UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

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Queering the Home: the Domestic Labour of LGBTQ Couples in Contemporary England

by

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ABSTRACT

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In the West, the home is traditionally associated with the heterosexual nuclear family. Through social, cultural and legal processes, the heterosexual bond has been constructed as central to the family home. Despite these dominant discourses, the home is also a space in which heteronormativity (or the unacknowledged assumption that heterosexuality is *the* natural and normal form of sexuality) may be subverted. This thesis considers how the domestic lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) couples in England challenge the heteronormativity prevalent in dominant discourses of the home. Drawing on 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews with LGBTQ individuals and couples, my thesis extends existing critical geographies of the home and contributes to feminist and queer theory by focussing on how these LGBTQ couples divide and understand domestic labour (and childcare, where relevant) in their homes. The perceived normativity of coupled domesticity and childrearing means that on one hand the LGBTQ participants in this study could be seen to fit in with normative ideals of domestic family life. On the other hand, I show how these couples subvert heteronormative assumptions about gendered household practices through their approaches and attitudes towards domestic labour and childcare. In particular, the thesis highlights the (often complex or contradictory) ways in which the participating LGBTQ couples destabilise heteronormatively gendered domestic roles; and queer the spaces of the home through the seemingly unremarkable, everyday practices and negotiations of domestic labour and childcare.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, ...[please print name]

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Queering the Home: the Domestic Labour of LGBTQ Couples in Contemporary England

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:
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Signed: .....

Date:.....

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The beginnings of a research project

Perhaps surprisingly, given that my thesis is entitled *Queering the Home*, this research project had rather heteronormative beginnings. When I first set out on the project, I had no intention of conceptualising the queerness of home or even studying LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) couples. The PhD studentship for which I received funding was initially advertised as a research project exploring contemporary divisions of labour within cohabiting couples in the UK. Whilst sexuality was not mentioned in the PhD advertisement, its implication was that the research would focus on heterosexual couples. A final year undergraduate student who had only recently 'come out' as a lesbian to a wider circle of friends and family, I applied for and was accepted onto the PhD programme.

At the start of my research project as I began to familiarise myself more with academic literatures on the division and gendering of domestic labour in heterosexual homes (including Crompton 2006; de Meester et al. 2011; Erickson 2005; and Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010) I began to question the differences between the everyday domestic lives and experiences that I was reading about and my own experiences of home as a lesbian woman. Although at the time I was not living with my partner, we spent enough time in each other's homes in the evenings and on our days off that domestic labour was becoming an increasingly shared endeavour. I felt excluded from narratives referencing traditionally gendered divisions of labour in the home because I did not share domestic labour with a male partner, but with a female one. I began to ponder how gender and sexuality might intersect and influence the division of domestic labour of cohabiting LGBTQ couples. Through searching academic databases (and to my delight) I found an active and growing body of literature exploring the meanings, materiality and everyday lived experiences of home for LGBTQ people (Valentine 1993; Valentine et al. 2003; Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a; Elwood 2000; Pilkey 2013) as well as a small number of studies specifically focussed on housework and parenting practices in

LGBTQ families (Pfeffer 2010; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Kamano 2009; Kentlyn 2008; Carrington 1999; Dunne 1997, 2000; Oerton 1997, 1998). These studies inspired me to take my PhD in a rather queer direction, in recognition of the fact that domestic labour and childcare are not limited to heterosexual coupled households. My thesis thus extends the existing body of literature on LGBTQ homes in and beyond the discipline of Geography by focussing on the domestic labour and childcare performed by cohabiting LGBTQ couples in contemporary England, and centring my analysis on how the domestic practices of the participating LGBTQ couples intersect with (hetero)normative discourses of the heterosexual family home and associated (gendered) domestic roles. The three interrelated research questions that this project addresses are:

- How do cohabiting LGBTQ couples divide domestic labour and childcare?
- What role do sexuality and gender play in LGBTQ couples' understandings, experiences and divisions of domestic labour and childcare?
- How do the domestic practices of cohabiting LGBTQ couples intersect with heteronormative discourses of the home?

Beyond my personal connections with the project, there are broader social reasons as to why this is a timely project. The research has been conducted at a very interesting moment because over recent years significant gains have been made in LGBTQ rights in England. The Equality Act 2010 included sexual orientation, sex and gender reassignment as 'protected characteristics', legislating against discrimination or harassment on these grounds. In addition, as I began my PhD in September 2011 the government announced plans to hold consultations about marriage for same-sex couples. The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 has since passed through parliament, allowing same-sex couples in England and Wales to get married from 29th March 2014. However, these changes to the law in England have not been without their opposition. Resistance to LGBTQ rights has come from a number of religious, political, and think-tank groups, which often argue against same-sex marriage or parenting, and for the preservation of heteronormative definitions of marriage, relationships and the family (that is, definitions which privilege and normalise heterosexual subjectivities and relationships between cisgender[1] heterosexuals) (Browne and Nash 2014). In addition,

[1] A term used to describe people who identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.

although the ability to marry has been welcomed by many LGBTQ people, others have argued that such changes to the law are an attempt to assimilate LGBTQ people with normative ideals of 'respectable' family life, monogamous coupling, marriage and domestic gender roles (Duggan 2002). By examining how the domestic practices of the participating LGBTQ couples intersect with such normative ideals of domestic family life, this thesis advances understandings of contemporary LGBTQ domesticity in England in the context of a shifting legal, social and cultural backdrop.

Despite major policy and social shifts in recent years, entrenched norms regarding acceptable forms of sexual identity and behaviour continue to shape everyday life in England. With regards to the home, popular culture and the mainstream media (re)produce the dominant discourse of the domestic sphere as a space in which heterosexual couples consolidate their relationships, reproduce and raise their children (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006b, 2007). The repetition of this discourse (re)creates the illusion of the home as a 'naturally' and 'normally' heterosexual space, and renders invisible the sexual power relations underlying this illusion (Browne 2007b; Duncan 1996). However, the home is also a space in which heteronormativity (or the unacknowledged assumption that heterosexuality is *the* natural and normal form of sexuality) may be subverted. Drawing on in-depth interviews with cohabiting LGBTQ couples in England, in this thesis I argue that the domestic practices of these LGBTQ couples 'queer' heteronormative understandings of the home. As will be expanded upon in Chapter 2, I use 'queer' or 'queering' to refer to the ways in which LGBTQ people resist normativity and challenge the hegemonic heterosexualisation of home through their domestic practices, building on the work of Pilkey (2013), Kentlyn (2008) and Gorman-Murray (2007). The theoretical framework of my thesis combines this reading of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process with critical geographies of home as both a material and imaginative space (Blunt and Dowling 2006), thereby enabling an exploration of how the LGBTQ participants' everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare are shaped by and/or shape the materiality of the home space, (hetero)normative social discourses of home, and the couples' own (queer) agencies and personal meanings of home.

1.2 The structure of the thesis

To contextualise my thesis, Chapter 2 moves through three interconnected sets of literatures and debates central to my consideration of the division of domestic labour and childcare in LGBTQ homes in contemporary England. I introduce work on everyday life, LGBTQ studies and critical geographies of the home, explaining how each of these sets of literatures have inspired and shaped the focus, key concepts and theoretical perspectives of this thesis. I open the chapter with a discussion of scholars of everyday life such as Lefebvre (1991) and de Certeau (1998), making the case for the value of centring my thesis on the seemingly unremarkable, everyday practices and spaces of domestic labour and childcare. I further emphasise that the home is a space worthy of serious academic attention by drawing on the work of feminist geographers who have focussed their analyses upon the smaller scale of the home rather than urban and public spaces (Valentine 2001; McDowell 1999; Blunt and Dowling 2006). A review of existing social research on the everyday lives of LGBTQ people extends the discussion to encompass everyday practices and identities which disrupt (hetero)normative ways of living. In this chapter I also outline the theoretical framework used to structure this thesis, explaining how critical geographies of home and 'queering' are being understood and introducing the key theorists who have informed the theoretical perspectives of this thesis. Combining critical geographies of the home as a material space imbued with social and personal meanings with a reading of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process forms the basis for a critique of normative discourses of the heterosexual family home, its material spaces and layout, and associated domestic roles and values (see section 2.9).

In Chapter 3 I outline the methodological strategies I employed in carrying out my empirical study. My research draws upon semi-structured in-depth interviews with couples and individuals who self-identify as LGBTQ, and Chapter 3 reflects upon the rationale, benefits and limitations of this qualitative approach to studying the everyday domestic lives of LGBTQ participants. In addition, Chapter 3 demonstrates my commitment to morally responsible research, reflecting upon the key ethical considerations which arose over the course of the research project. It also outlines my thematic approach to analysing the interview data collected.

Chapter 4 introduces the data from my research study and provides an overview of the key demographic information about the participants, including their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and living arrangements. It discusses how identity and intersectionality are being understood in this thesis, engaging with intersectionality debates and considering how human geographers have conceptualised intersectionality. As well as building a picture of the identities of the participants involved in the study, this chapter identifies general trends in the divisions of domestic labour and childcare in their homes. In addition, in Chapter 4 I begin explain how the everyday domestic lives of the LGBTQ participants disrupt heteronormative conceptualisations of the home, in particular by destabilising the traditional gendered associations of various domestic tasks such as cleaning and DIY. This provides a basis for a more detailed discussion of these themes in the three subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 then moves on to provide an in-depth analysis of the participating LGBTQ couples' everyday homemaking practices, paying particular attention to the agency of place and the role of the material home in shaping these practices. In doing so I draw on critical geographies of home and 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process to emphasise how the everyday homemaking practices of these couples (including domestic labour and childcare) are shaped by and/or shape the home space itself, including its architectural layout and material objects; (hetero)normative imaginaries of home; and the personal (queer) meanings, uses and roles that the participating LGBTQ couples bring to the domestic sphere.

In Chapter 6 I analyse how gender and sexuality shape coupled experiences and understandings of domestic labour in the LGBTQ households in my study, employing the combined theoretical perspectives of the home as a material space imbued with *social* and *personal* meanings and 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process enacted in particular spaces and social contexts. In this chapter I argue that, whilst the participants included in the study may be seen to fit in with the normative *social* ideal of coupled domesticity, they simultaneously challenge heteronormative assumptions about domestic roles and meanings through their *personal* (queer) attitudes and approaches towards the division of domestic labour in their homes. This chapter also helps to make the case for a key theoretical argument put forth in this thesis, that the process of

challenging heteronormativity can take place even within such everyday spaces as the home, which on the surface may not appear to be particularly transgressive of heteronormativity. As well as considering how the couples' apportioning of domestic tasks is influenced by gender and sexuality, in this chapter I emphasise the influence of time availability, personal preferences, standards and skills on their domestic practices, meanings and roles. A version of this chapter has been published in a special issue of *Home Cultures* on 'Queer Domesticities' (Barrett 2015).

I focus on childcare in the LGBTQ parent households in my sample, in Chapter 7. Similarly to the arguments put forward in Chapter 6, in this chapter I employ the theoretical perspectives of critical geographies of home a (material) space imbued with social and personal meanings and queering as an anti-heteronormative process to show that, whilst the LGBTQ parents in this study may be interpreted as supporting the dominant societal ideals of coupled domesticity and childrearing, they also challenge normative assumptions about the straightforward links between parenting, heterosexuality and associated domestic meanings and gender roles. Throughout the chapter I examine how the family home is queered by the participating LGBTQ parents, as they disrupt (hetero)normatively gendered parenting scripts through their everyday negotiations of childcare and associated domestic tasks. The final chapter then offers conclusions on the findings from this research project, considering how it contributes to broader conceptual debates in and beyond Geography regarding the meanings of home, the gendering of domestic practices, and the queerness of everyday life.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Conceptualising the Queerness of Home

2.1 Introduction

The purposes of this literature review are twofold. Firstly, it provides a rationale for focussing on the seemingly unremarkable or mundane spaces and practices of the home. Secondly, it introduces key concepts such as 'heteronormativity' as well as the theoretical framework that is employed throughout this thesis, which combines critical geographies of the home as both a material and imaginative space with a reading of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process, thereby understanding the material and imaginative home as mutually produced, maintained and queered. Bringing together work on everyday life, geographies of the home, lesbian and gay studies, as well as feminist and queer theory, in this literature review I also provide an overview of the background literatures that have inspired and informed the focus and theoretical perspectives of this thesis. Most influential in shaping this research project have been those scholars who, in recent decades, have recognised the diverse, complex and even contradictory ways in which heteronormativity might be subverted through mundane practices and taken-for-granted spaces, thereby acknowledging the queer politics and potentials of everyday life.

Section 2.2 introduces literatures from a long tradition of scholars who have studied everyday life. Beginning in the mid-20th century with the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, I trace the work a number of scholars who have explored the ways in which normative social processes or ways of living might be subverted through everyday spaces and practices, including Michel de Certeau, Dorothy Smith, and Sarah Pink. In doing so my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which my thesis draws on and contributes to this existing body of literature by focussing on *hetero*normativity specifically, as well as the everyday spaces and practices of domestic labour and the home.

Next, sections 2.3 to 2.5 consider how the current research project builds upon existing social research on the everyday lives of LGBTQ people. Whilst acknowledging the vibrant scholarship that has explored the geographies, practices and identities of LGBTQ people over the last 20 years in the social sciences, I suggest that the home is an under-researched yet important space for understanding LGBTQ lives. Drawing on critical conceptualisations of the home as both a material space and a space imbued with social and cultural meaning, in sections 2.4 and 2.5 I also comment upon how my thesis questions and critiques normative discourses of the nuclear family home and normatively gendered divisions of domestic labour in the home space.

Following this, I give critical consideration to the terms 'heteronormativity' and 'queer'. In section 2.6 I outline how these two concepts are used within this thesis, showing how my approach draws upon the work of a number of human geographers and queer theorists who have critiqued (hetero)normativity in recent decades. In sections 2.7 and 2.8 I then move on to consider the potential for challenging heteronormativity within the domestic sphere, reviewing some recent texts in the social sciences which explore the meanings and experiences of home for LGBTQ people. Whilst the former section focuses on the relationships and material practices of LGBTQ people at home, the latter section highlights existing studies that have considered the division of domestic labour within LGBTQ coupled households. I indicate how the current thesis builds upon these existing studies, most notably through its focus on the complex ways in which the LGBTQ couples in my study destabilise heteronormatively gendered domestic roles, and queer the spaces of the home through their everyday approaches and attitudes towards domestic labour and childcare.

Section 2.9 then articulates the theoretical framework utilised in this thesis, drawing on the literatures and theoretical perspectives that I have reviewed. I outline how the two main theoretical perspectives of this thesis – critical geographies of home and 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process – provide a complementary and useful means through which to explore how domestic labour and childcare are performed, shared and valued in the home by the cohabiting LGBTQ couples in my sample who (perhaps even inadvertently) seek to 'queer' the meanings, roles and spaces involved. In this section I continue to make the case for the domestic focus of this thesis, drawing

attention to those queer scholars who have recognised the potential for challenging (hetero)normativity even within everyday spaces such as the home. Lastly, I conclude this chapter by commenting on how this thesis brings together interdisciplinary literatures on everyday life, the home, sexuality and normativity; and how I extend this body of work through a consideration of the everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare in the participating LGBTQ couples' homes in contemporary England.

2.2 Everyday life

At the outset of this thesis centred on the spaces and practices of the home, I feel that it is important to acknowledge that the value of researching everyday domestic life might not be immediately apparent. The repetitiveness of cleaning, the reappearing piles of laundry, the quotidian routines, messes, lists, emotions and negotiations of the domestic – these mundane aspects of life are often overlooked or not considered worthy of serious academic attention because of their very everydayness. However, turning our attention to practices and spaces that are usually taken for granted can improve our understandings of our social worlds. Through everyday practices and places our identities are shaped, relationships forged, and lives are lived. The everyday "is where we make our worlds and where our worlds make us" (Pink 2012, p. 5). In this thesis I therefore adopt a critical approach to everyday life, one which values and seeks to draw attention to the often invisible or taken for granted day-to-day practices and spaces of domestic labour and childcare. In doing so I draw on the work of a long tradition of scholars who have studied the practices, places, emotions and politics of everyday life.

The concept of 'everyday life' first appeared in social thought in the 1920s, although it was not until the second half of the 20th century that it received sustained academic attention (Bennett and Watson 2002). The French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre was among the first social theorists to study everyday life. In *Critique of Everyday Life*, which was first published in French in 1947, Lefebvre argued that everyday life was the product of particular social conditions that had emerged under industrial capitalism. His approach to everyday life was one of social critique, and

moving towards alternative ways of living. For Lefebvre (1991), everyday life offers opportunities for resistance and transformation. He believed that people have the potential to subvert hegemonic social processes in and through the spaces of everyday life. My approach in this study draws on the work of Lefebvre as I consider the potential for subverting (hetero)normative social processes through everyday practices in the home.

In particular, I focus on the routine or mundane practices of domestic labour and childcare. In doing so, I also draw upon Michel de Certeau's writings on the everyday. Following Lefebvre, de Certeau (1998) and de Certeau et al. (1998) argued that power may be resisted and contested through the spaces and practices of everyday life. More specifically, de Certeau's work emphasised that this everyday resistance most often comes not in the form of explicit political actions or demonstrations, but through quotidian routines and seemingly unremarkable spaces (Bennett and Watson 2002). My study, with its focus on domestic labour, childcare and the home, adopts a similarly critical approach to these often taken for granted practices and spaces of the everyday, suggesting that they have potential as sites for challenging (hetero)normativity. In exploring this line of argument, I turn to the more contemporary writing of anthropologist and social scientist Sarah Pink. Following Pink (2012) I recognise that whilst practices of everyday life have potential as forms of resistance or innovation, they can also serve to maintain normative ways of living. In this thesis I explore the potential role of domestic labour and childcare as activities through which heteronormative discourses of home might be challenged, but acknowledge that these practices could equally work to sustain (hetero)normative ways of living in the domestic sphere.

In theorising everyday practices and spaces, my thesis also employs feminist conceptualisations of the everyday as a site of power relations. In particular, it is useful to return to the sociology of everyday life offered by Dorothy Smith, as her approach seeks to uncover the processes of domination and (gender) inequality that are built into our daily lives and practices. Smith (2003) called for a critical analysis of people's everyday lives, which considers the (gendered) power relations that structure the everyday world and people's day-to-day practices. This is particularly pertinent when studying the everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare and the everyday

spaces of the home, which are traditionally highly gendered. Smith's central idea is that of making the everyday world 'problematic'. Rather than taking for granted people's everyday experiences, the study of these experiences becomes a place from which to explore wider social norms or power relations (Smith 1987). Within this thesis, people's everyday experiences of domestic labour and the home are studied with a view to understanding broader processes of heteronormativity and the gendering and (hetero)sexualisation of these practices and spaces.

Whilst I acknowledge the value of domestic labour and childcare as practices through which socially, culturally and historically situated norms can be understood, maintained or subverted, I do not believe that this is their only value. Rather, I adopt the feminist view that domestic labour and childcare also have value in and of themselves (Valentine 2001; McDowell 1999; Oakley 1974). This often 'invisible' or taken for granted work would soon be noticed if it was not done: if washing-up was left to pile up in the sink, if dirty school uniforms were left in the laundry basket, if the fridge and cupboards were left to slowly empty of food, bills were not paid, appointments not made, greetings cards not bought for friends or family on special occasions, the effects would soon be felt. These practices take up considerable amounts of time and effort; and their centrality to most people's day-to-day lives makes them worthy of serious academic attention (McGinnity and Russell 2008; Valentine 2001; McDowell 1999).

2.3 The everyday lives and spaces of LGBTQ people

By focusing on the mundane practices of domestic labour and childcare in LGBTQ homes, this thesis also serves the important function of extending and building upon existing social research on the everyday lives of LGBTQ people. Some of the earliest research documenting the day-to-day geographies of lesbians and gay men emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, during a time of socio-political upheaval following gay, women's and civil rights movements in Europe and the USA. This research typically focussed on a particular 'gay community', be it at the local or national scale, with some geographers and sociologists drawing attention to 'gay ghettos', segregated neighbourhoods

containing large numbers of gay people, services and other facilities (Humphreys 1972, Levine 1979). The sociologist Manuel Castells contributed to this body of work, mapping lesbian and gay spaces in San Francisco in *The City and The Grassroots*. His book included maps of gay social venues, multiple male households, and votes for the gay politician Harvey Milk in the 1975 supervisorial race (Castells, 1983). Other research considered spatial patterns of gay nightlife, services and leisure facilities (Weightman 1981, Winchester and White 1988); gay political activism (Geltmaker 1992, Jackson 1989); and the residential patterns of gay people (Rose 1984, Knopp 1990).

Although social scientists therefore began to pay more attention to sexuality in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of sexuality in shaping experiences of particular spaces was still frequently ignored. Typically, spatial research focussed on mapping and increasing the visibility of lesbian and gay spaces rather than critically challenging heterosexual hegemony in public space (Chouinard and Grant 1996). In his 1991 article entitled 'Insignificant others: lesbian and gay geographies', David Bell argued that lesbian and gay identities continued to be 'othered' and neglected within the discipline of Geography. Meanwhile, in the early 1990s England (1994) also lamented the lack of engagement with lesbians in the discipline; and Johnson (1994) pointed out the (in)visibility of lesbians within the academy, suggesting that this was largely due to fears of 'coming out' within a heterosexist culture and discipline.

Following calls for a more direct engagement with the lives and spaces of lesbians and gay men, a vibrant scholarship has explored the everyday lives of LGBTQ people over the last 20 years in the social sciences, including significant articles and monographs from Bell and Valentine (1995), Brown and Knopp (2003) and Browne et al. (2010). In 2007, a special issue of the journal *Social and Cultural Geography* was the first collection of papers focussing on lesbian women to feature within a geographical journal. In her introduction to the special issue, Browne (2007a) highlighted that both transgender and cisgender women had been under-researched within geographical studies of sexuality, with few studies focussing on the specific experiences of women. Therefore, the collection sought to address the gendered bias of geographical studies of sexuality by focussing on the lives and experiences of lesbian, bisexual and queer women. An engagement with critical debates regarding sexual identities has also been

evident in Geography in recent years. This body of work has moved beyond previous studies of lesbian and gay geographies, which tended to homogenise lesbian and gay spaces, experiences and identities. Instead, researchers have begun to acknowledge the diversity and fluidity of gender and sexual identities, and engage with the geographies of bisexual and transgender people, sex workers, and others marked out by some form of sexual 'difference' (Binnie and Valentine 1999; Brown and Knopp 2003; Browne et al. 2010).

Although much of the existing literature on LGBTQ lives has focussed on public and community spaces, some academics have also considered the experiences and meanings of home for LGBTQ couples and families (Cook 2014; Pilkey 2013; Scicluna 2013; Pfeffer 2010; Kentlyn 2008; Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Gabb 2005a, 2013; Elwood 2000; Carrington 1999; Oerton 1997, 1998). My thesis extends the existing body of literature on LGBTQ domesticity by focussing on the everyday domestic lives of a sample of LGBTQ couples in contemporary England. In doing so I recognise that home is central to the everyday lives of many LGBTQ couples and families, and thus an important point of departure for exploring (hetero)normativity and the gendered meanings of everyday spaces and practices.

2.4 A critical geography of the home as a (hetero)sexual space

The lack of attention paid to the domestic sphere in early geographical studies of lesbians and gay men is perhaps unsurprising, given that within academia more broadly the home and its associated domestic practices were not traditionally thought of as worthwhile topics for serious academic attention, because of their associations with women (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). The discipline of Geography in particular was historically male-dominated and masculinised, and so for decades the home was ignored by geographers. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s a specifically feminist Geography began to emerge, criticising the marginalisation of women and exclusion of issues such as household labour, childcare and the home from geographical studies (McDowell 1999). Beyond the discipline of Geography, other literature in Sociology,

Anthropology and Architecture has addressed similar topics and debates since the 1970s and 1980s (Oakley 1974; Hayden 1980; Erickson 2005; Crompton 2006; Rotman 2006).

This literature has drawn attention to the importance of home, not only as a physical or material location, but as an imaginative space imbued with social and cultural meanings (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Home is a key space in which our identities are (re)produced. Through everyday routines and the materiality of things around the home, the 'stuff' of everyday life, we construct and express a sense of self (Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b). At the level of the household, particular subjectivities and identities are normalised – and others marginalised – through social discourses of the ideal home. Perhaps most importantly for this thesis, the home is a space in which socially acceptable forms of sexual identity and behaviour are normalised and contested (Gorman-Murray 2006b, 2007; Baydar 2012).

In contemporary Western societies, an ideal discourse of domesticity equates the home with the heterosexual nuclear family. Government policy, popular culture and the mainstream media construct an ideal notion of the home as a detached, suburban house in which married heterosexual couples consolidate their relationships, reproduce, and raise their children (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006b, 2007). So, too, do housing design and layout reflect the hegemonic heterosexuality of home. For example, Johnston and Longhurst (2010) note that it is common for homes to feature one larger or master bedroom, designed for a (presumably) heterosexual couple, and two or three smaller bedrooms, designed for their children. They argue that these layouts are specifically designed with the traditional nuclear family in mind and do not suit the needs of many people living in domestic spaces, such as extended families or friends who live together and might prefer evenly sized bedrooms. In addition, estate agent advertisements reinforce the ideal of the heterosexual family home by describing houses in terms of the family, child friendliness, the great kitchen 'for Mum' and the spacious garage 'for Dad' (Longhurst 2012). The repetition of these dominant discourses (re)creates the illusion that the home is 'naturally' and 'normally' heterosexual, thereby rendering invisible the sexualised power relations which (re)create this illusion (Browne 2007b; Duncan 1996). As noted by Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2006b) it is difficult to think of the home as anything other than a space of the heterosexual couple and their children. This illusion of the home as a stable or

permanently (hetero)sexual space may result in the marginalisation of those (non-heterosexuals) to whom these norms do not apply (Browne 2007b).

In addition to concentrating on these broader societal discourses and ideals, some authors have focussed on the micro-geographies of particular heterosexual households as a means of exploring the relationship between heterosexuality and home. Through studying the everyday domestic lives of cohabiting heterosexual couples in New Zealand, Morrison (2013, 2012) seeks to make visible the taken for granted material objects and practices that contribute to the appearance of the domestic sphere as normatively heterosexual. In particular, she focuses on the diverse ways in which heterosexuality is (re)produced in the home through material objects such as couple photographs (Morrison 2013) and embodied forms of coupled intimacy such as touching and feeling (Morrison 2012). In doing so she complicates the presumed homogeneity of heterosexual homes, and calls into question the assumed 'natural' and 'normal' links between heterosexuality and the domestic sphere.

2.5 The gendered division of domestic labour

As well as the hegemonic heterosexuality of home being sustained through policy, popular culture and design, the practice of looking after the home through domestic labour is commonly perceived through a heteronormative lens. This is largely due to long-lasting cultural traditions and social structures, which mean that the gender ideology linking women to the domestic sphere has retained some socio-cultural hold in the West (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010; Crompton 2006; McDowell 1999). Despite an increase in female employment and a rise in qualifications amongst women in recent decades, the assumption that the home is a space in which men and women take on separate, gendered roles remains persistent in societies such as the UK (Crompton 2006). Women are perceived to be responsible for housework tasks such as cleaning, laundry, meal preparation and childcare; whilst men are associated with the waged workplace and a small number of domestic tasks including car maintenance and do-it-yourself (DIY) tasks such as putting furniture together, hanging pictures from

walls, and fixing things around the house. The norm associating women with housework has become so entrenched that it is commonly assumed to be the 'natural' and 'normal' order of things. In the UK and other Western countries, housework and childcare activities have traditionally been conceptualised as part of the 'natural' role of women and an expression of love for their family (Erickson 2005, Hochschild 1983, 1989). Meanwhile, waged employment has traditionally been considered the preserve of men, who are often seen as 'naturally' more competitive or aggressive than women (Crompton 2006, Williams 2000). This illusion is powerful in maintaining the traditional association between housework and the female identity. As well as being patriarchal, this dualistic understanding of gendered domestic roles normalises the heterosexual nuclear family, as an ideal home is understood to contain a female homemaker and male breadwinner (Gorman-Murray 2012). Following Browne (2007b), the repetition of this discourse (re)creates the illusion of the home as a 'naturally' and 'normally' heterosexual space, and renders invisible the sexual and gendered power relations underlying this illusion.

However, the gendering of domestic roles is not fixed, and sociocultural understandings of masculinity and femininity vary temporally. The 'male breadwinner' model arose from a particular set of social conditions under Western industrial capitalism in the 19th century (Crompton 2006, Williams 2000). As industrialisation took hold, a rise in waged labour in factories, banks and other industries coincided with residential development in rapidly growing cities. This led to the emergence of separate spheres, or a separation between the spaces of paid employment and the home (Crompton 2006, Oakley 1974). These separate spheres led to new understandings of gendered, dualistic roles of breadwinners and homemakers in the West. Whilst for working-class families a financial imperative often meant that women participated in waged employment outside of the home, the middle-class ideal of husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker was constructed as an ideal for all.

By the mid-20th century, social policy and institutional arrangements in the UK had come to reflect the 'male breadwinner' model. For example, women were marginalised within the waged workforce, quotas were placed on their entry to education, and it remained legal to pay women less than men for the same job (Crompton 2006). The Beveridge Report of 1942, which provided the basis for post-war social policy in the

UK, reinforced divisions of labour along gendered lines and hence contributed to gender inequalities. The Report asserted that married women had duties as wives and mothers, and should take responsibility for domestic labour and childcare in order to allow their husbands to earn a wage outside of the home (Bakshi et al. 1995; Crompton 2006). Following the Beveridge Report, British social policy worked in favour of married couples. Men in full-time employment were paid a 'family wage' large enough to support a wife and children, whilst women received benefits as wives and mothers as welfare provision increased (Crompton 2006; Millar 1999; Bakshi et al. 1995; McDowell 1991). Typically, any waged work that a woman engaged in was low-paid, because their earnings were seen as supplementary to the family wage earned by their husband. This reinforced the position of women as dependents, with many married women economically reliant on their husband (McDowell 1991; Bakshi et al. 1995).

Such a system may be described as Fordist. Whilst Fordism is a contested concept, it has been widely used to conceptualise the social and economic arrangements of many advanced capitalist societies following the Second World War (Crompton, 2006; McDowell, 1991). The key characteristics of Fordism were full male employment, growing state welfare provision, and mass production and consumption. At the household level, men were expected to earn a 'family wage' large enough to support their family; and women were expected to provide unwaged domestic labour in return (Crompton, 2006; McDowell, 1991). Whilst Fordism began to decline in the late 20th century, the gender ideology linking women to caring and the domestic sphere retained its hold in the UK (Crompton, 2006; McDowell, 1991; McDowell and Dyson, 2011). By the 1960s and 1970s, more women began to enter the labour force; however their position in the labour market remained far weaker than that of men. In the UK, women were more likely to be employed in part-time, low-status or poorly paid work, with fewer benefits and less security than men (Crompton, 2006; Crompton and Harris, 1998; McDowell, 1991). Second-wave feminists in the mid- to late-20th century fought to improve workplace rights for women, arguing that barriers to women's training and employment were based upon patriarchal structures (Crompton, 1999, 2006). The Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination legislation were introduced in the 1970s; and in the decades since women's participation in waged employment has significantly increased, qualifications amongst women have risen, and the relative working hours of heterosexual partners have become more equal (de Meester er al. 2011). There has also

been some unravelling of the gendered associations of homemaking and breadwinning, as women today are often expected to combine their domestic and family responsibilities with waged employment; whilst there is a greater social expectation that men will be involved in domestic labour and childcare. These social expectations have fed into the domestic practices of (heterosexual) men and women: for example, new fathers are increasingly taking time off work to care for their child(ren), and men are becoming more actively involved in childcare in general (Aitken 2009; Dermott 2008; Doucet and Merla 2007; Chesley 2011). However, whilst there have been some shifts in social attitudes towards (domestic) gender roles, the notion that domestic labour is inherently female remains powerful in shaping gendered and (hetero)normative domestic meanings and practices in the West today. As traditions have been established as to the 'correct' gendered division of labour, these continue to be influential in shaping heterosexual coupledom in the West (Gorman-Murray 2012; Pfau-Effinger 1998; Williams 2000). Hence, female partners continue to perform more of the domestic labour and childcare than male partners in heterosexual couples. In many cases this creates a double burden or 'second shift' of domestic labour in addition to waged employment for these women (Hochschild 1989; de Meester et al. 2011).

2.6 Heteronormativity and 'queering' space

The idealised discourses of the nuclear family home and associated gendered divisions of domestic labour explored in the previous two sections of this literature review may be described as 'heteronormative'. An important concept within this thesis, I will now provide an extended definition of 'heteronormativity', including a consideration of the ways in which it has been resisted and critiqued by queer theorists in recent decades. To begin, it is important to note that heteronormativity is different from heterosexuality. Whilst the term 'heterosexuality' is typically used to describe romantic and sexual relationships between men and women, the term 'heteronormativity' refers to a wider set of processes by which heterosexual subjectivities and relationships (and associated binary understandings of gender) are naturalised and normalised. In particular, it is the nuclear family and heterosexual, monogamous, private sex between two cisgender

partners of the same generation that are constructed as natural, normal, safe and healthy (Rubin 1984; Pilkey 2013; Hubbard 2008). A line is drawn between these and all other types of sex, with the latter seen as abnormal, unnatural, or even dangerous or immoral. Sex and relationships are commonly subject to stigma or disapproval if they are non-monogamous, commercial, cross-generational, or involve pornography, group sex, LGBTQ people or BDSM (bondage and discipline (B&D), dominance and submission (D/s), and sadism and masochism (S&M)) (Hubbard 2000; Rubin 1984). In addition, ways of living that show disregard for the traditional trajectory of marriage, reproduction and childrearing are commonly disapproved of (Halberstam 2005).

Heteronormativity is problematic because it can lead to people who do not follow a specific model of monogamous and heterosexual coupling being marginalised and pathologised. Heteronormative discourses position homosexuality in binary opposition to heterosexuality, and as a result homosexuality is marked, marginalised, and cannot go unremarked upon (Browne 2007b; Browne et al. 2007). As well as potentially enabling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, heteronormativity may also result in heterosexuals facing discrimination if their sexual relationships or behaviours do not fit in with the normative ideology of the heterosexual nuclear family (Pilkey 2013; Halberstam 2005). In her 1984 essay ‘Thinking sex’, Rubin wrote that anybody whose sexual preferences were outside of the dominant model of sexual correctness faced oppression in Western society. She argued that amongst the groups facing the worst oppression were those who engaged in sadomasochism or cross-generational sex.

Resisting and critiquing (hetero)normativity has been one position that queer theorists have taken up in recent decades. I make this point tentatively because ‘queer’ is a highly contested term, and many overlapping and sometimes oppositional perspectives might be considered ‘queer’ (Binnie 2009; Pilkey 2013; Rudy 2001). In the following paragraphs, however, I will attempt to trace some key authors and strands of queer theory which have centred around resisting (hetero)normativity. But first a point about the emergence of ‘queer theory’. The word ‘queer’ was originally used to describe something or somebody odd or strange. Later, it was used as a homophobic insult, usually directed towards gay men. In recent decades, ‘queer’ has been reclaimed by activists and used with pride in the fight against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and other forms of prejudice (Giffney 2009). Today, the word ‘queer’ is frequently

utilised as a shorthand term for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; or to resist discrete identity categories, to challenge the notion that identity is static throughout a person's life, or to recognise that our understandings of sexuality are situated within a particular historical, social and cultural context (*ibid*). Other queer theorists have moved away from an identity-based analysis to centring their work on resistance(s) to heteronormativity more broadly, considering the ways in which not only identities but also times, spaces, politics and practices might be (re)produced as queer (Schippert 2011; Baydar 2012; Halberstam 2005). The first use of the phrase 'queer theory' is widely accredited to de Lauretis in her 1991 introduction to a special issue of *differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies.* de Lauretis questioned the usefulness of discourses on lesbian and gay sexuality of the time, arguing that they did not pay enough attention to the differences between gay men and lesbians in terms of gender, race, culture, class, age, geographical or socio-political location. She suggested that questions surrounding identity, sexuality and desire might be better addressed by a queer theory which pays close attention to differences in perspectives, histories and experiences. de Lauretis (1991) believed that such a critical queer dialogue would not only draw attention to shared experiences, but also lead to a better understanding of the specificity and partiality of individual experiences. Since then 'queer theory' has been used to loosely describe the varied and sometimes conflicting interdisciplinary approaches towards subjectivity, identity, desire, sex, gender and normativity. In other words, queer theory is not a singular theory, concept or methodology; rather, uses of the word 'queer' within this loosely defined body of literature are often contested or contradictory (Spargo 1999; Giffney 2009).

Within this thesis, I use 'queer' to refer to the ways in which LGBTQ people resist normativity and challenge dominant heteronormative discourses of the home through their everyday domestic practices. I thereby take a similar analytic stance to a number of other geographers writing on sexualities at home, including Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2007, 2008a), Kentlyn (2008) and Pilkey (2013). My position has also been influenced by a number of queer theorists, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), Jack Halberstam (2005) and Michael Warner (1993), whose critiques of the normative I will now turn to. In *Sex in Public*, Berlant and Warner (1998) provide an in-depth critique of heteronormativity, outlining the radical aspirations of queer culture that they wished to promote:

> not just a safe zone for queer sex but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexual culture. (p. 548)

Writing from a US perspective, Berlant and Warner (1998) drew attention to the social discourses and material practices that are implicated in the heteronormativity of Western society. They argued that central to the national culture of the US is heterosexuality. Heterosexual family values are deeply embedded in Western law and political ideologies; and heterosexual intimacy, coupling and kinship are viewed as signifiers of societal belonging. As such, Berlant and Warner (1998) suggested that heteronormativity is something more than a prejudice or ideology that works against gay and lesbian people. Rather, it is reproduced in various arrangements and areas of social life, including the law, the state, education, medicine and romance; and various spaces including the home and street. Often, it is difficult to distinguish heteronormativity in these areas because heteronormative sexual culture and its associated material conditions are tacit yet central organising forces within society (*ibid*).

Other queer theorists have posed challenges to heteronormativity by calling into question the assumption that current conceptualisations of hetero/homosexuality are universal, timeless, natural and normal. Perhaps most notable in this regard is the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick (1990) explained that during the 19th century, understandings of same-sex sexuality shifted from a focus on prohibited genital *acts* to understanding sexuality as a marker of *identity*, and the word 'homosexual' became a part of Western discourse. Sexual behaviours and identities that might be considered 'homosexual' had a long history before this term came into use; however it was not until the early 20th century that the view emerged that every person could be described as either homosexual or heterosexual. Sedgwick (1990) queried the notion that sexual identity could be straightforwardly understood by such 'common sense' categories:

> It is a rather amazing fact that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another (dimensions that include preference for certain acts, certain zones or sensations, certain physical types, a certain frequency, certain symbolic investments, certain relations of age or power… a certain number of participants, etc. etc. etc.), precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of 'sexual orientation'. (p. 8)

She highlighted that we have not developed a vocabulary to describe many types of sexual preferences or behaviours as identity markers, which may be disempowering as it limits the ability of people to verbalise or describe their own sexual desires or practices. Whilst acknowledging that the category of 'homosexual' and its more recent synonyms are often powerful signifiers of identity and sexuality, Sedgwick (1990, 1993) emphasised that narrowly conceptualising the whole of sexuality using the binary terms of heterosexuality and homosexuality has also contributed to 'heterosexual' being privileged as normal and good whilst 'homosexual' is subordinated as abnormal and bad, resulting in the oppression of homosexuals.

Most notably, Sedgwick (1990) discussed this oppression in terms of the epistemology of the closet. As a result of heteronormative assumptions about sexual identities and relationships, she highlighted that gay people continually have to make a choice as to whether they disclose their sexuality or 'come out of the closet' as they meet new people in their everyday interactions. Encounters with new people create new closets, as to assume that a person is anything other than heterosexual is against the norm. Sedgwick (1990) argued that the epistemology of the closet was a defining feature of gay culture and identity throughout the 20th century, and 24 years since the publication of *The Epistemology of the Closet*, heterosexuality continues to be viewed as the natural and normal sexuality and 'coming out of the closet' continues to be part of the everyday lexicon of LGBTQ people in the West (Pilkey 2013).

However, one critique that may be levelled at Sedgwick (1990) is her male-centred approach and her ambivalence towards the discussion of gender. When queer theorists overlook the significance of gender in their analyses, this can lead to the (gay) male subject being the referent subject of queer theory, whilst the specificity of the lives and experiences of women (and people who identify their gender as non-binary) are erased from the theoretical discussion (Nagoshi et al. 2014; Rudy 2001; Williams 1997). As argued by Walters (2006),

> in a culture in which male is the default gender, in which *homosexual* (a term that also does not specify gender) is all too often imagined as male… to see queer as somehow gender *neutral* is ludicrous and wilfully naïve… I applaud queer theory's expansion of the concept of difference but am concerned that, too often, gender is not *complicated* but merely ignored, dismissed or 'transcended'. (p. 845, emphasis in original)

In other words, seemingly gender-neutral accounts of a 'universal' queer subject serve to cover up or homogenise the lives and experiences of (queer) people of different genders. This has led to some authors suggesting that queer theory is often male-centred, or even anti-feminist (Nagoshi et al. 2014; Rudy 2001). In this thesis I seek to take queer theory forward and avoid any such male bias in my analysis by paying attention to the role of gender in the process of queering heteronormativity at home; by involving a diverse group of female and male[2] LGBTQ participants rather than centring my discussion on a universal (gay male) subject; and by highlighting the multiple and nuanced (gendered) experiences of home reported by these participants. Notably, Chapters 6 and 7 take into consideration the intersecting or interconnected gender and sexual identities of the LGBTQ participants when discussing the extent to which these participants support and/ or challenge (hetero)normative discourses of domestic roles

[2] I recognise that gender is non-binary (see Doan 2010; Brown 2004; Hines 2010; Butler 1990). Whilst my study was open to non-binary people, none of the participants reported that they identify their gender as non-binary.

and relationships; whilst Chapter 8 offers some conclusions as to how and why gender matters in the queering of heteronormativity in the home.

In addition to questioning the assumed naturalness and normalness of heterosexuality as an identity, queer scholars have also challenged the assumption that particular *spaces* are necessarily heterosexual. Amongst these scholars is Baydar (2012), whose conceptualisation of space as socially produced emphasises how spaces are continually (re)produced by different actors and practices. He argued that new, critical meanings of space could be revealed by engaging with subjects, sexualities and spaces that are typically rendered invisible by normative spatial discourses. These subjects, and their alternative spatial practices, work to challenge (hetero)normative and traditionally gendered associations of space, such as the home with women and heterosexuals (*ibid*). In her 2005 book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Halberstam similarly discussed 'queer place' in terms of the place-making practices that LGBTQ people are involved in, and the new 'queer' understandings of spaces that these practices create. Arguing that queer studies frequently focus on urban spaces, Halberstam (2005) sought to draw attention to queer rural lives. Typically, small rural towns are thought of as hostile to queerness, and it is often assumed that queer people can only find a sense of belonging in urban areas. Whilst Halberstam (2005) acknowledged that queer subcultures may thrive within urban centres, she also challenged the essentialist notion that queer life is necessarily or always urban. My thesis, too, moves away from public urban centres and into the spaces of the home, in an attempt to queer everyday home life. Thus, I draw on the work of both Halberstam (2005) and Baydar (2012), by centring my thesis on domestic spaces which are often rendered invisible by normative spatial discourses, or overlooked by queer discourses. The queer theoretical framework that I employ throughout this thesis is further expanded upon in section 2.9.

