussion may be a ticking time bomb for the happiness of the household that creates an 'unmentionable' that is deferred rather than actively attended to – the elephant in the room.

Within the previous section of this chapter we have dealt with the more 'intangible' goods that are consumed within shared accommodation: those things that we may not immediately recognise as being consumed, and are more readily availed to residents when the bill arrives on the doormat. The prevalent regimes of organisation are far from straightforward and are reluctantly dealt with and illustrate the complex nature of 'sharing' in shared households, and how a flat, peer-based hierarchy particularly problematizes this further. Interpersonal relations are intrinsic to their practice, with fears of embarrassment and a 'sticky situation' discouraging housemates from directly addressing issues of contention. There is inherent irrationality in how these practices are played out; as we move on to explore how other kinds of 'stuff' are shared, we will see how these issues of irrationality, peer-relations and complexity are similarly present, but manifest in different ways, and how different types of 'stuff' also raises different issues.

In addition to these intangible elements, there are more discrete and tangible areas of consumption that can also be identified as having distinct practices and regimes involved in their coordination: the purchase and consumption of food and supplies, such as cleaning products, also has a range of regimes within which overall consumption is organised within shared accommodation that aim to mediate the complexities of living with other people whilst remaining independent at the same time. Continuing the interrogation of 'many households within a household', the regimes by which residents organise their supplies are as varied and apparently irrational as the management of bills and money, whereby instead of taking advantage of potential 'economies of scale' through coordinated purchases and consumption, many residents tend to purchase and consume individually. This section will give an overview of these practices, ranging from

a formalised cooperative regime, to more individualised forms of consumption that clearly demarcate who owns what.

Buying and sharing food and supplies

The acquisition and consumption of food is a necessary part of every day life. Much of the existing literature on food provisioning – the acquisition, preparation and consumption of food – has largely focused on the ‘home’ when exploring the practices of provisioning, such as DeVault (1994) who explored the gendered nature of food provisioning within the family, with the ‘mother’ developing routinized practices of consumption to save time, resources and make less conscious decisions over what to put on the table when there are other chores to be done, whilst also enjoying the benefits of ‘commensality’ – the practice of sharing and eating with one another (Ochs and Shohet 2006). Research into food consumption within couple households, such as that by Kremmer (1998), suggests that within young couple households there is a ‘symbolic importance’ placed on eating a meal together, with a democratised approach to food purchase and consumption whereby both men and women took a joint role in the choice of food and its preparation. Mennell et al (1992) explored patterns of consumption across gender, age and class, that had been observed by the literature, and suggested a multiplicity of behaviours or practices depending on social location rather than a standard approach. However, as Valentine (1999) observes, researchers often wrongly assume the ‘home’, and the practices it engenders and contains, as a singular, cohesive entity of consumption. Instead, Valentine suggests, in line with the contention of this thesis, that

households, rather than being single units of food consumption, can be sites of multiple and sometimes contradictory consumption practices and that it is necessary to understand how patterns of eating are negotiated and contested within households in order to understand how the home functions as a ‘consumption site’. (Valentine 1999, p.491)

In line with that suggestion, this section of the thesis exemplifies those ‘contradictory consumption practices’ by illustrating that the ways in which food acquisition and consumption in many shared households is organised has both rational and irrational elements that are at odds with wider concerns of economy (value for money) and sustainability (waste minimisation and environmentalism), in favour of individual concerns of autonomy, freedom and taste. This will be illustrated through the examination of practices of acquisition, storage and consumption that are favoured by shared households, and analysis of the social and economic costs and benefits those regimes provide. It will further serve to highlight the presence of multiple households under one roof, rather than a singular, cohesive household.

Across the research cohort, three broad strategies of food acquisition and consumption were observed:

- I. individual purchases, cupboards and supplies;
- II. individual purchases, cupboards and supplies with 'shared essentials';
- III. communal purchasing and consumption.

The first regime, individual purchases, cupboards and supplies, was by far the dominant regime across peer-shared and owner-occupied shared accommodation, and involves individual residents buying and storing their own food in their own spaces, such as cupboards or fridge shelves. The second regime, which had communal 'shared essentials', such as bread and milk, in addition to the individual purchase regime, was less prevalent, and a more casual than formal arrangement. The final regime, communal purchasing and consumption, was only observed in one household, the ideologically-led house share, and was the most contrasting and communally organised form of consumption across the cohort.

Individual cupboards and supplies

The most common of all the regimes in relation to food, this involves individual residents buying food individually and storing it in predetermined spaces, such as cupboards and areas of the fridge and freezer, that allows easy recognition of who (and who it does not) belong to. Food is prepared individually using their own supplies rather than communally. The reasons behind choosing this form of organisation range from it being a legacy of the way the house has always been organised, to more pragmatic issues of timing and the kind of foods people like to eat.

Within houses of 'randoms', where there is a state of flux with housemates coming and going, Jim (31, civil servant) explained that this method of organisation is often the easiest as it presents the least path of resistance – it was easy to learn and understand, and needed little organisation between housemates.

J It's just easier with your own stuff. I don't eat a lot of bread, so I wouldn't want to share that anyway, and you know where you stand if you know it's your responsibility to provide for yourself. If you've used the last of the milk, it's a pain to have to buy more as others need it, even if the [shop] is just down the road.

The simplicity was a benefit, as well as not feeling others were relying on the resident if it was their turn. Indeed, it would be problematic if someone forgot to buy the milk in a shared regime and no one could have breakfast cereal, for example, which would probably result in some very grumpy housemates that morning.

Laura (26, scientist) described how their house organised food and supplies in this way, and that that it suited her as she could keep track of what she had available to her, which would possibly be more difficult if people were helping themselves, or there was a more communal regime.

- L In terms of food? We have our own cupboards. We have our own shelves in the fridge and freezer.
- I Do you borrow each other's stuff? For example, eggs?
- L Every so often it will happen, but we generally don't.
- I Is there any reason for that?
- L I don't like people taking my stuff as such. I have a photographic memory and I know when people use things so it throws me.

Her housemate, Nicola (29, teacher) explained that there were other reasons why this was a useful regime, rather than just a dislike of 'sharing'. Issues of temporality (timing) and taste (the kind of food they choose to eat) were also important considerations that make this regime useful.

- N We have different diets and eat at different times, so it doesn't make any sense to cook and eat together. We would be more likely to go to the pub as it would be easier to get what we all wanted to eat.

There were clear benefits for Nicola as choosing not to coordinate communal acquisition and consumption of food also meant that she did not have to eat the food that others ate, that she might not like or be able to eat due to dietary restrictions. Similarly, she could choose to eat at different times, without feeling beholden to the schedules of other residents, so coordinating consumption does not make 'any sense' to her. Both of these aspects of communal consumption are key features of the communal purchasing regime, which is discussed more fully later, and is seen as a benefit ideologically, economically and socially but clearly not to all participants.

Daniel (29, project manager) explained that he felt that it was unreasonable to expect people to share their food with you, particularly if they are new to the house. He described it as 'getting into bed' suggesting that sharing commodities was an intimate act that needed to be developed over time rather than assumed.

- D [When Craig moved in] we gave him his own cupboards. You can't expect someone to just suddenly fall into the nest, get into bed with you and say, shared bread and milk, so no, we gave him his own stuff. His own space, rather.

Giving Craig his 'own space' was the obvious way forward for Daniel as he would not want to assume that Craig would want to share his food, and Daniel did not want to appear to make that assumption or make demands of him. The gesture was as much symbolic as it was empathetic to Craig's position as a 'new' housemate.

Benjamin (30, postgraduate) expressed a more extreme allegiance to this regime of consumption. As he did not get on with two of his current housemates, and felt quite isolated in his own home, he would rather look after himself and not have to provide for others.

- B I would rather buy my own stuff. I don't want to owe them anything, and I don't want them to owe me anything.

It is important not to assume that the nature of relationality between housemates – or co-residents – will always be positive. Ben's antipathy to other residents in his shared accommodation has developed over time and has clearly influenced his willingness to 'share' with others. Rather than it being a 'given' within shared accommodation, for Ben it is a privilege of positive relations.

The individual cupboard and supplies regime offers residents clear boundaries within which to behave, and also avoids having to shoulder the responsibility of having to ensure that everyone else has access to communal items if they have been used up. In this regime the individual provides for himself or herself, without concern that the milk has gone off or they have used the last slice of bread, and preventing someone else from eating their breakfast or sandwich. It provides freedom of both routine and taste, as it does not ask others to align these practices and preferences, and avoids potentially unwarranted expectations that others would want to share anyway.

Individual cupboards and supplies with 'shared essentials'

This second regime is more of a commonly seen 'add-on' to the individual consumption regime outlined above rather than a distinctly separate mode of organisation, but with some 'core' or 'essential' products that are shared, such as bread, milk, spread, eggs, tea, coffee and other small items. More substantial items of food for cooking meals are purchased by individual housemates as per their own desires and requirements, whilst the 'shared essentials' are agreed upon and organised communally. The practicalities of this were often considered informal, with people 'taking it in turns'.

Rebecca (22, social worker) explained how she organised her communal items with her housemate Alison (23, marketing), which represented a typical form of organisation, which just 'works out' rather than having what they perceive to be a formal structure.

R We both use milk and margarine [margarine] so we take it in turns to buy that. I always try to buy more before it's finished, but that isn't always the way it works. Sometimes Alison will buy it twice in a row, and then I will be it twice in a row. It just works out.

The benefits of this reciprocal system are not just logistical and practical, but also emotional. Alison also appreciated this interpersonally, expressing that it made the house feel like more of a home.

A Me and Rebecca have shared milk and stuff since she moved in. [The other housemate] doesn't use any of it, but then she isn't really here, I haven't really seen her. But I like that we have house things as it makes it feel like we live here together.

The 'house things', which she mentioned later in the interview also included shared cookware and other kitchen items, were important to Alison as it made her feel as

though they were actually living in the property rather than just using the house as a temporary residence. The routine and mutual relationship provided a 'home comfort'.

A similar sentiment regarding the sharing of communal goods was expressed by Pete (31, trainer), who actively takes part in the buying of communal provisions despite being away from home a lot during the week due to work. Even though he may not be at home to use any of the food he buys, he says that it is part of the 'sharing philosophy' of living with other people.

P Well, with things like the food and stuff, we tend to share the little things rather than buy loads. I'm rarely here, so it's not worth me going to the supermarket normally, but I would get things that I knew [my housemates needed] even if I wasn't here. It's all part of the sharing philosophy.

The 'sharing philosophy' for Pete was about mutual benefit; although he may not eat the food, he may use his housemate's PlayStation or his other housemate might clear up while he's away. It was not necessarily financial gain, but about a group ethic.

Ashley (23, postgraduate) has a similar, slightly more formal approach to the communal goods, which had worked successfully in her previous house share. However, in her current house share, which has three people rather than the previous five, the smaller number of people has made it more problematic.

A Normally we buy milk, bread, garlic, onions, oil, margarine, together. Sort of take it in turns. We started a rota. Last year, we had a rota for the five of us, and so people weren't buying more milk than others. It worked well. But this year, it doesn't work as well, because of the smaller number.

I Having a smaller number makes the house more difficult to run?

A Well, yes. Last year we cooked for ourselves. It was quite easy. Strict rota for essentials. But this year, the rota doesn't really work. We just can't get into the swing of it this year.

The reasons why the regime is not working this year is unclear, and Ashley did not explain any further, but it underlines the point that these regimes of consumption need active participation if they are to be successful; they are not an automatic process.

The 'shared essentials' regime, when it worked, offered both practical benefit of having supplies of staple goods, but also an apparent sense of homeliness and reciprocity.

Those who took part in it felt the benefits socially rather than financially, especially in the case of Pete.

Communal purchasing and consumption

The one clear and consistent exception to the individualised regimes of consumption was evident within the ideologically-led house share. Ruth (40, civil servant) explained the way she, Lauren (35, researcher) and Samantha (25, engineer) organised food purchasing and consumption in their house in very clearly understood terms. Their

organisation was explicitly communal, and this was important to how they felt about their home.

J Actually this is a shared house: we share our food, we cook together; it's not a place where you put your name on the yoghurt pots, erm... It's, this is a home, we eat together, we cook together, it's not obligatory, but that's, the shopping is communal. [...] It's a vegetarian house, so we only buy vegetarian food in the communal shopping. If people want to buy something, something special, then that's fine, but this is a shared house and we want to share things. We don't have individual cupboards.[...] Each of us put some money in a jar each week for food and it comes out from there. I'm not here all week as I work away in [Place] so I don't put as much in as everyone else. [...] We eat together, and if you're not here when we cook then there will be leftovers.

For this house share, the notion of sharing is beyond simply sharing the physical residence, and they wish to share other aspects of their lives, including eating together to enjoy economies of scale. They shared not only their food but also their beliefs with one another by requiring the house share to be vegetarian. The organisation of meals was a regular pattern of eating at a certain time (8pm), unless arranged otherwise, but the availability of leftovers allowed some freedom to each resident. There was a standard list of essentials that they bought from the local vegan cooperative grocers, and individual residents could request items above and beyond those within the realms of the available budget if they wanted to cook anything special. The cooking itself was also often a group activity, largely as there was not a television in the property, and the residents socialising while cooking together. The co-operative and equitable nature of the regime is strongly maintained, with Ruth paying only for the proportion of the time she is resident within the property.

This system, which is in direct contrast to the two previous regimes discussed above, provided both a routine and sense of wellbeing to the residents who wanted to feel far more connected to their home and each other than they perceived other house shares providing. Ruth's partner, Lauren (35, researcher), elaborated on this point to illustrate its importance:

So, I mean, I had my own reasons for wanting to share, which were about sharing, how much freedom it gives you financially and socially, to actualise yourself in all sorts of ways, and that it made sense to have, in this alienated society, to have a different kind of family, family that you choose. All sorts of reasons like that, so, yeah, gives you the financial freedom, the social stability in this kind of world, and long term relationships with people which are a lot more intimate. It's better financially and ecologically.

The sharing of food was part of a larger ideological system, which provided the residents of this property with a freedom, family and stability, with more intimate relationships. The commitment necessary to achieve and maintain this system was greater than that within previous regimes: each housemate was required to actively participate both practically and ideologically in order for the communal consumption to be effective.

Although the system appears to work for the members of the ideologically-led house, Hayley (26, postgraduate) recounted living within a similar communal system of consumption while she lived abroad for a year before returning to the UK to her current shared property in Manchester. While there were benefits to the communal system, she often found it constricting and laborious, especially when other people involved in the system did not wholly take part, and found relief in having sole responsibility for her consumption.

H In that house [abroad] it was run by this amazing hippy who ran it. It basically looked like a squat, but it was great. He had this crazy system of communal shopping where he would calculate what you needed to buy. There was a list. There were some horrendous three-hour long house meetings.

...

[In my current house you] have your food. And, er... To be honest, after [Country] that was a bit of a relief. Although the communal system was amazing, it was so complicated, people had decided to abscond from the communal system. It wasn't that I didn't like, I just thought that this would be easy – buying my own food and making it. It was a relief.

The communal consumption regime demonstrably requires greater commitment than the previous two, more individualistic regimes. Indeed, the failure to successfully get into the habit of buying household essentials within the example of Ashley's current shared accommodation, intimates a greater commitment is required for communal consumption to work than mere good intentions. The notion of home and commitment to home for Ruth, Lauren and Samantha was notably different to the sentiments expressed by other participants, and this commitment underscored their consumption practices, which also allowed them to live more cheaply and efficiently, at the expense of some of the freedoms that participants enjoyed.

There is irrationality inherent within the process of individual rather than communal consumption. For example, if each person in a three person house cooks for themselves, that involves individuals using the cooker three times, the dishes three times, the washing up three times, all of which take time, and will have to be coordinated to ensure that one person's use does not impact another. Practically, this results in triples the amount of energy costs and the time to cook and wash-up. These contradictions appear at odds with the economic motivations of shared accommodation; namely, that it is cheaper than living on your own. The requirement to coordinate activities due to the duplication of tasks was highlighted by Jim (31, civil servant) who explained that he preferred to wait until someone else was finished before he started cooking, which subsequently delayed his own food preparation. The practice of 'sharing' of 'space', as practice theory suggests, is an appropriate coordination of routines. Jim does not suggest that it is an annoyance, but he does imply that he defers his own tasks in order to avoid 'ducking round people', which would be stressful and problematic.

J What I do find around shared areas around the kitchen is that I'm very particular about that I won't cook if other people are in there generally, so if I

know someone's cooking, because it's not a massive space here, it's not too bad, but it's not massive... I'd rather just wait 15-20 mins until people are finished generally, so you're not ducking round people, and let them do their thing.

For the coordination of individual kitchen practices to work, it also requires that everyone involved is consistently proactive in their maintenance. The regime quite quickly falls apart when one person chooses not to wash up their dishes after use where there are shared cookware and crockery; the next person will need to wash-up before *and* after their own cooking. Kitchen routines are a coordinated entity that is enacted by shared house residents into a recognisable form of practice. When housemates successfully enact this practice, and ensure the availability of space and facilities for other residents, they are establishing the social value of that practice. However, where residents do not proactively follow this valorised practice, it can very quickly break down, and disrupt enablement of the practice for others. Further, and as we shall see in the next chapter, interpersonal relations can disrupt the volition to enact the practice; if one person cannot be bothered to wash up (enact the valorised practice) then why should I?

'Borrowing' and special occasions – exceptions to the rules

A notable practice that illustrates the boundary between what is shared and owned was the issue of 'borrowing' items from other people, such as an egg or a stock cube. Although the house is nominally 'shared', the limit to that sharing is evident when residents narrate the boundaries or limits they have to what their co-residents can appropriate. But this sentiment is also turned on its head in cases of 'special occasions' where residents of shared households coordinate their otherwise disparate consumption practices to host an event. These two exceptions serve to highlight the normative nature of disparate consumption practices that have been illustrated in the first two regimes described above by virtue of them being conscious *exceptions* to practice, that require explicit negotiation in contrast to the implicit, tacit nature of 'every day' consumption.

Hayley (26, postgraduate) described her experiences of 'borrowing' – in this case without asking – and how while she perceives it as a small issue, she recognises that other housemates attach a much greater gravity to the issue.

H If I run out of teabags, I'll look in people's cupboards and take a teabag. But some people in shared houses treat it like a criminal offence and get really offended. I can kind of understand, but I think it's kind of ridiculous.

I Have people ever challenged you about it?

H Yeah, I have been in situations where people have said, like, not have a go, but I'll have someone's cupboard open and they'll walk in and they would ask what I was doing, and I said I would put it back later. I have had to check myself a bit to stop myself doing that.

The commodity in Hayley's example – a teabag – is small, and probably worth a matter of pence, but she recognises the illicit nature of taking such a small item from her co-

residents without asking, even though she considers such prohibition 'ridiculous'. Hayley has had to align her own consumption practices to the normative value of discrete rather than communal goods to avoid a possible confrontation if caught. She is aware that while she sees little harm in taking a teabag, her housemates may view this otherwise.

To return to Laura's (26, scientist) example, she finds that when people take items from her cupboard, this 'throws' her:

- I Do you borrow each other's stuff? For example, eggs?
L Every so often it will happen, but we generally don't.
I Is there any reason for that?
L I don't like people taking my stuff as such. I have a photographic memory and I know when people use things so it throws me.

Within Laura's household there is a common understanding that they will not 'borrow' items from one another, and this is particularly important for Laura in order to avoid a sense of discomfort.

In other households, however, there was a more liberal, yet organised, approach to the 'borrowing' of small items that had an unwritten 'code' that items would be replaced. Andy (27, retail) explained that he was not opposed to housemates taking items that they needed, but that permission should be sought before this happens; taking without asking first was seen as problematic.

- A If there's something I've got in my cupboard that someone else needs, they'll come to me and say, cumin powder, and I'll say that's fine. I'm not bothered. But if someone takes something without asking it's different.

Furthermore, Andy felt that the particular circumstances of that 'borrowing' needed to be such that you had no other option but ask for the assistance of a housemate. If you were able to provide for yourself, then you should do.

- A Sometimes, you know, when the shops been closed and wanted to make sandwiches for the next day I've taken a tomato, and you know, [said to the other housemate] I've bought this tomato from the shop today as I took one of yours. But that doesn't happen that often.

It is notable that such small commodities as tea bags, cumin powder and a single tomato can demand such effort from the acquiring party to 'make amends' and restore the commodity that has been taken. In the bigger picture, that someone has taken a tomato appears relatively minor, but within the milieu of shared accommodation, and the required management of interpersonal relations in tandem with the management of material goods, the issues of fairness, equity and responsibility are paramount. It is an explicit exception to the otherwise understood discrete and individual consumption practices that they understand each other to be enacting, and requires equally explicit negotiation.

Similar arrangements were noted in other interviews, including Matt (26, administrator) who noted some 'pre-conditions' to this 'borrowing' that alleviated any future tensions – or what we may now consider a 'sticky situation'. He explained that his house had an understanding of when it is appropriate to 'borrow' from one another, but not where that borrowing would preclude the original owner from consumption.

M It's OK if people use your butter or your milk as long as you don't use the last of it. It's really annoying to go to the fridge and think, 'fuck, someone's used all of my milk' when you expected it to be there, so I try to make sure I only borrow something if there's enough for them left.

The cognitive and practical demarcations of ownership of these household commodities between residents are apparent through an analysis of these coordinated practices, and is a further illustration of the empirical question of whether shared accommodation is one household or many. With the exception of the ideologically-led household examined previously, the majority of households operate discrete, individual consumption, with an observable and negotiated code of reciprocity where the 'rules' of this practice are transgressed. Importantly, it illustrates the importance of interpersonal relations within the enactment of that practice: to take without asking is problematic, as is leaving a housemate without access to their own, sovereign goods – even something as small as a tea bag. The repercussions are a breach or transgression in the practice; or, as Hayley noted, a 'crime'.

In contrast, there were instances of exceptional communal consumption. In this instance, the form of communal consumption is not in the same form as the ideologically-led house share, but in line with Warde and Marten's (2000) notion of communal provision which refers to household entertaining where food and drink is supplied to others – normally without payment – as a form of hospitality. Shared households would often work together to host a party, barbecue or other event, where they would all contribute to the provision of the event financially or practically, with the view to entertaining others in the home. This is a notable exception because of the level of cooperation between housemates in the practice of consumption that is otherwise individualistic and discrete in practice. Andy (23, retail) who narrated a somewhat reluctant approach to borrowing without asking also illustrated a more proactive approach when it came to hosting parties.

A We had a Halloween party last year, and everyone got dressed up. Then before that we had a murder mystery night. We'll make an effort, and make the house look better. For the Halloween one, we all went out to Stockport to go and get Halloween stuff one afternoon. Did it all together, and everyone made drinks and made stuff around the house, and did it together as a group before we had a party.

In this instance of exceptional communal provision, there was overt determination to make the house look nice, and 'make an effort'. The need to 'make an effort' is illustrative of the exceptional nature of this collaboration. We can see further evidence

of the tension between independence and interdependence, with an awareness that in normal circumstances, they act as individuals, whereas in the realms of entertaining they 'make the effort' the act as a 'house' and are perceive interdependence on one another for that to be successful.

These exceptions to the dominant rules, and in the latter instance of Warde and Marten's (2000) communal provision, are poignant examples to illustrate the dominant forms of consumption practice. These exceptions *require* negotiation for them to be rendered valid against the dominant, valorised entity of consumption, and transgressions are seen as negative behaviour. They highlight the role of interpersonal relations in practice, and the awareness that non-negotiated transgressions of practice have a dim view taken of them. This awareness of interpersonal relations assists in the constitution and valorisation of 'correct' consumption practice; the practice is not just a sterile schema that the housemate carries.

This section has highlighted the dominant entities of practice that guide the regimes of consumption within shared accommodation. With one notable exception of the ideologically-led house share, there was an observable regime of individual and discrete consumption that involved the coordination of practices across time and space to ensure success. Differing diets and schedules precluded the desire to eat with one another, and sometimes you just dislike other people, so why would you want to eat with them?

Within solo or familial households, the purchasing of food and other household supplies can be somewhat more coordinated due to either only having to cater for yourself, or some effort to coordinate the families mealtimes (DeVault 1994) and provide for those who cannot provide for themselves, such as young children. In halls of residence, the purchasing of some of the more contentious shared supplies, such as toilet roll, is avoided completely as the institution provides supplies and arranges cleaning of those areas. With the exception of the co-operative house share, which bureaucratically organised the purchase and consumption of food as a fundamental tenet of their house share, most individuals within shared houses chose to have their own cache of supplies for their own use. While there were efforts to have group events, these were exceptions to the general practice of individuals cooking their own foods based on their own temporal and dietary demands

While group purchasing, preparation and consumption of food may expect to bring about both financial and temporal economies – that you would save time and money – the participants chose not to take advantage of these potential savings, instead choosing to give primacy to their independence. This independence was not just ideological, but involved aspects of taste, time and economy that allowed freedom of choice. In this

sense, the residents of non-ideologically-led residences operated as multiple households under one roof. However, there were exceptions to this independence that highlighted interdependence through the exceptional forms of 'borrowing' and communal provision. Further, where there were 'shared essentials' the consumption was clearly symbolic, with the 'communal' aspects of sharing food being not just about economies of scale and time, but performing 'one household', and engendering a notion of 'home'. The need to perform 'sharing' of food as *both* one household and several households leads to tensions and the need to coordinate complex routines and time strategies.

So far, we have considered intangible consumption and its associated practices through an examination of how household bills are organised, and their inherent irrationality. In the section above we have considered more tangible aspects of 'sharing', and how the 'sharing' of food (or not) is often individualistic and contentious. In the remainder of this chapter we will consider more ephemeral aspects of 'sharing' – those 'things' within shared houses that are shared such as responsibilities and space. These issues again raise important points of independence and interdependence, and the complexity of coordinating routines and practices in terms of time, but also in terms of power and values.

