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Growing Precarity in the UK: An Examination into the Everyday Lived Experiences of Homesharers

by

Laura Isobel Paddon

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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Enduring neoliberalism has made life in the UK increasingly precarious. The housing market is
overstretched, access to care provision has been termed a 'postcode lottery' and levels of
loneliness continue to rise. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, these issues have been
exacerbated and insecurity and uncertainty have become more pervasive. As the UK enters its
second decade of austerity, alternative models of care and housing provision are arising and UK
homeshare is one such model. Homeshare involves an older adult with a spare room being
matched with a younger person who completes ten hours of informal care tasks for the older
person per week (activities such as cooking, cleaning and providing companionship). Both the
older adult with the spare bedroom and the younger adult completing the care tasks pay a
monthly fee to a homeshare organisation who arrange homeshare matches and provide ongoing
support.

UK homeshare has been portrayed by homeshare organisations, the media and
policymakers as a solution to the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises. Through understanding
the everyday lived experiences of homesharers, this thesis examines if this portrayal is in line with
homesharer experiences or if, like other so-called crisis solutions, homeshare actually works to
contribute to growing precarity in the UK. The data within this thesis comes from 16 in-depth
interviews with homesharers (and 2 interviews with the daughters of older homesharers). This
thesis examines homesharing through the lens of everyday lived experience and provides key
insight into how precarity is entwined into the everyday for homesharers.

Firstly, I explore people's motivations for homesharing, examining the making, unmaking
and remaking of homes. In doing so, I analyse a central characteristic of participants' homeshares:
insecurity. This shows how in coming to homeshare, people attempt to navigate uncertain
situations and precarity. Secondly, I examine co-homesharer relationships, analysing if these can
provide important social bonds in challenging times, and questioning if relationships built out of
requirement can be valuable or lasting. Finally, I focus on the labour involved in homesharing,
considering what this means in terms of precarity for homesharers and exposing the hidden
labour that is involved in homesharing. Overall, the findings of this thesis provide an original
contribution to geographical and sociological scholarship into precarity, exploring how precarity
interweaves into everyday life, actions, feelings, decisions and relationships – vital research in an
increasingly precarious society.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: **Laura Isobel Paddon**

Title of thesis: **Growing Precarity in the UK: An Examination into the Everyday Lived Experiences of Homesharers**

I 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.

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. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature:... Date: 09.08.2022

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Definitions and Abbreviations

Householder .... Older adult providing the home in a homesharing arrangement.

Younger Homesharer .... Younger adult undertaking the informal care tasks in a homesharing arrangement.

Homesharers .... Both the younger homesharer and the householder.

Chapter 1 **Introduction**

1.1 Background

> 'I just really wanted to leave [my previous living arrangement] and live in the countryside and it kind of felt like homeshare was the only way I'd be able to do that. I get to live here for cheap so that's a positive but at any moment Irene [householder] could just be like 'no', and she has every right. It's her place, I'm here as a benefit to her. She doesn't really owe me anything and I think as soon as it got to a point where it wasn't suitable for her, that would be it, I'd be gone. I'd have to move out and find another place to live' (Hayley, younger homesharer)

Homeshare is based on a 'win-win' premise – younger people with housing need who have the ability to provide some form of care provision are matched with older people in need of care provision with spare rooms. Homeshare International (n.d.) portray homeshare as bringing together older and younger generations 'to share their lives for their mutual benefit'. Yet, as the above quote from a younger homesharer shows, homeshare can also involve feelings of uncertainty and an unequal relationship.

This idea of sharing for mutual benefit is not new. In times of crisis, the sharing of resources, intellect and services are often celebrated and upheld as innovative and necessary (Bergan *et al*, 2020; Ince and Hall, 2017; Ferreri *et al*, 2017). However, portrayals of UK homeshare take this one step further. UK homeshare and certain media outlets portray homeshare as a solution to the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises (Clements, 2015; Homeshare UK, 2018c; St Monica Trust, n.d.). This thesis asks if this portrayal is in line with homesharer experiences or if, like some of the other so-called crisis solutions addressed in this thesis, homeshare adds to widespread precarity in the UK.

The thesis is set against a backdrop of enduring neoliberal policies which have made life in the UK increasingly precarious. Stagnant wages, an overstretched housing market and a rise in zero-hour contracts mean that many people struggle to 'put down roots' and have to navigate daily life amidst uncertain housing, work and care provision (Taylor, 2021). These issues have been exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic which has seen vital services closed,

increasing job insecurity and widespread uncertainty (Killgore *et al*, 2020; Tinson and Clair, 2020). Through examining the everyday and lived experiences of homesharers, this thesis considers the role of homeshare to both individuals and society. I ask if homeshare really 'solves' people's housing and social care needs or if homeshare only offers a 'quick fix' to people's immediate needs, thereby adding to growing feelings of precarity. By exploring the everyday life of homesharers, this thesis not only reveals how this novel form of living is experienced on an individual level, but also uncovers how homesharing contributes to neoliberal shifts of growing precarity.

1.2   What is Homeshare?

Homesharing is where an older adult (aged 65 years and over) with a spare bedroom provides accommodation for a person, in exchange for ten hours of informal care per week - activities such as cleaning, gardening, cooking and providing companionship. Both the older person (hereon referred to as householder) and the person completing the informal care tasks (younger homesharer) pay a monthly fee to their homeshare organisation, who arrange homeshare matches and provide ongoing support (discussed below). This fee varies depending on individual homeshare organisations, who operate under the umbrella organisation of Homeshare UK. On average, younger homesharers pay £160 per month and householders pay £140 per month (Homeshare UK, n.d.a[1]).

Since its founding in the USA in 1972, homeshare has spread across many countries in the Global North. Homeshare now operates in thirteen countries from Belgium and Portugal to Australia and New Zealand (for a full list of countries with homeshare see Homeshare International [n.d.a[2]]). In the UK, the first formal homeshare organisation launched in London in 1993 but the growth of homeshare organisations across the UK is more of a recent phenomenon (Homeshare International, n.d.b). According to Homeshare UK (n.d.a), there are now 19 homeshare organisations across the UK[3] and these organisations are a mixture of charities, community interest companies (non-charitable limited companies with primary aims of benefitting communities rather than generating profit) and local authority-run groups. Funding for UK homeshare schemes comes from its users, but also from grants from the Lloyds Bank

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[1] This information was taken September 2021.
[2] This information was taken September 2021.
[3] There are 10 homeshare organisations in the Greater London area, 2 in the East of England, 2 in the Southeast of England, 2 in the Southwest and West, 2 in Yorkshire and Humber and 1 in the Republic of Ireland. Of these, 5 homeshare organisations provide a national service (Homeshare UK, 2021c).

Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund, who invested £2 million in the development of UK homeshare in 2018 (Homeshare International, n.d.c).

Homeshare UK claim that homesharing allows older people to receive the care and support they need at a cheaper price and allows them to stay independently at home for longer, whether because of age, disability or health issues such as dementia. And for younger people, homesharing provides an opportunity to live in a house or location they may otherwise not be able to afford and to save money on rent (Homeshare UK, n.d.). Moreover, Homeshare UK explain homeshare as 'bringing together people with spare rooms with people who are happy to chat and lend a hand around the house in return for affordable, sociable accommodation'. One underlying motivation of my thesis is to investigate if this depiction of homeshare is experienced as such by people who homeshare.

Interestingly, the average UK homeshare match is just 9 months long (Homeshare n.d.a), which raises questions around homesharing and precarity, and the viability of homeshare as a solution to widespread pervasive crises. Homeshare arrangements can be any length but most homeshare organisations require a minimum of six months, of which the first month is a trial period. Once this period is over, homesharers asked to sign a non-legally binding contract outlining the details and expectations of their arrangement (see appendix A for an example homeshare contract from Homeshare Gloucestershire). The contracts state that if either party is unhappy with their homeshare arrangement, they have to give their co-homesharer one month's notice to end the arrangement.

Homeshare organisation workers have many roles; to advertise homeshare via the internet (on homeshare websites and websites such as spareroom.com), vet potential homesharers, arrange matches and provide ongoing support for current homesharers. This support includes telephone and face-to-face check-ins with homesharers to ensure their match is going well and providing support if homesharers have any issues with their homeshare or co-homesharer. Potential homesharers (where homesharers are referred to, this includes both younger homesharers and householders) go through a vetting process by homeshare organisations who determine if they are suitable to homeshare. These checks include an appropriate and safe living environment, suitable care requirements (no tasks that involve 'touching' are to be undertaken by younger homesharers i.e., feeding, bathing and dressing), sufficient income to cover homeshare fees and a legitimate reason for wanting to homeshare (i.e., not solely wanting to homeshare to save money). Homeshare representatives look for people who want to 'share home life, time, skills and experience' with a co-homesharer (Homeshare UK, n.d.). During the current COVID-19

pandemic, which broke out unexpectedly in the middle of this thesis, homeshare organisations carry out additional checks for potential homesharers, covered below.

The recent coronavirus outbreak has had huge impacts globally. In the UK we have seen national lockdowns, social distancing restrictions and all non-essential shops closed. Issues of housing availability have intensified and with vital care services ordered to remain shut, access to care has become more difficult (Tinson and Clair, 2020). Amidst this, many people struggled with mental health issues and loneliness levels have risen (Killgore *et al*, 2020). During this pandemic, homeshare organisations remained open and prioritised providing support to existing matches and helping with matches ending over arranging new matches (Homeshare UK, 2021a). Homeshare workers made regular check-ins to existing homeshare matches but provided these via skype or the telephone rather than face-to-face. Where new matches are made, homeshare organisations must ensure that there is no risk of the individuals involved being exposed to COVID-19 (ibid).

Of all UK homeshare matches that ended in 2020, sixty per cent were directly due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Homeshare UK, 2020). Homeshare UK (2020) explain that this is due to some non-British younger homesharers returning abroad to their families and some householders moving in with family or friends. Yet despite this, the UK homeshare sector grew by three per cent in 2020 and there are now 1072 people in homeshares (ibid). UK homeshare expect this number to grow significantly in the coming years, thus it is vital to now understand the role that homeshare plays on both individuals and wider UK society.

1.3   Portraying UK Homeshare

The growth of UK homeshare comes at a time when the UK is experiencing 'crises' in housing, care and loneliness (which will be discussed further in the next chapter). The media and homeshare organisations portray homeshare as a timely solution to each of these crises. For instance:

'Young people share homes of the elderly in bid to tackle Britain's housing crisis' (Clements, 2015)

'Homeshare offers solution to loneliness and housing crisis' (Homeshare UK, 2018c)

'At a time when both the UK's housing and social care are deemed to be in crisis, Homeshare UK offers an alternative way of doing things' (St Monica Trust, n.d.)

'Homeshare Offers Solutions to Loneliness and Youth Housing Crisis' (Novus Homeshare, 2018)

Likewise, within government debates, homeshare is described as:

An opportunity to become a major force to reduce loneliness among both older and younger people, as well as to provide affordable housing and a good start in life to young people and others (HL Deb 10 Oct 2018).

Paul Ellis, the cabinet member for adult care and health at Wandsworth Council said this of homeshare:

[Homeshare] is a common-sense approach that tackles two problems at once in a creative way. Loneliness is a hidden problem in our communities, and as well as providing more homes, this scheme will provide companionship and bring different generations together (HL Deb 10 Oct 2018).

Homeshare is thus depicted as a method of reducing loneliness, providing accommodation for younger people and helping with the care needs of older people; therefore, solving each crisis, at least in part. Homeshare is portrayed as a method for older people to make 'good use' of their spare bedrooms without needing to downsize (Fox, 2018); allowing older people to 'do what is right' for the UK housing crisis without the struggles of finding suitable housing elsewhere. According to Homeshare UK, homeshare also provides 'affordable, sociable accommodation' for younger people amidst the difficulties of accessing accommodation in a housing crisis. Likewise, homeshare is depicted as addressing a central feature of the care crisis – the lack of affordable care. For instance, Share & Care (n.d.), a nation-wide homeshare service, advertise homesharing as paying £5 a day for care, which is significantly lower than most other non-personal[4] care options. Further, homeshare is also presented as helping to solve the UK's loneliness crisis. Paul Streets, the chief executive of the Lloyds Bank Foundation – one of the largest funders of homeshare - refers to the integration of generations that homeshare provides as 'true symbiosis' (Novus Homeshare, 2018, p. 1). He states that:

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[4] Here non-personal care refers to tasks which do not include touching i.e. bathing, feeding, dressing.

Sometimes the issues facing society can seem intractable – growing loneliness, isolation and intergenerational divides, the unaffordability of housing and the social care crisis. Homeshare offers a clear and effective way to help people on the sharp end of these issues.

Lack of inter-generational integration has been cited as a factor contributing to the increase in reported loneliness among both older and younger generations (de Jong Gierveld *et al*, 2012). Therefore, by portraying homeshare as sociable and in using terms such as 'symbiosis', homeshare is positioned as a mutually beneficial relationship between generations, a way that people can deal with their own loneliness while supporting another in need, and thereby helping to solve the loneliness crisis.

Homeshare is thus depicted as an innovative method of solving inter- and intra-generational issues. It addresses the fact that older people are more likely to have access to housing but not care provision and younger people are more likely to be able to offer care provision but not have access to housing. But while homeshare does appear on the surface to address various societal issues, are there any negatives to homeshare which are overlooked in these depictions? How does the portraying of homeshare as a solution fit into the wider logics of neoliberalism? And is homeshare a radical new sharing solution, or is it a new marketised approach to care that masks continued precarity under the guise of shared living and feel-good marketing? The following chapter looks deeper into each crisis and critically analyses homeshare's portrayal as a crisis 'solution'.

1.4   Socio-Economic and Political Landscape

To fully understand how UK homeshare is portrayed as a crisis solution, first we must consider the context in which the current study and the growth of UK homeshare is situated. Ongoing austere cuts to public sector services, benefits and jobs, have exacerbated issues surrounding access and affordability of housing and care, thus everyday life is increasingly experienced as precarious. With the government backing a neoliberal agenda, new infrastructures of care, housing and support are emerging to address these crises – homeshare being one – which are upheld as brilliant new solutions by the media. But how appropriate are these so-called solutions to addressing the UK's housing and care issues? This section contextualises UK homeshare amidst its socio-economic and political landscape.

1.4.1   Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a political ideology that organises society around principles of competition, efficiency, and a 'right' price for everything (Lawson, 2007). Under neoliberalism, public support and spending are withdrawn from many important arenas (such as care provision and housing) and public services are increasingly privatised. A neoliberal agenda regards competition as a crucial component of human relations. Monbiot (2016, p. 1) has proposed neoliberalism 'redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling', thus merit is rewarded and inefficiency is punished. Moreover, neoliberalism emphasises the primacy of the market and stresses minimal government intervention (Darab *et al*, 2018).

Neoliberalism has played a key role in a variety of societal crises, from the 2008 financial recession to the current UK loneliness 'epidemic', yet it is so pervasive it is seldom recognised as an ideology (Labonté and Stuckler, 2016; Monbiot, 2016; Venugopal, 2015). Neoliberalism in the UK can be traced back to the Conservative Thatcher government of the 1980s which implemented a series of neoliberal economic reforms to address the chronic stagflation that the UK was experiencing. Since then, neoliberalism has been widespread and ubiquitous, but also often accepted and unchallenged.

A neoliberal agenda backs discourses of individual responsibility (for poverty, unemployment, care, homelessness etc) (Monbiot, 2016). As Darab *et al* (2018, p. 537) have noted, neoliberalism 'attributes blame to those unable to achieve independence and places the responsibility for self-provision squarely on the shoulders of each person'. Hence, under neoliberalism, state provision for vulnerable people is reduced and profitability is prioritised above human needs (Kennett, 2011). In terms of the housing market, neoliberalism is felt through inability to access affordable and suitable housing options and difficulties in accessing social housing. When applied to social and care support, neoliberal principles marginalise those with care needs by constructing care as a private affair only needed by the vulnerable, thus not of government concern (Lawson, 2007). Furthermore, in reducing state influence in the economy, neoliberalism pushes responsibility for social issues away from the government and onto individuals, communities and the third sector, thus onto organisations such as Homeshare UK. Hence, the promotion and growth of UK homeshare emerges within the context of this wider neoliberal ideology. But we also need to think about homeshare in the context of recent government moves towards austerity in light of the 2008 recession, discussed in the following section.

1.4.2   Austerity

Austerity has become a buzzword in the UK, a commonplace identifier for the UK's social, economic and political situation. As Hall (2019a, p. 2) writes, at its most basic level, austerity refers to 'a specific set of actions and policies by the state: the reduction of spending on public expenditure with the precise aim of reducing governmental budget deficit'. Since the 2008 financial crisis, and now further entrenched with the COVID-19 pandemic, austerity has come to permeate everyday life and has become embedded throughout society. For public services in England, austerity has meant closures, cutbacks, staff reductions and salary cuts (Himmelweit, 2014). Austerity has also resulted in increased inequalities, substandard working conditions, insecure employment and inability to access vital housing and care provision (Clarke and Newman, 2012; Glendinning, 2016; Hall, 2019a).

Austerity is not a fiscal inevitability. It was an economic agenda and a political choice taken by the UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government after the financial crisis of 2008. Austerity was favoured not because alternative 'solutions' to the 2008 financial crisis did not exist, but because finance capital had the power to ensure that the crisis endured unless its 'solution' of austerity was implemented (Himmelweit, 2014). The prime minister of the time, David Cameron, told people that unless these reductions in salaries and social spending were made, the crisis would continue because international finance would not invest in such 'uncompetitive' economies, instead favouring tax havens and cheap labour economies (ibid).

Since the program of austerity was implemented, successive UK's governments have promoted an ideological commitment to localism; where powers are devolved to communities and a greater emphasis is placed upon the voluntary sector and informal support (while at the same time, making budget cuts to local authorities) (Eagle *et al*, 2017; Gray and Barford, 2018). Thus, austerity shapes how and by whom support is administered, enacted and received (Hall, 2019). New infrastructures of support, particularly within the third sector, such as homeshare, emerge and become more important as austerity continues (Heslop and Ormerod, 2019). At the same time, informal support provided by communities, families, friends and individuals is required to 'fill the gaps' caused by austere measures. Thus, austerity changes landscapes of support provision and impacts people's relationships, responsibilities and needs.

Austerity is also more than a fiscal policy; austerity is a lived experience and a feeling (Hall, 2019a; Hitchen, 2016; Horton, 2016; Jupp and Bolwby, 2019). Austerity is as much about the personal and the social, as it is about the economic and the political. Understanding austerity on a personal level highlights the tangible impacts of austerity on people's responsibilities, choices,

relationships, aspirations and future life trajectories. This can lead to insecurity and uncertainty for people who have to navigate their lives via increasingly austere and precarious conditions.

1.4.3   Precarity

As austerity endures and the welfare state continues to decline, new forms of insecurity arise (Crăciun, 2019; Edmiston, 2017). The concept of precarity refers to a feeling of intrinsic insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability, resulting from coping with increasing outside pressures (Grenier *et al*, 2017; Crăciun and Flick 2014). The term commonly represents a living condition founded on transience, job insecurity and fragmentation in increasingly flexible labour markets. Precarity also refers to increasing ownership for one's own life, health and wellbeing (Kosmala and Imas, 2016). Key scholarship on precarity such as that from Lauren Berlant (2011) and Judith Butler (2004) differentiates between precariousness, an intrinsic state of dependence and vulnerability, and precarity, a political condition that is the result of uneven power relations. Thus, while precariousness is common to all life and contemporary living, a state of precarity relates to the current era of austerity and neoliberalism and therefore is largely politically induced (Kosmala and Imas, 2016).

The economic impacts of austerity are leading to precarious working lives via increasingly common platform, zero-hour and gig employment with low or insecure pay (Bonner-Thompson and McDowell, 2020; Nowicki 2017). However, like austerity, precarity is more than an economic condition, it is a wider social and cultural phenomenon with affective and emotional consequences that can shape day-to-day lives. Kosmala and Imas (2016, p. 5) explain the term precariat which refers to a social class in the making who:

> feel their living and identities are made up of fragmented and fractured elements, in
> which it seems impossible to construct a desirable narrative by weaving work and
> quality time for a life outside work.

Precariat is an umbrella term for all people, from any walk of life, who need to navigate through life while coping with precariousness, job insecurity and the individualisation of life (ibid). Since the 2008 recession and the introduction of austerity measures in the UK, precarity has become increasingly accepted as the 'new normal'. So much so that what Berlant (2011) terms a 'crisis-ordinary' state has become the norm in the UK. This refers to the daily efforts of people to merely 'get by' or 'stay afloat'. Especially in a socio-political climate of austerity, in which social welfare has been radically reduced, precarity permeates all aspects of everyday life (Hall, 2020; Nowicki,

2017). Thus, understanding precarious housing trajectories, access to care provision and feelings of precariousness is of great contemporary importance. This thesis does so through a focus on the everyday and lived experiences of homesharers.

1.4.4 New Infrastructures of Support

Consequently, new infrastructures of care, housing and support are emerging which aim to address some of the consequences of austerity. These 'solutions', however, often only 'provide' for people in the short-term, and therefore often do not remove people from precarious situations or feelings of precarity. One example that highlights this trend is research by Ferreri *et al* (2017) who have looked at the rise in property guardianship in the UK. Property guardianship is a new type of temporary and insecure urban dwelling whereby young individuals, often in precarious employment, become temporary 'guardians' in central urban locations via intermediary companies. Property guardianship allows people to live in unusual locations, such as warehouses or buildings pending for demolition, at below market rent while undertaking live-in security arrangements that are not considered as a form of 'work' (ibid). In this way low-income but 'flexible' individuals such as students or people in precarious, part-time or self-employed work are able to live inexpensively in central urban areas. Like UK homeshare, property guardianship has been celebrated in the UK media as a solution to the lack of affordable housing and as an inventive and adventurous type of living (England, 2015; Norwood, 2010).

What is poignant about property guardianship is that the property guardians accept their multiple insecurities as an unavoidable and expected condition of contemporary urban life. The glorification of alternative forms of living has led to people favouring imaginaries of resourcefulness and convenience under austerity over ideas of victimhood (Ferreri *et al*, 2017). This highlights the extent to which precarity is entrenched and emphasises the view of precarity as flexible and adaptable and thus as enabling and liberating. Precarious solutions to austerity are therefore not only normalised but often actively celebrated as useful, innovative and entrepreneurial (Harris and Nowicki, 2018).

There are many similarities that can be drawn between property guardianship and homesharing. They are both portrayed by the media as a solution to the UK's housing crisis, they both usually only address people's short-term or immediate housing need and thus they can both be seen as precarious living situations. UK homeshare therefore deserves the same critical attention to fully understand the role of homeshare in addressing people's needs and the precarious geographies that homeshare produces. It is in this context that this study into homesharing sits. Is homesharing experienced as precarious by those involved? Do homesharers

feel homesharing is solving their housing and care needs? Are the downsides to homesharing overlooked by the media, the UK government and homeshare organisations in favour of upholding neoliberal solutions to broader economic and social issues? Further, if the downsides of these precarious solutions were acknowledged, would 'precarity as the new normal' be challenged? What would the consequences of this be? Thus, at stake here are vital implications for how we approach and research precarity and austerity as co-constitutive of everyday life.

Importantly for this thesis, it is not only younger people who experience precarity and precariousness. Older people too are experiencing challenges within the context of increasing life expectancy, severe cutbacks to local services and the welfare state, and growing economic and social inequalities. While policy discourse and cultural representations may portray older adults as a cohort that is prosperous and healthy, many older individuals experience insecurities that arise due to older age or are carried forward as a result of earlier disadvantage (Grenier and Phillipson, 2020). Further, greater responsibility now falls on older individuals and/or their families to provide or arrange care or support provision. Although the impact of precarity and precariousness on younger people has been widely examined (Berrington *et al*, 2014; Holdsworth, 2017), precarity and older people has rarely been addressed – a research gap I hope to fill in this thesis.

This thesis will therefore contribute to a growing body of scholarship around the geographies of precarity, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and researching the processes through which precarity is embedded within everyday life. Examining homesharing calls attention to the various formats and contexts in which precarity exists and emphasises the need to recognise the different ways in which precarity is reproduced and normalised as an accepted element of the everyday. Exploring homesharing through the lenses of precarity and the everyday is thus vital in understanding and challenging precarity as the 'new normal' - an important geographical concern in an increasingly precarious world.

1.5   Research Aims and Questions

In line with the above, this thesis has the following aims and research questions:

1. To understand the everyday experiences of people who homeshare

    - how is home experienced by homesharers?
    - how are the interpersonal relationships between co-homesharers experienced?
    - what labour is involved in homesharing and how is this experienced?

2. To explore if portrayals of homeshare as a solution to the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises are in line with homesharer experiences

    - do householders feel homeshare addresses their short-term and longer-term care needs?
    - do younger homesharers feel homeshare addresses their short-term and longer-term housing needs?
    - do homesharers feel homeshare improves their social wellbeing?

3. To explore how the emergence of homeshare in the UK normalises precarity

    - do homeshares feel precarious in their homeshares?
    - has homesharing reduced precarity for homesharers?
    - what can the example of homesharing tell us about wider patterns of precarity in the UK?

1.5.1 Research Aim 1

While media attention of homeshare is widespread, academic research into UK homeshare is lacking. This thesis will examine how homesharing is experienced in the everyday, analysing how homesharers relate to their home spaces, how relationships are developed between co-homesharers and how the labour involved in homesharing shapes homesharer experiences. This thesis will explore if homesharers feel secure in their homeshares, if co-homesharers can develop support networks which counteract loneliness (as depicted in homeshare portrayals) and will examine what labour is involved in homesharing.

Homeshare is dependent upon the interpersonal relationships that occur between co-homesharers. I will therefore analyse how co-homesharers build and maintain relationships with their co-homesharer and what the role of this relationship is in homesharers' social networks. This will provide some understanding into why some homeshare matches last and others do not. Moreover, exploration into the everyday experiences of homesharers will reveal how homesharing shapes people's day-to-day lives and can uncover the benefits and downsides to homesharing. Through exploring people's lived experiences of homesharing, the complex picture of what it is like to homeshare is better understood and thus, insight is provided into homesharing on an individual scale.

1.5.2   Research Aim 2

Portrayals of UK homeshare often celebrate homeshare as an ingenious solution to various UK's 'crises' (Clements, 2015; Homeshare UK, 2018c; St Monica Trust, n.d.). This thesis will listen to homesharer narratives to understand how and if homeshare is solving these individuals' needs. In order to 'solve' crises, solutions must provide for people in the longer run. I will therefore ask homesharers not only about how or if homeshare addresses their current needs of housing or care (or social wellbeing), but also if homesharing impacts on homesharers' longer-term needs and future needs. I will consider if the downsides to homeshare are overlooked in its advertisements and will uncover if homeshare portrayals are in line with homesharers' experiences.