2.7 Meanings and experiences of home for LGBTQ people

In considering the domestic lives and labour of a sample of cohabiting LGBTQ couples in contemporary England, and how their experiences might queer the spaces of the home, my thesis builds upon a growing body of literature in the social sciences which explores the meanings and experiences of home for LGBTQ people. Some authors have considered the implications of heteronormative discourses of the home for LGBTQ people living within this space. Such research recognises that the 'privacy' of the home is illusory to a degree, as social discourses regarding (in)appropriate domestic behaviours and identities still permeate this space; and behaviours or identities may be monitored by other members of the household (Gabb 2005a, 2008, 2012; Johnston and Valentine 1995). For example, Valentine (1993) noted that lesbians living within the family home (who are completely, partially, or not 'out' about their sexuality to other members of the household) may feel oppressed or alienated within this heterosexual family space. In 2003 she built upon this argument with Tracey Skelton and Ruth Butler, by considering the experiences and implications of lesbian and gay youths 'coming out' in the family home. Valentine et al. (2003) argued that the persistence of homophobia meant that coming out to the family was seen as a risk for many lesbian and gay youths. They also found that some lesbian and gay youths who were not 'out' to their parents experienced feelings of isolation within the family home or ran away in order to avoid negative family reactions. Although Valentine et al. (2003) found that some families were accepting of a lesbian or gay family member, they explained that others reacted with verbal abuse, physical violence, or by making the youths feel that they were no longer part of the family. Practices or identities which challenge the heterosexual domestic norm may be subject to surveillance or scrutiny from friends, family members or neighbours in and around their home. When they have visitors to their home, lesbians and gay men may alter their behaviours or hide certain objects which could identify their sexuality, as they fear harassment even within this supposedly private space (Gorman-Murray 2006a; Elwood 2000).

Despite these dominant discourses of the home as a heteronormative – and at times homophobic – space, there is growing recognition of the significance of home for LGBTQ people. A body of literature is emerging, informed by the feminist and queer

concerns of challenging heteronormative understandings of the home and family. Most commonly, these studies focus on lesbian and gay living spaces, and the varied meanings and experiences of home for lesbian and gay people (Cook 2014; Pilkey 2013; Scicluna 2013; Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a; Gabb 2005a; Elwood 2000). Both Gorman-Murray (2008a) and Pilkey (2013) note that the heterosexual nuclear family home is not necessarily an oppressive space for young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Whilst acknowledging that some youths do experience homophobia after coming out at home, these authors emphasise the fact that other lesbian, gay and bisexual youths receive support and reassurance after coming out to their families. They argue that these positive, supportive reactions work to challenge the heteronormativity of the family home, as the space becomes one in which non-heterosexual identity development is encouraged (Gorman-Murray 2008a; Pilkey 2013).

Meanwhile, other studies have focussed on the ways in which LGBTQ adults use the spaces of the home to express and affirm their sexual identities and relationships. For example, in the context of lesbian parent families in the North of England, UK, Gabb (2005a, 2013) found that lesbian identity is expressed in subtle ways, for example through displaying keepsakes, decorations and pictures associated with or depicting women (and through the absence of equivalents associated with or depicting men). Similarly, in the urban area of Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota, Elwood (2000) found that lesbians may express their sexuality at home by flying rainbow flags or displaying lesbian-themed posters. Johnston and Valentine (1995) and Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2006b, 2007) have also demonstrated that lesbians and gay men may embed their identities into the material spaces of the home by displaying certain possessions or altering their home's design in ways that they feel affirm their sexual identities. For example, one lesbian couple interviewed by Gorman-Murray (2007) have a BDSM relationship. The couple discussed the material changes they have made to their home in order to accommodate their sexual activities and identities, which included making changes to the décor and altering their doorways to accommodate their BDSM equipment (Gorman-Murray 2007). As well as non-heteronormative sexual identities being expressed through material changes to the home, they may also be expressed through certain activities that take place within the domestic sphere. Lesbians and gay men may use their homes to socialise with other lesbians and gay men, creating a space

of socialisation through which the heteronormativity of the home space is subverted (Elwood 2000, Gorman-Murray 2006a).

2.8 Domestic labour in LGBTQ homes

Both within and beyond the discipline of Geography there has also arisen a small but growing body of work exploring domestic labour in LGBTQ families (Pfeffer 2010; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Kamano 2009; Kentlyn 2008; Carrington 1999; Dunne 1997, 2000; Oerton 1997, 1998). Much of this literature highlights the on-going gendering of domestic labour. For example, Kentlyn (2008) examined domestic labour in lesbian and gay households in Brisbane, Australia, from the theoretical perspective of 'doing' domestic labour as a way of 'doing' femininity. In their[3] paper, Kentlyn highlights that domestic labour continues to be viewed as low status, women's work. As such, they argue that the home can function as a space in which lesbians and gay men can subvert gender norms, through their performances of domestic labour. Whilst acknowledging that lesbian and gay families destabilise these traditional gender norms, Oerton (1997, 1998) emphasises the notion that gender norms still play a central role in structuring the division of labour. For example, she notes that there might be an expectation for some lesbians to perform a greater amount of family and household work within extended networks of family and friends, because of their position as unmarried women. Additionally, Carrington (1999) notes that lesbians who perform little domestic labour, or gay men who perform the majority of it, may be subject to stigma for subverting gender norms in the home. Thus, their position as gendered subjects influences their domestic experiences.

[3] Kentlyn's preferred pronouns are they/ their (personal correspondence, 2014). Gender-neutral pronouns can be used when a person is neither female nor male, genderqueer, or does not want to be referred to using gendered pronouns such as she/her or he/his.

Other studies have indicated that the absence of traditional gender scripts opens up the possibility of a more egalitarian division of labour within LGBTQ homes. In their study of the domestic labour of lesbian couples in Australia, Rawsthorne and Costello (2010) found that many couples consciously based their relationship, as well as their division of labour, on the principle of equality. In these relationships, domestic labour is typically characterised by negotiation and flexibility. However, Carrington (1999) suggests that, whilst there is a desire for shared domestic responsibilities in many lesbian, gay and bisexual couples, in reality their divisions of labour are often not structured according to a feminist egalitarian model. A similar finding was reported by Pfeffer (2010) in her study of the division of domestic labour and emotion work between transgender men and their cisgender female partners living in the USA and Canada. Many of the participants reported that domestic labour in their relationship was divided along traditionally gendered lines but they tended to conceptualise this in terms of choice and preferences, rather than gender norms. Carrington (1999) argues that same-sex couples tend to describe unequal divisions of domestic labour in terms of choice and fairness, with an understanding of fairness based upon factors such as preferences or the time each partner spends in waged employment. My thesis extends this existing body of literature by focussing on the domestic labour and childcare performed by a sample of LGBTQ couples in contemporary England, and centring my analysis on the ways in which these couples queer or challenge (hetero)normative discourses of the home and family life through these everyday practices.

2.9 Implications for my project: theoretical framework

Based on my review of relevant literatures and theories, I developed a theoretical framework for investigating the division of domestic labour and childcare in the participating LGBTQ couples' homes. Two theoretical perspectives – critical geographies of home as material and imaginative and 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process – provide a complementary foundation for my thesis. Employing critical geographies of home allows me to explore how everyday domestic practices are shaped by both the material spaces of the home and social discourses and

meanings of home; whilst theorising queering as an anti-heteronormative process provides a context for me to consider the extent to which the participating LGBTQ couples challenge heteronormative social discourses, meanings and uses of home spaces through their everyday domestic practices. Combining these two theories within one framework thus allows for an exploration of how the participating LGBTQ couples' everyday domestic practices and uses of home spaces are shaped by and/or shape (hetero)normative social discourses of home, the materiality of the home space, and the couples' own (queer) agencies and personal meanings of home.

2.9.1 Critical geographies of home as material and imaginative

When theorising the meanings and uses of the domestic sphere, a perspective informed by critical geographies of home is useful because it captures the complexities of home as both material and imaginative (see Blunt and Dowling 2006; Baydar 2012; Chevalier 2012; Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2007). The authors who have influenced my understanding of critical geographies of home most centrally are Blunt and Dowling (2006). In their critical geography of home, Blunt and Dowling (2006) emphasise that the home is not only a physical or architectural structure containing material objects, but also a set of social and personal meanings, associations, norms and values. The material and imaginative home are tied together, meaning that for a physical structure to become a home it must be imbued with social, cultural and personal meanings; whilst these meanings associated with home are influenced in part by the physical structure of and material objects within this space. In other words, homes are made through the relation between the material and the imaginative.

Using critical geographies of home to analyse everyday domestic practices in this thesis requires a consideration of how the physical spaces of the home are maintained and altered through means such as domestic labour, material arrangements and décor; and how associated social and personal meanings and values are involved in creating and maintaining the home (Gorman-Murray 2010; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Chevalier 2012; Anderson and Jones 2009). More specifically, within this thesis I will use critical

geographies of home to investigate the home as a material space in which socially acceptable forms of sexual identity, relationships and behaviours are normalised and contested. As discussed earlier in section 2.4, in the West government policy, popular culture, the mainstream media and the standard architecture of Western houses prescribe a particular way of living in the home: namely, as a heterosexual nuclear family unit (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Chevalier 2012; Johnston and Longhurst 2010). However, such heteronormative discourses of home fail to account for the myriad meanings, uses and values that LGBTQ individuals, couples and families may bring to the home.

As well as the social norms and meanings that are involved in the creation and maintenance of home, a critical geographical reading of home also pays close attention to how homes are made through *personal* meanings and uses. Within this thesis, critical geographies of home will be used to help me uncover how the participating LGBTQ couples negotiate and challenge the dominant heteronormative social meanings that are associated with the material environments in which they live; and how these couples bring their own meanings or understandings to the domestic sphere, and create and maintain homes that are expressive of their sexual identities and relationships. Such a perspective has already been taken up by geographers such as Johnston and Valentine (1995), Elwood (2000) and Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2006b, 2007), who have discussed how lesbians and gay men may challenge (hetero)normative social meanings and values of home and express and embed their own (queer) meanings, identities and relationships in this space through *material* changes such as flying rainbow flags, changing their home's décor or displaying certain possessions which they feel affirm their sexual identities; and by using their homes for particular *activities* such as spending time with lesbian and gay friends, creating spaces of queer socialisation.

My thesis adds to this existing body of work by using critical geographies of home to study domestic labour and childcare in a number of LGBTQ homes in contemporary England, and employing this theoretical perspective to consider how the participating LGBTQ couples create, maintain and value their (material and imaginative) homes in ways which (perhaps even inadvertently) challenge (hetero)normative social and architectural discourses of the home. Chapter 5 in particular draws attention to the physical spaces of the home, discussing the material agencies of home and how the everyday domestic practices of the LGBTQ couples in this study are shaped by the

interplay of the home space itself, including its architectural layout and material objects; social meanings and norms associated with the home; and the personal meanings and values that the LGBTQ couples bring to the home space. Chapters 6 and 7 then extend this critical geographical analysis of home by focussing more specifically on how the participating LGBTQ couples subvert (hetero)normative social meanings, values and roles in the home through their everyday attitudes and approaches towards the division of domestic labour and childcare in their homes.

2.9.2 Queering as an anti-heteronormative process

Having outlined my theoretical perspective of critical geographies of home in the previous section, I will now turn to consider how 'queering' is being understood or theorised in this thesis. As discussed in section 2.6, 'queer' is an oft-contested term, and queer theory encompasses multiple, overlapping and sometimes conflicting interdisciplinary perspectives on subjectivity, identity, desire, sex, gender, space and social, cultural and historical norms (de Lauretis 1991; Giffney 2009; Spargo 1999). In this thesis, I adopt the theoretical perspective of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative *process*, and in doing so draw primarily on the work of queer theorists Berlant and Warner (1998) and Halberstam (2005), who have theorised queering as a process enacted by individuals or groups in a various spaces, from urban streets to rural villages. In his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Warner (1993) suggests that queering represents a "thorough resistance to regimes of the normal" (p. 16). By the normal or heteronormal, Warner refers to a heterosexual culture which interprets itself as the natural and normal state of affairs in the West. He argues that the ongoing process of challenging or queering this culture of heteronormativity involves rejecting dominant social understandings of respectable sexual identities, relationships and behaviours; embracing sexual shame; and making queer sexual culture and politics public through spaces such as gay bars, neighbourhoods and sex shops (Berlant and Warner 1998; Warner 1999). Meanwhile, in her book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Halberstam (2005) suggests that particular times and spaces may be queered by people opposing the social convention of monogamous heterosexual

coupling, marriage and reproduction; and by these individuals or groups instead developing 'imaginative' life trajectories, queer social networks, and alternative relationships to space.

Theorising queering as an anti-heteronormative process is useful to my thesis because it allows me to draw attention to the ways in which the LGBTQ participants challenge heteronormative discourses of home (whether intentionally or not) in an ongoing manner, through their everyday domestic practices. In doing so I build on the work of social scientists including Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2007, 2008a) and Pilkey (2013) who have similarly employed 'queering' to refer to the ways in which LGBTQ people resist heteronormative domestic meanings and roles and express their (non-heteronormative) identities, relationships and values through everyday homemaking practices including decorating and socialising within the home space (see also section 2.7). The perceived normativity of coupled domesticity would undoubtedly result in some queer scholars such as Berlant and Warner arguing that the theory of queering as an anti-heteronormative process cannot be applied to such everyday domestic practises as decorating or domestic labour. As discussed above, these scholars focus on queering as a radical process of rejecting respectability and publicly embracing sexual shame (Berlant and Warner 1998; Warner 1993, 1999). Meanwhile, the home lives and domestic labour of LGBTQ couples might be perceived as assimilating with – rather than queering – a heteronormative culture of domesticity (see also Pilkey 2013; Rudy 2001). Yet, I use the following three paragraphs to argue that this is not the case, and that the theoretical perspective of queering as an anti-heteronormative process *can* be applied to the domestic sphere and mundane practices such as domestic labour.

To make such an argument, I must first contextualise my theoretical position by explaining the concept of 'homonormativity' and its applications. In 2002, Lisa Duggan first used the term 'homonormativity' to describe a sexual politics amongst homosexuals which sustains normative ways of living rather than challenging dominant ideals such as monogamous coupling, the institution of marriage, patriotism, domestic privacy and binary gender roles. Her conceptualisation and critique of homonormativity may in part be seen as a response to a significant change in attitudes towards mainstream expressions of homosexuality within many countries in the Global North since the 1990s (Brown 2009). In the UK, legal reforms have included lowering the age

of consent for gay men from 21 to 18 in 1994, and then to 16 in 2001, and repealing much legislation which discriminates against lesbians and gay men (Stonewall 2014; Brown 2009). Civil partnerships were legalised in the UK by the Civil Partnership Act 2004, with the first ceremonies taking place at the end of 2005, whilst the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 has allowed same-sex couples in England and Wales to get married since 29th March 2014. Whilst acknowledging that these changes have undoubtedly been beneficial to many lesbians and gay men, some theorists have expressed a concern that such social and cultural changes have narrowly defined a 'homonormative' ideal of responsible and respectable living, with the result that those LGBTQ people who assimilate with the normative ideals of family life and citizenship are privileged, whilst those who challenge or subvert these norms are marginalised (Duggan 2002; Brown 2009; Puar 2006).

However, Gavin Brown (2009) has argued that homonormativity is not an all-encompassing and unassailable force that exerts a normative influence over the everyday lives of all LGBTQ people. By drawing attention to a variety of gay (economic) practices that are rendered largely invisible by discourses of homonormativity, he calls into question the assumption that LGBTQ lives are always shaped by homonormativity, in all times and spaces. By focussing on *particular* lives and spaces, Brown (2009) suggests that we can better understand the diversity of contemporary LGBTQ life, paying attention to differences and spatial contexts. He further argues that there is value in considering how spaces and practices which on the surface seem to support social norms (or the assimilation of LGBTQ people into heteronormative culture) may simultaneously be transgressive. A similar premise was put forward by queer theorist Halberstam (2005), as she highlighted that LGBTQ people do not necessarily live in profoundly different ways to heterosexuals but that they may develop alternative relationships to people and places. In other words, it is important to recognise that 'transgressive' queer spaces and practices are not in binary opposition with 'normative' gay or lesbian spaces and practices, as this fails to acknowledge the diversity, complexity and contradictions of practices, identities and relationships that may be (re)produced in various spaces (Brown 2009; Oswin 2005; Pilkey 2013; Rudy 2001).

The notion that queering as an anti-heteronormative process can only be applied to 'transgressive' queer spaces, embracing sexual shame or making queer sex public runs counter to the everyday lives and desires of many LGBTQ people, and may work to render invisible the queer politics at play within everyday spaces such as the home (see also Pilkey 2013; Rudy 2001). Whilst a conservative project focussed on the 'gay and lesbian community' might seek to assimilate lesbians and gay men into mainstream family living, a queer analysis maintains a focus on critiquing normativities (Halberstam 2005; Rudy 2001). Throughout this thesis, I seek to achieve the latter. Whilst my focus is on the domestic sphere, which on the surface might not appear to be particularly transgressive, I draw attention to the diverse ways in which LGBTQ people challenge dominant understandings of the home as a heteronormative space, which allows for an exploration of its queer potentials. In this way I add to the theory of queering as an anti-heteronormative process by moving away from overt queering in the public sphere to the more subtle, everyday and even inadvertent queering of heteronormativity that occurs through people's day-to-day attitudes and approaches to domestic labour and childcare in their homes.

2.10 Conclusion

This literature review has sought to position my thesis within existing debates and bodies of literature regarding everyday life, sexuality and home, as well as outlining the ways in which my research adds to these existing discussions and associated theoretical approaches. Early scholars of everyday life such as Lefebvre (1991) and de Certeau (1998) suggested that seemingly unremarkable, mundane spaces and practices could potentially be used by people to challenge normative ways of living. However, these scholars did not centre their analyses on sexuality or critically consider how heteronormative understandings of the everyday might be subverted. Nevertheless, their work provides a useful point of departure for arguing the value of researching everyday domestic life. In this thesis, I build upon the work of these scholars by centring my analysis on the everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare, and considering how they might be used to challenge *hetero*normative discourses of the home. To do so I primarily employ two theoretical perspectives: critical geographies of home (as a material and imaginative space) and queering as an anti-heteronormative process. Using

critical geographies of home, in this thesis I add to an existing body of literature on LGBTQ domesticity (Johnston and Valentine 1995; Elwood 2000; Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2007) by exploring how the everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare in LGBTQ homes are shaped by the interplay of the material agencies of home, heteronormative social and architectural discourses of domesticity, and the participating couples' personal meanings and interpretations of home. Meanwhile, by employing 'queering' to describe the process of challenging heteronormativity my thesis makes use of and extends queer approaches to the everyday that have emerged in recent decades in the work of queer theorists such as Warner (1993) and Halberstam (2005) as well as social scientists including Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2007, 2008a), Kentlyn (2008) and Pilkey (2013). Together these two perspectives provide a strong theoretical framework for exploring how the participating LGBTQ couples create and maintain their material and imaginative homes in ways that subvert dominant heteronormative discourses of the home space and the associated practices of domestic labour and childcare.

The perceived normativity of coupled domesticity means that on the one hand cohabiting LGBTQ couples could be seen to fit in with normative ideals of domestic family life. Many authors demonstrate how the home has become almost synonymous with the heterosexual nuclear family (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2006b, 2007; Johnston and Longhurst 2010; Longhurst 2012). Furthermore, certain strands of queer theory have focussed on 'transgressive' queer spaces or radical rejections of normativity, conceptualising the mundane spaces of everyday life as sites in which LGBTQ people assimilate into mainstream ways of living and thus suggesting that these are not productive spaces in which to critique or subvert heteronormativity (Duggan 2002; Berlant and Warner 1998). On the other hand, I have also shown that dismissing the home as necessarily heteronormative or homonormative runs counter to the everyday experiences of many LGBTQ people, and may work to render invisible the queer politics at play within this everyday space (Pilkey 2013; Rudy 2001). In the following chapters I extend this line of argument by conceptualising 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process, and applying this concept to the study of the mundane practices of domestic labour and childcare in the homes of the LGBTQ couples in my sample. In doing so I seek to demonstrate how these couples might subvert heteronormative and traditionally gendered meanings and uses of the material and

imaginative home, through their everyday homemaking practices. By foregrounding a discussion of heteronormativity and the ways in which the participating LGBTQ couples challenge normative domestic ideals in and through the spaces of the home, in the following chapters I seek to combine and build upon the critical literatures and theories of everyday life, sexuality, normativity and home discussed in this literature review. Before offering my queer and critical geographical analysis of the participating LGBTQ couples' homes and homemaking practices, the next chapter provides an overview of the methodological approaches used within this project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In order to explore the everyday home lives of the participating LGBTQ couples, in this thesis I adopt a qualitative approach. This is largely because underpinning my project is the ontological perspective that social 'reality' is made up of people's understandings, attitudes, emotions and experiences. These I view as the very nature or essence of things making up the social world. It is these phenomena – people's understandings, attitudes, emotions and experiences as they pertain to domestic labour and childcare in the home – which I seek to investigate within this thesis (see Mason 2002a; Stanley and Wise 1993). My epistemological position, or my understanding of how knowledge about these phenomena can be acquired, draws largely on interpretivist approaches – and in particular, phenomenology. Phenomenology is primarily concerned with the way in which people give meaning to the world, through their perceptions and experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Benton and Craib 2001). Accordingly, my interpretivist epistemology posits that meaningful data about social (domestic) experiences can be generated by human subjects discussing these experiences and sharing their perspectives (Blaikie 2000; Mason 2002a, 2002b). Thus, I chose to base my research on qualitative in-depth interviews. This research method is in-keeping with my ontological and epistemological positions, as it allows for a focus on people's understandings, experiences and subjectivities within the spaces of the home.

In section 3.2, this chapter will begin by introducing my intersubjective methodological approaches. I will outline how these approaches were influenced by feminist and queer scholars who have called for researchers to be reflexive about their own role in the research process, and to consider the influences of positionality and subjectivity on the knowledges generated (Gabb and Singh 2014; Moser 2008; Stanley and Wise 1993). Here, my aim is to demonstrate that, instead of searching for the 'truth' of the situation, this thesis seeks to explore (inter)subjective understandings of domesticity, situating these understandings within a particular historical, sociocultural and spatial context

(Fawcett and Hearn 2004). Following this, I outline the research questions that form the basis of this project, as well as explaining how I have sought to address these questions using in-depth interviews. I use sections 3.3 to 3.6 to highlight a number of factors that I needed to consider when designing and carrying out the research, such as whether to conduct a pilot study, where to conduct the interviews, which sampling technique to use, and how many participants to interview. I suggest that all of these factors had an important bearing on the knowledges produced during this project, and therefore needed critical consideration. Also of great importance to the integrity of the project was a commitment to morally responsible research. In section 3.6 I provide an appraisal of the ethics of this research project, in particular highlighting how I ensured that the participants were giving their informed consent, and how I kept their identities anonymous. Lastly, I use section 3.7 to outline my thematic approach to analysing interview data, before offering my conclusions as to why the methodology that I used in this project was an appropriate and effective means of exploring the everyday domestic lives of the participating LGBTQ couples in England.

3.2 Positionality and my intersubjective methodological approach

I open my discussion of the methodologies employed in this thesis by outlining the intersubjective approach that I have used to structure my qualitative research. This methodological approach stands in sharp contrast to the traditional approaches of geographers, who sought to be neutral in their research so as not to bias it with their own views. Feminist geographers such as Rose (1993) suggest that this goal of objectivity stems back to popular 17th century definitions of knowledge as separable or independent from the social position, emotions, values and body of the 'knower'. This approach suggests that knowledge is objective or universal, and led to geographers positioning themselves as 'detached explorers', able to discover neutral and context-free 'truths' about the world (Bondi and Domosh 1992, cited in Rose 1993, p. 7). Yet, feminist geographers argue that ignoring the partiality and specificity of knowledge has reproduced White, masculine, heterosexual and bourgeois geographical discourses as universal (McDowell 1992, Rose 1993). In recent decades, feminist and poststructuralist

researchers have questioned the validity of scientific objectivity as a concept (Haney 2002; Moser 2008; Browne and Nash 2010). Most notably, Haraway (1988) argued that when a researcher claims they can observe phenomena from a distance (or see 'everything from nowhere') they are merely indulging in an illusionary 'god-trick'. Researchers cannot be completely neutral in their observations or unbiased in their research. Such arguments recognise that knowledge is situated and that ways of seeing are shaped by personal experiences, histories, identities and power (Moser 2008; Rose 1997; England 1994; McDowell 1992).

In order to situate the knowledges and interpretations generated within this research project, I have sought to be reflexive about the position from which I am writing and researching (see Gabb and Singh 2014; Moser 2008; Mason 2002a; McDowell 1992). This has involved a consideration of my subjectivities (including my sexuality, gender, ethnicity and class), my location in time and space, and how these situate me within various networks of power (Gorman-Murray et al. 2010; Moser 2008; Kong et al. 2001; Mullings 1999; Rose 1997). For example, my position as a middle-class White British individual living in the UK affords me certain privileges. Meanwhile, my position as a lesbian woman places me in the minority within a largely heterosexist society. Throughout the research process, I have viewed the interview as the product of a situated researcher and research participant, within a particular time-space. My focus has been on the co-production of knowledges or the generation of intersubjective knowledges, through my interactions with situated individuals (Williams 2002; McDowell 1992). As such, I have remained conscious and critical of how I am situated in relation to the research participants and their respective subjectivities. In the following paragraphs I will reflexively consider the ways in which identities and power dynamics have influenced our research relationships and the production of knowledges during the research process.

The power dynamics of the researcher-participant relationship operate along a number of axes, such as sexuality, class and age. The relationship might also be shaped by the institutional privileges afforded to the researcher (Rose 1997; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). In terms of institutional privileges, power dynamics come into play in two senses. Firstly, power is conferred by the status of researcher. Secondly, there is the asymmetrical division of rights and expectations

during the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Lee 1999). Within my research project, my status as researcher meant that I defined the research topic, posed questions, interpreted the knowledges generated during interviews, and determined how these knowledges were presented or published. In addition, there was no expectation that I would make personal revelations during the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Mullings 1999; England 1994). Meanwhile, the position of research participant required the disclosure of a lot of personal information, beliefs or feelings.

However, this is not to say that the position of research participant is a powerless one. As noted by Thapar-Björkert and Henry (2004), research participants have power in the production of data, and play an active role in shaping the research. The nature of my study is such that it prizes the understandings, definitions and priorities of the research participants. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed room for the participants to interpret the topic in ways which were meaningful to them (see also section 3.3.2). Furthermore, participants had power over the amount of information they disclosed in their interview, and therefore over the knowledges generated. This was striking in one joint interview, as a woman remarked to her partner, "you said we were going to be open and honest, my love". From this comment, it appeared that the couple had discussed how much they were going to reveal to me, before I arrived for the interview. Thus, being a research participant also confers a certain degree of power.

A sense of ease or comfort may be created in interviews, where the researcher and research participant share some aspect of their identity (Mullings 1999; Feldman et al. 2003; Kong et al. 2001). When the researcher is an 'insider', or member of group or community that they are studying, this facilitates communication with research participants. It means that the researcher may be better placed to understand the responses of the research participants; as well as the significance of these responses (Gorman-Murray et al. 2010; Muñoz 2010; LaSala 2003; Kong et al. 2001). This is because the researcher is likely to share some common social, cultural, emotional, political or legal experiences and knowledges with their research participants (Kanuha 2000; Gabb and Singh 2014; Gorman-Murray et al. 2010).

In terms of my project, the LGBTQ participants may have been more responsive to me as a lesbian researcher, because of a perceived shared interest and understanding. The

participants were more likely to trust an LGBTQ researcher to sensitively portray their lives, experiences, and the challenges they encounter due to their sexuality (Hash and Cramer 2003; LaSala 2003). Further, they may have felt that I was well placed, as a lesbian, not to perpetuate social misconceptions of LGBTQ people (LaSala 2003). As well as sharing an aspect of marginalisation with the participants, I also shared some important aspects of privilege (in UK society) with many of them. As I explain later in section 3.4, my sampling technique produced a largely White British middle-class sample. Sharing a White British middle-class subject position with the majority of participants meant that we shared some classed and culturally-specific experiences. This is likely to have contributed to a sense of trust and shared understanding during the interviews (Kanuha 2000).

A sense of shared identity between the researcher and research participants can also create difficulties. For example, the 'insider' researcher may assume that they know what the research participant means, without fully exploring the personal understandings of their respondents (LaSala 2003; Kanuha 2000). As a lesbian researcher interviewing LGBTQ participants, I attempted to avoid this by asking participants to define things for themselves, or to clarify their meanings – for example, when using terminology such as 'butch' or 'femme'. However, asking for clarification felt awkward at times, because some participants seemed to assume that I understood their use of terminology or discussion of particular situations because I am a lesbian (see Hash and Cramer 2003; Feldman et al. 2003). Yet, it was important for me to follow up their comments or uses of particular words with additional questions or probes. In doing so, I sought to make fewer assumptions and explore the understandings and experiences of the research participants in more depth (Kanuha 2000).

Whilst acknowledging the potential benefits of researching LGBTQ lives as a lesbian researcher, it is also important to note that when particular subjects interact during the research process, meaningful and trusting research relationships are not necessarily sparked even when these subjects are linked by community associations or the sharing of social or political spaces (Nash 2010). Just because the researcher identifies as LGBTQ, this does not necessarily make them more qualified to represent LGBTQ lives (Binnie 1997). It is also possible – and sometimes easier – to communicate across different subject positions. This is because the research participant is likely to

acknowledge this divide, and provide additional explanations for the 'outsider' researcher, rather than assuming that the researcher understands their responses (Gorman-Murray et al. 2010). Therefore, rich and meaningful knowledges can also be produced through interactions across subject positions.

In considering the implications of identity and subjectivities for research relationships in this project, it is also important to recognise that people have multiple, intersecting identities. In reality, the hierarchical insider/outsider binary is too simplistic, as my position is likely to have been simultaneously that of 'insider' and 'outsider' (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004; Gabb 2008; Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Gorman-Murray et al. 2010). For example, 'insider' status may have been conferred by my sexuality, however I may have also be considered an 'outsider' due to my position as an academic researcher, which could inhibit a sense of shared identity or perspective (LaSala 2003; Kanuha 2000). Furthermore, positionalities and identities are not static, and the boundary between 'insider' and 'outsider' is highly unstable. Positionalities, boundaries and the meanings of a research relationship are shaped by the unfolding interactions of the interview itself (Mullings 1999; Gorman-Murray et al. 2010). This suggests that it is difficult to identify the precise ways in which identities and subject positions affect the research process. Yet, it is still important to remain mindful of the situated nature of knowledge (Rose 1993, 1997).

As well as considering the power dynamics of the research relationship in terms of social characteristics such as gender or sexuality, Moser (2008) argues that researchers should acknowledge the ways in which their personality affects the research process. Personality may be defined as "that pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and in situations" (Phares 1998, p. 4, cited in Moser, 2008). My personality is somewhat introverted, which posed a particular challenge when I attempted to recruit research participants by attending social events and introducing myself to new people (see also section 3.4). For example, in the early stages of my research project, I attended a daytime social gathering organised by an LGBTQ support group in Brighton. As an introvert, I found this prospect daunting. However, at the event, I made a concentrated effort to smile, introduce myself to everybody, and join in with group conversations. It seemed that my friendly approach and my willingness to get fully involved in the event

was well received by the group members. Based on this interaction, I was put in touch with a number of new contacts and potential research participants. In addition, towards the end of the event, one attendee revealed to me that she was also part of a transgender support group – and said that she would circulate my call for participants within this group, too. My experiences here support the arguments of Moser (2008) that the personality of the researcher affects their access to research participants, and how much the research participants are willing to share with them.

In order to encourage research participants to be open and forthcoming in their responses, it is necessary to build a rapport with them. During the interview process I sought to do so by being polite, actively listening, and showing a genuine concern about each participant (Feldman et al. 2003; Duncombe and Jessop 2002). I did not make moral judgements about the experiences or opinions shared by the research participants even if they challenged my own understandings or beliefs, as advocated by Gabb (2010). Additionally, I took care to avoid using language that the participants may have disliked or been offended by. For example, I avoided using the term 'homosexual' because many LGBTQ people see it as an outdated word that has developed connotations of pathology (Kong et al. 2001; Martin and Meezan 2003). Being open about my sexuality and sharing some of my own experiences as a lesbian woman living together with my partner further helped me to develop a rapport and sense of shared identity with the participants, facilitating the development of open and trusting relationships (LaSala 2003).

3.3 Interviews

3.3.1 Using interviews to investigate my research questions

The qualitative research which forms the basis of this project was carried out between July 2012 and September 2013. The three broad, interrelated research questions that I sought to investigate were:

- How do cohabiting LGBTQ couples divide domestic labour and childcare?
- What role do sexuality and gender play in LGBTQ couples' understandings, experiences and divisions of domestic labour and childcare?
- How do the domestic practices of cohabiting LGBTQ couples intersect with heteronormative discourses of the home?

To answer these questions, I conducted 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews with self-identifying LGBTQ people who live with a partner in England. This included 16 couple interviews and 24 individual interviews, with 56 participants aged between 18 and 65 years. The interviews lasted between 25 and 93 minutes, with the average length of an interview being 55 minutes. At the beginning of each interview I asked the participants to fill in a demographic information form so that I could analyse their identity characteristics including gender, sexuality and ethnicity (see Appendix D and section 4.2).

Qualitative methods are beneficial when studying an under-researched topic, because they allow for an emergent and flexible research design (Hash and Cramer 2003). As relatively little geographical literature has focussed on the unwaged domestic labour and childcare performed in LGBTQ homes, this makes qualitative methods appropriate for my study. More specifically, my decision to use in-depth interviews was based on the project's focus on people's understandings and experiences. Conducting in-depth interviews means that rich and detailed accounts of the participants' lives can be sought. Conversation is the main way in which humans get to know each other and learn more about each other's feelings, understandings and experiences. Thus, I can potentially learn much about my research participants through an interview conversation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Gabb 2009; Hash and Cramer 2003; Mason 2002b).

In addition, in-depth interviews are an appropriate research method to use because people's understandings of sensitive or personal topics are often ambiguous and contradictory (Gabb 2009; Lee 1999). Therefore, asking multiple questions in the interview is a means of uncovering these complexities and contradictions. For example, I found that the initial response that a participant gave when asked about the division of labour in their relationship was sometimes followed up by contradictory remarks, as we discussed the apportioning of specific tasks around the household at length. As such, I

was able to gain more of an insight into the participants' everyday divisions and approaches to domestic labour as each interview progressed and the participants talked in more detail about their everyday lives (see also Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Brannen 1988).

On the other hand, interviews could be considered inappropriate for researching everyday practices in that these practices may have become so routine that it might be difficult for people to discuss them or the reasoning behind them (Hitchings 2012). Some oft-repeated practices become almost automatic or habitual. This is true of many types of everyday action (Lefebvre 1991, de Certeau 1998, de Certeau et al. 1998). In the context of my project, this might suggest that my participants may have found it difficult to discuss their everyday domestic practices, because these may have become automatic or unthinking. However, Hitchings (2012) also pointed out that participants are likely to develop a heightened awareness of their practices, or why they act in a particular way, over the course of an interview. He posits that in-depth discussion is an effective means of uncovering everyday practices and getting people to discuss them in meaningful ways. This was certainly true of the research interviews that I conducted, with some participants talking to me about their everyday experiences and understandings of domestic labour for over an hour.

In-depth interviews have advantages over other qualitative research methods when exploring personal experiences of domestic labour and childcare. I believe that questionnaire surveys would have been inappropriate for my research project, because they can be somewhat impersonal and would not have provided the depth of responses that I was seeking (Lee 1999; Williams 2002). For my project, in-depth interviews also had benefits over time-use diaries, which are oft used in studies of everyday practices such as domestic labour (for example see McGinnity and Russell 2008; Craig 2006). My main deterrent from using such diaries was that I felt the participants might not complete them fully or accurately. In addition, diaries may only have provided me with surface understandings of the time spent on different household tasks, rather than the participants' attitudes and specific approaches towards different tasks (see Lee 1999). In order to gain fuller accounts from the research participants, I deemed in-depth interviews to be the most appropriate research method.

3.3.2 Semi-structured approach

When conducting my research interviews, I employed a semi-structured approach. Additionally, I sought to keep my interviews relatively informal in style, so that they were closer to a discussion than a formal question and answer session (see Mason 2002b). To prepare for my interviews, I devised an interview schedule, including key topics that I wished to discuss and some suggested questions for each topic. During each interview, I was flexible as to the sequence and precise wording of these questions, depending on the flow of the conversation and the words used by each participant.

There are methodological advantages to adopting a semi-structured interviewing technique. It means that the emphasis of the interviews shifts towards what the research participants feel is important. In other words, it allows the research participants to help shape the flow of the interviews (Brannen 1988). The loose structure allows for spontaneous interview conversations, informed by the interests and responses of each participant (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Brannen 1988). For example, some participants in my study were far more interested in talking about the gendering and politics of domestic labour than others. Furthermore, a loose interview structure leaves room for unexpected topics, themes or ideas emerging over the course of each interview (Gerson and Horowitz 2002; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). One challenge of conducting such semi-structured interviews was the need to 'think on my feet', particularly when attempting to frame follow-up questions or ask participants to clarify their meanings. In order to make this easier, I included some generic 'prompt' questions in my interview schedule, such as "can you tell me a bit more about that?". I then referred to these prompts if I wanted to encourage the participant to go into more detail about a particular topic. Another challenge of conducting semi-structured interviews was keeping the interview focussed on topics that would provide relevant data for my research project, whilst at the same time allowing the interview conversation to be guided by the interests of the research participants. My interview schedule was extremely valuable in this respect, helping me to clarify which comments I should follow up with further

questioning, and when I should re-focus the conversation by asking a question on a more relevant topic.

3.3.3 Location

Before beginning to conduct my interviews, it was important for me to think about where they should take place. Place plays a key role in the construction of identities and knowledge. The ways in which research participants present their identities, and the responses they offer, are related to the location of the interview (Sin 2003). Therefore, choosing an interview location was an important decision because it would influence the types of data that were produced during the interviews (Elwood and Martin 2000; Brannen 1988). I chose to conduct the research interviews in the participants' homes wherever possible[4]. There were multiple reasons for this. Firstly, power relationships between the researcher and research participants are shaped by the interview location. Often, the home is the location in which individuals feel the most powerful (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). At the same time, conducting the interviews away from the University setting helped me to downplay the power that I have as an academic. This factor had a large bearing on my decision to conduct the interviews in the participants' homes. I wanted the participants to feel empowered, and that they had valuable contributions to make, so that they would be forthcoming with their responses.

Secondly, the location of the interview influences the construction of the participants' roles and identities in the research process. Whether consciously or unconsciously, research participants are likely to position themselves differently with regards to their multiple identities, in different locations (Elwood and Martin 2000; Sin 2003). As I conducted the majority of my interviews in the participants' homes, these participants

[4] On two occasions, it was not possible to interview the participant face-to-face at their home, due to practical reasons. In these instances, I asked the research participants to choose a place in which they would be comfortable to be interviewed. Both interviews were conducted on the University of Southampton campus.

are likely to have emphasised their home or family-based identities more than if I had interviewed them elsewhere. Home is the central focus of my study, and so I felt it important to explore the participants' roles and identities as they are expressed in the home.

Thirdly, deciding to conduct my interviews in the research participants' homes was a pragmatic decision. The location needed to be physically and socially accessible, as well as convenient for both the research participants and myself (Elwood and Martin 2000). I felt that the participants' homes best fit these criteria, as they are the places that are most likely to be accessible and convenient for everybody involved. Finally, I felt that it was best to conduct interviews with the participants in their homes (rather than in a public setting) because this helped to ensure confidentiality. As Martin and Meezan (2003) pointed out, some participants who are not publicly 'out' about their sexuality may prefer this protection, because they do not want their sexuality to be made public by people finding out that they are taking part in a particular study.

On the whole, the participants' homes provided a quiet and private space in which to conduct the research interviews. One problem that I encountered was when other members of the household, who were not taking part in the interview, entered the research space (see also Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). This disrupted the flow of the interview, and seemed to make some participants more self-conscious in their responses. I dealt with this issue by continuing with the interview as before, and re-visiting topics once I was alone with the participant again. Additionally, whilst I aimed to carry out mainly face-to-face interviews, due to geographical or time constraints I conducted five interviews over the phone or using Skype. One further interview was carried out via email, at the request of a participant who has autism and dyspraxia, as they felt more comfortable and able to respond to questions in written form. This demonstrates that I was flexible in my research design, in order to ensure that my project was accessible and inclusive.

3.3.4 Individual and couple interviews

I originally intended to interview both partners in each couple involved in the study; however this was not possible in practice because in some couples one partner did not want to participate. I therefore decided to be more flexible in my approach, allowing individuals to take part in a research interview even if their partner was not interested in participating. Practical issues also had to be taken into consideration when arranging interviews, as it was often easier to interview just one member of a couple due to disparities in couples' working hours or time availability. As such, I adopted the mixed strategy of interviewing some couples together and interviewing other participants individually. This approach was primarily guided by the preferences of the research participants and their partners. Combined, the individual and couple interviews provide a rich and useful data set with which to address my research questions. As discussed in section 3.2, I view these interviews as generating intersubjective knowledges through interactions between situated individuals. Thus, it is appropriate to combine data from individual and couple interviews providing that consideration is given to how these differing interview contexts and subjectivities shape the knowledges that are produced. I will turn to consider these issues now.

Twenty-four participants elected to take part in a one-to-one interview. This included 2 couples and 20 participants whose partners declined to take part in the research. The one-to-one interviews allowed the individuals to discuss their own experiences, understandings and emotions without their responses being influenced by the presence of a partner. For example, individuals could reveal or omit what they wanted to, without feeling pushed into saying or revealing something by their partner (Heaphy and Einarsdottir 2012; Valentine 1999). Also, depending on the dynamics of a particular relationship, some individuals might only have talked openly about their home lives and relationships away from their partner, particularly if there are any points of discontent or discord in their home lives (Valentine 1999; Allan 1980). Individual interviews confer further benefits in that there is less chance of conflict arising from them. As part of my research considers the division of domestic labour within relationships, and how the participants feel about this division, it is possible that interviewing couples together

could potentially lead to disagreements between partners or exacerbate tensions in their relationships (Lee 1999; Valentine 1999).

In addition to the participants who were interviewed one-to-one, 16 participating couples took part in joint interviews. Providing couples with the option of being interviewed together opened up the study to people who felt anxious at the prospect of an individual interview or whose preference was to be interviewed at the same time as their partner (Valentine 1999). This type of interview also confers some benefits. When interviewed together, couples interacted and collaborated to answer my questions. Partners added comments to each other's responses, which helped the flow of the interview conversation, and triggered other stories (Heaphy and Einarsdottir 2012; Gabb 2012; Valentine 1999). Additionally, the interactions between partners gave me further insights into the dynamics of their relationship and highlighted any points of negotiation or contestation with regards to their domestic roles (Kamo 2000; Valentine 1999; Allan 1980). In instances where one partner dominated the joint interview, I did not necessarily see this as a problem that could be solved using the 'correct' method or a better interview technique. Rather, it provided me with useful information about the ways in which the couple interact with one another (Heaphy and Einarsdottir 2012).

Interviewing couples together is also effective inasmuch as partners may challenge one another's responses, or prevent one another from presenting idealised accounts of their lives (Valentine 1999; Allan 1980). In the context of my project, individuals who are interviewed one-to-one may overestimate their own contribution to the domestic labour, whilst underestimating that of their partner (Kamo 2000). Meanwhile, interviewing partners together is likely to minimise this effect, encouraging these couples to come to an agreement over the actual apportioning of domestic tasks in their relationship. Whilst this process could potentially trigger conflict between partners, particularly if there is underlying resentment with regards to the division of labour (see Valentine 1999; Kamo 2000), this is not an issue that I encountered during the interview process.