Keeping things clean: sharing responsibilities (or not)

The need to keep the house or flat clean is a common bone of contention between residents of shared accommodation. Just as residents are reluctant to take complete control of all of the bills, they can also be reticent to take the lead with cleaning. Cleaning and cleanliness has become increasingly moral (Berner 1998) and risk based aspect of the home (Ger and Yeniciglu 2004; Martens and Scott 2005; Martens and Scott 2006), where people may have a social sense that they do not want to be seen to be 'dirty', science discovering ever greater threats to our health, and the market providing an even greater wealth of products to mediate those threats.

As well as these wider, cultural aspects of cleanliness, within peer-shared accommodation the issue of cleaning is a good example of how practice is matched both practically (in terms of its organisation) and interpersonally (in relation to residents' notions of 'clean' and their predilection or aversion to cleaning). Keeping things clean ranges from making sure that dirty dishes do not stop other people from cooking and eating their meal, to ensuring that the common areas are habitable. It is not only the task of cleaning that is shared, but also the obligation: the conscious awareness of not inhibiting the practices of others through a lack of cleanliness. Both practice theory and the housing pathways approach are useful conceptual frameworks here, as they allow a view of how cleaning is coordinated (or not), but the legacy values and experiences that

residents bring with them that influence the enactment of practice in current (and future) households.

Hunt & Hutchison (2009, p.81) suggest that 'cleanliness is likely to be a major source of conflict', and that it 'stands to reason that any flatshare will only be as untidy as the untidiest person in it so if one of you is extremely houseproud and another is a slob you'll struggle to find the middle ground that's acceptable to both (sic)' (2009, pp.81–82). The kitchen, bathroom and living room are likely to be the 'obvious battlegrounds' due to their shared status, with each having their own problems (2009, pp.82–87):

- the kitchen is the 'easiest to turn into a bombsite in minutes' due it being used for the preparation and consumption of food, and 'even the most committed non-cook will need to get to the kettle', with gone-off food languishing in the fridge, neglected washing up and a reluctance to take out the bins being particularly problematic;
- the bathroom, given that it is a room where people aim to clean themselves, 'shouldn't be that hard to keep clean but it never quite manages to work that way', due to a reluctance to scrub the bath, and contention over who should replace the toilet roll;
- and the living room, as 'a truly shared space', should be kept clean at all times so that it is easily accessible to everyone, but suffers from people leaving 'last night's socks' and 'shoes' lying around, and 'your best mate who came for the weekend, and is still on the sofa five days later'.

The difficulties surrounding cleaning within shared accommodation have similar tensions to that of organising finances: where there is a flat hierarchy or power vacuum few people want to assume the responsibility for the cleaning to be done, or carry out that cleaning. Also, cleaning takes effort: it takes time and energy to carry out cleaning, and is a task that people generally do not enjoy. A further complicating factor is that although spaces such as the kitchen, lounge and bathroom may be shared, people do not want to share the labour of cleaning; there is a sense that people should clean up after themselves rather than rely on a collective effort, so where someone does tend to be more messy than others, this can cause resentment if the mess is not cleared up. Natalier (2003; 2004) suggests that within shared houses there is a tendency for all housemates to do as little as possible (possibly due to not wanting to do more than anyone else), but that there is a sense that it can become gendered, in that women take on a more 'wife-like' role, and then men can defer to this.

As with the organisation of bills, described at the beginning of this chapter, there was a notable reluctance to organise cleaning along formalised lines, such as a rota, or to explicitly acknowledge and manage issues of allocation. Within this area of household organisation it was difficult to discern some identifiable 'regimes' or 'entities' of practice that were observable across finances and food. Instead, how cleaning was organised within peer-shared households was largely driven by what Jim (31, civil servant) called 'thresholds for cleaning': the limit to which people were willing to live in relative

cleanliness or squalor. Jim described his experiences of how cleaning is organised, and noted that he was capable of 'sin' – transgressing acceptable standards.

J It very much depends on the individuals. Erm... I would say I'm somewhere in between: I'm not the cleanest person in the world, but I will clean, and try and do my share. Probably the kitchen and the bathroom are the main things for me, and I will try and do my bits, and I will try... I'm very conscious of particularly the kitchen I'll nearly always – not always, but nearly always – clean up straight afterwards. I do sin by leaving things in the drainer. For example, in this house, Louise is the cleanest, and, you know, will tidy things away even before I've had chance to do anything. Yeah, she probably does do most of the cleaning. But you find that in different houses different people have different threshold, so the person who's got the lowest threshold for cleaning will probably do more of it, and in the last house I was in I did the most cleaning. Some people have got a big threshold for cleaning, and some people have got no threshold for cleaning, and just won't clean at all, even if you ask them to, and will quite happily live in fairly skanky circumstances, so that can be a bone of contention. Depends where and how you handle it, again. It's about how you handle it I suppose.

The relative 'threshold' of those whom you are living with highlights the clear importance of interpersonal relations (and an awareness of other's threshold) to the enactment and negotiation of the practice of cleaning. Jim's narration suggests an approach that fits in with the 'thresholds' of others, changing his behaviour (cleaning more or less) when he recognises the contributions of other people. References to 'thresholds' were present throughout the interviews. Laura (26, scientist) explained that in the absence of an explicit rota in their house for cleaning, she ended up tidying and vacuuming the house every Sunday. While this was an annoyance, she tempered this against a desire for a cleaner home, and recognised her housemates did not share the same 'threshold' as her. Furthermore, she makes references to issues of propriety and guilt, noting a sense of guilt over the cleanliness (or lack of) when comparing it to other houses, suggesting awareness that visitors may pass judgment on the house.

L I'm annoyed about that and they know I am [cleaning up after them]. I tell them that they should be wiping their pubes out of the bathroom and not me. But I know that they won't so therefore that's why the house is never as clean as I would have it. I do compare [our house] with other houses and feel guilty.

The mention of her housemate's 'pubes' – pubic hair – was mentioned with an air of levity, but suggests a more serious undertone: pubic hair is intimate, and she would overtly rather not be dealing with the intimate surplus of others. However, if Laura is to live in a house that she considers within the realm of her threshold of cleanliness, she is aware she needs to take action.

The use of a rota may appear to be a straightforward way to organise household cleaning, but evidence from the interviews suggest that this is not always as suitable solution as would be hoped. The coordination of a rota to clean requires an adherence to the rota and coordination of routines and practices, which, as with the issue of buying 'shared essentials' discussed earlier, is an active rather than passive process. Fiona

(41, psychologist) explained her experience of trying to organise a rota with a problematic housemate, and illustrates the importance of acknowledging roles and responsibilities in shared accommodation.

F The other prime thing is cleaning. [...] Not to be obsessive about it, but if you don't have any responsibility attached to something well you might not do it today, tomorrow, next week or next month, and she [an old housemate] just didn't want to have a rota, and, of course, the place never got cleaned. So I had to ask her, and she used to get really angry.

Fiona recognised a tangible reluctance for her housemate to have a cleaning rota, but she also recognised that without having an explicit responsibility to deal with something, nothing will get done. The rota would have made the tasks explicit, and with the responsibility comes accountability, and the ability for other housemates to call those who are not cleaning to account.

A dominant theme from the interviews was the issue of guilt, and how when seeing other people clean up, they feel encouraged or a sense of culpability to join in. This was most clearly illustrated by Daniel (29, project manager) who felt a greater disconnection with notions of domesticity (and acceptable domesticity) than his housemates.

D Craig is really good. Craig cleans the place from top to bottom quite a lot on his own. This weekend I kind of did the bathroom because I kind of had to. But he was happy to do all of these things himself I think. I say, 'Let me help you', and he says 'No, no it's fine'. And I think I have to help. Because Steve's thinking 'Why's Daniel not doing anything?'. No one is asking Steve why he isn't doing anything. <Laugh>. Generally we [Daniel and Craig] get on fine. We share a bathroom and so it gets dirty in the bathroom sometimes. I think his [Craig's] ideal is not to share a bathroom with someone. I really have to try to put tops back on things, and if I spill toothpaste everywhere I have to clean it up. With me, I'm not dirty or slovenly particularly, but it's not my first instinct. With Craig it's just kind of practical. Some people are just very practical aren't they? I'm not very domesticated. I'm not really in that kind of zone with people.

Daniel's conscious sense of responsibility is only encouraged when he feels other people may question his level of participation. Additionally, he has to make a conscious effort to be 'practical' or 'domesticated' to the level he perceives Craig to expect. Although Daniel has an understanding of the practice of cleaning, and what it entails, he is loathed to enact it until 'pushed'. Cleaning is valorised within his house, as is clear by his awareness of standards of cleanliness, but the practice is not enacted until interpersonal relations demand such action – when he feels guilty. He's attempting to avoid a 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000) - a feeling of embarrassment – by doing what he feels is required rather than having a commitment to it.

Daniel further reflected on the reasons between the contrast in his and his housemate's approaches and indicated it was due to their different experiences. Steve is the owner-occupier of the property, and Craig owns a property elsewhere in the UK that he had not

been able to sell. Daniel's differing housing pathway – that of a tenant – did not, in his eyes, predispose him to being 'sensible' about things, which home ownership would do.

[W]hereas Steve [owns this property] and Craig, he's got his own flat in [Place], he's more sensible about things, like bushes and the lawn need cutting apparently and I don't know, so, yeah. Tenants are never going to be as careful about things. If it's your own stuff you're going to look after it. I don't abuse anything deliberately. I don't go drawing on the walls or anything. I don't notice sometimes some crazy things, you know, like making sure the shower curtain is over the bath. That water doesn't go over the side.

Daniel's 'role' as tenant brings with it less responsibility. He will draw the line at drawing on the walls, but acknowledges that tenants will not necessarily have the same level of respect for property as owners, which encourages them to be 'sensible' – or, to put it another way, clean the house.

How 'thresholds of cleanliness' were developed is an intriguing point, and one that links to the notion of housing pathways. Andy (27, retail) noted the importance of previous experiences as a precursor to setting 'thresholds of cleanliness' and explained that his main reason for keeping things clean and tidy was in relation to how he was brought up, and this has influenced his behaviour within his current shared house.

A How I've grown up, in terms of being tidy, we always had to keep the place tidy. I don't leave plates on the sideboard, we put them in the cupboard, but a lot of people don't do that. It can be annoying, but I don't get stressed by it, I just do it. I end up doing most of the washing up.

This 'socialised' norm of cleanliness and responsibility embraced during his time in the familial home is an important factor (Fasulo et al. 2007) in why Andy now 'ends up' doing the washing up, but not getting stressed. His previous experiences and sense of responsibility to keep things tidy have carried over as 'habitual' to this new context of shared accommodation.

Within some houses the issue of cleaning was largely avoided by bringing in a cleaner to deal with the issue. Andy (27, retail) explained how cleaning was organised in his shared house, with an overt acknowledgement that people were reluctant to carry out certain tasks, and paying someone else to do those jobs bypasses the need to liaise with each other to ensure they were carried out.

A When I moved in there was a cleaner. Then she left, and no one organised a replacement. But there are certain things like hoovering and mopping that no one wants to do, or is prepared to do. There are two kitchens, and a lot of things that get dirty easily, like fridges, and no one wants to do it, which is why we have a cleaner really.

Paying for someone else to take on the responsibility that would otherwise be assumed by residents was an easier option for Andy than trying to organise it. In the interim period of not having the cleaner tasks such as mopping or vacuuming just did not get done, so they shouldered the financial burden of paying for a cleaner rather than the

practical burden of cleaning themselves. The coordination of the practice was circumvented because of its complexity, both practically and interpersonally. The cleaner avoids a 'sticky situation' that may occur when a resident has to ask a co-resident to deal with their mess.

The presence of a cleaner was mentioned a few times by participants, but with a cleaner also came 'cleaning for the cleaner'. Matt (26, administrator) explained that although his house had a cleaner for common areas, they often tidied up before the cleaner arrived, as they did not want to be judged 'dirty'.

M Yeah, the landlord has a cleaner for the common areas once a week, so we all try to make an effort to make sure its tidy for the cleaner because... Well... I suppose we don't want to look dirty for the cleaner. But having a cleaner helps because we all make sure things are done, and you don't have any of that, erm, annoyance when someone hasn't done the washing up.

Within Matt's household, the routine of having a cleaner served to sustain and encourage the larger domestic practices of washing up and making 'sure things are done'. However, the contradiction inherent in this approach is recognisable: firstly, that they go to the effort to clean for someone who is cleaning for them because they do not want to appear 'dirty'; second, that having a cleaner, which is meant to help with issues of cleanliness encourages the maintenance and social valorisation of the practice of cleaning.

None of the participants of this research narrated a clear rota or organised system for the management of cleaning within their households. Rather, a more negotiated approach based on the relative 'thresholds of cleanliness' of their peers was present, with some housemates clearly doing more than others in the absence of full participation from everyone to a standard that they would like. This appeared to be something that was accepted as a common issue within shared accommodation, and as Jim highlighted, differed depending on who lived within the house, and how you chose to handle it. The perception of guilt was a motivating factor in taking part in cleaning practices, rather than a sense of responsibility, which was evident in both Daniel's response to Craig cleaning, and Matt's household 'cleaning for the cleaner' – they did not want to appear dirty or lazy. The presence of a cleaner served a dual benefit to the households within this study: firstly, to avoid having awkward conversations with housemates about who was going to clean what; second, that, in the case of Matt's household, 'cleaning for the cleaner' actually reinforced domestic practices.

In contrast to other forms of household, the organisation of cleaning in shared accommodation was more problematic, particularly in regard to interpersonal relations. Within solo-living arrangements, it is clearer who is responsible for any mess, and if they want to live in squalor, then they can choose to without impacting others (until they have

guests); within shared accommodation, there may be a desire to live in a 'clean' house, but this is juxtaposed against a dislike of cleaning up after other people, or asking people to do 'their bit'. Within familial environments the division has largely fallen on gendered lines, with women more likely to carry out domestic practices (DeVault 1994; Berner 1998), with a recent study (Baxter et al. 2013) suggesting that within couple environments while women are still likely to do more, the division of labour is less about equity (an equal distribution) but about fairness, contingent on overall contributions to the relationship and household rather than domestic practice as a single measure. The notion of contributing to the household and relationship is greater than the individual act, within those relationships. However, within shared accommodation, with its transience, and inherent tension between independence and interdependence, there is less evidence to suggest that contributing to household tasks is about 'paying in' to a wider relationship; rather, sharers do as little as they can deal with within the realms of their own thresholds of cleanliness, which are developed based on previous experiences and levels of commitment to the shared household. Interpersonal relations are key to the enactment of cleaning and responsibility for domestic practices, but only insofar as to avoid conflict and a 'sticky situation' when residents have to raise the issue with their messy housemate.

Making spaces available to others, through cleanliness or the resident's presence or absence, is a key feature of shared accommodation, and it is this notion of space that will now be considered. In a similar fashion to being able to use a pan to cook dinner because it has been cleaned in line with expectations, the use of and sharing of space within expectations is equally as important and problematic within shared accommodation. Sharing living accommodation with others necessitates the sharing of rhythms and routines, to enable successful co-presence and coordination of practices and minimise impingement on the lives and choices of others. The visible and recognisable performance of practices in shared spaces is particularly important, as will be demonstrated in the following section, as it indicates a willingness of other residents to actively engage in shared living.

Sharing space

Within the vast majority of shared houses the configuration of what is shared between housemates and what is the domain of individuals can be summarised as follows: each housemate has their own bedroom that can be called their 'own' (and occasionally an en suite bathroom), which they can permit or deny access to by other residents and visitors, with the remainder of the property being shared between co-residents with mutual (equal) access. These areas normally encompass the lounge, kitchen, dining room, bathrooms, hallways and gardens, along with the shared responsibilities to keep these

areas clean and available for other housemates to access and use. This appears to be a reasonably straightforward arrangement that should be relatively easy to maintain, but when combined with the negotiation of relationships and differing individual practices (such as personal tastes, routines and expectations), the situation can become more complex. This section explores the management and 'sharing' of space and the particular complexities that it can present both practically and interpersonally. As with the 'shared' 'stuff' explored earlier in this chapter – finances, food and responsibilities – the 'sharing' of space provides a window into the level of effort and negotiation required for 'sharing' to be a positive form of living, and highlights how individuals within shared accommodation have to balance their own independent needs and desires against the wellbeing of the house 'at large' and the interdependence that it necessitates through the negotiation and coordination of practice, rhythms and routines. The 'sharing' of space presents its own peculiarities in addition to these common issues of 'sharing', most notably how the availability and use of physical space is not just a practical 'act', but one that is impacted by the nature and quality of interpersonal relations; put simply, just because space is notionally 'shared', the sharing of it is not necessarily easy if you do not get on with the other people in that space. This section explores these issues in relation to the quality of interpersonal relationships, and how acceptable standards of living and issues of access and authority are played out within 'shared' space.

When housemates get along with one another – perhaps as houses of friends rather than 'randoms' – the issue of sharing space with one another may appear to be a relatively easy issue to confront: you like these people, and you would choose to live and spend time with them. Sharing the kitchen or bathroom with someone who you get along with does not seem to be a huge problem. However, the assumption that people who get along with one another will also live well with one another also includes the assumption that they have similar expectations and behaviours as each other in addition to a mutual affinity. For example, what one person may consider being 'clean' may be another person's 'dirty'; or a 45 minute shower in the morning may be considered acceptable for one person, and annoying and disruptive to another. Within ostensibly positive relationships – friendships – these observable behaviours present a problem: how do you raise a criticism of another person's behaviour when you live with them and want to sustain a living relationship with them without causing an argument or an 'atmosphere'? As noted across the exploration of other 'shared' 'stuff' earlier in this chapter, there is an observable reluctance to avoid approaching issues of disagreement and grievance, or where the coordination of practices appears to be less successful than at least one party would hope. This reluctance, driven by a concern over creating a 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000), is about avoiding *perceived* conflicts with housemates, and, as this section will demonstrate, being 'friends' with someone does not make raising these issues easier, it can actually exacerbate the reluctance.

In familial and solo-living arrangements, acceptable standards, practices and behaviours are more likely to be led by a head (or heads) of household. Of course, as previously discussed, whilst family and personal life researchers have noted that there are strong moral expectations of how finances, obligations and responsibilities should be shared between kin, the practice of sharing on the ground is in reality more messy and negotiated. So whilst there are strong moral values about the 'proper' way to organise obligation and sharing amongst kin, 'family practices' (Morgan 1996) are rather more complex and much research has emphasised the fluidity and diversity of family forms and behaviours. Nonetheless, there are clear moral values about the 'proper' way to organise obligation and sharing amongst kin (often structured by power relations related to gender and age) and, as Belk notes, familial sharing, often occurs within 'taken for granted sharing privileges' (2010, p.724) afforded to those who are at 'home'. For those who live within a shared household, however, where there is often an on-going tension as to whether there is one 'home' or several within the household, sharing privileges can by no means be taken for granted. So whilst there is a clear expectation of sharing within shared households, 'shared household practices' are even more complex, messy and negotiated than 'family practices'.

So, for example, in a familial or couple household the householders will be able to decide on their standards of living, such as whether the washing up is done immediately after the evening meal, and are afforded the luxury of an argument that can be 'brushed off' under the auspices of 'unconditional love' should there be a disagreement. Further, should there be any children in the house, they often have to fall into line with the conditions set by their parents. Within a solo-living household, the 'conditions' of living are set purely by that individual: if the house is a mess, it is a mess due to the action or inaction of the individual and no one else.

Within shared living, acceptable standards of living, or acceptable practices or behaviours, are rarely formalised, tend only to be mentioned at a basic level during any recruitment stage that may take place (as explored in chapter four), and are raised only as a specific issue when standards differ between individuals to such an extent that another resident feels the need to highlight this as a problem to another resident. This is particularly problematic when housemates have a positive relationship with someone as residents felt less able to raise issues of criticism about their co-residents if they were friends because of the potential to damage that friendship by raising the criticism. As Smart et al (2012) argued, friendships are often 'critical associations' in which it is hard to acknowledge and voice conflict because of the moral values accompanying the notion of 'friends' as elective, freely chosen, positive relationships. As she notes however precisely because of these moral values it is often harder to dump a friend than a lover.

While the co-residents are not linked to each other in any socially formalised way that one might normally expect within 'standard' housing trajectories, such as being a family member or in an intimate relationship, their less formalised but positive relationship – of friendship – actually makes raising criticisms of each other's behaviour harder than if they were in a relationship that afforded the ability to criticise. To explore this issue, three scenarios raised by participants will be used to indicate how interpersonal relationships within positive relationships can impact the use and availability of shared space, and the ability to address issues of contention. Further, the examples illustrate how the presence of other residents act to guide practice in line with expectations.

Steve (31, accountant) has been letting rooms in his owner-occupied shared house for a number of years after the breakdown of the relationship with his partner with whom he originally co-purchased the property. Before this, he co-owned a property with his sister. He finds the current owner-occupied arrangement largely beneficial as it allows him to afford the mortgage for the property, which he would otherwise be unable to afford on his own, and also because he enjoys the company. He lives with Daniel (29, project manager) who he has been a friend with for a number of years before he moved into the property, and Craig (33, researcher) who was recruited to the property through a house share advertisement. However, he noted that sharing with peers – even as nominally a 'landlord' – was more problematic than other forms of relationship. Although Steve speaks very positively about his relationships with Daniel and Craig, he finds raising issues of the sharing of space within the household problematic; more so than with his ex-partner or sister. The example below highlights how the differing nature of the relationship between his co-residents in shared housing versus the nature of his relationship with his ex-partner has impacted upon his ability to feel able to approach issues of practice and shared space.

S I think, 'Am I going to offend Craig' if I was to go 'Can you stop doing that?' It's just a stupid little thing, but he has his breakfast, midway on the stairs, but in the morning, at 6am in the morning, all you can hear is the spoon hitting the bowl, and it wakes me up, and Daniel mentioned it as well, it's like, do you know what I mean? It's do you mention it or, do you...? I don't want to offend him, so I haven't mentioned it, so I probably won't!

[...]

I 'spose with your partner you don't have that sort of relationship do you? With [my ex-partner] I wouldn't ever tell him to do things, and I don't think he'd ever tell me. So it was just a case of... I don't know if it was because we were similar in a lot of ways, or a domesticated way, that things just got done, like it was a shared burden, not that someone always seemed to be having to clean up or wash-up, or whatever it was. But that was just a natural process.

Although 'a stupid little thing', that Craig sits on the middle of the stairs to eat his breakfast is problematic for Steve. The stairs are a common area, and Craig choosing to eat his breakfast there is annoying for both Steve and Craig, but the nature of his relationship with Craig is such that he fears offending him – creating a 'sticky situation'

(Sabini et al. 2000) that will bring about embarrassment for Steve as well as for Craig. Notably, he contrasts that with his relationship with his ex-partner, which he felt was a more 'natural process' and a 'shared burden', which is different to that of a housemate. The *nature* of the relationality between co-residents impacts the ability for them to approach each other over issues of space, even though, in this instance, the relationship is apparently a good one. The issue is small, and Craig may well react hospitably to the request to not eat his breakfast on the stairs, instead eating in the lounge, but Steve has an identifiable sense of apprehension.

Jim (31, civil servant) explained how the lounge was used in his house, and how common areas, and use of facilities in common areas, can indicate the nature of a hierarchy in a shared household. In this example, Jim uses the example of the television to illustrate that something as simple as choosing what to watch on the television in an ostensibly 'shared' area, is a complex process that can give rise to a reluctance to take on responsibility, and such choices can be a 'burden'.

I Thinking about shared space, have you also felt comfortable in shared space? Such as watching TV in the lounge?

J I think the lounge is probably the focal part of the house, and I think the dynamics of the house and as to who's in the lounge and what they're watching can be an indicator of a hierarchy of who can put what on the telly.

I Is that based on who has lived in the house longest?

J Sometimes it can be, like I said before, [an old housemate] had his Sky box, and he would always want to watch the football, and it was very much his TV and his stuff, you know, and he'd be fine about us using it, but if he was there, most of the time we'd watch what he wanted. In most places it's a bit more liberal, just whoever's there. But I find people don't want control of the telly. They find it in a burden to have the remote control, because they don't want to have to make a decision that the rest of the house has to abide by cuz they think people might judge them by it. And especially now there's more digital channels, people spend ages flicking trying to find something that they think might appeal to everybody.

I Do you think when they're doing that they're looking to see if people like it?

J Yeah, they are very much wanting to know, 'is this OK for you?'

Jim's example indicates the diversity of practices that he has engaged with during his experience of shared living, rather than there being a uniform way of such issues being dealt with in shared accommodation, and that he sees the lounge, and use of the lounge, as a window into what he calls the 'dynamics' of the house – the hierarchy and rules that guide interaction and practice. The negotiation of what to put on the television is relatively easy if someone has explicit ownership of that television as the responsibility or 'right' can be invested in the 'owner'. However, when there is no explicit owner, he notes that it seems a more complex situation, with other residents spending time flicking through what is on until something acceptable to the group is stumbled upon. There is a 'burden' to decide as there is a reluctance to assume that everyone will want to watch the same programme. The presence of others inhibits the choice of

television programme, and this is subtly negotiated through 'flicking' through channels. The conscious awareness of others, and their relative tastes, coupled with the notion of the lounge being an open, shared space, makes what may appear to be a very straightforward decision more complex, involving aspects of interpersonal taste and judgement. Choosing what to put on the television in shared space requires the resident to negotiate the tastes of others as well as their own so that they are not appearing to dominate the space.

The presence of others, and the impact it has on encouraging acceptable practice within shared accommodation was most acutely observed in an example offered by Louise (24, project manager) where she narrated a situation where she had walked in on a housemate masturbating in the lounge as he thought everyone else was away that weekend.