1.5.3   Research Aim 3

Under neoliberalism, whereby power is devolved to local communities and the government plays a lesser role in supporting its population, innovative methods of support provision or 'solutions' to societal issues develop, homeshare being one. However, these methods typically only provide for people in the short term (such as property guardianship described above). This short-term provision, while beneficial to individuals, often adds to widespread, growing precarity in the UK. As aforementioned, precarity has become so engrained into everyday life in the UK that it is often overlooked, unchallenged or even unnoticed. This thesis will consider if like other so-called crisis solutions discussed in this thesis, homesharing adds to and normalises precarity. I will consider this from homesharers' perspectives and will assess this through the stories they tell about their current lives and imagined futures. This will provide vital insight into how precarity is normalised into the everyday and in doing so, will highlight how precarious solutions to societal issues are romanticised.

1.6   Thesis Outline

The following chapter contextualises the growth of UK homeshare against the backdrop of the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises. In doing so, this chapter sets the scene for the study and opens up important questions which are taken forward into this thesis. I first question how the language of crisis is used to shift responsibility for housing, care and loneliness provision from the government onto the third sector and individuals. Then each of the housing, care and loneliness

crises are discussed in depth and I critically analyse how UK homeshare is portrayed as a solution to each crisis.

Chapters 3 and 4 form the literature review chapters for this thesis. Within these chapters I trace the development of significant bodies of literature that are pertinent when studying homesharing, notably literature around care and home, respectively. Chapter 3 examines key debates within feminist ethics of care scholarship, highlighting this existing scholarship as paramount for this research. This chapter analyses interpersonal relationships in care, and covers central concepts such as caregiver/receiver, power and interdependence. This chapter also looks more broadly at landscapes of care literature, highlighting shifts in who provides care and where care takes place. Moreover, this chapter shows the limits to care under neoliberalism and in doing so, builds a critical picture of the landscape in which UK homeshare has emerged.

Chapter 4 highlights critical geographies of home scholarship as vital to this study. I demonstrate how processes of home making and unmaking impact on feelings of 'at homeness', revealing home as more than merely a roof over one's head. Thus, this chapter critiques traditional essentialist views of home-as-hearth and elucidates home as a contested and political site. I examine the growth of alternative and shared living arrangements, considering the impacts of these arrangements on how homes are experienced. The chapter also explores intergenerational shared living schemes, analysing the labour that is usually involved and how this shapes both home as a place of work and home as a place of care. Throughout this chapter, the similarities and differences of homeshare and other shared living schemes are considered and I explore how shared homes can be experienced as precarious.

Chapter 5 describes and justifies the methodological framework for this thesis. The chapter explains my focus on everyday lived experience, showing this as a crucial lens when examining homesharing and precarity. This chapter details my three research methods of in-depth interviews, emotion maps and photo elicitation and discusses my data collection process. COVID-19 broke out in the middle of my data collection and this chapter explains my original research plans and the implications (both positive and negative) of the coronavirus pandemic on my study. The chapter also describes my positionality in relation to my research and acknowledges my role on the research project. Here the ethical concerns raised throughout this study are also discussed, along with the demographics of the research participants and the processes of data analysis and presentation.

Chapters 6 to 9 present the findings of this thesis and address the thesis' research questions stated above. These chapters draw upon the data gathered via interviews, emotion

maps and photo elicitation to explore the everyday life of homesharers and what it is like to live in a homeshare in the UK.

Chapter 6 examines participants' motivations for joining a homeshare. The chapter considers how homesharing incorporates both the making and unmaking of homeshare homes, previous homes and future homes. I also investigate a defining characteristic of participants' homeshares: insecurity. This chapter analyses the impacts of insecure homeshare homes on individuals' homeshares and considers what this means in terms of precarity. Some homeshare-specific characteristics, such as increasing care needs for householders and the role of householder's families for younger homesharers, are also examined and the chapter shows how these shape how homesharers relate to their home spaces. Moreover, this chapter explores how homesharers make or feel 'at home' when their homeshare homes are characterised by transience and insecurity. The chapter asks if precarity is minimised for homesharers or if homesharing compounds precarity.

Chapter 7 explores the interpersonal relationships between co-homesharers (and the householders' family for younger homesharers). Homeshares are dependent on a working relationship between co-homesharers, therefore this chapter examines how homesharers describe their relationship with their co-homesharer and looks at the role of homeshare in people's wider social networks. This chapter analyses both the benefits and limits to co-homesharer relationships. I show homeshare as a platform for developing close relationships, which can be forged through differences of age and race. The chapter uncovers how co-homesharer relationships can provide security and support in a time of need, and thus how homeshare can open up new forms of attachment and relationality. At the same time, I highlight how interpersonal conflict can shape everyday living for homesharers and can influence how secure homesharers feel in their homeshares. The chapter uncovers how power and interdependence are interwoven in co-homesharer relationships and how homeshare relationships can break down. Moreover, this chapter examines the formation of co-homesharer relationships amidst a failing care system and reveals how precarity entwines with everyday relationships for homesharers.

In chapter 8, I analyse the labour involved in homesharing for both younger homesharers and householders. The chapter explores the pressure that is placed on younger homesharers who have care responsibility for their householders and I consider what this means in terms of precarity for both younger homesharers and householders. The chapter examines the potential exploitation of younger homesharers for whom 'switching off' becomes difficult. It shows how the

labour involved in homesharing speaks to wider issues for younger people in today's society and highlights how this labour can lead to a sense of burnout for those involved. The chapter also explores the emotional labour of homesharing and analyses how this is related to the uncertainty participants feel in the continuance of their homeshares. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which, through the labour involved in homesharing, precarity permeates into the everyday for homesharers.

The final chapter provides an overview of the thesis. I summarise the thesis' overarching findings in line with the thesis' research aims and questions. The chapter reflects back on the study, acknowledging the limitations of the thesis and suggesting potential areas of future research into homesharing. This chapter also highlights the contributions that this thesis makes to precarity scholarship and the implications of this thesis for potential homesharers.

Chapter 2   **Context of UK Homeshare**

With a lack of academic research into UK homeshare, as well as a tendency for so-called 'crisis solutions' to be precarious and short-term (Ferreri *et al*, 2017), a critical examination into whether homeshare is a viable answer to the problems society is currently facing around housing and care is required. Accordingly, this chapter describes and analyses the three crises of housing, care and loneliness that UK homeshare and the media portray homeshare as solving. Is homeshare really a solution to each of these crises? Or do portrayals of homeshare as a crisis solution actually push a neoliberal agenda that is adding to growing precarity? By contextualising and examining how UK homeshare is portrayed, this chapter opens up important questions which will be taken forward in this study. Firstly, the chapter critically interrogates what the language of crisis actually does, and questions how it is used to push certain narratives of self-responsibility and neoliberal agendas (see Heslop and Ormerod, 2019; Jessop, 2013; Walby, 2015). This is followed by a discussion of the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises in turn. Each section provides a brief overview of each crisis to contextualise the growth of UK homeshare and also critically analyses how UK homeshare is depicted as a solution to each crisis.

2.1   **Crisis Narratives**

Although historically, crises have brought about advancements and even emancipatory progress (see Beck 2006), there is extensive consensus that crises are something which need to be evaded, repressed and resolved. If left to simply 'run their course', crises can be extremely costly politically, economically and socially (Rycker and Mohd Don, 2013). The original Greek meaning of crisis denoted a 'decision' or 'tipping point', a situation requiring urgent action or attention. Yet, the protracted time period of the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises (each nearly a decade in length) shows how the meaning of the term has shifted to a prolonged position and even a current state of affairs (hence Berlant's [2011] notion of a crisis-ordinary state). Crisis has been referred to as 'an ongoing, enduring condition which has everyday qualities, being both predictable and consistent' (Heslop and Ormerod, 2019, p. 146). Crises are also relational; how one experiences a crisis is shaped by gender, race, class and other dimensions of social difference and in turn, this impacts how individuals and groups respond to crises (Ince and Hall, 2018).

During periods of crises normative ways of living are often exposed, and governing discourses are potentially opened up for disputation. Crises can generate opportunities for new policies and political narratives that shape the ways people live and interact with the state (de Rycker and Mohd Don, 2013). Crisis narratives are created and channelled through media discourse and political rhetoric, and such narratives form the basis for policy actions (Heslop and Ormerod, 2019). This permits the cessation of previous norms and beliefs and creates new opportunities for the government to introduce new policies and incentives with the aim of 'solving' the crisis. Moreover, crises may lead to new progressive shifts in society, and a sense that things cannot go back to the way that they were. But crises can also be used as ways to mask particular neoliberal ideologies.

Under the aegis of 'crisis', the UK government was able to introduce new, often austere, measures which shift responsibility for housing, care and loneliness provision from the government onto the third sector and individuals, thus reducing government spending and responsibility in these areas. In using the language of crisis, actions taken to 'solve' the crises seem not only necessary and required but innovative and brilliant. Further, in experiencing multiple 'crises' at once, the situation of the UK is seen to be at peril and therefore subsequent action to deal with these crises is framed as urgent and essential.

UK homeshare is an example of a scheme that is being promoted under the language of crisis. Would homeshare be seen as necessary if the issues it is said to solve (lack of housing and care provision) were not regarded as in crisis? Would the notion of younger people living with older strangers because they cannot afford housing seem innovative if the language of crisis was not being used? Moreover, do crisis discourses mask wider problems in society and if so, do the schemes being pushed as crisis solutions, such as UK homeshare, actually address societal issues or do they also work to bolster certain crisis narratives of self-responsibility that are so integral to neoliberal agendas? Furthermore, there is a need to analyse how UK homeshare has been positioned as a solution to each of the UK's housing, care and loneliness 'crises', asking if such a portrayal is in line with homesharer experiences or if such solutions only offer short-term options which can add to growing precarity. The chapter now moves on to discuss each of these crises in turn, critically analysing the portrayal of UK homeshare as a 'solution' to each crisis.

2.2　　Housing

A central feature of austerity in the UK is the precariousness of the housing market. House and rental prices are growing at an exponential rate and severe cuts to housing benefits limit where

and with whom people can live (Hall, 2017; Wilkinson and Ortega Alcazar, 2017). The increasing population places growing pressure on the housing market, and with a lack of supply and a clear commitment from the government to invest in affordable housing, this has led to increased unmet housing demand (Hall, 2019). Since 1996, the average house price in the UK has increased by over 160% in real terms and it is now estimated that 8 million people in England are living in unaffordable and insecure housing (Mulheirn, 2019; National Housing Federation, 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, issues relating to housing in the UK remain and, in some circumstances, have become more dire (Barker, 2020). Lockdowns have:

> led to economic stagnation as well as revealed the absence of safe housing needed to survive during the pandemic. Homelessness and the inability of vulnerable people to access affordable housing have become more visible issues [and] the precarity and structural weaknesses in the private and social rented sectors have been brought to the fore (Ejiogu *et al*, 2020, p. 1).

Despite UK housing now deemed to be in 'crisis', these issues with the housing market have a longer history than the current era of austerity or the COVID-19 pandemic. The origins of the housing crisis can be traced back to the Conservative Thatcher government of the 1970s/80s and its neoliberal housing policies, such as the 'Right to Buy' scheme. This scheme privatised public housing stock as part of a broader re-organisation of the welfare state (Heslop and Ormerod, 2019). Thus, for the past forty years housing has become increasingly unaffordable, homelessness levels have risen and the number of those with housing need has increased (ibid). Since the 1980s, the UK's financial market has been highly deregulated but with a relatively small number of large players in the mortgage market. This has led to an ongoing issue of inadequate supply and therefore, substantial volatility in market activity and house prices (Whitehead and Williams, 2011). The ability to access affordable housing has been hindered by the tightening of credit, stricter mortgage lending, increase in deposit requirements and reduced public spending and resources (Mulliner and Maliene, 2013). Furthermore, a failure to invest in social housing over the decades has also caused social housing residualisation, whereby social housing is now only available as a safety net for those who cannot obtain housing by other means (Pearce and Vine, 2014).

For these reasons, many younger people struggle to become homeowners and experience difficulties in accessing the decreasing social rented sector due to lack of availability and priority being given to vulnerable groups (Kintrea 2006). Renting and shared living for a longer time period

is now normalised, as economic insecurity means that people cannot afford to buy a place of their own, or housing market insecurity means there are no available homes in nearby, affordable or desirable locations. Many younger people are therefore left with little choice but to either remain in the parental home for longer (see Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcazar, 2017) or to rent in the private rented sector (PRS) until later in life (Mulliner and Maliene, 2013). The growing numbers of younger people privately renting for longer periods of their lives has been termed 'generation rent' and it has become a buzzword within the media and in government documents (for instance, see Inside Housing, 2020; Independent, 2018; McKee 2012).

Among the narratives being pushed via the housing crisis is the narrative of 'generations in conflict'. Within the media and via some right-wing politicians, the housing crisis is often blamed on older generations who are claimed to have 'bankrupted youth' (Howker and Malik, 2013) and 'taken their children's futures' (Willetts, 2010). Baby boomers – people born between the late 1940s and early 1960s - are portrayed as 'the luckiest people in history' (Sandbrook, 2010, p. 90) who 'enjoyed a life of free love, free school meals, free universities, defined benefit pensions, mainly full employment and a forty-year-long housing boom' (Hutton, 2010, p. 1). These portrayals are directly compared with the various issues today's younger people are facing and rather than looking to explanations of these generational differences in terms of welfare state retrenchment and neoliberal restructuring, older generations are blamed (Bristow, 2019). Moreover, this 'generations in conflict' narrative is doing neoliberal work – diverting attention away from the lack of government investment in the welfare state and public housing and encouraging the idea of housing as an investment and not as a home. Through generation-blaming, the government is pushing responsibility for the housing crisis away from itself and in doing so, avoids a discussion of the failures of the state to adequately provide housing.

This 'generations in conflict' narrative tells us that all older people are homeowners who are 'using up' vital housing stock and this is highlighted by certain policies, such as the removal of stamp duty for older adults who move into smaller homes. Thus, there is a pressure for older people to downsize in order to 'free up' existing housing stock, despite these now 'free' homes being too expensive for many younger people (Pannell, 2012). Nevertheless, with limited housing options available, not all older adults are able or willing to downsize. Downsizing requires finding an available property with the correct number of bedrooms and suitable in situ adaptations, and unless the new property is nearby, individuals risk disrupting their local support systems and cutting their community and neighbourhood ties (Gibb, 2015). Also, homeownership remains an aspiration for people in the UK, which is closely related to social status and social identity (Crawford and McKee, 2018). Downsizing can therefore be regarded 'a step down on the ladder of social success, particularly when available accommodation is positioned in less attractive areas'

(Park and Ziegler, 2016, p. 4). Many older people also require spare bedrooms which can be used for visitors, in particular children and grandchildren, who themselves may be struggling to find suitable accommodation.

Furthermore, demands for older people to downsize despite these issues, as well as issues with housing shortages, has led Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008, p. 229) to contend that 'out of sight, out of mind' has become a 'convenient reality' for UK elder policymakers. As Park and Ziegler (2016, p. 2) highlight:

> even those with greater resources are likely to face a choice between staying put (and, where possible, adapting their own home) or moving outside of their current neighbourhood. The resulting lack of life course continuity can be traumatic and have lasting effects on wellbeing and independence. At the same time as trying to make such a complex emotional and financial decision about their future housing, many older people and their families are subjected to the politicized debate around the impacts of an ageing population, a national housing shortage, growing housing inequality and 'over occupation'.

In this context then, housing options for older people are framed around ideas of not only greater self-responsibility, but also a moral responsibility to do 'what is right' for the state of the UK housing market, even if the options available are not suitable or desired (ibid). This can create feelings of anxiety or precarity among older people who juggle with these pressures and decisions, while lacking any real 'choice' in terms of housing stock. Likewise, for younger people, or 'generation rent', a lack of affordable or available properties and thus choice, means that precarious housing is often part of everyday life. The term 'generation rent' has become normalised to the extent that shared living is depicted as something that people would choose first rather than as a last resort (McKee, 2012). As a result, younger people's housing trajectories are more mobile and flexible and this 'leaves many feeling frustrated as they struggle to remain fixed in place in order to 'settle down' and benefit from the positive qualities of home' (Hoolachan *et al*, 2017, p. 63). Furthermore, self-responsibility narratives being pushed through the housing crisis promote the idea that it is up to individuals to fix the crisis by changing their living arrangements or their housing expectations, even if this means that people experience housing as more precarious (covered in detail in chapter 4) (ibid; Park and Ziegler, 2016).

2.2.1   Homeshare and the Housing Crisis

Homesharing conforms to the UK government's aim of filling up under-occupied rooms and creating more homes for people. Homeshare is portrayed as allowing older people to make 'good use' of their spare bedrooms without needing to downsize (Fox, 2018). This fits in with the narrative of older people 'doing their bit' for the UK housing crisis, without the struggles of finding suitable alternative housing. Thus, portrayals of homeshare can be seen as a means of pushing neoliberal narratives of self-responsibility for the housing crisis.

Homeshare also reflects the shifting ideology of people living in shared accommodation until later in life. Homeshare is advertised as 'high-quality, affordable accommodation' (Homeshare UK, n.d.b), which helps to provide 'a good start in life to young people' (HL Deb 10 Oct 2018). Homeshare is therefore positioned as an economically viable housing option for younger people, who perhaps cannot or will not stay in the familial home and for those saving to buy a place of their own. But how beneficial is this housing option?

The average UK homeshare match lasts only nine months (Homeshare UK, n.d.a). Ultimately, a homeshare arrangement only works as long as both parties are content, which can lead to insecurity, particularly from the younger homesharers' point of view, who risks losing a place to live if their homeshare breaks down. A consequence of the housing crisis is the growing number of people living in insecure, temporary homes (McKee *et al*, 2017). Therefore, while homesharing can provide a place to live for younger homesharers, does it really give them access to a secure place that they can call home? Moreover, portraying UK homeshare as a 'housing crisis solution' despite the average match length being so short-term highlights the expected mobility of younger people in today's society (Holdsworth, 2017). Younger people are expected to be flexible for work in a precarious labour market and also available, ready and willing to move in and out of properties (Ferreri *et al,* 2017). Younger people's housing trajectories are increasingly characterised by impermanence and mobility, and portraying UK homeshare as a housing crisis solution, can be seen as normalising housing insecurity and precarity.

Further, homeshare contracts state that homesharers have one month's notice to either leave or for their co-homesharer to leave the arrangement if they are unhappy (see appendix A). Yet, the Homeshare UK Practice Guide (2011, p. 25) states that 're-matching typically takes longer to organise because the householder and the [younger] homesharer often have more specific requirements once they have experienced the realities of homeshare'. During the time it takes to arrange a new homeshare match, younger homesharers must find an alternative short-term place to live. They may be subject to stringent checks from estate agents and estate agent's fees, perhaps countering any money they may have saved while being in a homeshare. For people in

this situation, homeshare may be the cause of their housing insecurity, rather than a housing solution. Do younger homesharers feel that their housing needs are being met by homesharing? And does homesharing help to remove younger homesharers from feelings of housing insecurity and uncertainty? These important questions will be addressed in this thesis.

2.3   Care

Insecurity and uncertainty are also features of the UK's care crisis. Austerity has resulted in vast cuts to vital support services for older people (Himmelweit, 2014). Home adaptation aid support, meals-on-wheels and domiciliary care provision are just some of the areas which have seen huge reductions (Glendinning, 2016; Mortimer and Green, 2015). Due to these public service cutbacks, as well as increasing demand for long-term care due to a growing and ageing population, large numbers of people do not receive the care that they require. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, these issues have been exacerbated as more people in need are failing to be given assessments of eligibility for care provision and workers are under increasing pressure (Oliver, 2021). The current Conservative government's Health and Care Bill 2021-22 will introduce new measures to increase funding for health and social care over the next three years, however many have claimed that this will not adequately address the issues in UK social care and the crisis in care will remain (Age UK, 2021; Oliver, 2021; Shembavnekar *et al*, 2021).

Like the housing crisis, the care crisis can be dated back to the Conservative Thatcher government which rapidly sold off nationalised industries to private providers and reduced the welfare state (Himmelweit, 2014). It was thought that by contracting out various public services to private providers, efficiency gains would be made because private providers were presumed to be more efficient than public sector managers. It was also presumed that competition would incentivise private providers to ensure greater value for money. In one sense, greater value for money means higher quality of care, however, greater value for money is often achieved by cost containment (Porter, 2010). As care provision is labour intensive there is limited opportunity for real productivity improvements, therefore, cost containment is actually attained by employing less staff on lower pay and in worse working conditions (ibid). These approaches to cost containment are all likely to lead to a fall in care quality, thus the marketisation of long-term care can lead to poorer quality of care provision in more precarious circumstances, despite it being favoured over many decades (Himmelweit, 2014).

Since the Conservative Thatcher government, welfare state reductions have continued and with finite funding and resources, access to publicly funded social care depends on stringent tests of assets, income and need (Yeandle *et al*, 2012). Social care services for older people are progressively targeted at the most vulnerable, whom otherwise would be at risk of hospital or residential care admission (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). This marginalises those with lower-level care needs and leaves them with no choice but to enter into a precarious, competitive and sometimes very costly, private care market (Glendinning, 2016). Moreover, austerity has led to less care being provided and funded by the state, at least in relation to growing needs. Thus, the marketisation of care, in some respect, is the neoliberal tool by which cuts to public care services, and the shift in the provision of care from public to private, is achieved and rendered politically acceptable (Himmelweit, 2014).

Furthermore, inequality and welfare retrenchment are often justified through the language of choice, as the increasing marketisation of care highlights. Within this private care market, more options may be available for people to personalise their care, and thus take more responsibility and control of their care provision. However, increasing demand and pressure within the private care market raises the costs of care despite access to financial support from local authorities becoming more difficult (ibid).

This language of choice is a key part of neoliberal logics. For instance, the 2014 Care Act was introduced to promote choice and control for care provision by local authorities and to put 'people and their carers in control of their care and support' (Department of Health, 2014, p. 1). This Act stated that in England, local authorities could allocate older people with a personal budget if they assess that the older person is eligible. These personal budgets can be managed either by the older person themselves as a direct payment, by the local authority or by a third party – usually a relative (Age UK, n.d.). The introduction of individualised personal budgets has amplified the marketisation of care that was already growing, through people self-funding and by those who are not eligible for public support. Self-funding for care provision has also exponentially increased as public funding has failed to keep pace with the growing number of working-age women that are in employment that had traditionally cared for older relatives, and with the increasing number of years that older individuals need support for disabilities (Himmelweit, 2014).

Individualised personal budgets are intended to offer flexibility, control and choice for older people and their carers regarding who provides their care (Yeandle *et al*, 2012). Yet, whether real choice is actually available for people, or whether the language of choice is an empty neoliberal rhetoric, can be questioned. The availability of choice depends on the accessibility of information,

the coverage of suitable services, the quality of advice offered by advocates, and the ability of care providers to adapt to the changing and growing requirements of older individuals (ibid). However, increasing or changing care requirements mean that older individuals' decisions about how their care needs can be supplied are continuously being made, sometimes in situations where older people lack mental capacity (Hardy *et al*, 1999). Furthermore, the 2014 Care Act makes clear that decisions surrounding a person's needs, and thus access to care, remains with local councils, who themselves have different priorities (Slasberg and Beresford, 2014). Moreover, even those with economic power may struggle to exert any real choice.

Choice also involves deciding who can and will provide care, what type or combination of support is required by the older individual, their family and professional support, and at what cost (Yeandle *et al*, 2012). This can be overwhelming or frustrating for older people or burdensome for their families who have to keep up with their changing care needs and any changes in the care market (Barnes and Prior, 1995). Additionally, with long-term care provision, there is often a desire to build and maintain a relationship with one's carers. Thus, by frequently changing carers, care-receivers' desires for familiarity, continuity and security in receiving their certain care requirements are not met. This cannot be remedied by changing care-providers, so subsequently, care-receivers may stay with their substandard care out of fear that an alternative may be worse (Brennan *et al*, 2012).

Neoliberalism promotes the idea that the market can provide better and more care options. Yet, in order for people to truly personalise their care, resources for care need to be less than minimal, so that people can use their personal budgets to receive more than basic care services (Himmelweit, 2014). However, even before the current era of austerity, research has shown that spending on social care was being reduced at an alarming and unseemly rate (Wanless, 2006). Accessing care in the UK has been termed a 'postcode lottery' within the media as care service provision is hugely geographically and socio-economically uneven – many people in rural areas or people of lower socio-economic positions struggle to access the care they need (Milligan, 2003).

The language of choice can therefore be seen as a rubric hiding the resource-limited state of UK social care (ibid). While responsibility is increasingly placed on the individual for care and wellbeing, the 'choice' they have over the care they receive remains limited. This shows the limits to a neoliberal promotion of 'choice' in an age of austerity and highlights why care provision is increasingly experienced as uncertain and precarious. Furthermore, increasing self-responsibility for care provision and the increasing marketisation of care, both of which are seen as necessary

due to the care crisis, actually work to make accessing suitable and affordable care options more difficult and precarious (discussed more in the next chapter).

2.3.1 Homeshare and the Care Crisis

In light of this, it is important to consider who has access to and who is excluded from homeshare schemes. Homeshare is available for both older owner-occupiers and renters but for those whose landlady's do not allow additional lodgers and for those who do not have a spare room to offer, homesharing is not a viable option. Homesharing is thus only feasible for a relatively wealthy demographic of people, and economically disadvantaged people are excluded. Additionally, older people in rural locations cannot access homeshare as homeshare organisations are generally only available in areas with sizeable populations (Homeshare UK, 2021c). Beatty and Fothergill (2016) have outlined the ways in which poorer and rural-dwelling older people are affected most by the care crisis because they are less likely to have access to nearby and affordable care services. Therefore, portraying homeshare as a solution to the care crisis can be seen as contradictory as homeshare can be seen as exacerbating issues surrounding inequality in terms of access to care for poorer and rural-dwelling older people – a central issue of the care crisis. Moreover, homeshare is only available to older people who are relationally already privileged.