3.4 Sampling

One difficulty that I did encounter was in the initial stages of recruiting LGBTQ people to take part in the study. Vulnerable, minority and marginalised populations (such as LGBTQ people) can be difficult to define or reach (Sullivan and Losberg 2003; Dean et al. 2000; Lee 1999). LGBTQ people are not uniformly identifiable, and often remain 'invisible' within wider society. The easiest LGBTQ sub-populations to access are cisgender, male and middle-class, living in urban areas with close connections to the LGBTQ community and related organisations (Meezan and Martin 2003). When I first began recruiting research participants, the majority belonged to this group. It was more difficult to find participants from other subgroups of the LGBTQ population, such as transgender and bisexual people, and people who do not make use of LGBTQ groups or services. Some LGBTQ people avoid publicly identifying as such, because they fear discrimination, social isolation or other negative consequences (LaSala 2003; Meezan and Martin 2003; Sullivan and Losberg 2003). In addition, some LGBTQ people might mistrust researchers, feeling that they may use their research to promote discrimination against LGBTQ people (Ciano-Boyce and Shelley-Sireci 2002). This has affected the ways in which I have accessed and recruited research participants for my project.

Due to these difficulties in accessing and approaching the LGBTQ population, I decided to use snowball sampling to find participants. Snowball sampling is a useful technique when looking for potential research participants within a hidden, minority or marginalised population, such as the LGBTQ population (Meezan and Martin 2003; Blaikie 2000; Lee 1999). It is a recruitment method whereby new participants are found using the social networks of existing participants. These social networks tend to be well-developed within the LGBTQ population (Browne 2005; Rothenberg 1995; Blaikie 2000; Dean et al. 2000; Lee 1999). As a lesbian researcher, I was well placed to begin recruiting LGBTQ participants, because I have developed social networks within this group. I was able to mobilise these personal social networks, in order to find some initial participants. Using my personal networks and snowball sampling was a useful means of targeting LGBTQ people who are less 'visible', do not make use of LGBTQ social spaces, or are not part of any LGBTQ-related groups (Browne 2005; Rothenberg 1995).

However, one issue with snowball sampling is that social networks are often homogenous in terms of attributes; and so they provide the researcher with links to people with similar social characteristics to the initial participants. This does not help the researcher in attempting to develop a diverse sample (Lee 1999). I aimed to minimise this effect by having a number of starting points from which to 'snowball'. Whilst my personal social networks were useful, only 8 of the participants who are discussed in this thesis were known to me prior to the research project commencing. I found further research participants by approaching LGBTQ social and support groups; distributing postcards about the project at Pride events in Brighton and Reading (see Appendix A); and advertising the project on my website and Twitter page. I was then able to mobilise the social networks of these individuals, utilising snowball sampling in order to find more research participants.

In particular, I found that Twitter was an efficient tool in spreading my call for participants. Social networking websites such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are websites on which users can build online social networks, communicate, and gather and share information. In recent years, online social networking has been increasingly used by academics to promote their research, gather data, disseminate findings, and publicise conferences (Clements 2013; Fox et al. 2003; McKee 2013). At the same time, many LGBTQ people today use the internet to communicate, express their marginalised identities, and campaign for social change. Social networking websites are rapidly becoming an important source of information and support for LGBTQ people, and so they are a useful means through which to recruit LGBTQ people for research projects (Hash and Cramer 2003; Mehra et al. 2004). Indeed, over half of the participants that I interviewed found out about the project through individuals and groups sharing my call for participants on Twitter.

Empirical representation of a wider social phenomenon or group is not my key concern within this project. When recruiting research participants, I kept my criteria for participation broad, with the aim of developing a diverse sample in terms of sexuality, gender, age, location and other aspects of identity. My sampling technique resulted in a largely White British and middle-class sample, and so clearly does not represent the entirety of the LGBTQ domestic experience in England. However, the sample does

contain a relevant range of experiences and identities with which to address my research questions. Furthermore, my sample includes participants from across England. During the piloting and early stages of the research, interviews with 21 participants were carried out in and around Southampton, largely due to practical considerations including the time and money involved in travelling elsewhere. The remaining 35 participants were subsequently recruited from the Isle of Wight (2), Devon (1), Winchester (2), Bristol (3), London (9), Oxford (2), Milton Keynes (2), Birmingham (1), Norwich (3), Lincolnshire (1), Sheffield (1), Liverpool (1), Manchester (2), South Yorkshire (1), Hull (2), Cumbria (1) and Tyne and Wear (1). Thus, it provides a geographically diverse sample with which to address my research questions. My approach allows me to highlight specificities and subjectivities across different familial and social contexts, but also means that I may be able to identify cross-contextual generalities in the LGBTQ domestic experience in England, which have a wider social significance (see Mason 2002a).

3.4.1 Sample size

As mentioned earlier, in total I conducted 40 research interviews with 56 participants. This sample size is appropriate given my time constraints, financial resources, research focus, and the philosophical underpinnings of my project. My sample size is in line with other geographical studies on sexuality, the home, and domestic labour (including Luzia, 2010; Gorman-Murray 2008b; Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2007; Kitchin and Lysaght 2003). It is also in line with past PhD studies. Mason (2010) analysed the accepted abstracts of 560 interview-based qualitative PhD studies from the UK and Ireland, using theses.com. Focussing on studies in which participants were interviewed once, he found that the mean sample size was 31. Adler and Adler (2012) also suggest that a sample size of around 30 is appropriate for graduate student using qualitative interviews, given the time constraints that they are under.

My sample size was also informed by the interpretivist methodological approaches of my project. Interpretivist research tends to be based upon smaller samples, because it

involves in-depth analysis of a particular issue (Bryman 2012). My study takes a largely interpretivist approach, focussing on people's understandings and experiences of domesticity. Thus, a small sample size was appropriate, allowing me to explore and analyse personal experiences more thoroughly. I would not be able to answer my research questions through a superficial assessment of a large number of brief accounts (Mason 2002a; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

3.5 Pilot study

In preparation for my main study, I carried out a pilot study. There were a number of reasons for doing so. Firstly, my pilot study enabled me to judge whether my planned snowball sampling technique was likely to generate a sufficient number of research participants (van Teijlingen and Hundley 2004; Mason 2002a). Once I had found some initial participants to take part in my pilot study, I found that the sample grew fairly rapidly through word of mouth and social networks. This suggested to me that my planned sampling technique would indeed be effective in my main study. Secondly, the pilot study enabled me to practice my interview technique. More specifically, it gave me the opportunity to practice active listening, asking follow-up questions, and allowing for pauses or periods of silence. These interviewing skills are largely based on tacit knowledge, and so are best learnt through practice (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Thirdly, my pilot study helped me to develop my interview questions and schedule (van Teijlingen and Hundley 2004; Bloor and Wood 2006). For example, I quickly found that the most effective way of getting the interview conversation started was to ask the participants some basic questions about their household arrangements. Rather than immediately broaching the topic of domestic labour, I began to open each interview by asking the participants how long they had been in a relationship for, and how long they had lived with their partner for. These questions 'broke the ice', sparked conversation, and were an easy way into talking about the participants' relationships and divisions of domestic labour within them. Lastly, the pilot study generated data, which I could later analyse and use to supplement the findings and conclusions that I drew from my main study (Mason 2002a; van Teijlingen and Hundley 2004).

3.6 Ethics and consent

Throughout the research process, I was committed to morally responsible research. In doing this research, my aim was not only to satisfy the ethical imperative to 'do no harm' but also to 'do good' (Hugman et al. 2011). My aim was for the potential benefits to the participants (and the wider LGBTQ group they represent), as well as the benefits of knowledge generation during the study, to always outweigh any risk of harm to the participants. Simultaneously, I always attempted to minimise this risk of harm or distress to the participants.

Before carrying out my research, I gained ethical clearance through the University of Southampton's ethics committee. When recruiting participants through gatekeepers, I have followed any additional research guidelines that these gatekeepers suggested, where appropriate. For example, in order to work with one bisexual support group, I agreed to comply with the *Guidelines for Researching and Writing on Bisexuality* written by biUK, a national organisation for bisexual research and activism. These guidelines contain a number of ethical considerations, including being open, accountable, and respectful of bisexuality (Barker et al. 2011).

3.6.1 The ethics of researching LGBTQ homes

In order to ensure that my research is ethically responsible, I firstly considered the ethics of involving LGBTQ people in research. LGBTQ people are part of a minority population. Even in the 21st century, many LGBTQ people living in the UK remain socially marginalised and may encounter discrimination or prejudice in their everyday life. In particular, transphobia remains prominent in the West, with transgender people often experiencing stigma and even violence. Some LGBTQ people avoid publicly identifying as such, because to do so could result in discrimination or other negative

reactions (Browne 2005; Martin and Meezan 2003; Dean et al. 2000). As such, to minimise the potential for harm to the research participants, it was important for me to protect their privacy and prevent disclosure of information that could potentially lead to them being discriminated against (see Lee 1999). This is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.3.

In considering the ethics of interviewing LGBTQ people, it was also important for me to think about the benefits that doing so could have. One likely benefit of these interviews is that many research participants will find it an empowering and enriching experience (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). Another is that the project will help to challenge heteronormative understandings of domestic labour and childcare within the discipline of Geography. Additionally, involving LGBTQ people in this research will contribute to the wider effort of improving the recognition and rights of LGBTQ people in the UK (and beyond). Thus, the project has a wider socio-political significance (see Mason 2002a). I deemed these benefits to outweigh the small potential for distress of the LGBTQ people involved in the research.

To further assess whether my research is ethically responsible, I reflected upon the ethics of studying the particular topic of my thesis, the domestic labour and childcare performed by LGBTQ people. This topic could be considered sensitive, because it touches upon the home, family, gender identity and sexuality. Within their interviews, some participants discussed lived experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. All of these are highly personal, often private, and potentially emotive topics (Lee 1999; Gabb 2008, 2009; Dean et al. 2000; Martin and Meezan 2003). Discussing such topics can be stressful or emotionally demanding. As the researcher, I considered it my ethical duty to protect the participants' emotional wellbeing. Following the practices of Mitchell and Irvine (2008), I utilised a number of strategies to meet the participants' emotional needs during interviews, such as allowing for periods of silence, moving on from a topic if the participant seemed uncomfortable, and allowing the participant to guide the flow of the interview.

Whilst some individuals might find talking about their home lives difficult, for others the interview can be a liberating, cathartic experience (Gabb 2009; Lee 1999; Brannen 1988). For example, one lesbian couple went into great detail about how their

relationship started and the process of moving in and creating a home together. Afterwards, they revealed that only one or two other people knew the story; and both remarked that they had enjoyed talking about the early stages of their relationship with me. Even when research participants appeared to be enjoying the interview, I was mindful of the fact that we were discussing potentially emotion-laden topics; and sought to remain responsive to the participants' emotional needs, so as to ensure that my research was ethically responsible (Lee 1999; Mitchell and Irvine 2008; Martin and Meezan 2003).

3.6.2 Consent

Before each interview, I gained the written consent of the research participant (see consent form in Appendix C). Gaining voluntary, informed consent from research participants is an important aspect of conducting ethical research (Crow et al. 2006; Martin and Meezan 2003). However, the process of gaining such consent is not straightforward. In order to give their informed consent, potential participants should be provided with appropriate information about the project, before they decide whether or not to take part. This helps to prevent deception or coercion from taking place (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Miller and Bell 2002; Sieber and Stanley 1988). However, it can be difficult to provide information about the topics to be discussed in a semi-structured interview, because the flow of the conversation is largely unpredictable, with unexpected topics often emerging (Gabb 2008; Gerson and Horowitz 2002; Miller and Bell 2002). Additionally, providing people with too much information can merely serve to confuse them or put them off participating in the research (Crow et al. 2006).

Taking these issues into consideration, I sought to provide potential participants with a broad and relevant explanation of the research topic, without defining it too tightly or providing unnecessary information. Each potential participant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet, which included a brief outline of the study, details of what their participation would involve, and the potential benefits and risks of the study (see Appendix B). I wrote the Participant Information Sheet in everyday language that any potential participants should easily understand, as suggested by Kvale and

Brinkmann (2009). I took spare Participant Information Sheets with me to each face-to-face interview, so that participants were able to look over these and ask me any questions before the interview began. This enabled me to feel confident that the consent my participants provided was informed. Furthermore, in recognition that unexpected topics or themes may emerge over the course of the research, I viewed consent as an ongoing process. I made participants aware of their right to end their participation at any point, without consequence.

Whether the participants are giving their consent freely is another issue that I had to grapple with. This is because persuasive influences may compel somebody to consent to take part in a research project (Mason 2002a; Mitchell and Irvine 2008). For example, participants recruited through snowball sampling might feel pressure to participate in the research, if they know the researcher or an acquaintance of the researcher. I sought to minimise this pressure during my research study by asking people whether or not they are interested in taking part in an interview more than once; and by reminding them that they do not have to take part. In addition, my Participant Information Sheet emphasised that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and refrain from answering any questions, without consequence. Martin and Meezan (2003) suggest that it is important to remind participants of this during the study, as it minimises the risk that they will feel obliged to continue to participate against their wishes. In adopting this practice, I sought to ensure that the participants were providing me with their ongoing consent to take part.

3.6.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality has also remained a top priority during my research project. As my research involves LGBTQ participants, it has been particularly important to keep their identities anonymous, because some of them are not publicly 'out' about their sexuality or gender identity (see Hash and Cramer 2003; LaSala 2003; Martin and Meezan 2003). However, as noted by Gabb (2010) it is very difficult to keep a person's identity anonymous from those close to them or people who know details about their personal

lives. This is particularly true when conducting in-depth research into a person's everyday experiences of home and family life. Gabb (2010) suggests that sacrificing such research would be an ethical over-reaction; instead, she advocates for both developing a comprehensive analysis and also maintaining a trusting research relationship with the participants. Within this thesis I have therefore sought to maintain a sense of the complexity of everyday domestic life and the richness of the data, whilst also protecting the anonymity of the research participants. I have used pseudonyms when presenting or publishing any findings. At the same time, I recognise that pseudonyms alone might not be enough to ensure anonymity, due to the personal and unique nature of the data produced during the in-depth interview (Wiles et al. 2008; Mason 2002a; Brannen 1988). As such, I have reported the location of the participants at the level of the borough, city or county. Reporting my findings on a reasonably crude spatial scale helps to ensure that participants cannot be identified (Lee 1999). Additionally, I have chosen the quotations included in my publications carefully, in order to omit places or details which might make the participants immediately identifiable. Other measures that I have taken to protect the identities of my research participants and comply with University ethics procedures include keeping any written data and my dictaphone locked in my desk at the University of Southampton and password protecting my computer files, as advocated by Martin and Meezan (2003). The participants were made aware of the steps that would be taken to protect their anonymity in the Participant Information Sheet provided to them; and their consent to take part on this basis indicates that they were happy with the level of confidentiality of the research. The only instances in which I would consider breaking confidentiality would be when I felt the individual was at risk of harm, or was likely to cause harm to others, as suggested by Wiles et al. (2008).

3.7 Data Analysis

After carrying out the interviews, which I recorded using a dictaphone, I then transcribed them. Subsequently, I took a thematic approach to analysing the transcripts. This involved coding the data using NVivo qualitative analysis software. I decided to

use NVivo because it allowed me to quickly and easily colour-code a large number of transcripts. The software also meant that I could alter the codes applied to different sections of the transcripts far more efficiently than if I was coding (and re-coding) the transcripts by hand. Rather than having a pre-established coding framework, I developed a framework as I coded, based on recurring themes from the interview transcripts (Attride-Stirling 2001; Aronson 1994). This process was not linear but involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, and applying new codes as new themes began to emerge. Coding the data enabled me to highlight key sections of the transcripts that I wanted to analyse in more depth (Attride-Stirling 2001). I kept the codes fairly broad, such as 'domestic gender roles' or 'preferences' so as not to constrain the focus of my analysis, and so that I could continue to develop my ideas and arguments as I was writing the analysis chapters. Once I had coded the transcripts, NVivo allowed me to export all of the quotations relating to a particular theme into a single document, which further facilitated my analyses. The themes that emerged as I was coding the data form the basis of the subsequent analysis chapters in this thesis.

3.8 Conclusion

Throughout my research into the everyday domestic lives of the participating LGBTQ couples, my aim has been to pay close attention to personal experiences and develop nuanced understandings of domesticity. In order to foreground the understandings, attitudes, emotions and experiences of the research participants, I adopted a qualitative approach centred on in-depth semi-structured interviews. This allowed me to talk in detail with the participants about their domestic practices and relationships, and gain a deeper insight into the complexities and contradictions of their everyday lives than might have been possible through other methods such as questionnaires or time-use diaries. In seeking rich, detailed accounts, I felt that 40 interviews was an appropriate number as this allowed me to capture a range of experiences whilst also meaning that I could provide an in-depth analysis of the data. As is demonstrated in the following chapters, my sample covers a range of identities, including people who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer; a number of different household

formations, including coupled households, shared houses and households containing children of various ages; and a number of different areas of England, from Devon in the South West to Tyne and Wear in the North East. Whilst it is clear than any sample would not be able to represent the entirety of LGBTQ domesticity in England, the interview data presented in the subsequent three chapters represents an array of domestic lives and experiences with which to explore my research questions.

Chapter 4: The Division of Domestic Labour in LGBTQ Homes in Contemporary England: Introducing Data from the Research Study

4.1 Introduction

Having laid out my methodology in the previous chapter, in this and the three following analysis chapters I draw on the data from my research interviews (with 56 participants) to analyse the division of domestic labour and childcare within 38 LGBTQ homes in contemporary England. I use this first analysis chapter to introduce the data and begin to explore the everyday home lives, identities and domestic practices of the participants. In other words, in this chapter I provide a broad overview of the data. I then use the three subsequent chapters to analyse this data in more depth, focussing on the ways in which the LGBTQ participants queer heteronormative ideologies of domesticity in the material home (Chapter 5) through the everyday practices of domestic labour (Chapter 6) and childcare (Chapter 7).

I begin this chapter by introducing the participants in terms of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and living arrangements (sections 4.2 and 4.3) in order to build a picture of the couples or families involved in the study, as well as the homes that they live in. Section 4.2 includes a discussion of the way in which identity is being understood in this thesis, drawing upon debates in geography and the wider social sciences on identities and intersectionality. Following this, I reflect upon the influence that the different living arrangements of the participants have upon the amounts and types of domestic labour that take place in each home. In particular, I emphasise the impact that the presence of a child can have on the amount and types of domestic labour performed by a couple. Next, I use sections 4.4 to 4.6 to begin a discussion of the general trends in the division of domestic labour amongst the participating couples, and the ways in which particular domestic tasks are apportioned and negotiated by each couple. This allows me to start drawing out the ways in which the participants' everyday divisions

and negotiations of domestic labour challenge heteronormative discourses of the home as a space in which heterosexual couples take on separate, gendered roles (see Crompton 2006; McDowell 1999). Thus, through pulling out differences between the everyday domestic lives of the participating couples and heteronormative discourses of home, in this chapter I lay the groundwork for the three subsequent chapters, which focus more closely on the nuanced (and at times complex or contradictory) ways in which these LGBTQ couples subvert heteronormative assumptions about (gendered) domestic roles and material home spaces through their everyday practices and negotiations of domestic labour.

4.2 Demographic and identity characteristics of the participants

As the focus of my research project is on the domestic lives and labour of LGBTQ couples, when recruiting people to take part in an interview I aimed to achieve diversity in terms of the gender and sexuality of the participants.

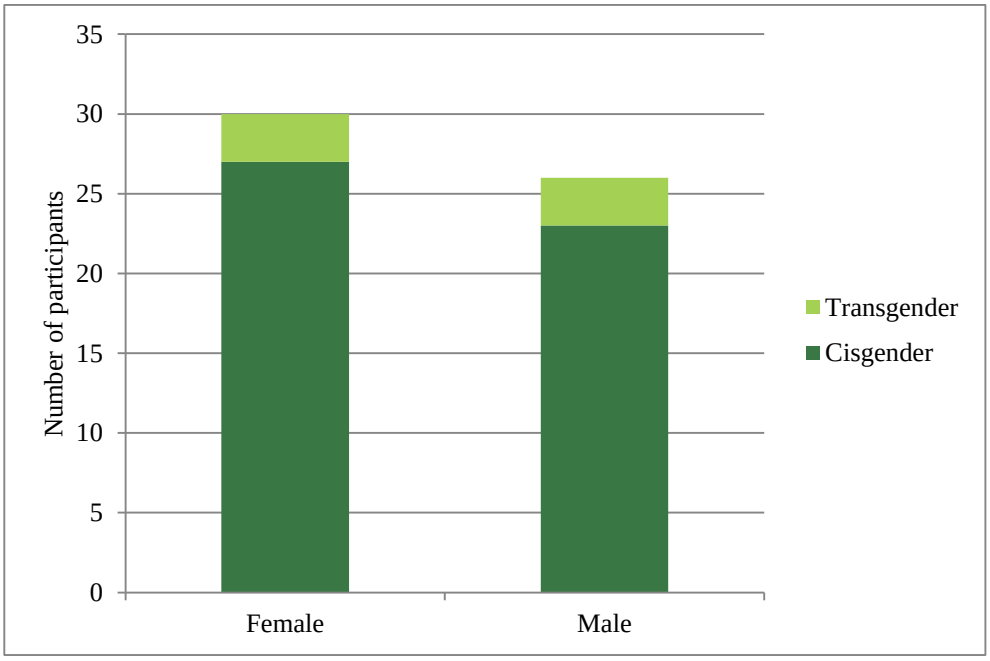

Figure 1: Gender of participants

As can be seen in Figure 1, the sample of 56 participants contains a roughly even split of females (*n* = 30) and males (*n* = 26). Of the 30 female participants, 3 are transgender and 27 cisgender. Meanwhile, of the male participants, 3 are transgender and 23 cisgender. Although I recognise that gender is not binary (see Doan 2010; Browne 2004; Hines 2010; Butler 1990), none of the participants in the study reported that they identify as non-binary.

Figure 2 presents the sexuality of the research participants. In categorising the participants as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and heterosexual, I employ the terms that the participants used to describe themselves during their interviews. In doing so I am not suggesting that the way in which people identify their sexuality is static throughout the life course. Indeed, I recognise that sexual identity and attractions are fluid and so may be subject to change over time (see Giffney 2009; Jagose 1996; de Lauretis 1991). However, this graph provides a snapshot or broad sense of the way in which the participants identified at the time of their interview. The graph also demonstrates that I achieved diversity in the sample in terms of sexuality because whilst a large proportion of the participants identify as either lesbian or gay, 7 identify as bisexual and 3 as queer. In addition, 1 transgender man and 1 transgender woman who took part in the study identify as heterosexual.

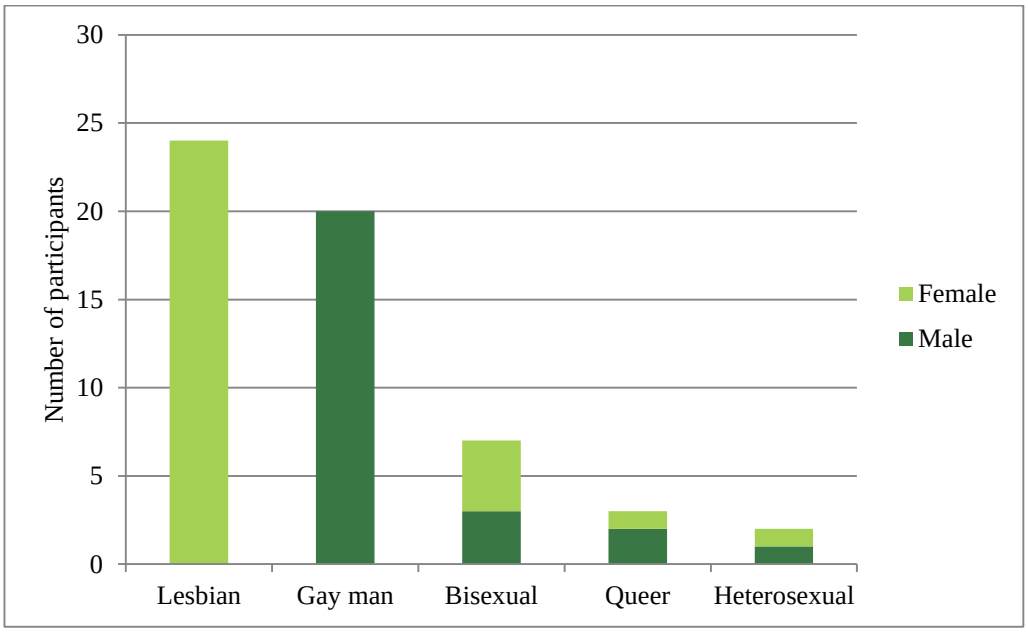

Figure 2: Sexuality of participants

In terms of the couples' composition, the study included 38 couples: 19 couples in which both partners are female, 15 couples in which both partners are male, and 4 couples in which one partner is female and the other male.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the majority of participants (n = 48) are of White ethnicity. 3 participants classify their ethnicity as Mixed, 2 as Asian/ Asian British, and 1 as Other. An additional 2 participants chose not to provide information about their ethnicity. The largely homogenous ethnic background of the participants in this study should be taken into account when considering its findings, as the thesis reports upon the experiences of this socially specific group of mainly White British LGBTQ people.

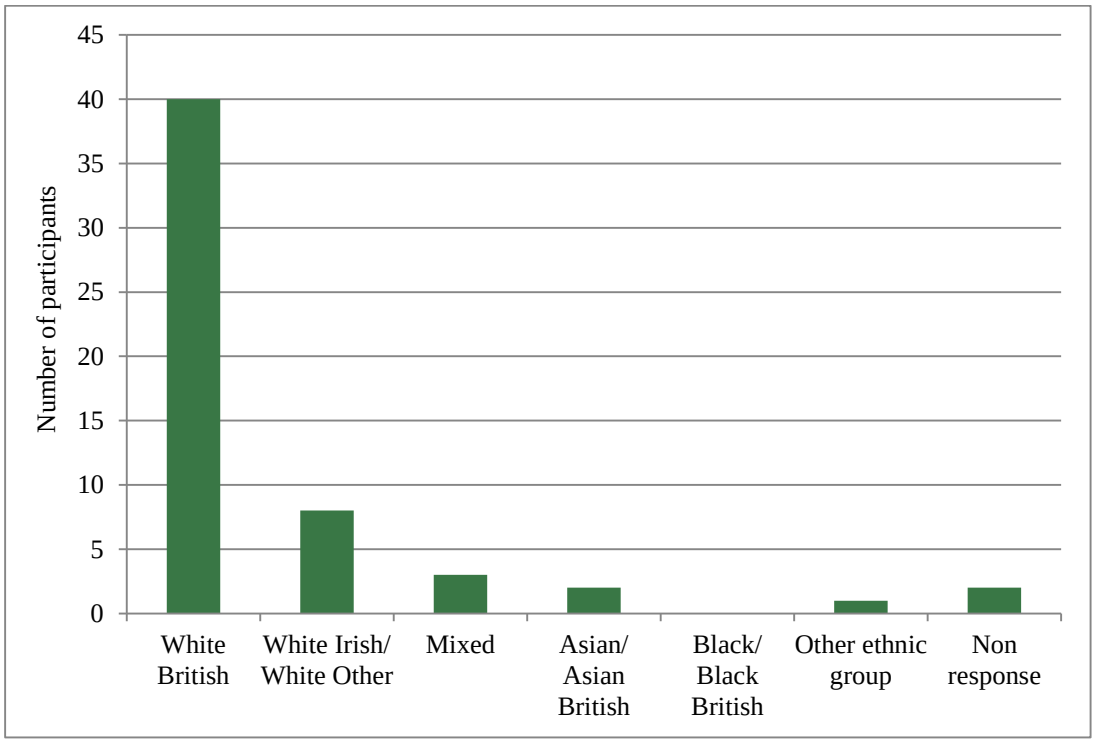

Figure 3: Ethnicity of participants

Research participants were also asked to provide their current or most recent occupation, which I then classified according to the Socio-Economic Classification system used by the Office for National Statistics (2014). This allowed me to assess the class of the participants. The trends in occupation shown in Figure 4 are indicative of medium to high average income levels, and suggest that the majority of participants in the sample are middle-class. Thirty-one participants are employed in higher level

managerial or professional occupations such as retail managers, senior nurses or university lecturers. A further 15 are employed in intermediate occupations such as office workers, finance assistants and railway staff. Meanwhile, only 4 are employed in routine and manual occupations such as customer assistants, bar work or security. As noted previously in the Chapter 3, it is important to recognise that the lives and experiences discussed in this thesis are likely shaped by the mainly middle-class social position of the participants, which affords these couples certain privileges such as the ability of one couple with young children to employ a live-in nanny (see section 4.4.1 and Chapter 7).

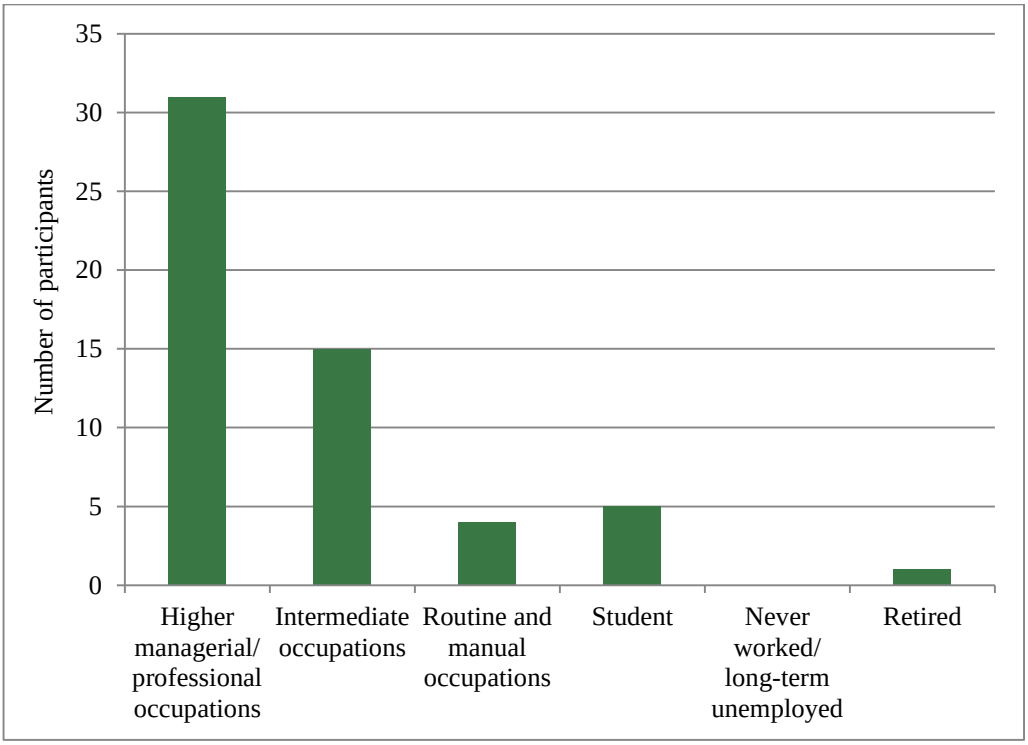

Figure 4: Current or most recent occupation of participants

4.2.1 Understanding identity and intersectionality

By providing a 'snapshot' of the demographic or identity characteristics (gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class) of the participants, section 4.2 could be interpreted as presenting these aspects of identity as separate and fixed. However, the figures and

categories used so far in this chapter should instead be read as providing a basic overview of the identities of the participants, at the time of their interview. They are designed to give the reader a better sense of the participants who took part in the study. In presenting the data in this way, it is not my intention to suggest that these identities are discrete and fixed. Rather, I recognise that the boundaries of the identity groupings that I have used are unstable, changeable, and potentially contested in nature. Furthermore, in this thesis I conceptualise these identities as *interconnected*, therefore drawing upon the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Valentine 2007; Brown 2012; Nash 2008). Intersectionality is a useful concept because it allows for a consideration of the multiple, interconnected subject positions or identities that constitute everyday (domestic) life, as well as the associated power relations that are central to people's everyday experiences within particular social and spatial contexts (such as the home) (Valentine 2007; Peake 2010). In the following paragraphs, I will trace some of the literatures and debates that have informed my approaches to identity and intersectionality in this thesis, beginning with a discussion of the origins of intersectionality as a concept.

Intersectionality was in part a response to the black feminist critique of a mainstream feminism which claimed a concern for *all* women whilst simultaneously overlooking the racial, classed and sexual differences *between* women (Crenshaw 1991; Nash 2008). It was first conceptualised in the late 1980s and early 1990s by critical race theorists who rejected the idea that social categories such as race, gender and class are separate or essentialist and instead sought to focus on the interconnections between race and other social categories, as a means of better understanding identities, difference and oppression (Crenshaw 1991; Valentine 2007). These theorists highlighted the limitations of one-dimensional understandings of identity and difference, arguing that focusing on only one aspect of identity (such as gender) is likely to overlook other, connected identities and oppressions that may render people's lives and experiences quite different from each other (Brown 2012). The concept of intersectionality was thus used in order to move away from a single-axis framework of identity and oppression; and towards a more complex understanding of identities and experiences as having multiple, interconnected dimensions (Nash 2008).

The earliest conceptualisations of intersectionality understood identity and oppression in terms of 'axes of difference' or social categories that interlock as fixed vectors, producing different social lives, experiences and inequalities (Crenshaw 1991). However, the concept has been subject to much debate, with scholars such as West and Fenstermaker (1995) moving away from the assumption that social differences are stable and fixed and towards an understanding of identities and differences as multiple, fluid, contested and ambiguous. In other words, West and Fenstermaker (1995) argued that 'axes of difference' do not intersect to produce a subject in any structurally stable way. Rather, they suggested that the intersection of identities is a more fluid process or 'doing', wherein identities and differences are made, unmade, changed, claimed and rejected (see also Valentine 2007; Monro 2010; Waitt and Gorman-Murray 2011; de Leeuw et al. 2011).

Debates on intersectionality in the social sciences have also highlighted the need to move away from essentialist understandings of identity and difference which view different aspects of identity as 'adding on' to one another (Rodó-de-Zárate 2015; Yuval-Davis 2006; Brown 2012; Valentine 2007; West and Fenstermaker 1995). This essentialist approach assumes not only that identities are separate (and fixed) but also that there is a (presumably white, heterosexual, able-bodied, male) 'base identity' onto which other differences are added (Valentine 2007). Many theorists have argued that identities cannot be understood as merely additive, but that identities and oppressions are *relational* and *mutually constitutive*, as their intersections change the nature of the identities and oppressions themselves (Rodó-de-Zárate 2015). As an example, Valentine (2007) shows that the experiences or identity of a black woman cannot be straightforwardly understood by adding together the experience of being black with that of being a woman. Similarly, Nash (2008) argues that it is too simplistic to say that "race + gender + sexuality + class = complex identity" (p. 6). These theorists emphasise that the intersections of these identities or differences change and complicate each other, producing particular identities, experiences and oppressions (see also Brown 2012; Rodó-de-Zárate 2015).

As the concept of intersectionality arose from a consideration of the identities and oppressions of black women, and because much intersectional scholarship focusses on the subjectivities of multiply marginalised subjects, this raises the question of whether the concept of intersectionality can be applied to *all* subject positions. As Nash (2008) asks, is intersectionality a theory about marginalised subjectivity and oppression? Or is it a more general theory of identity? These questions remain unresolved within intersectionality debates. Rather than solely using intersectionality as a tool for considering oppressions and exclusions, the concept has been used by some researchers to understand and theorise an array of subjectivities and experiences, including those which may be (partially) privileged (Rodó-de-Zárate 2015; Brown 2012; Valentine 2007). It has been argued that these subjectivities and experiences, too, are the product of multiple, complex and intersecting aspects of identity (Nash 2008; de Leeuw et al. 2011). This reading of intersectionality recognises that it is often too simplistic to argue that one person has power whilst another does not. It further allows for a simultaneous analysis of oppression, difference and privilege; and suggests that individuals can be simultaneously privileged and oppressed by their intersecting identities (Rodó-de-Zárate 2015; Brown 2012; de Leeuw et al. 2011; Nash 2008; Valentine 2007). If privilege and oppression are theorised as complex and potentially simultaneous, intersectionality is arguably able to provide a more robust picture of identity, power and oppression (Nash 2008). When considering the participants' (intersectional) identities and domestic experiences in this thesis, I therefore seek to show how certain subjectivities may hold privilege(s) or power whilst also encountering oppressive heteronormative social discourses of home, thereby responding to calls for research on intersectional identities to recognise that people may experience *both* social exclusion and privilege (see Brown 2012).

As I begin to introduce how identity and intersectionality are employed in this thesis, it is useful to consider how other human geographers have engaged with these concepts. In 2007, Gill Valentine formally introduced intersectionality to the discipline of Human Geography in a paper entitled, 'Theorizing and researching intersectionality: a challenge for feminist geography'. Since then, human geographers who are concerned with questions of identity have gradually paid more attention to intersectionality as a means

of understanding the complexities of difference, subjectivities, power and place (Brown 2012; de Leeuw et al. 2011; Gorman-Murray 2015; Atherton 2009; Rodó-de-Zárate 2015). For example, the growing body of work concerning masculinities within human geography is in part reflective of a greater engagement with theoretical questions surrounding intersectionality and identity within the discipline (Hopkins and Noble 2009). This body of literature includes intersectional studies which acknowledge the ways in which masculine identities intersect with other aspects of identity such as race and age, therefore highlighting the multiple masculinities that exist across different spaces and different times (for example see Hopkins and Noble 2009; Atherton 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015). Meanwhile, other human geographers have emphasised the heteronormativity of much feminist geography and the masculinist approaches of geographies of sexuality, in order to highlight the need for researchers within these sub-disciplines to adopt an intersectional approach which takes into account how people's uses and experiences of various spaces are shaped by their interconnected sexual and gender identities (Rodó-de-Zárate 2015; Browne 2007a).

Geographers have added to theorisations of intersectionality, identity and social inequalities in the wider social sciences by emphasising the significance of *space* in the (re)production, claiming and rejection of (intersectional) identities (Valentine 2007; Brown 2012; Peake 2010; de Leeuw et al. 2011; Nightingale 2011). As noted by Valentine (2007), as people move through different spaces at different times they come into contact with social norms that define which identities and practices are considered socially acceptable in these spatial and temporal contexts. This indicates that power operates within space in part by defining the identities and practices that are seen to 'belong' or not belong in different spaces, over time. Whilst acknowledging the power of dominant social and spatial discourses, Valentine (2007) also emphasises that normative subjectivities, power and social inequalities within a particular space may be (re)produced *or contested* through the social practices, meanings and identities of the people who occupy them. This suggests that individuals have power to reclaim or transform the meanings of spaces in or from which they have been marginalised or oppressed. In other words, "subjectivities can and do perform and produce spaces differently and not always routinely, invisibly or quietly" (Peake 2010: 66). A

geographical analysis of (intersectional) identities thus allows for an exploration of the complexities of people's spatial relationships, and the ways in which their identities and experiences may be shaped by or shape the spaces that they encounter in their everyday lives (de Leeuw et al. 2011; Brown 2012). This approach understands identities as being changeable over time, and also leaves room for individuals to be actively involved in (re)producing their own lives, identities and spaces, thereby helping us to move further away from essentialist or determinist classifications of individuals into fixed identity categories (Valentine 2007; Nightingale 2011).

As noted by Valentine (2007) and Browne (2007a), due to the complexity of intersectionality, limitations on time and financial resources, and for the sake of clarity, social and feminist geographers typically focus their analyses on the relationship and interconnections between certain identities (such as gender and class) as opposed to considering the full implications of intersectionality in a single study. However, some geographers have raised concerns with this approach. For example, with regards to geographies of sexualities, Brown (2012) points out that this literature most commonly focuses on the intersections between sexuality and gender and/or race, whilst paying less attention to how sexuality intersects with class, age and other structures of oppression. For Brown (2012), this raises the 'anxiety' of which identities are included in intersectional geographies of sexualities. On what basis do geographers decide which identities to include in their studies? Do geographers unintentionally prioritise and marginalise different identities through the presences and absences in their research? In raising these questions, Brown (2012) does not reject employing intersectional approaches within geographical studies of sexualities. Indeed, he posits that an intersectional approach is valuable in helping us to better understand the range of sexualities and subjectivities enacted in various spaces. However, he stresses the importance of *acknowledging* the choices we make when considering which intersections and identities to focus on in our research. Within this chapter, I have acknowledged that the main focus of my analysis is on sexuality and gender as interconnected and important aspects of identity which may disrupt the homogeneity of (hetero)normatively gendered domestic identities and spaces. As discussed above, I also recognise that the domestic lives, experiences and spaces of the participants are shaped

by other, interconnected identities such as their privileged class positions (see also section 3.4 and Chapter 8). However, my justification for focussing on gender and sexuality is that the main focus of this thesis is on how the participating LGBTQ couples (re)produce and/or queer heteronormativity at home through their everyday attitudes and approaches towards the division of domestic labour and childcare; and I found that the interconnections between sexuality and gender were most salient in understanding these themes (see Chapters 6 and 7). The emphasis of this thesis on sexuality and gender allows me to provide an in-depth exploration of the significance of these intersecting identities in the (re)production of domestic lives and spaces.

Another concern with intersectionality that has been raised within the discipline of geography (as well as the wider social sciences) is that a focus on the subjectivities of the individual and the complexity of their intersecting identities may lead to researchers losing sight of the dominant social discourses in various times and spaces that (re)produce the oppression or marginalisation of certain groups and identities (Valentine 2007; Monro 2010). As such, whilst I wish to emphasise in this thesis how the sexuality and gender identities of the LGBTQ participants intersect and affect their domestic lives, spaces and practices, I also aim to retain a focus on the dominant heteronormative discourses of domesticity, and their implications for the everyday experiences of the LGBTQ participants in the home. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I build upon existing (geographical) work on sexuality, identity and intersectionality to explore how the domestic practices of the LGBTQ participants create (material and imaginative) home spaces in which heteronormatively gendered domestic roles and subjectivities are (re)produced and/or contested.

4.3 The living arrangements of the participants

Moving on from a discussion of identity, this section will introduce the participants in terms of their living arrangements. Figure 5 demonstrates that the majority of

participants live with their partner only. Six couples reported living with one or two children aged 18 or under; and one of these couples also has a nanny living with them. One participant has an adult son at University who only lives with his mother and her partner during University holidays. This couple have been categorised as 'couple only' for the purposes of Figure 5, as this reflects their living arrangements the majority of the time. Five couples live in shared households: one of these couples has a lodger, one couple are lodgers themselves, and the other three couples in this category share their home with up to six other housemates. One participant lives with his partner in his parent's household; and one couple live with an adult daughter and also have a polyamorous relationship, with their partner's boyfriend occasionally staying at their house for a week at a time. These trends likely reflect the diversity of living situations of LGBTQ people as well as heterosexuals because – as noted in the literature review – LGBTQ people do not necessarily live in profoundly different ways to heterosexual people (Halberstam 2005).