L Everyone apart from [one housemate] had planned to be away that weekend. I was planning to go home [to her parents] but my plans changed, so I was there that weekend. I didn't tell anyone else in the house as I didn't think it really mattered, and it's none of their business really. I think this surprised [my housemate] as when I got home later that evening I walked into him in the lounge stark naked having a wank in front of the big TV. He evidently wasn't expecting me to be home, and I wasn't expecting him to be doing what he was doing. I just went, 'Hi [housemate]' and walked out again and went upstairs and he dashed into his room. I think he was more embarrassed than I was, but we've never spoken about it since.

Although an extreme example, it serves to illustrate the guiding nature of the presence of others in negotiating acceptable practice. Louise noted that her housemate was surprised to see her, as he was enjoying the absence of other housemates to behave in ways that would otherwise be discouraged or taboo. Her housemate's tangible embarrassment suggests that if he was aware that Louise was coming home that day rather than going to her parents his use of the lounge for masturbation would have been less likely, but Louise also noted that she felt no obligation to advise her housemates of her change in plans as it was not any of their concern. This further illustrates the benefit of coordinated practice in order to understand and be aware of the plans and routines of others so that they can successfully – or, in this case, unsuccessfully – ensure that their behaviour does not impact upon others.

Some participants explained how they would make an effort to avoid shared space if they were aware of others using it. For example, Rebecca (22, social worker) explained that she would avoid using the lounge if one of her housemates was there with their partner as she appreciated that they needed some time together as a couple.

R If [my housemate] was here [in the lounge] with her boyfriend then I'd probably go up to my room. I wouldn't want them to feel uncomfortable because I was here and they couldn't be 'coupley'.

In contrast, Ashley (23, postgraduate) had a contrasting approach where she would deliberately avoid being, as Rebecca calls it, 'coupley', as she would not want to exclude others from that space because they may feel uncomfortable.

A Oh, there's nothing worse than watching people smooch, and I wouldn't want to put them through it, so I wouldn't do it. It's a shared house. If I wanted to do that, I'd go upstairs.

The concern works in the opposite direction for Ashley, who would be worried about making her housemates uncomfortable, instead opting to go to her room to 'smooch' rather than put her housemates through watching it, which she would not appreciate herself.

'Shared' or 'common' space is not necessarily easy to share, and, as indicated by the examples above, even when you 'get along' with other residents, there are complex considerations given to the negotiation and use of shared space. Other housing formations, such as the 'family' or 'couples', may provide a more secure environment to raise issues of negotiation and divergence in practice that participants within this study suggest is not always present within shared accommodation. This also highlights the on-going tension of independence and interdependence, whereby individual housemates are attempting to respect their co-residents choices of how they live, but need to weigh that up against their own standards, the fear of a 'sticky situation' if it is raised, and the need to regulate coordination in practices to ensure individual choices do not impact upon others.

Given the difficulties that 'friends' have in criticising the actions of others within shared accommodation due to apprehension of a 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000), you may think it would be the case that if you did not get on with that person and they were behaving in a way that was causing problems within the house that it would be easier to raise that with them. However, this does not also appear to be the case, with residents suggesting that when relationships are sour, it is still difficult to approach issues of divergence in practice and expectations directly. Within peer-shared households, with its demonstrably flat-hierarchy, and absence of overt power structure, residents demonstrate more creative means to try and align expectations between one another, rather than address the issue directly. Further, as the example below illustrates, the inherent issues of transience in shared accommodation – that it has a temporary nature and that either you, or others, can move on – provides some comfort to residents that although they may be experiencing a 'bad' house share, that it is not a permanent arrangement that will eventually end.

Fiona (41, healthcare) explained a 'dodgy' situation with a male housemate who was being 'creepy' by exposing himself within shared spaces – the kitchen and the garden,

within the excerpt below. Rather than approach him directly, she changed her own behaviour, by making lots of noise to make him realise she was there, and by kicking the door closed if he failed to close it as he was using the toilet. The extended excerpt below demonstrates how upsetting this was for her, but the 'expiration date' gave her some strength to put up with it rather than deal with it directly.

F It was a bit dodgy. It all started a long time after he moved in and he wasn't in a relationship; he struck me as a bit of a loner. He found himself a woman. I don't know kind of what their preferences were sexually; I don't know if that's how it came about, because he was fine before that. But I was once sitting in the kitchen and you can see the garden there, and she was sitting there reading the paper, I don't know, and I saw him peeing in the garden! It was the kind of neighbourhood where people can see into each other's gardens. I thought how weird. I thought he just must have been very relaxed, but really I was sitting there and now I think that was just the beginning! It got worse from then on, I kept on bumping into him naked, basically. It was horrible, you'd be in the kitchen and you'd just go 'oops!' and run away; it was creepy. This was in the build up to him moving out. It was horrible! And I was really afraid. And then I started locking my door because though I trusted him up until then one night he just walked into my room at like 2-3 in the morning. The loo was just next-door so I thought maybe he'd had some drinks and, actually, I thought no, he's never stepped into my room, why would he mistake the door. So I started locking the door. It became a bit creepy that one. I never said anything as he was on his way out. [...]

When I went downstairs in the morning I made a huge noise because I thought, you know, what's going, so he could hear me, but he still took no notice. [...]
The toilet upstairs is on the corridor and he leaves the door open when he's in there and I would kick it closed as I was walking past. I just found it very awkward, but I knew there was an expiration date attached to it, so...

The way Fiona's housemate used shared space was divergent in both form and quality to how she would normally expect space to be used, and she noticed a shift in how his practices had changed. She was not expecting people to be naked, urinate in the garden, or leave the toilet door open, and she tried to alter his behaviour to combat this, to no avail. However, the 'expiration date' gave Fiona something to look forward to and the reassurance that she would not have to endure the behaviour for much longer.

In contrast to other forms of living, dealing with issues over 'shared' space appears more difficult due to this absence of clear hierarchy, which is more fully explored in the following chapter. Even when a clearer hierarchy is present – such as in the case of Steve being the owner-occupier – there is still a reluctance to highlight issues of divergent practices due to a fear of causing 'offense' and ending up in a 'sticky situation'. Within other household types, such as couple or familial relationships, there appears to be a clearer way of dealing with these issues of divergence: parents can have more ability to regulate the behaviour of children; and negotiating issues of practice in couples apparently appears to be a more 'natural' process, according to Steve. As indicated in the next chapter, dealing with these issues of divergent practices can lead to a desire to live in a couple or on their own, in order to avoid these issues. Whether or not the grass is actually greener in these other structures is not for this thesis to contend, but that

these tensions are present are important to reflect upon in relation to how 'sharing' is pragmatically and interpersonally achieved. In peer-shared housing an authority hierarchy does not usually exist, leaving co-residents to deal with such conflicts on their own. While they can go to the landlord – or in a more extreme example illustrated in the next chapter, the police – should things become particularly difficult, there is a limited amount that they can realistically do if they are not in the house other than give a warning, and many residents would not bother their landlord about smaller incidents, as they would not want to appear petty.

Issues like these make the shared space in shared houses *difficult* to share. Divergent practices make it an uncomfortable space rather than one that is open to all, and alters how individuals feel about the space. It moves from somewhere that they consider a home, to one that can sometimes even be considered a battleground, but at the same time, because of the economic need to live within affordable shared accommodation, they need to maintain some form of relationship with their co-residents which gives rise to indirect and more subtle approaches to issues of divergence than approaching the issue head-on. Again, it illustrates the independence that co-residents feel, but their interdependence through fear of 'rocking the boat' and disrupting the viability of the shared residence, despite how difficult it is to live there every day. Rather than negative relationships making things easier to talk about, it is equally difficult for issues to be raised because of a fear of exacerbation.

Summary

Chapter four considered how residents were recruited *into* practice, and how standards and expectations were implied through a swift search for homophily that would (hopefully) set the stage for a positive 'sharing' experience. Building on that analysis, this chapter has explored the 'doing' of sharing in shared households, focusing on the sharing of utilities and bills; food and supplies; tasks and practices; and space. In doing so, I have focused on sharing in shared households using the lens of practice theory. By using this framework – which sees all social practices as inherently coordinated collections of activity, or 'entities' – I have focused on the range of complex, shared practices within a shared household – such as sharing payment for rent or utilities; sharing the use of the fridge or a washing machine; sharing tasks, cleaning; sharing commodities, such as milk and bread; and the sharing of time, space and the coordination of routines such as the use of a living room or of a shower at given times. It is this complex of shared practices and facilities which serve to constitute 'shared housing' as *shared* housing.

The diversity and complexity of 'sharing' arrangements, such as the multiple ways of managing the acquisition and storage of food and supplies, were evident from the

research cohort. Although formalised and, perhaps, more 'manageable' communal regimes were observed in the form of the ideologically-led shared household, this was as an exception, with the majority of participants narrating a more individualised approach to sharing goods that gave primacy to individual taste and routine over economies of scale and time. Although it could be cheaper for everyone to coordinate their eating practices and routines, this was not seen as preferable or possible at the expense of personal independence and freedom. How sharing was managed was not an easy task for those involved, and often problematized by issues of longevity (how long someone has been in the house) and reluctance on the part of residents to take on responsibility, coupled with an aversion to raise issues of compliance with and divergence from practice due to a fear of creating an atmosphere or 'sticky situation' if the issue was raised.

The *type* of non-sovereign 'stuff' 'shared' varies from the tangible, such as goods and space, to the intangible, such as responsibilities and time, with each aspect having some nuanced tensions attached to them. The issue of shared space has issues of co-presence and negotiation of acceptable practice *between* residents during use; whereas the issue of shared responsibilities, such as cleaning and cleanliness, has issues of temporality and moral value, such as ensuring kitchen items are clean for others to use, and to an acceptable standard. Food and supplies are often organised and consumed more independently, with separate acquisition and storage, with some 'shared essentials' and exceptions to individual consumption when hosting a group event. In contrast, the organisation of bills and finance requires a necessarily communal approach to ensure everyone pays their 'fair share', but one that is approached with a reluctance to take on responsibility, and complex regimes of administration. Again, although more organised and communal regimes of consumption were observed within one ideologically-led house share, this was the exception to the dominant forms of 'sharing' that were observed within the sample cohort.

As well as these nuanced tensions, the practice of sharing has some common features, such as the necessity to coordinate practices across time and space, and also an observable unwillingness to address issues of divergent practices due to concerns of confrontation and 'sticky situations'. This absence of overt coordination led to negotiation and alignment of practices occurring tacitly, with a 'look and learn' approach to practices that were new to residents (such as the coordination of bathroom usage) and a reliance on experiences from earlier in their housing pathways as a map or 'schema' for their current practice.

The tension between one household versus many households under one roof is a constant feature of 'sharing practices'. Whereas the physical property is viewed

economically as a single household in terms of utilities and taxation, the individuals within the household often act and consume independently from one another, giving rise to less rationalised forms of consumption that involve multiple people doing the same task but at different times, such as cooking a meal, rather than coordinating those acts to enjoy economies of scale and labour. To return to Heath and Cleaver's (2003, pp.98–108) and Heath's (2004) suggestion that peer-shared households 'exemplified the key features of "neo-tribalism"' (2004, p.171) as outlined by Maffesoli (1996) – 'proximity, shared space (both physical and symbolic) and ritual' (Heath 2004, p.167), there is certainly evidence that they are sharing space, in close proximity, and that there are certain 'rituals' – which I have referred to as 'practices'. However, the 'commitment to the communal ethic' (Heath 2004, p.166) is less clear, with evidence that residents of shared households have overtly divested commitment to a communal ethic (by not taking on bills, for example), and see themselves as independent individuals within an interdependent household. Further, there is annoyance and reluctance when individuals find themselves having to take on responsibility for the community where they feel they should not have to. The 'communal ethic' only goes so far, with few households having a demonstrably 'communal' approach to food, and some participants illustrating the contrary, that they would *not* want to share. The 'communal ethic' was more evident within the ideologically-led shared house, but this was the *exception* rather than the rule

'Sharing' is inherently relational and interpersonal: so the form and quality of the interpersonal relationships within which 'sharing' occurs fundamentally affects the nature and success of 'sharing' within shared households. Whereas Pete (31, trainer) viewed the sharing of small items of food with his housemates as part of the 'sharing philosophy', this was in contrast to Benjamin (30, postgraduate) who would rather his housemates buy their own food, simply because he does not like them very much. Further, the depth and quality of the relationship inhibits or empowers 'sharing': you cannot just expect people to 'fall into the nest' or 'get into bed' with you in relation to 'sharing' even small items of food, as Daniel (29, project manager); it is something that should develop over time. Those 'performing' the 'elements' of practices are more than just 'carriers' – they have to attend to the interpersonal aspects of those performing the 'sharing', and they have to respond creatively to that attendance, rather than robotically. The next chapter builds on these observations, and looks in more detail at the interpersonal elements of sharing (and in particular at how conflicts can cause sharing to break down) as well as the dynamic aspects of these interpersonal elements, considering how people's trajectories (and anticipated trajectories) affected sharing practices.

Due to the observable complexity (and sometimes, irrationality) of aligning practices, and their diversity, there is a danger of seeing these 'households' as static or clearly

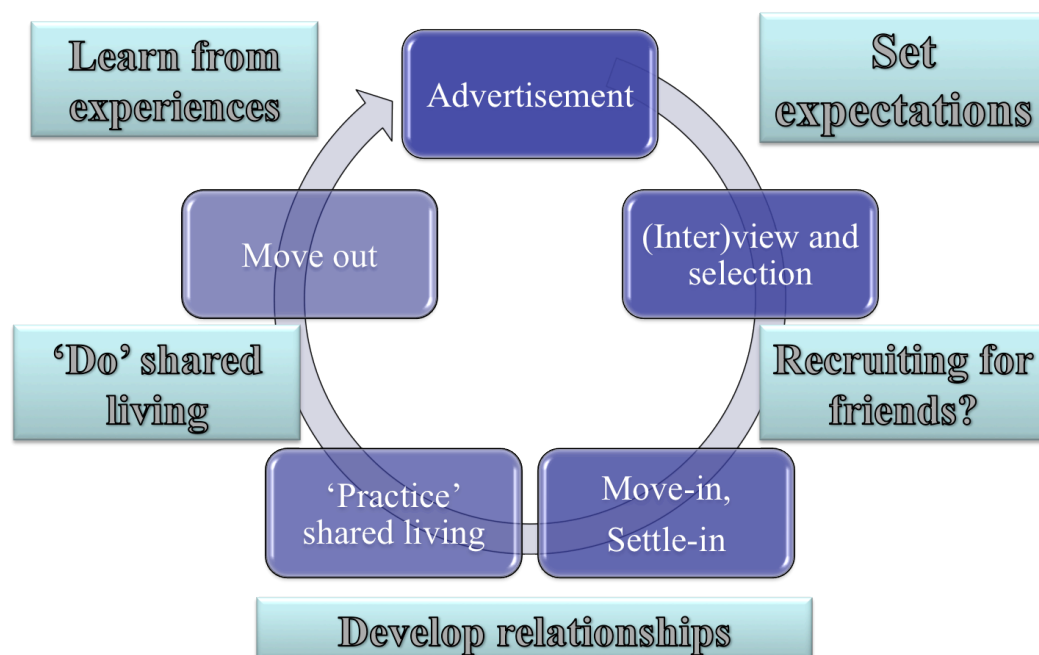
defined entities. Clapham (2005; 2009) argues that the physical and symbolic accommodation of a household should not be seen as a static, constraining structure, or as a single household, but rather as multiple overlapping households in dynamic trajectory. This was illustrated by Louise's (24, project manager) difficulty in organising bills due to differing abilities to pay, or housemates committing insurance fraud; each housemate had differing social and economic locations (and intentions) that disrupted a cohesive approach. Clapham's concept of 'housing pathways' seems particularly pertinent to the subject of shared households, where the question recurs of whether we are looking at a single household, a set of households under a shared roof, or some combination of the two. The next chapter will be using Clapham's (2005; 2009) idea of a housing pathway to focus attention on the individual's housing career as well as to the household as a composite context. Clapham defines a housing pathway as 'the continually changing set of relationships and interactions that it experiences over time in its consumption of housing' (Clapham 2005, p.27), and the next chapter considers that in relation to issues of 'conflict' – where issues of practices and relationality are at odds with one another – and how experiences of shared housing impact future housing choices and housing pathways.

Chapter Six: Dealing with conflict and moving on from shared accommodation

In the previous chapters the ways in which individuals are recruited both into houses and into practices have been explored, as well as how the 'doing' or practice of 'sharing' within shared households is organised and coordinated (or not) between residents. The complex nature of 'sharing' has been explored, and how it is not an easy or straight forward process, but one that involves awareness of the expectations and practices of others, and an ability to tacitly coordinate practices with others both socially and temporally, whilst also avoiding issues of tension and 'sticky situations' that cause embarrassment and conflict. The picture painted thus far does not necessarily present shared living as a continuously carefree and amiable form of living and association, but one that can be stressful and difficult to negotiate. Building on the empirical findings in the previous chapters, and continuing to use theories of practice as a lens through which to view household organisation and negotiation, it is these stresses and issues of negotiation that are the focus of this final chapter.

In relation to the wider 'cycle' of shared living (figure 11, below), we are now reaching the latter end of the 'shared accommodation cycle' where individuals have settled in and are 'doing' 'shared' living – they are active carriers of practice – and are using their existing experiences to assist in their future housing choices.

Figure 7: Shared Accommodation Cycle



As previously discussed, many residents of shared accommodation do not foresee sharing as permanent arrangement, instead seeing it as a comfortable but temporary situation before they can live on their own or move in with a partner. Living in shared accommodation allows people to live in a nicer house and area at a time when their income may not allow them to afford to live on their own or to maintain the standard of living to which they aspire. This first part of this chapter explores further previous observations of the core tension that exists within shared living, between the independent individual living within an interdependent household. It uses illustrations from study participants to examine how this tension inhibits the ability to deal with interpersonal and inter-practice conflicts. As I have argued earlier, the practice of 'sharing' within something colloquially called a 'shared house' is not simple or straightforward. While there may be expectations of having to 'share', or having shared access to certain goods, the practice of 'sharing' is negotiated, with boundaries being negotiated and demarcated through continual and communal negotiation. These boundaries are not necessarily negotiated overtly through a systematic regime of managing mutual expectation, but also through negative experience, bitterness and deliberate restriction. Sharing is not just about having access to something, but also being able to withdraw sharing, perhaps even as a social weapon, and is not straightforward and simple. This first section of this chapter will further consider the pressures of living within close-quarters with others with whom you do not necessarily share an intimate relationship, and explore the more 'critical' nature of these associations (Davies and Heaphy 2011; Heaphy and Davies 2012) and how the quality and form of those associations – or relationalities – impact the ability to 'share' productively, or produce more conflict.

In the second half of the chapter, I explore how questions of hostility and conflict are affected by their location within housemates' own housing pathways. As previously noted, Clapham's (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009) concept of a housing pathway – defined as 'patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space' (2005, p.27) – combines elements of social practices, time-space geography and concepts of housing career, to consider the upward and downward movement of housing position of a household, focusing on the lifecourse and life-events, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth and changes in occupational circumstances, including unemployment or retirement. A housing pathway is 'the continually changing set of relationships and interactions that it experiences over time in its consumption of housing' (Clapham 2005, p.27) with these interactions including intra-house dynamics, such as those between co-residents, letting agents, landlords and neighbours. This idea of housing pathway as trajectories of (intersecting) practices over time provides a useful lens to explore shared housing, since a core element of shared housing is its persistently transient nature. A shared household can always be in a state of constant or

potential change, rather than one that has the ideal or potential for permanency. In contrast to familial households, for example, which are based upon familial links which have a quality of longevity attached to them and are generally organised around mutual forward planning, shared households are often made up of people with differing, unconnected pathways of occupation, relationships and differing goals. This leads to differing intra-household dynamics, and differing household practices as each resident moves in and out of the house. This kind of transiency, with contrasting yet parallel pathways, can provide a positive edge to shared living: it is a flexible form of living that can also provide a stable quality of life even when co-residents are moving at different speeds or directions on their pathways. It can also be a source of on-going tension and conflict, of course, as this chapter explores. However, in my sample, the on-going management of such conflict also depended upon how individuals were placed – or felt they were placed – on their own housing pathways, and their trajectories through and out of shared households. To deal with problems that they experienced in a previous household people often move between shared households to resolve issues of conflict, or choose to exit shared living completely to avoid the perceived complexities and fatigue of shared living brought about by the sense of constant negotiation. As will be explored, how people talk of their trajectories out of shared living reveals normative ideals of 'sharing in a household', and the contrasts between other forms of living arrangement, such as living with a partner, or on your own.

Hierarchy or vacuum: the difficulties and tensions of power relations within shared accommodation

Heath and Cleaver (2003, p.106) suggest that within shared accommodation that domestic labour – and issues arising over whether or not domestic labour has been carried out – are more likely to be resented than tolerated, and such resentment is more likely to be made public than in other forms of familial arrangement. This research, however, points to a different story, where the tension between independence and interdependence, discussed in the previous chapter, and a desire to 'avoid an atmosphere' or 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000) result in housemates avoiding conflict, and raising issues of division, instead adopting more subtle and indirect approaches to get their point across. Rather than observing an environment that allows greater freedom to air grievances than other living configurations, participants narrate a story of suppressed bitterness and resentment, rather than vocal resolutions. This section aims to illuminate the mechanisms and processes that participants have articulated as being the tools available to deal with issues of divergent practice.

Previously I have argued that within shared households comprised of peers living together without a resident owner or landlord, there is no specific power hierarchy in

place. Furthermore, in many cases, due to a desire from individual housemates to not take on responsibility for certain aspects of running the house (such as bills or cleaning) there sometimes exists a 'power vacuum'. This 'power vacuum', or flat hierarchy, where no one person feels they can dictate or be dictated to by others, and where no one has more rights or responsibilities than any other resident, can leave individuals without recourse to authority structures that they may have been used to in other areas of their lives, such as the familial home (where one might defer to a parent) or employment (where one might defer to an employer or supervisor). This lack of a clear authority or decision structure can be further exacerbated by a desire for housemates to 'keep the peace' through a reluctance to raise issues of contention with other housemates, such as money owed or undone washing up, in order to avoid an 'atmosphere' or 'sticky situation'. This can lead to bitterness and resentment by some housemates where they perceive their own expectations of domestic practice to be undermined by the lack of participative practice of other residents, and, over time, lead to issues of disagreement and conflict within shared accommodation.

Issue of conflict and negotiation routinely emerge in shared houses and how such conflict is dealt with – or not – is an important aspect of consideration. As discussed in previous chapters, when housemates are at odds with one another – often when their idealised notions of practice do not coalesce – they often choose to suppress or avoid conflict in order to prevent creating an 'atmosphere' in the house and to encourage a cordial living experience. Conflict is frequently diffused through implicit or explicit negotiation, or through avoidance strategies. This section explores why this occurs by examining how conflict can destabilise an individual's 'ontological security' within the household, and also suggests that idealised notions of the 'home' play a part in the perception of conflict. The chapter also explores how and why some explicit strategies of conflict resolution, such as house meetings, and one-to-one discussions, are often overlooked as strategies in shared households despite their more pragmatic and potentially more effective approach to the negotiation of conflict.

What is the significance of avoiding creating an 'atmosphere' in a shared household, and how does this come about? Let us consider the role of ontological security within the home environment, and its particular importance within shared accommodation.

Ontological security has been described as

“[t]he confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self identity and in the constancy of their social and material environments. Basic to a feeling of ontological security is a sense of the reliability of persons and things” (Giddens 1990, p.92).

The importance and value of ontological security is that one has some perceived sense of stability in an otherwise chaotic and somewhat unpredictable world. Within the context of shared accommodation, we can see from Giddens' overview that the 'home' –

as a social and material environment – is an important factor in this, a point echoed by Saunders (1990, p.361) who suggested that the home environment provided support for a sense of ontological security.

“Where people feel in control of their environment, free from surveillance, free to be themselves and at ease, in the deepest psychological sense, in a world that might at times be experienced as threatening and uncontrollable.”

The ‘home’, then, *should* provide one basis within which people can be authentic and at ease, to be what Goffman (1969) might consider a ‘back region’ in which the individual does not feel the need to play a role to a perceived or actual audience. Within the ‘home’, one can feel protected from the ‘uncontrollable’ outside. However, the participants in this study did not paint such a stable picture of their home environment, and rather than their shared household providing a secure environment, in their accounts the transient nature of shared accommodation often lent it a more precarious edge. Due to the unpredictability, unreliability and potentially volatile presence of other residents, due to their independent and yet interdependent housing pathways, the continuity and consistency necessary to achieve Saunders’ notion of an ontologically secure ‘home’ was often disrupted. This section illustrates how conflict and tensions within shared accommodation can contribute to that disruption, and the strategies that individuals can deploy to mitigate the impact it may have on their lives.

Conflict, in this section, is not necessarily overt conflict between residents, where there may be an explicit argument or disagreement that is addressed between the residents, but also refers to a conflict of, or between, practices, or divergences in practices: where different residents have differing notions and ideals for how they wish to go about their everyday lives. For example, differing levels of what might be considered acceptable cleanliness often created divergent practices between housemates. While this may not be conflict in the common-sense use of the term ‘conflict’, this divergence of practices could bring about tensions and subsequent conflicting actions and inactions between residents, and often illustrated the depth of emotion that such divergence could provoke. Such implicit conflict of practices (or normative ideals of practice), could negatively impact on a resident’s overall sense of ontological security within their home.

A poignant and illustrative example of how divergence in practice can upon impact ontological security was given by Alison (23, marketing) who explained that a previous male housemate’s relaxed attitude to home security weakened her sense of ‘home’ and ‘safety’.

A I always try to double-lock the door before we go to bed at night, but when [a previous male housemate] lived here that was pretty much impossible. We never knew when or if he was coming home, and so I couldn’t lock the door, as I would have locked him out. [...] One time he came home really drunk and fell asleep on the sofa and left the door unlocked when we [her other housemate and her] were in bed. I asked him to be more careful, but he’d always leave

windows open... Or I'd not know if he was coming home. I didn't really feel safe in my own home, which wasn't very nice. [...] In the end, I had to ask him to leave. I didn't trust him.