Further, it is the decision of individual homeshare organisations to decide how much they will charge their users. Some homeshare schemes, such as Homeshare West (n.d.), charge £100 per month to both the younger homesharers and the householders[5]. But others, such as Two Generations (n.d.) who charge £59 to the householder and £299 to the younger homesharer, and LightShare (n.d.) who charge £170 to the younger homesharer and do not charge the householder, believe that the householder's provision of a room is worth more than the informal care or company provided by the younger homesharer. The difference in costings between younger homesharers and householders reflects arguments surrounding the 'free labour' expected of younger people in today's precarious society (Ferriri *et al*, 2017; Holdsworth, 2017). In current precarious times, younger people are often expected to provide their time and labour for free in order to further themselves as entrepreneurs of their own lives (Holdsworth, 2017). In homeshare, younger people are expected to provide labour for free in their homeshares while also holding down a job and trying to navigate an increasingly precarious labour market. This reflects current neoliberal attitudes about the value of younger people's work (Holdsworth, 2017).

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[5] All costings correct as of 2022.

The difference in costings of homeshare organisations also reflects the geographic disparities of UK homeshare, showing how homeshare can actually create regional disparities in terms of access to care services and provision. Should homeshare be portrayed as a care crisis solution when it does not address issues of care provision for these groups of people and excludes large numbers of people, possibly those who have been most impacted by the care crisis? Thus is UK homeshare actually adding to the already existing precarious geographies of care?

Additionally, in relation to the average homeshare match length of nine months, homeshare can be experienced as precarious for older people who may suddenly lose the vital care they require if a match breaks down or ends. Changes to lifestyle, particularly in older age, can be stressful and can have lasting impacts to independence and wellbeing, especially for householders with dementia (Park and Ziegler, 2016). Householders will have to face either continuing with another homeshare and re-building a relationship with their new co-homesharer, paying more for care in the private sector such as over-night carers, or going without the previous care they may have become accustomed to. This thesis asks if the short-term nature of homeshare impacts how secure householders feel in their care arrangements. I ask if homeshare is experienced more as unstable and unsettling for those involved, rather than resourceful and innovative. Moreover, I consider does homesharing actually help individuals' care needs or address the wider care issues UK society is facing?

2.4   Loneliness

Linked with the care crisis and the huge numbers of people in the UK with unmet care needs is what the media has termed the UK's 'loneliness epidemic' (Bound Alberti, 2018). Recent times have seen rising rates of loneliness across all generations and the Campaign to End Loneliness (n.d.) (a non-profit organisation set up specifically to address these issues) claim that 45% of UK adults, or 25 million people, feel sometimes or often lonely. Social scientists have looked to wider, societal changes to explain this increase in levels of loneliness, such as growing distance between families, which means that there is less social support available for people and changes in household composition, such as the increase in single person households (Snell, 2017) and 'stranger shares' (households where co-tenants are not known to each other at the start of the tenancy) (Rugg *et al*, 2011). Scholars have also pointed to the UK's issues with accessibility of social care due to neoliberal policies and austere measures that reduce the availability of social support groups that enhance social wellbeing (Butler, 2012; McGrath *et al*, 2015).

Furthermore, loneliness has also been linked to economic precarity and to neoliberal ideologies (Magnet and Orr, 2019; Raifman *et al*, 2020). By expecting workers to be mobile, flexible and never completely 'unplugged' from work, this can lead to reductions in communication with people outside of work and changing lifestyles which can contribute to loneliness, for instance, working from home (Magnet and Orr, 2019). Additionally, with the current COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, loneliness is a major issue for large proportions of the population (Groarke *et al*, 2020). Social distancing restrictions which aim to stop the spread of the virus, from self-isolation to the 2-metre rule (people prohibited from being closer than 2 metres to others), have had profound effects on communities and interpersonal relationships, increasing loneliness levels across the UK (ibid).

In an attempt to reduce the pre-pandemic rising levels of loneliness and to increase community cohesion, the Conservative Liberal-Democrat Coalition government introduced the concept of a 'big society' in 2010. This notion reflects neoliberal shifts towards localism and captures the current Conservative government's support of a minimalist approach to the provision of welfare (Alcock, 2010). The idea of a 'big society' is that family and friends are encouraged to provide informal 'care in the community' for example by visiting elderly relatives or neighbours on a regular basis (Motel-Klingebiel *et al*, 2005). A 'big society' aims 'to devolve powers to communities and establish a greater role in public services for voluntary and community organisations' (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012, p. 30). Yet, simultaneously, the government is making austere cuts to vital support services for both older and younger people, from lunch clubs and day centres to libraries and youth centres, each of which has been associated with rising rates of loneliness across generations (Age UK, 2015; Gray and Barford, 2018). In this regard, the idea of a 'big society' is an amorphous rubric to hide the transfer of responsibility from the state in terms of welfare provision for people, without the simultaneous development of adequate community care infrastructure (Slater, 2014). This adds to the precarious nature of social care and support in the UK. Rather than helping communities to come together and reduce loneliness for people, a 'big society' increases reliance on relatives and informal carers which can be burdensome and stressful (ibid).

Since the 'big society' was implemented, successive governments have also attempted to address the rising levels of loneliness. In 2018, the prime minister Theresa May appointed a minister for loneliness and launched the government 'strategy for tacking loneliness'. This strategy had three aims of: improving the evidence base for loneliness rates; understanding the factors that can cause or exacerbate loneliness; and to raise awareness of the impacts of loneliness to help reduce stigma (HM Gov, 2018). The strategy made recommendations to tackle loneliness, for instance increasing the role of community spaces, such as libraries, day care

centres and youth services. Yet academics have critiqued this strategy, arguing that these recommendations are contradictory when the government has made severe cuts to these very places through its austerity measures (Stenning and Hall, 2018). Stenning and Hall (2018, p. 1) contend that 'the strategy refuses to acknowledge' the current 'impoverished landscape' of cuts and argue that the strategy provides a 'depoliticised analysis of the rise of loneliness and its relationship to neoliberalism'. Along the same lines as the 'big society', the strategy places responsibility for loneliness on individuals, families and communities. Furthermore, through deeming loneliness to be 'in crisis', the government is able to introduce measures such as the 'big society' and the 'strategy for tacking loneliness' which do neoliberal work: shift responsibility away from the government by promoting ideas of self-responsibility and simultaneously removing attention away from the failures of the state while not providing adequate social support provisions.

2.4.1 Homeshare and the Loneliness Crisis

Homeshare reflects the shift in responsibility for support provision from the government onto the third sector and communities. In government documents, homeshare is described as 'timely given the epidemic of loneliness' and as the solution for loneliness for both older and younger generations (HL Deb 5 Nov 2018). In reference to the Tenants Fees Bill in 2018 (ibid), that originally included homeshare schemes, Baroness Jenkin of Kennington said:

> I am sure none of us would wish to place barriers to its [homeshare's] growth at a time when our health and care systems, and the older people they support, desperately need innovative solutions to the scourge of loneliness and to the shortage of good social support many older people experience.

Homeshare UK (n.d.a) emphasises homeshare as not only affordable accommodation, but as *sociable* accommodation and in government debates where homeshare is discussed, loneliness, and homeshare as the solution to loneliness, is mentioned 13 times (HL Deb 5 Nov 2018). Yet, there is a lack of clarity about the difference between loneliness – an involuntary condition with a longing for meaningful relationships - and aloneness or solitude – the state of being alone (Galanaki, 2004). Though homesharing ensures that both parties do not live alone, and to some extent ensures that they have similar routines due to the younger homesharers' chores, homesharing does not necessarily make people feel less lonely.

Claiming homeshare solves the loneliness crisis is therefore presumptuous. Reducing loneliness depends not only on the amount of social contact one has but on the quality of the social bonds maintained between people (Franklin and Tranter, 2011). Studies show that living with others does not necessarily equate to feeling less lonely (Perissinotto *et al*, 2012). Therefore, what are the limits of portraying homeshare as a solution to the loneliness crisis? Further, if homeshare matches are only short-term, can people actually create meaningful relationships that combat feelings of loneliness? This line of enquiry will be followed in this thesis, as I explore the connections between co-homesharers.

2.5   Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has contextualised the growth of UK homeshare and has examined its positioning as a solution to the housing, care and loneliness 'crises' in the UK. Through using the language of 'crisis', housing, care provision and loneliness levels are all shown to be at breaking point, despite them being the result of longer-term trends and all in this 'crisis' state for a protracted time period of over a decade. Yet, under the aegis of crisis, a sense of the situation being critical and out of control is created, rather than a result of years of failing policy (Heslop and Ormerod, 2019). Subsequently, through austere cuts, the government can push responsibility for care, loneliness and housing provision onto the third sector, families and individuals.

Homeshare remains a short-term housing and care option with geographical and socio-economic exclusions. Despite this, homeshare is portrayed as innovative, timely and resourceful. This chapter has shown that homeshare may contribute to precarious living by providing an unstable and short-term housing and care arrangement. This thesis will therefore consider if the portrayal of UK homeshare as a 'crisis solution' actually works to push a neoliberal agenda of self-responsibility that adds to growing precarity.

This thesis will consider homesharing from the perspectives of homesharers. For instance, is the temporariness of homeshare always experienced negatively by those involved or do homesharers enjoy the flexibility and mobility that homesharing can offer them? Moreover, are there also moments when homesharing offers something more utopian, for instance, does homesharing provide connections across generations and beyond traditional kinship structures? Thinking more broadly around notions of responsibility and crisis narratives, do homesharers feel they are doing 'what is right' for each crisis by either providing vital support for an older person or providing a much- needed home for a younger person?

This chapter has therefore opened up some significant areas of concern for this study. Although there is widespread media coverage of UK homeshare, academic research into UK homeshare is scarce. Thus, in examining how UK homeshare is experienced by homesharers, I intend to extend geographical debates surrounding precarious lives and spaces (Ferreri *et al*, 2017; Nowicki, 2017). Moreover, this thesis will provide greater insight into the normalisation of precarity across generations as well as the everyday experiences of people who navigate precarious situations. In understanding how homesharing is experienced by those who homeshare, this thesis thus expands geographical research which examines life insecurity, housing and care provision.

Chapter 2

Chapter 3   Care: Key Concepts and Theories

Under neoliberalism, care is often privatised and undervalued. As a result, care provision and care work are experienced as precarious. This chapter examines important debates surrounding care and caring relationships that are pertinent when exploring homesharing: a living arrangement based on a supposedly caring relationship. The chapter analyses the wide-ranging and multi-scalar impacts of neoliberalism on care structures and relationships, considering how this makes care more precarious for both those providing it and those receiving it. Firstly, I examine the important body of feminist work on care ethics, analysing the gendered and feminised nature of care. This section lays the foundation for some of the central concepts surrounding care which are vital for studying homesharers, such as caregiver/receiver, interdependency, power and precarity. This section also considers shifts in who provides care and the consequences of this on those involved. Then, the chapter opens up to examine literature on landscapes of care, showing how new spaces of care are emerging due to austerity and asking if they are adding to growing precarity. I conclude by demonstrating how exploring critical debates surrounding care raises new questions and directions for this thesis into homesharing.

3.1   Feminist Ethics of Care

Neoliberal policies and practices often overlook care and reduce care to the activities of women within the private sphere (Tronto, 2017). Indeed, the large majority of homesharers, both householders and younger homesharers, are female (73% and 78% respectfully), and the care work involved in homesharing is undertaken largely within the home space (Homeshare UK, 2020). An ethics of care framework is useful for this study because it aims to re-value women's experiences of caring, critiquing the unequal and gendered distribution of caring labour and centring care as a key political and social issue (Phillip *et al*, 2012). Yet, ethics of care scholarship also does more than this; it highlights care as the central thing that connects us to the world, showing that care is needed and necessary in all our lives. An ethics of care questions neoliberal values of individualism, and of society organised around competition, efficiency, and a 'right' price for everything (Lawson, 2007). Thus, it is useful to study homesharing through a feminist ethics of

care approach because homesharing is centered on a supposedly caring relationship between two relative strangers, yet UK homeshare has grown within the context of neoliberalism and austerity. This thesis critically examines homeshare as a neoliberal solution to various crises yet also acknowledges the care work that takes place within homeshares and the caring relationships that are formed between co-homesharers. As ethics of care is about valuing care work and also critiquing existing unequal ways in which care work functions, it is a fitting approach for this thesis.

3.1.1 History of Feminist Ethics of Care Scholarship

In order to understand what care ethics scholarship is, it is useful to first examine how it has developed. Over the last three decades or so, feminist ethics of care literature has flourished and can be loosely divided into two waves. In the early 1980s, Gilligan and Noddings were key figures in this body of research, with Gillian's (1982) work 'In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development' shaping this area of scholarship. Within this work, Gilligan describes an ethic of care as a particular style of moral judging that is centred around relationships, gender, emotions and responsibilities, rather than justice, domination and rules.

From the early 1990s onwards, Tronto and Sevenhujsen emerged as central figures in feminist ethics of care scholarship (Philip *et al*, 2012). Sevenhuijsen (1998, p. 141) re-examined the concepts of equality and citizenship from a political theory of care perspective and emphasised that 'power and conflict are involved in every phase of the caring process, as well as in our collective discussions about the way social institutions should care about and for human beings'. She argued that a political ethics of care should not aim to remove power from caring relationships but should make power more recognisable and manageable by differentiating between power and domination. Indeed, this study will shed light on the wider paradigms of care, power and responsibility in the UK as well as the micro, everyday conflicts between co-homesharers.

In a similar vein, Tronto's (1993) work showed care as not only relating to the private sphere, but as central to our ethical relation to the world. As Tronto (1993, p. 180) explained,

> care is not a parochial concern of women, a type of secondary moral question or the work of the least well off in society. Care is a central concern of human life. It is time that we began to change our political and social institutions to reflect this.

Over the years, an ethic of care approach has thus sought to 'uncloak the veil of invisibility' of care as apolitical, showing care as involving unequal power relations and as more than an activity undertaken by women within the home.

3.1.2   Caring Concepts

An ethics of care approach is useful to this thesis because it covers crucial concepts which are important when understanding homesharing. As homesharing is centred on a supposedly caring relationship between two relative strangers, notions of power, reciprocity, interdependency and precarity are vital to understand, and these concepts have been critically examined within feminist ethics of care scholarship. For instance, feminist scholars have called attention to an ethics of care whereby care is not regarded as a task, per se, but rather as a way of relating to others (Lawson, 2007; Lloyd, 2010). Academic scholarship has thus distinguished between caring *for* and caring *about*. Caring *for* refers to acts of caregiving, for instance activities or tasks undertaken by formal and informal carers, such as paid care workers, friends, family and volunteers. Whereas, caring *about* encompasses the emotional elements of care relations (Lloyd, 2010). Drawing on this, this thesis will explore if homesharers care *for* and/or care *about* their co-homesharers, to whom they are neither formal carer nor friend (at the beginning of their homeshare at least).

Within ethics of care scholarship, significant debates call attention to how we think about care itself. Milligan and Wiles (2010) claim that there is a propensity to regard care (both caring *for* and caring *about*) as unidirectional, passing from a caregiver to a care-receiver. This is particularly the case in regard to elder care, which is often viewed as passing only from younger person to older person and not vice versa (Thompson, 2013). However, as Fine and Glendinning (2005), as well as Kittay (2009) and Jochimsen (2013), have highlighted, care involves interdependence whereby both caregivers and care-receivers are involved in the coproduction of care. Therefore, the care involved in homesharing may not only involve unidirectional care from younger homesharer to householder but may also be passed in the opposite direction.

Moreover, it is increasingly inappropriate to differentiate between 'independent' caregivers and 'dependent' care-receivers (Himmelweit, 2014). It is likely that both will have some care requirements, and both will provide some form of care to the other, either through acts of care, or through a reciprocal commitment to each other's wellbeing (Fine and Glendinning, 2005). Both the care-receiver and caregiver, whose roles can be reversed, therefore play an integral role in the caring relationship. Even in situations where the care-receiver cannot or does not reciprocate any

form of caring *for* or caring *about*, their role in the caring relation may be enacted through improvements in their caring situation (for example feeling less lonely, having a clean house or eating sufficient meals).

For this reason, some academics argue that it is more suitable to think of care in terms of reciprocity and interdependency. Many ethics of care theorists argue that by recognising interdependency within caring relationships, it becomes clear that care is central to all aspects of everyone's lives and not just the activity of women caring for kin within the home space (Kittay, 2009; Keyes *et al*, 2015; Nussbaum, 1996). Kittay and Feder (2002, p. 4) claim that what may appear as independence is actually subject to 'invisible or unacknowledged dependencies on others, or on economic or political institutions and on social understandings of what constitutes dependence and independence'.

An important dimension of dependency scholarship views dependency as a product of social relations (Fine and Glendinning, 2005). This is particularly pertinent to research examining older adults, which emphasises the ways in which the welfare state and the institution of retirement can produce dependency in older individuals, through insufficient health service infrastructure and pension provision (ibid). Additionally, the government's push towards 'care in the community', covered in the previous chapter, promotes dependency upon family members and friends for social support (Alcock, 2010). In this context, schemes such as homeshare that may (slightly, if not completely) remove older people from direct reliance on government provision of social support, or on friends and family, can be viewed as countering dependency from societal structures.

However, it can be questioned whether these schemes merely shift care reliance of older people from the state and family to relative strangers, who themselves may be economically precarious and may be entering homeshare through a lack of choice due to wider economic inequalities. For instance, younger people are more likely to be increasingly financially dependent on their parents due to greater participation in higher education (which is increasingly marketised and leading to debt for many younger adults) and a reduction in the availability of full-time work (Schneider, 1999; Xiao *et al*, 2017). Thus, homeshare schemes also have the potential to help reduce the financial dependency of people on their parents or the state through the provision of cheaper rent. Furthermore, acknowledging interdependency highlights that everyone has care needs and that everyone will rely on others to some degree at points throughout their lives. Understanding how interdependency is experienced in homesharing may elucidate some insight into this, seeing as both householders and younger homesharers, who are in different stages of life, are coming to homeshare via a mutual need for housing or care provision.

Yet, interdependency and reciprocity within caring relationships does not mean that power is not involved in care. Kittay (1999) writes that inequalities of power are inevitable in caring relationships because care-receivers are unable to undertake certain tasks and therefore must rely on their caregiver. Thus, the care-receiver is vulnerable to the abuse of power by the caregiver. However, she explains that the reverse may also be true. The highly gendered, feminised and racialised nature of care work and the fact that it is seen as low-skilled, means that the value of care and care work is often undermined (Thomas, 1993; Tronto, 1993). This increases the experiences of care as precarious for both those receiving care and those providing it. Caregivers usually receive low (or no) pay and are often drawn from groups of lower socio-economic position than that of the person they care for. This can mean that care-receivers have power over their caregivers due to their social position, control of employment or wealth. What this means for the power relations at play between co-homesharers will be examined in this thesis.

Moreover, whether conducted for money or not, care work is generally experienced as insecure and precarious and in emphasising that caring relationships are neither symmetrical nor equal, an ethics of care scholarship emphasises the gaps and inequality that can be involved in care (Fine and Glendinning, 2005; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1993). Dyer *et al* (2008, p. 2030), for instance, examined the social organisation of labour markets and highlighted that work is increasingly undertaken in 'precarious, informal, or temporary situations'. They explained that these conditions and the resultant concentration of those with little autonomy in the labour market (often due to these positions being filled by economic migrants) are characteristic of care work (ibid). Due to austere measures and care service cutbacks (both to funding and staff), carers are under increasing pressure, with greater demands and more time constraints. Likewise, Clayton *et al* (2015) have highlighted the ways in which, due to austerity, people employed in care work are frequently forced to make compromises or to cut corners and this can reduce the quality and reliability of care being provided. These issues, combined with the low pay of care work, leads to high staff turnaround and decreasing employment security (Lloyd and Penn, 2014; Rubery *et al*, 2015). Thus, when examining homesharing, an ethics of care approach can help to deconstruct some of the macro and micro power relations at play, as well as emphasising care as vital to all lives, not just the 'needy few' (White and Tronto, 2004, p. 444).

Furthermore, care ethics scholarship questions neoliberal practices from which homeshare has arisen. Using an ethics of care approach is useful for dissecting and understanding homesharing – a scheme backed by a neoliberal agenda that pushes responsibility for care onto

individuals. In light of this, it is pertinent to consider the care relationships between co-homesharers through an ethics of care approach to understand how precarity is interweaved in homesharing. Householders, while having less power in terms of their need for practical support, are in the more powerful position of homeowner. How power and interdependence are negotiated in homeshare relationships and how notions of caregiver/care-receiver are blurred between householders and younger homesharers is an important dynamic that will be explored in this thesis.

Understanding how care is practised in different contexts is thus integral to understanding how care is conceived, delivered and experienced, not just at the beginning and end of life but throughout life (Rogers and Weller, 2012). Furthermore, an ethic of care highlights that the types, as well as contexts, of care vary between caring relationships. Jochimsen (2013) for instance, describes three typologies of caring relationships in which caring means different things: *self-care*, where acts of care are performed on oneself; *caring for family or friends*, where the care-receiver has the capacity to deliver an equal form of care to the care-provider and ultimately care for one-self; and finally, *care for dependents*, where the care-receiver cannot function without receiving support from the care-provider. But where does this position the care between co-homesharers and how does this care reflect wider shifts in who provides care?

3.1.3 Who provides care?

Amidst a landscape of welfare cuts and narratives of self-responsibility (discussed in the previous chapters), questions arise of who provides care and what the consequences of this are. Due to the low value placed upon care, most paid care work is undertaken by women and specifically immigrant women of minority ethnicity (Yeates, 2004). Yet due to the cutback of more formal methods of care provision in the UK (discussed in the previous chapter), more people rely on informal care provided by kin (Riley and Bowen, 2005). As care ethics scholarship explains, care relationships are neither symmetrical nor equal and the increasing role of informal care provision generally falls on adult women who have the responsibility of care for both their children and their ageing parents (Himmelweit, 2014). People in this position have been termed the 'sandwich generation' and studies have found that being in this position can be both physically and emotionally draining (Riley and Bowen, 2005). Particularly throughout the current COVID-19 pandemic, amidst the temporary closure of many home care services, nurseries and schools, pressures on the 'sandwich generation' (typically women) have been found to be significantly increased (Phillips *et al*, 2020). Thus, both paid care work, and informal care work tends to be undertaken disproportionately by women and during this pandemic, both the receiving and giving of care and support is experienced as more uncertain and precarious (ibid).

3.1.4   Support Beyond Kin

At the same time, increasing attention within the social sciences is being paid to forms of care and support beyond the biological nuclear family (Dewaele, 2016; Morgan, 1996; 2011; Weeks *et al*, 2001). Much of this scholarship regards families as constructed, rather than static, monolithic institutions. Significant in this body of research is the work of David Morgan (1996) who coined the term 'family practices' to treat the word 'family' as an adjective rather than a noun. This enables scholars to think beyond 'the' family, which is generally associated with heteronormative couples and their children (Morgan, 2011). Thus, people who are typically marginalised or excluded from notions of 'the' family, such as non-heterosexual people and people in alternative living arrangements, such as homesharing, can consider themselves as types of family. Families are therefore not limited to the genetic family unit but are socially constructed and come into being through performative acts.

As aforementioned, feminist work on care highlights how acts of care, particularly within the home space, are typically considered of female and kin domain (Lawson, 2007). Yet this area of scholarship shows the potential for care to be more than this; to involve all genders and non-kin to the extent that non-kin becomes family. Morgan's (1996) work thus links with growing geographical and sociological enquiry into 'families of choice' literature, which shows how non-kin can develop strong, beneficial relationships that can be deemed as 'family-like' (Weston, 1991; Weeks *et al*, 2001). 'Families of choice' scholarship reveals the ways that people rework, expand, or depart from the nuclear family unit and traditional kinship structures (Dewaele, 2016). Weeks *et al* (2001) for instance, highlight that kin-like networks based on friendships and non-kin relations have become important in the reorganisation of 'the' family, focusing on ties of intimacy and relationships that are chosen rather than fixed. This has some echoes for homesharers as homesharing moves practical care (caring *for*) from families to strangers with whom they are expected to form 'genuine' and 'lasting' relationships (Lightshare, n.d.a; Share My Home, n.d.). Does homesharing therefore represent a shift in by whom we expect practical care and support to be delivered? Moreover, this thesis will consider how homesharers narrate and construct their relationships with their co-homesharers to understand if in caring for each other in the home space, co-homesharers come to regard each other as family or if close bonds between co-homesharers are not developed.

Bowlby's (2011) research on friendships illustrates further the shifting role of kin and non-kin in everyday support networks. She emphasises the essential role of friends within people's support systems for both minor everyday issues, such as a lift to the doctors, as well as for major

issues such as illness or physical incapacity. Likewise, within sociological literature, Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) have examined the significance of friendships for LGBTQ people living without a partner, showing how friendships can become more important than kin in people's support networks and thus highlighting the blurring of boundaries between friends/family. Researching homesharing therefore generates new questions surrounding the type and nature of caring relationships between non-kin which will be examined later in this thesis. It is important to question why homesharers are turning to strangers to provide them with practical care and support rather than the state or their families, and it is vital to consider what this tells us about the precarious nature of care in the UK.

3.1.5 What makes 'good' care?

When examining care and relationships, questions arise of what makes 'good' care and if it is possible to have 'good' care when living a precarious life. Scholars such as Folbre and Nelson (2000) conceptualise an ideal caring relationship as one where the care-receiver feels emotionally supported, nurtured and valued as an individual. They explain that these feelings are considerably shaped by the rapport developed between the caregiver and care-receiver. In a similar vein, Himmelweit (1999) describes caring as the evolution of a relationship for it includes more than just physical support but also emotional connection. Likewise, Held (2006) and Kittay (2001) both maintain that an affective component is essential to 'good' care. These scholars therefore point to the role of emotions within care work and emphasise the importance of building a working relationship between caregivers and care-receivers. Indeed, Himmelweit (1999, p. 29) writes that 'a carer will not succeed in delivering good care unless she appears to the person being cared for (the caree) to be motivated by genuine concern over his [sic] wellbeing'. However, particularly in situations such as homesharing, where one's housing or care provision depends on co-homesharers forming a working caring relationship, it is vital to question whether these emotions are always genuine or if they can also be regarded as a form of emotional labour.

3.1.6 Emotional Labour

The concept of emotional labour was first presented by Hochschild (1983) in her study into flight attendants entitled 'The managed heart'. Hochschild found that flight attendants were required to display certain feelings so that their work appeared effortless. The concept of emotional labour thus describes an individual's 'act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling' (Hochschild, 2008, p. 122). Hochschild found that flight attendants would have to mask their true feelings, perhaps of weariness, and instead pretend to be enthusiastic about the upcoming flight.

In homesharing, emotional labour may involve masking feelings of resentment, perhaps about care tasks, and pretending to be a in a good mood to satisfy one's co-homesharer.