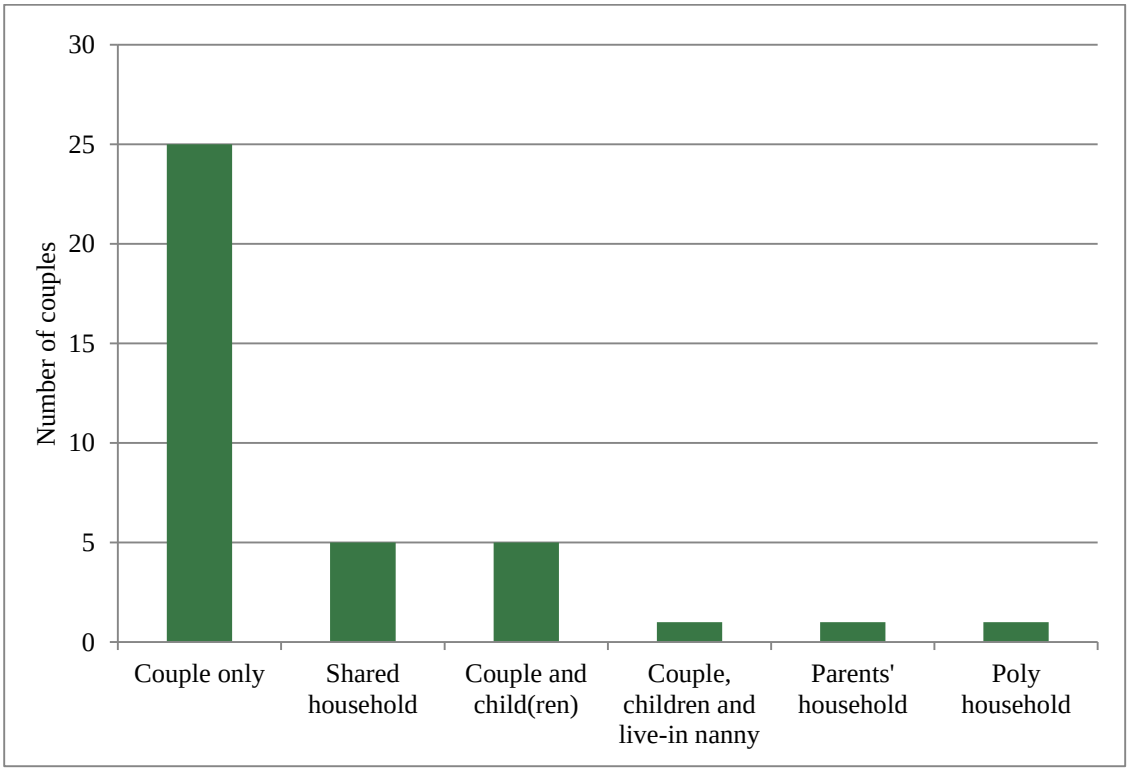

Figure 5: Living arrangements of participants

The differences in the living arrangements of the participants are significant because they play a role in the participants' experiences of and attitudes towards domestic labour, as well as the amount of domestic labour that is performed in each household. For example, Howard (student, 20s) and Johnny (student, 20s) share a house with two other male students. Howard said that their two housemates do their fair share of the domestic labour, and therefore do not add to the amount of domestic labour that Howard and his partner perform. Similarly, Kim (banker, 20s) and Naomi (student, 20s) feel that the one housemate they share their home with contributes fairly to the domestic labour. In contrast, Justin (police officer, 20s) and Antony (rail staff, 20s) report that their lodger does not make enough of a contribution around the house; and they feel that he is adding to the amount of domestic labour that the couple need to do. The additional domestic labour that is created by additional household members was also reflected on by Vicky (LGBT mental health advocate, 30s) and Paula (learning support assistant, 30s), who share a house with six other people. Vicky said:

> I think, because there's so many people as well, it gets dirty so quick and I hate cleaning in filth, or cooking or doing stuff in the kitchen when it's dirty. That really bugs me.

In their interview, the couple discussed strategies that they use to manage the sheer volume of cleaning that is necessitated by living in an eight-person household. These strategies will be elaborated on in section 4.3. Meanwhile, Hugh (accountant, 20s) and Larry (researcher, 20s) live with Hugh's parents. During his interview, Hugh explained that his parents take primary responsibility for the domestic labour in their household, which means that he and Larry perform almost no domestic labour unless his parents are away. By drawing attention to these differences in household situations, I emphasise just how much simplistic conceptions of the nuclear family household-as-home flatten out very complex daily lives. Throughout this thesis, I retain a focus on the complexities and varied experiences of everyday domestic life in order to queer such normative discourses of the home.

4.3.1 Participants with children

In line with previous research (including Baxter et al. 2008; South and Spitze 1994; Shelton 1992; Eichler and Albanese 2007), the participants in this study who live with their or their partner's children indicated that the presence of a child increases the amount of domestic labour required to maintain their household. For example, Liam (charity worker, 30s) remarked:

> Thinking of the washing that piles up... Since we've had the baby, the washing is just an unbelievable chore. It's just a constant wave… Look, she's got tomato sauce on her now! [*laughs*] You know what I mean? She has to be changed three times a day.

Liam and his partner Bradley (chef, 30s) recently adopted their daughter, who was nearly one and a half years old at the time of their interview and had been living with them for around seven months. I interviewed them at home, in their open plan kitchen/ living room. For the majority of the interview, their daughter was sat in her high chair in the kitchen area with Bradley, whilst Liam and I sat on chairs in the living room area. Bradley was feeding their daughter at the beginning of the interview, during which time she spilt food down the front of her clothes, which perfectly exemplified the point that Liam was making about the volume of laundry that is produced when you have a small child. Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s) too, commented that laundry in particular becomes a more substantial task with the arrival of a child. The couple were in the process of adopting their daughter, who was two years old and had been living with them for around seven months when I interviewed them. They said:

> Olivia: We seem to constantly be doing washing now.
> CB: … You've noticed an increase in laundry?
> Olivia: Oh goodness, yeah. It's ridiculous!
> Isobel: Even our clothes. You're always getting sticky stuff over you; you just have to wash all the clothes. You

used to wear a hoodie all week but now it has to go in the wash straight away.

Olivia: Yeah. It gets your clothes messy too, and kneeling on the floor all the time, my trousers get muddy really quickly and stuff like that.

As well as increased levels of cleaning and laundry, having children clearly introduces new forms of work into the home. This was reflected upon by Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) and Debby (academic researcher, 40s), who live with Wendy's 18-year-old and 13-year-old daughters from a previous relationship. When I asked the couple what taking care of the children involves, Wendy answered:

> Oh lord! It involves everything about their lives. Absolutely everything, from managing their material needs to managing their every kind of emotional requirement… Yeah, so absolutely everything from ballet lessons to packed lunch… homework, revision, friendship crises. Everything, absolutely everything.

Wendy emphasised that looking after teenage daughters does not only involve physical domestic labour such as making packed lunches but also emotional labour such as helping her daughters to deal with tensions in their friendship groups, and organisational labour such as arranging their dance lessons. Previous discussions of emotional and organisational labour of both unwaged and waged work can be found in the work of academics such as Hochschild (1983), Erickson (2005), Eichler and Albanese (2007) and James (1992). Wendy's teenage daughters clearly require very different kinds of care to those required by the younger children of Liam and Bradley or Isobel and Olivia. Indeed, it is important to recognise that children are not a homogenous group, and the types and levels of care they need differ according to factors such as their age (VanEvery 1997, Kurz 2002). Nevertheless, the six couples in this study who live with children aged 18 and under all indicated that the presence of these children creates additional physical, emotional and organisational labour in their households, even if the precise form that this additional labour takes varies with the age or needs of the child in question. For example, whilst emotional care for a 13-year-old might involve helping them to deal with problems in their friendship group (Wendy and Debby), emotional

care for a 2-year-old might involve talking or singing to them, or responding to the noises and sounds that they make (Isobel and Olivia).

From the interviews, I also identified that a change in priorities can occur when a couple has children. For example, this was discussed by Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s), who I interviewed when their twin boys were just 4 months old. Since having their sons through surrogacy, Dale and Hal remarked that their approach to domestic labour has shifted:

CB: How has having children impacted the amount of work that needs doing around the house?

Dale: Overall clearly there's more but at the same time we've sort of laxed [*sic*] on other things. So the floor doesn't get vacuumed as much as it used to, that sort of thing.

CB: Yeah.

Dale: So in some ways we're doing less and in other ways clearly we're doing a lot more of the baby laundry and the things associated with babies. Feedings and all that. But I haven't felt that in terms of chores it's made a huge difference. Just an extra load of laundry every day, really.

Hal: Yeah. The other things we get maybe 10% less done.

For Dale and Hal, the increased amount of time they are spending on laundry and other tasks associated with looking after their babies has been accompanied by a reduction in the amount of time they are spending on vacuuming and other tasks that they deem less important in maintaining their home and taking care of their family. This indicates that when children become part of a household it does not necessarily lead to a straightforward increase in the time spent on *every* household task, but can also cause people's priorities and attitudes towards different forms of domestic labour to shift and change.

4.3.2 Home ownership versus renting

From my interviews I identified that another important factor influencing the amount and type of domestic labour performed (or not) by the participating couples is whether they live in rented or owner-occupied households. This demonstrates one of the ways in which these couples follow established patterns that have been previously documented in heterosexual families (Bianchi et al. 2000; Cox 2013; South and Spitze 1994). The participants were more likely to report investing time and creativity into the maintenance of their home if they owned it themselves. Dale (professor, 40s) reflected:

> We're renting too so we don't put in quite the same… We owned a home in Bristol, and we made sure everything was polished and spit-shined all the time!

Dale indicated that he and his partner do not have the desire to keep a rented house to the same standard as they did a house that they owned themselves. This suggests that the overall amount of domestic labour that the couple performs has been reduced by the fact that they now rent. Other couples commented that renting a property means that responsibility for particular domestic tasks lies with their landlord rather than themselves. Specifically, Dean (psychologist, 30s); Teresa and Fred (FE educator, 40s and mathematician, 20s); Justin and Antony (police officer, 20s and rail staff, 20s); and Aidan and Rob (customer assistant, <20 and student, <20) all said that because they are renting, this reduces the amount of DIY or household maintenance that they are responsible for. Dean (psychologist, 30s) explained:

> because we're in a rented property at the moment, lots of [the DIY] gets done by the landlord, so we tend not to have to do too much of that, but of course now we're about to buy, there's going to be more of that.

Dean and the other participants who discussed the implications of renting or owning their home all suggested that owning a property is associated with increased responsibilities for household maintenance, and an additional level of domestic labour.

South and Spitze (1994) also found that homeowners spend longer hours on domestic labour, similarly suggesting that this might be a result of homeowners being more involved in household maintenance and home repairs than people who are renting. In my study, this idea was elaborated on by Lizzy (lecturer, 30s):

> We bought this house three years ago so that's added a whole level of things that need doing that didn't need doing before, from the financial side to the actual maintenance of a house because before, you know if you're renting somewhere and something breaks, you ring the landlord. It's their problem. Now there's stuff like putting up shelves that we have to decide, are we going to get somebody in? Are we going to do it ourselves? Can we afford it? How much does it even cost? How do you find somebody to put up shelves? So there is that level of extra stuff to do.

As demonstrated by Lizzy, the additional domestic labour associated with maintaining a home that you own is not reducible to physical labour: it also includes the decisions, negotiations, financing and organisation of this maintenance. Considering the outsourcing of home maintenance activities by homeowners in New Zealand, Cox (2013) similarly outlined how this process involves the homeowner choosing whether or not to complete the work themselves, deciding who they should ask or employ to help them, and paying for these home maintenance tasks to be completed. In contrast, as indicated by the renting participants in my study, dealing with such maintenance issues in a rented property usually only involves the single task of contacting the landlord.

4.4 The division of domestic labour within the participating couples

Now that I have provided an overview of the types and amounts of domestic labour that the LGBTQ participants discussed performing in their homes, I will turn to consider what these participants said about dividing this domestic labour with their partners. In

this section I will provide some initial comments and analysis of the overall divisions of domestic labour reported by the participating LGBTQ couples in their interviews. Table 1 provides a summary of how the participants perceive domestic labour to be divided in their homes. It should be emphasised here that no time-use methods were used to gain data about the divisions of domestic labour amongst the 38 participating couples. Rather, this thesis used the method of interviewing in order to focus on how the participants understand or perceive their divisions of domestic labour, as discussed in the previous chapter. As such, the robustness of the categorical divisions used in this table are unproven. The table should thus be viewed as offering a rough interpretation or simplification of what the participating couples perceive or reported their overall divisions of domestic labour to be. Table 1 also makes use of the broad relationship categories of 'both partners female', 'both partners male' and 'male/female couple'. I present the data in this way because it allows me to consider how gender intersects with sexuality and how this might play a role in the division of domestic labour as it is perceived or reported by the participating LGBTQ couples.

	Both partners female	**Both partners male**	**Male/female couple**	**Total**
Roughly equal division	11	6	4	21
One partner does noticeably more	6	5	0	11
One partner does almost all	2	4	0	6

Table 1: Participating LGBTQ couples' perceptions of their division of domestic labour

As shown by Table 1, over half of the couples in the study perceive themselves to have a roughly equal division of domestic labour in their household. Such an understanding of their division of labour sets these couples apart from heteronormative discourses of domestic labour, in which this work is understood to fall disproportionately to the

female partner within the context of the heterosexual family home (Crompton 2006; McDowell 1999). It is interesting to note that the male/female couples in the study all reported having a roughly equal division of domestic labour in their relationships. As will be discussed in the Chapter 6, often the roughly equal sharing of domestic labour reported in these male/female relationships is the result of a queer politics and the desire of these couples to set themselves apart from heteronormative relationships or roles. Deliberate attempts are often made in these male/female relationships to ensure that domestic roles are not apportioned according to hierarchical gendered norms (see section 6.2).

Meanwhile, only 6 out of 38 couples said that one partner does almost all of the domestic labour, and 4 of these couples were cisgender gay male couples. Additionally, 6 couples in which both partners are female and 5 couples in which both partners are male reported that one partner in the relationship does noticeably more of the domestic labour. As the (uneven) division of labour discussed by these couples in their interviews cannot be straightforwardly explained in terms of hierarchical male/female relationship roles, this indicates that other factors must also be at play – as will be explored in more detail in Chapters 5 to 7.

Overall, the divisions of domestic labour reported or perceived by the participants were typically more equal amongst couples in which both partners are female than amongst couples in which both partners are male. On the surface, this distinction could be interpreted as the product of heteronormative discourses which equate domesticity with women in contemporary England. In other words, the on-going feminisation of domestic labour might explain why the couples in which both partners are female are more likely to report taking on shared and equal responsibility for this work than the male couples. Meanwhile, as there is less societal expectation that all men will engage in domestic labour, and this might explain why the couples in which both partners are male are more likely to discuss having a division of labour in which one partner does noticeably more or almost all of the domestic labour than the female couples. Whilst acknowledging these patterns, I also contend that there are additional, complex processes at play and that divisions of labour discussed by both the female couples and male couples in the study cannot wholly be understood in terms of traditionally gendered expectations. To unpack this argument, in section 4.5 of this chapter as well as

in the subsequent chapters I explore how the participating couples challenge normatively gendered domestic roles and expectations through their everyday practices. Chapters 5 to 7 consider in greater detail how the participating couples perceive the apportioning of various household tasks in their homes, as well as their understandings of how their particular divisions of domestic labour are influenced by the intersections of their gender, sexuality and other factors. My analysis in these chapters will thus add depth and detail to the participants' perceptions of their domestic practices discussed in this chapter, and will go on to explore the complex (and often contradictory) ways in which the (privileged) LGBTQ couples in this study queer heteronormative understandings of domestic labour through their everyday practices in the home.

With regards to the couples who live with children aged 18 or under, two couples perceive their divisions of domestic labour to be roughly 50-50. Ruby (FE teacher, 50s) reported that care for her partner Jan's 9-year-old daughter is shared roughly 50-50 but that Ruby does almost all of the other domestic labour. Meanwhile, Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s) said that stay-at-home Mum Olivia does noticeably more childcare and domestic labour; whereas Liam (charity worker, 30s) and Bradley (chef, 30s) said that stay-at-home Dad Liam does almost all of the childcare and domestic labour. Lastly, Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s) reported having a roughly equal division of domestic labour in their household, whilst also evenly sharing the care for their 4-month-old twin sons with live-in nanny Duncan. These understandings of the division of childcare show much variation and frequently depart from heteronormative understandings of parenting which conceptualise childcare as part of the 'natural' role of the woman (Patterson and Farr 2011; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Aitken 2009; Dunne 2000). The ways in which such heteronormative discourses of childcare might be queered by the participating parents are analysed in more depth in Chapter 7.

4.4.1 Outsourcing and divisions of domestic labour

In total, six couples have outsourced some portion of their domestic labour. This includes four couples in which both partners are male, and two couples in which both partners are female. In *Servicing the Middle-Classes*, which focusses on waged domestic labour in heterosexual coupled households, Gregson and Lowe (1994) emphasise that financial resources play a major role in determining who is likely to employ paid domestic workers. As financial resources are highly gendered, it is perhaps unsurprising that more of the male participants who live with another man reported outsourcing domestic labour in my study. According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2014), the gender pay gap was 19.7% in 2013. To assess the difference between the earnings of women and men they used the median gross hourly earnings excluding overtime, calculating that an average female worker earned 19.7% less per hour than an average male worker. Due to men having a higher earning potential, couples in which either one or both partners are male are more likely to be able to afford a paid domestic worker (Howard and Hollander 2000). In terms of the kinds of domestic labour that are outsourced, Dale and Hal's live-in nanny shares responsibility for the childcare with the couple, as well as preparing meals and doing the washing up. Oscar (health promotion, 40s) and his partner have outsourced their ironing, as Oscar pays his sister to do the majority of it. He will drive to her house, which is around 12 miles from where they live, to drop off the ironing and collect it a few days later. The other four couples pay for a cleaner to come into their house either once a week or once a fortnight, and the cleaners' main duties are typically to clean the floors, vacuum, and clean the bathrooms. Five out of the six couples who have a cleaner report sharing the remainder of the housework roughly 50-50.

The most common reason given for having a cleaner was that the couple are working long hours in waged employment, and so do not have the time or energy to keep their household as clean or tidy as they want to. George (academic researcher, 30s) explained:

> We were finding it quite hard to do those weekly chores.
> Cleaning the bathroom, cleaning the kitchen floor, that kind of

> thing. It either wasn't getting done, or I was doing it… in place of time where I should have been relaxing or socialising or working or other things… So we decided we would look into getting a cleaner, and we did, and we both agree it's the best thing we ever did. It's money that's very well spent… It's a very good service. But still the day-to-day cleanliness needs to be done, but on a weekly basis it does help. It means, for example, more weekend time free for other things.

Similarly, Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) commented:

> We started off doing [the cleaning] on our own, because neither of us had had cleaners ever before but then we soon realised the combination of pressure of work and the [house] size – neither of us has lived in a house this big before, either, with this many stairs, so yeah. The combination of work circumstances and [the size of] the house, we needed help.

These couples all earn a high enough combined salary that they can afford to pay somebody to help with the domestic labour in their home. For these participants, hiring a cleaner makes performing the domestic labour and managing their material home environments easier, and also helps to reduce pressures on their time. As expressed by George and Wendy in their respective interviews, combining full-time waged employment with managing a household can be stressful; and having a cleaner removes some of this stress. Whilst all of the couples who hire a cleaner emphasised that they still engage in domestic labour around their home, they also said that having a cleaner opens up additional free time which they can spend on things other than cleaning. Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s) are the only couple in the study with children who pay for somebody to help them with childcare on a day-to-day basis. In their interview, the couple acknowledged that they are privileged to be in a position where they can afford to have a live-in nanny. They explained that Duncan, the nanny, makes caring for their twin sons easier because it means that the childcare is divided between the three of them, rather than the couple alone, allowing each of them additional rest and time to do other things. The couple indicated that choosing a male

nanny was a deliberate decision, mentioning that if Duncan left they would hire another man to replace him. This finding is interesting because as well as gendered divisions of unwaged domestic labour, paid domestic labour is also traditionally gendered. The vast majority of paid domestic workers and live-in nannies or au pairs are female (Pratt 1997; Cox and Narula 2003; Widding-Isaksen 2010) and therefore the couple are transformative in hiring a man to perform this role.

In addition to the six couples who pay for some portion of their domestic labour to be outsourced, one couple are themselves paid by their housemates for performing the domestic labour in their household. In their interview, Vicky (LGBT mental health advocate, 30s) and Paula (learning support assistant, 30s) explained how they came to this arrangement with their housemates:

> If you're looking at the whole house, then initially we tried rota systems which failed miserably, and then we looked at paying a professional cleaner to come in, but at the time I was at college, unemployed, so I said 'oh I've got some free time, I'll do the cleaning. You pay me.'

Vicky and Paula now describe themselves as "joint cleaners" of the household, and their 6 fellow housemates each pay them £10 a month to keep the kitchen, bathrooms and communal areas of the house clean. Hiring a professional cleaner would have been too expensive for the 8 housemates, whereas Vicky and Paula are happy to take primary responsibility for the domestic labour at a lower cost than that of hiring a professional. The arrangements evidenced in Vicky and Paula's household are not transgressive of the stereotypical gendering of paid domestic labour, however the two women explained that being paid for this labour by their housemates has provided benefits such as removing the need for and stresses of (inefficient) rota systems in their household, as well as ensuring that the cleanliness of the communal areas is maintained. Furthermore, it provides an additional income for Vicky and Paula, which is particularly useful to them because Paula was about to begin studying for a University degree at the time of their interview. As per the initial arrangement, Vicky continues to take the lead with the domestic labour, and both partners agree that their division of this work is roughly 70-30, with Vicky responsible for around 70% of it.

4.5 The apportioning of particular domestic tasks

From the interview data, I have identified three patterns which may be used describe how the LGBTQ couples in this study reported apportioning various forms of domestic labour (for alternative models see Kurdek 1993, 2007; Kamano 2009; and Patterson et al. 2004). The first is a *shared pattern,* meaning the couple reported sharing particular domestic tasks between partners. For example, they may have discussed taking it in turns to clean the bathroom or cleaning the bathroom together. The second is a *segmented pattern,* meaning the couple reported that particular domestic tasks are performed by a particular partner. For example, they may have said that one partner routinely prepares meals whilst the other partner routinely washes up afterwards. My interviews show that most couples are likely to report combining these two strategies of apportioning the domestic labour, but to varying degrees. As such, the third pattern that I identified is a *combined pattern*, meaning the couple reported that a roughly equal number of tasks are *shared* between partners as are *segmented* or routinely performed by one partner or the other. From the experiences and perceptions of their domestic roles that the participants discussed in their interviews, I suggest that 13 couples lean more towards a fully *shared pattern*, 16 lean more towards a fully *segmented pattern*, and the remaining nine couples towards a *combined pattern*.

My interview with Howard (student, 20s) indicated that he and his partner Johnny (student, 20s) lean more towards the *shared pattern*. The couple are both cisgender gay men. Howard reported that they frequently clean the kitchen or bathroom together; and share responsibility for the laundry, tidying, and taking the bins out. He said that they take it in turns to shop for groceries and prepare meals; and have an agreement that if one person cooks, the other person will do the washing-up afterwards. This type of bargaining around sharing the meal preparation and washing-up was also reported by 8 other couples. My interview with Teresa (FE educator, 40s) and Fred (mathematician, 20s) suggested that the *segmented pattern* better described the apportioning of domestic labour in their household. Teresa is a cisgender woman who identifies as a lesbian, whilst her partner Fred is a transgender man who identifies as heterosexual. In their household, the couple reported that Fred tends to take responsibility for the cleaning, vacuuming, ironing, washing up, and finance management; whilst Teresa tends to do the

laundry, groceries shopping, and meal preparation. In contrast, the way in which Zoe (charity worker, 20s) perceives the division of domestic labour between her and her partner Daniel (librarian, 20s) can be better described in terms of the *combined pattern*. Zoe is a cisgender bisexual woman, whilst her partner Daniel is a cisgender heterosexual man. In her interview, Zoe reported that the couple share the cleaning, tidying, groceries shopping and finance management whilst the laundry, washing up and vacuuming fall to Daniel and the ironing, DIY and gardening fall to Zoe. Even from these three short examples, it is clear that the divisions of domestic tasks reported by these participants do not follow a heteronormative pattern wherein one partner takes on the domestic tasks that are traditionally thought of as female (such as cleaning and laundry) and the other partner performs household maintenance tasks that are traditionally thought of as male (such as DIY). Rather, the couples may be interpreted as dividing and sharing tasks around their homes in ways which move beyond or queer these traditional domestic roles or scripts. These themes are picked up again in Chapter 6 as I discuss in more depth the participants' attitudes towards the gendering of domestic labour, and how these attitudes as well as the apportioning of particular domestic tasks within the participants' homes work to queer heteronormative discourses of domestic roles and relationships.

4.6 Negotiations, discussions and arguments

In order to work towards or maintain a division of domestic labour that suits both partners, the majority of participants mentioned the importance of discussions and negotiations regarding their respective domestic roles. From my interview data I have identified that there are three main 'triggers' for these discussions or (re)negotiations. The first trigger is the couple moving in together. In their interview, Teresa and Fred (FE educator, 40s and mathematician, 20s) explained that their main conversation about the apportioning of domestic tasks took place when they first began living together:

CB: Is [domestic labour] something you discuss much?

> Fred: I think we did at first, didn't we? When we were kind of negotiating who was going to do what.
>
> Teresa: … It was definitely negotiated at first, part of an overall communication of, 'OK, how do you normally do things?' 'How do you?' 'What will work?' because communication is really important for both of us.

As Teresa and Fred value communication in their relationship, when they set up a home together the division of domestic labour was something that they actively discussed and negotiated, as part of the overall dialogue about the ways in which they both live. Whilst there are ongoing conversations about domestic labour between Teresa and Fred, the couple indicated that these early negotiations were the most important in determining the apportioning of domestic tasks in their household.

A second thing that might trigger a discussion about the division of domestic labour is a change in circumstances. For example, Rosalind (freelance writer, 30s) explained that she and her partner have both changed jobs multiple times over the 11 years that they have lived together, which has led to them negotiating and renegotiating the division of domestic labour in their relationship. She said:

> I'm quite happy with the arrangement we've got here. It works pretty well. It is something we've negotiated over time as well, and because we've both moved around and changed jobs quite a lot, so we've been in different work situations and there was a time when I was travelling away for work quite a lot, and I think during those periods when there's been change, we've either actively discussed it [i.e. the division of domestic labour] or we've both changed our behaviours to make sure that everything is dealt with.

As well as a change of employment, my interviews indicated that another major change in circumstances that can elicit a discussion about or renegotiation of the division of domestic labour is the birth or adoption of a child. The two couples who discussed this

in most detail were Liam (charity worker, 30s) and Bradley (chef, 30s), who recently adopted their one-and-a-half year old daughter, and Isobel (project management, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s), who are in the process of adopting their two year old daughter. For both couples, having a child has brought about significant changes to the division of labour in their household. Liam and Olivia have both stopped working full time in order to stay at home and care for their respective children. This change in circumstances has also led to them assuming greater responsibility for the domestic labour in their respective households. In their interviews, both couples emphasised that deciding which partner should stay at home with their child involved serious thought and discussion.

The third trigger for a discussion about domestic routines is one or both partner(s) wishing to evaluate their approach to domestic labour as a couple. For example, Dean (psychologist, 30s) and William (telecoms, 30s) typically divide the domestic labour roughly 50-50 in their household. In his interview, Dean reflected that communication is key to maintaining this equal division. The couple will negotiate and discuss their domestic routines if ever one feels that the division of tasks in their household has become unequal, or if they notice that certain tasks are not being carried out. Dean said:

> I can remember the conversations we've had about these kinds of things and how if it gets a bit out of balance, one of us will kind of say to the other 'get this sorted' so it's an aspect of the relationship that's had really a lot of attention. I suppose in a way because it's so obvious, isn't it? So tangible, you know, stuff gets done or it doesn't get done… so it's where a lot of the thinking about sharing has happened… Yeah. It feels really conscious. We've done all of that thinking, and done all of that deciding… so yeah it is an area of the relationship that feels quite saturated with a lot of thought and discussion, actually.

Similarly, for Jackie and Valerie (both security, 40s), discussions about the apportioning of domestic tasks are mainly prompted by one partner feeling that the couple's approach to managing the household could be improved. To exemplify this, Jackie talked about a

situation when her partner Valerie felt unhappy that the cooking was continually falling to her:

> She got fed up at one stage, a few years back, with always cooking… So I said to her, if she felt like she's doing a lot, why don't we split things a bit more fairly? Because I suppose a few years back, I wasn't doing that much. So I said to her 'I'll take on all the ironing and washing and stuff, I don't mind hoovering either, as long as you do the cooking'.

The perception that the division of domestic labour is unequal or unfair, as discussed by Dean and Jackie, has previously been highlighted as a (potential) source of conflict for heterosexual and same-sex couples (Solomon et al. 2005). However, Dean and Jackie both presented their coupled attempts to renegotiate the apportioning of domestic tasks in their homes as amicable discussions, as opposed to arguments. Indeed, many of the LGBTQ couples who took part in my study emphasised the lack of arguments or conflict that take place when they are discussing or negotiating the division of domestic labour in their homes. The most common reason that participants gave for not usually arguing with their partner about the domestic labour is that their overall division of domestic labour is fair, or tends to work well for them as a couple. In making such comments, these LGBTQ couples placed themselves in contrast to heterosexual couples, who they perceived to have a less equitable division of domestic labour and more arguments about their domestic roles than LGBTQ couples. Discussing the topic of arguments about domestic labour, Zoe (charity worker, 20s) said:

> The closest we get to arguments is me saying 'you've not done that properly' … Essentially, we have no conflict full stop. We're not a couple who argues, pretty much ever, and I think if we were to argue, when we finally do argue, it will be about something a little more meaningful than housework. I'm not saying it's not meaningful, because if there was an unequal division, if someone did feel that they were being ripped off all the time, then of course it's a totally legitimate thing to argue about, but we're not in that situation, so there's no reason to

> argue about it. I think we're happy about how it plays out, so there's nothing to argue about.

Meanwhile, in their joint interview, Lara (retired, 60s) and Susan (retail manager, 40s) contextualised the lack of conflict over domestic labour in their relationship by saying that they had been through a lot of difficult experiences together, as lesbians. For example, both women 'came out' as lesbians as adults, and left heterosexual marriages before starting their relationship. They also discussed feeling excluded from their Church after 'coming out', and their attempts to reconcile their Christian faith with their sexuality. During their interviews, many other participants similarly recounted their own experiences of discrimination based on their LGBTQ identity; or discussed the difficulties they face as LGBTQ couples living within a largely heteronormative society (as will also be mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7). As a result of such experiences, and given the wider struggles for LGBTQ rights and respect that continue in the UK (and abroad), Lara and Susan expressed that they are grateful to be able to build a domestic life together in the first place. Perhaps, then, the lack of arguments over domestic labour reported by many participants in my study may be (at least partly) understood in terms of these LGBTQ couples viewing any disagreements over their domestic roles as relatively trivial compared to the broader struggles they face as LGBTQ couples; and thus not feeling that the division of domestic labour warrants arguments or conflict in their homes.

Other couples who reported that they rarely argue with their partner over domestic labour talked about their deliberate attempts to avoid conflict in their relationship. This was exemplified by George (academic researcher, 30s), when he talked about the arguments he has had (or avoided) with his partner, Alan (primary school teacher, 30s) regarding their division of domestic labour:

> [There's] the occasional cross word. There's never been any blazing rows, just a bit of the odd tense moment, but nothing major. I try to avoid those scenarios by being as tactful as I can, or just getting on and doing [the housework] myself!

Whilst George discussed himself as being tactful in order to prevent arguments in his home, this does not mean that there is no disagreement between George and Alan regarding the division of domestic labour in their relationship. Rather, it suggests that this disagreement is not always openly expressed, which limits their ability to jointly renegotiate their apportioning of domestic tasks (see also Strong and Cohen 2014). George's desire to avoid conflict with Alan has contributed to him taking responsibility for noticeably more of the domestic labour in the couple's home. During his interview, George indicated that it is easier for him to do more of the domestic labour himself than to cope with the arguments that may be caused by asking Alan to help out more around the home. George's desire for harmony at home therefore appears to overshadow his desire to renegotiate a more equal division of domestic labour with his partner (see also Beagan et al. 2008). In contrast, during their joint interview Debby (academic researcher, 40s) and Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) explained that they are both very analytical, and therefore purposefully discuss their domestic roles and practices in order to foreshadow, avoid or resolve any disagreements or tensions that may arise. For example, Debby said:

> I don't think we've had a disagreement about [domestic labour], but if we did, we're great talkers-through, aren't we? So we could deconstruct a cup of tea for 6 hours and frequently do, and that kind of analytical approach to life extends to everything… So, things are deconstructed and talked through and ironed out, and are fine.

By reflecting on their negotiations and divisions of domestic labour as largely lacking conflict or disagreements, the LGBTQ couples in this study presented their domestic arrangements in rather idealised terms. On one hand, this could point to these couples assuming equitable or mutually agreed upon domestic roles, which both partners are happy with; viewing conflict over domestic labour as trivial compared to wider LGBTQ struggles; and dealing with any (potential) sources of tension through the use of discussions and tact, as they described in their interviews. On the other hand, perhaps these participants are deliberately downplaying the disagreements or conflict that occur in their homes. The participants in my study are largely well-educated and this appears to have afforded them a considerable degree of reflexivity. As highlighted in the

previous chapter, it seems that some participants had consciously decided (with their partner) what or how much to disclose about their domestic lives and practices, before their interview. As such, they may have 'knowingly' presented an idealised account of LGBTQ domesticity, in which few arguments take place, in order to show themselves or LGBTQ couples more broadly in a positive light. The limitation of the well-educated and reflexive nature of the sample is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Other participating LGBTQ couples, meanwhile, *did* acknowledge the conflict and lack of agreement that occurs within their home lives. A common source of arguments reported by the participants in this study was differences in their approaches towards domestic tasks[5]. For Kim (banker, 20s) and Naomi (student, 20s), arguments about domestic labour mainly arise due to Kim wanting to achieve a higher standard of cleanliness or tidiness than Naomi (see also section 6.4.3 for a further discussion of standards):

CB:	Have you ever had any conflicts over housework?
Both:	[*laugh*]
Kim:	Yes.
Naomi:	Yes we have, because I get so cross sometimes at her compulsive cleaning, it winds me up so much.
Kim:	I think I'm getting better. I do think I am!
Naomi:	I'll be like, 'we're going to be late, we've got to go' and she'll be like, 'ok yeah' and just tidy something up. I'll be like, 'that really doesn't matter'. And also, what else annoys me is that that desk [*gestures towards desk*] is the desk where I sit and do all my work and all my revision, and she'll move things around and then I can't find things.

[5] As will be discussed in Chapter 5, such disagreements over how to approach the domestic labour within the participating LGBTQ couples' homes can manifest themselves as material sources of tension (see section 5.3.2).

Similarly, Ivy (unemployed, 30s) said that tensions can be caused in her relationship with Leanne (academic researcher, 30s) due to differences of opinion as to the scheduling of domestic tasks:

> I think the only tension is when one of us is doing something [i.e. a domestic task] that the other thinks is not necessary to be done at that time. There's been some tension, I think, over the years over that. I'm like, 'why are you doing this now?'

In addition, during her interview Marnie (academic researcher, 30s) reflected upon how arguments between her and her partner Bev (technical support, 30s) have been caused in the past (or could be caused in the future) by one partner critiquing how the other partner carries out a particular domestic task:

> … because [Bev] takes pretty much full control of the food thing, I remember there was a jar of pesto that she kept buying and I remember saying to her that I didn't like it because it had chilli in, and when I had to say it a second time… she got really arsey about it, because it felt like I was kind of picking holes in her side of the job, in the same way as if she was to come in and say 'the bathroom's not very clean,' I'd hit the roof, you know? … I suppose there's kind of ownership of those things. You don't want the other person to criticise it, but you also want to do a good job for them.

When living together, couples must negotiate their individual approaches towards, schedules and standards of domestic labour (Strong and Cohen 2014). As demonstrated by the above quotations, the everyday negotiations that are tied up in domestic coupledom at times lead to arguments within the participating LGBTQ couples over whose approaches towards domestic tasks will predominate, whose standards of cleanliness or tidiness will be reached, or whose priorities or schedules will be followed. This emphasises that the maintenance or reproduction of home is not always a uniform, shared project (Reimer and Leslie 2004; Löfgren 1990). Disagreements and arguments over domestic labour are a part of the everyday landscape of home for many

participating couples; and it is partly through such disagreements or conflict that their home spaces and domestic relationships are (re)negotiated and (re)made.

In addition to arguments over their domestic schedules, standards and approaches, another source of disagreement or conflict reported by the LGBTQ couples in this study was one or both partners feeling dissatisfied with the *division* of domestic labour in their home. For example, Aidan (customer assistant, <20) and Rob (student, <20) said that arguments arise between them due to Rob wanting Aidan to contribute more around the house, and Aidan disagreeing:

> CB: How satisfied are you with the current division [of domestic labour]?
> Aidan: He's not, I am.
> Rob: I'd prefer if you did more.
> Aidan: And I'd prefer if you stopped pushing me for it.
> Rob: Do I think it will happen? No.
> Aidan: It's because, when you don't push me, do you realise I do it? No. Like, the other day when you didn't tell me anything and I did the whole bathroom and the other day when you didn't tell me and I did the kitchen, and the other day when you told me nothing I vacuumed the floor in the living room, bedroom and kitchen. Thank you!

As well as participating couples such as Aidan and Rob arguing over the fairness of the *overall* division of domestic labour in their relationship, I also found that arguments may arise over the apportioning of certain tasks even between partners who perceive the overall division of domestic labour in their relationship to be roughly equal and fair. This is demonstrated by lesbian participant Fay (nurse, 40s), who said that the division of domestic labour between her and her partner Ellie (probation worker, 50s) is roughly 50-50. Despite this, Fay explained that there are times when she or her partner are dissatisfied with how a particular task around the home is being divided, which can cause them to have arguments. She said that arguments most commonly arise over the

additional domestic tasks that having guests to stay overnight entails, as Fay feels that the division of this labour is often unfair:

> … Ellie loves having people to stay. She'd have people every other weekend if she could. I hate having people to stay, staying overnight. I like my own space… Ellie loves having people over, so we've had to compromise on that… So consequently, there are household chores to be done before someone has to stay. I begrudge cleaning the bath out if she's invited somebody to stay that I don't want to stay anyway! … So that's the only time we have words about it.

Other participants who perceive that the overall division of domestic labour in their household is roughly equal and fair reported that a desire to renegotiate the (unequal) division of particular domestic tasks – in order to make the apportioning of these tasks fairer – can result in arguments with their partner. Seb (unemployed, 20s) commented:

> I did put my foot down recently because there were a couple of jobs that I wasn't happy with, that I felt were always landing on me. That was throwing out the recycling and throwing out the black bin [bag]. Black bin bag just pisses me off, when it gets to the point where it really smells in the house and stuff, and I just got annoyed that it was me that was noticing it… it's been more heated discussions or it's just more a case of [saying] 'you know what, I'm not comfortable with this' or 'I don't like that'.

Meanwhile, Lizzy (lecturer, 30s) said:

> Sometimes I can get a bit petty and spiteful and a bit, 'I've been cleaning for 3 hours and you've been in bed' about it. But it doesn't tend to be major… it tends to be a question of Gina saying, 'calm down, it's fine, let's have something to eat, we'll talk about it afterwards… Recharge then we can talk about what I can do to make you feel better afterwards.'

By Seb and Lizzy verbalising their concerns about the division of particular domestic tasks (such as cleaning or taking out the bins) in their respective households, even when this leads to an argument, they are subsequently able to renegotiate the apportioning of these tasks with their partner, thereby helping these couples to maintain a division of labour that both partners perceive to be roughly equal and fair. Other participants, too, have emphasised the importance of communicating as a couple in order to improve their joint approaches to domestic labour. This process does not always involve arguments or conflict. For example, Ivy (unemployed, 30s) remarked:

> Sort of every couple of months we're like, 'right, this counter is a mess, why is it a mess? How can we stop it from being a mess?' So we try and evaluate the old habits, to change them. Like we just re-arranged the cupboards the other night because we were like, 'this is not working'. That's the extent to which we usually talk about housework.

For Ivy and her partner Leanne (academic researcher, 30s), evaluating habits and routines is important, as the couple continually seek to improve the way that they live. Communication about their approaches to domestic labour therefore becomes a part of their overall discussion of how they can make life better. If either partner notices something around the home that they are not happy with, for example the kitchen counter being untidy, they will communicate this to their partner and negotiate a way to deal with the issue. Such discussions and innovations in home-making practices may help to build families, relationships and shared identities (Löfgren 1990). This co-production of homes, relationships and identities is an on-going project. As couples repeatedly clean, discuss, argue about and actively maintain their homes together, so too do they (re)create and (re)negotiate shared domestic identities (Gorman-Murray 2006b; Reimer and Leslie 2004; Löfgren 1990). What I am most interested in in this thesis is how the shared domestic spaces, identities and homemaking practices introduced in this chapter intersect with heteronormative discourses of home. In the following three chapters I analyse my interview data in more depth, specifically focussing on how the (privileged) LGBTQ couples in my study queer heteronormativity within the material

home (Chapter 5) through their everyday practices and negotiations of domestic labour (Chapter 6) and childcare (Chapter 7).

4.7 Conclusion

I have used this chapter to introduce the data from the research study and begin to build a picture of the participants, their (intersectional) identities and their everyday domestic lives. The perceived normativity of coupled domesticity and childrearing means that on one hand the living arrangements of many LGBTQ participants introduced in this chapter could be seen to fit in with normative ideals of domestic family life. On the other hand, in this chapter I have also introduced the idea that these couples might simultaneously subvert (hetero)normative assumptions about (gendered) domestic roles through their everyday approaches towards dividing and negotiating the domestic labour. In particular, section 4.5 has highlighted how couples might subvert (hetero)normative ideals by destabilising the traditional gender norms which associate certain domestic tasks (such as cleaning and laundry) with women and other household maintenance tasks (such as DIY) with men. Using three couples as examples, this section demonstrated how these couples divide and negotiate tasks around their homes in ways which move beyond traditionally gendered domestic scripts, thereby producing queer domestic roles and relationships. Key to moving forward with my analysis in Chapters 5 to 7 will therefore be to explore in more detail the complex (and even contradictory) ways in which the LGBTQ participants in this study queer heteronormativity at home through their approaches and attitudes towards a variety of housework and childcare tasks.

Chapter 5: Homemaking and the Material Home

5.1 Introduction

As noted in the literature review, in the West 'home' is typically associated with the site of the house, and the standard architecture of Western houses prescribes certain ways of living in these spaces (Chevalier 2012). Most relevant to my thesis, the physical layout of most houses reflects the dominant discourse of the home as the site of the heterosexual nuclear family, with houses typically featuring one larger bedroom intended for a (presumably) heterosexual couple and a number of smaller bedrooms intended for their children (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Furthermore, estate agent advertisements frequently prescribe heteronormatively gendered uses of various spaces around the house by describing the great kitchen 'for Mum' or the spacious garage 'for Dad' (Longhurst 2012).

Whilst these spaces and layouts were designed to be used by the heterosexual nuclear family in specific ways, a number of meanings and uses can be brought to a particular domestic space because "[a]ny built form can serve interests for which it was not intended" (Dovey 1999: 183, cited in Pink 2004). In other words, individuals and couples may express their own values, personalities, identities and relationships in the home by negotiating domestic social norms and the material environment in which they live (Pink 2004, 2007; Gorman-Murray 2010). Indeed, according to the theoretical framework employed in this thesis, the home is both a *material* space and a set of *social* and *personal* meanings and values. For a particular material space to become 'home' it must be imbued with social and personal meanings; whilst these meanings and interpretations of home are in part influenced by the materiality of the home space itself (Blunt and Dowling 2006). This theoretical perspective draws attention to the agency of the people who inhabit domestic space, emphasising that the ways in which they (re)produce and use their home may support and/or challenge the dominant social and cultural meanings associated with its built form. As argued by Pink (2004: 54-55):

> The material culture and existing schemes of a house might influence the ways individuals can express their projects of self in their homes. However, individual creativity in relation to housing forms is also innovative and diverse; the materiality of a new home might constrain, or even provide a narrative for how identities are expressed in it, but it does not dictate what is articulated.

I use this chapter to demonstrate that (hetero)normative discourses of the material home and its layout fail to account for the ways in which the spaces of the home may be used, altered and lived in by the participating LGBTQ couples or families. As well as engaging with critical geographies of home, this chapter therefore also employs the theoretical perspective of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process which may take place within even everyday spaces such as the home. I use this theoretical framework to explore how the LGBTQ couples in this study express their personalities, identities and relationships – and associated ideas about ways of living in the domestic sphere – through the (re)production and maintenance of their material homes.