The divergence in practice within Alison's example is clear: she had ideals to lock the door and have a secure home, whereas her previous housemate was far less concerned over issues of security and safety. The consequences of these divergences in practice could have been quite major, and Alison felt shaken by his inaction.

These practices, and their divergence, are bound-up within individual resident's ideas of what constitutes an idealised sense of home, which could be a quiet, safe haven from an otherwise busy world, or a social-centre where freedom and hedonism are enjoyed without barrier or constraint. As explored in chapter four, a great deal of effort is often placed on matching expectations of behaviour within shared accommodation through the process of advertising and interviewing, so one might expect these issues to be fairly minimal. Further, where there are households of friends, who have known each other for extended periods of time, one might also expect an extended shared biography to act as fertile ground for the development of shared practices and notions of 'home'. However, as indicated by some reflections on the recruitment process, you often never 'know' whom it is you are going to be living with until they have actually moved in.

For many of my participants a greater sense of annoyance and conflict emerged when these *perceptions* of shared notions and expectations of the home in practice diverged, resulting in an increased sense of friction as practices which appeared to have already been previously negotiated and aligned became subsequently opposed: for example, when something seems 'obvious' (such as locking the door, in Alison's example above) or where behaviours and practices had changed over time to the chagrin of a co-resident. An illustrative example was given by Suzanne (37, healthcare) who explained that in a previous house share where housemates rhythms, routines and practices were largely 'aligned' – they lived happily together – a housemate's schedule had changed and they were working nights, which impacted upon Suzanne.

S She went from working days to nights, and so started putting her washing on as she went to work at about... Erm... I dunno, 10pm? And washing takes ages, you know? So sometimes, if she was using the drier, it would go on 'til one or two in the morning. It was a nightmare, and I couldn't sleep, and I would turn it off, and then she would get annoyed that her washing was left sitting in water. She couldn't see why it was annoying as she wasn't there, but it really was fucking annoying. She had it easy as we were always out during the day when she wanted to sleep.

The shift in household rhythms and routines was problematic within Suzanne's household at the time, and trying to realign those practices was difficult as they were often not in the house together to address the issue. Suzanne turned the washing off, but this just led to annoyance and frustration rather than a resolution.

When asked about how they would deal with conflict, many participants could not articulate a conscious strategy. When relating to issues of conflict, they often related back to bad experiences they had been through previously. Nicola (29, teacher) explained how she would approach issues of conflict in relation to a previous housemate who appeared to unofficially move in:

I How would you deal with something that was annoying you? Can you approach people?

N Depends what it was. If it was a boyfriend overstaying their welcome you'd let it slide to begin with. Then you'd have to approach it. If it was something else then I think it's approached in a jokey way – never a truer word is said in jest. If it was a really big thing then you would say about it, I'm sure.

Nicola's comment about 'never a truer word said in jest' was poignant as it illustrated the subterfuge that sometimes needs to be employed to address an issue but without directly approaching the subject. Nicola would rather seem to be making light of a situation, while making a more subtle illustration of her dissatisfaction with arrangements, than make a clear statement of her dislike. Further, she illustrates the tolerance that is involved when a divergent practice is encountered. Nicola would initially tolerate a boyfriend overstaying their welcome, perhaps hoping that it would resolve itself rather than deal with it, and then have to address it, but it suggests the recognition of a divergent practice as soon as it appears.

Louise (24, project manager) explained that she largely ignored issues within shared housing when I asked how she dealt with conflict:

L Usually ignore it and bitch about my housemates to my friends, family and work colleagues. All of my social group know about my experiences of shared living! [...]

In the majority of houses I wouldn't describe the problems I had as conflict, more irritation. And because someone irritates me I wouldn't raise it with them as it's just the nature of sharing accommodation. [...]

I've lived in shared accommodation of some kind for eight years; in that time period I only had one argument with a housemate. Which was really a clash of personalities rather than over the division of the shared labour associated with house sharing. Although I was not an entirely innocent party in the argument, I still maintain that the housemate I argued with had the problem, as he didn't understand the 'rules' of shared living. He shouted at me when I disagreed with his views, in some cases his views were actually quite offensive and in some cases racist and because I didn't like him I pulled him up on it. Because he was older than me he spoke down to me quite a lot, and liked to share his life experience but he struggled to comprehend that people didn't always agree with him. Housemates aren't friends and like the workplace I would apply the same rules – don't broach subjects about religion, politics, etcetera.

Both Nicola and Louise appear to prefer the indirect approach in dealing with issues of conflict, and Louise illustrates the importance of 'bitching' to either friends or other residents to provide support. While the support they are providing is not pragmatic in the sense that they are helping to alleviate the issue, the process of 'bitching' to other

people at least allows the resident to air the grievance, and seek some recognition from other people that they are not being unreasonable and that their displeasure of the behaviour of their housemates has some validity. This sense of validity may help to bolster a sense of ontological security in the home by reassuring the resident that it is not 'just them', but that other people, too, would be annoyed if they had to experience that behaviour. By checking their annoyance with others they are avoiding a feeling of isolation. Louise also indicates an interesting division that she acknowledges between friends and housemates: that, often, she would not treat them like friends, and would avoid certain topics of conversation to avoid any subsequent potential conflict.

Fiona (41, healthcare) illustrates the difficulty in expressing to one of her housemates that their differing styles of living were proving incompatible, and the problems in raising that with her housemate at the time. The issue involved a housemate who was making a great deal of noise, which was at odds with Fiona's personal desire for her home – as a place for peace and sanctuary, and where she could practice meditation. Fiona described her job as a busy one, involving a great deal of interaction with other people, and when she was at home, she appreciated the luxury of solitude and relaxation that she feels the home should provide. However this was not necessarily easy to achieve in the face of her housemate's ideas of acceptable noise and behaviour, and this impinged on how Fiona could live her life within the house.

I She was having parties, she wasn't appreciating that you had different working lives, how did you deal with that?
F It was very difficult. It was very difficult to even sit around the table. You know the prime area of arguments was the noise level and she used to slam the door day or night, make a noise in the middle of the night, that kind of thing. [...] I'm very sensitive to noise. That's really difficult, and just randomly bringing strangers in. It's your house, your space, and I feel quite precious about that. But I don't mind meeting someone's social network, you know, and then they have... You know, I invite my friends round for a meal, but I'm very aware of where I'm sitting, what time is it, is the noise carrying? I'm quite aware of the other person. But she'd like book a taxi at five in the morning, put the central heating on, you're always awake when she was awake. I found that very stressful. [...] So it pushed a lot of buttons for me and everyone has their own ways of dealing with it and mine was I tried and I backed off. I dealt with it, which was very strenuous, on my own, basically. Erm... And then I started meditating. So I was seeking remedies to not feel like this all the time. Even in my room I just couldn't relax with her around in the house. And she went on holiday and immediately was able to take up the space, it was quite, erm... But I learned to meditate which helped a lot.

Fiona's ideal way of negotiating the situation would be to 'sit around the table' and talk about it, but her housemate was not allowing this to happen. In her narration, she makes clear what she considers acceptable forms of practice – being aware of your use of space, the time, and if you are making too much noise – and how her housemate's behaviour was divergent from this. Fiona's method of dealing with this was tolerance through detachment, living 'around' the other housemate, keeping to her own space and 'things' rather than to commune with the other housemate, and this was particularly

highlighted by the sense of freedom she felt in the absence of this other housemate. However, the impact of the housemate's behaviour on Fiona was tangible by her saying that she was 'seeking remedies to not feel like this all the time', and it is notable that one of those remedies was not asking her housemate to change her behaviour. The divergence in practice was not just practical in terms of how Fiona used space, but visceral, in how she felt about her living situation.

Fiona's experience of excessive intimacy, where her housemate stopped wearing clothes around the house and started urinating in the garden, as explored in the previous chapter, is also worth returning to as an illustration of how to deal with conflict and divergence in practice. As well as avoidance, as indicated above, Fiona attempted to change *her* behaviour to discourage unwanted behaviour from another housemate. In this instance, the housemate was demonstrating some exhibitionist behaviour that many would find disconcerting. However, as the housemate was 'on his way out' – leaving the house shortly – Fiona chose to deal with this indirectly by changing her behaviour to make suggestions to the other housemate, indirectly, that this was unwelcome. Fiona illustrated a catalogue of behaviours that she found 'creepy' and that made her uneasy. The behaviours – that crossed the boundary of physical intimacy in terms of nudity – were 'weird' and appeared to escalate. But an important factor for Fiona in dealing with this was the knowledge that he was 'on his way out'; that he would soon be leaving the house, and so the behaviour would come to a natural end rather than continue, even if her mitigating behaviours – creating noise to denote her presence, and locking her door – had no effect.

This issue of transience, and of a perceived end to a residency (for either the housemate experiencing unwanted behaviour, or the perpetrator), even if that end is not necessarily explicitly known, was a recurring feature of the experiences of my participants, and especially so when dealing with issues of conflict. If an end to sharing with a troublesome particular individual or group was perceived, then there was a sense that the behaviour could be tolerated for a short while, rather than raise the issue and have to endure an uncomfortable encounter.

We can also see from this example the deployment of mitigating behaviours. Fiona went to great effort to illustrate to the housemate that their behaviour was not welcome, and used both 'signs' – banging to denote her presence – and 'barriers' – locking her door – to minimise the impact of that behaviour. The 'sign', however, is only effective if the receiver interprets it meaning as intended and changes their behaviour accordingly. The difficulty here is that the indirect nature of the sign leaves it open for ambiguity: Fiona's loud banging could be interpreted as her just being noisy rather than suggesting her housemate should not walk around in the nude.

These 'signs' and 'barriers' were indicated in other participant stories. Benjamin (30, postgraduate) explains how he dealt with the issue of disliking someone he lived with.

B You mean, I like, I'd get up in the morning, make a cup of tea, watch the news with [Oliver], be nice, or, if [Oliver] was in the living room and there was a film on I'd go and watch that in the evening with him. If [Adrian] happened to be in there and I happened... Something [happened] that we both ended up in the living room on our own, I'd just sit there on the couch, and he'd sit on the couch opposite, and I'd ask him a question, just making conversation, and he would, he would give me a three word answer, and just continue to watch the TV. And I am very conscious of the fact that I felt, I feel quite uncomfortable of the fact that I feel quite uncomfortable here. I don't feel comfortable enough with you to sit with you and not speak to you...

I Yeah

B So I... I probably just light a cigarette. Made a cigarette and then said excuse me, I'll go and smoke this upstairs, just to get out of his way. And in the whole time there, in a year, I probably spent maybe, three nights... Three nights... Three lots of 20 minutes in the same communal living room with him. If he... I mean I've discussed this with [Oliver]... If he had a dinner party, he wouldn't tell us that he was having a dinner party, he would invite four of his friends around, and not only would he not tell us, he wouldn't invite us. Whereas, if it was me, I would invite the people that lived there. Er... He was an oddball.

While we may not consider disliking someone a 'conflict', in the context of shared housing the impact and consequences of disliking someone are felt more readily due to the inherently close quarters within which you are living: you have to see and speak to these people by virtue of sharing a front door, facilities and space. In other areas of life one may more readily avoid people if necessary, but spending periods of time with people you dislike within shared houses is sometimes unavoidable when carrying out everyday tasks, such as making food, or doing the washing up. It is when a person is disliked that a divergence in practices is most acutely felt, as Benjamin explained. He changed his behaviour to avoid spending time with the offending housemate (here called Adrian) through the 'signs' of making a cigarette to contrive a reason to leave the room, and the 'barrier' of avoiding spending time with him.

Benjamin clearly distinguished the difference in relationship between Oliver, who he got on with, and Adrian, with who he found it difficult to spend time. As in other examples, he was reluctant to directly engage a housemate about a specific difficulty, but decided to manage the situation through changes in his own behaviour. The changes in behaviour did appear to provide some mediation and resolution to the problem – in that Benjamin did not have to suffer spending time with Adrian – but at the expense of using the communal shared lounge. The resolution did not change the nature of the problem; it changed the experience of the problem in some pragmatic way, allowing Benjamin respite from having to spend time with Adrian. Relating this back to the concept of ontological security, Benjamin's situation lacks the necessary security and predictability for it to be 'homely'; since he was having to continually assess and amend his use of the

house depending on whether or not Adrian was present. While his strategy effects some change, it did not appear to be tremendously effective long term. However, Benjamin making a change in his own behaviour may be the only remedy he had to attend to his desire for ontological security; avoiding uncomfortable situations was in itself some comfort.

An extreme example of an action to deal with an issue of conflict, which had no perceivable, tangible effect on the behaviour of the offending party, was illustrated by Louise (24, project manager). Within this example, she carried out an act that had the potential to inflict physical pain on her housemate, whom she disliked, in order to illustrate her displeasure. However, there was no way for the offending party to know the causal link between their pain and Louise's act.

- L I live with a guy that I don't like very much. He wakes me up in the night and is generally quite arrogant and rude to me. He is so unapproachable that I felt as though there was nothing I could do about it, so I used to wait for him to get in the shower in the morning and I would go downstairs and turn on the tap so it made his shower run hot.
- I Did he know it was you?
- L I don't know, but it made me feel better.

Again, rather than approaching the housemate directly, Louise used a 'sign' to illustrate her displeasure – turning on the tap when he was in the shower. However, the sign had no way of being causally linked to any particular behaviour. Within this example, the benefit to Louise is a possibly sadistic one, gaining pleasure in the knowledge that her housemate was in pain. However, it also allowed her to express her frustration and feelings of hostility, and to overcome a sense of powerlessness. It may have added some sense of buoyancy to her own ontological security as she had done 'something' about the behaviour, however ineffectual it may be long term, but this may not address the sense of homeliness demanded by Saunders' (1990) where the intolerability and unpredictability is eliminated. As with all of the other signs – Fiona's banging and Benjamin disappearing for a cigarette – their indirect nature do not necessarily mean they have been received by the other party with the desired intention, and been effective in changing the behaviour of the housemate long term. In Louise's example, it is difficult to imagine that, due to the detachment between the act and the intention, that it would be effective in making a meaningful change to Louise's living conditions but there was a sense of a 'safety valve'; that something had to be done to allow her to 'feel better'.

All of the examples indicate the preference amongst many people living in shared households to approach issues of conflict and divergent practices indirectly rather than overtly address them. However, the strategies used - 'signs' and 'barriers' - appear only to be effective in the short term, often as a remedial measure until a perceived exit by the offending housemate, rather than as a long term measure that had a meaningful

impact on the behaviour of the offending housemate. Although it may appear to be in the immediate interest of the housemate to raise the issue directly with the resident who is causing the issues, this was not something that was seen as a readily available route of action. The key catalyst for making the choice of an indirect approach to the behaviour appears to be other people being 'unapproachable' (Louise), or the housemates doubting the relative effectiveness of a more direct approach, coupled with not wanting to be the one 'making a fuss' or creating the potential for an 'atmosphere' within the house.

While these indirect approaches, with the exception of Louise's, are not overtly aggressive, they are still 'passive-aggressive', as attempts to control the situation through the use of manipulative (making lots of noise), obstructive (locking doors) or procrastinating (leaving the room, not doing other residents' washing up) behaviours (Wetzler 1992). Passive-aggression appears to be a key strategy in shared living arrangements, where the latent aggression 'lies behind a mask of passivity' (Wetzler 1992, p.174), in attempting to deal with problematic housemates, particularly as the passivity – or inaction – can inspire anger in the receiving party (Wetzler 1992, p.25). It provides comfort for the resident exhibiting the behaviour, because they are not giving overt cause for the other resident to respond, and are thus avoiding a confrontation, while also attempting to affect change in the behaviour of the other resident. Passive-aggression offers an approach that may bolster ontological security because it avoids 'rocking the boat', while also attempting to avoid the situation getting worse. It also provides a 'safety valve' that allows the resident to act on their grievance because although it is 'passive aggression', it is still aggression nonetheless; it is just enacted in a more enigmatic way.

Examples of passive-aggression in shared accommodation are something that has enjoyed attention on websites and books as humorous examples of the tensions of sharing with others. Books such as *I Lick My Cheese* (O'Hagan 2007), *Passive Aggressive Notes* (Miller 2008), and its sister website, PassiveAggressiveNotes.com provide some wonderful illustrative examples of residents indirectly trying to change the behaviour of their housemates. Such notes were not part of the research strategy for this thesis, but their cultural presence and notoriety as a recognised part of life within shared accommodation serves to demonstrate the more subtle measures that appear to be more readily available to residents than directly dealing with issues overtly.

The majority of examples explored so far illustrate where people had issues with another housemate's behaviour that were dealt with indirectly. Within this research, there were some more extreme examples where explicit measures had been taken to address a grievance. Polly (29, healthcare), narrated a situation where a housemate took great exception to a guest staying in a spare room within their house for a few days, to such

an extent that the whole household went through a great deal of turmoil while trying to deal with it. While both parties intended to explicitly state their positions, the divergence in both expectation and practice became so great, even with grievances being explicit, that the situation escalated out of control of the house itself, with one resident appealing to more than one authority structure outside of the residence.

P [An old housemate] had someone come and stay and she said to [Gabi], another female housemate] 'Oh, I've got a friend coming to stay'. We had a study, a little bedroom, 'she's just going to stay there for five nights, she's got a job near here and she starts soon and I said that she could stay'. [Gabi] went 'yeah, ok.' Then ten seconds later came marching down the stairs, 'No, it's not OK! She needs to pay some rent! She needs to pay this!', so [the old housemate] said, 'No, sorry, that's not happening, so like get over it.' She's like, 'No, no it's subletting.' So she went to the agency that we were using to tell them that we were subletting but in order to that she needed to provide some evidence, so flung open the door at 11pm when this girl [who had come to stay for a few days] had literally just finished getting changed, flung open the door and took a photo on her mobile phone of her in this room. So obviously this poor girl [X] is like, 'What's going on?' So she decided to sleep in [another housemate's] room, which is a fire hazard, she wasn't a very tidy girl. So she slept in there for the rest of the week. But [Gabi] kept going on, and on, and on about this. So, it came to about the Thursday evening, yeah about Thursday, and that had happened on the Sunday, and I said to her, '[Gabi], enough of this. I've given you a copy of the contract; we're not breaching the contract. If she does pay then we are breaching the contract. So, just to let you know, she's not going to pay anything, the bills are hardly anything cuz it's summer, even if we worked out it would be like £1.50 each or something that we would save, so it's just not going to happen, but here's a copy of the contract.' So she took it, flung it over at [another housemate] and slammed the door shut. This was about 10pm. So we all go up to our rooms, have a bit of a chat first, and the girls and have got to get up in the morning, I've got to get up, so we all go off, and about 1am and I heard <bangs on desk>. I was like 'What's going?!'. Must have been part of my dream. Got a text in the morning saying, 'If you're awake then we're all in [another housemate's] room.' I was like, 'OK...' Now what had actually happened was, [Gabi] had called the police about 1.30am and told them that we were blocking her passageways around the house and that she felt threatened in her own home, so two really obnoxious young male police officers had come in and she'd let them do this, she'd let them into the front room. They'd gone, not into my room, and I don't know why this is, I don't know what I did to make her not as obnoxious to me as the other girls, but especially as I was so harsh with her in the first place... Then she, erm, was... The two police officers just walked into these two girls bedrooms, erm, and told them that they would be arrested if they didn't cease their actions. They were like, 'Hang on, we're asleep, in bed, what have we done?' The police officers were like, 'you've been threatening your housemate.' So both of them were like you've heard one side of the story, you haven't heard both, like we've been in bed for three hours and haven't done anything wrong.

In this extended example, we can see that housemates were very clear about their own expectations of how this situation should play out. Gabi did not want someone staying in the house without paying rent, and then subsequently did not want her staying in the house at all; Polly and the other housemates were confident that their friend making use of the spare room for a few days was reasonable and entailed no legal constraints, unless payment was taken. They were confident that any authority structure that could intervene (the law) would be satisfied with their actions. However, even though both

parties had been clear and explicit with each other, their expectations diverged to such an extent – and at such a speed – that neither party was able to negotiate a middle ground. In contrast to the previous examples, where indirect strategies allowed some sort of mediation of conflicting practices or expectations (even where that mediation was either not explicit or successful), this instance instead created even more issues of conflict. The overt confrontation of the issue illustrated the differing views and expectations of the housemates, and unwillingness to move toward a middle ground.

A key feature of the example is Gabi's appeal to a higher authority: the police. As previously mentioned, the flat hierarchies within shared housing can be both liberating and constraining to many people, providing an (ideally) equitable place to live, but also requiring a constant renegotiation of the conditions of that living environment in order to ensure that everyone is happy with those conditions. This constant negotiation is a cognitively tiring process. This is a key feature as it indicates both how constraining and wearying the conditions of a flat hierarchy can be. If ontological needs cannot be met – that they feel empowered and comfortable in their 'home' - ultimately there was a need to appeal to someone who has the authority to intervene, where previously all outcomes had to be achieved through a process of negotiation. As extreme as the reaction may appear to be, Gabi clearly felt tremendously unsettled by her housemates' behaviour and unwillingness to capitulate, and wanted this redress.

Relating these notions of conflict, 'signs', 'barriers' and 'passive aggression' to Goffman's dramaturgical approach (1969), one can appreciate that within shared accommodation residents may never truly feel in the 'backstage' but constantly vigilant, and on the 'front stage', having to 'manage impressions' to avoid conflict. Residents manage a sense of ontological security, in the sense suggested by Saunders (1990), by avoidance and passive-aggression and by not investing unduly in particular housemates, or any given shared house, instead taking comfort in the knowledge that the residence is not a permanent state of affairs, and will come to an end.

Moving on from shared housing: reflections on experiences and the potential of different housing pathways

It is the transient nature of shared accommodation that this chapter now moves on to. The negative experiences of shared living often precipitate an exit into an alternative form of living, choosing to go where the grass *appears* greener, such as solo or conjugal living, and without the level of negotiation that participants narrate as present within shared accommodation. Some participants have narrated other reasons for moving away from shared accommodation, such as an aspiration to own their own home, or

move in with a partner, without expressing dissatisfaction with shared living, and some saying that they will miss the freedoms that it provides.

As mentioned in previous chapters, occupants of shared accommodation often see it as a temporary living situation before they move on to more permanent and secure forms of living, such as living on their own, moving in with a partner, or buying a house. Living within shared accommodation is often seen as an intermediary step between leaving university or moving out of the parental home and these more 'traditional' or secure housing options, with shared accommodation filling both social and economic needs: affordability, geographic mobility and living with (relatively) social similars. As Kenyon and Heath (2001) note, this does not mean that sharers necessarily see shared accommodation as a constraining choice, but evidence from my participants suggest that it is seen as a temporary choice *until* a different choice becomes a realistic alternative.

This section deals with the trajectories that some participants have followed or aspire to follow when leaving shared accommodation, and narrates the reflections that occupants have on the temporary nature of the accommodation and how their experiences have influenced their future choices. As previously noted, Clapham's (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009) concept of a housing pathway – defined as 'patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space' (2005, p.27) – combines elements of social practices, time-space geography and concepts of housing career, to consider the upward and downward movement of housing position of a household, focusing on the lifecourse and life-events, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth and changes in occupational circumstances, including unemployment or retirement. These issues, particularly the notion of housing career, are important when we consider 'moving on' from shared accommodation, as something that participants see as *in process*, rather than stagnant, with episodes of living within shared accommodation often ending due to a developing fatigue of having to cater for other residents' needs and wants while also trying to cater for their own, or due to moving on to another step in the 'traditional' household trajectory, such as buying a house, or moving in with a partner.

Co-ownership: a step between 'sharing' and 'owning'?

Before moving on to those people who chose to leave shared accommodation completely, it is worth exploring those who have opted for an intermediary step between shared accommodation, and solo- or couple-households: those people who purchased their home in a shared arrangement. While these were a small part of my cohort (two households), the experiences of co-owners were distinct from co-tenants due to their financial investment in the property, but retained elements of shared housing due to the nature of the relationships between them. Within these examples from my participants,

they indicate that shared ownership of a home operates as a hybrid between sovereign ownership and renting, offering the social aspects of shared housing, with the financial stability and 'good sense' of ownership. Interestingly, within both of the examples, the shared ownership model is likened to a family or couple type relationship, but yet also distinct.

Jon (35, graphic designer) explained that he and Suzanne (37, healthcare) had previously lived together in a shared house elsewhere in Manchester, but needed to move as the house they occupied was being sold. Subsequently, they chose to buy somewhere together.

J I think it was just circumstance. We both wanted to get somewhere, we thought about renting somewhere together, and, at the time it was quite cheap for what it was, and it made sense to try and get somewhere. I would have been, what, 30? 30-something? And [Suzanne's] a bit older than me. So it made sense to try and finally get somewhere, erm... And even though it is a place which is mine, because we own it, it feels like a shared house as well. So, like even though [Karen's] a lodger, she's like family, so it's sort, it's just like a family home, but shared home, but kind of mine and hers at the same time.

For Jon, the living situation straddled the expectations or notions he would have of a familial home, and also that of shared housing. Jon was a veteran of shared living, having lived in multiple shared houses since leaving university; but this particular house, because of his 'stake' in the property, had the added sense of the familial about it, in addition to the freedoms he associated with shared accommodation. He infers, that in terms of his housing pathway, his age was a factor, and that it 'made sense' to 'finally' get somewhere', where that 'getting' is 'owning' and not renting.

Similarly, Nadia (29, housing officer) suggested that the approach she and her co-owner took to the property was analogous to that of a 'husband and wife', even though they were not in a relationship. They had chosen to purchase the property they had been living in after three years of renting it together.

N Yes. I'd been thinking about it for a couple of years because I was in a position to do it, but [my housemate] was doing a [course], so I wasn't in a position to buy on my own, so we waited for her to get a job. We waited for about six months before we did it, once she was in the job for six months, and then decided to do it. ... It's just like a husband and wife would do it. You don't do anything different; both of your names are on everything. We never considered having any kind of legal agreement between us because the kind of documents we signed, like life insurance when you set up the mortgage if one of you dies, the other one gets all the debt. It is like husband and wife, except that you are different individuals.