Since Hochschild's study, emotional labour has been recognised as a central element of various types of (typically feminised) 'people work', for example hairdressing (Cohen, 2010; Harness *et al*, 2020); nannying (Delap, 2011; Wrigley, 1999) retail (Gupta and Mishra, 2011; Ikeler, 2016); and cleaning (Datta *et al*, 2006; Dyer *et al*, 2008); work which is also often characterised by low pay. Some scholars have examined situations in which the low pay of work is counteracted by the emotional benefits (Dyer *et al,* 2008; England, 2005; Folbre and Nelson, 2000). For instance, Boyer *et al* (2013) found that although it was experienced as hard work, nursery workers can experience strong emotional relationships (including love) with the children they care for.

Nevertheless, other studies show that emotional labour may make some forms of care work exploitative, taxing and draining (Dyer *et al*, 2008; Twigg, 2000). Folbre and Nelson (2000) found that care workers can perform emotional labour beyond what is required of their role, often to their detriment and sometimes becoming a 'prisoner of love'. These scholars argue that a central reason behind the lack of recognition (and thus low payment) of caring work in Western societies is the presumed dichotomy between money (payment) and love, whereby people accept lower wages because they care about the people they are caring for and find this work rewarding (England, 2005; Folbre and Nelson, 2000). However, due to the low pay and low value of caring work, those involved are less likely to take action when they feel overworked or have any issues with their care arrangement, particularly if they feel a duty of care for the persons they are caring for (Himmelweit, 1999; Lopez, 2006). This points to the precarious nature of care work in the UK.

Academics have therefore considered what the role of money or payment for caring is on caring relationships and whether this influences the emotions involved (Jochimsen, 2013; Rodrigues, 2014). For these academics, paying for care calls into question both concerns surrounding 'appropriate' motivations for caring and also around what makes 'good' care (Baxter *et al*, 2013; Lawson, 2007). They show that payment for care work can be viewed as undermining the emotions (or at least sentiment) of those involved in the caring relationship (Huynh *et al*, 2014). Thus, the commodification of emotions can have an adverse effect on the quality of care work (Cox, 2013). While homesharing does not involve any transfer of money between co-homesharers, they each effectively pay and receive payment for their contribution to their homeshare through cheaper care or reduced rent. In this sense, homeshare can be seen as a form of commoditised care in that an exchange of some sort is being made by each homesharer,

underwritten by a contract. This thesis will consider if this influences the relationship that develops between co-homesharers and the care work involved in homesharing.

3.2   Landscapes of Care

The preceding sections have introduced some key concepts surrounding caring relationships that are pertinent for homesharing. In this section, the chapter moves on to look more broadly at landscapes of care literature, highlighting how new spaces of care have emerged due to austerity and a pervasive neoliberal agenda. In doing so, this section elucidates insight into how and why UK homeshare has emerged and the context in which it takes place. Landscapes of care literature is a thriving body of geographical scholarship that examines the varying contexts, types, scales, and sites in which care can take place (Gleeson and Kearns, 2001; Macpherson *et al*, 2021; Milligan, 2016; Power and Hall, 2018). Landscapes of care literature highlights that we cannot just look at the everyday acts of care but must also consider wider structures and gaps which shape the care people receive. Landscapes of care scholarship builds upon earlier geographic research into landscapes of despair and deinstitutionalisation, as well as research into therapeutic landscapes (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). The term refers to the complex spatialities and landscapes that emerge from the intersection of formal and informal caregiving within institutional and domestic environments (Milligan, 2016).

Within geography, landscapes of care research has articulated care through: the various spaces that enable caring relations (Atkinson *et al*, 2011; Conradson, 2003a); the entanglements of interdependency within informal and formal care settings (Bowlby *et al*, 2010); the gendered and generational expectations of care and work (Cox, 2013; McKie *et al*, 2002); and the emotional landscapes that underpin care, care work and care relations (Power, 2016; Milligan, 2005). Over the last two decades, geographic work on landscapes of care has become a useful framework for understanding the relation between care, proximity and distance. Scholars, such as Milligan and Wiles (2010), argue that previous work that conceptualised care as dependent on geographical proximity (see Joseph and Hallman, 1998; and Smith, 1998), underestimates or ignores the significance of the ways in which care can take place at a distance. For instance, a caregiver might live far away but still be heavily involved in the organisation of care for the care-receiver i.e. by monitoring care-work, contacting agencies or providing remittances. Equally, Milligan and Wiles (2010) contend that geographical or physical closeness does not automatically lead to feelings of care. Due to strained, problematic or exploitative relationships (or for paid carers, poor working conditions, social difference, or high staff turnaround), carers may not necessarily care *about* the care-receiver and their caring *for* may at best be limited to 'tending'. Therefore, while

homesharers are physically close, they may not automatically be emotionally close and although they may care *for* each other, they may not necessarily care *about* each other.

The decision to give care, and who provides that care, depends on a variety of factors, for instance kinship bonds, need, ability to cope, gender norms, and access to and cost of forms of support (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Crucially, for geographers, *where* these care relationships take place is vital to consider because care does not just involve interpersonal relationships but also people-place relationships (Atkinson *et al*, 2011; Conradson, 2003a; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). In studying homesharers, the role of the homeshare home on the interpersonal relationships between co-homesharers will be examined, as in the words of Brown (2003, p. 849), it is essential to acknowledge 'the thoroughly spatial ways care [is] structured and practiced', stressing the complexity and richness of the relationship between place and care.

Yet it is also important to recognise the wider politics and social circumstances that impact on care relations. Landscapes of care literature emphasises how care is multi-scalar: a recognition of macro-level governance or social arrangements on both national and international scales, as well as on an interpersonal level. Factors such as national and international policies, migration patterns, allocation of funds and priorities, and structure of responsibility and decision-making for care etc shape the way care is conceptualised, practised, received, and experienced (Connell, 2009; Meghani and Eckenwiler, 2009; Moon and Brown, 2000). Neoliberal policies and the current era of austerity have had a huge impact on the UK's landscapes of care and how care is experienced as precarious. This is explained more in the following section.

3.2.1 New Spaces of Care

Against the ongoing backdrop of austerity, scholars have highlighted the shifting landscapes of care provision and the implications of this for how care is practiced and experienced. Power and Hall (2018, p. 311) suggest that due to austerity, 'new spaces, relations, networks and practices of care and caring are emerging in difficult times, in unexpected and unconventional places'. In their special issue entitled 'Placing care in times of austerity', they map the changing geographies of care against a backdrop of austere measures and welfare cuts. They examine new types and spaces of care, and explain how people are negotiating, and in some cases contesting, this new landscape. Likewise, Hall (2019) explores everyday relationships and relational spaces of care and shows how austerity is shaping how, where and by whom care is practiced and experienced.

According to Conradson (2003b, p. 508), 'a space of care can then be understood as a socio-spatial field disclosed through the practices of care that take place between individuals'. Geographers are paying greater attention to caring relations within a growing range of 'ordinary' spaces. For instance, Power and Bartlett (2018) have examined 'self-building practices' of people with learning disabilities against the backdrop of day care centre closures in the UK. They found that due to the closures of these day centres, support is becoming 'less placement driven and instead woven into everyday spaces within the community' (p. 336). These authors identify new sites of care in places such as bingo halls, marinas, allotments, and fish and chip shops, and show how adults with learning disabilities are reclaiming these spaces as 'safe' havens of care. Likewise, Pareja-Eastaway (2017) has studied shared intentional communities, such as the OWCH (older women's cohousing) program in London, which are emerging as inclusive new spaces of care. This is a community of women who would otherwise live alone but have chosen to co-live surrounded by 'friendly helpful neighbours' (OWCH, n.d.).

These studies emphasise how austerity is leading to new spaces of care in both expected (e.g. people's homes and community centres) and unexpected (e.g. bingo halls and food shops) places. What can also be taken from these studies is that care is unevenly geographically dispersed, which makes it difficult for some people to access care provision. Cutbacks to care services, due to austerity, mean that remaining services are increasingly costly, excluding people in certain areas and in lower socio-economic positions (Himmelweit, 2014). Access to (affordable) care is therefore increasingly precarious and uncertain, despite the emergence of new 'spaces of care'.

Moreover, researchers show how certain spaces are not always considered 'caring'. Research conducted by Waters (1992) into UK day care centres for homeless people found that these places improved people's psycho-social wellbeing yet also had internal tensions and were sometimes exclusionary. More recently, Johnsen *et al* (2005) analysed day care centres for homeless people and found that they were key sources of material resources and refuge for these groups of people. Yet, they caution against romanticising 'spaces of care', explaining that while some individuals may experience these places as 'caring', others may experience these as places of fear. They argue that the fragility and ambiguity of such spaces should be acknowledged and they show how supposedly 'caring' spaces can be both caring and careless; at times helping individuals and improving their wellbeing; at other times not improving people's wellbeing and leaving significant gaps in care.

Homeshare could be conceptualised as a new space of care in the UK in that it has grown with the rise of austerity and is framed as a solution to some of the consequences of austerity.

Homesharing in the UK can be regarded as an innovative new way of providing older people with the care they require, however as above, it is important to consider if those involved in homesharing experience their homeshares as caring places. Landscapes of care scholarship shows us that care involves not only how individuals experience a situation, but the wider context in which it takes place. For instance, UK homeshare is growing in an era of welfare cuts, housing insecurity and neoliberal narratives of self-responsibility. Further, it is pertinent to consider homesharing against this uneven backdrop of care provision, which is potentially exclusionary to people in certain areas and in lower socio-economic positions. This will elucidate insight into the wider political care landscape in which this study takes place.

3.3   Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on feminist ethics of care literature to emphasise care as central to all human relations. Through this, the chapter also highlights the limits to care under neoliberalism, showing how care can be experienced as precarious for both those receiving it and those providing it. Neoliberal values undermine the importance of care to all our lives and reduce care to the 'problem' of the 'needy few'. Thus, under neoliberalism, the value of care is diminished and care work is often reduced to female activities within the home space, or low-paid feminised formal care work. Because UK homeshare has grown out of neoliberal practices in response to austerity and because homesharing is a gendered phenomenon mainly undertaken within the home space (Homeshare UK, 2020), it is vital to understand the role that UK homeshare is playing in shaping who provides care and where care takes place.

This chapter has shown how care can be experienced as precarious and how new spaces of care, such as UK homeshare, are arising due to austerity and the embeddedness of precarity within society. Through examining crucial debates and areas surrounding care, this chapter has opened up questions that will be considered later on in this thesis, for instance, how is power negotiated between co-homesharers? Is the relationship between co-homesharers centred around interdependency? And are the emotions involved in homesharing considered labour? By addressing questions such as these, insight will be provided into how homeshare is experienced as a relationship rather than simply a housing and care needs 'solution'. This insight will go some way to understanding if homeshares, as 'solutions' to rising care and housing needs, are experienced as such, or if this framing as a solution is romanticised and actually works to further embed precarity as a normalised lived experience.

Furthermore, homeshare is based on a supposedly caring relationship which takes place predominantly within the home space. As geographic research into landscapes of care has highlighted, it is vital to examine the wider context and site in which the care relationship is taking place (Conradson, 2003a; Milligan, 2016). Therefore, the next chapter moves on to explore literature surrounding home and asks if shared living can be experienced as precarious for those involved. Together with this chapter, the next chapter builds up a picture of how care and shared living with the home space are experienced and how the wider context of precarity permeates into everyday care and home life.

Chapter 4   Home: Key Concepts and Debates

Neoliberal ideologies often portray housing as investment rather than home (Rolnik, 2013). Particularly in a period where housing demand outstrips supply, homes are increasingly commoditised and politicised. As mentioned in chapter 1, in times of crisis, sharing practices are often revalued (Ince and Hall, 2017). Sharing homes, either through intentional communities for specific groups, co-housing schemes, student shares or homesharing, are often celebrated during periods of 'crises', as the portrayals of coliving (Bergan et al, 2020), property guardianship (Ferreri *et al*, 2017) and UK homeshare (Homeshare UK, 2018c) demonstrate. This chapter examines the literature surrounding homes and shared homes, exploring key concepts and debates into how homes are experienced. Throughout this chapter, I outline how homes are constructed in an age of austerity and ask if shared living is always experienced as precarious.

First, I trace the development of critical geographies of home literature, considering how homes are experienced on a personal level, rather than as financial entities. Within this section I examine notions of home making and unmaking; concepts which are useful for understanding how homesharers relate to their homes. Then, I analyse the growing body of literature into alternative forms of shared living arrangements, exploring the social dynamics of sharers and examining how these households are both shaped by and shape societal shifts and changing trajectories. Within this section I explore the positives and negatives of shared living arrangements, considering how precarity can be interwoven into shared living. I conclude by highlighting the lack of academic research into homesharing and argue for the need for additional research in this area.

4.1   Critical Geographies of Home

It is first beneficial to examine how home has been studied as an academic concept. The study of home-space is a relatively new sub-discipline of geography, and home has only recently begun to be considered as a key socio-political site. Home is no longer regarded as apolitical but is increasingly considered as a site which can offer valid and useful insights to critical geographers (Blunt, 2005; Domosh, 1998; England, 2010; Nowicki, 2017). Geographies of home literature largely focuses on the relationship between home, belonging, and material culture (Manzo, 2003). A large body of extant literature examines the nuances of people's relationships to home, exploring senses of place, place identity and place attachment (Blunt and Varley 2004; Burrell

2014). Such literature has tended to conceptualise the relationship between people and place as one centred in comfort, belonging and rootedness (Manzo 2003). In the 1970s and 1980s for instance, geographic work on the home tended to conflate home with feelings of security and acceptance: depicting home as an inherently positive site and as a 'safe haven' (Brickell, 2014).

Moreover, early humanistic geography, typically written by men, often overlooked and oversimplified the relationship between people and home. In particular, negative aspects of home were omitted, such as domestic violence or women's oppression within the home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Thus, in the last thirty years or so, feminist geographers have pushed geographies of home debates 'past the front stoop' (Domosh, 1998, p. 276) to view home as a significant political, spatial and social site. Feminist geographers have recognised that home can also be a place of alienation, violence and fear for many people (Pain *et al*, 2002; Valentine, 2001). In line with this body of research, scholars claim that expressions of 'home as haven' are romanticised, idealised and even nostalgic notions of home (Exley and Allen, 2007; Mallett, 2004). This, these authors argue, is in conflict with the reality of peoples' lives and the everyday lived experiences of their homes. Goldsack (1999) even goes as far to reject the idea of home as haven because many women and young children are subject to abuse within the home. Feminist scholarship therefore highlights the complex ways in which traditional understandings of home typically present a masculinist view of domestic space that can be problematic for women and minority groups.

Work on geographies of home has also aimed to emphasise the relationship between the domestic and the non-domestic, stressing the instability of the divide between the public and private spheres. Home as a private sanctuary was a dominant conceptualisation of home in the early nineteenth century (Chapman and Hockey, 2002). When male labour was moved from homes to new sites of commerce, homes were idealised as private places where nuclear families fulfilled familial and homecare duties (Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Mallett, 2004; Saunders and Williams, 1988). This ideal of home as a private space was a socio-spatial response to the social and economic logics of that period (Rybczynski, 1986). Today, new economic and social logics challenge notions of home as private. As many feminist geographers note, home is neither a product of the public nor the private sphere, but is constituted through both worlds, with permeable and unfixed boundaries (Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Geographers now challenge the idea that 'home is not work . . . [and] home does not encompass commercial activities' (Dowling, 2012, p. 367). Feminist geographers in particular have challenged the theorisation of home as a private space removed from work, arguing that wider heteronormative gender roles are reinforced within the home. For instance, care work is most commonly assumed to be of female preserve and located within the 'private' domain of the home

(Bergan *et al*, 2020; Hollows, 2008). In current (precarious) times, temporal and spatial distinctions between home and work are often blurred. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing measures, the lines between home and work are further merged as large sectors of the workforce move to working from home. Moreover, workers are often expected to be spatially boundless and temporally flexible and the spheres of home and work are increasingly and often intentionally merged (Roelofsen, 2018). Indeed, within homeshare schemes, younger homesharers are expected to perform ten hours of chores or tasks per week, reconfiguring notions of home as private, secure and a reprieve from work.

4.1.1 At Homeness

Furthermore, critical geographies of home scholarship has flourished in recent years and is now an academic field in its own right. This was concretised by Blunt and Dowling's foundational book *Home* in 2006 which shed light on the complexities of home as a concept, showing it more than a mere site or a place of shelter, but also an experience, a feeling and an imaginary (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Blunt and Dowling, and other critical geographies of home scholars, have highlighted the imperativeness of understanding home beyond material 'bricks and mortar' depictions (Nowicki, 2018). This growing sub-field emphasises that home should be understood on a variety of scales and contexts and not simply thought of as a dwelling.

Critical geographies of home literature builds upon and develops wider work from a range of feminist scholars. This work examines what is meant by feeling 'at home'. For instance, pivotal research by Young (1997) describes normative values of home, such as individuation, safety, privacy and preservation, which she believes everyone should have a right to. These essential elements make people feel 'at home'. Many scholars have used these normative values to better understand various aspects of home and home making/unmaking (concepts covered later in this chapter). Bennett (2011) for example, analysed what home meant to working-class women of North-East England who lived in privately rented or social housing. Although these women have places to live, they lacked one or more of Young's (1997) normative values and therefore rarely felt 'at home'. In this thesis, I will ask if homesharers lack any of Young's (1997) normative values and will consider how homesharing shapes these values for those who homeshare.

Such scholarship extend understandings of what makes a home 'home', emphasising that having a roof over one's head does not necessarily equate to feelings of 'at homeness'. Watson and Austerberry (1986) have proposed that homelessness does not always refer to a situation in which someone does not have a place to sleep, but that homelessness can also be understood as

unacceptable housing situations in which people do not feel 'at home', thus, there is a home-to-homelessness continuum. Research on the 'home-to-homelessness continuum' recognises how people can feel both at home and homeless at the same time. McCarthy's (2018) research on women's access to homelessness services in the North of England for instance, shows how the same place can be experienced as both 'home' and 'unhome' at different times and also simultaneously. Her research used Freud's concept of the 'unheimlich' to consider how 'the homelike' and 'the unhomely' combine. McCarthy (2018) emphasised how 'home' can be experienced and felt in non-familial or unusual places such as homeless hostels and importantly, she highlighted the psychosocial factors that make certain places feel like home. Psychosocial factors that make a home 'home' will be also examined in this study, as like homeless hostels, homeshare homes are non-familial places, thus it is important to consider if homesharers feel 'at home' in their homeshare homes.

4.1.2 Home Making and Unmaking

Despite the progress made in critical geographies of home scholarship, some geographers contend that much of it centres on practices of homemaking and omits the role of 'home unmaking' (Baxter and Brickell, 2014). Homemaking refers to the building of identities, materialities and social relationships into a place called home. The concept has become engrained in the way some scholars conceptualise home and has led to the idea that 'home is made' being taken-for-granted (ibid). These academics argue that homemaking is commended as the 'underlying goal of all housing processes' (Dayaratne and Kellett 2008, p. 55).

Home unmaking broadens the concept of homemaking and is defined by Baxter and Brickell (2014, p.134) as the process 'by which material and/or imaginary components of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged or even destroyed'. Home unmaking examines the variability and volatility of home across the lifecourse, and analyses the ways in which physically and figuratively, homes can be deconstructed and/or remade in a variety of situations, for instance through marital breakdown (Watkins and Hosier, 2005), forced eviction (Porteous and Smith, 2001) moving and leaving home (Ahmed, 1999), burglary (Chapman, 1999), homelessness (May, 2000), natural disasters (Brun and Ragnhild, 2008), war and genocide (Meade, 2011) and death (Marcoux, 2001).

All home dwellers experience home unmaking at points throughout their housing biographies (Baxter and Brickell, 2014). Home unmaking is therefore also associated with the everyday and ordinary, often unreported activities of home life and times passing. Yet, the concept of home unmaking also acknowledges that peoples' domestic lives are seldom

predictable or static but are varied and fluid. Dayaratne and Kellett (2008, p. 66) emphasise this in their definition of homemaking as a process that 'continues and consolidates itself with each event of significance that adds to the sense of home by overcoming the obstacles which might diminish it'. Moreover, rather than working in separation from each other, home unmaking actually 'casts a spotlight on these diminishing forces in concert with homemaking' (Baxter and Brickell, 2014, p. 135).

Moreover, home unmaking also exposes ways in which the loss or destruction of home can be positive and can provide the opportunity to create new forms of home. Nowicki (2014) for instance, has examined how UK squatters have redrawn boundaries of home since squatting was made illegal by repurposing abandoned commercial properties. In a similar vein, Brickell (2014) studied Cambodian women who left abusive marriages, showing how home unmaking can be simultaneously freeing and disempowering, as balances are made between escaping from a violent home and the stigma that is associated with a broken family. It is therefore useful to approach homesharing through the lens of homemaking and unmaking as in coming together, co-homesharers are both unmaking previous homes and creating a new home with each other. Whether this is experienced as positive or whether this contributes to feelings of precariousness will be examined in this thesis.

4.2   Shared Homes

The chapter now moves on from discussions surrounding what home is and how homes are felt, made and unmade to look at broader literature surrounding shared homes. This section examines literature which explores the positives and negatives of shared homes and considers how they can be experienced as precarious.

Ample research on home focuses on the familial home, meaning that research into non-kin shared living arrangements is lacking in comparison, despite growth in numbers of people living in non-traditional shared homes (Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Lloyd and Johnson, 2004; Pennartz and Niehof, 2019). The growth into alternative or shared living arrangements has been attributed to, amongst other things, population growth, increasing housing costs and housing providers struggling to meet demands for affordable accommodation (Heath *et al*, 2017). People's motivations for shared living can vary hugely, from financial necessity on the one hand, to a desire to live alternatively and communally on the other (ibid). Shared living can also be a short-term

buffer for certain life events, such as unemployment and marital breakdown etc (Glick and Hook, 2011; Wright *et al*, 1998).

In the 1990s, Heath and Cleaver (2003) explained that younger people generally regarded shared living arrangements as short-term and required only as prior to living on one's own or with a partner. However, later research conducted by Heath in 2017 found that younger people in shared living arrangements today often feel they have no such guarantees. Factors such as a lack of access to and availability of affordable housing, as well as policy changes such as housing benefit reductions for single people under the age of 35, mean that more people will live in shared living arrangements at some point due to financial necessity (Green and McCarthy, 2015; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcazar, 2017). Indeed, in the wake of the UK's housing crisis, sharing homes is often pushed as a neoliberal market solution to various housing issues (Ferreri *et al*, 2017; Homeshare UK, 2018c). But in light of the ranging reasons people share homes for, is this solution suitable for all or does it contribute to growing precarity in the UK?

4.2.1 Precarious Homes

Many scholars have examined the conditions and consequences of precarity on housing (Bergan *et al*, 2020; Harris and Nowicki, 2018; Worth, 2019). For instance, Ferreri and Dawson (2018) have researched the increase in property guardianship in the UK (covered in the first chapter) which they see as a method of further normalising and entrenching precarity. Academics have also analysed how precarity shapes notions of homemaking and unmaking, from younger people unable to achieve housing goals to those worrying about their home equity (Dorling, 2014; van Lanen, 2020). Thus, precarity impacts not only people's housing realities but also their future housing trajectories. For the young Irish people in van Lanen's (2020) study for instance, their anticipated future housing was adjusted to a post-financial crisis context, with housing mobility and insecurity being expected. These young people had postponed their life-course expectations of future housing amidst a context of expensive private rental rates and a lack of available social housing. They reconsidered their housing expectations to fit contemporary circumstances by delaying transitions or downscaling prospects, showing how contexts of precarity and austerity can shape people's imaginaries of both current and future homemaking.

4.2.2 Precarious Shared Homes

Sharing homes may therefore seem a rational response to these wider economic/market and social forces. Indeed, scholars have found that amidst a lack of affordable properties, many share homes to save money on rent and to save for a place of one's own (Kenyon and Heath, 2001).

Sharing homes can also create a sense of togetherness, for instance Jarvis (2013) examined a self-governing squatter community in Denmark and found that this form of shared living provides its occupants with greater social support than non-communal living. She emphasised that shared living has a longer and richer history than merely being a result of current neoliberal ideals. For Jarvis, communal living shows how people can use shared living as a method of overcoming oppression, social isolation and waste. Others have found that shared living arrangements can provide people with social relationships across generations that stretch beyond kin and provide stable support systems (Pareja-Eastaway, 2017; Sargisson, 2017).

Nevertheless, other scholars show that such living arrangements may actually increase precariousness of the home and its occupants. Blandy (2018) takes the opposite of precariousness - complete stability – as her starting point to approaching the precarious home. She hypothesises this completely stable home as a single site on an empty island, with no other island residents, no complicating property rights such as leasehold interests, no risk of losing the island to the lender, no financial indebtedness secured against the home and the sea as a natural barrier to remove any risk of disputes over boundaries with adjoining properties. In imagining this completely secure home which avoids common risks and causes of precariousness, Blandy concludes that many reasons for precariousness arise from sharing property. Thus, she asserts that sharing and precariousness of home are closely intertwined. I consider Blandy's assertion in regard to homesharing throughout this thesis.

Bergan *et al* (2020) also consider the close relationship between precariousness and shared living arrangements. These authors examine coliving in North America – a new type of privately delivered shared housing for people who share similar interests and values, and typically in Bergan *et al*'s (2020) study, precarious jobs. Coliving is emerging as a 'commercial [response] to the specific needs of young professionals sharing in large cities' (Heath *et al*, 2018, p. 129). Coliving organisations frame themselves as temporary places to live – appropriate for the mobile worker and, similar to homeshare in the UK, coliving is portrayed as a solution to their housing affordability crisis. Yet these authors disagree with this portrayal, arguing that coliving is generally priced above market rent, thus it actually offers less affordable housing. Through paying attention to how notions of work are entwined with this shared living arrangement, Bergan *et al* (2020) show how emerging practices and meanings of home are entwined with wider economic precarity in the labour market.

Through their analysis of coliving, these authors highlight how coliving opposes traditional or conventional meanings of home as a long-term, secure, private space that is separate from

work. Rather, for colivers, home is a site for the active production of capital and is inhabited only for a short while. Thus, Bergan *et al* (2020) contend that the economy, meanings and cultures of home are co-emergent and co-productive. Therefore, precarity shapes people's living arrangements and housing options, and new housing schemes do not always remove people from precarious situations, but sometimes further entrench them. Moreover, it is pertinent to study homesharing in the UK, considering the similarities and differences it has with schemes such as coliving housing, and examining how homeshare interplays with feelings and conditions of precarity.