In order to explore these themes, I have divided the chapter into three main sections. To begin, section 5.2 explores how the LGBTQ couples in this study embed and express their (queer) identities within the material spaces of their home by making changes to the décor, design and arrangement of material objects. Next, in section 5.3 I discuss whether the 'home space' is relevant in shaping the couples' everyday practices of domestic labour, drawing upon the example of laundry and clothing flows in the material home. This section also gives consideration to material sources of tension and arguments; and the fractures in shared identities that may occur in the home when partners have different ideas about how to live in or maintain domestic spaces. Lastly, section 5.4 analyses how the LGBTQ couples in my study negotiate the material layout of their homes, and use particular rooms in ways which depart from heteronormative and traditionally gendered understandings of their 'appropriate' uses. I then offer my conclusions as to how everyday domestic practices of the LGBTQ participants are shaped by the interplay of the material agencies of home, associated social norms, and their (queer) individual and coupled agencies.

5.2 New homes and the interplay of human and material agencies

5.2.1 *Expressing shared identities through décor, design and material arrangements*

On moving into a new home together, homemaking practices such as decorating are used by the participants to express themselves as individuals and couples within the physical landscape of home. When couples make decisions together about décor and material arrangements in a new home, they create and embed a life together within this space (Gorman-Murray 2006b). Many of the LGBTQ participants in my study recounted how they have created homes that are expressive of their coupled identities and relationships since moving in together, by making changes to the existing décor, design and material arrangements of their home space. For example, Milo (customer services assistant, 20s) is a queer transgender man who is in a relationship with another transgender man, Isaac. Milo explained during his interview that his partner's favourite colour is green – a colour that Milo also likes – and that the couple have put their own stamp on their kitchen by filling it with green utensils; green coffee, tea and sugar pots; and green appliances including a microwave, toaster and kettle. Meanwhile, Karrie (HR manager, 30s) and Megan (HR business partner, 30s) reported making their new build house their own by decorating rooms, adding light fittings, and putting up curtain rails together; whilst Zoe (charity worker, 20s) reported that, since moving into their current home, she and her partner Daniel (librarian, 20s) have added personal material touches to the space in the form of pictures hung from the walls and a new front door handle, which they chose together.

None of these material expressions of coupled identities are overtly queer; however as argued by Pilkey (2013), queering the home is not only about making overt changes to its design or décor, such as flying a rainbow flag. Rather, he suggests that the heteronormativity of the home may be queered in minor and subtle ways; and that material expressions of queer sexual and gender identities are not always highly visible in the domestic sphere. In other words, LGBTQ coupled homes do not necessarily share a set queer aesthetic, and on the surface many LGBTQ coupled homes are likely to look similar to those of heterosexual couples (Pilkey 2013). For the LGBTQ couples

discussed in the previous paragraph, it is largely through making joint decisions about the design and décor of their homes and maintaining these spaces together that they express and embed their queer coupled relationships and identities within the material spaces of the home (see also Gorman-Murray 2006b; Reimer and Leslie 2004).

Whilst filling the kitchen with green appliances or hanging pictures from walls are relatively straightforward means through which a coupled identity can be embedded in or expressed through the spaces of the home, there are also joint couple projects or ideas about ways of living in the domestic sphere that require more significant alterations to the existing materiality of the home. Continuing with the example of lesbian couple Karrie and Megan, another change that these women plan to make to their current home is replacing the bath in the main bathroom, because the existing one does not fit their needs as a couple. One important way in which the couple relax and connect with each other romantically and sexually is by having baths together; however they are unable to do so in their current bath. As Megan explained:

> … we ended up re-doing the bathroom in our old house, because they gave us a bath which had a tap end. And they've done the same with this house, and we're just about to rip that out as well, because… it's just annoying. One of you ends up with the taps in your back.

As Miller (2001) and Pink (2004) have previously argued, when people move into a new home its existing material agency may be seen to provide a narrative for how they should live within its spaces. The bath with taps at one end within Karrie and Megan's new home is a prime example. Embedded in the materiality of this bath and the positioning of its taps is the expectation that it will be used in a particular way: by only one adult at a time, for washing. However, the couple do not intend to conform to the normative assumptions about ways of living (and bathing) that are prescribed by this 'traditional' bathroom design feature. Instead, the couple plan to replace the bath with one that has taps in the middle. In doing so Karrie and Megan will reconcile the materiality of the bathroom with the way they live and connect as a couple; and bring new, queer meanings to the domestic bathroom as a space of lesbian romance and sexual expression.

In addition to the changes that they have made to the interior spaces of their new home, Karrie and Megan have also altered the garden of their new build so that it better fits their everyday needs. Megan described herself and Karrie as "outdoorsy people", and the couple made it clear in their interview that the garden was a significant space for them, in both their current and past homes. The garden is the centre of much of their leisure time in summer; and during the warmer months it also acts as the space in which they prepare meals, as they own a large barbeque which they use to cook food on most summer evenings. To explain the changes they have made to their current garden, Megan said:

> We've re-done our garden actually because when we first moved in we had a little strip of patio and the rest of it was turfed, and we realised we needed it to be different because we use our garden all the time, we quite like to be outside in the summer so we designed our own garden and got some people in [to do the work.]

For Karrie and Megan, extending the garden patio in particular helped to turn their new garden into both a functional and social space. In making changes to the garden, the couple employed ideas about garden design and layout from past homes; and sought to reproduce the much-loved barbeque space of their previous garden (see also Levin and Fincher 2010; Pink 2004). Thus, the materiality of their current garden has been shaped by the materiality of their past gardens, and the creativity of Karrie and Megan in translating particular design elements – which are an important part of how they live and cook together as a couple – into a new outdoors space. By expressing the tastes they have in common through the design of their new garden, Karrie and Megan express their shared "outdoorsy" personalities and coupled identity within this material outdoors space. The changes they made to the garden must also be understood in terms of their middle-class social position, which meant that they could afford to outsource the manual labour involved in altering their patio space.

5.2.2 *Making a 'mark' on the material home: individualised homemaking efforts*

For cohabiting couples, maintaining the home is at times a joint project, whilst at other times one or both partners will prioritise their individualised homemaking efforts (Reimer and Leslie 2004). The couples mentioned thus far in this section moved into their new homes together, and recounted their experiences of making these homes their own through an on-going process of *jointly* (re)decorating or (re)designing the space. In addition to these experiences, there were also a number of participants in the sample who moved into a home that their partner was already living in, and discussed their *individual* efforts to make and maintain the home. These participants tended to report feeling something of a disjuncture between their partner's existing ways of living in or looking after the home, and how they are used to living in the domestic sphere themselves. Similar findings were reported by Reimer and Leslie (2004) in their study of identity and home consumption. They pointed out that living in a home containing somebody else's furniture may be disorientating for the individuals who have not contributed to the material design or making of the space. In my study I found that individuals who move into their partner's home may also be disorientated because they have not contributed to the existing cleaning or homemaking regimes of the space. These participants' experiences of making home therefore tend to involve making their own 'mark' on a space that they feel already reflects the domestic life and needs of their partner. One participant who discussed this was Rosalind (freelance writer, 30s), who made her mark on her partner Imogen's (trust director, 40s) flat by re-organising and incorporating her belongings into the space:

> I moved into her flat originally and I was kind of the one moving into her space, re-organising her cupboards, stuff like that… you know I'm quite good at systems and ordering, sorting, so I tend to do more of that. Yeah.

Rosalind negotiated the existing material arrangements of the couple's now shared flat; and consciously made changes which were expressive of her self-identified systematic nature and organisational skills. In doing so, she deliberately sought to make the flat feel like it belonged to both women, and not just her partner Imogen. Another participant

who discussed a similar process of putting their mark on a partner's home was Tim (administrator, 30s), with regards to moving in with his partner Patrick:

> He'd been living on his own for 5 years, so he was kind of used to doing his own thing, and so when I came in I scrubbed the place from top to toe and just kept going really.

As will be discussed later in this thesis in section 6.4.3, Tim feels that he has higher standards of cleanliness than Patrick, and likes to do a 'deeper' clean of spaces such as the bathroom and kitchen. This helps to account for why he did a thorough clean of the flat when he moved in with Patrick. Pink (2004) suggests that it is common for people to do a thorough clean or 'blitz' on moving into a new home, because removing the dirt of previous occupants or strangers helps to make the space one's own. Whilst he was moving in with his *partner*, Tim nevertheless took steps to remove the dirt that had been accumulated prior to his moving in, as a means of making the space reflect his own values, desires and ways of living – as well as Patrick's.

One last participant who discussed moving into a partner's home was Ruby (FE teacher, 50s), who had lived with her partner Jan and Jan's 9-year-old daughter Kelly for 6 months at the time of her interview. On moving into the house that Jan had previously lived in with their ex, Ruby explained that she thoroughly cleaned the house, cut the hedges in the garden, and trimmed the lawn, saying that the garden was previously "a bit of a jungle". Since then, she has kept both the garden and house tidier than they were prior to her moving in; and through an on-going process of cleaning, tidying and gardening has therefore made her own mark on what is now their joint home. However, this process has not been without its complications, as she explained:

> A few weeks ago, I cleaned out a cupboard. It was full to the brim where you couldn't get in. It was a walk in cupboard off the kitchen, and it was largely for some reason – their ex was a compulsive collector of plastic bags from shops – so it was largely full of thousands of bags, so I got a bin bag and filled it up with these carrier bags and put them in the bin, but there were lots of other things once I got past the bags, and I set to

> organising them so there were things on the shelves, they were no longer on the floor. There was space to stand things up properly, and I thought 'that's so much tidier now. You can go in now, we've got some storage space, and everything's nice and tidy'. The reaction I got [from Jan] was, 'why Ruby, why have you done that? I knew where everything was in there… now you've tidied things away and I don't know where they are any more' and I said, 'oh, I'm sorry. It was so untidy' and so that's happened on a few occasions… It's not been arguments, but it's been a few pointed comments that I've tidied things up *too* well…

For Ruby, tidying the cupboard involved removing signs of Jan's ex – namely in the form of plastic carrier bags – and creating a space that she felt was more usable. Yet, by bringing her preferred way of living and organising things to this space, Ruby went against the established order of things in the kitchen, which caused a degree of tension between her and her partner. This emphasises that creating a shared domestic space or developing a joint project of homemaking when one partner in a couple moves into the other's existing home is not necessarily an easy project, and involves (re)negotiating the existing material arrangements of the home and one partner's existing uses and understandings of this space.

More generally, the examples outlined in the section above indicate that maintaining the material home is not always a straightforward, shared project. As noted by Reimer and Leslie (2004), a change in relationship or living arrangements (such as a partner moving in) destabilises the existing connections between the material home and its occupant(s), and sometimes necessitates changes in homemaking practices, divisions of domestic labour, material arrangements, or the expression of taste and style in the home. Spaces of the home may then become sites of compromise and conflict, as fractures emerge in couples' ideas about homemaking practices and the organisation or aesthetics of home (Reimer and Leslie 2004). Nevertheless, as noted by Gorman-Murray (2006b), these conflicts, compromises and fractures are part of the (re)making and (re)materialising of both individual and coupled identities and ways of living within the spaces of the home. Through their ongoing individual and joint homemaking efforts, be them

straightforward or fraught with tensions, the LGBTQ participants discussed in this section thus express and embed their personalities, shared lives and coupled relationships within the spaces of their homes.

5.3 Domestic labour and the material home

Whilst the previous section explored the ways in which the LGBTQ participants in this study have negotiated and made changes to the décor, design and material arrangements of their homes since moving in, in this section I turn to consider how the home space might be relevant in shaping their everyday practices of domestic labour. To explore this idea I will use laundry practices as an example, discussing how the material agencies of the home influence the participants' laundry practices, and the flow and storage of clothing in their homes. In doing so I will draw on critical geographies of home, and more specifically my theoretical perspective that the agency of the material home has a bearing on the meanings, uses and norms associated with this space.

5.3.1 *Clothing flows, laundry and storage*

One of the most common remarks that participants made about their material homes was that they lack space; and a lack of space was understood by the participants to shape their everyday practices around the home, including how they store their clothes and dry laundry after washing it. Female participants – and particularly those who live with another woman – commonly discussed a lack of space with regards to the storing of their clothes and accessories. As has been noted in previous literature, women often view clothing as a central part of their female identity (Gregson and Beale 2004); and so it is perhaps unsurprising that when two women live together, they may experience difficulties in storing the clothing, shoes and accessories that they have jointly accumulated. For example, lesbian couple Ivy (unemployed, 30s) and Leanne (academic researcher, 30s) reported that they enjoy going clothes shopping together, and have recently become more interested in fashion. Whilst the couple enjoy looking at and

critiquing clothes in shops rather than necessarily making purchases, at the same time they are conscious that they may soon accumulate more clothes and accessories than they can efficiently store in their Victorian flat, which they described as small and lacking storage space:

> Ivy: I still don't know how we're going to deal with the clothes situation! [*laughs*] It's not that bad, but… They don't have [built-in] closets in Victorian apartments, so that's really annoying!
>
> Leanne: We've tried really hard to become a bit more minimalist with respect to clothes, shoes, accessories, et cetera.

There are two key ways in which Ivy and Leanne negotiate the physical limitations of their flat with regards to storing their clothing. Firstly, they make an on-going attempt to clear out clothes and accessories that they no longer wear or want. Secondly, they maximise the amount of clothing and accessories that they can store in a small space by developing innovative storage techniques. Often these techniques are researched by the couple on community-based 'life hack' websites, which provide tips on minimalist living and improving the efficiency of domestic life. In particular, the couple said that the Apartment Therapy[6] website has been useful to them, as it provides specific advice on how to live in a small space. Thus, Ivy and Leanne consciously use their own agency and creativity – and draw on innovative ideas that others have shared online – in order to deal with the limits imposed by the physical materiality of their flat and the difficulties of storing two sets of clothes, shoes and accessories that they reported facing as a lesbian couple.

Male participants, especially those in a relationship with another man, were less likely than the female participants to comment on a lack of storage or wardrobe space for clothes, which is perhaps indicative of them owning fewer clothes than the female participants. Nevertheless, some male participants who live in a flat with their male partner and/or do not have a private garden did discuss a lack of space with regards to

[6] http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/

the *drying* of their clothes after washing them. For example, Tim (administrator, 30s) commented:

> I've got a whole system going, because… I hate leaving [laundry] stacking up so it's just running constantly, because otherwise we end up with no space to dry anything. Because we live in a second floor flat, um, so we can't put any washing out anywhere, so I like to keep things ticking along… Yeah, so I've always got a load of washing on.

Similarly, Dean (psychologist, 30s) remarked:

> … the drying is the problem because we're in a flat and we don't have any outside space so it is kind of on [clothes] horses… it's funny, the place feels like Widow Twankey's laundry sometimes with stuff just hanging up in varying degrees of dryness, and stuff really only goes away when the next lot of laundry is coming out, so it's this kind of rotation.

Within the everyday material environment of home, clothing is not only stored or cleared out. Rather, it is situated within an on-going flow of storing, wearing, washing, drying, sorting and clearing out (Gregson and Beale 2004). During their interviews, the ways in which participants talked about these flows were somewhat gendered. Whilst a number of female participants reported having difficulties *storing* their clothes and feeling constrained by the physical limitations of their wardrobes, male participants such as Tim and Dean were more likely to discuss the physical limitations on *drying* wet laundry imposed by their clothes horses, square footage of their homes, or (where relevant) a lack of outdoors space in which to dry their clothes. In order to negotiate the constraints imposed by the materiality of their homes, these male participants employ their creativity to find spaces and ways in which their clothes can be dried efficiently. Tim and Dean both deliberately structure their laundry practices in a rotation, with clothes moving between the laundry basket, washing machine, clothes horse and wardrobe as and when there is room for them. The attempts of these two men to keep a constant flow of clothes between the various stages in this laundry cycle helps to relieve

some of the pressures on space caused by the everyday reality of doing laundry in a flat with no garden.

5.3.2 *Material sources of tension*

So far in this chapter I have argued that the processes by which the participants (re)produce or maintain their material homes are closely tied up with the (re)production of their individual and coupled identities, relationships and personalities (see also Blunt and Dowling 2006; Wallace 2012; Pink 2004; Gorman-Murray 2006b). This means that in creating and maintaining their material homes, the participants must negotiate these individual and coupled identities and personalities, and associated ideas about ways of living in the home. More specifically, these cohabiting couples must negotiate their individual and shared attitudes towards the material arrangements of home, uses of domestic spaces, and ways of maintaining the home through domestic labour. When couples encounter discrepancies in their attitudes with regards to how the home is (re)produced or maintained, these discrepancies can manifest as material sources of tension.

Such material sources of tension were typically described by participants in sensory terms: the way a room looked or smelled, for example, might be described as causing tension between them and their partner. As highlighted previously in social sciences literature on domestic labour and the material home, perceptions of when it is necessary to clean or make changes to domestic material arrangements are often based upon embodied, sensory experiences of the material home space (Martens 2007; Pink 2004, 2007). In particular, Martens (2007) conceptualises sight and smell as powerful in triggering people's desires to clean or re-arrange particular spaces around the home. When couples react in a similar way to sensory triggers, Pink (2004) suggests that it is relatively straightforward for them to (re)produce a sensory, material environment that reflects their shared ideas about ways of living in the home. However, when there is more of a discrepancy in the way partners react to the sensory domestic landscape, due to differing ideas about the maintenance and arrangement of the space, this can lead to

sights or smells around the home that one or both partner(s) are not happy with. In such cases, developing shared ways of living in the material home and (re)producing a sensory domestic landscape that expresses the desires of both partners is more likely to involve ongoing negotiations, tensions and/or conflict (Martens 2007; Pink 2004).

A common source of material tension reported by the participants in my study is a discrepancy in where they feel it is appropriate to leave or store their clothes and shoes. For example, Karrie (HR manager, 30s) and Megan (HR business partner, 30s) reflected that Megan's 'floordrobe'[7] is one of the only things that they argue about as a couple:

> Karrie: Oh, the floordrobe! Your floordrobe is a source of constant tension. Megan has lots and lots and lots of wardrobe space and I've even bought you all matching coat hangers so it's all pretty. She still loves to have her floordrobe.
>
> Megan: Yeah, I don't know why… Yeah, you do occasionally have to tell me to tidy it.
>
> Karrie: That's the only source… That's the only thing I ever have to say, 'Megan if you don't [tidy] your floordrobe I'm going to – I don't know – I'm gonna sulk!'
>
> Megan: Yeah, I get a row for that.
>
> Karrie: You get a row for your floordrobe. All the time.

Tim (administrator, 30s) similarly explained during his interview that he and his partner Patrick rarely argue, but one thing that does cause tension between them is an ongoing difference of opinion as to where shoes should be kept:

> You know, something that drives me crazy is shoes in the hallway, and so I will constantly be picking up Patrick's shoes out of the hallway and [moving them] into the bedroom, you know? He just doesn't think about it. And on a good day it

[7] A 'wardrobe' of clothes that are on the floor.

> doesn't bother me, but on a bad day... that can result in conflict. He says, 'oh don't worry about those'. I will worry about it. I want to get it sorted… But not, it's never very much conflict.

In making sensory judgements regarding domestic labour, individuals may be influenced by social norms as to when or whether it is appropriate to carry out a certain task; but can also use their agency to accept or transgress such social imperatives in line with the identity and values they wish to express through their sensory, material practices in the home (Pink 2007). For both Karrie and Tim the *sight* of clothes and shoes 'out of place' annoys them, because they would prefer to conform to the social convention of storing clothes and shoes away in drawers and/or wardrobes. They respectively view clothes on the bedroom floor and shoes in the hallway as disrupting the visual aesthetics of these rooms. Existing literature on the visual home has argued that home decoration and material domestic arrangements play an important role in (re)producing and expressing self-identity at home. This body of literature suggests that people express themselves and their values by decorating and arranging their homes in a particular style; and maintaining the look of their homes through domestic labour in a particular way (Martens 2007; Pink 2004; Gregson and Beale 2004). For Karrie and Tim, then, clothes and shoes which are not tidied away represent a disjuncture between their visual, material home spaces and the way they want to express themselves at home. Meanwhile, Megan and Patrick challenge the domestic ideal that clothes and shoes should always be tidied away through their everyday actions. The different values that they and their partners place upon clothes and shoes left on the floor thus lead to disagreements in their homes and fractures in the coupled identities that are expressed in these spaces (see Reimer and Leslie 2004; Gorman-Murray 2006b; Pink 2007).

Another couple who respond differently to the sight of clothes on the floor are Kim (banker, 20s) and Naomi (student, 20s), as can be seen from the following discussion:

> Kim: I suppose the only thing I get annoyed at, and it's not even often, is when dirty clothes are not in the wash bin. That drives me frigging nuts. How difficult is it? What you take off, rather than just leave it where you

were – it's not even put anywhere, it's left where she was stood!

Both: [*laugh*]

Kim: I can see where she's got undressed!

Naomi: It's like a person has disappeared!

Kim: And the clothes are just there. So are these dirty? Are these clean? … And that's when I end up washing clean stuff. She's like, 'well that wasn't dirty'. I'm like, 'well it was on the floor along with everything else! So it just went in the wash'.

Similarly to Karrie and Tim, having clothes left on the floor does not reflect the way that Kim wants to live within the material spaces of her home. As well as reacting against clothing being put on the floor in terms of the visual aesthetics of the bedroom, Kim also dislikes it because she feels that it creates extra work for her in terms of laundry. For Kim, if an item of clothing has been left on the floor with other dirty clothes, then there is a chance that it might be dirty, and so she will wash it. Her perception of the (potential) dirtiness of these clothes is not based on how they look or smell, but the association she makes between clothes on the floor and clothes that need to be washed. In contrast, Naomi does not consider visible piles of clothes on the floor to be a problem; and feels that it is Kim who is creating additional laundry for herself by not asking Naomi which clothes need washing. Again, their different attitudes towards the visual presence of clothes on the floor and the social imperative to tidy away clothes in drawers or wardrobes at times lead to the couple arguing, as well as creating fractures in the coupled identity that is expressed through their visual home.

It is not only the sight of clothes that creates tension between the participating couples: the *smell* of clothes can also lead to partners arguing. When I asked Milo (customer services assistant, 20s) whether he and his partner Isaac ever have any arguments over housework, he replied:

> Yes. Yes. He was furious – I did some washing and apparently the jeans were still slightly damp when I ironed them, and the iron was pretty hot, so I was pretty sure they were dry, and I had

> to go to work so I folded them up and left them, and they weren't actually dry, and so he re-washed them because they smelt of damp. They were half dry for eight hours.

Similarly, Fred (mathematician, 20s) said that his partner Teresa (FE educator, 40s) will complain if they do not dry their laundry properly (by spreading it out on the clothes horse) because this results in the clothes smelling. For other participants, meanwhile, a smelling *bin* elicits emotions of disgust and is a material source of tension in their household, as Howard (student, 20s) explained with regards to the house he shares with his partner and two other housemates:

> Taking out the rubbish. That really bugs me. I'm like, look, if you have a bit of rubbish, you see [the bin]'s full and put it on [top], the bin doesn't magically take itself out. And I was so angry… I got back home from two weeks' holiday, and the bin had been piled up. And I'm just like, who the fuck do they think takes the bin out? … And things drop on the floor, then I have to clean the floor, and it can stink because it's been sat there for a while rotting.

As discussed in section 4.6, Seb (unemployed, 20s) also said that a smelling bin has caused arguments between him and his girlfriend, mainly because his partner does not notice or respond to the odour of the bin as quickly as he does:

> Weirdly, she's quite sensitive to smells, but for some reason a stinking bin bag she doesn't seem to notice… I hate it when I walk into a place and I can smell bin straight away. I just do not like it.

These discussions of damp-smelling clothes and bin odour demonstrate that the *smell* of the material home is an important aspect of these participants' experiences and divisions of domestic labour. I found that human agency comes into play in shaping the smells of the home environment and associated domestic practices. For example, the smell of damp clothes and kitchen bins were not perceived to be an inevitable part of the

material home. Rather, participants highlighted the role of their own agency and domestic labour in avoiding or reducing these smells (see also Pink 2004). Seb and Howard respond to 'unpleasant' odours from their respective kitchen bins by emptying them into their outside waste bins. These participants feel that it is important to do so regularly, because unpleasant bin odours run counter to the ways in which they want to live and express themselves in the material home. Tensions arise, however, when their partners or other members of the household do not tackle bin odour in the same way or as rapidly as Seb and Howard think is necessary. As well as disliking the smell of a filling kitchen bin, Seb and Howard also react against this smell because to them it highlights that nobody else is contributing to the task of taking the rubbish out. They perceive this to be unfair, adding to the tensions created by the bin smell itself. The quotation from Milo above shows that other participants also experienced such tensions with regards to the drying of laundry, and the arguments that arise from the (damp) smells and the labour (of re-washing clothes) that are created if clothing is not dried properly.

For these participants, developing shared ways of living in the material home in part involves negotiating the agencies and smells of their material environment; their agencies as individuals and couples to manage the smells of the home through domestic labour; and their attitudes as individuals and couples as to how the spaces of the home should smell. Couples who live in shared accommodation must additionally negotiate their housemates' attitudes towards smells in the home, as well as their housemates' agencies in managing these smells. Negotiating these different agencies and elements of the material home is not always straightforward, and when discrepancies arise as to how the smells of the material home are perceived and responded to by individual partners or housemates, this can again create tensions, arguments, and fractures in the shared identities and values expressed in the material home (Reimer and Leslie 2004; Gorman-Murray 2006b).

5.4 Negotiating the material layout, meanings and uses of home spaces

5.4.1 *Child free couples and the use of (bed)rooms*

As well as negotiating the sights and smells of the material home through their everyday practices of domestic labour, the LGBTQ couples in this study also reported negotiating the layout of their material homes in an ongoing manner. Often this involves the couples reinterpreting architectural spaces designed with the heterosexual nuclear family in mind; and using these spaces in ways that suit their particular lives and needs. For example, a number of child free couples who took part in the study had more than one 'bedroom', and these additional rooms were most commonly used as an office space or a guest room, thereby challenging the heteronormative assumption that domestic spaces will be occupied by the heterosexual nuclear family, and smaller 'bedroom' spaces used by children (Johnston and Longhurst 2010; Gorman-Murray 2007). This gives support to the theoretical perspective employed in this thesis that the physical layout of the home and associated socio-cultural expectations may be viewed as points of departure, from which human creativity and agency can be used to produce various ways of living in the home. For the participants discussed in this section, it is largely their interconnected middle-class and child free identities which shape their uses of 'bedroom' spaces in their homes.

Returning once more to the example of Karrie (HR manager, 30s) and Megan (HR business partner, 30s), the privileged middle-class social position of this lesbian couple allowed them to recently purchase a house containing five 'bedrooms'. In their interview, the couple also discussed being resolutely child free, explaining that having children is not compatible with the way they want to live in their home:

> Karrie: We don't have little people making a mess.
> Megan: We have them come to visit, which is quite traumatic, because most of our friends think it's

> hilarious to make them – 'put your hands on Auntie Karrie's window! Go on!' Or 'yeah of course you can play with these pens!' Argh! Oh my god! [*laughs*]

Instead of being children's bedrooms, the additional rooms in their house allow the couple to have an office in which Megan can study, as she is currently undertaking a Master's degree; and these rooms also mean that the couple can frequently have guests to stay with them, something that they both enjoy:

> Megan: We've got a guest suite at the front of the house with a bedroom and their own bathroom, so I guess that's why a lot of people come to stay, because they've got their own facilities!
>
> Karrie: … And at Christmas we had a conveyor belt of people [to stay].

Meanwhile, in the home owned by Marnie (academic researcher, 30s) and Bev (technical support, 30s), two smaller rooms which would undoubtedly be considered children's bedrooms according to a heteronormative architectural discourse instead provide private spaces in which the child free women can separately store some of their belongings, and engage in individual pursuits. Marnie said:

> … we've kind of got a room each, because I've got a room that's sort of my study but also is where my clothes are because I've got a wardrobe, a chest of drawers and a desk, so it's basically like a bedroom without a bed, really, because the bedroom is quite small, and she's got a room upstairs because she's got her decks laid out and all her music stuff…

It is important to recognise that the middle-class social position of these couples has undoubtedly contributed to them having multiple bedrooms in their homes; whilst being child free has allowed the couples to interpret these extra spaces in ways which depart from the traditional spatial organisation of home and normative discourses of adults'

and children's bedrooms. Both couples transgress heteronormative expectations of how additional 'bedroom' spaces in the home will be used, and employ their agency to create home spaces that suit their lifestyles. For Marnie and Bev, it is important to have separate spaces in the home where each partner can store some of their belongings and engage in individual pursuits such as writing (for Marnie) and playing music (for Bev). This allows both partners to express their individual personalities within an otherwise shared domestic space (see also Gorman-Murray 2006b).

Another example of a child free couple who have negotiated the physical layout of their home to meet their own (non-heteronormative) needs are Seb (unemployed, 20s) and Mai (fashion designer, 20s). As explained by Seb:

> Seb: We've got two bedrooms… when we moved in here the idea was I have my own bedroom and my girlfriend have her own bedroom…
>
> CB: Was it important for you to have your own space, then? Your own bedrooms?
>
> Seb: Yeah, definitely, because she has a lot of things. She works in fashion so there's shoes and stuff everywhere and… I just like to have a bit of space to myself because prior to that I lived alone for 4 years so I was very used to my own space…

Whilst the heteronormative expectation is that a cohabiting couple will share the master bedroom of a house, Seb and Mai's use of their domestic space further demonstrates that home layouts are subject to multiple interpretations, and that rooms may be put to different (queer) uses. Similarly to Marnie and Bev, having a bedroom each allows Seb and Mai to maintain their individual identities in a shared domestic environment by providing them with separate spaces in which they can spend time alone, store belongings with personal meanings, and arrange their belongings in ways which suit them - without having to worry about how their partner wants to use this space. Gorman-Murray (2006b) argues that as well as sustaining individual identities, these separate spaces are also a way of sustaining coupled relationships because a lack of personal space can create problems or tensions between partners; and also because

partners are more likely to value the time they spend together if they also have time and space to be by themselves. Thus, in allowing for the expression of individual identities, having separate bedrooms does not prevent coupled identities from also being expressed and developed (or even strengthened) within the material home (*ibid*).

5.4.2 *Parenting and the use of kitchen spaces*

It is not only the child free couples in my study who bring new (queer) meanings to spaces or rooms around the home. When I asked Liam (charity worker, 30s) and Bradley (chef, 30s) to discuss how they care for their daughter at home, the couple mainly focussed on the space of the kitchen; and how the uses and meanings of this material space had changed significantly for them since becoming parents. For example, when they first moved into their London home as a child free couple, Liam and Bradley bought two stools for the breakfast bar that separates their largely open-plan kitchen and living area. However, the stools they purchased were too high, meaning that they could not be used to sit at the breakfast bar. Despite this, Liam and Bradley kept the stools because they fit the aesthetic of their downstairs living space; and the couple planned to "get around to" modifying the stools so that they could be used. In the interim, the couple tended to sit on their sofas or use a separate table and chairs, instead. It was only when the couple became parents that Liam shortened the stools, as the couple reflected upon during their interview:

> Liam: … you see these two stools that look really short now? It's because I cut the legs on them! We've got a table and chairs upstairs but… I was like, right, I'm chopping the legs of the stools so we can sit round [the breakfast bar] comfortably! Because it's such a big thing, we needed somewhere we could sit in the kitchen and eat basically.
>
> Bradley: For two or three years when we didn't have our baby, we didn't think about it. We couldn't sit on

these chairs – they came up too high – so they were just there and we didn't do anything about them.

Liam: We didn't bother because we didn't want to sit in the kitchen that much, but now we just need to be able to make pasta and a sandwich and all sit around together… Meals are a lot more of a big deal.

Prior to having their daughter, the breakfast bar and stools primarily served an aesthetic rather than a practical function in the couple's everyday lives and routines. As parents, they have since developed the largely unused and unusable breakfast bar area into a convenient kitchen space in which to feed their daughter and spend time together eating as a family. This project has involved negotiations between the changing needs of the family, and the existing physical layout and material objects within the couple's downstairs living space. The couple's current uses of the breakfast bar may thus be seen as a product of the agency of this space, as well as the couple's agency, their needs as parents, and Liam's DIY skills.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, according to (hetero)normative discourses of home, kitchens are feminised spaces in which women perform traditionally gendered roles which include cooking and cleaning for their husband and children (Levin and Fincher 2010). Indeed, the kitchen and breakfast bar in Liam and Bradley's home were not likely designed with a gay couple and their child in mind. However, as gay parents using their kitchen to care for, feed and interact with their daughter, Liam and Bradley challenge such (hetero)normative understandings of the kitchen; and bring new gendered and queer meanings to this space. Their uses of the kitchen and breakfast bar as spaces of (gay male) parenting push against normative understandings of feminine domesticity, and point to the possibility of new domestic masculine subjectivities emerging as the material connections between men and the domestic sphere shift and change in the 21st century, and men become more involved in everyday homemaking practices (see also Gorman-Murray 2014; 2010).

Another couple with children who discussed the interplay of their parenting practices and the material home are Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s). The downstairs layout of the house that this couple live in with their 2-year-old

daughter Poppy is similar to that of Liam and Bradley's inasmuch as they have a largely open-plan kitchen and living room. Isobel and Olivia similarly discussed how their uses of this space have changed since becoming parents. Most notably, they have put up a child safety gate between the kitchen and living room. Olivia reflected:

> … that [child safety] gate, people think that it's so I can put Poppy in [the living room] so she can't get to the kitchen because the kitchen is dangerous, when actually I shut it all the time when she's covered in paint, to stop her putting her hands all over things. It's the other way round.

Although Isobel and Olivia talked about spending a lot of time in the kitchen, which at first glance may not appear to be particularly transgressive of the traditional feminisation of this space, the lesbian couple *do* challenge the (hetero)normative discourse that the only interactions that women will have with kitchen spaces will be using them to cook and clean for their husband and children. Firstly, by using and conceptualising the kitchen in an unconventional way as a space for playing and *making* mess with their daughter rather than always a space for cooking and *cleaning up* mess, Isobel and Olivia bring their own uses, values and understandings to this space, which contest traditional housewifely discourses and uses of the kitchen (see also Pink 2004). Secondly, Isobel and Olivia challenge conventional social discourses which construct the kitchen as a hazardous and inappropriate space for young children to use; and instead use their own parental judgements to shape their day-to-day activities within the kitchen space. By allowing Poppy to play, paint and spend time with one or both of them in the kitchen, Isobel and Olivia deliberately reinterpret the social meanings of the kitchen space. For this couple, the kitchen functions as an important space in which they can interact with their daughter and together express their (queer) family identity; and they have developed 'more-than-functional' uses of their kitchen as a space of leisure and familial life (see also Klocker et al. 2012; Levin and Fincher 2010). The family's uses of the kitchen are also mediated by the material agency of their downstairs living space. The addition of a child safety gate has allowed the couple to retain the open-plan feel of their living area, whilst also meeting their temporary need to keep their young child in the kitchen at certain times, such as when she is engaging in 'messy' play with paints. Thus, the choice to put up a child safety

gate was shaped by both the couple's agency and parental judgements as to what constitutes a safe space for their daughter; and the material agency and layout of their living space.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have put forward the theoretical argument that the everyday domestic practices of the LBGTQ couples in this study are shaped not only by the home space itself, including its architectural layout, material objects, sights and smells; but also by the social meanings and norms that are associated with the material home, and the (individual and coupled) agency and creativity of these participating LGBTQ couples. To a degree, I have found that the home space is relevant in shaping the couple's everyday domestic practices because its layout, size and number of rooms provide very real 'guidelines' or constraints as to how certain domestic tasks are performed – such as how, where and how many clothes can be dried or stored at once. Dominant architectural and social discourses also prescribe certain (heteronormative and gendered) uses of home spaces; although as I have argued throughout my analysis in this chapter, the LGBTQ couples in this study typically use their agency and creativity to create and maintain queer domestic spaces which are expressive of their non-heteronormative identities, relationships and personalities. The chapter has identified two key ways in which the participating LGBTQ couples express and embed their (queer) individual and coupled identities in the material home through their everyday homemaking practices. The first is by negotiating their individual and coupled attitudes and approaches towards the décor, design and upkeep of particular spaces around the home. This may involve dealing with material sources of tension, as disagreements can arise between partners as to how home spaces should be maintained. Nevertheless, it is through such negotiations, tensions and shared homemaking projects that couples (re)materialise their individual and coupled identities, values and ways of living within the spaces of the home. The second key way in which the LGBTQ couples in this study express and embed their (queer) identities and relationships in the material home is by bringing alternative meanings to particular rooms, which go against heteronormative

architectural discourses of home – such as child free couples using the smaller bedroom(s) of their house to pursue hobbies rather than as children's rooms. That these two key means of queering the material home may be seen as minor or subtle is not insignificant – it emphasises that in many ways, the home spaces occupied by LGBTQ couples and families may look very similar to those lived in by their heterosexual counterparts. The participants in my study were not concerned about complying with a particular queer aesthetic or way of living in their home spaces. Rather, they discussed expressing and embedding their non-heteronormative identities, relationships and values in the material home largely in terms of making joint decisions (be them straightforward or fraught with tension) as to how to decorate, design, live in and maintain their home spaces.

Chapter 6: Gender, Sexuality and the Division of Domestic Labour in LGBTQ Homes

6.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis I provide a critique of dominant discourses of domesticity, which have traditionally taken for granted domestic labour as a female activity that takes place within the spaces of the heterosexual family home. To unpack this critique further, in this chapter I again draw upon my theoretical perspective regarding critical geographies of home, predominantly focussing on the *imaginative* home and the social and personal meanings attached to this space, as a means of highlighting the disjuncture that may exist between heteronormative interpretations of the domestic sphere and the everyday, lived experiences of the participating LGBTQ couples in the home space. To contextualise my arguments, despite an increase in female employment, a rise in qualifications amongst women, and a more supportive policy context in recent decades, the gender ideology linking women to domestic labour and the home still retains much socio-cultural hold in the contemporary UK (Crompton 2006; see also Chapter 2). This traditional view of the gendering of domestic labour is based upon a heteronormative understanding of the home as a space in which men and women take on separate, gendered roles. According to this discourse, women are responsible for tasks such as cleaning and laundry, whilst men's responsibilities include car maintenance and DIY. However, this does not reflect the everyday lived reality of many couples, including cohabiting LGBTQ couples. In this chapter, I therefore use the theoretical perspective of the home as a space imbued with both social and personal meanings to draw attention to the meanings and roles that the (privileged) LGBTQ couples in my sample bring to or enact in the domestic sphere. Taking into consideration the intersecting or interconnected gender and sexual identities of the LGBTQ participants, I also explore the extent to which they support and/or challenge dominant social discourses of domestic roles and relationships. As noted in Chapter 4, whilst the participants included in the present study may be seen to fit in with the normative ideal of coupled

domesticity, at the same time they subvert dominant assumptions about heteronormatively gendered roles in the home through their attitudes and approaches towards domestic labour. The findings presented in this chapter therefore support the theoretical argument that I am making in this thesis, that 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process may be applied to even everyday spaces such as the home; and does not always involve overt or radical rejections of the normative but can also proceed in a more subtle (or even inadvertent) manner, through the non-heteronormative meanings and roles that LGBTQ people bring to the home space.

In order to further explore these themes, I have split the current chapter into three main sections. In section 6.2, I will discuss how the gender and sexuality of the participants shape both societal expectations and coupled experiences of the division of domestic labour in their homes. This will involve a consideration of the complex ways in which these couples interact with and queer heteronormative domestic roles. Next, I will use section 6.3 to further analyse the participants' attitudes towards the gendering of various domestic tasks. In particular, I will focus on the ways in which these attitudes and associated practices queer (hetero)normative discourses of dichotomously gendered domestic roles. In section 6.4 I will then analyse how participating couples who subvert heteronormative domestic roles apportion various domestic tasks, paying particular attention to the role of time availability, personal preferences, standards and skills in shaping the (queer) division of domestic labour in their homes. Finally, I will draw these three sections together and offer my conclusions as to how heteronormativity at home is queered by the participating LGBTQ couples through their seemingly unremarkable, mundane practices and negotiations of domestic labour.

6.2 Attitudes towards domestic roles in LGBTQ relationships

6.2.1 Lack of social scripts

By taking the theoretical perspective of the home as an *imaginative* as well as a material space, one of the key ideas that I wish to emphasise in this thesis is that the home is a

space in which socially acceptable (gendered and sexual) identities, roles and behaviours are normalised and contested (Gorman-Murray 2006b, 2007; Baydar 2012; Kentlyn 2008). As noted previously in Chapters 2 and 4, the 'private' sphere of the home in the West is traditionally associated with the heterosexual nuclear family. Within this space there are entrenched notions about how domestic labour should be divided, as traditional gender norms associate waged work with men and unwaged domestic work[8] with women (Crompton 2006). However, relationships in which both partners are the same gender disrupt this understanding of the gendered division of labour. These relationships are not structured by the same hierarchical male/female gender relations that heterosexual couples are, giving the partners in these couples scope to base their role division on something other than dichotomous gender norms, and to bring new meanings and roles to the home, which disrupt normative social imaginaries of domesticity (Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Dunne 2000).

Whilst there are entrenched social norms as to how the domestic labour 'should' be divided within heterosexual couples, a number of the participants in my study remarked that there is a lack of social scripts for how two partners of the same gender should approach or divide domestic labour in their home. Kim (banker, 20s) commented:

> In a straight relationship… there's a gendered divide and women are expected to do more [of the domestic labour] whereas with a lesbian couple, you're not told what you have to do as such. You can decide that for yourself, because there isn't an expectation.

Megan (HR business partner, 30s) also reflected on this:

> We've muddled through as a couple to work out which bits we do best, whereas if you're embarking on a straight relationship I wonder if it might be easier that the expectation is that you go out on a date, he pays. You live together, you cook.

[8] Waged domestic labour is also traditionally considered female (Gregson and Lowe 1994).

Justin (police officer, 20s) added:

> I don't think there's any expectations in a gay couple of how you should keep the house. There is more in a heterosexual relationship… There's the stereotype that the woman does it.

These participants each suggested that, as part of a lesbian or gay couple, they avoided the normative expectation that they would assume dichotomous or traditionally gendered roles in their home. Indeed, all three argued that these social expectations are largely absent for lesbian or gay couples, and that there are no set norms as to how domestic labour should be divided between partners. This supports the findings of other studies of the division of domestic labour and childcare in Australia (Rawsthorne and Costello 2010), Japan (Kamano 2009), Israel (Shechory and Ziv 2007) and England (Dunne 2000) which have argued that lesbian and gay couples have greater freedom and choice over the division of domestic labour and childcare, because there is no dominant societal model of how lesbian and gay relationships should function in terms of domestic role division.

This raises the question of whether there are dominant societal expectations of how cohabiting male/female couples should approach or divide the domestic labour when one or both partners identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the present study includes 4 male/female couples. My work therefore moves beyond the existing studies referenced in the previous paragraph, which focus on same-sex couples only. In their interviews, the participants who are part of a male/female couple tended to emphasise that their queer identities allow them to move beyond normative social scripts regarding domestic roles and behaviours. One couple who expressed this idea were Teresa (FE educator, 40s) and Fred (mathematician, 20s). Teresa is a cisgender woman who identifies as a lesbian, whilst her partner Fred is a transgender man who identifies as heterosexual. When discussing societal expectations of domestic roles, they commented:

> Teresa: I think anyone has given up expectations about either of us years ago! [*laughs*]

> Fred: … I mean, given that one of us is gay and the other is transgender, and we've ended up de facto being a straight couple, I think we just mess people's heads up so much that nobody tries to force categories on us anymore… I like not being shoved into other people's boxes. I think that's quite important.