This notion of 'family' and relating the relationship as 'husband and wife' is in contrast to the previous ways housemates related to one another within rented shared accommodation, where one could observe a demonstrable tension between independence and interdependence as sometimes problematic, particularly in terms of practical organisation. By relating their experiences to notions of 'families' and 'couples',

Jon and Nadia have reframed their experiences to acknowledge their interdependence in terms of co-ownership, yet Nadia also affirms they are still 'different individuals', indicating the echoes of a tension between independence and interdependence may still be at play.

The allure of living alone

After living in shared accommodation, some people feel a strong desire to live alone. As mentioned in previous chapters, while shared accommodation appears to offer people large amounts of freedom, to be a 'good' housemate, you still need to afford people consideration in how you conduct yourself within shared accommodation, making sure that you adhere to the household practices set by other residents in terms of such aspects as cleanliness, noise, and making sure bills are paid on time. The allure of living alone appears to be largely ignited by negative experiences of other housemates not meeting these implicit standards, becoming frustrated with having to tolerate a standard of living that does not meet their own, and endure divergent practices.

Hayley (26, postgraduate) explained why she felt that, for her, shared living had a limited shelf-life and how, as she has got older, she had become 'sick' of the effort that shared living required to ensure that it was a tolerable experience. She encapsulates the complexity of living within shared accommodation, and how it is a set of complex interpersonal and economic relationships that, for her, mean that it is a necessary yet transitory form of living, rather than one she wishes to maintain indefinitely. The effort to maintain convergent practices and coordinate routines is tiring; Hayley explains how the attraction of solo-living is not necessarily because of what it *is*, but what it *is not*.

H Yes, I'm so sick of living in shared houses. I am really sick of constantly moving. The constant negotiation that has to go on in shared houses, and I just want to have a space that's my space, and not have to worry about... am I monopolising the TV, or the front room? I'm really aware that if you're in a couple, and you're cuddling your partner, that it's not very welcoming to someone who walks in who wants to watch TV as well. I always feel self-conscious about that and at the same time you want to do that. So it's just stuff like that, and the washing up and the cooking. Or milk, or that kind of stuff. I'm just bored of it, and I'm getting a bit older and I just can't be bothered. Especially, with people's personalities, and getting to know new people, and working out how you're going to share the same living space. Yeah, I just wanna have my own space for a bit. But it's not going to happen, I can't afford it, but people can't afford to live on their own.

As discussed in previous chapters, many participants narrated the positives of shared living to be the social aspect, living with 'friends', and the level of independence it afforded; Hayley, however, is clear about the more constraining issues that can become manifest. That she wants to have her 'own' space, rather than sharing space, is indicative of the laborious nature of negotiating shared accommodation, and rather than offering a space where she can live her life openly and authentically, she is constantly

having to calculate the potential impact of her behaviour on other residents, such as being aware of monopolising the TV.

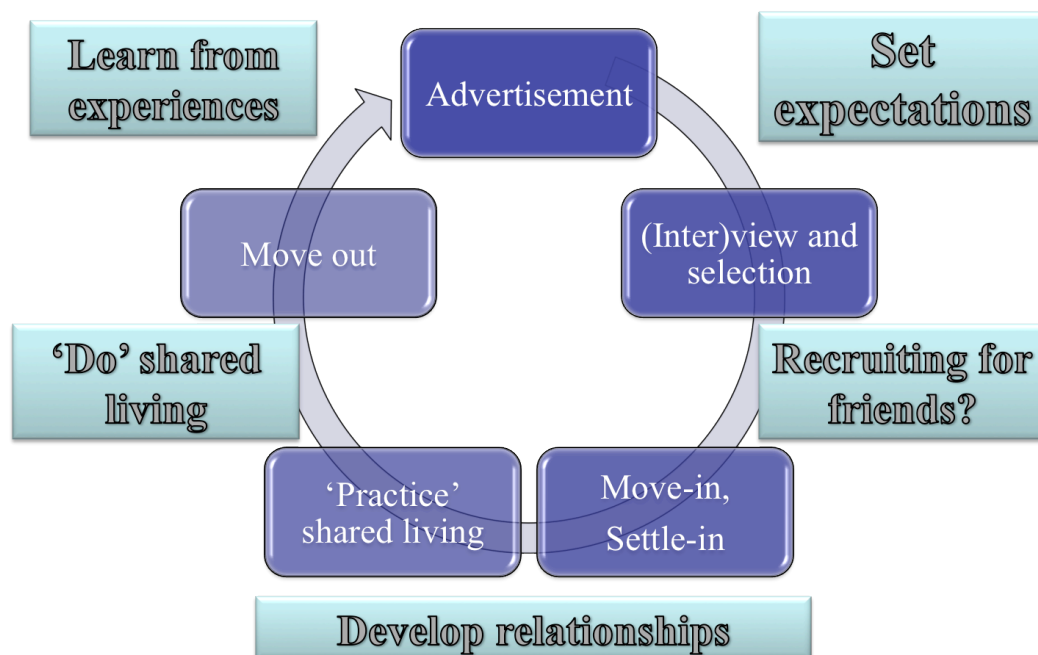
Louise (24, project manager) echoed these sentiments, explaining that her experiences of shared living had made her 'appreciate living alone a lot more'. Louise had recently organised to move into a flat on her own after many years of sharing and explained how she felt about shared living in retrospect.

L I would be incredibly reluctant to ever go back to shared living, as it was only a necessary means due to finances but it does make you appreciate living alone a lot more. ... Having your own and more space is the biggest direct contrast and the freedom associated. I can do what I want, have people over, sit in my pyjamas without fear of judgement. I don't have to consider anyone else or be considerate to other people now when it comes to making decisions that impact on my living arrangements.

Again, Louise affirms that notion of her 'own' space rather than shared space as the key benefit of solo-living rather than shared living. For both Hayley and Louise, the transient nature of shared living is not just due to its lack of stability, but also due to a sense of 'sharing fatigue' – that having to accommodate other people's needs was not something that can be maintained in the long term.

In relation to the 'house share cycle' that was previously introduced (figure 15, below), Louise and Hayley are reflecting on their experiences within shared living, which, in turn, have impacted their future choices, and their chosen trajectory on their housing pathway.

Figure 8: Shared Accommodation Cycle



Louise made a conscious decision to change the practices associated with her housing choice – namely, ‘sharing’ – and change her pathway, and Hayley illustrated her desire to change hers. As explored in chapter four, just as experiences of shared living within the context of university earlier on in their housing pathways endowed participants within this research with ‘skills’ that facilitated shared living, and enabled it as a housing ‘choice’, experiences within shared accommodation can become motivating forces to ‘step off’ the shared housing trajectory.

In contrast, one participant did not want to live alone, which serves to reaffirm the potential social benefits of shared living. Nicola (29, teacher), who is moving out of shared accommodation to move in with her partner, explained how she found the departure from shared living to solo living a ‘scary’ prospect, in terms of a lack of potential sociality, and also a sense of personal safety and security, which is otherwise provided by her co-residents.

I Would you just stay in shared housing if you weren’t moving in with your partner?

N Yes, I would. My brother has mentioned buying a house, but I really don’t want to live alone. Far too scary. Big responsibility. I don’t see renting as a waste of money. It’s not like you don’t get anything out of it, you get a lot out of it, such as living with friends. My long term plan would be shared houses rather than living on my own. However, if everyone left and lived on their own, I don’t think, at my age, that I would go and find another house and be another person. I’ve not particularly done that, that’s scary and I’m not that brave. I’d rather move in with someone I knew. I have friends with spare rooms as a short term measure until I got my own place.

I What’s the worst thing about thinking about living on your own?

N It’s scary. There are always people about here. So, you yearn to be on your own, but if they go to the cinema or whatever, I potter about a bit and then I get bored, and realise that I’m on my own. It’s quite boring. I want people around. I have grand plans, but I’ll be bored. But also scared – if there’s a creak. I’ve only had to sleep in this house on my own a couple of times.

Nicola is aware of the contradiction of wanting to live with others, and also the desire for solitude, but she is confident that shared living – or, for her, living with friends – is a positive housing pathway for her. However, she also recognises the transience of that pathway within her narrative: that other people can leave and ‘live on their own’, and the sense that her age would be a factor in continuing to live within shared living.

Moving in with a partner

Another reason given to leave shared accommodation is to move in with a partner. There were few instances of living with a partner *within* shared accommodation, or where participants had experience of this (although only one couple were currently in a relationship within their current shared household). It was seen as a more difficult arrangement than being single within shared accommodation as they had to stage-

manage their relationship in front of other housemates in order to not seem overly affectionate and make other people feel uncomfortable. As noted within chapter five, sharing space with couples was seen as something that was potentially uncomfortable for the couple, the other residents, or both, especially if they were being 'coupley' (such as public displays of affection). Lauren (35, researcher) and Ruth (40, civil servant) who were a couple living within the ideologically-led house share demonstrated that they were aware of this by having their own lounge upstairs, away from the shared lounge and kitchen, where they could be together without making other residents uncomfortable (despite their overarching commitment to communal living). Participants also narrated grievances where they had housemates whose partner was overstaying their welcome, and unofficially moving in. The tension is one of both resources and interpersonal relationships.

Nicola (29, teacher) was one participant who was on the precipice of moving out of shared accommodation and moving in with her long-term partner. She was approaching this with ambivalence and trepidation.

N I'm dreading it. I'm dreading being on my own without other housemates. I'm going to be round here [the house she is moving out of] lots. It's quite scary and I probably want a bit more time. It's going to be difficult. Testing. You've got a different relationship with your partner; you can tell them to do stuff. You can demand more things like move that umbrella.

As illustrated previously, Nicola has a fear of being 'on her own', and this is something that is causing her some anxiety – or 'dread'. Within shared accommodation, she perceives a sense of safety in numbers. Nicola also indicates the different nature and quality of the relationship that may exist with a partner as opposed to a housemate: with a partner there is some freedom to tell them what to do, whereas with a housemate, there is less licence to do so. This is a sentiment that was echoed by Steve (31, accountant) previously in chapter five where he felt it was more 'natural' to manage domestic practices within couples than it was within shared accommodation.

Carrying on, 'for the time being'

The vast majority of participants saw their potential to live in shared accommodation as having a limited timespan. Even though they may not have had the same negative experiences and narratives as Hayley and Louise, there was a tangible sense that living in shared accommodation *ad infinitum* was not the 'done' thing; it would be socially awkward. As part of the interview, all participants were asked how long they perceived staying in shared accommodation, and many of them responded with a similar tone of 'for the time being'. As Kenyon and Heath (2001) noted amongst their participants, the over-arching feeling was not that they were constrained *by* shared living, and that it presented a good option for them for now. However, two notable sentiments were observed from the participants within this thesis: firstly, the fear that they would end up

sharing past the age it was socially acceptable to do so; second, that it was not financially wise to carry on renting, and that purchasing was a more responsible option.

David (23, healthcare) illustrated the first sentiment when talking about his future plans. He was planning to leave to go to medical school in the near future, and expressed that although he realised he would be sharing during that time, it was not something he wanted to do forever.

D I used to live with my boyfriend before we split up and I moved here. I did enjoy that... <Laughs> Though it didn't end well! [...] I'm hoping that once I finish uni again I'll be to afford my own place in London rather than share. [...] It would be nice to live in a couple again.

Rachel (31, project manager) also suggested that she did not want to rent forever, reflecting the second sentiment, and worried about when it would cease to be considered socially acceptable to share as she got older.

R I've come to decision that I am going to be perpetually single. [Bad experiences with previous housemates] have made me think about buying a house. Thinking about it a bit more again now with all the current situation [as a housemate is leaving soon]. I'm 31 – when does it become uncool to live in a shared house? Yes, I am fed up with my money going to a landlord. My parents have said that they would invest. Sharing is fine for the time being.

Finally, Karen (30, social care) expressed a need to find either a relationship or independence as she felt her current situation was not ideal.

K I either want to find somewhere to live on my own or find a boyfriend. I think it's more likely to be the former. I like living with Jon and Suzanne [who co-own the house] but it's their house, and Suzanne is moving in the next few weeks. I'll have to see how it goes with whoever moves in. I would have liked to have not been sharing by now, but Jon and Suzanne were great at letting me stay.

The excerpts above indicate a number of prevalent sentiments: the social desirability of buying your own rather than renting; the social acceptability of sharing when you are 'older'; and the desirability of relationships. These issues are clearly implicated in the housing pathways of many of the participants, and assist in the constitution of shared living as a transient rather than permanent form of accommodation.

By using the notion of housing pathways, and appreciating the experiences of participants across their lifecourse, and how their experiences will impact their future choices, there are some observable characteristics of shared accommodation that buttress its role as a transient rather than perpetual form of accommodation. Where relationships and practices within the households were 'good', participants viewed their experiences as largely acceptable. However, when practices were less well aligned, and interpersonal relationships were not as positive, this had an impact on how participants felt about their accommodation, and their notion of 'home'. Within the first part of this chapter the difficulties in dealing with issues of conflict and divergent practice

were highlighted, with Saunder's (1990) notion of the ontologically secure home as stable, predictable and secure being illustrated as of importance to participants. Where stability, predictability and security were undermined, they felt less 'at home' or happy with the living situation. Participants narrated a reluctance to approach issues of conflict and divergent practice with other residents, instead choosing to use more indirect or subtle methods of resolution to try and bring about behavioural change, causing divergent practice that led to instability. This reluctance was similar to the reluctance noted in previous chapters, that they wished to avoid an 'atmosphere' or a 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000).

Summary

This chapter has considered two elements of shared housing: issues of conflict, and how they are dealt with (or not); and 'moving on' from shared housing, and how experiences of shared accommodation inform future housing choices and preferences. In some cases, issues of conflict were directly involved in those future choices.

Building on notions of 'recruitment into practices' and a reluctance to raise issues of divergence of practice due to *potential* confrontation– or 'sticky situations' (Sabini et al. 2000) – the first part of this chapter looked specifically at issues of 'conflict'. Conflict, in this section, was not necessarily overt conflict between residents, where there may be an explicit argument or disagreement that is addressed between the residents, but also refers to a conflict of, or between, practices, or divergences in practices: where different residents had differing notions and ideals for how they wished to go about their everyday lives. This was considered in relation to Saunder's (1990, p.361) notion of the 'home' providing 'ontological security'

'Where people feel in control of their environment, free from surveillance, free to be themselves and at ease, in the deepest psychological sense, in a world that might at times be experienced as threatening and uncontrollable.'

From examples from participants, it was evident that where ideals of practice did diverge, their sense of 'home' was undermined. From Alison's (23, marketing) feeling of physical insecurity because of her housemate not locking the front door, to Fiona's (41, healthcare) experience of her housemate suddenly starting to wander around the house naked, these examples suggest a lack of control over their environment and a lack of ease. The world that 'might at times be experienced as threatening and uncontrollable' (Saunders 1990, p.361) was coming in through the front door, rather than being held back at the doorstep.

When considering *how* participants attempted to deal with issues of conflict there was further evidence of a reluctance to 'rock the boat' or create a 'sticky situation' that we

saw in the previous chapter. Rather than deal with issues of conflict directly, more subtle approaches were used, such as 'signs' and 'barriers' that aimed to modify the behaviour of others, such as Fiona making lots of noise so her exhibitionist housemate would be aware she was there (a 'sign'), to Benjamin (30, postgraduate) leaving the room to avoid interaction complete (a 'barrier'). Alternatively, some issues were dealt with indirectly by venting their frustration through behaviour that the other resident may never even know about, such as Louise's (24, project manager) vengeance on a noisy, unapproachable housemate, by turning the tap on when he was in the shower, which has no clear benefit other than to make her 'feel better'. Such ways of dealing with conflict were not viewed as overt aggression, but 'passive aggression' (Wetzler 1992), using manipulative, obstructive or procrastinating behaviours in order to bring about change, with varying results.

One problematizing factor was the lack of clear hierarchy within peer-shared accommodation. The authority that could be appealed to that may be present in other forms of household, such as familial households, or types of relationship that allow a 'licence' to raise issues, such as family or partners, are not necessarily present within peer-shared accommodation. As well as being a liberating and independent form of living, the lack of clear hierarchy can also cause fatigue. From the example of Gabi calling the police over issues of 'sharing', the absence of a clear hierarchy was so frustrating that an alternate authority structure was brought in due to the absence of any resolution between housemates.

A notable feature of shared housing – its inherent transience – was one factor that contributed to the lack of overt conflict resolution. As shared accommodation is often seen as an episodic and temporary 'step' on the road to longer term residency arrangements, those participants who were experiencing conflict sought solace in the 'expiry date' that was attached to that behaviour, knowing that it need not be a permanent arrangement, either because the perpetrator was leaving, or they could choose to leave.

The latter aspect – leaving shared accommodation – was considered in the second part of this chapter, where the impact of experiences of shared living on future choices was examined. There were varying attitudes to shared accommodation as an ongoing form of living, but a tangible sense that there were other, more acceptable, forms of living to achieve, such as owning your own home, or living with a partner. Additionally, as Rachel (31, project manager) noted, there was a question as to when it was 'uncool' – or socially unacceptable – to live in a shared house. However, many participants were happy to carry on for the foreseeable future, or until other opportunities arose.

Where participants narrated a desire to move out of shared housing, possibly to live alone, this was attributed to the fatigue of 'constant negotiation' and a desire for their 'own space'. Having your 'own space' had the potential to provide the freedom to 'not worry' about 'monopolising the TV', or be able to 'sit in [your] pyjamas without fear of judgement', which is in contrast to 'shared space' that seemed to demand an awareness of the 'other' in the space, and their feelings and values, or 'people's personalities'. For Louise and Hayley, their experiences of shared living influenced what they did *not want* from future housing choices.

The positive aspects were illustrated by one participant who was planning on moving in with a partner who recognised the value of living with others, the alleviation of boredom, and the friendship that it can provide. However, it was contingent on the continued desire for others to share, and she was aware this reliance of others for that to continue.

Through the lenses of theories of practice and housing pathways, and an appreciation of issues of relationality within individual housing pathways and enactments of practice, we can observe the contingent nature of 'successful' 'sharing'. The contingent factors are relatively aligned practices (and expectations and values of practice), positive interpersonal relations, and an on-going desire to share. Again, we particularly see the issue of relationality at play within the enactment of practice, with 'carriers' of practice – the 'doers' of 'sharing' – feeling an undermined sense of 'home' (or 'ontological security') and more creative forms of practice as a means of resolution. Just because a form of practice is valorised as 'good' or 'acceptable', there are demonstrable diversions from this, and considerable tension felt by those on the receiving end of these differing forms of household practice. The contingency of shared accommodation – the reliance on others for its continued maintenance – was a factor in the deployment of passive-aggressive attempts at conflict resolution, rather than more overt (and perhaps, more effective) methods that may have resulted in confrontations, 'sticky situations', or rocking the boat.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

Most aspects of social life require us to share something with others (even it is no more than the sharing of our physical environment), and sharing as a social accomplishment appears to be a necessary feature of practically all social encounters. Yet despite the ubiquity and centrality of 'sharing' to social life, there is a surprising dearth of sociological work on 'sharing' itself. Whilst a number of sociological literatures have addressed aspects of sharing, the focus of such literatures has either been highly selective (focusing on particular and isolated types of sharing, of specific items or goods) or the focus of such accounts has not been on 'sharing' *per se*. This thesis argues that the concept and practice of sharing requires much more serious and sustained sociological attention, and the research undertaken in this study provides a preliminary sketch of some of the key empirical and theoretical questions, which must be addressed in a more developed sociology of sharing.

This thesis has used the empirical case study of peer-shared accommodation as a context and vehicle to examine questions of 'sharing'. This case study was selected because it offered the opportunity to explore a range of different 'stuff' being shared and so the coordination of different kinds of sharing practice; but also because shared accommodation demonstrates sharing in everyday, domestic situations, and thus 'sharing' as an embodied, habitual and routine set of practices. Whilst domestic 'sharing' has been examined, albeit indirectly, in research on family and conjugal households, there has been little research that explores such sharing practices amongst non-kin, and peer-shared accommodation also affords an opportunity to examine how different kinds of interpersonal relationships affect the nature of sharing practices. The analytic frameworks of 'theories of practice' and the 'housing pathways' approach were used to explore how 'sharing' operates within the milieu of peer-shared accommodation, with this case study being employed in order to contribute to a more developed conceptual understanding of 'sharing' more broadly. Through a mixed methodological strategy, using the analysis of shared accommodation advertisements and in-depth interviews with a sample of (largely) young professionals living in shared households, the research has indicated that 'sharing' must be understood not just as a 'form of exchange', but as a negotiated social practice with issues of relationality at the core of its successful negotiation. One of the central findings of this analysis of 'sharing' within shared accommodation is the complexity of sharing, and I argue here that 'sharing' must be seen as a contingent practice. 'Sharing' encompasses lots of different kinds of sharing practices, and how sharing is organised and negotiated depends on what is being shared; who it is being shared with; and where and why that sharing is taking place. Related to this point about the complexity and contingency of sharing is a further point: that successful sharing should be seen as a practical skill. So whilst 'sharing' may

often be taken-for-granted and tacitly understood, it is nonetheless a practical accomplishment, and the performance of different kinds of contingent sharing practices is something that must be learnt over time, and negotiated (and renegotiated) with others. In addition, 'sharing' appears to be easier to accomplish where there have been instances of 'sharing' in the past that can be used as a guide or template for how to 'share' within a similar context in the future.

It has been argued that 'sharing', and being able to share successfully, are key factors affecting our ability to achieve a more sustainable future. However, the processes and mechanisms that encourage or inhibit sharing are not well understood, either in terms of structural configurations (the contexts within which individuals 'share') or the relationality between sharers (the quality and form of the relationships of those sharing). This concluding chapter examines how the research undertaken in this thesis demonstrates the complex and contingent nature of sharing, and indicates the sociological significance of context and relationality in sharing practices. As such, it also presents some conceptual and methodological suggestions for future research into this key social concept. I argue that one fruitful direction for any future sociology of sharing is through the use of a *contingent* model of sharing.

The need for a more integrated sociology of sharing

In making the case that there is a need for a more developed and integrated sociological account of sharing, I have argued that work which addresses questions of sharing is scattered across a range of literatures and with little dialogue across them. These literatures often focus on partial and selective accounts of distinct types of sharing which, when taken together, demonstrate that distinctly types of sharing operate quite differently. The need for a more integrated, yet more differentiated, account, which considers the range and variation in sharing practices is, I argue, apparent. So, for example, whilst there is a preliminary literature that focuses directly on 'sharing', it has been limited in a number of important respects. Firstly, by its own admission, it offers an 'imprecise' conceptual definition of 'sharing' (Belk 2010), and has often been subsumed within theories of gifting and reciprocity despite 'sharing' being distinct in nature and practice from these other forms (Woodburn 1998). Secondly, existing analyses are heavily focused on 'sharing' as a consumer, rather than a wider social behaviour, and either use the 'family' as a prototype for the organisation of consumer sharing (Belk 2006; Belk 2007; Belk 2010); or else focus on specific instances of 'sharing', rather than sharing more broadly (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). There has been some work on the promise of 'sharing' as a sustainability measure, and on the development of a 'sharing economy' to encourage underused asset utilization (Botsman and Rogers 2011; Sacks 2011) but this work has

failed to consider the realities of sharing as an interpersonal and relational practice, or as a practical endeavour. Thirdly, and finally, existing analyses have focused on those instances of 'sharing' where there are clear lines of ownership of the 'stuff' being shared, with Belk (2006) overtly disregarding communal goods and services. Again, here the focus has largely been on the 'familial prototype' as a basis for conceptualising sharing. As a result, such work has left important areas of 'sharing' in the shadows, neglecting 'sharing' that occurs outside of a familial context, or where there is no clear indication of ownership (the sharing of non-sovereign goods). Further, there is little research that examines the practice of 'sharing' as an emotional and relational experience, as well as a pragmatic endeavour. This thesis has attempted to directly focus on these under researched areas using the context of peer-shared accommodation. Peer-shared accommodation is an example of a relational and pragmatic form of sharing: affording insight into domestic sharing but with non-kin (and within relatively non-hierarchical, 'flat' structural relationship); and of the everyday, routine 'necessary' sharing of communal, non-sovereign goods .

There are, of course, useful literatures that whilst not taking 'sharing' as their primary focus nonetheless highlight certain aspects of 'sharing'. The most pertinent literature for this thesis (as indicated by Belk (2010)) is the work on family practices and domestic life. These researches, which explore the nuances and patterns of the 'every day' in families and households, raise some valuable points for the researcher attempting to piece together an understanding of sharing within a domestic context. Firstly, such research demonstrates that while there is difference and diversity in how family and domestic practices are carried out 'on the ground', there are nonetheless normative ideals and demarcated roles providing some guidelines for how, for example, the management of finances (Vogler 1998; Finch 1989; Finch and Mason 1993) or the division of domestic labour (DeVault 1994; Kaufmann 1998) should be carried out. Such work usefully point to the significance of power dynamics, gender and age relations, and questions of interpersonal commitment and obligation in the organisation of household practices more generally. So, for example, there is often a gendered dynamic to household divisions of labour, a dynamic echoed outside of the familial context in Natalier's (2004) research within Australian 'share houses'. Secondly, research on family practices and domestic life indicates that the 'doing' of family – how responsibilities and roles are practically organised – is dynamic, negotiated over time, and requires effort. The 'doing' of domestic life, then, even where there are roles or ideals that provide a reference point for that 'doing', is not simple or straightforward. The third, and related point to emerge from the work on family practices, is the relational nature of family practices, as always inherently formed through the play of interconnection (Smart 2007). These literatures lend insights to a broader analysis of 'sharing' by alerting us to the importance and value of analysing both the idealised and moral values of sharing in domestic life, as

well as attending the messier and negotiated reality of sharing in practice, 'on the ground'. It also alerts us to the significance of the nature and quality of the relationships within domestic contexts, and including their power dynamics.