4.2.3   Dynamics in Shared Living Arrangements

As in homeshare, the relationships between co-residents in shared living arrangements are key to the overall success or failure of one's housing situation, and thus how stable or precarious one's home is. The experiences of shared living for students or 'young professionals' who are relatively affluent (Heath and Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon, 2000; Kenyon and Heath, 2001) and those who fall within low-income groups (Green and McCarthy, 2015; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019; Unison, 2014) is likely to be different. As Kemp (2011, p. 1025) explains: 'sharing a flat or house with friends or other young professionals is often very different from living with strangers in a dingy HMO at the bottom end of the private rented sector'. This is echoed by Rugg *et al* (2011) who make a distinction between 'stranger shares' – people living with others they did not know before living together – and 'friendly shares' – people who knew each other before living together. For those in 'friendly shares', young people expressed that they prefer sharing with others over living alone because it provides companionship, as well as a way to reduce spending on rent and living costs (Green and McCarthy, 2015). Yet, for those in 'stranger shares', loneliness and insecurity could be a common feature of their experience. These scholars found that people only experienced shared living as positive when it was through choice. This raises the question of how this might be the case for those who share homes in homeshare schemes.

For both sharers who share by choice and those who share for reasons of constraint, everyday relationships between co-sharers are central to the success or failure of the arrangement (Heath *et al*, 2017). Despite the growth into research on shared living, there remains limited study into the dynamics of those in shared living arrangements (Clark, 2017). Within nuclear family households, people have generally been socialised into particular roles, whereas in non-familial shared living arrangements, these roles are less well-established and are more open to negotiation. Thus, shared living with non-kin can open up potential new ways of relating to others, which will be examined in this thesis through homesharers.

Heath (2004), for example, studied flat dynamics of young people choosing to live together and regards such a dynamic as a 'communal ethic' based on notions of companionship, belonging and a shared sense of identity. She frames this with Maffesoli's (1996) neo-tribal theory which explains the growing significance that friendships are taking within people's social networks, particularly in comparison to couples' relationships. McKerron (2003) defines 'neotribes' as groups of people who chose to come together at a particular time in a particular place. Neo-tribal theory suggests that communal ethics are underpinned by commitment to a 'we' identity, proximity, ritual and shared space. The sharing of space in shared living arrangements is vital to the lifestyle and Maffesoli (1996) and Heath (2004) explain that ritual is critical in underpinning the sharing of space. In shared households where rituals are shared between co-residents, such as cooking together and spending evenings together, co-residents felt a sense of belonging to their homes and thus felt more secure in their living arrangements. However, where co-residents do not share rituals or spend much time together, their homes can become unhomely which can eventually lead to alienation and moving out (Williamson, 2006).

Waters (2014) examined shared living arrangements and refers to co-presence as 'unintimate proximity' if sharers feel a source of discomfort or embarrassment in the course of their everyday activities. To minimize this 'unintimate proximity', Jarvis (2005) found that sharers would space- and time-zone to ensure they received the privacy they sought. Space-zoning denotes the different areas of a house used by different household members, whereas time-zoning refers to the different times sharers use to occupy certain rooms, such as the kitchen or bathroom. Using space- and time-zones as a means of creating public/private boundaries is one way in which sharers can decide when and where they are socially accessible to their co-sharer (public) and socially inaccessible to their co-sharer (private).

For people in homeshares, the option to live 'together but separate' (a notion which explains co-residents who while living together, rarely see each other or spend any time together) may not exist (Heath *et al*, 2017). This is because they are more likely to share spaces and routines due to the labour involved in such arrangements (and companionship is often a clause to their arrangement). Where people lack a feeling of privacy in their home (one of Young's [1997] normative values of home discussed in the previous section), this can be detrimental to their wellbeing (see Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson, 2020). Yet for many, moving out of their shared living arrangements may not be a possibility, leaving people trapped in insecure, vulnerable and precarious situations.

Moreover, for people who are sharing out of economic (or other) constraints, and those in 'friendly shares', the dynamics of shared living arrangements can be starkly different. Writing in reference to young single women who receive housing benefit, Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson (2020) explain that these women often do not feel at home and actually experience their homes as places of fear and insecurity. They found that shared living with strangers can have a negative impact on sharers' mental health and can exacerbate existing conditions. Furthermore, shared living impacted on these young women's sense of ontological security and placed them in a position of increased vulnerability.

Other researchers echo these findings, for instance, Shaw *et al* (1998) found that people who live in houses of multiple occupancy are eight times more likely than the general population to experience mental health issues. Barratt (2011) proposed that this is due to less control, greater insecurity and poorer social networks generally experienced by people in such living arrangements. Rugg *et al* (2011) added concerns about cleanliness of communal areas and noise as factors that may also have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of people in shared living arrangements. Additionally, Green and McCarthy (2015) examined young low-income people living in stranger shares and found that managing the sharing of space is difficult when there is a lack of knowledge about or trust between co-sharers. These authors found that the insecurity of such arrangements often left people with a sense of unease and anxiety.

That is not to say that dynamics in non-kin shared living arrangements cannot provide benefits for the people involved (as shown in the examples at the beginning of the previous section). However, it is clear that choice and constraint in motivations for shared living have strong implications for how interpersonal dynamics play out in shared living and overall, in how shared living is experienced as liked, disliked, precarious or stable. It is therefore vital to understand the interpersonal relationships between co-homesharers, examining why they came to homeshare, the ways they experience their homes and the implications of homesharing on growing precarity.

4.2.4 Intergenerational Shared Living

So far, the literature discussed covers those of a similar age who share homes, either by choice or through economic constraint. Omitted is intergenerational shared living, which although numbers remain small, is growing in size and interest across Western societies (Housing Lin, n.d.). Nevertheless, geographical research into extrafamilial intergenerational relationships and intergenerational shared living remains scarce (though see Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2007). Most of the literature surrounding shared living for older people focuses on institutional

living arrangements, such as care homes and retirement villages (Bodner *et al*, 2011). These accommodation options have received ample attention due to concerns about the ageing population and debates surrounding how best to house older people with specific care needs (Banerjee, 2015). Yet due to wider socio-economic shifts across the Global North, novel forms of intergenerational shared living arrangements are arising. In the Netherlands for instance, intergenerational shared living schemes where students live in care homes have emerged (Housing Lin, 2018). In such schemes, the students live rent free and provide thirty hours of their time per month to spend with their older co-residents. Likewise, in Spain, intergenerational housing units are emerging in central urban areas for low-income older and younger people. In these arrangements, each younger person spends a few hours of their time every week with four older residents, on the basis of a 'good neighbour agreement' (World Habitat, 2017).

4.2.5   Intergenerational Shared Living Schemes as Labour

What UK homeshare and these other intergenerational shared living arrangements have in common is the involvement of some form of 'work' or labour for at least one of the sharers (usually the younger sharer). This work or labour can include household chores such as cleaning, gardening and cooking or simply providing companionship. Yet the blurring of boundaries between work and home and how this interweaves with precarity in shared living arrangements is not new. In au pair households, for instance, au pairs are expected to perform childcare and some housework in return for a bedroom and a monetary allowance (Búriková, 2006). However, for some scholars, such as Cox (2018), the labour undertaken by au pairs is presented as something other than work. Au pairs, on average, work a 38-hour week at around half of the National Minimum Wage and generally are untrained, although they take on tasks that would have been undertaken by qualified nannies in the past. Nevertheless, Cox (2018) explains that au pairs are generally not regarded as employees or workers, and their work is not always understood as 'real' work.

Hatton (2017) contends that there are legal, cultural and spatial mechanisms that make work invisible. Work can be invisible because it takes place behind closed doors or it is out of sight of the law – both of which domestic labour is affected by. Further, legal mechanisms do not provide domestic workers with any Workers' Rights – in the UK, au pairs and other live-in domestic workers are excluded from protections such as the right to the National Minimum Wage. Cultural assumptions also naturalise this work when it is done by women, in particular, migrant women or women of minority ethnicity. Au pairs are thus regarded as 'helping out' with

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childcare and housework rather than undertaking valuable and important labour. Younger homesharers are too described as 'helping out' with household tasks (Homeshare UK, n.d.b), therefore can the care work they undertake also be conceptualised as effectively invisible and does this have any implications on how homesharers experience precarity? This will be considered throughout this thesis.

4.2.6   Home as a Site of Care

If homes can be sites of care work, then they can also be sites of care. Scholars have examined the intricate and shifting socio-spatial relations between people and their home spaces, analysing both how the home shapes care and how care shapes the home (Dowling, 2012; Dyck *et al*, 2005). Wiles (2003a; 2003b), for instance, has explored how caring at home impacts both the care itself (for instance, the availability of formal support to family caregivers) and impacts how individuals relate to their home spaces, from feelings of frustration to increased feelings of independence. Dyck *et al*'s (2005) research shows that paid or professional care provision within the home space can disrupt normative and established meanings of home, as well as routinised home-life activities. Paradoxically, when an individual's activities and mobility is restricted, and thus they may spend more time within their home, it also becomes its most 'public' (Milligan, 2016). Therefore, geographical work on caregiving within the home emphasises that this not only changes the activities and values associated with home, but also blurs boundaries between private and public space (Milligan and Power, 2010; Conradson, 2003a). While for caregivers the home becomes a place of work, for care-receivers it becomes a place of care consumption. Thus, receiving care within the home space requires negotiation of boundaries of intimacy and privacy; notions which will be examined for the homesharers in this thesis.

Researchers have emphasised that care within the home space is underwritten by a complex relation of power that complicates everyday care practices (Dyck *et al*, 2005). This theme of power, care and the home space has been explored by Twigg (2000) who found that receiving care in the private home space empowered care-receivers as they could decide exactly when carers could visit their home and could exclude them from certain areas. However, others have highlighted that this may change as care needs progress because the power to exclude can be over-ridden by the need for further formal care support (Locke, 2016; Milligan, 2003). For householders, the power to exclude their co-homesharers from the home space and from certain areas is not possible, or at least, more difficult. Therefore, it is important to examine the power dynamics of co-homesharers because homeshares are dependent on a working relationship between co-homesharers. If homesharers do not feel secure or certain in their co-homesharer relationship, this will impact how homesharers feel about the stability of their homes.

4.3   Conclusion

This chapter has examined central concepts and debates surrounding home in the literature. It has revealed home as more than a financial entity but as something which is lived, felt, made, unmade and imagined. This chapter has discussed the various positives and negatives of sharing homes, showing how shared living can be linked to precarity. Homeshare involves the sharing of homes and is based on a supposedly caring relationship. Taking this chapter with the previous chapter, which detailed how care is increasingly experienced as precarious, it is therefore vital to understand how homesharers experience precarity and what homesharing can tell us about the normalisation of precarity in today's society.

Although research into shared living arrangements is growing, there remains a relative lack of research into such living arrangements in comparison to more traditional household formations. Particularly lacking is academic research into homesharing in the UK. This thesis therefore aims to work towards filling this scholarly gap, extending thinking on how social relationships are played out within homeshares and expanding research that considers shared living as both a consequence of and contributor to precariousness (Blandy, 2018; Bergan *et al*, 2020). Furthermore, it is important to further research into shared living arrangements to understand how people in such arrangements experience precarity. This thesis thus endeavours to extend understandings of why people homeshare, how co-homesharers relate to each other and how they relate to their home spaces. This thesis also aims to understand how UK homeshare relates to broader societal shifts and changing trajectories amidst an era of austerity and growing precarity.

Chapter 5   **Methods**

In approaching this project, I wanted to explore the everyday lived experiences of homesharers to build a picture of what it is like to be in a homeshare and to understand if and how homeshare is adding to or normalising growing precarity. For this reason, I took a qualitative approach, listening to homesharers' narratives to make sense of their social worlds. This research uncovered detailed, intimate stories from homesharers' perspectives, allowing me to understand not only how homeshare is experienced on a day-to-day level but also how homesharing relates to wider societal norms and trends, for instance the pattern of people living in shared arrangements until later in life. Through this research, intricate insight into the world through homesharers' eyes has been uncovered and this chapter provides a detailed discussion and justification for the methods used and approach taken to attain this.

First, I explain my methodological approach and describe how this informed my three research methods of in-depth interviews, emotion maps and photo elicitation. Here I also describe the importance of emplaced research for my study. After this, I describe my, at times, challenging recruitment process and the participant characteristics. This section highlights the 'messiness' of the research process, showing qualitative research as often complex, multifaceted, and at times spontaneous (Katz, 2013). Next, I detail my data collection process and explain my original plans. COVID-19 struck in the middle of my data collection thus I then go on to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on my research. This section explains and justifies the sample size and the small up-take of people undertaking the photo elicitation and emotion map elements of my research methods. Then, the chapter describes my positionality in relation to my research and explains how this shaped the research process. Finally, the chapter details the limitations to my research methods and describes my processes of data analysis and presentation.

5.1   **The Everyday and Lived Experience**

I approached this research through the lens of everyday lived experience. As Bennett (2004, p. 1) notes, focusing on the everyday is associated with 'the familiar, the taken-for-granted, the common-sensical' which can mean that the everyday is overlooked or labelled as unimportant or benign. However, it is 'precisely the inherent taken-for-grantedness of everyday life that renders it valuable as an object of social research' (ibid). Through the lens of everyday lived experience, I

am better able to understand how homesharers experience homesharing and how wider trends and norms influence the everyday and vice versa.

At the centre of feminist geography and sociology lies a mutual interest in the mundane world of the everyday, the material conditions of people's lived experiences and an analysis of what is taken for granted (Dyck, 2005). Sociologists have studied the microforms of home, family and intimate relationships, and feminist geographers examine how these domestic relations are shaped by broader social and economic policies (Tarrant and Hall, 2020). Moreover, feminist geographers and sociologists have long advocated the role of the everyday and lived experience as worthy topics of study, and these notions underly what this thesis endeavours to uncover and understand.

Everyday lived experiences are especially relevant in the context of precarity. As I have previously discussed, particularly since the 2008 financial recession and through the current climate of austerity, precarity has come to infiltrate all aspects of everyday life (Hall, 2020; Nowicki, 2017). The everyday has been politically appropriated as a means of normalising and placating precarity to the extent that some scholars such as Berlant (2011) assert that a 'crisis-ordinary' state has become the norm. Thus, I wanted to understand how precarity influences people in the everyday, in particular, people's feelings of precariousness, access to care and experiences of precarious housing.

A focus on everydayness is often thought to refer to a 'micro' geographic scale that sits beneath, rather than alongside or part of broader issues (Pain and Smith, 2008). Yet attention to lived experience and the everyday can actually reveal much about wider social and economic processes that both shape everyday life and are in turn, shaped by it. Paying close attention to the activities and spaces of everyday life, and people's experiences of this, provides an entry point to uncover and understand societal processes on both smaller and larger scales (ibid). By looking at the everyday life of homesharers, I can understand not only how this novel form of living is experienced on an individual micro-level, but also how homesharing reflects wider societal shifts in care provision and living arrangements. This is vital to my thesis because I aim to understand how homesharer's individual narratives link to ongoing austerity and growing precarity.

Furthermore, a focus on lived experiences at home can reveal how home is vulnerable to wider political processes and therefore can be a key site to help us understand how precarity is lived, experienced and resisted. The home is made increasingly precarious by rising rental payments (particularly in comparison to wages), legislative changes (such as reduced housing benefits) and increasing difficulties in access to homecare (Hall, 2017; Himmelweit, 2014; Wilkinson and Ortega Alcazar, 2017). In using the lens of everyday lived experience, I can better

understand how the social structuring of homeshares are responses to societal changes and economic restructuring, rather than seeing homes as static apolitical entities. I can thus uncover and better understand how provisions of care and home are the result of wider ideologies and agendas that shape people's experiences and life trajectories. The following section discusses the research methods I undertook in order to further understand this relationship.

5.2   Mixture of Qualitative Methods

Like Cohen *et al* (2007, p. 19), I believe that 'the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated'. With these authors, I therefore take a constructionist ontological viewpoint and believe that there is no shared reality, only a series of individual constructions of reality with different meanings for different people. My approach to understanding the everyday lived experiences of homesharers is therefore underpinned by my belief that one reality or absolute knowledge does not exist. Rather, I believe that multiple realities or 'truths' exist and knowledge is subjective (Al-Saadi, 2014). Thus, I aimed to understand the everyday experiences of homesharing through the eyes of multiple homesharers.

Likewise, I believe that the social world should be understood by trying to make sense of people's interpretations, perceptions and behaviours, rather than just observing and explaining them. Therefore, in order to understand how homesharing is experienced in the everyday, I take an interpretivist epistemological approach to the nature of knowledge and believe that knowledge is produced by examining and understanding (not discovering) participants' social worlds through concentrating on their interpretations and meaning (Al-Saadi, 2014). For this reason, I take a qualitative approach to research.

A qualitative methodology recognises that all knowledge is socially constructed (Lewis and Ritchie, 2013). Nevertheless, no method alone can capture all the nuances in people's experiences. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 12) write 'individuals are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why.' Using a range of interconnected qualitative methods thus allows me to make broader and deeper understandings of the worlds of experience of homesharers, a central aim of this thesis.

Multiple, interconnected methods therefore have a greater ability to capture the subtleties of the experiences of homesharers. Having various perspectives contributes to a richer

understanding of homesharing because it shows the different ways in which homesharing is experienced and helps to capture the messiness of everyday lives and relations. The use of multiple research methods allows participants to express their experiences and understandings of these in different ways, and consequently allows me to understand their viewpoints and experiences from slightly different angles, building up a detailed picture of the lives of the participants. In line with this, I undertook in-depth interviews, emotion maps and photo-elicitation methods, each discussed in turn below.

5.2.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews produce detailed subjective data from people's perspectives which can build insight into opinions and feelings, thus they are the most suitable method for my thesis' aims (Denscombe, 2003). Flowerdew and Martin (2005) write that interviews are a beneficial tool for understanding narratives and revealing the everyday experiences of research subjects. The intimate nature of interviews is appropriate for this study because it allowed me to uncover sensitive information about participants' experiences (Ragin, 2014). Studying homesharing has the potential to expose upsetting or distressing information regarding participants' experiences of sharing the home or the reasons they came to homeshare. The nature of interviews allows participants to express these feelings face to face, in an empathetic interaction with the researcher (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews permit a 'conversation with a purpose', allowing for a degree of mutual control of the conversation between myself and the participants (Mason 2002, p. 115). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to express their feelings or stories about whatever they feel is relevant to the study theme as a whole, rather than staying firmly within the research questions (Bryman, 2004). This ability of participants to drive the research content allows scope for divergence and thus the emergence of new avenues which may not have otherwise been explored. In my research, this approach allowed me to uncover interesting data such as the integral role of householders' families within homeshare relationships, which was unexpected and led me to interview two daughters of householders.

The decision of whether to conduct joint or individual interviews with homesharers was one of the first key considerations in my research design, as there are both advantages and disadvantages to each type of interview. Joint interviews are beneficial for investigating household dynamics because interviewees can expand each other's narratives by challenging stories and jogging each other's memories. The dynamics of joint interviews can generate new themes and can promote mediation between interviewees which can provide insight into their

shared realities (Pelechova, 2014). Whereas the privacy of individual interviews can provide interviewees with more freedom to express their opinions and stories. Individual interviews are beneficial in comparing these stories and the data between participants because they can highlight the negotiations that occur between people within a household (Valentine, 1999). For this reason, I decided that individual interviews would be most fruitful for this study, so that if they desired, participants could divulge personal stories and could more freely express any negative concerns about their homesharing arrangement.

Overall, I conducted in-depth interviews with seven householders (of which four were interviewed face-to-face and three conducted via telephone post COVID-19 outbreak), nine younger homesharers (one of which was conducted via telephone post COVID-19 outbreak) and two daughters of householders (one conducted via telephone post COVID-19 outbreak). Further detail about this is covered in section 5.6.

5.2.2 Emotion Maps

A further research method chosen to gain information relating to my research aims was emotion maps. The use of emotion maps in the home derives from diagnostic use in family therapy interviews (Gabb, 2009; Gabb and Singh, 2015). On a floor plan of their home, participants are asked to indicate the emotions that each room evokes through questions such as 'where is the place of security for you in your home? Or 'what stories are associated with the manner in which you experience security in the kitchen?' (Viola, 2014, p. 7). Through the geographic placing of emotions, further narratives are shared and a deeper reflection of homelife is considered (Gabb, 2009). Emotions are complex, amorphous categories that are often merged and rarely appear as a separate emotion at a time (Yang, 2000). For instance, a room could evoke both joy and sorrow, or both loneliness and grief. Mapping these emotions can reveal these constellations, help participants to consider the spatiality of their emotions and can contribute to an understanding of the day-to-day lives of homesharers (Gabb and Singh, 2015).

Due to this, I decided that emotion maps would be a valuable method to use for this thesis. Emotion maps allowed me to capture the 'feel' of participants' households and to reveal the fluid nature of participants' emotions as spatial metaphors (MacKain, 2004). Further, emotion maps helped to place the data and stories back in the micro-geographies of home, ensuring participants talked through how specific spaces in the home 'work' for them and their homeshares, and how practices of their everyday homemaking function; fitting for my research aims.

I did consider other tools, such as walk-along interviews with homesharers, so as to explore dimensions of homeshare relationships outside the home environment - given that the relationship extends outside the home (for instance, walking in the park or going shopping). However, the relationship of co-homesharers inside the home environment is more integral to homesharers' experiences of homesharing as it is their main place in which they spend time together, therefore emotion maps showing relationship dynamics in the home were favoured. Unfortunately, only five participants (one householder and four younger homesharers) completed the emotion maps, which is discussed in depth in section 5.6).

5.2.3   Photo Elicitation

A further method focussing on visual data that I used was photo elicitation. Harper (2002, p. 13) defines photo elicitation as the 'idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview… to evoke deeper elements of human consciousness'. The photo elicitation method involves participants taking images which are then discussed with the researcher in an interview. Participants are asked to explore the meaning or significance of the subject of each photo and to explain the reasons behind why they took each photo. This opportunity to reflect encourages a multi-dimensional response from participants which can reinforce and enrich data (Board, 2014).

Photo elicitation pushes the use of photographs past illustrations and places them at the centre of the research focus and participant discussion. This adds a tangible layer of interpretation by the participants because they explain how the photographs represent their experiences of homesharing. According to Rose (2012, p. 312) 'even the most banal of photographs…can prompt participants to give eloquent and insightful accounts of their lives'. By engaging participants in the interpretation of data, a new narrative understanding of participants' experiences is uncovered and reality as seen through the participants' eyes is better understood. Everyday patterns and routines of homelife can be overlooked and taken for granted by people, yet photo elicitation can help participants to recognise and interpret their familiar routines – vital for understanding the everyday lived experiences of homesharers. Moreover, photo elicitation is valuable for interpreting experiences of homesharing, as participants are able to both conceptualise and then analyse their relationship with their home.

An advantage of photo elicitation is that it allows researchers to explore essences which are difficult to observe (Harper, 2002). For instance, photo elicitation helped to capture both the relationship between each co-homesharer and the relationship between homesharers and their homes; integral for my research aims. Through photographs, notions of how sharing the home is played out are revealed, for instance personal or private spaces vs more communal spaces, or

items with more or less significance to each homesharer, and this exposed something about the everyday dynamics of the relationship between co-homesharers. This was important because with a lack of academic research into homesharing, I wanted to uncover whether issues associated with other shared living arrangements, such as negotiations between shared spaces, are relevant to homesharers. However, as with the emotion maps, only five participants took part in the photo elicitation method (the same five that completed the emotion maps), explained in section 5.6.

5.3   Emplaced Research

A key decision taken early on was the decision to interview participants in their homes. I understand that knowledge is not only co-constructed by the researcher and the participant, but also by the research site (Evans and Jones, 2011). Therefore, in being sensitised to the role of place, deeper insight can be gained into the everyday experiences and routines of participants. By conducting research in the participants' homes, I was able to capture intimate and more everyday data. Participants could express what their home means to them and could consider their homesharing experiences in a more lived manner when in the home themselves (Borbasi *et al,* 2002).

The construction of knowledge and identity in place has implications for the ways in which participants navigate interviews. Participants may assert one identity in one place and another identity in a different place, and these different identities may mean that participants provide different perspectives to their answers, depending on the site of interview (Elwood and Martin, 2000). For instance, McDowell (1998) found that when interviewed at their workplace, bank employees were reluctant to discuss their home-lives due to their perception of what was appropriate topics to discuss in a bank. Moreover, while participants and researchers present different aspects of their identity through a continual process of negotiation, this identity is also situated through the site of research method (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Participants were interviewed in their homes because their identities are more likely to be constructed around their identity as a homesharer when in the home and therefore the knowledge shared and produced is more likely to be shaped by participants' experiences of homesharing.

Using the home as the site of interview when exploring people's experiences in and relationships to their homes can also uncover how participants use 're-memory' in creating what they call 'home' (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Re-memory is 'a conceptualization of encounters with

memories, stimulated through scents, sounds and textures in the everyday' (ibid, p. 314). In interviews in the home, researchers have the opportunity to observe items within participants' homes which can constitute re-memory and spark conversations. Such items can reveal stories of participants' past and present, and the displaying of these can shape how participants create their home space and thus contribute to their identity as homesharer.

Within the participants' homes, pre COVID-19 outbreak, I was able to observe artefacts such as ornaments and decorations that reveal certain commitments or priorities of participants and therefore provide knowledge about people's social worlds and their processes of homemaking. I was able to observe any interactions that participants had with their co-homesharer, which is relevant for understanding how participants construct and experience their relationship with their co-homesharer. Also, in walking into each room within the home with participants during the emotion map or photo elicitation exercises (discussed below in section 5.6), I could see what was not displayed. For instance, some younger homesharers had a lack of personal items in their bedrooms and rarely entered certain spaces within their homes, which surprised me. Seeing how participants create and use their home space thus allowed me to 'get into the gaps' of their experiences and understand how participants' dynamic relationships with their homes shape their stories of their homesharing experience.

As discussed in the literature review, home is not only a physical dwelling, but is also an idea, a feeling and a memory (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Being interviewed in the home can therefore expose the emotional ties that bind individuals to their home space, thus I can understand how participants use their home space to make their homeshare 'work'. For instance, some participants had a more 'divided' home in that certain areas were more theirs, and other areas were more their co-homesharers. Uncovering information such as this, which was not necessarily emphasised by what the participants said, allowed me to visually understand how the spatial organisation of the home influences participants' experiences of homesharing and vice versa. Conducting interviews in participants' homes allowed me to better understand how participants navigate their home space and negotiate privacy and boundaries within their homes, as well as participants' relationships with their homes.