Teresa and Fred suggested that their relationship queers normative perceptions of coupled relationships, because it cannot be straightforwardly understood as either heterosexual or lesbian. As a result of moving away from binary understandings of identities and relationship categories, the couple do not feel under social pressure to conform to normative or dichotomous roles within their home or their relationship more broadly. Throughout their interview, Fred in particular strongly expressed that this avoidance of normative expectations with regards to domestic roles is a positive aspect of his and Teresa's relationship, giving them the freedom to base their role division on something other than dichotomous gender norms – as will be discussed in more detail in section 6.2.2.

A similar idea was expressed by Vivian (nanny, 30s) and Spencer (games reviewer, 30s). Vivian is a cisgender woman who identifies as queer whilst Spencer is a cisgender man who identifies as bisexual. In their interview, Vivian discussed how she feels that she 'escaped' any heteronormative expectations by not conforming to gendered social norms or behaviours from an early age. She said:

> I really struggle to figure out what is expected of me, gender-wise... I shaved my head when I was 12 and everyone thought I was a boy, and I was talking to my Mum last weekend, and I was like, 'do you remember that year that I was a boy?'… You know, if you look at it from a kind of child psychology point of view, puberty was happening and I'd never really been a girly girl and so I just decided to wholesale reject it, be a boy instead, and I think I dodged a lot of conforming bullets because I never *did* conform, and so no-one ever expected me to grow up and get married and look after my husband, because no-one really

> thought that I would be able to get a husband! [*laughs*] … I didn't have that template set out for me, because I was quite clearly 'other' when I was young.

Whilst they are a cisgender male/female couple, Vivian discussed how she has never felt any expectation that she and her partner Spencer would assume dichotomous roles in their relationship. Rather, she suggested that her intersecting queer sexuality and gender identity has allowed her and her partner to move beyond normative roles in their home, and instead share domestic tasks regardless of their traditional gendered associations. The *combined pattern* introduced in Chapter 4 best describes how domestic tasks are apportioned in Vivian and Spencer's household, as Vivian largely takes responsibility for the laundry and gardening; Spencer typically does the washing up and groceries shopping; and the couple share between them the cleaning, meal preparation, finance management and DIY. Rather than traditionally gendered roles structuring their apportioning of the domestic tasks, Vivian and Spencer explained their division of domestic labour in terms of their respective preferences for various tasks. As demonstrated by this couple and the previous example of Teresa and Fred, for the male/female couples in the study it is often their queer identities as couples (and individuals) that place them outside of dominant social scripts as to the gendering and division of domestic labour in their homes. This allows them to bring their own personal meanings and roles to the domestic sphere, resulting in an imaginative home space which is shaped more by personal, queer meanings than heteronormative social discourses of home.

6.2.2 (Hetero)normative expectations of gendered domestic roles

On the other hand, my interviews also indicated that assumptions remain about normatively gendered domestic roles even for some LGBTQ individuals and couples in contemporary England. This emphasises the pervasiveness of (hetero)normative social discourses of domesticity, which shape even the imaginative home spaces of the participating LGBTQ couples. Women in the study were more likely than men to

comment that their position as a gendered subject is associated with certain expectations when it comes to domestic responsibilities. In a discussion about societal attitudes towards the division of domestic labour, Ivy (unemployed, 30s) and Leanne (academic researcher, 30s) said:

> Ivy: I think a lesbian couple might be less confounding for people to speculate about than a gay male couple.
>
> Leanne: I guess so, because you're both women, so you must love cleaning!

In the context of a lesbian household, Ivy and Leanne suggested that there might be a societal expectation that both partners will take some responsibility for the domestic labour, due to the traditional associations between women and the domestic sphere. Meanwhile, they commented that hypothesising about the division of domestic labour in a gay male couple might be confusing for some people, because men occupy a gendered subject position that is usually associated with waged employment in the workplace rather than domestic labour in the home. This is exemplified by lesbian participant Francesca (student, 20s) who herself contemplated the division of domestic labour between male partners:

> I wonder how it would work in a gay male relationship, because presumably someone has to do it!

During her interview, Francesca said that she associates domestic labour with women, and seemed to find it puzzling to think about how the domestic labour might be divided between two men in a relationship. That this puzzle of who keeps the house in a gay male relationship is almost unimaginable for Francesca points to the pervasiveness of heteronormative domestic roles and meanings within our society. It also highlights a disjuncture between the dominant social discourse of domestic labour as women's work and the actual lived domestic practices of couples in which both partners are male.

As well as discussing these societal norms generally, a number of participants discussed specific examples of how their gender, as well as the gender of their partner, shape their friends' and families' expectations of their domestic roles and responsibilities. This is

perhaps best exemplified by the interviews that I conducted with child free lesbian and bisexual women who cohabit with a female partner. I found that, because of their position as child free women without a male partner, additional expectations may be placed upon these participants by (heterosexual) friends and family members. One bisexual woman, Lizzy (lecturer, 30s), said of child free lesbian and bisexual women such as herself:

> … they're expected to do a lot of carework for their friends because the assumption is unspoken [that] because they don't have children, or they don't have a man to look after, what else would they be doing? … There's an assumption that you can lean on a lesbian daughter a little more heavily because they don't have their own responsibilities.

The attitude that child free lesbian or bisexual women will be able to assume additional caring responsibilities for friends or family members beyond their household is based upon two heteronormative assumptions. The first is that caring is women's work, something that women should take responsibility for because of their gender. The second is that, because child free lesbian and bisexual women have fewer domestic responsibilities than heterosexual mothers, this opens up 'free' time which they should spend on other forms of caring. These assumptions overlook the fact that lesbian and bisexual women may deliberately choose to remain child free because they do not want any such additional caring or domestic responsibilities. Indeed, existing literature in the social sciences tells us that women may choose to remain child free for a number of reasons. They may perceive there to be advantages to not having children, such as having increased autonomy and opportunities; being better able to pursue a career; having more opportunities for self-fulfilment; or being in a better financial position (Agrillo and Nelini 2008; Gillespie 2003; Kelly 2009). In making the deliberate decision not to have children, are the child free lesbian and bisexual women in my study still *women*? Traditionally, the gender identities and domestic roles of women in Western societies have been constructed around motherhood; and this discourse remains prominent even today. Women are commonly constructed as nurturers, as caring for their husband and children, as always having a maternal instinct or desire to find a (male) partner and have children (Gillespie 2003; Agrillo and Nelini 2008; Kelly 2009).

Lesbian and bisexual women who choose not to have children confound heteronormativity and represent a radical rejection of these hegemonic, pronatalist social discourses, which draw parallels between womanhood and motherhood (Gamson and Moon 2004; Kelly 2009). By rejecting this central tenant of what it traditionally means to *be* a woman, I argue that the child free lesbian and bisexual women in my study are no less women. By presenting themselves as deliberately remaining child free, these lesbian and bisexual participants challenge the traditional behaviours, relationships and domestic practices associated with their gender. In other words, they disrupt normative discourses of what it means to be a woman through their intersecting sexual, gendered and child free identities; and the associated (lack of) domestic or childcare responsibilities that they take on in the home. As a result, their female identities must be understood outside of normative social discourses of motherhood. Their rejection of motherhood as a central tenant of their female identity points to the agency of these participating women in developing and enacting (queer) female identities, which are not based upon social ideals of motherhood and heterosexual coupling, in the home (see also Gillespie 2003; Kelly 2009).

Whilst it has already been highlighted in this chapter that the male/female couples in the study might also be able to move beyond normative expectations of gendered domestic roles through their queer identities, some of the participants who are in a male/female relationship also discussed specific instances of friends or family members perceiving their domestic roles and relationship through a heteronormative lens. For example, Zoe (charity worker, 20s) is a bisexual cisgender women who is in a relationship with Daniel (librarian, 20s), a heterosexual cisgender man. During her interview Zoe acknowledged that on the surface she and Daniel might appear to be a heterosexual couple, however she argued that their relationship is in fact queer, in part due to the non-heteronormative roles that the couple assume. Despite feeling that her relationship with Daniel is queer, Zoe recounted occasions on which friends or family have assumed that the couple take on heteronormative domestic roles. For example, she pointed to the assumptions that her father made when he was helping her and Daniel to move into their new home:

> When we moved in, and my Dad was helping us put up the bookshelves, we had to cut off the corners of these things to put the bookshelves up, and my Dad gave the saw to Daniel

> instinctively, and Daniel was in this horrible situation where he didn't want to sort of make a mess of the work, he didn't want to look stupid in front of my Dad, but he also didn't want to do it, and he did one and I was just like, 'Dad, I'll do it'. And I ended up doing them all… we've talked about it since – it's just completely unfair expectations… we just take it for granted that we play it the way we play it, until someone else comes in and goes, 'Really? You're not going to be a man and jigsaw this bit of wood? That's what being a man is,' or something.

DIY is traditionally thought of as a task that is performed by men, and this quotation demonstrates that Zoe's father expected Daniel to take the lead in putting up the bookshelves due to his gender. However, Zoe explained that it is her rather than Daniel who tends to assume responsibility for the DIY in their relationship because she enjoys this task more and is better at it than Daniel, who does not like using power tools, especially ones which make a loud noise. Whilst the couple do not structure their division of DIY according to traditional gender roles, thereby queering normative understandings of domesticity, the attitude of Zoe's Dad emphasises a continuing social expectation that DIY will be performed by the man in a male/female couple (Cox 2013).

From this study I have also found that in the absence of an alternative model for the division of domestic labour in LGBTQ homes, the entrenched heterosexualisation of this activity means that its division even between partners of the same gender is frequently interpreted through a heteronormative lens. As argued by George (academic researcher, 30s):

> There is a common conception or misconception that in gay relationships there is a 'male' and 'female' role… so therefore you might expect for the 'female' character within that relationship to be more inclined to keep the house. But I think that's a bit of a generalisation to be honest, and I think the housework roles might be defined more by a range of other factors, not just 'male' and 'female' roles within the relationship.

The assumption that traditionally 'male' and 'female' roles can be straightforwardly mapped onto LGBTQ relationships is reflective of a heteronormative culture, which interprets itself as the natural and normal state of affairs. This culture is what Warner (1993) described in his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*. He suggested that the logic of heterosexual order is embedded in various social discourses and institutions, such as the family and home:

> Political struggles over sexuality ramify in an unimaginably large number of directions. In the everyday political terrain, contests over sexuality and its regulation are generally linked to views of social institutions and norms of the most basic sort. Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom… maturation, reproductive politics… intimate life and social display… and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. Being queer means fighting about these issues all the time, locally and piecemeal but always with consequences. (p. xiii)

The LGBTQ participants who I interviewed are familiar with heteronormative understandings of domestic roles and relationships, and often deploy their agency to create and perform different domestic roles and relationships in their homes, thereby queering their domestic imaginaries and material practices. Many participants explicitly rejected the notion that the division of domestic labour in their home would follow a *segmented pattern* (see Chapter 4) wherein one partner would take on the domestic tasks that are traditionally thought of as female (such as vacuuming and laundry) and the other partner would perform the tasks that are traditionally thought of as male (such as car maintenance and DIY). Gay male couple Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s) challenge such heteronormative understandings of gender roles because, although their apportioning of domestic tasks follows the *segmented pattern*, they divide these tasks regardless of their traditional gendered associations:

> Dale: In some respects I'll do the more traditionally masculine things like taking the car for the brakes [i.e. getting the brakes

repaired]… But then I'll do the dusting and vacuuming and laundry… So we have a division of labour, but 50% of my chores are masculinised and 50% are feminised, and same for Hal.

Hal: Or roughly. To the traditional stereotypes.

In addition, my interview with Vicky (mental health advocate, 30s) and Paula (student, 30s) revealed that the couple do not structure their relationship or role division according to dichotomous gender roles:

> I don't think we've got any particular gender roles in our relationship. We don't fall into those stereotypes… we kind of switch it about a little bit.

Vicky and Paula explained that there are periods of time in their relationship when one partner or the other will assume greater responsibility for domestic labour, and that this is typically influenced by the relative hours they are spending in waged employment or studying (see also de Meester et al. 2011; Patterson et al. 2004). The couple added that they recognise when one partner takes on greater responsibility for tasks around the home, and consciously seek to even out the domestic workload over a longer time frame of weeks or months. As such, the domestic roles in their relationship shift and change over time and are not normatively gendered. More generally, their personal understandings of their domestic roles and relationship – together with their everyday enactment of these roles through domestic labour – therefore disrupt or queer (hetero)normative social imaginaries of domesticity.

Similarly, lesbian couple Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) and Debby (academic researcher, 40s) challenged the idea that the division of domestic labour in their home can be understood in heteronormative terms. The couple live with Wendy's two daughters from a previous relationship, 18-year-old Pippa and 13-year-old Bonnie. The apportioning of domestic tasks in this couple's home follows the *combined pattern* introduced in Chapter 4. Certain tasks – such as cleaning and gardening – are shared. Other tasks routinely fall to one particular partner, with Wendy usually doing the laundry and ironing whilst Debby typically prepares meals and does the DIY. Both

partners were keen to express that their apportioning of these remaining tasks does not rest upon a traditional understanding of dichotomous gender roles:

> Wendy: I suppose on the face of it… Debby does the DIY and I do the washing, and that's clearly gendered, or could be construed as gendered.
>
> Debby: I think you have to set that in a context… I enjoyed putting the new felt on the roof of the wood shed and painting it liberally with lovely coloured wood stain, but had I not done that, [Wendy] would have done it anyway.
>
> Wendy: Mmm.
>
> Debby: So I like doing creative, makey type things, but that might well be [baking] a cake as it is [building] a wood shed. You know, Pippa was 18 the other week and Bonnie and I made a ukulele-shape cake…
>
> Wendy: It took hours, didn't it?
>
> Debby: It did, you know … without that additional context, it would seem that somehow I do the boy things and [Wendy] do[es] the girl things, but actually I don't think that's the case at all. There's a whole range of reasons why things happen the way they do, that has nothing to do with stereotype or gender or any of those things at all, I don't think.

Wendy and Debby explained their apportioning of particular household tasks largely in terms of preferences and playing to each partners' strengths, highlighting that these preferences and strengths depart from traditional gender dichotomies (see also Ryan-Flood 2009). This is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Debby's discussion of herself as a creative person: her creativity manifests itself in both a preference for baking, which is traditionally associated with women, and a preference for DIY, which is traditionally associated with men. For both women, the subversion of normative gender roles is an important outcome that they deliberately seek to achieve in their relationship. By remaining flexible and open to discussing their respective domestic roles, Wendy

and Debby work together to ensure that they maintain a division of labour that is non-hierarchical and that each partner is happy with. In doing so they set themselves apart from rigid or dichotomous understandings of gendered domestic roles; and (re)produce an imaginative home space which is shaped by their personal (queer) understandings of gender and relationship roles, rather than one which supports dominant (heteronormatively gendered) social discourses of domesticity.

As well as Wendy and Debby, Fred (mathematician, 20s) is another participant who indicated that the division of certain tasks in his household might appear to be normatively gendered at first glance. As noted earlier, Fred is a heterosexual transgender man who is in a relationship with Teresa (FE educator, 40s), a lesbian cisgender woman. When explaining the division of domestic labour in their household, Fred said:

> It's ended up fitting the stereotypes to some degree in that I manage the finances and [Teresa] do[es] the cooking, but I don't think it was ever intended to be. It's not happened as a result of my gender identity and wanting to do certain things because I'm a bloke. It's just what we've ended up doing because of how it's worked and what we're good at.

Although the couple reported a *segmented pattern* of domestic labour, with Teresa taking responsibility for the meal preparation, which is traditionally thought of as women's work, whilst Fred takes responsibility for managing the finances, which could be construed as men's work, the couple rejected the notion that their domestic roles are normatively gendered. Rather, they explained the apportioning of domestic tasks in their household in terms of "what works best" with reference to their relative standards, preferences and time availability. In many ways the couple subvert heteronormative domestic roles, as they divide the domestic labour roughly 50-50 and Fred takes primary responsibility for the cleaning, a task which is traditionally associated with women. Again, the *personal* meanings and roles that this couple bring to the home work to disrupt heteronormatively gendered *social* imaginaries of the domestic sphere. This process of queering domestic meanings and roles in Teresa and Fred's home also emphasises again that challenges to heteronormativity do not always necessarily involve

overt or radical rejections of social norms: in this couple's home, the subversion of heteronormatively gendered roles is deliberate yet subtle, and at first glance their everyday practices of meal preparation and finance management could be interpreted as a sign that this couple assimilate with heteronormative domestic gender scripts. I believe this emphasises the need for a queer reading of home, which takes into account such subtle or even inadvertent forms of queering heteronormativity, rather than adopting a queer approach which assumes that the home space and associated domestic practices and roles are inherently (hetero or homo)normative (see also section 2.9.2).

6.2.3 Butch and femme domestic roles?

The lesbian participants discussed below in this section also commented on the popular stereotype that their relationship and role division are structured by one partner identifying as butch and the other as femme. As discussed in Chapter 3, the interviews for this project were semi-structured. During the interview process, I asked the participants about the role of gender in their relationship and domestic role division, however I did not initiate a discussion of butch and femme lesbian gender identities. Those participants who mentioned that they or their partner identify as butch or femme did so spontaneously over the course of their interview. As only the handful of lesbian participants quoted in this section mentioned the role of butch and/or femme identities in their apportioning of domestic tasks, I suggest that even if the other lesbian participants identify as butch or femme, they do not see this as an important factor structuring the division of domestic labour in their relationship.

Nora (academic researcher, 30s) and Cassie (HR, 30s) are a lesbian couple who live in Norwich and have been in a relationship for 3 and a half years. They are child free, and have been in a civil partnership for around a year. When discussing the role of their intersecting sexuality and gender identities in their division of housework, the couple reported thinking that people will make assumptions about their relative domestic roles, due to their butch and femme appearances:

Nora: I'm quite conscious about what people will assume about our relationship, so people will see us and they assume butch/femme and that those are going to be our roles.

Cassie: And if you look at our wedding photos, I've got trousers on and she's got a dress on. I'm the one with… the short hair.

Nora: But I don't think we really are butch/femme in other ways.

Butch and femme lesbian gender identities are typically employed to describe the appearances, behaviours and social interactions of lesbians. Historically, the term 'butch' has been used to refer to masculine lesbians, and 'femme' to refer to feminine lesbians (Dahl 2011; Levitt and Hiestand 2004). However, the plurality of lesbian identities and practices in contemporary Western cultures means that these expectations in terms of masculine or feminine appearances or behaviours do not necessarily apply to every lesbian who identifies as butch or femme (Maltry and Tucker 2002; Dahl 2011). Nevertheless, as Nora presents her appearance as femme, and Cassie as butch, the couple reported feeling a societal expectation that they will follow a traditional division of labour, with Nora performing the tasks that are traditionally feminised and Cassie performing the tasks that are traditionally masculinised. Over the course of their interview, the couple revealed that their apportioning of the housework does not follow this pattern:

Nora: [*To Cassie*] You mostly do the laundry and put it out on the line and all that kind of thing… I don't iron. Cassie irons.

Cassie: Not an awful lot, but I do it where it's needed.

Nora: You care more about it; I don't really care if I go out [with my clothes] wrinkly! You care and you iron your shirts and stuff, and sometimes iron my shirts too if you think…

Cassie: Well if you want them ironed, I do them.

Nora: I never want them ironed!

Cassie: Yes, I know. [*laughs*]

Nora: … But it's good, we complement each other in that way. We have different skills, different things we remember or care about… It just comes very natural[ly] that we each did what we enjoyed the most.

Cassie: Or hate the least!

Nora: I don't think I hate anything about it, it's just that I wouldn't know how to go about DIY, for example, and you're so skilled at it so I'm happy to let you do it… Actually I feel quite lucky that we have different skills and interests, because then it never becomes like we hate cooking and 'urgh, I cooked last night, now it's your turn!' It's never like that, which I think is quite good because I don't think we ever really argue about housework or anything like that, do we?

Cassie: No.

Nora: I don't remember ever [arguing about housework] really.

Cassie: You get fed up with cooking sometimes.

Nora: Yeah… But that's not that common, that I get really fed up with it… I think it works quite well that we have our different inclinations and skills.

The *combined pattern* best explains how domestic tasks are divided in this couple's household. Cassie assumes primary responsibility for the laundry and ironing, tasks that are traditionally considered to be feminine, as well as performing the majority of the DIY, a traditionally masculine task. Meanwhile, Nora does the majority of the cooking, which is traditionally feminised, and the couple share the remaining household tasks roughly 50-50 regardless of their traditional gendered associations. As such, Nora and Cassie's division of housework cannot be understood in terms of dichotomously gendered (butch and femme) roles. Rather than assuming responsibility for particular tasks around the home due to identifying as butch and femme respectively, Nora and Cassie instead deploy their agency to create and perform domestic roles which suit them as a couple, resulting in a division of housework that is largely informed by each

partner's respective skills and preferences. Through their everyday negotiations of housework, Nora and Cassie create and maintain their material and imaginative home in ways that challenge and rework normative social understandings of dichotomously gendered domestic roles.

Jackie (security, 40s) is another participant who challenged the assumption that there is a straightforward association between assuming responsibility for particular domestic tasks and having a butch (or femme) appearance, gender and/or sexual identity. In her interview, Jackie commented that she and her partner Valerie (security, 40s) are both fairly butch in appearance, and that Valerie might be perceived to be more butch because of the way she looks but also because she is knowledgeable about plumbing and DIY. However, Jackie also highlighted that Valerie challenges the stereotypical butch domestic role through her 'soft' personality and engagement in traditionally female domestic tasks such as cooking:

> Some of my colleagues… perceive my partner as more of a butch person – mind you, she's not really! I mean, a straight person would never describe either of us as femme. A straight person would probably, out of the two of us, say that she's a bit more butch, because of the way she carriers herself and stuff like that, and the way she looks… and the sort of things she talks about as well, because she does the plumbing and knows how to do the electrics and things like that, they'd probably think of her as more butch… But actually, she'll do the cooking and she's actually a bit soft, you know.

Marnie (academic researcher, 30s) similarly discussed the extent to which the apportioning of domestic tasks in her household is influenced by the fact that her partner Bev (technical support, 30s) identifies as butch:

> You know, I don't particularly identify as femme… Because [Bev] is butch, I do think that she probably identifies with certain tasks more, like DIY stuff and like the gardening stuff. I don't really feel that anything I do is specific to my gender identity or

> sexuality… Yeah so actually there are a few little jobs that she probably associates herself with more because she thinks of herself as… butch.

From Marnie's interview it was clear she felt that her partner Bev's butch identity influences their apportioning of the DIY and gardening to an extent, as Bev identifies with these tasks which are traditionally seen as masculine. On the other hand, Marnie also commented that she is capable of doing these tasks too, and will sometimes take responsibility for them. Furthermore, she explained that Bev typically takes responsibility for the meal preparation and groceries shopping in their relationship, tasks which are traditionally thought of as feminine (Lake et al. 2006). This indicates that particular (domestic) behaviours or practices cannot be straightforwardly understood as either 'butch' or 'femme' (Walker et al. 2012). Marnie went on to say:

> I think people think of us as following some kind of normative gender role thing, which is irritating, which is why I would probably never tell them about things like my partner does the DIY… they just assume 'that's fine, I can make sense of this because they follow the same pattern as a man and a woman because she's butch and she's femme,' and it's much more complicated than that actually, and I wouldn't want to enforce that view.

Marnie rejected the notion that the division of domestic labour in her relationship could be understood in terms of traditionally gendered dichotomous roles. In many ways she and Bev subvert (hetero)normative domestic roles, as Marnie reported dividing the domestic labour roughly 50-50 and the couple follow a *shared pattern* of apportioning tasks, sharing responsibility for the majority of tasks regardless of whether they are traditionally considered masculine or feminine. Rather than gender, Marnie reported that the main factors influencing the division of domestic labour in their household are their respective preferences and the time that each partner has available to them, with Bev more likely to do domestic tasks such as groceries shopping if it is needed on a weekday evening because whilst the couple both work weekdays, Bev is typically home earlier than Marnie (see section 6.4). The meanings, preferences and roles that this

couple enact in their home space thus work to queer heteronormative social discourses of domesticity and associated gender roles. In terms of my theoretical perspective of critical geographies of home, the example of Marnie and Bev once more highlights the importance of considering how *personal* meanings and roles – as well as social (gendered) norms – are productive of the (imaginative) home.

Meanwhile, Fay (nurse, 40s) said in her interview that neither she nor her partner Ellie (probation worker, 50s) strongly identify as butch or femme. She explained that the division of domestic labour in their relationship cannot be understood in terms of butch and femme roles; and she sees these roles as a stereotype which do not reflect reality for many lesbian couples:

> Until I was 15-ish… I somehow got the idea that in a lesbian couple, one would be very male, short hair and trousers, and one would be very girly and female, and then they would fit into the traditional gender roles… What I now think is, same as for heterosexual couples, what goes on behind your front door is your own business – as long as it works for you I think that's fine.

As such, these participants also challenge the notion that coupled lesbian domesticity can be straightforwardly understood in terms of dichotomously gendered butch and femme domestic roles, wherein lesbians who identify as butch take responsibility for tasks that are traditionally masculinised; whilst lesbians who identify as femme take responsibility for tasks that are traditionally feminised. Instead, the attitudes and domestic practices of these participants speak to the plurality of (butch and femme) lesbian identities and domestic roles in contemporary England. This finding contributes to an existing body of literature on butch and femme lesbians in the social sciences, which suggests that certain ways of behaving cannot be straightforwardly mapped onto particular lesbian gender identities (Walker et al. 2012).

Whilst butch and femme identities are typically associated with lesbians, some of the male participants in the study also remarked upon the stereotype that when two men are in a relationship together, one partner will be more masculine and the other more

feminine, and that this will influence their apportioning of domestic tasks. Tim (administrator, 30s) is one participant who expressed strong feelings against this assumption. He said:

> I think some people do have this expectation that the 'femme' one will do the housework and the 'butch' one doesn't, but I don't like that division and I don't like people speaking about that kind of thing. I really don't like it. I don't think people fit into those categories. I think they're false categories. I tend to reject that quite strongly.

Similarly, Oscar (health promotion, 40s) commented that this assumption does not apply to his relationship, and instead stressed the importance of preference when it comes to the division of domestic labour between him and his partner:

> If one [male partner] is more feminine and one is more masculine, then there will perhaps be an assumption that the more feminine one will do the household chores and the more masculine one will do the other chores… I think that's why it's important for us both to say we both hate it, so we both do it!

Other men in the study commented on this, too. For example, during his interview it was clear that Bilal (student, 20s) does noticeably more of the domestic labour than his partner Ethan (teacher, 30s). At the same time, Bilal commented that Ethan is usually perceived to be more feminine than Bilal, which demonstrates that their division of domestic labour cannot be straightforwardly understood in terms of masculine and feminine relationship roles or identities. Another participant, Dean (psychologist, 30s) commented that neither he or his partner William (telecoms, 30s) are particularly butch and so neither of them particularly identify with the task of DIY; yet he also explained the apportioning of the DIY in terms of fear and competence, saying that William tends to take greater responsibility for this task because he is a little better at it than Dean. Overall, he suggested that the main factors influencing the couple's approach to domestic labour are preferences, standards and skills rather than the fact that neither of them consider themselves to be butch (see section 6.4). These couples therefore use

their agency and creativity to perform domestic roles which are expressive of their non-heteronormative (sexuality and gender) identities, personalities and relationships, rather than basing their domestic role division on (hetero)normative social scripts of domestic meanings and (gendered) roles.

6.3 Questioning the feminisation of domestic labour in LGBTQ homes

Thus far in this chapter I have built a picture of the various personal attitudes and approaches towards domestic labour through which the participating LGBTQ couples subvert heteronormative social discourses of domesticity and associated gender norms in their homes. Kentlyn (2008) has previously considered how the subversion of normatively gendered domestic roles operates. In their interviews with lesbian and gay couples from Brisbane and south-east Queensland, Australia, they found that most participants saw domestic labour as a low status, feminised activity. This is perhaps not surprising, given the weight of history and long-standing gendered norms with regards to domestic labour (Crompton 2006; McDowell 1999). As such, Kentlyn (2008) conceptualises domestic labour as a way of 'doing femininity' and argues that how lesbians and gay men engage with domestic labour reveals the degree to which their identity is feminised. Here the argument is that gender norms are subverted – and queer domestic roles, meanings and identities expressed – through engagement (or lack thereof) with this feminised form of labour. However, I argue that this tactic does not destabilise the underlying gender dualism of housework and waged work.

My study, too, indicates that the mundane practice of domestic labour plays an important role in challenging heteronormatively gendered social imaginaries of domesticity and expressing queer identities and roles in the home. However, in contrast to the findings of Kentlyn (2008), the LGBTQ participants that I interviewed did not articulate using certain kinds of domestic labour to enact a traditional form of femininity (or other household maintenance tasks to enact a traditional form of masculinity). As such, their subversion of gender norms cannot be understood in terms of 'doing

femininity' through domestic labour. Rather, I argue that the participants subvert gender norms by resisting the idea that domestic labour is naturally or normally women's work, or that by performing domestic labour they are necessarily performing a feminised identity. Throughout the interview process the overriding attitude expressed towards domestic labour was one of destabilising its associations with women and the feminine, as the majority of participants see these associations as maintaining heteronormative gender roles. For example, Oscar (health promotion, 40s) is a cisgender gay man who argued that conceptualising domestic labour as women's work is an unhelpful stereotype:

> I like to think that I'm beyond the gender stereotypes… so I don't think [domestic labour] is any one particular gender's role.

Seb (unemployed, 20s) is a queer transgender man who also challenged the traditional gendering of domestic labour:

> I try not to subscribe to this thought that some things are 'women's work' or 'men's work' because I think that reinforces gender stereotypes… I'm a man that likes to do laundry, so what? Why does it have to be, 'oh it's because you're more of a feminine trans man' … That's bollocks!

Meanwhile, in their interview, lesbian couple Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s) discussed the idea that some domestic tasks are 'pink' (or women's work) and some are 'blue' (or men's work):

> Olivia: It does irritate me when people suggest that you somehow need a man…
> Isobel: Some of our friends talk about pink jobs and blue jobs.
> Olivia: They talk about pink jobs and blue jobs, and we're like 'no'.

For these couples, rejecting the idea that domestic labour is solely women's work, or a way of enacting femininity, is a way of rejecting heteronormative ways of living in and looking after the home. I argue that domestic labour then becomes a queer activity,

through which LGBTQ individuals can subvert normatively gendered domestic roles and bring forth a queer identity within the spaces of the home. This moves the debate on from simply shifting or flip-flopping within the gendered dualism. For some interviewees, the queering of domestic roles was treated as a source of humour. They playfully discussed how the division of domestic labour in their home might be perceived through a heteronormative lens. For example, cisgender lesbian Susan (retail manager, 40s) remarked:

> We do have a laugh about that, actually… I don't touch the washing, I don't do any ironing, so I must be the man!

In addition, cisgender lesbian Megan (HR business partner, 30s) joked:

> When we're doing a DIY project, I tend to be in charge of that, and I'll wander round with power tools and people will take the mickey and say I'm being the boy… I've got a brilliant response to 'who's the boy in your relationship?' I say it's like asking which chopstick is the fork! [*laughs*]

Due to the division of domestic labour in their respective relationships, Susan and Megan joked that they would be interpreted as taking on the 'male' role from a heteronormative perspective. For Susan this is due to her lack of engagement with the laundry and ironing, tasks that are traditionally thought of as female. For Megan it is due to her taking primary responsibility for the DIY, a task that is traditionally thought of as male. Both women used humour to reject this heteronormative interpretation of their domestic roles, a strategy which has been identified in other studies of domestic labour in lesbian households (Rawsthorne and Costello 2010). Rather than explaining the apportioning of this labour in terms of heteronormative gender roles, both Susan and Megan challenged the normative gendering of these domestic tasks.

Meanwhile, other participants presented the queering of domestic roles as a serious outcome that they seek to achieve through their attitudes and behaviours at home. These participants were more explicit in arguing that they see their relationship, and associated

domestic activities, as a direct critique of normative gender roles. Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) asserted:

> I think we're very conscious of it as well. Gender. So we would, you know, if I found myself in a stereotypically gendered context, I would recognise it and I think I would say, 'hang on, what's going on?'

Positioning his relationship in contrast to the traditional heterosexual relationship, in which men and women assume separate, gendered roles, Justin (police officer, 20s) said:

> We're pretty modern in the respects that we do it equally and try and do our fair share… We live with pretty much all aspects of life shared. Shared lives, shared money, shared housework.

Whilst Marnie (academic researcher, 30s) reflected:

> In the home, whatever split you've got, it kind of is just what works for you as a couple, isn't it? But at the same time, if there was something about it that reinforced normative perceptions of gender, I'd be really pissed off about it as well!

These participants reject heteronormative ways of living in and looking after their home by remaining conscious of the division of domestic labour in their relationship; and seeking to avoid any divisions that are based on hierarchical gender roles. Instead, the majority of couples that I interviewed indicated that they base their division of domestic labour on the principles of fairness or equality. This finding is in-keeping with existing literature, which indicates that a strong ideology of fairness tends to underlie roles and power relations in lesbian and gay relationships (Perlesz et al. 2010; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Patterson 2000).

Whilst it would be easy to end this section here with a reasonably 'neat' picture of the subversion of gender norms in LGBTQ homes, Gabb (2009, 2010) is critical of the

impetus amongst researchers to tidy up the data or accounts they present. She places value on retaining some 'messiness' in qualitative analyses, as this allows for more nuanced understandings of our participants' experiences, which are often complex or contradictory. Gabb (2010, 2013) argues that avoiding the temptation to 'tie up' loose ends in research is not evidence of sloppy or incomplete methods; rather, it better represents the complexity of everyday life. As such, it is important to note that there were also times when the participants *did* discuss their attitudes or approaches towards domestic labour in terms of traditionally gendered norms. One participant who talked about the division of domestic labour in their household in these terms was Ruby (FE teacher, 50s). Ruby is a heterosexual transgender woman who lives with her partner Jan and Jan's 9-year-old daughter Kelly in South Yorkshire. Jan is also a transgender woman, but has not yet started transitioning and is not 'out' publicly or to their daughter. In her interview, Ruby discussed feeling a responsibility for the domestic labour as a woman:

> The other day we had somebody coming round to do [some maintenance work] so I vacuumed down all the rooms that they were likely to go into and Jan said 'why, they're coming in just to do some work' and I said 'yeah but I don't want it to be, you know, I don't want them to think the house is so [dirty] they have to wipe their feet when they walk out of the door!' And [Jan said] 'Oh, they'll not be bothered. I'm sure they've seen worse,' and I said, 'Yeah but I see it as a woman, and they won't be judging you if the house is dirty, they'll be judging me! They'll be like, "what woman lives here that leaves the house in a mess?"' … And I'm really embarrassed if it's dirty, if it's not perfect, if there's too many clothes around in the wash basket at the top of the stairs and things like that, and if Kelly's thrown all her toys all over the place… In a way, I needn't think like that… but I feel like I'm recognisably the woman in the house and people are going to judge me.

As noted in Chapter 4, Ruby performs almost all of the domestic labour in the couple's home. She described herself as taking on a traditionally feminine domestic role, which

she understood to mean combining responsibility for the majority of the domestic labour, as well as engaging in waged employment. Ruby suggested that, because her partner Jan has not yet started to transition and 'outsiders' typically read the couple as male/female, she feels more strongly that domestic labour is a role that is expected of her. Rather than viewing dichotomously gendered domestic roles as something to be subverted, Ruby expressed in her interview that she was happy with the way she and her partner divide the domestic labour; and positively described taking on a traditionally feminine role in her home. Her experiences thus complicate the overall picture of the participating LGBTQ couples queering domestic roles and responsibilities in this thesis.

Another participant, Susan (retail manager, 40s), suggested that female socialisation results in women including herself and her partner Lara feeling a responsibility towards the domestic labour:

> Women tend to… because of how we've been brought up and how it's been instilled into us that we should be the homemakers and we should be the housewives and that sort of thing, we tend to do [the domestic labour]. Like, [*to Lara*] I do something and you do something… Whereas if it's a man and a woman, the man wouldn't whereas the woman will, because that's how… we've been told we should be.

Whilst earlier in the chapter I showed how Susan used humour to reject the normative gendering of domestic roles and responsibilities, the above quotation indicates that she does feel that domestic labour in her household is shaped by normative social understandings of gender roles to an extent. Referring once more to my theoretical perspective of the home as a space imbued with both social and personal meanings, this example of Susan indicates that 'disrupting' heteronormative social means of the domestic with personal (queer) meanings and roles is not necessarily a straightforward process. Heteronormative understandings of domestic roles and gendered responsibilities are entrenched in social imaginaries of home, and thus may influence even the participating LGBTQ individuals who purport to reject heteronormatively gendered divisions of domestic labour. Indeed, the contradictory sentiments expressed by Susan during her interview indicate that her attitudes and approaches towards

domestic roles and meanings in her home are multifaceted and complex, both challenging and to a certain extent supporting (hetero)normative social discourses of home.

Teresa (FE educator, 40s) similarly expressed ambiguous or complicated opinions about the feminisation of domestic labour during her joint interview with her partner Fred (mathematician, 20s):

> Teresa: We've got a system that works and means household chores don't become an issue or something that could cause arguments, when I think when we first moved in they looked like they could have done.
>
> Fred: Well, we were still working out who was going to do what, and I think you seemed to act like you thought you needed to do far more than I thought was your fair share. You acted like you needed to be the stereotype housewife, is how I sort of felt when you moved in. I'm like, no, no, no. That's not how it works.
>
> Teresa: But then I didn't have a job then, so… [Fred] explained that job hunting is sort of a job in itself, whereas I felt I wasn't doing anything, Fred made it clear I actually was.
>
> Fred: That's what frustrated me. I thought you were perfectly pulling your weight and that there was no need to kind of run round like a headless chicken! I thought you were just turning into my mother! I think that's what I was scared of. I felt for years like my mother just lived to do the cleaning and the housework, and I didn't want that to be the case… and I was worried you were going more like that! Or more to the point that you felt pressure that that's how you 'ought to be,' in inverted commas.

Teresa: And that's when you went on your really strong feminist rants, which kind of annoyed me, but I'm the sort of person who, the more you would come out with what's perfectly reasonable feminist stuff, I would react against it. I'd suddenly turn into almost like this 1950s monster! [*laughs*] And sort of wanting to take control, and 'the house is mine!' And then Fred, you said, 'we're not having this'… I mean, the mad thing is although I've said Fred is the stronger feminist, I still am a feminist, just not to the same radical degree I don't think… there's still a bit of me that actually says, there is bloke stuff and there is women's stuff, and I know it's nonsense! That's the mad thing! I know it's nonsense… And I can't even explain why I say it.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, in many ways Teresa and Fred disrupt heteronormative social imaginaries of home and associated understandings of dichotomously gendered domestic roles because they divide the domestic labour roughly 50-50 and tend to apportion domestic tasks without regard for their traditional gendered associations, thereby bringing their own (queer) meanings and roles to the spaces of the home. However, the comments from Teresa presented above demonstrate that even individuals who engage in feminist politics and do not enact traditionally gendered roles in their homes may still express contradictory opinions about the gendering of domestic labour, and refer to dominant heteronormative social discourses in their conceptualisations of the imaginary home, its meanings and associated domestic roles. In suggesting in this thesis that the participating LGBTQ couples queer heteronormative discourses of domesticity and disrupt dichotomously gendered relationship roles in the home, I therefore recognise that this is not a straightforward process, applicable to all LGBTQ couples at all times. Rather, I acknowledge that approaches and attitudes towards the queering of domestic roles and meanings may be contradictory and complex, involving the interplay of influential and dominant (heteronormative) social discourses of domesticity and personal meanings and understandings of the home.

6.4 Factors influencing the division of domestic labour in LGBTQ coupled homes

Applying a critical geography of the home as a space in which socially acceptable forms of sexual identity and behaviours are normalised and contested to my analysis of the division of domestic labour in LGBTQ coupled households helps this thesis to understand dominant heteronormative ideologies of home, and the ways in which these might be subverted through people bringing their own (queer) meanings and roles to the home space. The perceived normativity of coupled domesticity means that on one hand the LGBTQ couples in this study could be seen to fit in with normative social ideals of domestic family life. On the other hand, these couples subvert (hetero)normative domestic ideals by destabilising the traditional gender norms which associate domestic labour with women. As my analysis thus far has shown, the participants interviewed do not tend to structure their division of domestic labour according to normative gender roles. Indeed, many of the interview quotations that I have utilised in this chapter indicate the participants' strength of feeling against heteronormative interpretations of their domestic practices and roles (sometimes expressed stridently, sometimes humorously). For these couples, domestic labour is in fact an activity through which they can subvert (hetero)normatively gendered domestic roles and meanings, and instead produce and maintain homes which affirm their queer identities and relationships. In the absence of traditional gender roles structuring the division of domestic labour in these LGBTQ households, and often in an attempt to ensure that the division of domestic labour is fair, the apportioning of domestic tasks between partners is usually influenced by factors such as the time availability, personal preferences, standards and skills of each partner. This highlights that *personal* meanings, values and desires can play a key role in the (re)production of the (imaginative) home; and in particular should be taken into account when *queering* critical geographies of home or emphasising how socially acceptable forms of (sexuality and gender) identity and behaviour are *contested* by individuals or couples in and through the spaces of the home.

Discussing same-sex relationships in general, as well as her own lesbian relationship specifically, Connie (academic researcher, 30s) said:

> In a same-sex relationship… things are negotiated over time, and people play to their strengths, and people play to what they like doing, and obviously one person in the couple might have more time than the other one, but it's more those factors rather than an intrinsic factor about the person's gender that determines who does what.

Similarly, bisexual participant Dean (psychologist, 30s) explained how he and his partner William divide the domestic labour without basing these divisions on heteronormative roles or scripts:

> I think that is how it's got into competence and hatred and fear as the dividers, because there isn't any other way of dividing it up, actually. I've always been under the impression that it's actually a lot more difficult for non-straight couples to divide this stuff up, because unless you subscribe to any of the kind of cultural stereotypes, you actually have to think a lot more seriously about who does what, so I think it's a good thing really. It feels properly in the realms of diversity and equality, the way we've had to kind of manage stuff.

Whilst studies of heterosexual couples have also discussed the apportioning of domestic labour in terms of time availability, personal preferences, standards and skills, women still perform more of the domestic labour in the majority of heterosexual households, indicating that traditional gender norms continue to be the overriding factor shaping the domestic roles of these couples (Beagan et al. 2008; Crompton 2006; Kaufmann 1998). Seemingly gender-neutral rationales for the division of domestic labour in heterosexual households are often grounded in unspoken assumptions about gendered roles and responsibilities (Beagan et al. 2008; Pfeffer 2010). Societal expectations regarding the dichotomous gendering of preferences, standards and skills around the home mean that caregiving and homemaking are commonly assumed to be the preserve of women, and heterosexual women are expected to maintain higher standards of cleanliness or tidiness than their male partners (Erickson 2005; Beagan et al. 2008). Furthermore, Beagan et al.

(2008) note that even when both partners in a heterosexual couple have similar paid work schedules, time availability is often used to explain why the female partner performs more of the domestic labour, again revealing underlying assumptions about gendered responsibilities in heterosexual households. In contrast to the patterns reported in heterosexual couples, the LGBTQ participants in the current study disrupt such implicit expectations about dichotomously gendered domestic roles. With reference to the theoretical framework of this thesis, and its *queering* of critical geographies of home, these findings indicate that it is important to acknowledge that the queer home is (re)produced by participating LGBTQ couples who bring *their own* meanings, values and roles to this space, and in doing so *contest* (hetero)normative social scripts regarding the gendering of domestic meanings, roles and responsibilities. In the final section of this chapter, I explore in more detail how the participating LGBTQ couples move beyond (hetero)normative discourses of domesticity and (re)produce queer domestic roles and meanings which are instead based upon their personal understandings of time availability, preferences, standards and skills. I begin by discussing how time availability influences their divisions of domestic labour.