However, the contribution of these literatures to a broader conceptual understanding of 'sharing' is restricted in several important respects. Work on family practices inevitably does not help us to address how sharing occurs with 'non-kin', and outside of familial settings. Such sharing is likely to be significantly different because there are less well-established normative structures or moral values about how one should share with non-kin, and this requires exploration. The relational ties between non-kin are also often more contingent and – particularly in relations between peers – often exhibit a very different power dynamic than that found amongst families or conjugal partners. These differences alert us to the possibility that the 'doing' of 'sharing' within non-kin may be more dynamic, and require more on-going negotiation than that found in familial settings. Finally 'sharing' between non-kin is also more likely to be affected by social differences than amongst kin (as kin are more likely to share many significant social characteristics as well as many elements of biography), so we might expect successful sharing amongst non-kin to be related to how 'similar' the practitioners' characteristics are, and whether their expectations and 'habitus' mesh (or not). Finally, and again because of the different relationality between kin and non-kin, the expectations of what sharing 'is' may differ outside of familial contexts. For example, what may be considered elective 'sharing' amongst non-kin, such as offering friends or housemates food when cooking, may be better considered as 'redistribution' within the moral economy (Morgan 2001) of the family, where there is a habitual expectation of communal food provision.

All of these differences mean that peer-shared households allow us to explore 'sharing' beyond the familial focus of existing analyses, enabling us to look at the necessary and sustained nature of household sharing practices, but with a very different angle on issues of relationality. By their nature, peer-shared households require sharing as part of their on-going organisation, but also have differing qualities of obligation and sanction from that are evident within familial relationships, as well as an inherent transience (an 'end date') not necessarily present within familial relationships, which have at least an aspiration for longevity. The analysis of 'sharing' within peer-shared households provides an opportunity to begin a more integrated analysis of 'sharing' as a broader, social practice. Expanding the focus of existing analyses – to examine sharing between social actors who do not share strong relational ties, who share a range of stuff and sharing practices, and whose trajectory of peer-shared accommodation is often transitory – this thesis explores the diverse, contingent and negotiated aspects of 'sharing'.

This chapter now turns to précis this empirical project and summarises the key findings derived from it. Building on these findings, the main conceptual and empirical contributions of the research will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on the value of exploring relational ties as an important aspect of 'sharing'. This will be followed by a discussion of the implications of understanding 'sharing' as a contingent and differentiated social practice. Finally the chapter reflects on the conceptual and methodological approach adopted in the research, and considers the implications of this for further research.

Key points from the empirical research: how 'sharing' in peer-shared households was researched and understood

Before I can summarise the main empirical findings of the research, it is first necessary to recap the research strategy and methodological approach adopted in the study. The research adopted the following questions in order to explore how sharing is conducted in shared households:

- What are the processes by which flatmates are recruited both into shared households and into the shared practices of those households?
- How is sharing empirically understood, negotiated, practiced and developed within shared accommodation?
- How does the nature of the relationships and relationality between 'sharers' impact on the perceived 'success', 'failure' or 'willingness' to 'share'?

In order to address these aims, this thesis embraced Clapham's call for existing housing studies to go 'beyond the front door' (2005, p.37) to investigate just how households understand the world and 'do' sharing. The theoretical frameworks of 'theories of practice' and the 'housing pathways' approach were combined in order to provide both a temporal and practical lens through which to observe the everyday aspects of household 'sharing'. 'Theories of practice' (Schatzki et al. 2001; Warde 2005; Shove et al. 2012) provide a way of conceptualising the 'doing' of sharing as a collection of ordered and practical behaviours. Such approaches stress the collective, routine, and habitual of social practices and focus both on how people are 'recruited into' and acquire the skills of practices over time but also focuses on how people actively constitute such practices by their performances of them. This approach was coupled with Clapham's 'housing pathways' approach (2002; 2004; 2005; 2009) to provide a methodological and analytical focus on shared households as a 'continually changing set of relationships and interactions' that are experienced 'over time in [the] consumption of housing' (Clapham 2005, p.27) and included a focus on intra-house dynamics, such as those between co-residents; life-events; and also interactions outside of the household. Combining these analytical perspectives, therefore, methodologically entailed examining

not just the constituencies, relationality and range of sharing practices within shared households but also meant exploring the dynamic trajectories of these elements; and so considering how people are recruited into shared households and into sharing practices, as well as how such households and practices change and develop over time. This framework provided the foundation to investigate empirically what it means to 'share', and to address how interpersonal relations – or relationalities (Smart 2007) – may empower or inhibit the practice of sharing.

Using a qualitative approach, the research considered (i) the experiences and range of practices deployed by participants as they searched for and were recruited into a shared house, (ii) their past and present experiences living within shared housing, and (iii) how those experiences influenced anticipated future housing pathways. 31 participants from 18 households from Chorlton and Didsbury in Greater Manchester were recruited to take part in qualitative, semi-structured interviews explored the following empirical questions:

- How was sharing variously negotiated and practiced over time by participants within shared accommodation?
- How did participants perceive, conceptualise and value 'shared accommodation' within the context of their lifecourse and housing pathway?
- How did the changing configurations of individuals and experiences within shared households affect these perceptions, conceptualisations and values?

The use of interviews necessitated a focus on how people *talk* about their sharing experiences (rather than, say, direct ethnographic observation), and so also required the analysis of findings to take into account the following issues:

- How residents *narrated* the process and experience of living within shared accommodation?
- How the notion of 'sharing' is narrated?
- What factors (tangible, intangible or interpersonal) impact on the practice of 'sharing' and its perceived (and narrated) success or failure?

In addition, 360 GumTree house share advertisements from Chorlton and Didsbury were analysed to explore the dominant traits that can be observed in house share advertising as an ancillary method of exploring recruitment into shared households as well as 'recruitment into shared housing practices'.

The research material was analysed and reported along three key substantive areas, summarised below.

- I. Recruitment into shared households and how the recruitment process formed part of a larger process of recruitment into 'practices';

- II. How 'sharing' was 'practiced' in shared housing across types of 'shared' 'stuff', including bills and finances; food and supplies; cleaning and responsibilities; and sharing of space.
- III. How issues of 'conflict' were addressed (or not) in shared accommodation, and how experiences of shared accommodation impacted future housing choices.

In relation to 'housing pathways' this emphasis on trajectories through households helped to analyse the broader practices, and recruitment into practices, outlined within chapters four, five and six. The emphasis on trajectories along the pathways of a shared accommodation 'cycle' stresses the interrelated nature of steps along housing pathways rather than each 'step' being seen as static and insular, and allowed examination of how experiences within past and current accommodation can influence future housing choices. Past experiences often altered the choices people made about the sorts of household they wanted to live in, or the people they wished to recruit to a household, or even choices to leave shared households to live in a different form of accommodation completely. However, it is important to note that the notion of a shared accommodation 'cycle' is not meant to be determining or linear; rather, it illustrates the idea that individuals who live in multiple shared houses experience a 'career', and the significance of trajectory along pathways. Individuals could step off of this pathway, and on to another, should the opportunity and desire arise. Nonetheless the notion of movements along pathways is a useful framing device, and so each temporal 'step', and the empirical and theoretical contributions of such an analysis, will now be discussed in greater length.

Recruitment into shared housing, and recruitment into practices

Chapter four explored recruitment into shared housing and into the sharing practices of such households. The initial process of recruitment into shared housing is strongly characterized by processes of 'homophily': the matching 'social similars' with similar expectations and practices through an 'informalised' process, which used language and procedures analogous to that of employment recruitment or online dating. Starting from the advertisement of spaces in shared households, where efforts were made to present a certain 'type' of household, and to attract a particular 'type' of person desired, and based on previous experiences in shared accommodation, such 'signalling' or 'matching' processes were evident. Far from simple and straightforward, the process of finding a shared house or housemate through adverts and interviews involved negotiation over mutual compatibility, both practically and interpersonally, through a regime of explicit questions with implicit assumptions, and sweeping judgments. Via a swift and 'unnatural' (inter)viewing process, Participants narrated housemate interviews as a search to seek out the character of individuals they were meeting, a process of using implicit questioning to ascertain whether they had the 'skills', 'taste' or 'habitus'

(Bourdieu 1984) necessary to 'share' successfully. Participants made judgements, a form of housemate 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984) using cues from lifestyle and social status to decide if prospective housemates were 'endowed with dispositions or tastes that are similar' (Bourdieu 1990, p.71) that so sufficiently compatible with existing household practices and expectations. Though couched in implicit terms, participants were aware of the disingenuous nature of this process, describing it as an 'audition' where people could play the part of the role required, and be on their 'best behaviour', rather than the person you may end up living with. This initial recruitment stage indicates how important the 'correct' relationality was to successful practice: not only were participants looking for someone who could be a successful 'carrier' of the household's practices, they wanted to live with people who had the interpersonal qualities that would make 'sharing' a pleasant experience, rather than a procedural one.

This recruitment process formed the first part of a resident's recruitment into 'practice' – the collection of 'elements' (Shove et al. 2012) that make up the routines, habits, preferences and conventions of the shared house that – how things are 'done'. Certain expectations and standards were 'signalled' in the (inter)view process, such as the level of household cleanliness, but other standards needed to be acquired once the resident's foot was in the door. New residents had to 'learn the ropes' and acquire knowledge and experience of those practices through 'mimetic apprenticeship' (Shove et al. 2012, p.70) – often a case of watching and learning. Often participants assumed a great deal of knowledge of practice from new residents, expecting them to take to shared living as 'fish to water', transferring experiences of practice from other, similar contexts, such as previous shared accommodation or university. However, those who lacked such experiences could find such expectations disconcerting, and noted that they often did not know the 'rules of the game' at the outset of house sharing.

The common assumption among the research cohort was that the alignment of routines and practices was something that should be – and most often was – organised on an informal, casual, and tacit basis, rather than as an explicit or formalised process. The tacit and unspoken nature of 'how sharing was done' in shared households could however present difficulties, particularly when routines that were once aligned become disrupted, or when interpersonal differences override pragmatism. As explored in chapter six, the unspoken nature of many elements of shared living, such as routines, rules and expectations, often made misalignment of expectations and practice uncomfortable to address, and difficult to renegotiate when conflict arose, or when things went wrong. Although the majority of participants spoke of the assimilation of mundane routines as unproblematic, acquiring them through mimetic apprenticeship, such ease of transition was facilitated by the matching of expectations at recruitment,

and there also appeared to be a sense of pre-existing skill and knowledge that allowed this to happen, enabling the tacit organisation of sharing practices.

How is 'stuff' 'shared' in shared housing?

Following on from this examination of recruitment into houses and into initial household practices, chapter five considered the practicalities and organisation of 'sharing' within shared accommodation. In exploring the 'practices' of 'sharing' different kinds non-sovereign 'stuff' – the 'stuff' that no one individual has full ownership or control over – it became apparent that such sharing was complexly organised and often a subtle and laborious process. The analysis considered four distinct 'areas' of sharing utilities and bills; food and supplies; tasks and practices; and space. The chapter therefore focused on a range of complex of shared practices within a shared household – such as sharing payment for rent or utilities; sharing tasks and responsibilities, such as cleaning; sharing commodities, such as milk and bread; and the sharing of time, space and the coordination of routines such as the use of a living room or of a shower at given times, using the framework of 'theories of practice' – which sees all social practices as inherently coordinated collections of activity, or 'entities' (Shove et al. 2012). It is this complex coordination of shared practices and facilities which serve to constitute 'shared housing' as *shared* housing, where residents are required to share aspects of their lives that are both tangible (furniture, utensils, for example) and intangible (time, space, utilities, responsibilities, emotions, for example), and within relationship of varying form and quality.

Bills and payments had multiple regimes of organisation but financial arrangements were notable for their complexity and most commonly exhibited the desire to distribute responsibility with an unwillingness for any one housemate to take it on. Further, some participants narrated difficulties in asking housemates to take on responsibility for bills, with the person who had been in the house longest often ending up having to deal with their administration by default. The organisation and coordination of household bills was often unspoken, and tacit, rather than overt, and hindered by housemates' reluctance to raise issues of money, debt and repayment due to their potential to provoke confrontation or a 'sticky situation' (Sabini et al. 2000). This tacit organisation, and a reluctance to explicitly acknowledge and manage issues of allocating responsibility were also evident when considering the domestic practices surrounding cleaning. Rather than have a 'rota' or defined responsibilities, participants noted that it was largely arranged on the basis of thresholds of cleanliness, where some people were willing to live to a minimum required standard, with others doing more based on their own individual 'thresholds' or participating in cleaning when feelings of 'guilt' encouraged a sense of culpability.

With the exception of one ideologically-led household (which shared food and cooking communally), household regimes of consumption surrounding food and supplies was largely individually determined, with housemates having clearly defined spaces for their own consumption items, although there was some organisation of communal consumption of 'essentials' such as bread and milk. Although the house was nominally 'shared', there were limits to this 'sharing' in the arenas of food, cooking and other supplies, where consumption often fell along independent lines due to issues of 'taste' (such as diet) and temporality (such as individual schedules). Although shared accommodation offers an opportunity to enjoy economies of scale through group purchasing and consumption (thus sharing cost, preparation and cleaning time), in most households this was declined in favour of individual freedom of choice, with an apparent unwillingness to coordinate issues of taste and temporality.

In declining the benefits that afforded by the economies of scale of group procurement and consumption, the individualised organisation of food practices in shared accommodation created inherent complexity in the coordination of individual practices across space and time. With more than one meal being cooked, residents need to coordinate successive and convenient access to the kitchen, for example, and ensure that the kitchen, and the associated commodities – hob, pans, workspace, plates, utensils, etc. – were available for use. This analysis of the complex coordination of practices of 'sharing' indicated that shared accommodation exhibits a fundamental tension between the household as set economic and social actors who are independent (such as pursuing individual strategies around food) whilst also simultaneously being interdependent (reliant on the negotiation of practices with other members of the household by virtue of co-presence and the sharing of space and time). This tension raised the issue of whether those within shared accommodation were one household, or many households, given the individualised forms of consumption that were narrated against an otherwise 'shared' landscape. As housemates narrated their negotiation of 'practices' across these areas, and their differential approaches to coordination, coupled with some reluctance to embrace certain practices, it became apparent that many participants experienced ambivalence about the notion of 'sharing'. The 'sharing' that occurred within shared accommodation was not necessarily seen in an entirely positive light, as something mutual and communal, but rather was often framed as a 'necessary evil' – requiring sharing practices that they did not like, but knew had to happen.

This empirical analysis of sharing (of sharing utilities and bills, food and supplies, tasks and practices, and space) in shared accommodation also suggested very strongly that issues of relationality were very important in successful sharing 'practices'. Intra-house dynamics, and positive relations with other housemates were important in how well for 'practices' were coordinated and enacted to mutual expectations. This was also

manifest in housemates' desire to enact practice with others with similar expectations and standards to themselves in how things were 'done' – or 'practiced'. It was also demonstrated in the widespread hesitancy and disinclination amongst housemates to explicitly address issues of divergent or unsatisfactory sharing of practices – where responsibilities or expectations were not being met, such as not washing up, or not paying bills on time. Housemates were reluctant to share their dissatisfaction with such matters with their peers, and were prepared to 'put up' with mutual practices they found unsatisfactory because their relationships with housemates did not seem to easily permit the resolution of such problems. The fear of confrontation or 'creating an atmosphere' was bound up in with the avoidance of what Sabini et al (2000) call a 'sticky situation'. The potential embarrassment, or strain on interpersonal relations, caused by raising issues of divergent practice was so great that the issue was either ignored or dealt with indirectly. Within the flat-hierarchies and limited interpersonal intimacy or obligation of peer-shared households, it appeared that housemates had limited resources and sanctions with which to resolve problems in sharing. The management of these types of interpersonal relationships, characterised by domestic interdependence and close physical proximity but also characterised by relatively limited intimacy, commitment, obligation and personal independence was a key feature explaining both how complex sharing practices were organised in a largely tacit manner, but also how less than successful or unsatisfactory instances of sharing were left to run unresolved. In shared accommodation, housemates were prepared to put up with annoyance and inconvenience in their everyday habits and routines, because they wanted to avoid rocking the boat or causing confrontation or embarrassment. Their willingness to 'put up with' such situations was at least partly sustained by their knowledge that such arrangements were temporary and transient, and that they, or their unsatisfactory housemate, would eventually move on. So as we shall see, the transitory nature of the relationships within shared housing were a factor both in creating problems in sharing practices, but also in permitting such less than satisfactory arrangements to be sustained and endured.

Dealing with conflict and 'moving on'

The issue of divergent practices and the 'sticky situations' that could emerge in shared accommodation was explored in more detail in chapter six, where issues of 'conflict' and their negotiation were considered. Conflict in shared accommodation was typically driven by divergent practices and misaligned expectations – where people were 'doing' 'sharing' in unexpected or unwelcome ways – or where interpersonal relations were at odds, and people did not 'get on'. Where residents' shared deployment of practices differed from individual expectations, this led to various forms of conflict. An example of this might be a housemate using all the pans in the kitchen without washing up, making too much noise at a time considered too early or late by others, or having a guest who 'overstayed' their welcome. These are all common and stereotypical examples of

grievances within shared house living, and they highlight the problematic area of divergent practices and misaligned expectations: shared accommodation works best when everyone is practicing the 'same' practices, or at least along the same lines. When an apparently coherent practice unravels or diverges against expectations it can become a source of frustration and 'ontological insecurity' (Giddens 1990; Saunders 1990) in the 'home'; where a basic habitual practice which should be the basis of everyday routine and comfort instead becomes a source of contention and conflict. Issues of interpersonal dislike and conflict are problematic in shared accommodation, as the residents have to coalesce their need for a secure and enjoyable living environment, with their own personal dislike for another person. This can lead to situations where residents have a schismatic relationship with their living situation: liking where they live, but not the people they live with, again impacting on their sense of 'home' and the 'ontological security' it has the potential to provide.

As already suggested, within peer-shared accommodation, the issue of conflict – and its resolution – is further problematized by an absence of a clear-cut power structure or hierarchy where someone can act as arbiter in disputes, as may be present in family households or a halls of residence, for example. As with the organisation of household practices, within peer-shared households no one person usually has any more or less responsibility – or power – than others so when conflict arises this has to be negotiated mutually without appeal to authority. This adds a further layer of complexity to the negotiation that needs to take place in shared accommodation in both the coordination of practices, and in the management of interpersonal relations.

This again links back to the issue of housing pathways (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2004) and the need to understand the *relationship between* the physical home *and* the relationships within it. The issue of divergent practices and interpersonal conflict (and the problems of resolving them) in shared accommodation also highlights the difficulty in conceptualising shared accommodation as a single, cohesive household, or as several individual households – albeit in intimate proximity with relative strangers. It is argued here that shared accommodation is in fact in hybrid mixture of both independent and interdependent household and that many of the tensions and conflicts that occur within shared accommodation result from this. The interdependence of shared households is a consequence of the relatively limited obligations and commitment that exists between many housemates, and this limited interpersonal dimension and the (perceived) inherent transience of shared living discourages the overt resolution of 'conflicts' in favour of subtler, indirect processes of behavioural modification. These tensions resulting from shared housing as a simultaneously inter/independent household, the absence of a power-structure, plus the added complication of the particular legal and contractual demands placed upon residents

(such as having to commit to a minimum of six months in a property) all give rise to predominantly indirect ways of dealing with conflict and dissatisfaction within houseshares. Rather than engaging with conflicts between practices or individuals directly and explicitly, participants preferred to use indirect methods of dealing with such issues, opting for the use of 'signs' and 'barriers'. 'Signs' are where individuals deploy a behaviour in the hope that it will 'signal' to another resident that their behaviour is not welcome, such as Fiona's use of loud noises to indicate to her exhibitionist housemate her presence in the house and that he might want to put some clothes. 'Barriers' are where individuals will use physical space to try to shield themselves from the behaviour of others; such as Benjamin retreating to his room 'for a cigarette' whenever a housemate he particularly disliked entered the room. In many instances, rather than dealing with conflict directly, participants opted for methods of subterfuge and behavioural modification rather than directly addressing the problem, either to avoid creating an 'atmosphere' or to avoid appearing as 'fussy' or 'over fastidious'.

On the basis of this study, peer-shared accommodation appears to have an inherent transience or precarious quality about it that causes anxiety about dealing with issues of conflict. In such households there is a sense of group commitment to ensuring the on-going stability of the house, even if an individual's present experience of the house is not a positive one. This sense of precariousness was also seen by participants as being in contrast with other *idealised* forms of alternate living arrangements such as living on one's own, or with a partner, which *appear* to housemates to offer a greater sense of security and stability than peer-shared households.

Participants' attitudes to shared living and their perceived potential future housing pathways were also explored in the latter part of chapter six. While many participants saw shared living as acceptable for the 'time being', they expressed concerns over the long-term social acceptability of shared living and its wisdom in terms of money and investment. Those who wished to exit shared living wanted to do so because of the 'constant negotiation' – or coordination and alignment of practice – that was seen as necessary for 'successful' shared living. A sense of cognitive fatigue, and the allure of being able to act without fear of judgment by others, was also clear in their discussion of alternative futures, with solo-living being one such potential future. In terms of 'housing pathways' it was clear that participants' reflection on their experiences was shaping their discussion of their future preferred choices, be it within shared accommodation or elsewhere.

Reflection on 'sharing' and existing literature

The preceding sections have drawn out some of the key empirical findings of this research study into sharing in peer-shared accommodation. I now turn to consider the

implications of these findings for our understanding of 'sharing' more broadly. In doing so, I start to map out the beginnings of a conceptual framework for understanding some of the key elements of 'sharing' as part of a 'sociology of sharing'. That there is a need for a more integrated and developed account of sharing is I hope clearly established. The literature that has focused specifically on 'sharing' has tended to focus on very particular and demarcated forms of sharing, looking at the sharing of specific goods or services (such as toilets and cars), through the sharing of sovereign items or through access based consumption. By contrast, that literature which has considered the sharing of the range of items and practices (the literature on the domestic sphere and family practices) has not considered questions of 'sharing' specifically. A further literature, arising from theories of practice, has looked at how everyday practices are collectively coordinated, but the analytical focus has tended to have been on practices as the unit of analysis (on how people are recruited into practices and on how practices develop over time), rather than on how people must actively manage and negotiate how such practices are organised in performance.

So whilst work on how shared household practices are enacted and negotiated within familial and conjugal contexts offer a valuable insight into how familial household practices are collectively coordinated, they present limited insights into 'sharing' as a practice amongst non-kin. These are not limitations of the literature *per se*, but a reflection on the particular nature of the milieu and the relationships focused on within that literature. Comparing the findings of this thesis to the work on family practices, two key empirical contrasts can be drawn which can help inform our theoretical understanding of both 'sharing' more broadly and literatures on family and domestic life. Firstly, the nature of relationships within familial or conjugal households organised around expectations of commitment, obligation and longevity, contrast with those living within shared accommodation, with the relationality of shared households exhibiting a more marked sense of transience and independence. Secondly, the nature and quality of the relationships between 'sharers' seems very significant for how sharing practices are variously organised and framed. Indeed, the very definition of what is considered as 'sharing' seems to vary across familial and peer-shared households, presumably due to the different relational 'moral economy' that is present within familial (and conjugal) households. This question of the significance of relationality within sharing practices will be examined in more depth below, and therein indicates an important dimension that must be factored into our conceptual understanding of sharing more broadly. It also suggests the importance of considering the nature of relationality in general analyses of the organisation of social practice (and not just practices of sharing).

One of the notable empirical findings of this study is that 'sharing' within peer-shared accommodation was often difficult to coordinate and created tensions that peer-sharers

found hard to resolve. These problems were related to the limited interpersonal commitments and obligations of peer-sharers and the relatively flat hierarchical structure of shared households, which made the negotiation of sharing and the resolution of conflict more difficult. In the absence of a clear 'role' of who should do what, or take on certain responsibilities, participants narrated that responsibilities often fell by default to who had lived in the house longest. Further, participants noted a weariness, reluctance and apprehension in discussing aspects of contentious sharing, or 'sharing gone wrong' (such as where money was owed or dishes left unwashed). This difficulty was a quality encouraged by the perceived inherent transience of peer-shared accommodation: housemates were reluctant to rock the boat by raising issues of contention which could inhibit the overall success of the 'shared' household; and the prospect of directly asking other residents to take on responsibility for certain aspects of household organisation was also met with ambivalence and reluctance.

In contrast to the literature on familial and conjugal households, which suggests a significantly gendered and role based approach to household tasks and practices (see, for example, Devault (1994) and Kaufmann (1998)), the participants within this study, while not necessarily troubled by an absence of knowing 'who should do what', did experience a less structured, and more fluid negotiation of 'sharing'. This was particularly felt in relation to issues of conflict – both interpersonally, and in the enactment of practice – and to how participants felt they could approach conflict. While research into conflict within couples has suggested that it is a productive element of household relationships (Kaufmann 2009) (to argue with one another is to create a biography of a shared pathway, melding together previously diverging 'blue prints' of how things should be done) and a matter-of-course in conjugal relationships, this was far less evident amongst peer-sharers studied in this research. The participants, as independent residents, as well as residents of a 'shared' house, felt less commitment to tolerate the behaviour of one another, but at the same time felt apprehensive in raising the issue because of potential repercussions of doing so, and the 'sticky situation' that might result (Sabini et al. 2000). The distinction between being able to raise issues of conflict within a couple relationship versus a co-resident – even one that may be considered a friend – was noted by Steve (31, accountant) in chapter five who explained it was easier for him to approach his ex-partner about issues of annoyance within their house, versus his housemates, out of fear of causing offence and embarrassment. It is clear then, that peer-sharers have access to less commitment and fewer sanctions in their household relationships than in familial or conjugal contexts, and this seems to result in a quite different, and a perhaps less satisfactory, organisation of household sharing practices.