Being in participants' homes also allowed me to capture some of the emotions participants felt towards their homes. For instance, I could see how householder Blanche, in the face of declining mobility, had moved many of her possessions into her lounge so that she was still able to reach important items and see certain significant objects. By viewing how she had organised her lounge, I could better understand her feelings of entrapment within her home and why she felt a sense of resentment towards her co-homesharer who now had the whole of the upstairs to

herself, as Blanche could no longer access it. Also, in interviewing Melody, the daughter of the deceased householder Raegan, in Raegan's now empty home, I could visualise how the home used to look when Raegan was homesharing with Miranda and Lexi and I could understand more the happiness that homeshare had brought to this home in comparison to it now as an empty, unused space. Thus, the interviews were not only opportunities to garner information through questions, but were also opportunities for participant observation (Oberhauser, 1997).

Additionally, the location of interviews provides a space for the enactment and constitution of participants' power relations and expertise (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Using the home as the site of research was therefore also beneficial in making participants feel more relaxed and comfortable as they are familiar with their surroundings (ibid). Being in the comfort of their own home can help participants to feel at ease when sharing personal stories and feel more open to divulge sensitive issues (Borbasi *et al,* 2002). Interviewing people in their homes therefore provided me with rich data which can piece together a more complex understanding of the everyday lives of homesharers. In this study of homesharers and their experiences, participants' homes are thus vital as the site of interview, whether I am there in person or via a telephone call. Although the interviews conducted via the telephone (due to COVID-19) did make it more difficult for me to capture how participants relate to their homes (discussed in more depth in section 5.6).

5.4   Recruitment Process

The recruitment and data collection processes of this thesis did not play out as originally expected. This was not only because of the outbreak of COVID-19 which began in the middle of my thesis and halted face-to-face interviews, but due to other issues that arose or became apparent along the way. At the beginning of my PhD project, the plan was to conduct approximately thirty interviews with younger homesharers and householders (fifteen each). These interviews were to be conducted in the homes of the participants and gained via homeshare organisations and other methods such as spareroom.com. However, this plan did not go as expected.

I began my data collection process by contacting Homeshare UK via email and telephone, who then passed on a recruitment email to their subsidiary organisations to distribute to homesharers. This email explained the details of my PhD research and asked if homeshare organisations could ask their homesharers if they would be willing to be interviewed as part of my research. I did not have any exclusionary criteria; any householder or younger homesharer from

any homeshare organisation could be interviewed. Similarly, I did not specifically look for homesharers with certain characteristics, such as particular genders or ethnicities.

After weeks of waiting with no response, I emailed and rang every homeshare scheme under the umbrella organisation of Homeshare UK – nineteen in total. However, the majority of homeshare organisations were not willing to advertise my research. They explained that there is a limited pool of homesharers and a lot of researchers that want to talk to them, so interviews would be burdensome on homesharers (although, in reality, little academic research exists into homeshare). Only two homeshare organisations agreed to advertise my research, each located in the South or West of England, and as a result, my sample size of seven householders and nine younger homesharers is smaller than I had originally intended and most of my participants homeshare in these areas. Nevertheless, an upside to this is that I could consider the accounts from participants in greater depth.

In an attempt to not rely on homeshare organisations for my sample, I looked on spareroom.com because I had seen homeshare advertisements on this platform. However, this was to no avail because homeshare advertisements on spareroom.com are listed by homeshare organisations. Other methods of gaining participants such as via Facebook support groups for homesharers were not possible because such groups do not exist. Therefore, all of the participants in this thesis were gained via homeshare organisation representatives, bar one gained through snowballing (discussed below). This is a limitation to my sample because homeshare organisations could potentially chose and omit certain homesharers for the interviews (limitations are discussed in detail in section 5.7). Homeshare organisations became the gatekeepers of who was put forward for interview.

Snowballing was also used in an attempt to gain further participants. Any participant I interviewed, I asked if they could ask their co-homesharer if they would also be willing to be interviewed. If participants had come from a previous homeshare or were moving to a new homeshare, I asked if they could ask their new/previous co-homesharers. Through snowballing, I gained one further participant – Daisy – a younger homesharer who was due to move in with a householder participant named Jocelyn in the weeks following my interview with her. For the majority, when homeshare organisations gave me the contact details of potential participants, they gave me the details for both the householder and younger homesharer of the same homeshare match, although I had informed homeshare organisations that the interviews would be conducted individually and that it was not essential for me to interview both of the co-homesharers in a match. Four of my participants were homeshare matches – both the younger homesharer and householder. This was not a deliberate strategy but rather depended on my

participants. However, the mixture of pairs and non-pairs in my sample is useful because I can understand the same stories from different viewpoints for matches, and further experiences and contexts of homeshares for where just one homesharer of a match was interviewed (Valentine, 1999).

Approximately every four months, I re-emailed and re-rang homeshare organisations to ask again if they could ask their younger homesharers and householders if they would be interviewed. Of the interviews I had completed at this point, a common theme was the role of householders' families in arranging homeshares. Therefore, in my further emails to homeshare organisations and snowballing attempts, I included the families of householders as people I would like to interview. One of my homeshare organisation gatekeepers managed to get two daughters of householders to be interviewed.

The difficulties I faced in gaining participants due to many homeshare organisations being unable or unwilling to advertise my research revealed many things about homeshare organisations in the UK. I was surprised to find out that many homeshare schemes, such as York Homeshare, Carmarthenshire Homeshare and Homeshare Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent, do not have any homesharers at the time of my research. In fact, a few homeshare organisations such as Homeshare Isle of Wight and PossAbilities Homeshare have shut down due to a lack of homesharers; information which is not available on the Homeshare UK website. Surprisingly, many homeshare organisations told me that many of their householders had dementia or memory issues. At no point in all my online research into homesharing in the UK had it hinted that many householders had dementia. When I asked one of my homeshare organisation gatekeepers about this, she said that Homeshare UK did not want to seem like it was only available to people with dementia and so avoided writing much about dementia or memory issues on their websites and advertisements. I did not want to exclude householders with memory issues from my research as this seemed like an integral group in my study. I therefore re-wrote my ethics application (discussed in section 5.6) to include people with memory issues and to cover new issues of capacity to consent, however of the participants I interviewed, none had memory issues.

5.4.1 Covid-19 Implications of the Recruitment Process

The coronavirus pandemic struck in the middle of my data collection. When the COVID-19 outbreak began I had completed four of the seven householder interviews, eight of the nine younger homesharer interviews and one householder's daughter interview. I had three further interviews lined up with one householder and younger homesharer (of the same homeshare

match) and the daughter of the householder. However, two weeks before the first UK national lockdown, these three potential participants emailed me to explain that they did not feel it was safe for me to enter their home and asked to postpone the interview. I postponed my data collection for four months, waiting for the shielding time of older people to end. However, by then, the University of Southampton had prohibited all face-to-face interviews and I had to rethink how I was going to generate my data.

The implications of COVID-19 for my research forced me to explore and consider other methods that would allow me to gather data about the experiences of those involved in homesharing without being face-to-face with participants. I considered asking new participants to undertake written diaries of their homeshare experiences in lockdown. Yet, because I had waited until after the first lockdown to restart my data collection, I felt that interviews conducted either via online video calls or the telephone would be more suitable going forward.

After the first national lockdown, I found that COVID-19 had placed additional pressures on homeshare organisations, which made it almost impossible to gain new participants. I therefore decided to turn my focus to re-interviewing my participants to hear about their experiences of homesharing during lockdown/with social distancing restrictions. Follow-up interviews added complexity to my findings, as some homesharers might be in a new homeshare, in the same homeshare or may have left their homeshare. Of the 5 younger homesharer/householder participants I re-interviewed, one younger homesharer (Nadia) was now living in a flat she owned, one householder (Jocelyn) was now without a co-homesharer, one younger homesharer (Miranda) was in a new homeshare and a pair (householder Irene and younger homesharer Hayley) remained in the same homeshare. This created interesting and illuminative data as I now had a longitudinal aspect to my research, which was not part of my initial research design.

When asking participants if they would like to be re-interviewed, I gave them the choice of an online video call or a telephone interview. This way, participants could feel more in control of how they shared their stories and experiences and could perhaps be more willing to be re-interviewed. A common obstacle in using online video interviews is access to a computer and the ability to use online video technology (Sullivan, 2012). These difficulties are often thought to be more significant for older people who may be less familiar with technology (ibid). However, studies have found that older people are willing to use new technologies and feel comfortable doing so (Fokkema and Knipscheer, 2007; Kiel, 2005; Lacono *et al*, 2016). Because of this, I did not assume that householders would not have access to, or would not feel comfortable in using, online video technology.

I emailed or texted all my participants to ask for a follow-up interview, of which five (three younger homeshares and two householders) agreed. I also emailed the three potential participants who postponed their interviews before the COVID-19 lockdown, of which only one interview went ahead (with the daughter of a householder). All participants preferred a telephone interview over an online video call, being more familiar and comfortable with this method. While a downside to telephone interviews is that I do not gain any visual cues or data, the majority of these participants had already met me and so they perhaps felt more comfortable in sharing their new experiences with me and I could also visualise their stories because I had already visited most of their homes. Because participants were not keen to complete the emotion maps or photo elicitation parts of my data collection before lockdown (discussed in section 5.6), and because these activities involved both myself and the participant walking around their homes, I did not ask further participants to complete these activities. I thought these activities might be too onerous for people to complete without my presence, or unsuitable for participants who may not want their co-homesharer knowing that they are taking part in an interview or for those with mobility issues.

After a few more months, I re-emailed and re-rang all the homeshare organisations again, asking if they could ask their homesharers if they would like to be interviewed by me. I sent this email during the third national lockdown and I stated in the email that homesharers may find it nice to speak to a new voice. From this email, three homeshare organisations replied (one of my original homeshare organisation gatekeepers and two new organisations) from which I got a new householder participant from two, and a new householder and younger homesharer participant (who are both in the same homeshare arrangement) from the other. All these interviews were conducted via the telephone, decided by the participant (the implications for this are discussed in further on in section 5.6).

5.5   Participant Characteristics

Overall, I conducted in-depth interviews with seven householders (three conducted post COVID-19 outbreak), nine younger homesharers (one conducted post COVID-19 outbreak) and two daughters of householders (one conducted post COVID-19 outbreak). All of my participants homeshare or live in the West or South of England and the ages range from 19 to 92. Younger homesharer participants have a range of ethnicities, races and migrant statuses - 5 of the 9 younger homesharers regard themselves as non-White and 4 younger homesharers are migrants. This is higher than Homeshare UK (2018b) statistics which find that 24% of younger homesharers

regard themselves as non-White. Contrastingly, all the householder participants are White British. According to Homeshare UK (2018b) statistics, 70% of householders are British, therefore my sample excludes householders of non-White ethnicity, which could potentially mean that certain experiences of homesharing are also excluded from this thesis. Table 1 gives further demographic information about participants.

All the participants bar two are female (one male householder and one male younger homesharer of the same match). This was not a deliberate choice, but rather is reflective of the gendered nature of homesharing. According to Homeshare UK (2020), 73% of householders and 78% of younger homesharers are female. Homesharing involves performing or receiving informal care tasks, which are still often associated as a feminised activity (Baker *et al*, 2010). This may influence the gender of those involved in homeshare. When I asked my participants if they had any opinions on the gender of their co-homesharer, most explained that they would prefer to co-homeshare with someone of the same gender because they felt they would feel more comfortable.

Table 1:   Participant Characteristics

Name (Age)	Type of Participant	Ethnicity	UK National (Yes or No)	Current Length of Homeshare	Number Homeshare	Job	Education Level
1. Ahmed (35)	Younger Homesharer	Asian	No	1 Year	1st	Student	Masters
2. Amira (92)	Householder	White-British	Yes	2 and a half Months	1st	Retired	PhD
3. Anya (35)	Younger Homesharer	Asian	No	2 and a half Months	1st	Student	PhD
4. Blanche (83)	Householder	White-British	Yes	7 Weeks	1st	Retired	Undisclosed
5. Carol (75)	Householder	White-British	Yes	4 Months	1st	Retired	Undisclosed

6. Daisy (25)	Younger Homesharer	White-British	Yes	2 Months	1st	Student	Masters
7. Edith (92)	Householder	White-British	Yes	1 Year	3rd	Retired	Undisclosed
8. Harold (90)	Householder	White-British	Yes	1 Year	4th	Retired	Undisclosed
9. Hayley (32)	Younger Homesharer	White-American	No	1 Year	1st	Support Worker	Undisclosed
10. Irene (84)	Householder	White-British	Yes	1 Year	1st	Retired	Undisclosed
11. Jocelyn (65)	Householder	White-British	Yes	2 Months	2nd	Retired	Undisclosed
12. Lexi (19)	Younger Homesharer	White-British	Yes	2 Months	2nd	Student	Under-graduate
13. Melody (61)	Daughter of Householder	White-British	Yes	N/A	N/A	Business Owner	Undisclosed
14. Miranda (47)	Younger Homesharer	White-British	Yes	2 Months	3rd	Receptionist	Undisclosed
15. Nadia (41)	Younger Homesharer	Asian	No	4 Months	1st	Engineering Role	Under-graduate
16. Sandra (61)	Daughter of Householder	White-British	Yes	N/A	N/A	Nurse	Undisclosed

| 17. Violet (35) | Younger Homesharer | Asian-British | Yes | 7 Weeks | 1st | Student | Under-graduate |
| 18. Zaina (30) | Younger Homesharer | Black-British | Yes | 1 Year | 1st | Shop Assistant | Undisclosed |

5.6   Data Collection Process

The following section details my data collection process, describing what I did and explaining the ethical considerations taken before and during the data collection process. I also discuss my positionality in relation to my research and explain how this shaped the study.

5.6.1   Data Collection

Prior to data collection, I gained ethical approval from the University of Southampton's Ethics committee, via the 'Ethics and Research Governance Online' (ERGO2) website. After receiving the contact details of participants from homeshare organisations, I used email or telephone to arrange a time and date to meet participants in their homes. For some participants, it was fine to complete the interview when their co-homesharer was in the house, but in a different room. Yet for others, who had a more volatile relationship with their co-homesharer, interviews were chosen at a time when they were the only one in the house.

I dressed in a smart-casual manner to the pre-COVID-19 interviews, wanting to appear professional but approachable. When I arrived in the homes of participants, I first re-explained to participants the details of my study and asked them to read and sign the participant information sheet (see appendix B) and consent form (see appendix C). Participants were made aware, both verbally and on these sheets, that all their names would be made anonymous and all data gathered from them would be stored on a password-protected laptop. I printed the consent forms and participant information sheets in large print in case any participants had eyesight problems. I also asked participants if they had any questions or concerns about the study and ensured it was ok for me to audio-record the interview on my phone.

The two homeshare organisation gatekeepers that agreed to advertise my research were unwilling to ask their homesharers if they would like to take part in the emotion map and photo

elicitation methods as they felt this was inappropriate and time-consuming for their homesharers. Therefore, when I got to the homes of participants, I explained these activities and asked if they would like to take part. Five of the sixteen younger homesharer and householder participants agreed. This small number of participants undertaking this more creative aspect of my research methods was disappointing and was probably due to participants being unprepared for this activity prior to the interview. With the participants that agreed to take part, we walked around their homes prior to the interview and during this walk, I drew a brief floorplan of their homes and they took photographs of any objects or places they felt were significant to them and their homeshare.

When the interview was complete, these participants then completed the emotion maps and we discussed them, along with the photographs. Previous uses of emotion maps typically involve participants placing emoticon stickers on each room, with different colours for different family members (Gabb and Singh, 2015). However, I asked participants to write down the words that each room evokes, as I thought that this was more age appropriate. The emotions evoked by different rooms ranged from positive emotions of security and comfort to negative emotions of resentment and a lack of privacy (see figure 1 for an example of an emotion map completed by younger homesharer Nadia). Through emotion maps, I could further understand how participants' feel in their homeshares and how they relate to their homeshare homes.
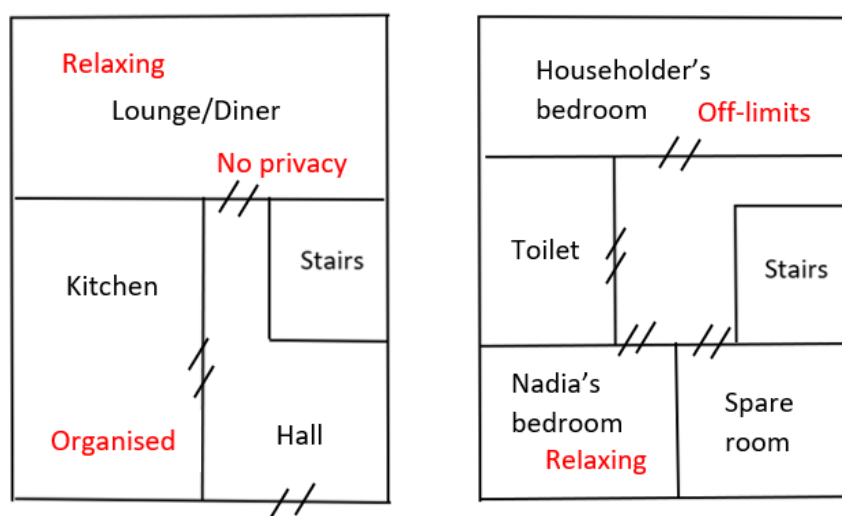

Figure 1   Example of a participant emotion map

When discussing the photographs participants had taken, some unexpected themes arose. For instance, I asked younger homesharer Violet why she had taken a photograph of her toilet cistern (see figure 2). Violet said it made her both laugh and feel angry because her householder's daughter had moaned to her that she had not cleaned well enough and had left dust on the toilet cistern. This example shows how photo-elicitation helped to generate new stories which highlighted different aspects to participants' experiences which otherwise would not have been uncovered.

Figure 2   Example of a photo from photo elicitation method

On an ethical procedure note, it was not until I arrived at the home where I would conduct my first interview, that I realised I would need the householders' permission for the younger homesharer to take photographs in their home, if the photographs contained items belonging to the householder. This meant I had to give consent forms to the householder to sign allowing their younger homesharer to take photographs in their home. This brought about new challenges for me as the householder was not always in the home at the time of interview, the householder may have had memory issues which meant they would have needed extra time to process the consent form and I would have needed to assess their capacity to consent, and also, some younger homesharers did not wish for their householder to know they were being interviewed. As a result, getting consent for photography taking was more difficult than I first thought and less participants completed this research method than I had originally hoped.

Each homesharer interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio-recorded. During the interviews with householders and younger homesharers, I asked about how and why they came to homeshare, the benefits they gain from homesharing and their relationship with their co-homesharer. Although I had a predetermined list of questions, the content of the interviews was driven largely by each participant, thus the stories and topics covered varied. Participants were

encouraged to say as much or as little as they wanted, as long as their stories stayed around the general themes of homesharing, housing, care and wellbeing. I asked participants not only about their current housing and care arrangements, but also their previous experiences and future plans. Participants were therefore able to construct their own narratives by recounting their everyday lived experiences in their own words.

Some topics and questions had the potential to be sensitive, for instance if reasons for coming to homeshare were due to increasing health issues or uncomfortable previous living arrangements. For this reason, I chose my wording carefully and approached these topics with caution to ensure that participants were not distressed (Bingley, 2002). I also outlined the general topics I would be asking about in the participant information sheet so that participants were aware of intended areas of discussion. Prior to beginning the interview and during, I told participants that they could skip any questions or could take a break whenever they wanted, yet no participants took up this offer or refused to answer any questions. I also told participants prior to the interviews that if they would like a friend or a family member present during the interview then this was fine, however all participants undertook the interview alone.

Although I had informed participants at the start of the interviews and via the consent form and participants information sheet that their names would not be used in my study, some participants felt wary when telling stories about the more negative sides of their homeshare or their relationship with their co-homesharer. I reassured participants that I would not be relaying any information they gave me to their co-homesharer or their homeshare organisations and that their comments would be made anonymous. I also told participants that they could opt out of the research at any point and when arranging the interview, I told participants that I could be available any time, including weekends or evenings, so that if they wanted to do the interview when their co-homesharer was out of the house then that was fine. I felt that these tactics helped to lessen any potential participant distress.

For the interviews with the daughters of householders, I changed the interview questions slightly. I still focused on the ways in which homeshare had benefited them and asked them questions surrounding how they heard about homeshare. But I also asked questions such as 'has homeshare changed your relationship with your mother or the care you provide for her?' and 'how do you feel about your mother's home being used by a younger homesharer?'. I was especially careful with wording and sensitivity as one participant's mother had recently passed away and the other participants' mother had dementia. As with all the interviews, I informed these participants that they could refuse to answer any questions and I ensured participants were

aware of the Samaritans and Age UK helpline numbers at the bottom of the participant information sheets. Like with the homesharer participants, I informed the daughters of householders that their comments would be made anonymous. These interviews were also audio-recorded and they lasted approximately 45 minutes.

For the interviews conducted after the outbreak of COVID-19 with participants who I had not previously interviewed, I followed the original interview schedule as well as some COVID-19 specific questions. For example, I asked about participants' experiences of homesharing during lockdown, if lockdown or COVID-19 restrictions had changed their opinions of homeshare and I asked about the ways in which participants had changed their routines due to social distancing measures. For the follow up interviews, I asked some longitudinal questions, such as 'have your opinions on homesharing changed since we last spoke?' as well as the updated COVID-19 questions. I recognised that the outbreak of COVID-19 may be a sensitive subject for people who may have had COVID-19, lost loved ones to the virus or been negatively impacted by social distancing measures. I therefore selected my wording carefully and when prompting for further information I approached this cautiously.

The post COVID-19 outbreak interviews were all conducted via the telephone and audio-recorded. In comparison to the face-to-face interviews, these interviews were slightly shorter (by around 15-20 minutes). Although telephone interviews are useful for conducting research in a COVID-19 safe manner, I did feel that they impacted the depth of participant answers or stories. This may have been because I was not present physically to build rapport and to put participants at ease (Opdenakker, 2006). Eye contact has been described as useful for establishing trust in interviews and I could not do this via the telephone. However, according to Lacono *et al* (2016, p. 7) this can be overcome by 'listening more carefully to participants' voices'. While telephone interviews reduce the social cues of interviews as interviewers cannot see the body language of the participants (Opdenakker, 2006), social cues of voice and intonation are still obtainable, and I found that participants still felt relaxed and willing to talk freely about any sensitive information (Novick, 2008).

Moreover, though I could not gain any visual data via the telephone, I asked new participants to describe the layout of their house, the position of their co-homesharer's bedroom in comparison to theirs and where they spent the majority of their time in the house. In these interviews, I spent more time on the questions relating to the home space and participants' uses of it, so that I could better understand and build up a picture of it. Nevertheless, I did feel that in comparison to the pre-COVID-19 interviews, the post-COVID-19 interviews were not as detailed (which perhaps the shorter length of the interviews shows). Participants interviewed post-COVID-

19 via the telephone did not have the opportunity to point at certain objects to explain certain stories to me and generally answers to questions were shorter and less in-depth. However, the telephone interviews still allowed me to remotely gather intricate data from participants in a manner that was safe for both of us.

5.6.2   Positionality

Each researcher brings their own worldviews, biases and prejudices to their research, and it is impossible to detach the researcher from the research (Darlaston-Jones, 2014). Therefore, just as place of interview shapes the knowledge produced, the researcher's positionality shapes the whole research process, which can influence the participants and the data. The dialogical nature of interviews means that 'the researcher is a visible and integral part of the research' (England, 1994, p. 248). Moreover, it is integral that I scrutinise my own role in the research process and challenge how my worldviews and biases may be interacting with participants' narratives.

The impact of the researcher on the research can be difficult to determine, yet one way to address this issue is for researchers to reflect and analyse on their personal values and their situatedness in comparison to their research topic and subjects (England, 1994; Underwood *et al*, 2010). Reflexivity is therefore central to research and it allows researchers to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that fieldwork raises and more considerate to the consequences of the interactions with those being studied (England, 1994).

Nevertheless, it is impossible to be fully reflexive in that we can never completely understand our own positionalities, and our positionalities are fluid and constantly changing (Mohammad, 2001). Feminist scholars have therefore debated the usefulness of the insider/outsider researcher positions (an insider refers to a researcher who is considered part of the same group as their participants, while an outsider is a researcher considered as not belonging to the same group) (Graham 2005; Valentine 2005). As Gorman-Murray *et al* (2010) have explained, researchers cannot always be insiders to their research, yet they are unlikely to be complete outsiders from their research either.

I am a young white woman studying at university with no experience of homesharing. However, I do have experience of interviewing older people and some of the younger homesharers I interviewed were also students. I also grew up in the same city where many of my participants were homesharing. Hence, I experienced a fluidity in both being an insider and an outsider (Couture *et al*, 2012). Where possible, I tried to find common interests between the

participants and myself upon entering their home, such as location, student-status, interest in ornaments etc, so that participants could feel more connected with me and thus more open to talk about their feelings and experiences (Kvale, 2006). This was not possible over the telephone but as most of these telephone interviews were follow-up interviews, participants had already met me and therefore hopefully felt more trusting of me.

For scholars such as Garrity (2010), the participants' apparent role as a 'novice' and the researcher as an 'experienced professional' shapes the power relations at play. Yates (2013) states that researchers have the power to judge, console, forgive, sympathise, or punish, thus participants may alter what they say in order to deter a reaction by the researcher. An example of this is found in work by Sinding and Aronson (2003) who conducted interviews with adults providing palliative care for their older relatives. They discovered that interviewees would often over-emphasise the value of their care-work so as to not damage their identity of being a 'good carer' or be frowned upon by the interviewer. This example shows the power that researchers hold of exposing the 'failures' of these carers and how this can alter the participants' responses and the knowledge produced. In my research, for instance, a homesharer could overplay the support they provide for their co-homesharer or could downplay the stress that homeshare chores place on them.

From my interviews, I found that showing empathy for the feelings that participants held about their homeshare arrangement, particularly feelings of entrapment by the younger homesharers, allowed them to feel more relaxed in discussing their situation, which in turn led to more detailed explanations of their feelings. Moreover, although the participants and I have our own positionalities, during the data collection process the identities of myself as a researcher and the participants are continuously co-constructed in their relation to each other (Garrity, 2010). Thus, while the researcher holding more 'power' than the participant is true in terms of knowledge surrounding the study (as well as in analysis and writing-up), it is the participants who have more knowledge than me of living in a homeshare and it is the participants' home in which the interview is taking place.

My knowledge of the experiences of homesharing is dependent upon what participants say or show and thus I am reliant on participants 'to provide insight into the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and shape [their] everyday lives' (England, 1994, p. 243). The open-ended questions and participatory nature of my research allowed participants to take control as they decided what they shared. Participants also had control in showing me around their home, and in taking pictures of whatever they saw fit. This 'handing back' of power during data collection empowered participants to feel more in control of the interview and more comfortable.