6.4.1 Time availability

In the present study, the majority of couples emphasised the role of time availability when discussing how they divide domestic labour between them. Usually 'available time' was understood as time that is not spent in waged employment. If an individual has a paid job with long working hours, then the amount of time they have available for domestic labour is limited (de Meester et al. 2011; Patterson et al. 2004). For example, George (academic researcher, 30s) tends to take on noticeably more of the domestic labour because he usually has more time available than his partner Alan (primary school teacher, 30s). As George explained:

> [Alan's] job is incredibly time consuming and he has less time at his disposal to do things than me. My job is quite demanding as well, but his job is very time-consuming in term-time, because

> he's a teacher. In term-time, he works very long days and when he comes home has to work as well, in the evenings, so I tend to shoulder a bit more of the burden, because I know he's busy.

This was a common pattern to emerge from the interviews. In 31 of the 38 couples studied, both partners engage in some form of waged work or higher education study. In 4 couples one partner works in waged employment and the other is either unemployed or retired. In another couple, both partners are currently stay-at-home parents although one partner is looking for work. In the remaining 2 couples, one partner is a stay-at-home parent whilst the other partner works full time. Typically, the participants reported that if one partner spends noticeably fewer (or no) hours in waged employment or study then they will take greater responsibility for the domestic labour in their household (see also Carrington 1999; Patterson et al. 2004; Solomon et al. 2005; Kamano 2009). This sets these LGBTQ couples apart from heterosexual couples, as there is evidence to suggest that even when both partners in a heterosexual relationship spend the same number of hours in waged employment, women continue to perform a larger share of the domestic labour, or 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989; de Meester et al. 2011; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010).

A number of couples also pointed out that the relative hours they spend in waged employment or studying are not fixed, and so the time they have available for doing the domestic labour fluctuates over time. One such couple is Teresa and Fred. Teresa (FE educator, 40s) is a cisgender lesbian whilst Fred (mathematician, 20s) is a straight transgender man. The couple usually split the domestic labour in their household roughly 50-50, although Teresa explained that this temporarily changed when she took on the additional job of marking examination papers the previous summer:

> I did some exam marking for A-levels for the [examination] board in June, and I had a couple of weeks where literally any time I had was marking, so Fred a couple of times when I was at my heaviest point said, 'right, I'm doing the cooking. You carry on with this,' and when Fred's been really busy at work or been out with meetings and stuff, I've said I'll do the washing up. So

> we're flexible around kind of thinking about the commitments each other has.

Teresa usually takes responsibility for the meal preparation in their relationship, whilst Fred does the washing up. However, in their interview the couple explained that that if either of them are particularly busy with work or other commitments then they will alter their apportioning of domestic labour accordingly, with the partner who has more time available taking on domestic tasks that the other partner usually performs. This indicates that the division of domestic labour in their household shifts and changes over time, and that their domestic roles thus cannot be understood in normatively gendered terms.

Other couples also reported similar patterns. For example, lesbian participant Naomi (student, 20s) is studying nursing and works longer and more sporadic hours when she is on a nursing placement than when she is based at university. As such, her relative contribution to the domestic labour is somewhat reduced when she is on placement. Meanwhile, Diane (writer, 50s) is a bisexual transgender woman and she explained that her partner Margaret, who is employed by the National Trust, has longer working hours during the summer. This means that Diane usually does more of the domestic labour – and particularly the meal preparation – during the summer months. For these couples, the division of domestic labour fluctuates in line with the relative hours they are spending in waged work or studying: the partner with the most time available tends to assume more of the domestic responsibilities at any point in time. Rather than structuring their domestic roles according to (hetero)normative scripts, these couples (re)produce queer domestic meanings and roles by employing their agency, and remaining flexible and adaptive in their approaches towards domestic labour and its division over time.

6.4.2 Preferences

If one partner has a preference for (or aversion to) a particular task, then this was also reported to shape the apportioning of domestic labour in the couple's household, as

exemplified by this quotation from Seb (unemployed, 20s), a queer transgender man who lives with his cisgender lesbian girlfriend:

> There's certain jobs that my partner Mai and I… seem to prefer to the other one, which has happened naturally, which is quite nice… She's very particular about [having a] very clean bath and bathroom and these sorts of things. I, on the other hand, prefer to clean the kitchen.

The division of domestic labour between Seb and Mai follows the *segmented pattern* introduced in the Chapter 4, as the couple split the domestic labour by task, largely according to their preferences. Seb said that these respective preferences tend to complement each other and result in a roughly 50-50 division of domestic labour. For example, whist Seb prefers the tasks of preparing meals and cleaning the kitchen, Mai likes to do the vacuuming and clean the bathroom. This division of domestic tasks according to preference was evident in many other participating couples. Tasks that one partner performs because they enjoy this task more than their partner include vacuuming (for Daniel, Henry, Ivy, Paula and Milo); DIY (for Bradley, Gina and Sean); gardening (for Ed and Leanne); making telephone calls (for Alfie and Zoe); meal preparation (for Valerie, Susan, Tim and Paula); ironing (for Jackie); laundry (for Vivian and Yvette); washing up (for Spencer) and groceries shopping (for Harriet). In some instances, a couple reported that they both enjoy a particular domestic task and so share responsibility for it. For example, with regards to meal preparation, 13 out of the 16 couples who routinely share this task explained that this is because they both enjoy cooking. Once more these divisions of domestic labour according to preferences point to the creativity of the participating LGBTQ couples in moving beyond prescriptive, heteronormatively gendered scripts of domesticity and instead creating their own (queer) domestic roles and meanings which suit them as both individuals and couples.

6.4.3 Standards

The majority of participants also explained that the division of domestic labour in their relationship is informed by their personal standards of tidiness or cleanliness, a finding which echoes those of previous studies (Pfeffer 2010; Kamano 2009). Out of the 21 couples who reported a roughly equal division of domestic labour in their household, 13 said that both partners having *similar* standards of cleanliness or tidiness is a major factor influencing this division. Meanwhile, of the 17 couples in which one partner does either noticeably more or almost all of the domestic labour, 9 of these couples explained their division of domestic labour in their household in terms of having *different* standards of cleanliness or tidiness to their partner. For example, Tim (administrator, 30s) said that one of the main reasons that he does more of the domestic labour than his partner Patrick is that he has higher standards of cleanliness:

> I'm a bit fussier about housework as well – I like it a particular way and I get flustered if the house is a mess. I can't work in mess, I am constantly tidying up so I have a neat and tidy space… He's not a grub, but yeah if I clean the bathroom I get down on my hands and knees and scrub, whereas Patrick will kind of wipe the cloth over it, and [he thinks] that's clean. Which it is, but it's not properly clean as I… like things to be.

In contrast, Aidan and Francesca both explained that their respective partners have higher standards of cleanliness than they do, resulting in their partners performing more of the domestic labour. Aidan (customer assistant, <20) remarked:

> He's a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to cleaning. I'm average when it comes to cleaning, like I'll clean once it gets messy. But he doesn't like it to get messy, so he just starts cleaning.

Meanwhile Francesca (student, 20s) said:

> [The cleaning] normally gets done before it reaches my level of intolerance. She has a much lower threshold for that. She'll crack before me, so she'll do most of it. Her standards of tidiness are higher than mine. Much higher.

At times, such differences in standards and the associated uneven divisions of particular domestic tasks can trigger arguments between partners, as was reflected upon by Aidan (customer assistant, <20) and Rob (student, <20):

> CB: So if I say the word "housework" to you, what's the first thing you guys think of?
> Aidan: Arguments! It's the source of our arguments!
> CB: Yeah?
> Rob: He doesn't like doing the housework!
> Aidan: It's not that I don't like doing it. I don't mind. It's the way he takes it to just another level. He's just too clean for me…

Connie (academic researcher, 30s) similarly explained that she has higher standards than her partner Harriet with regards to certain domestic tasks such as vacuuming, meaning that she tends to perform more of this labour. The uneven apportioning of such tasks occasionally leads to tension in their household:

> I do whinge a little bit sometimes, like last weekend I did vacuum the bedroom because it was absolutely filthy, because we've got the cat and because she spends a lot of time in the bedroom it does get very covered in cat hair… It's not [Harriet's] fault but sometimes it gets to the state where it really does need doing. So I do under the bed, trying to do round the edges and everything. I did have a bit of a whinge to her about that. Why let it get to that state? But it's as much me as it is her.

Despite such arguments, the participants who report doing more of the domestic labour than their partner due to having higher standards usually remarked that this extra labour

is worth their time and effort, as it means that the household looks the way they want it to. They largely saw the uneven division of domestic labour in their relationship as a choice, based on differences in standards between them and their partner. In making the deliberate decision to perform a greater proportion of the domestic labour in line with their personal standards of cleanliness or tidiness, these participants maintain a sense of agency over their domestic role, as opposed to understanding their division of labour as reproducing traditionally gendered dichotomous roles. Once more, this points to the importance of taking personal agencies and meanings into account when theorising the queerness of the imaginative LGBTQ home.

6.4.4 Skills

Skill was reported to influence the apportioning of at least one domestic task in 33 out of the 38 LGBTQ couples in this study. Whilst according to a heteronormative discourse it is assumed that most household skills are innately female, and maintenance and DIY skills innately male, the LGBTQ participants in this study subvert these normative associations. For example, Milo (customer services assistant, 20s) is a queer transgender man who is in a relationship with another transgender man, Isaac. Milo explained that he and his partner divide the traditionally feminised household tasks between them, according to who is better at each task. With regards to ironing and meal preparation, he commented:

> I iron, because [Isaac] can't iron for toffee. [*laughs*] He'll iron, and you've watched him do it, but it's not right. So no, I iron… Isaac cooks. I can't cook.

Meanwhile, Marnie (academic researcher, 30s) reported that her partner Bev (technical support, 30s) is better than her at both the traditionally masculinised task of DIY and the traditionally feminised task of meal preparation, and therefore tends to take primary responsibility for these tasks in their household:

> I suppose we go with our skills… Well, it is skills. It's about the fact that she is more practical. She knows what needs doing to do something. If I was just to suddenly decide to decorate a room, you know, there would be very important key things that I wouldn't do, because I don't know about them, like I probably should have sanded something down and I've not. I'd just get it wrong. So there are certain skills – you know, the cooking. She's got professional experience cooking, so that's definitely about skills… So yes, it's partly on skills and abilities and experience.

As demonstrated by the two examples above, the respective skill sets of the participating couples do not fall along traditionally gendered lines. Thus, their associated divisions of domestic labour cannot be understood in terms of normatively gendered domestic skills. In explaining their non-heteronormative apportioning of domestic tasks in terms of skill, these participants again challenge the assumptions that domestic labour is naturally or innately women's work; and that maintenance and DIY are naturally or innately men's work.

If a couple perceive there to be a noticeable difference in their skills with regards to a particular domestic task, then the partner who is thought to be best at the task usually takes primary responsibility for it. As such, the other partner is less likely to develop their skills in this area. On the other hand, Ivy (unemployed, 30s) and Leanne (academic researcher, 30s) explained how their mutual desire to improve their skills means that domestic tasks are not always performed by the partner who is deemed to be better at them:

> Ivy: I think in the course of our relationship, over the years, we've just discovered what people's strengths are and then sometimes one of us wants to build the strength so then they're told…
>
> Leanne: 'Now you're doing this today!'
>
> Ivy: Yeah, or whatever. I think the trick is not to have ego about thinking you're the only one who can do

> something, or you know, investing too much of your self-worth in doing it.

The same idea was expressed by Kim (banker, 20s) and Naomi (student, 20s). Whilst Naomi usually prepared meals at the beginning of their relationship, due to both partners seeing this as one of her strengths, Kim has since sought to improve her cooking. She now assumes greater responsibility for meal preparation, in order to practice her cooking skills. Howard (student, 20s) similarly discussed teaching his partner Johnny (student, 20s) to cook certain dishes; and Fay (nurse, 40s) discussed learning DIY skills from her partner Ellie (probation worker, 50s), which has resulted in Johnny and Fay assuming greater responsibility for these domestic tasks over the course of their respective relationships. Thus, the division of domestic labour by skill has shifted over time within some of the participating LGBTQ couples, as each partner learns new skills or seeks to develop their skills. The domestic roles that these couples assume are in part shaped by their desires and capacities to learn new skills; and by employing their personal agencies these couples queer the dominant, heteronormative discourse of domesticity, which contains within it the assumption that skills are dichotomously gendered and that rigid gender divisions of various household tasks are similarly 'natural' and 'normal'.

6.5 Conclusion

Coupled domesticity and everyday performances of mundane household tasks may not appear to be particularly 'queer' at first glance. However, throughout my analysis in this chapter I have shown that the (privileged) LGBTQ couples in this study disrupt the logic of heterosexual order which underlies normative understandings of dichotomously gendered domestic roles. As such, this chapter argues that everyday practices of domestic labour can serve as activities through which the entrenched social discourse of the heterosexual home is subverted, but in complex ways, as on the surface some LGBTQ couples in my sample seemingly fit in with normative ideals of domestic family life. For example, many couples remarked upon how the division of domestic

labour in their home might be perceived through a heteronormative lens. However, one of the key findings of this chapter is that the participants did not usually articulate using domestic labour to enact a traditional form of femininity (or household maintenance tasks such as DIY to enact a traditional masculinity). Instead, their attitude towards domestic labour is one of destabilising the traditional gendered associations of various household tasks, as they see these associations as reflective of heteronormative ways of living in and looking after the home. Rather than being structured by dichotomous domestic roles, the domestic labour within the participating couples is often purposefully apportioned according to the partners' respective preferences, standards, skills and hours spent in waged employment or studying. This chapter draws upon and extends my theoretical framework by emphasising the importance of the participating LGBTQ couples' personal meanings of home, agency and creativity in transgressing (hetero)normative social discourses of home as a space in which cohabiting heterosexual partners assume separate, gendered roles. Most notably, this chapter argues that it is often through their deliberate negotiations and conscious decision-making regarding their respective domestic roles and responsibilities that the LGBTQ couples in this study bring forth queer ways of living in the home.

Chapter 7: Queering the family home: childcare in LGBTQ parent households

7.1 Introduction

According to dominant parenting scripts in the West, it is the woman's role to care for children within the context of the heterosexual family home. This discourse of the nuclear heterosexual family home, in which men and women take on separate, gendered parenting roles, is deeply embedded within contemporary British society and continues to be privileged as the 'natural' and 'normal' way of living and raising children. Meanwhile, in popular British culture – and particularly within tabloid journalism – lesbian and gay parenting is often viewed as problematic or against the norm (Ryan-Flood 2009; Ryan and Berkowitz 2009; Patterson and Farr 2011). However, in the past two decades, LGBTQ couples have increasingly planned and created families together through means such as assisted reproduction, surrogacy and adoption; and have often gone on to raise their children together in a family home (Luzia 2013; Ryan and Berkowitz 2009; Taylor 2009; Gabb 2005a). Whilst they may be seen to support dominant societal ideals of coupled domesticity and childrearing, in this chapter I argue that the (privileged) LGBTQ parents in this study also challenge normative assumptions about the straightforward links between heterosexuality, gendered parenting roles, and the family home. In order to make this argument, this chapter will draw attention to the everyday spaces of LGBTQ parenting in England, and explore the participating LGBTQ parents' attitudes and approaches towards the gendering and division of childcare in their homes. Similarly to the last chapter, I will draw upon my theoretical framework of the home as a space imbued with both social and personal meanings, and queering as an anti-heteronormative process which may take place even within the everyday spaces of the home, in order to explore the extent to which the participating LGBTQ parents create and maintain homes which disrupt or queer (hetero)normative social discourses of (gendered) parenting roles and the family home.

To explore these themes this chapter will focus on the everyday lives of five[9] participating couples who are raising either one or two children between the ages of 4 months and 18 years. Focussing on a small number of participants allows for an in-depth analysis of their lived experiences, and helps to uncover more of the nuances in their home lives (Gorman-Murray 2006a, 2007). The participants focussed on in this chapter became parents in the following ways: two couples adopted, one couple used surrogacy, and two couples formed stepfamilies when they moved in together, as one partner from each of these two couples already had a child from a previous heterosexual relationship. Participants with adult children over the age of 18 were not included in this analysis chapter, because the aim was to focus on current practices of childcare for those aged 18 and under.

The chapter is split into three main sections. Section 7.2 introduces the participants who form the focus of this chapter, and considers in detail the ways in which they became parents. It explores how these LGBTQ couples challenge idealised discourses of starting a family as a romantic and private coupled activity taking place within the heterosexual family home. Next, section 7.3 discusses how the LGBTQ parents in this study divide the childcare in their homes, emphasising how the everyday domestic lives of these couples disrupt the normative expectation that childcare will be performed by the female partner within the context of a heterosexual coupled relationship. Section 7.4 then considers the impact of having children on a couple's division of domestic labour more broadly. It highlights the increased work around the home that is necessitated by the presence of children, and explores how the participating parents approach and apportion the domestic labour in their households. Over the course of the chapter I build up a picture of the ways in which the family home is queered by the participating LGBTQ parents, through their everyday practices and divisions of childcare.

[9] One additional participant had children but their everyday parenting practices are not considered in detail in this chapter. This is because the participant took part in a written email interview (see Chapter 3), and chose not to answer my follow up questions on parenting.

7.2 Beyond the heterosexual nuclear family home

Due to revolutions in medical technologies and shifting social attitudes, LGBTQ couples in contemporary Western societies are now better able to start a family together than ever before (Bos 2013; Ryan and Berkowitz 2009; Ryan-Flood 2009; Taylor 2009). In order to have children, many LGBTQ couples use assisted reproduction, surrogacy or adoption. Others share the care of children from previous (heterosexual) relationships or may form a variety of creative kinship ties, for example a lesbian couple sharing parenting with a male friend (Berkowitz 2013). Whilst the heteronormative discourse of parenting characterises the home as the intimate site of biological reproduction, for many LGBTQ couples the process of becoming parents entails moving beyond the private spaces of the home into more public spaces such as assisted reproduction clinics; and is not only a coupled activity but also requires the involvement of third parties such as egg and/or sperm donors, surrogates, or social workers (Bos 2013; Luzia 2010, 2013; Taylor 2009). Of course, many heterosexual couples also use these means to start a family, as estimates by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggest that one in seven heterosexual couples in the UK are affected by infertility (NICE 2013).

Of the five couples focussed on in this chapter, three couples planned and started a family together: two through adoption and one through surrogacy. The couples who adopted their children discussed this means of starting a family as a somewhat complex process, involving paperwork, telephone calls, matching panels, and liaising with social workers (see also Farr and Patterson 2013; Taylor 2009). Lesbian couple Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s) are currently in the process of adopting their 2-year-old daughter, who has lived with them at their home in Winchester for around 7 months. In their interview the couple explained that during the adoption process, their home was made 'public' to third parties, as social workers used home visits to assess the couple's eligibility to adopt. Gay couple Liam (stay-at-home Dad, 30s) and Bradley (chef, 30s) discussed in more detail how their experience of starting a family through adoption was mediated by third parties and external factors:

CB: How long did the adoption process take?

Liam: Not that long. We applied in July 2011, she was placed with us [at the] end of 2012, and the actual end of the process will hopefully be next month because they've made all the social workers redundant so we've just been stuck in limbo land. It's only just one more form that we have to put in.

Bradley: We were meant to be signed off end of January, February time, but they made our social worker redundant at the end of January, and it's only now…

Liam: It makes no difference except that I can't go abroad! And my sister lives in Germany on an army base, so I'll definitely go over and stay there, but we can't get a passport until the adoption has gone through. Plus you feel like you're free then, no more social workers every six weeks, and it'll be like two years of like social workers round the house all the time. It used to be like once a week at one time.

Bradley: We were quick compared to everyone for getting matched. Thirteen months before we got matched, we then had to wait another couple of months because they couldn't book in time to do the matching panel, to actually agree on a time when we could take her. I think it was August that we were matched with her and then we had to wait until November [for the matching panel].

Liam: You had to go to a matching panel, it's a legal thing, and it was so annoying because… they asked us *one* question, we're in there, then rubber stamped it. They said to Bradley 'so are you going to take two weeks adoption leave?' And he was like, 'er, yeah.' And they were like, 'alright.' Stamped. It was such a waste of time!

Whilst the length of time the couple had to wait to be matched with a child was relatively short, they nevertheless expressed frustration at the delays to the adoption process caused by public sector cuts and social worker redundancies, external factors which were clearly out of their control. Such delays made more difficult an already emotional process, as the couple feel that they missed out on three months of their daughter's life as a result. The experiences of this couple as well as Isobel and Olivia demonstrate that starting a family through adoption means moving beyond heteronormative social discourses of the home as the intimate or private site of (romantic and coupled) biological reproduction. For these adoptive parents, having children instead involved often intense and emotionally demanding interactions with social workers, and an opening up of the private spaces of the home to assessment and critique (Luzia 2013; Taylor 2009; Farr and Patterson 2013). Non-heteronormative meanings of the home and associated family relationships were thus (re)produced as these LGBTQ couples interacted with social workers in the domestic sphere, creating spaces of *queer* family formation – involving not only the couple themselves, but third-party social workers, too.

Having a child through assisted reproduction, surrogacy or adoption can also require the couple to physically move beyond the spaces of the home. The parents in my study who discussed this in most detail were Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s) whose twin boys were 4 months old at the time of their interview. The couple are American and moved from California to England in 2005. They had their twin boys through surrogacy, and to do so temporarily moved back to California:

> Hal: The surrogacy process took about two years… We had to do it in California because it's illegal here to…
> Dale: It's illegal to pay.
> Hal: Compensate beyond costs. Whereas in California, they do costs and also compensation for time and labour! So to speak! [*laughs*]

In California (unlike in England) it is legal to pay a surrogate to carry a baby, and the state has a reputation of upholding surrogacy agreements involving LGBTQ parents (Cheruvu 2014; Berkowitz 2013). As such, Dale and Hal travelled internationally to

California in order to start their family. It is important to note that this couple's means of starting a family together was clearly shaped by their privileged middle-class social position, as they could afford to travel internationally to California and pay a surrogate mother. There are many costs involved in commercial surrogacy, including funding the participation of the surrogate, surrogacy agency fees, legal fees, health insurance fees (for example, in the US), and assisted reproduction fees. As a result, gay couples who create a family through surrogacy usually share a significantly higher income than gay couples who create their families through other means such as adoption (Berkowitz 2013). The experiences of Dale and Hal also reflect a growing trend in international surrogacy amongst gay men, particularly to places such as California in the US, due to its favourable surrogacy laws (Lev 2006). The couple likened the process of finding a potential surrogate mother to a "dating game". Hal said:

> You meet and interview various surrogates and see if you're a match and if they want to match with you. So there's that matching and then you have to find an egg donor, because often it's not the same [person]… So the surrogate will carry somebody else's egg and sperm… We feel like we've known the surrogate all our life now, because we're just such buddies with her. She's great.

Dale and Hal used an egg donor who was already known to them, and were matched with a suitable surrogate mother who they did not previously know. This involvement of third parties once more disrupts the heteronormative ideal of reproduction as a distinctly private and coupled activity taking place within the home. Rather, having a child through surrogacy is a somewhat communal process. The use of third parties and assisted reproduction to become parents has also been discussed by Luzia (2010) in her research on lesbian women becoming pregnant by using sperm donors. She noted that this process is particularly communal when the donors are friends or relatives, and insemination is carried out in an informal way in the lesbian couple's home. My interview with Dale and Hal further indicated that this communal aspect of building a family could extend beyond reproduction. In their interview, the couple emphasised that the surrogate mother and egg donor were not only involved in the conception and birth of their twin boys: the couple now conceive of these women as part of their extended

family, referring to them as “Tummy Mummy” and “Bio Mom”. Dale and Hal intend to make annual visits to California with their sons, so that the women can remain a part of their lives. Thus, it was not only the process of *reproduction* which was communal: Dale and Hal acknowledge that *raising* their children will also be something of a communal (and international) effort, involving Tummy Mummy and Bio Mom. The couple’s approach to having and raising their children thus stands in sharp contrast to traditional discourses of coupled parenting within the nuclear heterosexual family home.

Whilst the main theoretical focus of this thesis is to apply the concept of queering as an anti-heteronormative process to the (material and imaginative) spaces of the household-as-home, at the same time I recognise that the concept of home is multi-scalar and open, and may be conceived of as stretched across multiple places at a range of scales, from the household or neighbourhood to the city, nation or world (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Previous studies of transnational migrants, for example, have emphasised that their personal understandings of ‘home’ are often complex, involving attachments to multiple places (*ibid*). For Dale and Hal, the home spaces in which they plan to raise their children are not limited to the house in England in which they live – rather, as transnational migrants their concept of home stretches beyond England, to incorporate spaces and people in California. The experiences of Dale and Hal in becoming parents, and their plans to raise their children internationally, point to a broader queering of the home spaces and relationships which may be involved when such (privileged) LGBTQ couples who are transnational migrants and/or use international surrogacy or adoption become parents.

The final two couples I am focussing on in this chapter did not have children together, but each formed a stepfamily on moving in together because one partner already had a child or children from a previous (heterosexual) relationship. Participants Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) and Debby (academic researcher, 40s) are a lesbian couple and have been in a relationship for 2 years. For the past year they have lived together in Hull with Wendy’s two daughters from a previous relationship, 18-year-old Pippa and 13-year-old Bonnie. Meanwhile, participant Ruby (FE teacher, 50s) is a heterosexual transgender woman who for the past 6 months has lived with her partner Jan and Jan’s 9-year-old daughter Kelly in South Yorkshire. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Jan is also a transgender woman, but is not ‘out’ publicly or to their daughter. In her interview, Ruby

used the pronouns they/their to refer to Jan, and remarked that "most of the time they live as a guy". The existing body of literature on the division of childcare has tended to focus on cisgender heterosexuals, and to a lesser extent cisgender lesbians and gay men (Perlesz et al. 2010, Ciano-Boyce and Shelley-Sireci 2002, Patterson et al. 2004, Rawsthorne and Costello 2010). Here I also consider the experiences of two transgender women who have formed a stepfamily, in order to challenge the normative assumption that raising children is limited to cisgender couples.

When one partner already has a child from a previous relationship, this does not necessarily create a 'straightforward' means of constructing a family. Moving in with a new partner still brings complications, as members of the household adjust to a new living situation. Rawsthorne (2008) highlights the potential for conflict in newly formed stepfamilies, particularly if the children are teenagers. She indicates that these teenagers may react negatively to a new partner, or the way in which the new partner's role within the household is defined. Wendy, Debby and Ruby all articulated that the formation of their stepfamilies has been challenging, however they each described it as a largely positive experience. As Debby commented:

> I don't have children of my own, and so… I moved from one place and Wendy has moved from another, and it's been a complete, mega life change for both of us, obviously. For all four of us. And we've asked the girls, the children, to take on all sorts of new thinking and ways of being that they hadn't before, but they have been remarkably pliant and understanding. Remarkable, really… And there's a sense that now the four of our lives are now completely intertwined.

Meanwhile, Ruby said of her partner's daughter Kelly:

> There's times that she's actually… she's forgotten herself, she's slipped and said 'Mum' and then she's remembered and said 'Ruby' and when I've told her off about going out and not eating her breakfast last week and she'd go out, slam the door… and stomp out of the house and then she'd been playing

> with her friends outside and I heard one of her friends saying to her, 'well Ruby's not your Mum. How can she tell you when you should be eating?' And then Kelly said, 'yeah, she's not my Mum. How can she?' And I thought, yeah, I'm turning into being a Mum figure to her and it's something that's happened without being planned.

Both couples have transgressed the normative trajectory of family living in that Wendy and Jan both became parents in a heterosexual context before later forming a new household with another woman. Whilst acknowledging this as a significant change, Wendy and Debby reported that Wendy's children have been supportive of their Mum's new lesbian relationship; whilst Ruby said that Kelly always uses the correct pronouns when referring to her, and wholly accepts her as a woman. For these participants, the main challenge in forming their new (step)family homes has instead been to slowly and carefully negotiate their new domestic roles and relationships with both their partner and the children, as will be discussed further in section 7.3.1.

7.3 LGBTQ parenting roles

Now that I have considered the diverse ways in which the LGBTQ (step)parents in this study had children or formed their stepfamily, I will move on to analyse how these couples divide the childcare at home. I argue that the participating parents disrupt the logic of heterosexual order which is embedded in normative discourses of domestic parenting roles. According to these discourses, it is the woman's role to care for children within the context of the family home she shares with her husband and their children (Patterson and Farr 2011; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Dunne 2000). Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, heteronormativity defines women largely through motherhood. Their gender identities and domestic roles are constructed around caring and nurturing; whilst these characteristics and roles are not traditionally seen as central to masculinity or male gender identity (Gillespie 2003; Agrillo and Nelini 2008; Kelly 2009). However, none of the parents that I interviewed described themselves as

taking on (hetero)normative gender roles or parental identities when it comes to looking after their children at home. With regards to my theoretical perspective of the home as a space imbued with both social and personal meanings, this suggests that the participating LGBTQ parents may produce (queer) family homes and parenting roles which disrupt such normative social discourses of the heterosexual family home and the feminisation of childcare, through their everyday attitudes and approaches towards looking after their children at home. For example, Liam (stay-at-home Dad, 30s) and his partner Bradley (chef, 30s) adopted a baby girl at the end of 2012, when she was just under a year old. A few months before they adopted their daughter, Liam quit his full time job in IT in order to become a stay-at-home Dad. For Liam, taking responsibility for almost all of the childcare does not equate to him enacting a feminised domestic role or parental identity. As he expressed:

> It's not only a woman's job… I don't feel any more feminine, do you know what I mean? Just because I'm doing more of the washing up and I've got the kind of primary carer bond with our baby, it doesn't threaten my masculinity.

This couple (and particularly Liam) are deeply immersed in domestic routines and childcare practices that are traditionally constructed as feminine (see also Atherton 2009). Yet, they do not conceptualise the performance of these routines and practices in terms of taking on a traditionally feminised identity. Instead, Liam and Bradley's attitude towards childcare is one of destabilising its association with women or the feminine. The couple challenge the notion that childcare is necessarily or naturally women's work, through their everyday childcare practices. Most notably, stay-at-home Dad Liam has constructed a masculine identity that is based upon his domestic and/or fathering role. Caring for his daughter at home provides Liam with a purpose; and fits in with the couple's understandings of the (masculine) roles that a man can take on in the home (see also Atherton 2009; Chesley 2011). Thus, as two (gay) men raising a child together, Liam and Bradley (re)produce their own *personal* meanings of domestic family life which subvert or queer dominant social discourses of heteronormatively gendered parenting roles or identities. This finding therefore adds to an existing body of literature in the social sciences, which critically considers how emotions and carework form an important (yet often overlooked) aspect of masculinity for some men (or

fathers) in the domestic sphere (for example see Aitken 2000; Atherton 2009; Chesley 2011; Gorman-Murray 2015).

The other gay male parents in this study, Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s), took a similarly critical stance towards normative assumptions about the feminisation of unwaged domestic childcare, pointing to resources for new parents which are clearly designed for a female audience:

Dale:	… it does get annoying. I get annoyed, you know, by stuff on the internet. 'Mother's corner.' 'Mother's questions.'
Hal:	Even from a heterosexual perspective, that's annoying.
Dale:	Yeah, even from a heterosexual perspective.
Hal:	Fathers are doing a lot of that parenting too, you know?
Dale:	Yeah! Yet [the websites] continue to place the onus of childcare and child responsibility on the mothers.
Hal:	And that's insulting to women, and it's insulting to men. Particularly in this day and age.

Dale and Hal argued that parenting websites commonly perpetuate the notion that childcare should be performed by women, and ignore those homes and families in which there is no "Mother". More specifically, they pointed out that the marginalisation of men on parenting websites fails to acknowledge the everyday parenting practices within family homes like theirs, in which two gay men share responsibility for raising a child or children. Similarly to Liam and Bradley, this gay couple challenge the assumption that childcare is a feminised activity, performed by wives and mothers in the nuclear family home, through their everyday childcare practices and attitudes towards (gendered) parenting roles. In doing so they also (re)produce masculine subjectivities that centre on childcare, home spaces and family life (see also Aitken 2000; Chesley 2011). Such subjectivities undermine dominant (heteronormative) conceptualisations of masculinity at home, wherein men are assumed to be the breadwinner and to take on a secondary caring role to their 'naturally' more nurturing wife. This indicates that

(domestic) masculinities are multiple, unstable and contested; and that hegemonic masculinity may be disrupted or queered by the participating gay male couples as they use their agency to enact alternative roles or practices in their homes (see also Hopkins and Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015; Atherton 2009). This discussion of the experiences and masculine gender identities of the gay male fathers in my study thus adds to the existing body of research in the social sciences which considers the everyday spaces, emotions and practices of fathering; and challenges the notion that women are naturally more nurturing than men (Doucet and Merla 2007; Dermott 2008; Aitken 2009).

Other parents in the study challenged (hetero)normative understandings of parenting roles by emphasising that it is not assumed that childcare will fall to a particular partner. Rather than being structured by dichotomous (gender) roles, the division of childcare is clearly something that is discussed and negotiated by these couples. To exemplify this I will consider the experiences of Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s), who are in the process of adopting their 2 year old daughter. Before adopting, the couple were both in full-time employment – Isobel as a project manager and Olivia as a teacher – and decided that one partner would become a stay-at-home Mum to look after their child. During their interview, the couple explained how they now divide the childcare:

Olivia:	Obviously I'm not at work, so I'm looking after Poppy all day but as soon as Isobel gets in… [she] kind of take[s] over the distracting [Poppy] or whatever it is… and then Isobel does the whole of bath time all the way up to story time.
Isobel:	Yeah, which we do together.
Olivia:	Yeah. So obviously because I'm off [work] I do most of [the childcare], but then Isobel's quite active because she gets home at like 5 o'clock so she does get quite a lot of time with Poppy, which is nice.
CB:	Yeah. How did you decide who would stay at home?
Olivia:	It veered between the two of us, didn't it?
Isobel:	Yeah.

Olivia: We thought it was going to be me, and then [Isobel], and then me, and part of the reason why was because I really enjoy doing all the crazy Mum stuff, like basically you just spend your whole day sitting on the floor singing, and I really like doing that… so you know, we thought of it from that point of view, that it was a bit silly for Isobel to be off work doing that kind of thing…

Isobel: And I'd hate it. Well, I wouldn't hate it, but…

Olivia: No. It wasn't a given that I would be the one who was off, but obviously I mean I'm a teacher so I do spend my whole day with children anyway, so I suppose over the past few years I've developed more of an immunity to irritation from children! [*laughs*]

To a degree, Isobel and Olivia now follow a 'traditional' division of labour, with one partner (Isobel) working in full time employment and the other (Olivia) staying at home to look after their child. However, the couple do not view this division in terms of Isobel taking on a traditionally masculine 'breadwinner' role whilst Olivia assumes a traditionally feminine 'housewifely' role. Whilst the couple acknowledge that Olivia does noticeably more childcare in the home, both partners were keen to emphasise Isobel's contribution to childcare in the evenings and at weekends, thereby complicating heteronormative understandings of dichotomously gendered breadwinning/ homemaking domestic roles. Furthermore, as a lesbian couple, Isobel and Olivia revealed that they did not assume that childcare would fall to a particular partner. Rather than being structured by stable and dichotomous (gender) roles in their relationship, the division of childcare in their home has been subject to much discussion and negotiation; and thus may be read largely as a product of their personal (queer) attitudes and approaches towards parental roles and responsibilities. Whilst on the surface a woman (or women) performing childcare might not appear to be particularly 'queer', setting this in a context of a lesbian relationship in which both mothers are involved in childcare to differing degrees points to the fact that multiple femininities, roles and identities may be enacted by women in the domestic sphere – thereby disrupting

traditional, heteronormative gender scripts which construct the (heterosexual) housewife as the natural, normal and stable expression of femininity at home.

As has already been touched upon above, the subversion of dichotomously gendered parenting roles is also obvious in the home of Dale (professor, 40s), Hal (academic researcher, 30s) and their twin boys, who were 4 months old at the time of the interview. As academics, the couple both have flexible working hours and can work from home for much of the week. They also have the income to be able to afford paid help with their childcare. This means that as well as sharing the childcare between them, the couple also have a live-in nanny, Duncan. Again, this shows that their everyday parenting practices challenge the heteronormative societal expectation that the division of childcare will be based upon dichotomous gender roles (while nevertheless reinforcing class norms). Dale described the routine that the couple has developed, to care for their sons:

> We're very lucky to have the three of us to take care of the children. So it's three against two, so we're doing OK! Essentially what we do is we divide up the hours, we pretty much do 5 hour shifts each… The kids get up at 8am for their first feeding. [Duncan] might take 8[am] to 1[pm], and then I might take 1 to 6[pm], and then Hal might take 6 to 11[pm], that sort of thing. And it's not exclusive, but it's like, that's the time that I'm predominantly responsible for watching them.

It was clear from this couple's interview that childcare is very much a communal effort in their household, involving both partners as well as live-in nanny Duncan. Whilst the three men usually divide the childcare roughly equally into "shifts", the couple emphasised that they also help one another with their "shifts" depending on the needs of the children – for example, if both children are crying. The sharing of the childcare between the three men was evidenced during Dale and Hal's interview, which took place in the living room of the couple's home. At the beginning of the interview, the babies were both in the room with us, one lying down next to the couple on the sofa, and the other in a self-swinging baby seat. The couple talked to, cuddled and kissed their children as we were talking, until around the mid-point of the interview when one

of the babies began to cry. At this point Hal called Duncan into the living room, so that he could take the babies and look after them in a different room. This anecdote provides a small glimpse into the everyday lives of the family, and demonstrates how their sharing of the childcare works in practice. This communal or shared approach to childcare challenges the (hetero)normative expectation that childcare will fall to one particular (female) partner within a coupled household. By centring their hours of employment, domestic routines and roles around looking after their children, this gay male couple (together with their live-in nanny, who is also male) (re)produce masculine subjectivities at home which re-work or queer heteronormative social discourses of gendered parenting roles and responsibilities in the home. As discussed above, this points to the multiple, unfixed and potentially contested nature of domestic masculinities (and interconnected parental identities, where relevant) (see also Aitken 2008; Hopkins and Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015).

Referring again to my theoretical perspective of the home as a space in which socially acceptable domestic meanings, roles and identities are normalised and contested, the divisions of childcare reported by the parents in this study indicate that, rather than following heteronormative discourses of gendered parenting roles, these lesbian and gay parents instead (re)produce their own (queer) parenting roles in the domestic sphere. Indeed, during their interviews, the parents quoted above resisted the idea that childcare is only women's work; and discussed their (queer) attitudes and approaches towards the division of childcare in their homes. Thus, this research supports previous studies which have similarly argued that lesbian and gay parenting undermines the heteronormativity of dominant discourses of (gendered) parenting roles and identities in the family home (Patterson and Farr 2011; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Ciano-Boyce and Shelley-Sireci 2002; Dunne 2000). Many existing studies suggest that lesbian and gay couples with children undermine heteronormative understandings of gendered parenting roles by sharing the childcare roughly equally, setting themselves apart from the traditional male breadwinner/ female homemaker division of labour (Patterson et al. 2004; Perlesz et al. 2010; Dunne 2000). In contrast to this, my results indicate that heteronormative social discourses of gendered domestic roles may be disrupted even when one participating lesbian or gay parent takes primary responsibility for the childcare. In other words, I argue that challenging heteronormative social discourses of parenting roles in the home is not necessarily synonymous with adopting a feminist commitment to egalitarian

parenting (albeit the two may be linked in some LGBTQ homes; see also Gabb 2005b). Instead, the transgressive potentials of lesbian and gay parenting are realised by the participating parents in my study through a resistance to the straightforward mapping of parental roles and responsibilities onto gendered identities. As noted by Gabb (2005b), this distinction is important because it accounts for those LGBTQ parent homes in which childcare and/or family power are not divided equally. An egalitarian division of childcare is not found in all LGBTQ parent homes, and it is important to acknowledge the diversity of approaches and attitudes towards childcare amongst LGBTQ parents (*ibid*). Whilst on the surface the division of childcare within some of the participating lesbian and gay parents' homes may appear to replicate the traditional heterosexual model of domestic gender norms, I argue that the parents in this study nevertheless challenge heteronormative discourses of parenting in their everyday domestic lives by destabilising the underlying gendered associations of parenting roles and responsibilities. For example, the stay-at-home parents in my study did not articulate the division of childcare in their home in terms of traditionally gendered dichotomous roles. Rather, they emphasised that their childcare responsibilities are discussed and negotiated with their partner, based upon practicalities, preferences, and their respective employment choices. Indeed, the emphasis that all parents in the study placed upon planning and discussions indicates that they do not rely on normative gender scripts to structure their parenting roles and practices in the home. Instead, gay fathers in the study construct masculine domestic identities based on domestic routines and childcare practices that are traditionally seen as feminine; whilst lesbian mothers in the study construct feminine domestic identities that are involved in childcare to differing degrees, thereby complicating traditional understandings of the feminine 'housewifely' role. These lesbian and gay parents use their personal agencies and creativity to (re)produce queer gender and parental identities within the spaces of the home. The departure of these parents from heteronormatively gendered parenting scripts suggests that multiple masculinities and femininities may be enacted within the home, and that gender and parenting roles in the domestic sphere should thus be viewed as unfixed, unstable and potentially contested (see also Hopkins and Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015).

7.3.1 Stepfamilies and childcare roles

Whilst the couples considered so far in this section have planned and started a family together through adoption or surrogacy, I now turn to consider the experiences of two stepfamilies to show a different context in which the heteronormativity of the home might be challenged by the participating LGBTQ parents. The three participants who live in stepfamilies were introduced in Section 7.2. The first two are lesbian couple Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) and Debby (academic researcher, 40s), who live with Wendy's two teenage daughters, Pippa and Bonnie. The third participant who lives in a stepfamily is Ruby (FE teacher, 50s), a heterosexual transgender woman who lives with her partner Jan and Jan's daughter Kelly. In their interviews, these three women all conceptualised their parenting practices in terms of negotiating and navigating a new domestic situation. When I asked Wendy and Debby about looking after Pippa and Bonnie, the couple explained that Wendy typically performs almost all of the childcare in their household:

> Wendy: I think because I've parented the girls from when they were babies obviously I've sort of taken the lead [childcare] role… and there are times when Debby will say something or have a view that's different, which she'll articulate, and I'll think it through and sometimes I will shift my perspective as a result of that but… I think predominantly the children will see me as their primary parent and [Debby] will see me as the primary parent.
>
> Debby: Which makes childcare in my context very easy, because I know there's always a more powerful voice if you like… Bonnie has said on many occasions that she sees me as a child with adult rights, because we buy [toys] and do stupid stuff… the subtext there is that she knows I don't have the authority you have… so for me, there's always you to defer to… But I think you do more, certainly more

childcare type things, and things that mean that the children are managed. You know, if it was up to me, Bonnie would never go dancing because I'd forget she had to go, or you know, [that] there's a show on.

Wendy: You'd forget once and then there'd be a row.

Debby: Yeah! Um, so I think we kind of work to each other's strengths, largely, in terms of that. What do you think?

Wendy: Mmm, I think that's right.

As Wendy's domestic role has centred around bringing up her children for the past 18 years, whilst Debby was child free until moving into a new home with Wendy and her children, it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of childcare in their household falls to Wendy. Wendy's parenting role was already well-established prior to moving in with Debby, and Wendy identified a number of specific tasks that her role as mother entails, including providing her daughters with emotional support, attending to their material needs, helping them with school work, driving them to after-school activities, and washing their school uniforms. Although Debby also mentioned driving Pippa and Bonnie to after-school activities, she mainly spoke of her involvement with the girls in terms of building and strengthening a new relationship with them through 'fun' activities such as baking, buying food and toys, and watching television together. Debby emphasised that because she did not raise young children, she is not yet familiar with all of the routines and practices involved in looking after two teenage daughters. Her comments about Wendy being a more "powerful" parenting voice to "defer" to indicate that Debby is happy to allow Wendy to take the lead when it comes to childcare and decision-making regarding the children; tasks which Wendy sees as an important part of her role as the girls' biological mother. Rather than viewing their parenting roles as unfair, unequal or hierarchical, both women described Wendy's role as primary carer positively in terms of the close bond that Wendy shares with her children (see also Gabb 2008). These findings add to existing studies of both lesbian and heterosexual stepfamilies, which have similarly found that the division of childcare in these relationships cannot be straightforwardly understood in terms of heteronormatively gendered dichotomous parenting roles; but instead in terms of the biological parent tending to assume greater responsibility for the childcare and associated decision-

making because they are perceived to have greater responsibility for the child's wellbeing (Ryan-Flood 2009; Rawsthorne 2008; Moore 2008).