The literature of family and conjugal relations presents a different picture of negotiation between parties to that relationship than that exhibited between the participants of this research. There are fewer 'roles' and 'blue prints' (Kaufmann 2009) within shared accommodation as to who should do what, and in contrast to Natalier's (2004) finding that gendered norms were still prevalent in attitudes to housework in shared households, this was not as markedly evident within the research for this thesis. Further, conflict within conjugal relationships appears to be far more easily weathered than within shared accommodation due to the commitment to longevity present within those intimate relationships that is absent from shared accommodation. That is not to say that conflict within intimate relationships is easy, or to minimise the personal impact of such conflict, for this commitment to longevity can result in weathering conflict for too long, with the consequences of that conflict escalating far beyond 'gripes' (Stets and Straus 1989). However, the picture of negotiation within shared accommodation presented one of both empowerment and entrapment: there was no sense of long-term commitment to co-residents, or their behaviour; however, unsatisfactory situations had to be 'put up with' and raising issues of conflict or tension had the potential to undermine the long-term success of the shared household.

The absence of long-term commitment in contrast to conjugal and familial relationships also highlighted a distinction in how the 'sharing' of resources was approached. Where couples or families are (hopefully) personally and emotionally invested for 'long haul', there appears to be greater sense of communal resource and responsibility, as in the 'pooling' of financial resources, discussed by Pahl (1989) in relation to heterosexual couples, and echoed more recently by Heaphy et al (2013) as being a prominent choice for same-sex couples. However, particularly in terms of financial organisation and the acquisition and consumption of food, the sense of a 'communal' resource was absent from shared accommodation. In shared accommodation, while the *responsibility* for the bills was shared, the resources available for the payment were not – each individual had to pay their own 'share'. This observation illustrates a crucial conceptual point: what may be considered 'sharing' in shared accommodation is perhaps more realistically considered as distribution or redistribution of communal goods within a familial or conjugal context. As noted within chapter two, there is evidence of Morgan's (2001) 'moral economy' operating within familial households – with tasks organised in relation to notions of what *should* be done by different categories of people, using cultural values, previous familial experiences, and 'roles' as a schema for the negotiation of practice. Within shared accommodation, while there is a notion of personal responsibility, and an awareness of a responsibility for the household *at large* through a need to ensure that each individual has somewhere to live, and enjoy living there, the evidence suggests that this falls short of the responsibility for *one another* that would be prescribed within a 'moral economy'.

Any analysis of 'sharing' more broadly, then, needs to be cautious of assuming that because a practice (such as the paying of household bills) may look the same *across* different household types in terms of its practical arrangement, that it is identical in all respects. As I have argued here, the differing nature of relationships between people may cause tensions that alter how the practice is negotiated both in quality and form. For example, utility bills still need to be paid to the supplier – and this does not change across household types – but the responsibility for that payment, and the negotiation that takes place to ensure it takes place, differs on the basis of the relationships between those involved in the practice. 'Paying the bills' may come to be a very different thing across different households (and different household relations).

Within the familial home, it is perhaps sharing amongst children that has the strongest parallels with sharing amongst peer-shared households. Siblings are more likely to experience greater equality in relationships between one another, and have equality of access to various household 'goods' that they may share, such as the TV and shared spaces. However, a key difference between sibling sharing, and sharing in peer-shared households is the presence of the parent as an arbiter of any disputes over 'sharing' that may occur and the 'power' to denote whose 'turn' it is. A sibling dispute over what to watch on television can be resolved by parental intervention and the authority that the 'role' of parent provides (Tiedemann and Johnston 1992). Within peer-shared households, a call to arbitration is very rarely a potential option, and noted only in the most extreme of circumstances within the research for this thesis (where a resident called the police over a dispute when a local, intra-house resolution could not be found). Sharing within peer-shared households is between those of equal right to access a shared, non-sovereign good; and it is this very different quality and property of 'sharing' in peer-shared households that makes its negotiation more complex than in familial households.

The value of considering the nature of relationality – and hierarchy – between individuals who are 'sharing' is significant. Such an appraisal is necessary for an adequate understanding of how sharing 'works' because it allows a view not only of the relationship between the individuals, but also the perceived sense of responsibility (or absence) to one another by virtue of that relationship. This, in turn, has an impact on how 'sharing' is practiced, and adds to its contingent nature – as a practice that is predicated on the conditions within which it is being enacted. This contingency will now be demonstrated in more depth as the implications from this research are drawn together to produce a picture of what a 'sociology of sharing' should include.

Conceptualising sharing: aligning contingent elements of practice

In order to develop a conceptual framework for a fuller understanding of 'sharing', it is useful to map the key characteristics that have been exhibited within the research for this thesis. Within the realm of shared households (particularly peer-shared households with their flat hierarchy) there is strong evidence to suggest that while 'sharing' something is part of everyday life, it is not necessarily a simple 'practice' and certainly requires much effort and negotiation. Whilst there was an assumption that residents knew how to share, (potential) co-residents looked quite carefully for evidence of this throughout the recruitment process of finding someone to fill a room within a property; and selected on the basis of finding the 'right' person to share with. Using the lens of theories of practice, it was apparent that the interview process was not only a question of recruitment into a shared house as someone to fill an economic gap, but also a process of recruitment into the practices within that house, and a search for homophily in housemates to fill a social and interpersonal gap. Sharing was easier to learn (or be recruited into) where there had been previous experiences of sharing as a 'prototype' to 'carry over' to the context of shared accommodation. Where there was an absence of 'sharing' 'skills' these took time to learn and some element of 'teaching' from co-residents (although this was not always forthcoming).

Within shared accommodation 'sharing' occurred across a number of different types of 'stuff' including: tangible goods (e.g. kitchen items), intangible goods (e.g. utilities), spaces (e.g. lounge, kitchen or bathroom), and responsibilities (e.g. cleaning and paying a share of the bills). The characteristic that made these 'shared', rather than discrete individual instances of consumption and practice, was the mutual and interdependent nature of access and culpability that was attached to them: their use was provided for within a shared context; their availability was dependent on all parties in the sharing relationship allowing mutual access; and parties to the sharing relationship were aware of the shared nature of the 'good' being 'shared'. For example, plates are often provided as part of a shared house and everyone is aware of this fact. As such, individuals pay special attention to ensure that their access to the crockery is not impeded through their action (or inaction) by making sure that they are clean after use and made available to other members of the household. . In relation to less tangible goods, such as utilities, residents are aware of their provision and billing as a communal resource, and are aware of their responsibilities for payment of their 'share' of the bills to ensure continuity of supply. This characterisation of sharing is in contrast to existing definitions of sharing that focus on ownership as a key feature of 'sharing'.

Defining 'sharing' within shared accommodation is relatively clear, but the characteristics above lose traction when applied to other contexts, such as commercial forms of 'sharing' or where there is clear ownership of the good (i.e. a sovereign, rather than non-

sovereign good), with the owner present. As I have discussed in my review of the literature, 'sharing' can be: both reciprocal and non-reciprocal; can involve sovereign and non-sovereign items; can entail the sharing of tangible and intangible 'stuff'; often involves a temporary, rather than permanent, transfer of goods, or items; differs according to what is being shared; as well as according to the context in which the sharing occurs. Overall, this research study has argued that apparently even the same type and context of 'sharing' (the sharing of household practices) seems to sharply vary depending on the form and quality of the relationships of those sharing. The key characteristics of 'sharing', a negotiated, relational practice, between people, that requires alignment of individual expectations is retained, but it is also apparent that 'sharing' is diverse, complex and contextual – escaping an easy definition.

Does this mean that there is no such thing as 'sharing' *per se*, but rather lots of different kinds of practice (reciprocity, access-based consumption, gift-giving, etc.) which contain some elements of sharing, but which cannot be captured within a single conceptual framework? Certainly, 'sharing' is a 'chaotic concept' (Sayer, 1992), highly dependent upon questions of context. However, rather than abandon the whole idea of an integrated sociology of 'sharing', I instead want to suggest that sharing is not so much a unitary practice, but is rather a differentiated and contextual *set of practices*. In making this argument, I follow the example of the sociology of the family which distinguishes 'the family' (as a category, or normative ideal) from the more messy and negotiated 'doing' of 'family practices', which often invoke and reference notions of 'family' but in complex ways. In developing our understanding of 'sharing' I argue that we should investigate 'sharing practices', the doing of sharing in different ways, contexts and between different people, but whose enactment, performance and negotiation of sharing practices evoke and reference more general notions of 'sharing'.

Rather than attempting to pin down what can (and cannot) be considered 'sharing', I instead suggest that we explore the differentiated conditions under which sharing occurs: that is consider the diverse elements in the varied 'doing' of 'sharing'. Within this, one way to explore the differentiated conditions of sharing is to examine the contingent factors which affect how 'sharing' is successful — which can be seen as a central components of its practice. As Shove et al (2012) contend, the elements within a practice need to be aligned between the carriers of practice, for it to be successfully recognised and enacted. It is these aspects of alignment that form the contingent factors of 'sharing', and which depend on structural and interpersonal factors for it to succeed. The contingent factors of sharing can be delineated across four interrelated variables:

- **What** is being shared (the good, space or responsibility)
- **Who** is sharing, and the quality and form of the relationality between the sharers
- **Why** the sharing is taking place (is it elective or necessary, and are there co-contingencies?)
- **Ownership of the 'good'** and if they are party to the sharing

The nature of sharing practices can differ markedly depending on each of these contingent factors, and the relative success of the practice depends on the qualities of these factors. For sharing to be successful between the carriers of practice, these aspects, and their understanding, need to be in alignment. Each of these factors of alignment will be explored below.

As previously noted, what is being shared can differ across lines of tangibility, with some 'sharing' being a physical allowance of access to goods, and other forms of 'sharing' being more ephemeral and longitudinal, such as the paying utility bills. Successful sharing in each case requires the parties involved in the sharing to have knowledge of the required practices involved across all types of sharing, and an awareness of the expectations and presence of others. For a 'sharing' practice to be successful, the practical and interpersonal factors also need to be in alignment. To use cleaning as an example, there may be an awareness that an individual has a shared responsibility to clean a shared space, but the extent and level of that cleaning needs to match the expectations of others to be considered a successful sharing practice. If the interpersonal factor of expectations is out of alignment, there is a risk that the practice will not be judged as complete or equitable. Similarly, an individual may pay a proportional share of utility bills, but their usage could be seen as unfair by co-practitioners, and outside of the practical alignment of fair use, and an interpersonal expectation of an awareness of others. The consequences of misalignment, as explored in chapter six of this thesis, can result in conflict, both practically and interpersonally.

These examples are intended to be illustrative of the complex and contingent nature of 'sharing' as a practice. The success of sharing, as exhibited within the research for this thesis, can be destabilised when contingent factors of alignment within the practice are not in agreement across practitioners. In a similar fashion, who one 'shares' with, is an important contingent factor of alignment in the practice of 'sharing'. The quality and form of the relationality between individuals in a 'sharing' practice impacts its negotiation, and subsequent success, and this is a central finding of this thesis.

The quality and form of the relationship between practitioners (including power relations, commitment, obligation, ability to sanction, and normative expectations within culturally defined 'roles'), have a clear impact on how (and how successfully) sharing is practiced. Within the research for this thesis, although many participants experienced positive relational affiliations with one another (and called themselves friends), the absence of a hierarchy within peer-shared accommodation, and the lack of a power structure to guide and sanction practice, was a notable factor affecting household's ability to align practices and to provide satisfactory resolutions to problems experienced with sharing. Who is sharing with whom, the quality and form of relationality between them, and the power structure (or absence) within which the sharing is taking place is of fundamental importance to the potential success of the sharing practice.

In addition to the contingencies of what is being shared, and with whom, the motivation for the practice of 'sharing' is important in an analysis of sharing practices in order to understand the impact and consequences of successful negotiation and alignment. Within this contingency of the motivations of sharing there is a distinction between *elective* sharing (sharing that is actively chosen) and *necessary* sharing (sharing that is mandated by context or hierarchy).

The examples of shared accommodation within this research featured both *elective* sharing, through the choice of living in shared accommodation; and *necessary* sharing within the context of shared accommodation. The elective nature of shared accommodation itself was illustrated by the narrative accounts of those participants who would actively choose to not share in the future: shared accommodation was tolerable for the time being (and such framings were significant to their ability to sustain household sharing even when it was felt to be unsatisfactory in some sense), but was not seen as a long-term solution. However, whilst moving into shared accommodation is elective, once they are within shared accommodation, there are forms of sharing that are necessary and embedded. These include sharing space, facilities and utilities; which are not practices that could be easily 'opted out' from, and choosing not to participate would disrupt the alignment of practices within the household, potentially causing conflict. To opt out of these necessary forms of sharing, a resident must cease living within the elective sharing context of a shared house.

Examples of elective and necessary sharing can be seen in other sharing contexts. 'Access-based consumption' (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012) such as car sharing is a form of elective sharing: by virtue of choosing to access a good for a period of time, rather than sovereign ownership of a car for sole use, is a consumer choice. However, the use of that car, to get to a required destination, *necessitates* the use of shared public roads, including an alignment of driving practices with other road users. The consequences of

opting out of the *necessary* sharing of the road could be grave. This example, while oblique, highlights the co-contingencies within 'sharing': the related practices that are dependent on the success of the practice in hand. Within shared accommodation, the overall 'success' of the shared house is contingent on the successful negotiation of other 'sharing practices' that are contingent in and of themselves. For example, if one housemate chooses to not actively attend to the necessary sharing of responsibility to pay rent within a shared (rather than individual) tenancy, this has a consequential impact on the tenancy itself and the availability of the house to other tenants as they will be evicted. Within the example of the elective use of a shared car, the lives of both the user and other road users are co-contingent on everyone aligning their practices.

The distinction between *elective* and *necessary* sharing is important to an analysis of sharing, because not all sharing is elective, and this impacts the approach that people can take when other aspects of their lives or practices are contingent on that sharing. Similarly, it is useful to know when and why people choose not to electively share and what qualities discourage an individual from choosing to share. This latter point is exceptionally important when considering 'sharing' within the context of sustainable consumption.

The final contingent factor in aligning practices of sharing concerns ownership of the good being shared and if they are party to the practice of sharing. This particular variable can often trump all of the other variables due to the power the 'owner' of a good can have to dictate how the practice of 'sharing' the good will be achieved. Within asset-based consumption, the access to the shared good is governed by the terms set out by the operator of the scheme. Sovereign goods (those goods where there is an identifiable owner who can dictate the conditions of the 'sharing' practice) appear to be more easily 'shared' by virtue of these clear expectations that can be set by the owner. However, not all sharing contexts enjoy this level of prescription, with peer-shared accommodation being a useful example. The owner of the goods can be defined as the 'landlord', but the negotiation of use of the goods, and what constitutes fair and reasonable access, is left up to the co-practitioners to negotiate. This level of interpersonal sharing, and flat hierarchy, as previously discussed, brings with it emotional and interpersonal concerns of everyday living, that go beyond single, asset based consumption, which is episodic rather than embedded in every day life.

Deploying the contingency model of 'sharing': towards a sociology of sharing

The contingent factors of sharing: what is being shared, with whom, for what reason, and the ownership of the good; can be drawn together to understand not only peer-

shared accommodation, but to develop the foundations of a broader 'sociology of sharing'. This research has not intended to produce a meta-narrative of sharing; rather, it is intended to explore some variations in the experience of the 'doing' of sharing, in order to consider the structural and interpersonal aspects that inhibit or catalyse 'sharing' as a practice. In arguing that we need to consider the contingent factors which affect the organisation of varied sharing practices, I have suggested that we see 'sharing' as highly differentiated, contextual and contingent. This 'contingency' model of sharing provides the foundations to develop a framework to research and understand the potential (or not) of sharing as a practice. This research has shown that for sharing to be successful, the elements of these contingent factors need to be aligned amongst practitioners, and there is evidence to illustrate that 'sharing' falters where misalignment occurs. 'Sharing' is a negotiated practice that takes time and effort, rather than being a simple act of consumption. The conditions within which sharing occurs are important in considering its on-going success as a sustainable practice.

More specifically, and building on the example of peer-shared accommodation explored in this thesis, one fruitful avenue for future research on sharing might be the exploration of non-elective forms of shared accommodation. This thesis has looked at peer-sharing amongst young, well educated professionals, but the contingency model suggests that peer-sharing which occurs out of social and economic necessity, is likely to give rise to very different forms of 'sharing'. Research into those who are sharing accommodation with other people due to the recent changes to welfare provision outlined in chapter two, for example, might be particularly revealing and important. The differing pathways into shared accommodation as a result of these benefit changes, coupled with differing recruitment into households that forego a search for homophily, suggest a less stable, and more turbulent living experience (Harvey and Houston 2005; Centre for Housing Policy 2011). The contingency model of sharing presents researchers with a way to understand both the practical and interpersonal aspects that are involved with sharing, and consider the experience of the practice, as well as analysis of its enactment (or not).

Outside the realm of housing, the contingency model of sharing presents advocates and policy makers of sustainable consumption with one way of evaluating both existing and potential plans to encourage 'sharing' of goods, services and space, and to understand the experiences of users, and potential problems. In their study of car sharing, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) noted the absence of commitment to car share schemes, a lack of respect for car and property, and suggested that it was due to the 'big brother' nature of the relationship, and a personal culpability. The contingency model approach suggests this might better be understood within the realm of the alignment of practices and conflict, and it is worth exploring whether that lack of respect for property, and acts of conflict, comes about due to misalignment of expectations.

How should sharing be researched in the future? Reflecting on the conceptual and methodological approach.

The conceptual mode of 'sharing' presented within this thesis offers a model with which to understand the contingent factors that can make 'sharing' 'work' and what can impede the 'doing' of 'sharing' successfully. Using Shove et al's (2012) conception of practices as being a collection of elements that form a coherent 'entity', this thesis has identified the nature of those constituent elements and how they contribute to a cohesive practice. Within shared accommodation, for example, there was evidence of processes of recruitment into sharing practices through mimetic apprenticeship and a collective adherence to the demands of practice. However, this thesis has taken Shove et al's conceptualisation further by establishing the significance of relationality within the organisation and performance of practices, an aspect which has been a relatively ignored within practice theory.

Practice theory allows a systematic appraisal of what is 'done' in practices, but pays less attention to the emotion and creativity experienced and employed by the actors involved with that 'doing'. Practice theory prioritises actions over the individual, and the individual's mind (Schatzki 2000, p.20), in order to 'highlight the role of skills, practical understanding and non-propositional knowledge in human action' and 'partially replace... explanations of human conduct that cite mental phenomena such as reason, will, consciousness or goals' (Schatzki 2011, p.1448). However, while prioritising practical action, it also often overlooks the significance of relational ties, emotion and creativity in the performance of practices. The research from this thesis, however, clearly illustrates that such relational factors are central to the alignment of sharing practices between practitioners. By not engaging with this relational aspect, theories of practice risk viewing the people involved in practices (or the 'carriers' of practices as they are termed) as simply the vessels into which practices are poured, rather than as active agents in the development and reconstitution of practices. The evidence provided by this thesis on a variety of household sharing practices shows that issues of relationality are central to the success of such practices, and that there was often considerable difficulty in the alignment of practices where turbulent relationships between housemates were present.

The creative nature of practice deployed by participants within the research for this thesis was demonstrated by the diverse ways in which practices were achieved. Although food was acquired and consumed in each of the houses, it was done so in different and diverse ways, dependent on the relationalities that were present. One house chose to communally consume food as a fundamental tenet of their relational philosophy, whereas other households were atomised, having individual supplies and discrete consumption practices. In addition, the inaction of practice – a deliberate recoil

from practice by choosing not to engage in practices of sharing with housemates – was often used as a weapon in interpersonal conflicts. The complexities of the diverse practices explored within this research illustrate the difficulties experienced in their successful achievement, rather than a simple process of people being recruited into and then becoming the ‘carriers’ of a practice. Instead there was an evident complex and ongoing process of intersubjective negotiation (Bottero 2010) that took place in the alignment of practices rather than an assumption of ‘one size fits all’. There is a need then to consider the interpersonal dynamics *within* practice as well as its constitution socially.

One central point made throughout this thesis is the need to accommodate not only the relational nature of sharing practices but also the temporal nature of practices. In this research this was achieved through the adoption of the ‘housing pathways’ approach (Clapham 2002; Clapham 2004; Clapham 2005; Clapham 2009) which conceptualises the ‘house’ as a research site as dynamic entity, based on the inhabitants and their individual pathways, rather than as a static entity. This approach acknowledges that tenants have histories that they bring to their existing accommodation, and have an ongoing trajectory, causing the ‘house’ as an object of study to be constantly in flux and the product of the diversity within. The acknowledgement of personal housing history was of value in understanding the relative ease or difficulty individuals experienced while learning and negotiating (being recruited into) practices due to past experiences they could use as an exemplar. Crucially, this helped in conceptualising the household itself as a contingent factor of practice, and the product of aligned practices, rather than as simply a ‘bricks and mortar’ product that was rented. Where practices failed, there was a risk the household would fail also, and become undermined by the breakdown of relationality between housemates.

In thinking about future directions, Wenger’s (Wenger 1999; 2000) notion of ‘communities of practice’ and ‘social learning systems’ present a potentially useful way of understanding how some aspects of ‘sharing’ in peer-shared households is negotiated, through active *engagement* with one another, an *alignment* of responsibilities and expectations, and having the *imagination* to understand the impact the individuals and their actions have on one another. The concept of ‘communities of practice’ echoes in some respects the concept of ‘neo-tribes’ (Maffesoli 2000; Heath 2004) that was explored in chapter five, as a group of individuals in close proximity, sharing space, and ritual. However, as argued in chapter five, although we can certainly see aspects of Wenger and Maffesoli’s concepts exhibited within the shared households of this research (most notably, in housemates’ attempts to engage and align responsibilities and expectations with one another, in close proximity and shared space), the transience of shared accommodation, the lack of long-term commitment to one

another, and the absence of a 'communal ethic' (Heath 2004, p.166) precludes peer-shared accommodation from exhibiting all of the characteristics of these two concepts. Nonetheless elements of the approach do provide a research framework to further consider 'power, politics, access, and their relationships to participation' in practice (Storberg-Walker 2008).

The conceptual and methodological approach taken here has offered a number of contributions to our understanding of 'sharing'. Stepping outside of the familial legacy within which 'sharing' has previously been understood, this thesis has argued that 'sharing' is a commonly understood, prevalent and yet also widely varying and contextually specific set of practices. As such it requires further research to understand how sharing operates in other contexts, with other elements being shared and with sharing employed for different reasons. Finally it is crucial to further explore the relationality which underpins different types of sharing and in particular to examine how differing forms of relationality (in addition to those researched here) impact on how sharing is negotiated and enacted. Because sharing occurs across a variety of contexts and relational forms, I would suggest investigating these through the use of facet methodology (Mason 2011) in order to explore different angles on the contingencies that may be peculiar and specific to individual contexts and relational forms.

Conclusion

The issue of sharing is seen as a major political issue for sustainability but also interpersonally. It is argued that we will need to consume less and share more in a sustainable future, but the experiences and barriers to successful sharing have been left unexplored. The current theoretical map of 'sharing' does not permit much insight into these potential futures, with emerging initiatives having to overcome barriers to sharing as they encounter them. Major brands within the 'sharing economy', such as Airbnb, have had to invest heavily in 'trust' verification systems that afford potential peer-sharers some level of confidence that they are inviting upstanding individuals into their home due to the fear of inviting in less savoury characters (Guttentag 2013). Such mechanisms indicate that while there is a market to share, it is at a price, but not at any price and not at the expense of personal security. There is willingness to share, but not with just anybody.

The desire for trust, and a sense of confidence in who you are sharing with, were sentiments confirmed as important within peer-shared accommodation and exceptionally important in the recruitment process. This research has demonstrated that shared living is far from a straightforward process of finding a room and living there. It is a complex and relational process of aligning practices between residents, and entails a process of

recruitment into practices as well as into the accommodation. Using 'theories of practice' as a way of conceptualising the processes and practices of sharing, this thesis has stressed the contingent nature of sharing that is predicated on aligning interpersonal expectations as much as practical behaviours. The process of sharing 'stuff' is an on-going, 'worked at' achievement of everyday relationships than popular understanding and sociological accounts have assumed. Sharing is contingent on what is being shared, whom it is being shared with, why the sharing is taking place, and who owns the good being shared. Within each of these contingent elements are embedded a number of expectations and practical understandings of 'how' to share that need to be carefully aligned if the 'practice' of 'sharing' is to succeed, and can very quickly undermined by a weak or broken relational tie. The contingent model of sharing presented by this thesis presents an empirically focused conceptualisation of sharing that can be operationalized into further research to provide a holistic appraisal of both 'sharing' as a relational practice and a complex social experience. It offers a clear departure from existing accounts of sharing based on familial prototypes, or focusing purely on consumer behaviour, and argues for a greater appreciation of the *experience* of sharing, as well as the *doing*.

If we need to *Share or Die* as Harris and Gorenflo (2012) so emotively demand, then we need to more fully understand issues of sharing. This thesis has presented a clear pathway, based on the contingent model of sharing, and a novel conceptual and methodological approach, that can be used to enable this greater understanding through research into diverse contexts and relational forms. If broader measures predicated on 'sharing', whether under the guise of 'collaborative consumption', the 'sharing economy' or 'sustainable consumption' are to be successful, the more fully we need to understand issues of sharing, and what can inhibit or catalyse its success as a relational practice *between* people. Only then can the strengths of collaborative endeavour and the weaknesses of various policy initiatives be fully understood and overcome.