5.7   Limitations

It is important here to recognise the limitations with my data. The smaller sample size than originally intended limits the pool of experiences and stories of homesharing that I can draw from. However, as Mason (2010, p. 29) notes, in qualitative research it is important to 'build an explanation through a deep exploration of how processes work in particular contexts, under certain sets of circumstances, and in particular sets of social relations', rather than collect a specific number of interviews. The depth and richness of data I collected goes some way to counter the small sample size. Also, as my thesis does not aim to be representative in the statistical sense but rather aims to highlight individuals' stories and experiences, the small number of participants does not impact on the transferability of my thesis' findings (in terms of conceptualisation of context and process).

Although I did not aim specially to gain participants from different socio-economic positions, backgrounds and ethnicities etc, for instance by asking for a certain number of participants from each group, my sample characteristics do represent a range of people. However, as discussed previously, all of my participants homeshare in the West or South of England, despite my thesis looking at homeshare in the UK more generally and all householders are White-British. Further, all of my participants (bar one gained from snowballing) were gained via homeshare organisation representatives.

Homeshare organisation representatives could therefore potentially hand-pick certain participants who have more positive experiences of homesharing, which would mean my sample is inherently biased. For instance, around half of my sample have been homesharing for around a year – longer than the average UK homeshare match. Additionally, as my sample only includes people who were homesharing when I interviewed them, it does not include people whose homesharing experiences were so negative that they no longer homeshare. However, I conducted follow-up interviews with five of my participants which I had not originally intended to do, so this allowed for deeper insight with a longitudinal perspective as well as allowing me to re-interview two participants who were no longer homesharing.

I allowed participants to choose the day and time of interview and told them that I could do weekends or evenings if they wanted their co-homesharer out of the house during the interview. This was an issue that some participants explained when I was arranging interviews with them. However, being alone in the house was not possible for all participants (especially those

interviewed during COVID-19 lockdowns/restrictions), therefore due to worries of being overheard, certain issues with their co-homesharer may have been downplayed or unmentioned.

5.8   Data Analysis

The analysis of my data was ongoing with my data collection. Following each face-to-face interview, I took fields notes on the train home to retain details about the interview that the audio-recording did not capture. For instance, how co-homesharers acted with each other when greeting me at the door or during any other exchanges. I also took notes on the area the participants lived in and what their homes looked like so that I would better remember details of their interview. I transcribed all the interviews myself.

I undertook thematic analysis, which is a method of searching, analysing and interpreting emerging themes within a dataset that are pertinent to the phenomenon being studied (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The key characteristic of thematic analysis is the systematic process of coding and the close examining of the meaning of each code, and thus the description of social reality through these codes (Vaismoradi *et al*, 2016). I undertook thematic analysis because this allowed me to conduct a thorough identification of significant patterns related to homesharing while identifying smaller nuances in participants' stories (Braun and Clarke, 2016). I believed this was most suitable in helping to identify overarching themes as well as individual stories which relate back to the overall themes.

In undertaking thematic analysis, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six guidelines. I first transcribed my data verbatim and immersed myself in the data by re-reading each interview multiple times and taking notes. This allowed me to familiarise myself with the depth and breadth of the interview content (Guest *et al,* 2011). Then, using NVivo version 12 software, I created initial 'good' codes that were interesting and relevant to my research aims. A 'good code' captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon under study and are the building blocks for themes, for instance, 'previous living arrangement' (Boyatzis, 1998). A benefit of thematic analysis is that codes can be brought together to form larger themes. I examined my codes and decided which ones linked together to tell a broader story of my findings. Some of my themes, for instance, 'at homeness' and 'friendship' remain closely linked to the home and care literatures that informed my study, yet other themes were more interpretive and were inductively generated, for instance 'restrictiveness' and 'learning new things'. Finally, I reviewed and refined my themes to ensure that the data within the themes remained relevant, while the themes themselves remained discrete.

5.9   Data Presentation

In line with my thematic analysis, I decided to use a conventional thematic writing style to present my findings. Due to the complexity and richness of participants' stories, at times I found it challenging to present my data in themes, as the same story could cover multiple themes. For instance, younger homesharer Violet's turbulent relationship with her householders' daughter, covered in chapter 7, is also important in describing her lack of privacy in her homeshare home, covered in chapter 6. At stages during my research process, I considered presenting some participant stories as case studies or vignettes to show in greater detail how a homeshare can be experienced. However, I decided against this in favour of presenting broader over-arching themes of my dataset, highlighting a range of stories and experiences and drawing out their similarities and nuances. I felt that presenting the data in themes still retained the detail and richness of participants' narratives.

After the outbreak of COVID-19 and my decision to conduct follow-up interviews (as well as further interviews) to examine how people experience homesharing during the pandemic, I assumed I would present this new data separately to the data conducted pre-COVID-19. However, through the follow-up interviews, it appeared that COVID-19 emphasised certain aspects of the homeshare experience, rather than changing people's experiences or opinions dramatically. I therefore decided that I would weave the information from the follow-up interviews throughout my data analysis, making it clear if data came from a follow-up interview or a first interview.

Likewise, because of the small number of follow-up interviews, I decided to weave the longitudinal data in throughout my data analysis, as it highlighted certain stories from the first interviews, rather than qualifying its own section. For instance, Nadia's experience about finding her homeshare restrictive from her first interview, is emphasised by her situation in her follow-up interview of finding her new flat freeing. I decided it would make more sense to present this data next to each other (but highlighting which interview the data came from) because it gives a fuller picture of participants' stories.

5.10   Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has described and justified my research approach and methods for this thesis into homesharing. My decision to use in-depth interviews (with visual research methods where possible) allowed participants to drive the content of the research while staying close to pertinent

themes of the study. These methods allowed me to gain detailed data about the everyday lived experiences of homesharers. As discussed, the outbreak of COVID-19 began in the middle of my research and it did have a huge impact in terms of data collection (via the telephone rather than face-to-face and possibly on the small uptake of participants undertaking the emotion map and photo elicitation elements).

At times during my data collection, I doubted whether I would be able to get any further participants or interviews due to the pandemic. However, I overcame these issues as best as I could, swapping to non-contact methods and re-interviewing participants. While the data collection process was more challenging than I first thought, I still managed to obtain rich, insightful data, and COVID-19 added an interesting element to my study of longitudinal data which I had not originally intended to gain. Moreover, the implications of COVID-19 and the limitations with the data collection process for this thesis have been explained and justified. The thesis now moves on to examine the empirical findings of this study.

Chapter 6   **Home**

Throughout this thesis, it is clear that so-called 'crisis solutions' are often celebrated and upheld as innovative and timely (Clements, 2015; Heslop and Ormerod, 2019). However, such 'solutions', often under the guise of neoliberalism, have been linked to growing precarity and feelings of precariousness in the UK (Ferreri *et al*, 2017; Harris and Nowicki, 2018). In order to understand how precarity interweaves with homesharing, it is important to examine people's motivations for joining homeshares, what homeshare offers homesharers and how homeshares are experienced. This chapter explores these topics around a central theme of home. In the context of a precarious and unstable housing market, participants come to homesharing in an attempt to secure their housing arrangements. Does homeshare 'solve' people's housing issues, such as access to a place people can call or 'make' home? Or does homeshare only temporarily address people's housing need of a roof over one's head?

This chapter begins by looking at participants' reasons for homesharing and then moves on to examine a defining characteristic of participants' homeshares— insecurity. This section shows how insecurity impacts all aspects of participants' homeshares, from homemaking and home unmaking to feelings of home and overall experience of homesharing. Next, the chapter considers 'at homeness', questioning if feelings of at homeness can be achieved in homeshares and if this counters against feelings of precarity. This section first explores the previous living arrangements of younger homesharers and considers how this shapes how younger homesharers experience their homeshares. Then, central issues of privacy and belonging are examined in relation to both younger homesharer and householder experiences. This section analyses some homeshare-specific characteristics, such as the role of householder's families and increasing care needs for householders and shows how these can disrupt some normative values of home (Young, 1997). Overall, this chapter expands literature on homemaking and unmaking in austerity and extends literature which looks at anticipated and precarious futures. This chapter asks if homeshare, although positioned as an innovative crisis solution, actually adds to growing precarity in the UK.

6.1   **Future Homemaking**

While reasons for homesharing differ between householders and younger homesharers (discussed in turn below), all participants' motivations for homesharing were shaped around the

practicalities of having or keeping a roof over one's head. Householders generally wanted to receive some level of care while 'ageing in place' and younger homesharers were generally motivated to homeshare to save money on rent. However, it became clear through the interviews that participants' motivations for homesharing were not simply about what their homeshare could provide for them now, but also about what homeshare could help them to attain in the future. Participants' motivations for homesharing are shaped around attempts to make the future less precarious in the context of current precariousness.

Many younger homesharers expressed a desire to save up enough to buy a place of their own and were using homeshare as a way of helping to reach their goals of future homeownership. One such participant is Nadia, aged 41. Nadia lived with her ex-partner for several years, and on splitting with him, moved to a new city and started university. She now works as an engineer and has been homesharing with Gloria, aged 90, for four months. Nadia is using her time homesharing as a period to save financially for her aspiration of homeownership:

> 'It was very important for me to find an economical place for myself because I needed to save some money, or at least as much money as I can save and I came across this cheaper option. Some rooms are really cheap or even for freeish and I found out this charity [homeshare organisation] who are supporting or organising those sorts of rooms on a very famous website spareroom.com… my dream is having or buying my own flat one day, hopefully in [this city] and [I will] have got my own privacy or my own dreamland' (Nadia)

Other younger homesharers echoed Nadia's motivations and aspirations:

> 'Why I began homesharing? It was just financial, the situation to be honest. I obviously rent and [this city] is pretty expensive. Like the going rate is like £450 a month which is really expensive, well for me it is. So, I was just looking into cheaper alternatives, something that's more affordable for me and that was when I came across homesharing… I want to save to buy a place of my own, living on your own is just the best' (Violet)

> 'I started homesharing when I first moved to [this city] because obviously I was looking for somewhere to live, somewhere cheap to live and I came across homesharing which is £100 a month. Obviously, that's a lot cheaper than the average rent or what I was expecting so that's when I decided to call [homeshare organisation]… I intend on homesharing for a few years and to save up some money to get my own place' (Zaina)

'So, positives obviously it's cheap. You pay like a £100 a month to the charity [homeshare organisation] and then you get to live for free so that is definitely one of the main benefits and that's the reason I began looking into homeshare to begin with, just because it is so much cheaper than private rented accommodation… I would like my own house. I don't think I would want to live on my own, I feel like that would be a bit boring so maybe with a friend or a partner' (Daisy)

With the exception of Zaina, these participants were interviewed only a few months or weeks into their homeshares, showing that in coming to homeshare, younger homesharers have goals or aspirations of saving enough money on rent to be able to secure a home of their own in the future. In line with portrayals of homeshare as a housing crisis solution then (Clements, 2015; Homeshare UK, 2018c), these younger homesharers are joining homeshare to address their housing issues – affordability – and their housing goals – homeownership – which are currently unattainable.

In austere or precarious times, questions arise of how individuals' lives play out alongside imagined life courses, expectations and aspirations (Hall, 2019). Within the context of the UK's ongoing housing affordability crisis, the feasibility of homeownership for younger homesharers can be debated (Cribb *et al*, 2018). Yet despite this, these younger homesharers construct their future housing ideals as if unimpacted by austerity. They remain hopeful to achieve homeownership in the future and are using homesharing as a stepping-stone towards this goal. Thus, their imagined future homemaking remains in line with conventional life course developments, which are seen as simply delayed due to current financial hardships or wider housing affordability issues.

Anticipated future homemaking can serve as a coping mechanism for the everyday reality of austerity and precarity by providing future hopefulness (Hitchen, 2016). The hopeful expectations of these participants may help them to manage their current financial challenges, as Nadia's use of the word 'dream' suggests that her housing aspiration is perhaps more imaginary than attainable, despite homesharing to save money for this goal. Indeed, participants' references to future homeownership were sometimes expressed more as a distant ideal, rather than a planned achievement. Nevertheless, these participants have come to homeshare as a means out of future shared housing and as a way of addressing housing issues and goals.

But future homemaking was not just a feature of younger homesharers' stories. Householder participants were generally homesharing because they require some help around

the house and want to 'age in place'. Yet, many householders were aware that one day they may need to enter into residential care or may need a full-time carer and homeshare allowed them to prepare for this. For both younger homesharers and householders then, homeshare represents attempts to bring security to their futures, rather than precarity.

For instance, householder Blanche, aged 83, has recently lost her ability to walk and now uses a wheelchair. At the time of interview, Blanche had been homesharing with Violet, aged 35, for just seven weeks. Violet's tasks for Blanche are to get her food shopping, make her a snack three times a week and keep her house clean and tidy. Blanche remains attached to her home, which homeshare allows her to stay in while waiting for other care and housing options to become available:

> 'I love it, it's me. My house and the way it looks is just how its evolved and its all, it's not designed or planned as you can see, it has just evolved and I love that because everything is just part of me… I have thought about it [moving into a nearby retirement village] long and hard and actually they had a flat come up which is exactly what I want, it came onto the market and I went to see it a fortnight ago with my daughter, we got one of those taxis that you can push the wheelchair into and um I said I would like to buy it and I didn't get it because so many people wanted it' (Blanche)

Other householders echoed Blanche's narrative, although they had less of a set plan in terms of the future:

> 'I've very poor mobility, extremely poor mobility. I can only walk with like a walker or a rollator. I have a stairlift to go up and down the stairs. Going up or downstairs without it is almost impossible. I do manage to get out the front door and the back door but I have to go extremely slowly… my home is still my home very much and I feel quite protective of it, after all it has served me for, well I moved in in 1985 so it's been quite some time… I intend to homeshare until I need more care and then I will have to consider getting some carers' (Edith)

> 'I ought to have moved out long ago when I came sort of on my own [when my wife died], but I like it so much here that I wasn't able to move. I've lived in this place for 25 years now so I am quite fond of it… I'm 90 years old, as long as I can live in my own house, accompanied with a [co-home]sharer, I will continue, it suits me well. Clearly though I will eventually have to look into other options but that just depends how much help I need you know and when my physical condition deteriorates, and you know what they can help

me with or if they [other care options] are suitable… I am actually technically signed up

with a care organisation that I will get back to if I need more help' (Harold)

Despite deteriorating health or the need for more support, these participants want to remain in their own homes, which they feel passionate about and protective of. Householder participants had generally been living in their homes for an extended time period and in the face of increasing care needs, they use homesharing to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Blanche's referral to her home as 'part of me' shows the extent to which some householders view their homes as an extension of the self and thus are reluctant to move out, even if like Edith, householders develop mobility issues which hinder how easy it is to move around their home space.

Neoliberal ideals encourage the notion of taking responsibility for your own needs, as well as for your future needs (Himmelweit, 2014). Older people are encouraged to take control of their own housing and care provision, yet a lack of structured resource provision, linked to austere measures, can make care options less accessible or affordable (Grenier and Phillipson, 2020). These participants' narratives show homeshare being used as a transitional step from living completely independently to more full-time care. For householders then, homeshare is not only about planning for future homes, but also about acknowledging the changes that come with ageing. While remaining in their own homes provides biographical continuity for householders, they are concurrently experiencing health changes that embody elements of discontinuity and can represent precariousness. Thus, for householders, homeshares are not necessarily stable or secure destinations but can actually represent changing needs and changing life circumstances, which can be daunting and scary.

According to Grenier and Phillipson (2020, p. 25), later life is 'characterised as a phase in which individuals are trying to *minimize* difficult transitions – and therefore minimize or postpone precarity' and here, homeshare is being used as a method of trying to do so. As discussed in chapter four, we know that shared living can be used as a buffer to some precarious life events such as marital breakdown and unemployment (Glick and Hook, 2011). Here, householders are using homesharing as a method of dealing with, and preparing for further, increasing care needs and thus as an attempt to reduce precarity. Before homesharing, none of the householder participants had experienced non-kin shared living, so coming to homeshare for householders is about undergoing a new life-stage and about accepting changing needs. Furthermore, for both younger homesharers and householders, homeshare represents a method of helping to prepare for their futures, whether that be future hopeful homeownership or future increased care needs.

Therefore, homesharers use homeshare as an attempt to prevent future precarity, despite current precariousness.

6.2   Insecure Homeshare Homes

Although participants are homesharing to prevent future precarity, participants all had short-term rolling homeshare contracts of around six months to a year. Therefore, a key question remains as to whether homeshare can be used as a means of preparing for the future if homeshare is short-term or temporary. Moreover, does the short-term nature of homeshare make homesharers feel insecure? A common theme in participants' stories was the transience or insecurity of their homeshares. This was evident in narratives by homeshare match Irene, aged 83, and Hayley, aged 32, who have been homesharing together for one year. Hayley and Irene live in the countryside in a barn conversion and Hayley's tasks for Irene are to get her food shopping, take the bins out and to do odd jobs around the home. Like many householders, Irene, has come to acknowledge that potential future deteriorations in her health or mobility would mean that she moves on from homesharing to full-time care. Irene began homesharing because:

> 'I was finding things eventually more difficult to cope with as I got older and I am very much less mobile. I have arthritis in my knees and I have got a broken arm which is not healed so I'm limited with quite a lot of things that I can't do very well, for instance I can't fill up the dishwasher or empty it because then I'm leaning down and it makes my arm hurt. I mean it doesn't sound like hard work but it is, so I thought it [homeshare] might be a good arrangement to get some help' (Irene)

Irene is very open about the transient conditions of her homeshare to Hayley:

> 'I keep warning her [Hayley] every so often, that although she's nice and cosy up in her room upstairs, the whole thing will come to an end if I need more help. If I need full-time looking after I would want to turf her out because I would want to accommodate a live-in carer perhaps. It's not definitely, it's only a probability. So, I often say to Hayley, you realise that if I needed full-time help, we would want you to leave. So, she knows that' (Irene)

Irene's narrative shows that Irene's care needs will be prioritised over Hayley's housing needs. The frank way that Irene speaks about ending her homeshare and 'turfing' Hayley out highlights the potential lack of security that homeshare provides people with. Hayley commented on this:

'At any moment Irene could just be like 'no' and she has every right. It's her place, I'm here as a benefit to her. She doesn't really owe me anything and I think as soon as it got to a point where it wasn't suitable for her, that would be it, I'd be gone. I'd have to move out and find another place to live. So that is definitely a downside of it' (Hayley)

While Hayley is currently able to live in a location that she would not be able to without homesharing: 'I just really wanted to leave [my previous living arrangement] and live in the countryside and it kind of felt like this [homeshare] was the only way I'd be able to do that', her homeshare can end at any time, thus, her new home is not stable. For Hayley, it is not a question of *if* she will need to move out as soon as Irene's care needs increase, but when. Hayley's story therefore shows she acknowledges the precariousness of her homeshare: she accepts that Irene 'has every right' to make her leave whenever she needs to and she does not challenge the idea that her home is not stable or predetermined.

Hayley's narrative points to the assumed mobility of younger homesharers and younger people in the UK more generally. Younger homesharers are expected to be ready to leave their homeshare when they no longer suit the needs of their householder. In this sense, the housing trajectories of younger homesharers reflect younger people more broadly in the UK (McKee *et al*, 2017). Younger people's housing trajectories are generally shaped by transition, mobility and impermanence, and here Hayley expects hers to follow a similar suit. Homeshare therefore does not necessarily remove people from precarious housing situations or trajectories, even if this is a key motivator for joining a homeshare.

Moreover, while homeshare provides a cheaper and easier way of reaching Hayley's current housing goal (of countryside location), her story reveals the lack of certainty and security her homeshare provides her with – this housing 'goal' can be lost at any moment and without homeshare, Hayley would struggle to attain this goal. Rather than a housing 'solution', here, homeshare represents a short-term fix for Hayley to live in the countryside, not addressing wider issues such as the affordability of homes in certain locations (such as the countryside) which would actually be a solution for Hayley, but another method of normalising housing precarity to the extent it is accepted and unchallenged.

Likewise, homeshare also normalises precarity as accepted and unchallenged for householders. Irene spoke openly of her reliance on Hayley for household tasks, explaining that she feels lost without her support:

> 'When she [Hayley] was away for a week or so, it didn't fall to bits, but I did really. I did
> feel I didn't have anybody else to call to do these things that I need doing. Even though
> my daughters realise that I might need more help because of her being away. So, I don't
> know what I would do if she left. But my needs vary from one day to another, most of the
> time I can get my own meal, my lunch but sometimes I can't, I feel a bit helpless and
> hopeless and can't manage to do it, but most of the time I can. It depends on if I feel well,
> or if my arm hurts, or if my daughters are about. But presumably, as is normal of old age, I
> will eventually run out of possibilities I suppose. I don't know' (Irene)

As aforementioned, homeshare represents changing life circumstances and progressing care needs, and as Irene's quote highlights, limited options in regard to this. Irene's quote shows her accepting yet uneasy attitude to uncertain life circumstances – revealing homeshare as not buffering against the insecurity that comes with decreasing health and increasing care needs. Although Irene accepts that in the future she will most likely need more formal care, her story reveals she would feel insecure and precarious if her homeshare ended because she relies on Hayley to help her to live at home. Irene's words of 'I will eventually run out of possibilities' epitomises how older age can be a precarious time for people, regardless of homesharing. The contingencies in her narrative relate to her health, resources and life itself: *if* she is well enough, *if* her body allows and *if* she has available support. Moreover, homeshare does not necessarily remove people from uncertain situations or feelings of uncertainty. Neither Hayley nor Irene regard their homeshare as stable, thus homesharing does not necessarily provide a secure housing and care arrangement. This insecurity, coupled with the short-term nature of homesharing, indicates how homeshare can be seen as a method of further engraining precariousness for both older and younger people, rather than removing them from it (as initial motivations for homesharing intend).

Furthermore, here it is interesting to consider literature which examines household tenure and precarity (Bates *et al*, 2020; Colic-Peisker *et al*, 2015; James *et al*, 2020). Factors that are associated with housing precarity are typically related to non-homeownership tenure: housing unaffordability, pressure from a landlady to relocate and frequent moves between rental dwellings. These factors can mean that renting or other non-ownership arrangements are experienced as uncertain, unstable and insecure. As younger people are less likely to own their own homes than older people, younger people are more likely to be affected by these issues (Hoolachan and McKee, 2019). However, Irene's quote shows that even older homeowners can experience their living arrangements as insecure or uncertain. While Irene owns her home, she may not necessarily feel any more secure than Hayley – she faces changing health, increasing care needs and an uncertain future, as her words 'helpless' and 'hopeless' exemplify. Therefore, while

householders are homeowners and have the ability to homeshare, this does not mean that they are automatically removed from feelings of precariousness. Homeownership does not equate to a lack of precarity and likewise, homesharing does not equate to security or stability.

6.3   At Homeness

If homesharers do not feel secure in their homeshares and most homesharers have short-term contracts, does this impact how homesharers make and feel 'at home'? We know from literature into shared living that people in stranger shares (people who do not know each other before living together) generally experience shared living in a less positive light than those in friendly shares (people who know each other before living together) (Green and McCarthy 2015; Rugg *et al*, 2011). So how do homesharers feel about and relate to their homeshare homes? Does homesharing help people to gain access to a place where they can feel 'at home'? And if so, does this counter against the feelings of precarity caused by the transient nature of participants' homeshares?

6.3.1   Leaving Past Homes Behind

When expressing how they felt about their homes, a common thread among younger homesharers' stories was a sense of not enjoying their previous living arrangements, and this shaped how younger homesharers felt about their homeshare homes. For example, as aforementioned, Nadia has come to homeshare after splitting from her long-term partner whom she lived with. Although she only ever planned to homeshare for six months, she felt her homeshare provided her with a peaceful place to live, particularly in comparison to her previous living arrangement. When asked what her favourite living arrangement has been, Nadia replied:

> 'Um, none of them. Um, I like here. Yeah, I have got more peace in here I would say, or at least because I don't have a very good memory. I don't remember the painful days or things properly. When I was living with my ex, I really was feeling that home, that house was my home more or less. I had lots of stuff there. I had, yeah, so many dolls, things, silly things. I used to buy furniture I liked and eventually I left all of them behind. So definitely it was very belonged to ah but because of him, I don't know if I have to say was it my favourite place I was living, yes, at some point but no because I left there and that's why I am saying I have peace here' (Nadia)

Though Nadia has left her previous home physically, mentally, it has left her unsettled. Her story reflects geographic research that shows homes experienced as both home and un-home simultaneously (Baxter and Brickell, 2014; McCarthy, 2018). Homes are more than places to sleep but invoke feelings and memories that shape how 'at home' people feel. Moreover, the fact that younger homesharers used the past as a frame of reference for interpreting how they feel in their current homes, points to the temporality of homemaking and unmaking, highlighting home as a process in constant flux, rather than a destination. Other younger homesharers referenced the past when describing how they feel about their homeshares:

> 'I mean obviously the first meeting [with householder Amira] was very nice, we both really liked each other, and I really liked the feel of the house. It's a very calm and peaceful house and because I'd had a hard time living in my last flat, I thought that this would be a good opportunity… [Here with Amira] it's a safe place. I do feel like I have a nice home, I live in a nice place and I'm luckier than so many of my colleagues who live in like student accommodation… Moving back in with my family is not an option for me because they live in India so I am happy here because when I reflect back now [on my previous living arrangement] I was really unhappy there' (Anya)

> 'So originally I moved here to [this city] because I'm obviously a student at the uni and so I moved into the halls but I just didn't really like or settle into the student accommodation very well. I'm not one for partying and I didn't like when the other students I lived with were coming back at early hours in the morning, blasting music everywhere. I very much like being in a home environment so I started looking around and I found homeshare online and I thought well 'that's a great idea because I don't know who's coming and going in [student] halls' and it's just more like a home than the halls' (Lexi)

> 'Before this I lived in a shared house with some other working professionals but it was really, we didn't like have a living room or anything so we didn't socialise and it was quite like isolated. We [previous housemates] all just kind of stayed in our own rooms and kept ourselves to ourselves… I looked into other places to live before I moved here but I just couldn't find anything for my budget and after my last experience I wasn't sure if I wanted to live with other working professionals who I didn't know again… [At householder Jocelyn's] it's just like somewhere cosy that you can come back and like where you can relax' (Daisy)

These participants' homeshares may currently provide them with a safe place to live in contrast to their previous living arrangements, which highlights that it is possible to carve out somewhere homely within these wider confines. Thus, home unmaking and re-making are not necessarily a

negative experience associated with the loss of attachment but can also be about the opportunity to create new forms of home (Baxter and Brickell, 2014). While home unmaking can be painful and difficult, it can also be freeing and liberating. For instance, Nadia's quotes shows the peace she now feels in her homeshare with Gloria.