Ruby (FE teacher, 50s), too, discussed the division of childcare in her household in terms of her and her partner's respective relationships with 9-year-old Kelly:

> I think [the division of childcare] is probably 50-50, but there's certain things that, because… Jan is the father there's certain things that they tend to do… Yeah, I think we tend to make it fairly even. You know, when [Kelly] gets up I'll be saying 'oh, you've got to have your breakfast. Have you cleaned your teeth?' … so yeah there's things like that. But I don't tend to go into the bathroom and things… [because] she's not as familiar with me. I mean, she'd quite happily run around now, which she wouldn't do at first. She was quite shy, but she'll run around in her knickers now in front of me without a problem, but I don't think she'd be comfortable with me seeing her in the bath and washing her hair and things like that, but you know, apart from that it's pretty much [shared]… but just a few little odd things that she still goes to her Dad for.

Whilst Ruby reported a more even division of childcare in her household than that of Wendy and Debby, she also noted that certain intimate childcare tasks fall to her partner Jan because they are Kelly's biological parent. As expressed in the above quotation, Ruby feels that Kelly is not yet comfortable with Ruby helping her to wash her hair, as they have only been living in the same household for around 6 months (whereas Kelly has lived with Jan since she was a baby). On the other hand, there was a definite sense during Ruby's interview that she and Kelly are gradually building a closer and stronger relationship, which implies that it is only a matter of time before Ruby becomes fully involved with all aspects of childcare. By sharing responsibility for the childcare roughly 50-50, Ruby and Jan subvert the idealised social discourse of the home as the site of cisgender heterosexual coupled parenting. Instead, through their everyday childcare practices they produce and maintain queer domestic roles in their home. The domestic experiences of this stepfamily provide another example as to why in this thesis

I am theorising the queering of (hetero)normative social discourses in terms of the personal (queer) meanings and roles that the participating couples (re)produce in their homes, through their day-to-day domestic practices such as childcare.

7.4 The impact of having children on the division of domestic labour

As discussed in Chapter 4 and in line with previous research (including Baxter et al. 2008; Shelton 1992; Eichler and Albanese 2007) the parents in this study indicated that the presence of a child increases the amount of domestic labour required around their household. In addition to the task of childcare itself, the parents in this study emphasised that having children necessitates additional cleaning, tidying, and laundry being performed in their homes. But what effect does the presence of children have on the *division* of this domestic labour? Previous research on heterosexual coupled households has indicated that becoming parents reinforces the traditional gendered division of labour (Dunne 1998; Rawsthorne and Costello 2010). In this section I question whether the presence of children has an impact on the division of domestic labour amongst the participating LGBTQ parents. With reference to the theoretical framework employed in this thesis, I ask to what extent do these LGBTQ parents support and/or queer (hetero)normative social discourses of dichotomously gendered domestic roles in the family home? To explore these questions, I will begin by considering the three couples who have had children together through adoption or surrogacy. Interviews with these participants did indeed indicate that having children has brought about changes to their division of domestic labour. Since having children and becoming stay-at-home parents, Liam and Olivia are each now taking on greater responsibility for the domestic labour in their respective households. As Isobel (project manager, 20s) and Olivia (stay-at-home Mum, 20s) discussed:

> CB: How much time do you think you spend on housework, relative to one another?

Isobel: Well, before we had Poppy it would have been 50-50. Definitely. But now it's not, is it? But that's because you're doing the childcare while I'm going [to work].

Olivia: Is it like 80-20 now?

Isobel: Probably.

Olivia: But then you know because I'm at home all day, and I do think that's part of it…

Isobel: I guess it's different, isn't it? Because before there were only two of us and we weren't ever home in the day, so you leave the house tidy and it's still tidy when you come home. But now things are going on in the house all day…

Olivia: And I do loads of stuff with [Poppy] that makes loads of mess – that's my fault but I'd rather we did that than just made her sit. You know, we make mess all the time… I do feel like, because I'm at home all day, I have a responsibility. It's not that you'll come home and be like, 'the house is a mess, where's my dinner?' It's nothing like that. But it's like, you know, I do have the time to do it and as much as I do devote much of my time to playing with Poppy and you know, doing things with her, I don't think it's unreasonable that in my day, which is like when you're not here – what, 8[am] to 5[pm] – I do have some time spent doing things which are kind of necessary to keep the house running. That's how I feel about it.

Emergent from Isobel and Olivia's interview was a discourse of freedom and choice. By making deliberate decisions as to how much "mess" to make with Poppy and how much time is "reasonable" to spend on domestic labour during the day, Olivia constructs and maintains a sense of freedom and control over her domestic role, rather than viewing herself as enacting a prescribed 'housewifely' role that fits in with heteronormative societal ideals of domesticity, femininity and mothering. Furthermore, Olivia's comment to Isobel, "It's not that you'll come home and be like, 'the house is a mess,

where's my dinner?'" is telling of the way she sees her and her partner's respective relationship roles: Olivia does not feel that their relationship reproduces the hierarchical power structures embedded in the traditional division of labour, wherein it is expected that the (female) homemaking partner will clean the house and prepare food for the (male) breadwinning partner. The couple further reject that housework is a role that is expected of Olivia by highlighting that, before they had Poppy, they shared the domestic labour evenly between them. For this couple, housework is actively discussed and negotiated – and is thus shaped by their coupled agency and creativity, rather than by normative (gendered) assumptions about their respective domestic roles. As argued by Rawsthorne and Costello (2010), it is perhaps through such conscious decision-making and negotiations regarding domestic labour that lesbian couples may set themselves apart from prescriptive gendered scripts in the home, and (re)produce their own (queer) domestic roles or ways of living in this space. This finding extends the theoretical framework employed in this thesis by emphasising that negotiations and deliberate or conscious decision-making can play a key role in the (re)production of domestic meanings, roles and spaces; and in the subversion or queering of (hetero)normative social discourses of the home and gendered domestic roles.

During their interview, Liam (stay-at-home Dad, 30s) and Bradley (chef, 30s) also explained why and how the division of domestic labour in their home has changed since they adopted their daughter:

> Liam: The housework… it was an even split, and now that we've got the baby and I'm at home, that's the thing that changed it all. If he's out at work all day, then it has to get done, you know? And there's more housework to do – a lot more housework to do – with a baby. If we were both working, I don't know how two people working full time do it, although I suppose you're not making meals because the nursery does it, but there's still a lot more housework to do with a baby, anyway.
>
> Bradley: On my two days off, I like to spend them more with the baby rather than doing [domestic labour].

Liam: Yeah, I feel bad, like this morning you were doing the vacuuming up and everything. I feel bad if he's been at work all the time, I don't want him to have to come home and do the hoovering, do you know what I mean?

CB: Yeah, sure.

Liam: Or the dishwasher. It's just a bit cruel, isn't it? ... But sometimes I can't face it so you'll have to do it.

Bradley: The most difficult is the big chores, like if the car needs servicing or something like that.

Liam: … I make Bradley do the car. You can't take a baby and do the car. You leave the car in the garage, what am I meant to do? Just wander the streets with a baby for a bit? So we have to wait until we're both off… Going to the tip – I can't put the stuff in the car, I can't put the seats down, I can't drive to the tip with the baby seat in and a load of rubbish, so I have to wait until Bradley's off and then I'm like, well, you know, he might as well drive [to the tip] and I'll carry on doing the washing like I do every day.

Bradley: It's just easier to stick with your own routine.

Liam: And it just grows like that.

Bradley: Let's not complicate the routine any more. He'll just carry on his normal routine with the baby, and I'll do the extra other bits around it.

Similarly to the account of Isobel and Olivia, emergent from Liam and Bradley's interview was a discourse of fairness and practicality. Whilst Liam takes responsibility for almost all of the domestic labour, he believes this is fair because his partner Bradley works full time. The exception to this are those infrequent chores outside of the home which are difficult to perform whilst looking after a baby. The couple explained that it is most practical for Bradley to take responsibility for these tasks, whilst Liam and their daughter continue with their everyday domestic routine. Rather than understanding their division of labour as reproducing traditionally gendered dichotomous roles, Liam and

Bradley instead view the apportioning of domestic tasks in their home as an on-going decision-making process based upon what works best for them as a family. Additionally, by actively discussing and negotiating their domestic roles and responsibilities, this gay couple subvert the normative discourse of masculine resistance to domestic labour, and in doing so (re)produce masculine subjectivities that are invested in domestic labour, home spaces and childcare practices (see also Gorman-Murray 2015). Again, this points to the importance of theorising coupled agency, negotiations and active decision-making as playing a key role in the (re)production of domestic meanings, roles and spaces; and in the subversion of heteronormatively gendered parental identities in the home.

Meanwhile, Dale (professor, 40s) and Hal (academic researcher, 30s) hired a live-in nanny before the birth of their twin sons. Although becoming parents has necessitated additional domestic labour being carried out around their home, the couple commented that having a nanny has freed up some time for the couple to perform these tasks. For example, neither partner is contributing to the meal preparation now that their nanny, Duncan, lives with them:

> Hal: There's extra chores that have been added on to our regular chores.
>
> Dale: Yeah, but I'm no longer doing any cooking at all.
>
> Hal: Or dishes or anything… I was expecting a little bit more craziness and lists and chores and stuff like that but with Duncan…
>
> Dale: But we can't emphasise enough how lucky we are. We are not a typical couple in that capacity… We have a full time live-in [nanny]… I mean, it's just a dream scenario.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, Dale and Hal explained that although they are now spending longer doing laundry and other tasks associated with looking after their children, they are also choosing to spend less time on tasks that they deem less important in maintaining their home and taking care of their children. Having children has led to the couple's priorities and attitudes towards domestic labour changing,

meaning that tasks such as vacuuming are now being performed by the couple less regularly. In terms of their division of domestic labour, the couple indicated that both before having children and since having children their aim has been to make this division roughly equal in their relationship. This couple place value on sharing the domestic labour, and in doing so (re)produce masculine identities that are embedded in their home spaces and the domestic practices involved in their maintenance (see also Gorman-Murray 2015). Since becoming parents they have been able to maintain a roughly equal division of domestic labour (and childcare) with the help of live-in nanny Duncan. Combined with their flexible working hours and ability to work from home as academics, this has allowed both partners to continue with their waged employment. Thus, their everyday domestic practices queer heteronormative understandings of feminine homemaking and masculine breadwinning roles in their relationship and home; and once more suggest that the home is a space in which *multiple* masculinities may be enacted or (re)produced (see also Atherton 2009; Aitken 2000; Gorman-Murray 2015).

Another context in which to consider the impact of having children on the division of domestic labour is within the two stepfamilies in the study. It is clearly not possible to compare these couples' divisions of domestic labour before and after having children, as one partner brought children with them on moving in with their partner. Thus, the children have always been a part of the couples' homes. Nevertheless, it was clear from the interviews that everyday domestic life for these stepfamilies is very much shaped by the presence of children. When asked how they divide the domestic labour in their household, Wendy (academic researcher, 40s) and Debby (academic researcher, 40s) explained:

> Debby: I think we… brought cemented patterns into the household, and your cemented patterns were ones very much about management. My cemented patterns were… about not having to care for children.
>
> Wendy: Yes, mine are very much focussed around children and having to manage children, having to manage a household with children. So you know… if you need

your school uniform for Monday, you need to do it, and that means you need to do washing, or you need to get ballet clothes done, or whatever. So mine was a much more systematic approach, because it had to be, because of my previous circumstances.

Debby: And mine was a less systematic approach, because it didn't need to be [systematic]. Now I find that it does need to be…

Wendy: Yes, so it's a learning curve, so Debby had to… at least recognise that there are certain things that have to be done.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, in this household Wendy tends to take primary responsibility for the childcare because her domestic role has centred around bringing up her children for the past 18 years. For the same reason, the additional domestic labour associated with having children usually falls to Wendy. On the other hand, the couple also acknowledged that since moving in together Debby has become more familiar with the types and timing of domestic work that is needed to manage a household with children, and has also contributed more towards these tasks. Thus, their division of domestic labour has shifted and changed since moving in together. Meanwhile, Ruby (FE teacher, 50s) has an adult son aged 27 and so unlike Debby she did not discuss moving in with her partner and partner's child in terms of a 'learning curve'. Rather, Ruby was already familiar with the additional domestic labour involved in looking after a child; and she and her partner Jan have shared this work fairly evenly since moving in together. As such, the domestic roles of all four women are shaped by the presence of children in their household, as well as their relationships to these children or previous experiences of raising children. Their varying and changeable levels of involvement that these women have with the childcare and associated domestic tasks in their homes disrupt heteronormative discourses of domesticity which interpret women's domestic roles and responsibilities as housewives and mothers to be stable or fixed.

Analysing the spatialities and everyday childcare practices of the participating LGBTQ parents in this chapter from a queer critical geographical perspective has allowed for a

consideration of heteronormative ideologies of parenting at home, and the ways in which these ideologies might be challenged or queered through the personal meanings, (gender) roles, agency and creativity that these LGBTQ parents bring to the home space. As reported by Luzia (2010) and Gabb (2005a), the everyday geographies of non-heterosexual parents have been under-attended to within academic literature on parenting and the family. Yet, there is much to learn about the everyday spaces and practices of parenting by considering the domestic experiences of these families. In her research into lesbian parent families from the Yorkshire region of the UK, Gabb (2005a) argues that the home is a critical space in which lesbian mothers experience and manage their sexual-maternal identities. Meanwhile, in her study of lesbian parents based in and around the major metropolitan area of Sydney, Australia, Luzia (2010) similarly suggests that it is in and through these everyday spaces and practices that people's identities – parental, familial, sexual or otherwise – intersect and are brought forth. Luzia (2010) thus positions the home as a space in which the lesbians in her study learn how to parent and also how to 'be' a parent. In other words, lesbian parents bring forth a parental or familial identity through their parenting practices within the spaces of the home. Building upon this argument, throughout this chapter I have emphasised that the LGBTQ parents in this study bring forth decidedly *queer* (or non-heteronormative) parental and gender identities and roles through their parenting practices in the home. To reiterate, the participating gay fathers enact parental and masculine identities that centre around family life and domestic routines that are 'traditionally' feminised; whilst the participating lesbian (step)mothers (as well as one participating trans stepmother who described herself as heterosexual and lives with another trans woman) enact parental and feminine identities that involve childcare and associated domestic labour to varying degrees, thus disrupting normative discourses of the (heterosexual and cisgender) 'housewife' role as the singular, stable and natural expression of femininity in the domestic sphere. Thus, the couples considered in this chapter reject heteronormative roles, traditionally gendered domestic identities and 'set' or prescribed ways of living in the home through their day-to-day childcare and associated domestic practices. These practices, and the associated domestic parenting and gender roles that are brought forth, work to challenge or queer entrenched heteronormative social discourses of domesticity. They indicate that gender and parenting roles in the home are unfixed or unstable; and that dominant heteronormative interpretations of these roles are subject to contestation (see also Hopkins and Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015). In

my study, childcare is thus one activity through which the participating LGBTQ parents enact queer parental and gender identities and (re)produce their own queer domestic meanings, roles and family homes.

7.5 Conclusion

In this final analysis chapter I have presented the experiences of five (privileged) LGBTQ couples, attending to the ways in which these couples approach and divide the childcare (and associated domestic labour) in their homes. Framing this discussion have been my theoretical perspectives of the home as a space imbued with social and personal meanings, and queering as an anti-heteronormative process which may be applied to the meanings, relationships and roles associated with the (family) home space. This theoretical framework I have used to demonstrate that the family home is created in diverse ways by the participating LGBTQ parents, in ways that rework heteronormative discourses of gendered parenting roles and domestic relationships. More specifically, I have outlined that there are two key ways in which the couples in this chapter disrupt dominant social understandings of parenting as an activity that takes place within the spaces of the heterosexual family home. Firstly, for the three couples in my study who had children through surrogacy or adoption, the very process of starting a family was something of a communal endeavour, involving third parties such as donors, surrogates and social workers. Starting a family in this way also required these couples to move beyond the private spaces of the home, for example to meet with social workers or potential surrogates. This challenges the societal ideal of starting a family through romantic and intimate coupled reproduction within the spaces of the heterosexual family home (or bedroom). Secondly, the LGBTQ parents in this study disrupt heteronormativity at home through the ways in which they divide the childcare and domestic labour involved in maintaining a household with children. Rather than following (hetero)normatively gendered parenting scripts, the parents that I interviewed subvert dichotomous parenting roles in the home and call into question the ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ links between childcare and women. The participants with children and stepchildren enact diverse domestic meanings and roles, and use their agency and

creativity to structure these roles according to their particular preferences, politics, and/or what works best in their relationship or home. Through their seemingly unremarkable, mundane negotiations of parenting and associated domestic tasks, the LGBTQ parents in my sample subvert dominant heteronormative social discourses about gendered household and parenting practices; and instead (re)produce or maintain queer family homes.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis investigates the everyday domestic lives and practices of 38 LGBTQ couples in contemporary England. In doing so, it extends existing empirical research and theorisations of domestic labour and the home. To address my research questions, I conducted 40 couple and individual interviews with 56 participants who live with a partner and self-identify as LGBTQ. Through snowball sampling I recruited a sample containing a mix of sexualities and gender identities, including participants who identify as bisexual, queer and transgender – subject positions which are frequently absent from geographical research (Brown and Knopp 2003; Oswin 2008; Browne et al. 2010). Including bisexual and queer participants in the research has allowed for a move away from a simplistic heterosexual/homosexual binary understanding of sexuality; whilst engaging with transgender lives has provided a more complex understanding of gender, acknowledging that gender is not always straightforwardly mapped onto the sexed body (Browne et al. 2010; Oswin 2008).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews have provided rich and detailed accounts of the participants' everyday home lives and their divisions of domestic labour and childcare. Many participants interviewed about their domestic practices spoke at length and often with great enthusiasm (for the topic, if not for domestic labour itself!) This methodology has allowed me to move beyond the bare facts such as time spent on various domestic tasks, and has provided nuanced insights into the participants' everyday experiences and understandings of domestic labour. On the other hand, I acknowledge that there are certain limitations to the study, which I will now address. One limitation of the study is that the majority of participants are White British and middle-class, and so clearly do not represent the entirety of the LGBTQ experience; although the specificity of the sample has allowed for an in-depth exploration of domestic labour and childcare within this socially specific group of mainly White, middle-class LGBTQ couples cohabiting in England. The majority of participants occupy a relatively privileged subject position in British society, both because of their class and because inequalities in the labour market in the UK result in the White population experiencing favourable job prospects compared to ethnic minorities (Wilton 2011). The relatively privileged subject position

of these participants has therefore shaped the findings of this project, with six White middle-class couples able to afford to outsource some portion of their domestic labour; whilst two couples with children can afford to live on one partner's income, allowing for the other partner to be a stay-at-home parent. When interpreting the research findings, the middle-class and White British nature of the sample must therefore be taken into consideration.

An associated limitation arising from the fact that I advertised the project via my academic Twitter account is that the call for participants was shared primarily by other academics, students or those already interested in research on LGBTQ issues, giving rise to a largely well-educated sample. In future additional recruitment methods could be used, for example publicising the project in a variety of LGBTQ social venues or contacting more local social and support groups, in an attempt to achieve greater diversity in terms of the class and education level of the participants, which would likely have a bearing on the research findings. Perhaps most notably, educational advantage appears to have afforded the participating LGBTQ couples a considerable degree of reflexivity: they are very much 'knowing' subjects with regards to their everyday domestic practices. During or even before their interviews, the participants appeared to make self-conscious decisions as to the domestic accounts that they presented – as exemplified in Chapter 3 by a quotation from Susan (retail manager, 40s), a well-educated middle-class participant who said to her partner Lara during their coupled interview, "you said we were going to be open and honest, my love." From this remark, it seemed that the couple made deliberate choices as to what to reveal in their interview, which were agreed upon in advance. Perhaps, then, the lack of conflict or disagreement reported by the couples who took part in my study was part of a deliberate attempt to present a seamless account of fair and equitable queer domesticity. In order to further unpick the participants' reflexive accounts of their domestic lives, in future research each couple could be interviewed both jointly and separately, as this may help to highlight differences of opinion with regards to their domestic roles and practices, or uncover contradictions in the idealised domestic account(s) presented.

The conflation of individual and couple interviews in this research project is another, related limitation. When carrying out my research, I largely employed the mixed strategy of interviewing some couples together and other participants individually due

to time and budget constraints. However, individual and coupled interviews lead to different accounts of the participants' home lives being produced. For example, in coupled interviews partners interact and collaborate to provide an answer, although this can lead to a simplified 'official' account of their domestic practices being relayed. Meanwhile, interviewing couples separately allows for each partner to discuss their own experiences and opinions, as well as any points of discontent or discord in their home lives, without being influenced by the presence of their partner (Valentine 1999; Heaphy and Einarsdottir 2012; Allan 1980). In this thesis, individual and coupled interviews are analysed alongside each other, which to a degree merges the voices or concerns of individuals and couples. In future research, doing separate individual interviews before the couple interview may help to deal with this limitation, and enable the disentangling of the individual opinions, values and understandings of both partners in each couple.

The final limitation of this research project that I will discuss is the lack of other 'props' such as domestic routine logs or time-use diaries being used alongside the semi-structured interviews. Employing more than one qualitative method may add to the richness of the data collected, and can help the researcher to gain further insights into people's lives or experiences. In the context of everyday family life and domestic routines, logs or diaries are fruitful because they add a temporal dimension to the research (Gabb 2009, 2013). In future research, time-use diaries could be used to help determine the *actual* division of domestic labour within the participants' homes; and the participants' experiences or understandings of the routines recorded in these diaries could be explored in a subsequent interview (Zimmerman and Wieder 1977). By employing this diary-interview technique, the time-use diaries would act as a useful means of introducing the research topic to the participants, prior to their interview (Gabb 2013). They could also be drawn upon as an ice-breaker during the interview(s), to ease the participants into talking about their domestic practices. Furthermore, these 'props' would provide background information about the participants, which could be employed to tailor each interview so that it is relevant to the participant(s) in question (Corti 1993). Using multiple methods in future research may require a smaller sample size because of the additional time and/or costs involved; however this trade-off would be worth it because using 'props' such as time-use diaries in combination with

interviews would provide a greater depth of understanding of the participants' lives, meanings and practices (Gabb 2013; Corti 1993; Zimmerman and Wieder 1977).

Now that I have addressed the limitations of my study, I will use the remainder of this conclusion chapter to synthesis my findings and answer the study's interrelated research questions. I will discuss the broader contributions of the research to knowledge in and beyond the discipline of Geography; suggest how my study builds upon and extends critical geographies of home and theorisations of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process; and offer some final concluding remarks on the wider significance of queering the home beyond the LGBTQ community. This thesis argues that the attitudes and approaches towards the divisions of domestic labour and childcare amongst the participating LGBTQ couples queer dominant social discourses of the nuclear heterosexual family home and dichotomously gendered domestic roles. In the West an ideal discourse of domesticity equates the home and its material layout with the heterosexual family and assumes that men and women take on separate, gendered roles within this space, with women responsible for the majority of household tasks including cleaning and childcare (Hochschild 1983; Crompton 2006; Blunt and Dowling 2006). However, this thesis maintains that heteronormative conceptualisations of the nuclear family home, domestic gender roles and associated uses of domestic spaces and layouts flatten out the complexities of everyday home life in contemporary England; and do not reflect the day-to-day lives or homes of the LGBTQ couples in this study. In order to make this argument, I draw upon my theoretical framework, which encompasses two theoretical perspectives. The first is a critical geography of home as both a material and imaginative space. This perspective has allowed me to show how homes are made and re-made through the relation between the material (the physical structure and material objects within the space) and the imaginative (the social and personal meanings, norms and roles associated with the space). The second theoretical perspective employed in this thesis is queering as an anti-heteronormative process, which I have applied to the home to show that (hetero)normative understandings of socially acceptable forms of sexual identity, behaviours and roles may be challenged even through everyday (home) spaces and mundane or taken-for-granted (domestic) practices which might be considered assimilationist or homonormative by queer scholars such as Berlant and Warner (1998) and Duggan (2002). Combining these two theoretical perspectives into one framework in this thesis has allowed me to show that the participating LGBTQ

couples' everyday domestic practices, roles and uses of home spaces challenge (hetero)normative social discourses of the material and imaginative home, allowing for their own (queer) agencies and personal meanings of home to be brought forth – thereby queering this space. In order to further unpick this queering of the heteronormativity of home, my thesis offers three key findings about the division of domestic labour and childcare in LGBTQ coupled homes.

The first key finding is that the participating couples reported taking on a diverse range of approaches towards the division of domestic labour and childcare. Of the 38 participating couples that this thesis reports on, over half perceive themselves to have a roughly equal division of domestic labour in their home, including two couples with children. The remaining participants reported that one partner either does noticeably more or almost all of the domestic labour in their home. The diversity of approaches towards the division of domestic labour which were discussed by the participating couples during their interviews indicates that they do not perceive their everyday domestic practices to be structured according to (hetero)normative social discourses of the home as a space in which couples assume dichotomously gendered roles. Indeed, the divisions of domestic labour reported by the participating LGBTQ couples were largely articulated and perceived by them in terms of what suits them best as a couple, with many participants saying that their domestic role division is the product of on-going discussions or negotiations with their partner. The participating LGBTQ couples revealed during their interviews that they do not necessarily view an equal division of labour as the most desirable arrangement. Rather, it is more important to them that they have the freedom and choice to apportion domestic tasks in ways that make sense to them, based on their particular relationship, relative working hours, politics, preferences, standards and/or skills. This finding builds upon my theoretical framework by highlighting the importance of the participating LGBTQ couples' *personal* agencies and creativity in (re)producing domestic roles which suit them as a couple; and which therefore transgress or queer prescriptive and heteronormative *social* discourses of home spaces, roles and meanings.

The second key finding of the research project is that the majority of LGBTQ participants did not articulate using domestic labour or childcare to enact a traditional form of femininity (or other household maintenance tasks to enact a traditional form of

masculinity). These participants contended that their divisions of labour are not based on hierarchical gender roles, and instead are based upon the principles of fairness or equality. Many participants articulated strong feelings against heteronormative interpretations of their domestic roles, which some expressed in a serious manner and others expressed through the use of humour. With regards to my theoretical perspective of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process, this indicates that one means of queering heteronormative ways of living in and looking after the home is by destabilising the traditional gendered associations of various domestic tasks. In this study, most participating LGBTQ couples reported sharing responsibility for various tasks around the home, regardless of their traditional gendered associations, thereby reworking heteronormative and gendered meanings of domesticity and bringing forth queer ways of living in the home. To complicate this overall picture, I additionally found that at times the participants' attitudes and approaches towards domestic roles are ambiguous, contradictory or complex, simultaneously reproducing and subverting heteronormative understandings of gendered domestic practices. This points to the ongoing salience of dominant (heteronormative) domestic ideals in shaping domestic practices even within some of the participating LGBTQ couples' homes; and highlights another reason why a critical geography of the home as a material space imbued with both personal and *social* meanings is useful when considering the everyday domestic roles and spaces of the participating LGBTQ couples.

The third key finding is that the LGBTQ couples in this study often set themselves apart from rigid or dichotomous understandings of gendered domestic roles through deliberate negotiations and decision-making with regards to each partner's domestic responsibilities. In other words, by remaining flexible and open to discussing their respective domestic roles, these couples produce and maintain homes which affirm their non-heteronormative identities and relationship roles. This leaves room for creativity and agency, resulting in a division of domestic labour which is not structured by traditional gender scripts but is instead influenced by the factors mentioned previously, such as the time availability and personal preferences of each partner. As such, in this thesis I make the case for paying attention to the seemingly unremarkable, mundane discussions and negotiations about domestic roles and responsibilities that take place within the everyday spaces of the LGBTQ home – as I argue that it is often through such discussions and negotiations (which may be amicable or fraught with tension) that

heteronormative social ideals of the home are subverted, and queer or non-heteronormative domestic roles and spaces (re)produced.

The findings of this thesis build upon broader conceptual and theoretical debates in Geography and related scholarship on the home and associated domestic roles and practices in three main ways. First and foremost, the thesis advances debates around the meaning of home by examining the everyday domestic practices of LGBTQ couples and families in contemporary England, employing critical geographies of home and taking the theoretical perspective of the material home as a space imbued with social and personal meanings. Previous studies in and beyond the discipline of Geography have already considered how LGBTQ adults might resist (hetero)normative social meanings of domesticity and use the spaces of the home to affirm their (sexual) identities and relationships. For example, Elwood (2000) and Gorman-Murray (2006a, 2006b, 2007) have examined how lesbian and gay identities may be embedded in the material home by altering its design, displaying certain possessions, or using the home space to socialise with other lesbians and gay men. My study adds to this body of literature by looking beyond design and socialisation in the domestic sphere, and arguing that the LGBTQ couples in my sample also express and embed their (queer) individual and coupled identities in the material home through their everyday homemaking practices, including domestic labour and childcare. Whilst dominant social and architectural discourses of home prescribe heteronormative and traditionally gendered meanings and uses of the home space, and whilst the material layout and objects in a home can provide tangible 'guidelines' as to how the spaces of the home are used and maintained, my analysis has nevertheless shown that the participating LGBTQ couples are able to employ their personal agencies and creativity to create and maintain homes which express their non-heteronormative identities, domestic roles, and ways of living in the home. In offering a queer reading of critical geographies of home as a material space imbued with social and personal meanings, my thesis thus emphasises how *personal* (queer) meanings and uses of the home can disrupt or challenge dominant (heteronormative) *social* discourses of this space.

Furthermore, I found that the disruption of heteronormativity is often not highly visible in LGBTQ homes: in other words, the home spaces of the participating LGBTQ couples and families do not necessarily look very different to those lived in by heterosexual

couples and families, and on the surface the homemaking practices of LGBTQ couples in my sample may appear to fit in with (hetero)normative ideals of domestic roles. Rather than challenging heteronormative social and architectural imaginaries of home by complying with a particular queer aesthetic or assuming radically alternative domestic roles, the LGBTQ participants in my study typically discussed bringing their own (queer) meanings to the home by employing their agency and creativity to (re)produce domestic roles and spaces which are expressive of their identities, personalities and values. In other words, these LGBTQ couples set themselves apart from prescriptive (heteronormative) domestic scripts by making the joint decision to paint a room a particular colour, negotiating how to use a certain room in their home, or purposefully apportioning a domestic task according to their respective preferences, standards, skills or time availability. By drawing attention to these subtle and everyday challenges to heteronormativity that take place within the home spaces of the participating LGBTQ couples, this thesis makes the case for the possibility of queering the (material and imaginative) home, thereby extending theorisations of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative process (which commonly focus on overt or radial rejections of heteronormativity) and critical geographies of the material and imaginative home (by focussing on home spaces and practices that are commonly overlooked even in this literature).

Secondly, the current study extends the broader arc of Feminist Geography – which has always focussed on expanding the limits of understanding of gender and sexuality – by advancing debates about the gendering of everyday domestic practices. Recent studies in the social sciences have highlighted that the traditional gender ideology linking women to the domestic sphere continues to shape gendered divisions of labour in heterosexual coupled households (Crompton 2006; Beagan et al. 2008; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010). Meanwhile, my research adds to a related body of literature which highlights how such traditional gender scripts might be subverted in LGBTQ coupled homes (Rawsthorne and Costello 2010; Ryan-Flood 2009; Kentlyn 2008; Carrington 1999). As noted earlier in this chapter, I found that the LGBTQ couples in my sample often set themselves apart from dualistic understandings of gendered domestic roles through joint decision-making and negotiations (which are at times amicable, at times conflictual) about the apportioning of domestic labour; and by sharing responsibility for

various household tasks regardless of their traditional gendered associations, thereby creating queer domestic roles which suit them as both individuals and couples.

Thirdly, my study has interesting implications in and beyond queer theory. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that gender remains relevant in the queering of identities and homes. Indeed, I have put forward that transgressing heteronormatively gendered roles is one of the main ways these participants enact queer or non-heteronormative domestic identities. In doing so the men in the study (re)produce (queer) masculine subjectivities that are concerned with domestic labour and involved in domestic and childcare tasks to varying degrees; whilst women in the study (re)produce (queer) feminine subjectivities that are not necessarily defined by traditional 'housewifely' roles and are often concerned with a range of homemaking practices including tasks that are traditionally gendered as male – such as DIY or gardening. The domestic practices of the participants may therefore be seen to undermine dominant, heteronormative conceptualisations of masculine and feminine domestic roles and identities, thereby reflecting the *multiple*, changeable and potentially contested domestic masculinities and femininities that exist (see also Atherton 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015). As such, my thesis extends the body of literature within the social sciences which emphasises the need to acknowledge the plurality, complexity and nuances of queer and/or gendered identities and practices in different times and spaces (Hopkins and Noble 2009; Gorman-Murray 2015; Aitken 2000).

Significantly, by arguing that gender matters in the queering of heteronormativity at home, my thesis also *goes against* some work in queer theory which has suggested that, in destabilising (hetero)normativity, 'queer' identities and practices are gender-neutral (Sedgwick 1990, 1993; Jagose 1996). I find this literature problematic, because by presenting a universal queer subject it omits any analysis of gender inequality and the specificity of gendered experiences. In other words, people's experiences of gender hierarchies, dichotomies, identities and roles in different times and places are largely overlooked (rather than disrupted or challenged) by a queer theory which claims to move beyond gender (Rudy 2001; Walters 1996; Nagoshi et al. 2014). Whilst this reading of queer theory can offer compelling visions of a progressive and non-gendered future, it fails to acknowledge that these gendered hierarchies, inequalities and identities remain significant in shaping people's everyday lives in the West today (Rudy 2001).

For example, with regards to the home in contemporary England, I have shown throughout this thesis that (hetero)normative understandings of dichotomously gendered roles continue to play an important part in shaping people's experiences, expectations and divisions of domestic labour and childcare; albeit I have also demonstrated that these gendered norms and roles may be destabilised, challenged or complicated (i.e. 'queered') through the participating LGBTQ couples' everyday attitudes and approaches towards the gendering and division of domestic labour in their homes. What I am arguing for in this thesis is therefore a queer theory which critiques the notion of a unified queer subject; and recognises the importance of considering gender (as complicated, multiple, unfixed, malleable and contested) when theorising queer subjects, experiences and spaces (see also Halberstam 2005; Halperin 2003; Butler 1990; Rudy 2001; Williams 1997).

This argument also allows me to move beyond one of the common critiques of queer theory introduced in Chapter 2, which is that an indifference to gender can result in the gay male being the referent 'universal' subject within some work in queer theory (Rudy 2001; Williams 1997; Samuels 1999; Nagoshi et al. 2014). In Western society, the privileged 'default' or unmarked gender is male, and this often results in purportedly gender-neutral theorisations of 'queer' overlooking the specific experiences of women (as well as people who identify their gender as non-binary), whilst focussing the discussion on (gay) men (Nagoshi et al. 2014; Rudy 2001; Walters 1996). By arguing that gender *does* matter in the queering of heteronormativity at home; by making visible the everyday home lives of a group of LGBTQ women and men (as opposed to only involving gay men in the study); and by paying attention to the *multiple* masculinities and femininities that are (re)produced by the participating LGBTQ couples in the domestic sphere, the queer approach taken in my thesis moves way from this masculine bias; and seeks to complicate, expand and challenge existing understandings of queerness, domestic gender roles and identities within (LGBTQ) home spaces.

Additionally, my thesis helps to extend theorisations of 'queering' as an anti-heteronormative concept – which often focus on public spaces or radical rejections of respectability – by making the case for the queer politics and potentials of everyday domestic life. Coupled domesticity, childrearing and everyday performances of mundane domestic tasks in LGBTQ homes may not appear to be particularly queer at

first glance, because of their long-standing associations with the heterosexual nuclear family. However, throughout my analysis I have shown that the domestic practices of the LGBTQ couples in my study may disrupt the logic of heterosexual order which underlies normative understandings of the home and associated (gendered) domestic roles. I argue that the everyday practices of domestic labour and childcare can therefore serve as activities through which these participating LGBTQ couples subvert dominant ideals of domestic family life, and bring forth non-heteronormative identities, domestic roles or ways of living in the home.

In turning my attention to the everyday lives and domestic labour of LGBTQ couples, it is not my intention to assimilate the participants' lives and identities within normative discourses of the domestic. Rather, it is with a view to challenging the argument (introduced in Chapter 2) that (hetero)normativity can only be subverted in 'transgressive' queer spaces, through embracing sexual shame, or by making queer sex public (Berlant and Warner 1998; Warner 1999; Duggan 2002). In other words, this thesis offers support to scholars such as Halberstam (2005), Pilkey (2013) and Brown (2009) who have suggested that it is arbitrary to draw a line between 'transgressive' acts and spaces which are considered queer and 'assimilationist' acts and spaces which are not. Building upon such theorisations, I centre my analysis on domestic spaces and practices which are often overlooked by queer discourses – namely, domestic labour and childcare within coupled homes. My theoretical argument within this thesis is that it is truly transformative to recognise how heteronormativity may be challenged or queered through even the most seemingly unremarkable, mundane and (hetero)normative spaces and practices. Such an approach enables us to queer heteronormativity throughout our everyday lives, starting here with even the most mundane of domestic tasks and perhaps the most everyday space of all – the home.

I argue that by conceptualising domestic labour and childcare outside of traditional heteronormative discourses of dichotomously gendered domestic roles, researchers in and beyond the discipline of Geography can develop new insights into the dynamics of everyday domestic experiences. This queer approach to the home has great salience in making sense of the diversity of domestic practices in contemporary society without always reading these in terms of (hetero)normative gender roles, which do not necessarily map onto contemporary family relationships or ways of living in and

looking after the home. Ultimately, looking at everyday domestic practices (such as domestic labour and childcare) from the theoretical perspective of queering as an anti-heteronormative process also extends the conceptual and empirical boundaries of critical geographies of home, making visible the intersecting gendered and sexual power relations which shape our everyday experiences of home.

Whilst this research project has focussed on LGBTQ couples, I suggest that understanding the home as a (material and imaginative) space in and through which heteronormative ideals can be challenged or queered is of wider significance beyond LGBTQ studies. The conceptualisation of domestic labour and childcare as queer activities might speak to new meanings of domestic life and labour, which are not based upon heteronormative gender roles, beyond the LGBTQ community (see also Rawsthorne and Costello 2010). In other words, the queering of domestic roles, meanings and spaces is not necessarily limited to LGBTQ coupled households. Although previous research has pointed to entrenched gendered divisions of labour in heterosexual homes (Gorman-Murray 2012; Crompton 2006; Beagan et al. 2008; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010), it is still possible for heterosexual couples to subvert gendered expectations of domestic roles and responsibilities through their everyday approaches and attitudes towards domestic labour and childcare. This can be seen, for example, in recent research on heterosexual stay-at-home Dads (Chesley 2011; Doucet and Merla 2007). As such, I contend that regardless of their sexuality or household formation, domestic labour and childcare are activities through which people can potentially challenge (hetero)normative ways of living in and looking after the home, thereby queering this space

Appendices

Appendix A Participant recruitment postcard

front of postcard:

back of postcard:

Take part in the LGBT Household Labour Project

*My name is **Carla Barrett**, and I am a PhD researcher at the University of Southampton. I am looking for people to interview.*

What is the project about?

The project is about the division of household labour in LGBT couples. Some key questions of the project are:

- What types of household labour take place?
- How do LGBT couples combine household labour with going to work?
- What are their attitudes towards household labour?

How can you take part?

If you identify as LGBT and are living with a partner, then I would love to interview you! You need to be aged 18-70 and living in the UK.

Please email me at **cb3g08@soton.ac.uk** if you are interested or for more information.

Carla Barrett
cb3g08@soton.ac.uk
UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Appendices

Appendix B Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet
(Version II, created 10/11/2012)

Study Title: Carework in the Contemporary UK

Researcher Name: Ms Carla Barrett

Ethics Reference: 4576

I am a PhD student in the school of Geography at the University of Southampton. I am conducting interviews for my PhD research project. Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?
My project looks at the division of household labour and childcare within LGBT relationships. Some of the questions that I am interested in include: what types of household labour take place? What are people's attitudes towards household labour and childcare? How is housework and childcare divided in LGBT relationships? My project also looks at how the work/life balance for LGBT people can be improved through policy and services.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been approached because the researcher is looking for LGBT adults (aged 18-70) who are in a relationship.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be asked to participate in an individual interview with the researcher, preferably in your home. The interview will last for approximately one hour. Interviews will be taped using a dictaphone (voice recorder).

Are there any benefits in my taking part?
This study will have benefits for the LGBT community, by identifying ways in which their work/life balance can be improved – and their needs better met – through policy and services.

Are there any risks involved?
There is a small risk that you might feel uncomfortable with a question asked during the interview. You may refrain from answering any question, without prejudice or consequence.

Will my participation be confidential?
I will comply with the Data Protection Act and University policy on confidentiality. Any written data, and my dictaphone, will be kept in a locked desk at the University of Southampton. All computer files will be password protected. No individuals will be named in any publications arising from this study. Instead, pseudonyms will be used for all participants. In any publication, the location of the participants will only be identified at the levels of the borough, city or county.

What happens if I change my mind?
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without your legal rights being affected.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, please contact Dr Martina Prude, Head of Research Governance at the University of Southampton, by telephone (02380595058) or email (mad4@soton.ac.uk).

Will I be able to read the findings of the study?
Please contact me using the details below in December 2013 to receive feedback on the findings of the study.

Where can I get more information?
Please contact Ms Carla Barrett by telephone (XXXXXXXXXX) or email (cb3g08@soton.ac.uk).

Appendix C Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
(Version II, created 10/11/2012)

Study Title: Carework in the Contemporary UK
Researcher Name: Ms Carla Barrett
Ethics Reference: 4576

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (Version II, 10/11/12) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐

I agree to take part in an interview for this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this project. ☐

I agree for my interview to be taped using a dictaphone (voice recorder). ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected. ☐

I agree for my contact details to be securely stored by the researcher so that I can be contacted about potential future studies. I understand that I may request to be removed from this contact list at any time. ☐

Data Protection: *I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.*

Name of participant (print name) _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

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Appendix D Demographic Information Form

(Version II, created 05/10/2012)

Study Title: Carework in the Contemporary UK **Researcher Name**: Ms Carla Barrett

Ethnic Classification

Asian or Asian British
Indian ☐
Pakistani ☐
Bangladeshi ☐
Any other Asian background ☐ (please specify) _____

Black or Black British
Black Caribbean ☐
Black African ☐
Any other Black background ☐ (please specify) _____

Chinese ☐

Mixed/ Dual ☐ (please specify) _____

White
British ☐
Irish ☐
Other ☐

Any other ethnic background ☐ (please specify) _____

Age

≤ 20 ☐
21-30 ☐
31-40 ☐
41-50 ☐
51-60 ☐
61-70 ☐
71+ ☐

Religion

Buddhist ☐
Christian ☐
Hindu ☐
Jewish ☐
Muslim ☐
Sikh ☐
None ☐
Other ☐ (please specify)

_____

Occupation (please specify)

_____

Sexuality

Bisexual ☐
Gay man ☐
Gay woman/ lesbian ☐
Heterosexual ☐
Queer ☐
Other ☐ (please specify)

_____

Gender

_____

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
No ☐
Yes ☐

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?
No ☐
Yes ☐ (please specify)

_____

Appendices

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