Appendix I: Spareroom.co.uk Census Data

Spareroom.co.uk obtained this data using a self-selecting online survey of their users during May and June 2011 obtained the following data.

	number	UK %	London %
Are you...			
Male	4254	40	36
Female	6476	60	64
What age group are you?			
under 20	166	2	0
20-24	2034	19	17
25-29	3017	28	37
30-34	1755	16	21
35-39	984	9	10
40-49	1369	13	9
50+	1314	12	7
If you live in the UK what is your postcode?			
I live outside the UK	313	3	
I live in the UK	10008	97	
What is your nationality?			
British	7346	72	61
Other	2885	28	39
How long have you been living in the UK? (if not British)			
less than a year	790	28	25
1-2 years	663	23	24
3-5 years	713	25	27
6-10 years	377	13	14
more than 10 years	327	11	9
What is your job?			
Professional/employed	7332	72	76
Self-employed	947	9	10
Unemployed	325	3	3
Student	1248	12	9
Retired	208	2	1
Other	133	1	1
Which annual income bracket do you fit in?			

Under 10k	1395	14	9
10-20k	2411	24	17
20-30k	3029	30	33
30-40k	1443	14	19
40-50k	514	5	7
50k+	473	5	6
Rather not say	916	9	8

What is your highest level of education?

O level/GCSE/CSE/NVQ level 1	798	8	5
NVQ level 2/BTEC 1st	317	3	2
A level/NVQ level 3/BTEC national	1752	17	11
Degree	4367	43	51
Higher (e.g. MA, PhD, PGCE)	2378	23	27
Other	360	4	3
None	181	2	1

Which of the following are you?

Lodger (living with the owner of the property)	1914	19	15
Live-in landlord (who rents out a spare room to a lodger)	2820	27	18
Flatmate (sharing with others but not your landlord)	5163	50	64
other	371	4	3

Do you have a written agreement with your landlord?

Yes	5257	71	75
No	2146	29	25

Do you have a written agreement with your lodger?

Yes	1575	57	62
No	1200	43	38

What type of contract do you have?

I have my own individual contract	2287	44	35
We're on a shared contract	2045	39	50

I replaced a previous flatmate and took over their contract	293	6	7
I have a lodger contract	606	12	9

How long have you lived in shared accommodation?

Less than a year	3131	41	35
1-2 years	1593	21	21
3-5 years	1643	22	24
6-10 years	860	11	14
more than 10 years	394	5	6

How long have you been taking in lodgers?

Less than a year	978	36	37
1-2 years	735	27	25
3-5 years	582	22	19
6-10 years	213	8	10
more than 10 years	192	7	10

How many shares have you lived in during that time?

1	2491	34	28
2	1558	21	22
3	1075	15	16
4	722	10	11
5	583	8	9
6-10	683	9	12
more than 10	177	2	3

How many lodgers have you had in that time?

1	820	31	33
2	512	19	20
3	351	13	12
4	238	9	9
5	216	8	8
6-10	313	12	10
more than 10	203	8	7

Do you plan to buy your own property?

This year	421	6	5
Within 2-4 years	2154	30	32
Within 5-10 years	2916	40	42
In more than 10 years	894	12	12
Never	860	12	9

Why do you live in your current area?

Work	3384	47	44
Family	336	5	3
Study	829	11	7
A combination of the above	1661	23	23
Other	1023	14	23

What's the main reason you share?

Financial	3918	54	53
Social	335	5	5
Both	2744	38	40
Other	225	3	2

What's the main reason you have a lodger?

Financial	1765	67	69
Social	48	2	1
Both	765	29	27
Other	60	2	3

Could you afford to rent on your own if you wanted to?

Yes	2681	37	32
No	4551	63	68

Could you afford your mortgage without a lodger?

Yes	1542	59	55
No	1089	41	45

How many people (including you) live in the property?

1	485	5	3
2	3289	33	29
3	2733	28	29

	4	1780	18	20
5+		1545	16	18

Is your flatshare or property single sex or mixed?

All male		1252	13	10
All female		2064	21	24
Mixed		6420	66	66

Do you live with any of the following?

Partner or spouse (yours)		1042	11	12
Partner or spouse (your landlord, flatmate or lodger's)		333	3	4
Children (yours)		233	2	1
Children (your landlord, flatmate or lodger's)		89	1	1
Other family (yours, your landlord, flatmate or lodger's)		380	4	3
More than one of the above		383	4	3
None of the above		7260	75	76

Do you have a set of house rules?

We have a written set of house rules		725	7	6
We have an informally agreed set of house rules		2798	29	26
We don't need any - we get along fine without		4823	50	53
No but we could do with some		1339	14	15

What type of property do you live in?

House		5804	60	42
Flat (converted)		1672	17	28
Flat (purpose-built or high-rise)		1996	21	29
Bedsit		46	0	0
Houseboat		8	0	0
Other		143	1	1

Does your property have a living room?

Yes	8711	90	86
No	954	10	14

How many bathrooms are there in your property?

1	5077	52	55
2	3291	34	35
3	871	9	7
more than 3	449	5	3

Do you have your own bathroom?

Yes	2025	44	37
No	2565	56	63

Do you share with...

Friend(s)	2002	20	22
Friend(s) of a friend	379	4	4
Stranger(s)	5492	56	55
Mixture of the two	1916	20	19

Appendix II: Letter inviting participants to take part in study

The Residents

«Address1»

«Address2»

«Address3»

«Area»

«Postcode»

«Date»

Re. Invitation to participate in social research project

Dear «First1» «Last1» «First2» «Last2» «First3» «Last3» «First4» «Last4» «First5» «Last5» «First6» «Last6»

Do you live in a shared house?

Do you have a story to tell about living within a shared house?

Would you like to take part in a new and exciting research project that is looking at what life is really like living within shared houses?

I am a PhD student at Manchester University undertaking research in the Chorlton area that aims to investigate the trials and tribulations of living within shared houses.

The research is interested in finding out what it is like to live in a shared house, and how it might differ (in both positive and negative ways) from other kinds of living arrangements. I am looking for households of three or more people sharing a house aged between 21 and 35 within Chorlton. Your household was chosen from the electoral roll as there are multiple surnames registered at your address, which indicates that your household may be shared. I would like to talk with you and your housemates about your experiences of living together in a shared house. The enclosed participant information sheet gives details of the research, along with some answers to common questions.

The research will form part of my PhD thesis, being undertaken within the Sociology Department at The University of Manchester. The research design has been given ethical approval, and is being supervised by Dr Dale Southerton.

If you live within a shared house and would be interested in learning more about the research and taking part, please complete the form at the end of the participant information sheet and return it in the prepaid envelope provided, or email joshua.richards@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk, and I will contact you with more details. Alternatively, you can contact me on **07805 560659**.

Thanks for reading, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Josh Richards
ESRC Doctoral Research Student

Appendix III: Email to participants recruited via GumTree

Dear ...,

Re. Invitation to take part in University of Manchester research on shared houses in South Manchester

First off, apologies for contacting you out of the blue. I found your contact details on GumTree from your advert offering a room to let.

I am currently carrying out research at The University of Manchester looking at what it is like to live in a shared house and I am looking for participants to take part in a short interview just to discuss your own experiences and feelings about shared living. It is part of my doctoral research that is looking at how we develop relationships with others, specifically within the context of shared houses.

I have attached a copy of the Participant Information Sheet which gives more details of the research. If you would be willing to take part, or would like to discuss it further, then please do contact me using the details below or in the information sheet.

Thanks for reading.

Best wishes,
Josh

--

Josh Richards
ESRC Doctoral Research Student and Teaching Assistant
Sociology, School of Social Sciences
The University of Manchester
e: joshua.richards@manchester.ac.uk
t: 07805 560659

Appendix IV: Pen Portraits

House 1

Occupiers: Alison, Rebecca and one other female resident (not interviewed).

Alison, 23, Marketing (Owner-occupier)

Alison has lived in the house for two years after her parents bought the house for her while she was at university within the North West. Since graduating she has run the house as an owner-occupied shared house and lived with a range of residents that have been both randoms and people known to her. Even though she has always shared the house with others, she still finds some sense of insecurity in sharing with others, particularly if they do not appear to be as vigilant over household security as her, and prefers to live with friends. Alison works in marketing for a local but expanding company, and anticipates living in shared accommodation for the foreseeable future.

Rebecca, 22, Social worker (Tenant)

Rebecca has lived in Alison's owner-occupied house for a year-and-a-half, and knows Alison from secondary school before she left to go to an international tertiary college. Rebecca returned to Manchester to train to be a social worker, and has been living with Alison since then. She is a gentle and undemanding housemate, who is keen to ensure that everyone in the house is happy. Rebecca enjoys spending time with people in the house relaxing, and enjoys the opportunities to socialise that that South Manchester provides.

House 2

Occupiers: David, William, Julia and one other female housemate (not interviewed).

All housemates moved into the property at the same time as a cohesive group of friends and have lived there for 18 months. They chose the house together and have all lived together since then. All of the housemates apart from David also work together at a national retail chain, although they now work in different stores.

David, 23, Healthcare

David decided to move into shared accommodation after his relationship with his previous partner who he was living with came to an end. Julia also lived with him in that house, and they decided to move together, with Julia knowing that William and one other person she worked with also needed a house. He has worked in healthcare for a number of years, but is looking to return to university to train to be a doctor in the near future, which means that he was expecting to leave the current house relatively soon and go back into halls. David had good relationships with everyone in the house, and he was seen as the one that every goes to when they have a problem. He also had what was seen as the nicest room in the house as it had a shower cubicle in the room

William, 24, Retail

William knew David from school, but they did not know each other as friends until they both left school and got to know each other on the gay scene in Manchester. They had a shared friend in Julia, who William worked with. Although William works in retail, he has aspirations to work in the media industry, but has found it difficult to get his foot in the door. He is originally from the Manchester area so knows it well, and enjoys living in South Manchester due to his proximity to his family. He perceived staying in shared accommodation until he got a job elsewhere, possibly in London, or he moved in with a partner.

Julia, 24, Retail

Julia has known David since university, and also got to know William after they started working together. An avid traveller, Julia has spent a great deal of time abroad, and she did not actually see the house before moving into it as she was abroad, instead trusting David's opinion of the house. She has had a chequered past in shared housing, disliking living with people who are in relationships, as she found she would get unwillingly drawn into disputes, but enjoyed living with David and William and considered the house to be exceptionally friendly. She was aware of David's intention to move out at some point, so she had plans to go travelling once again, as she felt that once in a relationship this would be less achievable.

House 3

All of the residents of this house were interviewed, and all were tenants, with Rachel and Nicola having been in the house significantly longer than Joanne and Laura, who were recruited as 'randoms' after a process of selection. They aim to socialise as a group

together, but this is sometimes difficult to organise, but do spend time together in the lounge watching reality TV.

Rachel, 31, Project Manager

Rachel is career-minded and works long hours, and also enjoys going to 'boot camps' in the evening to improve her fitness. Without exercise, she says that she is a nightmare housemate. Her odd working hours make it difficult to organise events with the group, but she does try and make an effort where possible.

Nicola, 29, Teacher

Nicola spends more time in the house than most other housemates due to being a teacher. She may be first out of the house, but she is also often first back, and during school holidays she is often in the house most of the day. She enjoys the social aspect of shared living most of all, and enjoys living with friends, but also notes that while she can crave solitude, this normally gives way to boredom quite quickly. She is planning to leave her shared house to move in with her partner at some point soon, and has some ambivalence about this move due to the contrast in arrangements it may provide.

Joanne, 30, Technical Writer

Joanne was recruited to the house by Rachel and Nicola after two housemates they did not overly 'gel' with left the property. She has similar fitness interests to Rachel, and they sometimes go to 'boot camp' together, but also enjoys sitting at home shouting at the TV. When moving into the current property she was not only looking for a place to stay, but also a friendship group, given that she was new to Manchester and had previously experienced a very isolated tenancy in an owner-occupied property.

Laura, 26, Scientist

Recruited within two weeks of Joanne, Laura moved to this house after living in a shared house elsewhere in Manchester where no one used the shared lounge, people ate in their rooms, and very little interaction took place. She was looking to develop a friendship group in addition to her network of friends at work, which this house has more than provided. She has a photographic memory, so does not like people taking things without asking as it throws her.

House 4

This is an owner-occupied property, with Jon and Suzanna being joint owners, and Karen being a tenant. All residents were interviewed.

Jon, 35, Designer (Co-owner-occupier)

Jon and Suzanna knew each other from a previous house share, and subsequently bought a house together when that one came to a natural conclusion. He has had a great deal of experience sharing in the past both in Manchester and elsewhere during his university years. He finds the co-ownership a positive arrangement, although it may be changing due to Suzanna moving away due to her job.

Suzanna, 37, Drug and Alcohol Counsellor (Co-owner-occupier)

Suzanna enjoys living with Jon, and was aware that without him she would not have been able to afford to buy. She leaves a large part of the organisation of the house to Jon, but makes sure she 'does her bit'. She is leaving Manchester due to a job offer elsewhere that includes accommodation, so she is unsure if she will keep the house as an investment, or look to Jon to buy her share.

Karen, 30, Social care (Tenant)

Karen is a friend of Suzanna's but now considers Jon to be just as close a friend since living together. Her job involves her doing 'overnights' so she is not always at home, and when she is, she is sometimes sleeping. She finds this a difficult part of her life to balance, so she is looking to change jobs soon, but was unsure what to. Although she enjoys living in shared accommodation with Jon and Suzanna, when Suzanna leaves, she is considering her future, and would prefer to have been living more independently at this point in her life.

House 5

Steve owns the property, with Daniel and Paul being tenants. All occupants were interviewed.

Steve, 31, Accountant (Owner-occupier)

Steve has lived in the property for five years after buying it with his boyfriend. When their relationship came to an end, Steve took on the remainder of the property and is

now sole owner. He rents out rooms in the property in order to be able to afford the mortgage rather than as a choice to share, but values the company of his housemates.

Daniel, 29, Project Manager (Tenant)

Daniel was a close friend of Steve before he moved in, and they have a number of shared friends. He enjoys living with Steve, but he is aware that he probably does not attend to the property as attentively as Steve would probably like, and is aware what winds Steve up. The negative aspect of living with friends, for Daniel, is that it affords no anonymity – people will know what he has been up to and with who – but it is a part of living with friends he accepts.

Craig, 33, Researcher (Tenant)

Craig is the newest housemate in this property, and moved there from the North East once he found a new job in Manchester. He owns his own property elsewhere, but was not looking to permanently move straight away. Craig often finds himself cleaning more in the house, but claims to not mind this, and spends more time away than the other residents due to work.

House 6

This was an ideologically-led property that valued a communal ethic and organised the household accordingly. Food and cooking were formally organised, and there were no individual cupboards. They chose not to have a television in the house, instead opting to encourage socialising and interaction between residents. There was one additional housemate in this property that was not interviewed.

Lauren, 35, Researcher

Lauren has lived in shared accommodation since she moved to the UK, and values communal living as an ethic as well as a positive living arrangement. Lauren and Ruth moved to Manchester together as a couple and set-up this property with this communal ethic in mind, and chose Chorlton because they were told that was where 'people like us' lived. She values the proximity of local cooperatives and yoga to her house.

Ruth, 40, Civil Servant

Ruth spends part of her time away at work, so only makes a partial economic contribution to the house. During the interview, Ruth was particularly forthright about the ideological and ethical nature of communal living – as a sustainable choice both socially and environmentally. Her choice of style of living is a conscious one and although she recognises that not everyone will enjoy this form of living, she would rather make the effort to maintain it.

Samantha, 25, Engineer

The quietest of the three housemates interviewed, Lauren and Ruth recruited Samantha to the house after she posted an advert specifically asking to be part of a house share with a communal ethic. Since joining she has embraced the form of living, and has actively recruited other members to the house when others have left. She values being able to let people 'couch surf' in the property, and letting people stay.

Individuals

Jim, 31, Civil Servant

Jim has lived in shared accommodation since leaving university after a brief period with his parents that he did not particularly enjoy. He has an adaptable approach to sharing, explaining that his role is largely dependent on the participation (or lack of) from others. He has remained friends with people he has lived with over time, and is looking to stay in shared accommodation until he gains a place to study further at university, where he also perceives himself sharing.

Louise, 24, Project Manager

Louise originally moved to Manchester with her boyfriend at the time after leaving university, but moved into shared accommodation separately after the end of that relationship. She has lived in a number of properties and had some interesting stories to tell. She often found her role to involve more organisation than she would like, largely because she was the longest standing tenant in the property. At the point of interview Louise had organised to leave shared accommodation and live on her own, which led her to reflect more critically on her experiences and the freedoms that solo-living may provide for her.

Pete, 31, Trainer

Pete has lived in shared accommodation since leaving university, apart from a brief period where he lived with his parents, but did not find this a tolerable arrangement given the contrast in freedom he perceived, such as having to tell his parents if and when he would be home. He travels a lot due to his occupation, so is often out of the property during the week, and sometimes for extended periods of time, so trusting his housemates is an important consideration for him, leading him to choose friends rather than 'randoms', and appreciates having company after spending extended periods in hotels.

Fiona, 41, Healthcare

Originally from continental Europe, Fiona found shared living a difficult experience to begin with, and found it in direct contrast to her own experiences. She finds the British pre-occupation with owning their own home an unusual aspiration, and finds renting a useful and socially valuable experience. Her experiences in shared accommodation have been varied, and involved some difficult associations, including one that caused her so much stress that it encouraged her to take up meditation and Buddhism. As a consequence, she was looking to move into a Buddhist shared house at some point in the future to enjoy the benefits of sharing both practically and spiritually.

Polly, 29, Healthcare

Polly had recently moved into shared accommodation in Manchester while taking a postgraduate course as part of her job. She has had experiences of sharing both at home and abroad, and largely enjoyed the experience. Her biggest bugbear is with landlords rather than co-residents, and does not appreciate being 'ripped off' but recognises that this is a necessary evil of shared living most of the time.

Ashley, 23, Postgraduate

Ashley moved into shared accommodation after returning from a year abroad to finish her postgraduate degree when her peers had already graduated, and chose to move away from the student areas of Manchester specifically because she did not want to live within that lifestyle any more. Her current shared house experience is less organised than her previous experiences, with less focus on shared eating and cleaning, which she enjoyed. After finishing her degree she plans to return home before making any other housing plans.

Imogen, 31, Media

Imogen bought her property that she had been renting for a year, and subsequently needed to find a tenant to help with bills. Imogen was particular in who she wanted in terms of a housemate, and was clear that she did not want someone who would be a close friend; she wanted someone who she could live with but also be independent. Being able to trust someone with her china was also important. Her previous housing experiences have taken her across Europe, and she values living with other people as a way of learning and growing as a person. Additionally, as she travels as part of her job, having someone in the property is an added security feature in her absence.

Anna, 27, Postgraduate

Anna has moved to Manchester to complete a vocational postgraduate qualification. She has previous experiences of shared accommodation, but found that now she was a 'bit older' she did not want to live with other students again. Sharing is a economic necessity rather than a social choice for Anna, and she plans to move in with her boyfriend once she has graduated.

Andy, 27, Retail

Andy has lived in his current shared house for two years and seen people come and go during that time. He lives a relatively quiet lifestyle and enjoys the social aspect of living within shared accommodation. He has, at times, taken charge of recruitment of new housemates, and expressed that he was quite particular over cultural homophily when making decisions. He had not considered his accommodation plans beyond his current situation.

Benjamin, 30, Postgraduate

Benjamin was just about to finish his postgraduate degree and also worked in a bar. He had lived in shared accommodation both in the UK and abroad, but his current house share was troubling for him as he had particularly poor relations with one of his housemates. He said taking part in the interview was a way of him being able to talk about his experiences, and was 'kind of like therapy'. The housemate in question was hopefully going to be moving out soon after the interview.

Nadia, 29, Housing Officer

Nadia co-owned her two bedroom flat with a friend after they had rented it for a number of years and her housemate was in a position to afford to buy. She describes the arrangement as 'like husband and wife' but 'independent' despite them not being in a

relationship. She feels she may clean a little bit more in the flat, which might make her housemate feel a bit uncomfortable. At the time of the interview they were considering selling the property as she wanted to move in with her boyfriend.

Matt, 26, Administrator

Matt has lived in his shared house for two years, during which time a number of people had come and gone. He does not foresee himself as ever being able to afford to buy somewhere, and sharing currently suits his needs. He did not describe any particular affinity or dislike of his housemates, and was happy to live with whoever came along. He valued the area that he lived in more than the house itself as he wanted to be close to his friendship group.

Hayley, 26, Postgraduate

Hayley had moved to Manchester very recently for a postgraduate degree. She had previously lived in shared accommodation both here and abroad, as well as with her boyfriend. She was decidedly less positive about shared accommodation than most participants, expressing the constraining factors that living with others can entail, such as the 'constant negotiation'. However, she is aware that she is unable to afford to live on her own at the time.

Appendix V: Aide Memoire

To start...

- First name and age for the recording
- Tell me a bit about your experiences of shared accommodation

Previous experiences:

- Family home
- University halls?
- Where did you live before this house?

Current shared house:

- How did you find this shared house?
 - How long have you lived here?
- Relationships
 - Describe relationships with housemates
 - Any positive or negative experiences?
- 'Sharing'
 - What do you consider shared?
 - Rooms
 - 'Stuff'
 - Kitchen
 - Food
 - What is your 'own' room/space/stuff?
- Routines
 - Is there a routine in the house?
 - Mornings
 - Showers/bathroom
 - Eat together?
 - If there aren't routines, how do you organise...
 - Access to kitchen/bathroom
- Rules
 - Would you say there any house rules?
 - Written?
 - Unwritten?
- Conflict/arguments?
 - Have you had any problems in the house?
 - How would you deal with these?
- Recruitment
 - Have you had to recruit housemates for this house?
 - How did you do this?
 - Interview questions?
 - Experiences...
 - Good/Bad?
 - Have you had to apply?
 - Experiences
 - Good/Bad?
 - What sort of things would you ask?
 - What's an...
 - Ideal housemate?
 - Nightmare housemate?
- How long do you foresee living here?
 - What are your plans for moving on?
 - Why?

Finally...

- What's the best thing about shared living?
- What's the worst thing about shared living?

Appendix VI: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Shared houses and shared lives: the maintenance and negotiation of space and relationships in Houses of Multiple Occupation

What is the research about?

The research aims to investigate the trials and tribulations of living within shared houses and is interested in finding out what it is like to live in a shared house, and how it might differ (in both positive and negative ways) from other kinds of living arrangements.

What will the research involve?

Each household will be asked to take part in a group interview between all the residents where elements of living within the shared house will be discussed, such as how spaces in the house are used and shared, such as the kitchen and bathroom, and residents will be asked to recount a typical day in the house and any routines that exist. This should take around 45 minutes to an hour.

In addition to the group interview, each resident will be interviewed individually to discuss their experiences within the shared house, their motivations for living in a shared house, and other aspects that were raised within the group interview, such as the use of space. This should take around 45 minutes to an hour.

With your consent the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Will I be asked lots of personal questions?

The interviews will explore general areas of life within the shared house and will not cover areas that the participants are not comfortable with. You can disclose as much or as little about your life within the shared house as you wish; you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to.

The types of questions you will be asked in the group interviews involve how the house operates day-to-day, such as how the house is used for activities like socialising, and how space is used. The individual interviews will cover topics such as why you chose to live in a shared house.

Who can take part?

Residents of shared houses of three or more people aged 21-35 living within the Chorlton and Didsbury areas can take part. In order to take part most or all of the residents of the house will need to participate in the interviews.

How much of my time will this take?

It should take no more than an hour for the group interview, and an hour for the individual interview. Each of these will be scheduled at times to suit you.

What will I get out of it?

There will be no direct benefit to participants, but the contributions made within the interviews will form part of a piece of research that aims to make a significant contribution our understanding of life within shared houses. Participants often find taking part in the research an enjoyable and interesting experience to explore life within their homes that they may otherwise not have thought about.

Do I have to take part?

No, you are not obliged to take part. Participation is entirely voluntary and should you choose to participate you can withdraw at any time.

What will happen to my details?

Once the interviews have taken place and been transcribed the details will be anonymised – your name will be changed, and only general information about you will be used, such as your age, gender, and occupation. Your contact details will only be stored as long as is necessary in order to arrange interviews and to contact you should you wish to be updated on the outcomes of the research. All details are stored securely, and only the researcher and supervisor have access to personal details.

Portions of the interviews will be used within the production of academic papers and the final PhD thesis. No identifiable information will be used within these pieces of work, and you can have access to these works should you wish to.

How did you get my contact details?

The original contact details were obtained from the electoral roll at Manchester City Council. Potential Houses of Multiple Occupation were selected from the roll by having more than three individual surnames at the address. If you choose not to participate in the research your details are automatically removed from the database.

How to participate

Please complete the slip below and return in the prepaid envelope provided. If you choose to participate the researcher will contact you to discuss the research further and to arrange a time to meet with the household and arrange the group and individual interviews.

Should you choose not to participate, please complete and return the slip below so that your details can be removed from the sample database.

Contact details

If you have any questions then please feel free to contact the researcher or supervisor directly.

Researcher:
Josh Richards
joshua.richards@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
Tel. 07805 560659

Supervisor:
Dr Dale Southerton
dale.southerton@manchester.ac.uk

Sociology
School of Social Sciences
The University of Manchester
Arthur Lewis Building
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL
Detach here

Reply slip

Address:

We live within a shared house

We are aged between 21 and 35

We **would** like more information on taking part in the research

Contact name:

Contact telephone number:

Best time/day to contact:

Contact email address:

We **do not** wish to take part in the research.
(Your details will be permanently removed from the research sample.)

Appendix VII: Consent Form



The University
of Manchester

Consent form

Shared houses and shared lives: the maintenance and negotiation of space and relationships in Houses of Multiple Occupation

Researcher: Joshua Richards, Sociology, School of Social Sciences

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I confirm that the interview will be recorded with my consent and that in the transcript a pseudonym or code identifier will be used and reference to me as an individual will be removed. The data will only be used for the stated research purposes.
4. I understand that any data I provide through taking part in this research will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
5. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in this research.

Signature of participant

Name of participant (please print)

Date

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