Evident across younger homesharers' stories then was a sense of moving away from unhappy homes, leaving their past homes behind and starting again in their homeshares. However, their stories suggest that they are coming to homeshare due to a lack of other housing choice (so here, homeshare was often positioned as the least-worst option). This may mean that younger homesharers accept the issues of their homeshare, such as transience and insecurity, as they prefer to be in a temporary place for now, rather than live in their previous arrangements. As above then, these quotes suggest that homeshare does not solve these participants' housing issues but just their immediate housing needs. So, can homeshare really be said to 'solve' the housing crisis when on an individual level it does not remove people from housing precarity? Are there any other issues with homeshare that homesharers accept due to a lack of other housing (or care) options?

6.3.2   Privacy

In coming to homeshare, participants are seeking some of Young's (1997) normative values of home which many younger homesharers lacked in their previous living arrangements. As detailed in chapter 4, Young (1997) describes normative values of home, such as individuation, safety, privacy and preservation. These essential elements make people feel 'at home'. For some participants, homeshare disrupted some of Young's normative values of home, in particular the value of privacy. One such participant is younger homesharer Violet, aged 35, who has been homesharing with Ruth, aged 90, for just under a year (at the time of interview, Violet was in her first homeshare with Ruth; she would later join her aforementioned homeshare with Blanche). Violet's tasks for Ruth were to make her a snack three times a week, buy her food shopping and keep the house clean and tidy. Like other younger homesharer participants, Violet felt that her current homeshare home was more enjoyable and comfortable than her previous living arrangement:

> 'It was so nice actually because I went from a place that didn't feel homely at all, like it was very cold, odd furniture, there was nothing on the walls or anything, 'til like this place, really homely and it was, I remember like it was winter, end of October or start of

November I think actually and the heating was on and all nice thick carpets and everything, so it felt really cosy and really warm' (Violet).

However, Violet explained that Ruth's daughter, Linda, constantly imposed on Violet's sense of privacy by entering her bedroom, despite the homeshare contract forbidding it. In reference to the photographs Violet took as part of the photo elicitation method (see figure 3), she expressed:

'Um, yeah, that's my bed. I took a picture of that because that was one of the things like when she [Linda] went into my room, she moved the bed and that was simply because, so I'd moved the bed because I'm allowed to do that because that is my room and she moved it and then lied and said cause she needed to get into the cupboards. But I pulled them up on that and said 'you don't need to move it to get into the cupboard because I go into that cupboard all the time'. So, she was caught out lying, so I reckon like she just moved it because she thought like "urgh that beds been moved and I want to know why its been moved" (Violet)

Figure 3   Violet's bed

Young (1997, p. 161) affirms that her normative values of home 'should be thought of as minimally accessible to all people'. Yet Violet lacks a sense of privacy and this impacts how 'at home' she feels in her homeshare. When asked if she feels more like a guest or a lodger rather than a homesharer following her story about Linda, Violet replied:

'I don't know because I have given you sort of different answers. I've said that I feel like I'm at home but then I also said that I can't be myself but I guess what I mean by that is that I feel like it's my home because like physically I can sort of like do what I want, you

know I can wash all my clothes here, and yes that always feels like a home to me for some reason when you can do your washing and like take ages in the shower. So, it feels like a home in that sense. But in that sort of emotional way, I don't feel I can say exactly what I want. So, honestly, I feel like, I don't know, I feel I'm a bit like a lodger, yeah cause there are rules I've had to stick to about like cleaning to certain standards that kind of thing as well as Linda always going in my room' (Violet)

Violet's narrative shows she appeared confused about how 'at home' she feels. Her homeshare feels like a home in a physical sense as a place to sleep, wash and do laundry, but she does not feel emotionally connected to her home, does not feel able to fully express herself and her sense of personal privacy is imposed upon. Lack of privacy can be seen to unmake homes through disrupting one's ability to feel at home. Young (1997, p. 162) writes that 'a person does not have a place of her own and things of her own if anyone can have access to them. To own a space is to have autonomy over admission to the space and its contents'. Violet feels under Linda's surveillance and this undermines her sense of privacy and thus her feeling of 'home'.

A significant point to make here is that this lack of privacy eventually caused Violet to leave her homeshare (Violet later began a homeshare with householder Blanche), showing that while issues of transience or insecurity may be accepted in participants' homeshares, issues such as a lack of personal privacy may not. Moreover, Violet's story suggests that psychosocial factors that make places feel unhomely are more important than physical factors, such as nice carpets and warm housing, that make places feel homely. Furthermore, while homeshare ensures that home in terms of a physical place to sleep is provided, it does not necessarily provide a secure place to feel 'at home' or does not automatically provide access to Young's normative values of home. Thus, even in longer-term homeshares of over a year, such as Violet and Ruth's, precarity can be a feature of how participants relate to their home and homesharers can feel unsettled if the 'home' they live in is not experienced as 'home'.

Further, an important feature of privacy and of feeling 'at home' is not simply freedom from other's company but is also the ability to foster relationships away from the presence of others (King, 2004). For younger homesharers, only having their bedrooms as a private space means that they may struggle to host friends, particularly if their bedrooms are small:

'Sometimes, I want to, for example, invite my friends or my colleagues over, or have a small party, but I cannot. Of course, Gloria always says 'bring your friends, blah, blah', but if we want to spend some time in the living room she would be involved as well so we

don't have privacy. Here [Nadia's bedroom] is tiny, apart from the chair, my friends would
have to fit on the [single] bed, so again um there is no point inviting my friends here'
(Nadia)

'In terms of inviting people to the house, stuff like that, it's not something he
[householder] likes so that's also something… The hardest thing is not having my friends
in the house, not being able to say, 'yeah sure come over' but my friends know my
housing situation, they know that it's not that easy for me to say, 'yeah sure come'. But
for dating it's really hard because it complicates things as you could probably guess, I
would not feel comfortable inviting a date over. So, it's these kind of things that just
disrupt my freedom I feel' (Ahmed)

'Friends aren't allowed to come over really, but you know I'm sure I could ask
[householder] Amira and she would say yes fine, but I just feel it's a bit, like she would say
yes and I could have a friend over perhaps but I would just find it easier to meet friends in
a café or outside rather than to bring them here, especially if I want to meet with more
than one of my friends' (Anya)

Privacy is about more than a spatial separation from others, it also refers to psychological space
and a freedom to do as one pleases (King, 2004). These quotes suggests that for younger
homesharers, homeshares may be a barrier to social interaction with friends or romantic
partners, at least in the home space. Indeed, many homesharers must pre-determine the rules for
overnight stays and visits with friends outside of the house in their homeshare contracts (see
appendix A), which may impact on weekends away and time spent with friends and family. This
appears contradictory to portrayals of homeshare by Homeshare UK (n.d.a) as 'sociable
accommodation' because while homesharing may form a bond between co-homesharers
(examined in the next chapter), it may inadvertently cause other issues for homesharers' social
networks. Moreover, these participants' quotes suggest a lack of control that younger
homesharers can feel in terms of who has access to their homes, which may represent a wider
lack of choice in terms of housing provision. But what about these issues for householders? The
next section considers this.

6.3.3   Belonging

Lack of control was not just a feature of younger homesharers' stories. Some of the householder
participants had formal carers visit them multiple times a day. With carers coming and going
throughout the day and living with a 'relative stranger' at the beginning of their homeshare,
homesharing is also about adapting to one's changing circumstances. This was expressed by

householder Jocelyn, aged 65, who has multiple sclerosis (MS). Jocelyn is a wheelchair user and has carers come in multiple times a day to help her bathe, dress and eat. She has lived in her home for six years and it has been modified to suit her needs, with her garage converted into her bedroom, her utility room converted into a downstairs bathroom and an automatic front door. Her home is the first home she has lived in alone and the modifications to her home were a parting gift from her ex-husband who is an architect. Jocelyn was homesharing because she wanted more company around the house and the security of having someone else in the house with her at night. At the time of her first interview, Jocelyn was in-between homeshares. Her previous co-homesharer had moved out six months previously and Jocelyn was awaiting her new co-homesharer, Daisy, who was due to move in in a few weeks' time. Indifference seemed to shape Jocelyn's homeshare narrative and experiences of home. When asked if she feels content in her home, she replied:

> 'No, I'm resigned here I suppose. I'm a bit somewhat fed up with everything really. Just hacking on. It's just somewhere to stay really, I don't know if I think of it as my home really. I'm not really sentimental about things. It's just a place where I stay. Some things work for me, like the [automatic] front door, others like the [lack of space in the] kitchen, well frustrating is a polite way of saying it, put it that way' (Jocelyn)

Feelings of at-homeness arise through the experience of belonging (Lawson, 2018). In contrast to some other householders who felt strong attachment to their homes, Jocelyn does not feel a strong sense of belonging in her home, despite owning it, decorating it to her taste and modifying it slightly to suit her needs. In fact, when describing the emotions different rooms evoke on the emotion map (see figure 4), Jocelyn used the word 'frustrating' in reference to her kitchen in which she struggles to turn her wheelchair around and when asked if any other rooms evoke any emotions she replied: 'no, I suppose I'm just resigned to it all really'.
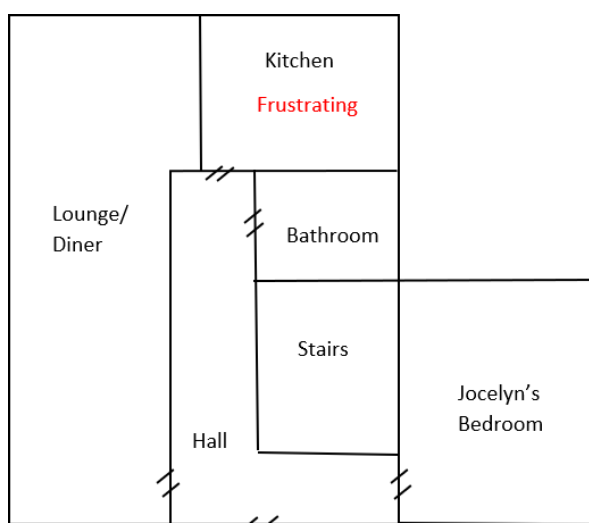

Figure 4   Jocelyn's emotion map

Van Lanen (2020, p. 14) writes that 'home is unmade as the past resurfaces in the present'. For Jocelyn, her home is a reminder of her decreasing mobility and therefore decreasing ability to easily access and use parts of her home. Thus, Jocelyn's home embodies her declining health and past painful relationships:

> 'See my ex-husband was an architect and so the modifications he made to this house were his way of saying, well I don't know, goodbye to me I suppose. Both of our sons left [this city] a long time ago, they have been back a few times over the years like when they finished university, they lived back with us in our old [previous] house but not for while have they lived here in [this city]. But anyway, he [ex-husband] helped me convert it [the house] and he lives in [a different city] now with that bitch from his office he left me for' (Jocelyn).

While previous homes (emotionally and physically) are unmade in coming to homeshare, for householders, the sense of moving on from unhappy homes can be more difficult. Homes in older age are often associated with identity and memory (Andrews and Phillips, 2004; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). Yet that does not necessarily mean that householders' homes are places of comfort for householders as they can evoke unhappy memories and can feel inescapable. While householders are choosing to 'age in place' and are using homeshare to allow them to do so, homesharing may be one of their only viable housing or care options. Thus, homeshare is not necessarily just about 'the mutual benefits of shared living' (Share My Home, n.d.) as some homeshare organisations portray, and one should not assume that because people are homesharing, they feel attached to their homes or do not experience precarity through housing or other circumstance (such as age, disability and access to resources). Moreover, homeshare does not necessarily provide either younger homesharers or householders with a sense of belonging to their homes, sometimes providing merely a 'place to stay' (Jocelyn).

That is not to say that homesharers cannot attain any positive qualities of home, but to highlight that homesharing has some specific characteristics that differ from other types of shared living which also need to be considered, for instance, the role of householder's family for younger homesharers and progressing care needs for householders. As these participants' stories have shown, these homeshare-specific issues may make it more difficult for homesharers to feel 'at home' in their homeshares, which can make homeshare homes feel unsecure and more precarious. Moreover, to portray homeshare as 'high-quality, affordable accommodation' (Homeshare UK, n.d.b) and as allowing 'older and vulnerable people to stay in their homes for

longer' (ibid) romanticises the lived experiences of homesharers and simplifies how home is made, unmade, hoped and felt in the context of precarity.

6.4   Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that participants' motivations for homesharing, while about accessing cheaper housing and care now, are also shaped around future homemaking and around planning for the future. Homeshare is therefore used as a means of buffering against future precarity – saving up money to buy a house or getting care while 'ageing in place' before further care needs progress. However, this chapter has shown that participants' homeshares are short-term and transient, thus homeshare does not necessarily remove people from current or future precariousness. Homeshare therefore appears more of a short-term fix for current housing and care needs, a far cry from a 'housing crisis solution' but rather another stage in a precarious housing cycle (Homeshare UK, 2018c). Moreover, this chapter expands research into everyday precarity, highlighting ways in which precarity is embedded into everyday life decisions and experiences and revealing the role of precarity in anticipated future homemaking.

This chapter also opens up debates surrounding at homeness and adds to literature examining homemaking and unmaking in precarious situations. The chapter demonstrates that home is not something that should be oversimplified. Through homesharing, younger homesharers are gaining access to a cheaper place to live and householders are able to 'age in place', but home is not as simple as a roof over one's head. Creating home in homeshares incorporates the unmaking of previous homes (which can be both liberating and painful) and seeking some of the normative values of home (Young, 1997). Feeling 'at home' is more complex than policy or homeshare portrayals presume, and by overlooking what home means to homesharers and how home is created, claims that homeshare addresses people's housing needs and issues are romanticised.

Chapter 7   **Homeshare Relationships**

How 'at home' one feels is not only influenced by one's housing arrangement, but also by one's relationships with the people they live with. For homesharers, whose living arrangements depend on them constructing a mutually beneficial relationship with their co-homesharer, this may be of even more importance. Homeshare organisations claim that homesharers establish 'genuine' and 'lasting friendships' with their co-homesharers and that these relationships, and the care tasks that shape them, go some way towards solving the UK's loneliness and care crises (Lightshare, n.d.a; Share My Home, n.d.). However, we know from the previous chapter that homeshares are often short-term and transient. Using austerity as its backdrop and precarity as its lens, this chapter therefore examines the relationships between co-homesharers. The chapter addresses key questions such as, can these friendships counter against feelings of precarity or are these relationships also precarious because they are temporary? The chapter explores how homesharers narrate and construct their relationships with their co-homesharer and their householder's family (for younger homesharers). I show how focusing on homeshare relationships provides an original opportunity for understanding how everyday relationships interweave with austerity and precarity.

The chapter is divided into five sections. First, I look at the family-like relationships of co-homesharers and consider how and why co-homesharers develop this type of relationship in a relatively short period of time. In this section, I also explore the role of homeshare in people's wider social networks. The chapter then moves on to analyse the care involved in these relationships, considering notions of caring *for*, caring *about* and interdependence to understand how homeshare relationships are experienced. Then, I investigate how differences between co-homesharers in terms of age and race can shape their relationships, providing ground for co-homesharers to bond over during times of need. This is followed by an examination of conflict within homeshares, exploring the unequal and precarious nature of homeshare relationships and the impact of this on homesharers. The chapter concludes by looking at the fleeting nature of homeshare relationships and considers what this means in terms of the support that they provide. Overall, the chapter reveals the benefits and fragilities of homeshare relationships and considers how these relationships shape the precarious nature of homesharing. Furthermore, the chapter broadens thinking around the formation of new relationships and intimacies across difference and in a failing care system, highlighting how precarity is interwoven into everyday relationships.

7.1 Fictive Kinship

Despite the temporary and short-term nature of most homeshare matches, many participants spoke of how they had formed close bonds with their co-homesharers and came to view them as family-like members. In using the language of family, people convey the nature of their relationship, for instance referring to friends as siblings conveys a closer and stronger relationship and referring to siblings as friends conveys the voluntary closeness of the relationship (Edwards *et al*, 2006). Many participants formed fictive kin by speaking of their co-homesharer as a family-like member, known as kin reinterpretation (Allen *et al*, 2011; Braithwaite *et al*, 2010). By reconstructing their social support networks to include each other as fictive kin, participants attempted to secure a sense of closeness and a mutual reliance, therefore providing a stronger basis for their homeshare relationship. In reference to their co-homesharers, these participants explained:

> 'Obviously we have different lifestyles really but we adapt and share and discuss, debate and decide what is best for both of us. It is a healthy relationship, I'm very fortunate, very blessed. What I find most beautiful about [homeshare] is that Freya and I are like a family... I would be lost without her' (Edith, householder – in current homeshare for one year)

> 'It's nice to have somebody and you know if you wanted to talk to somebody she's there and as I say she is a very nice person. She'll come down and she will sit with me for maybe half an hour and we will just have a talk... Although she is 32 and I am 75, we get on very well as though we are sisters, even though I am old enough to be her grandmother actually' (Carol, householder – in current homeshare for four months)

> 'He's not just a friend you know, he's more than that, I really care about him as a father. I have this thought in my head 'I'm not gonna go out, I don't want to take risks with this virus' because if it was your father in his place, you won't be happy that someone is taking risks. So, this kind of stuff makes me feel that he's more than a friend, you know in terms of spending so much time together and being responsible for each other, these sort of things make it so that he means more to me' (Ahmed, younger homesharer – in current homeshare for one year)

> 'With Raegan it was just ideal because you had your best friend there, you had your own space, you could come together and watch tv, you would eat dinner or lunch together, you could have a chat, you could have a cup of tea, you could do whatever you wanted so

she did become like part of my family by the end of it' (Lexi, younger homesharer – in homeshare with Raegan for five months)

In austere times, social support networks become more important because state service withdrawal means that more people look to and rely on their informal networks for everyday care and support (Hall, 2019; Hill *et al*, 2021). Do homesharers therefore turn to each other due to a lack of other support networks? Kin reinterpretation is often used as a way of adapting to changing family ties and structures (Allen *et al*, 2011). Particularly for participants living in different countries or cities to their own families, their co-homesharers took the role of grand/parent or grand/child, as well as friends. For these participants, not only have they made a 'home away from home', but they have also created a 'family away from family', which highlights the importance many homesharers place on their relationship with their co-homesharer and the value they place on having family-like relationships.

One match who especially valued the kin-like relationship between each other is younger homesharer Hayley and householder Irene. As explained in the previous chapter, Hayley moved to the UK seven years ago and has been homesharing with Irene for one year. When asked about their relationship with each other, they replied:

'It's just a nice added like significant relationship in your life. Like I said, I don't have family in the UK, I also don't have grandparents anymore, so Irene does kind of feel like a grandmother to me which is nice, so I think that family sort of feeling is important to me. And obviously its [homeshare] a nice thing to do, if you have the capacity to do it, to help someone, you know, to do something for someone that they can't do on their own, it's a nice thing to do and like I said, you gain that relationship' (Hayley)

'She does seem like family to me. Yes, she is like a granddaughter I suppose. I mean I trust her with my house, all the things and my belongings inside it, she has her own key and run of the house when I'm not in. She gets on very well with the cat and she's here for me if I need her so she is like family in that way yeah… I can depend on her and there are things which are her full responsibility for instance the recycling, so in that way she is like a granddaughter you could say' (Irene)

Here, both Hayley and Irene explain that they regard each other as a family member yet when describing their living arrangements, discussed in the previous chapter, they felt insecure and precarious. Can fictive kinship occur in situations of transience and insecurity? According to Allen *et al* (2011) people use kin reinterpretation as a method of ensuring a sense of companionship

and interdependence. Here, fictive kinship can be seen as a coping strategy used by homesharers to counter against the insecurity or precarity often involved in homesharing. In using fictive kinship, participants are emphasising a sense of closeness and mutual reliance, which can help strengthen interpersonal bonds and thus promote feelings of security. Thus, in line with homeshare portrayals, homesharing can provide a caring support network between co-homesharers, which could improve the social wellbeing of homesharers (Homeshare UK, 2018c).

In fact, participants often saw their kin-like relationship as a source of pride and in using the language of kin, they convey the message that this relationship 'works' as a family relationship and thus counters against ideas of homesharing as inorganic, abnormal or something only for lonely people. This reflects Finch's (2007) concept of display which builds on Morgan's concept of 'doing family' (discussed in chapter 3). This concept explains how people present 'family' to those not included as their family, often to display to the outside world that their family conforms to wider hegemonic and normative notions of what family is (James and Curtis, 2010). Moreover, in creating family-like formations, participants attempt to make their relationship with their co-homesharer seem normal, a type of relationship that is common within other households, even if their household is unusual in that it is underwritten by a contract and shaped by care tasks. Therefore, in attempting to normalise their living arrangements, participants gain a sense of security and belonging even if their households themselves may be insecure and transient.

Yet, forging new intimacies and relationships was not limited to the younger homesharers and householders, but also stretched to the families of householders. For some householders, their children were central in deciding that homesharing is needed, seeking out homeshare, determining if the potential match is suitable and in ensuring that the match is going well. Through the interviews, it became clear that the families of householders not only played a key role in participants' homeshares but also used kin conversion.

For younger homesharer Anya, her householder Amira's family were pivotal in her final decision to join a homeshare. Anya, aged 35, is a final year PhD student whose funding is about to run out. She joined a homeshare with Amira, aged 92, because she was seeking cheap accommodation. Amira is mobile and although she does not require any formal care, she began homesharing because she requires some assistance around the house. Anya's tasks for Amira are watering her plants, getting the weekly food shop and cooking for her three times a week. Anya was informed by her contact at her homeshare organisation of Amira's strict household rules and Amira's family, who have experienced these for themselves, were supportive and kind to her. The advice they have given her has helped Anya to cope with Amira and feel more supported when adjusting to Amira's high cleanliness standards:

'They're [Amira's family] very nice, they are very supportive of me and they keep telling me that you know, she's [Amira] a bit of a difficult lady so you know, they keep telling me that, they support me a lot… On the second meeting [with Amira] her full family were here, and when I met them then I realised 'this is it'. Her family is one of the main reasons I decided to go through with homesharing because they are very nice to me… They treat me like a, they don't treat me like an outsider, they treat me like a family member and make me feel included in things' (Anya)

Here, the family of a householder regard a younger homesharer as a family member; they share an understanding with Anya of how to look after Amira and they support Anya in many ways, such as paying for her to spend a night in a hotel if Amira accidentally locks her out and spending Christmas at their home with Anya. The family of Amira, as well as the families of other householder participants such as Irene, have begun to include the younger homesharers in as part of their families, forming close bonds with them, usually through an understanding that providing informal care for their parents/householder can be difficult at times.

Moreover, these participants' stories reflect sociological work on family practices and intimate lives where there has been a notable shift away from ideas that care and intimacy are limited only to 'the' biological family (Finch, 2007; Morgan, 2011; Smart, 2007). The notion of 'families of choice' is depicted in the participants' stories, highlighting how in times of need, homesharing can provide beneficial and supportive connections. Further, even householder participants, such as Carol and Irene, who have close relationships with their adult children both geographically and emotionally, regard their co-homesharer as their kin. Thus, the presence of adult children, or householders' families, does not prevent participants from reshaping close bonds with their co-homesharers to functional and meaningful kinship ties. Indeed, as Anya's story shows, the householders' families were also included in these wider kin-like connections. Therefore, homesharing has the potential to reform family dynamics, allowing non-kin to make the step from 'outsider' to 'insider' and generating new relationships not only between younger homesharers and householders but a wider network of individuals. In line with portrayals of homeshare as a loneliness crisis solution then, homeshare can represent a space of connection where supportive relationships are created and a sense of inclusion is formed (Homeshare UK, 2018c).

7.2   Caring Relationships

Furthermore, in an austere and perhaps insecure time, homesharing can help people to develop a beneficial social network, providing feelings of comfort, closeness and security. But how are these relationships experienced? For instance, do co-homesharers care *for* or care *about* each other? (As discussed in chapter three, caring *about* refers to a feeling of concern for others, whereas caring *for* refers to care tasks or activities). And how is interdependency experienced in co-homesharer relationships? This section examines the intricacies of co-homesharer relationships, with the aim of further understanding the role that they play in homesharers' social networks and support systems, and thus how they shape feelings of precariousness for homesharers.

At the time of interview, Anya and Amira had been homesharing together for just two and a half months. Despite this short time period, both Anya and Amira expressed that they care *about* each other, rather than just caring *for* each other:

> 'I care very much about Amira. I'm going through a phase in my life where I have anxiety and depression issues that seem to have suddenly sprung up and she's been a really big support and she's very concerned as well about my wellbeing you know, she keeps telling me to go and work you know… I do talk to her about things, I feel like she's more like a friend and I'm very glad to have her in my life' (Anya)

> 'Yeah, I do care about her a lot. I always ask her, for instance, if she wants to talk about things, about what's on her mind or what's getting her down and I even put her in contact with a friend's son who is a psychoanalyst to help her. She knows that I am always available to listen to her worries, well I'm sure she knows that' (Amira)

While homeshare is based on the premise of younger people providing support for an older person, Anya and Amira's story shows that the care involved in homesharing is more complex than this. Co-homesharers can come to care *about* each other as well as caring *for* each other and caring *for* is not just the premise of younger homesharers. Across social sciences literature, scholars argue against notions of care as uni-directional support from younger caregiver to older care-receiver (Thompson, 2013). Indeed, chapter 3 discussed some central debates in care ethics literature whereby 'doing good care' also requires the care receiver's involvement and contribution to the process (Kittay, 2001; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Homesharing too challenges the view of older people as passive recipients of care. As the above quotes demonstrate, the householders in this thesis were also care-providers to their younger homesharers, although Anya provides Amira with more practical care (in terms of household tasks) and Amira provides Anya with more emotional care. Therefore, their relationship is characterised by a level of interdependency. Anya describes her dependency on Amira as much as Amira's dependency on her. When asked if she feels dependent or independent on Amira, Anya replied:

'Dependent, I do feel that she really cares for me and, I don't really feel *that* dependent, but I do feel like there's an elderly figure in the house, like that you know, like I'm supported in some way yeah... Because of her [Amira's] physical frailties, she has to depend on me for certain things like I water her plants, that's one thing I do for her, water her indoor plants because she cannot carry much weight in her hands so she cannot carry the watering can and so I do that every Sunday for her. Also, sometimes she has to carry some weight of clothes up to her room and she cannot carry it, so I do that for her. I wouldn't say that you know, she is dependent, but she is because of her physical limitations yeah' (Anya)

Amira echoed Anya:

'We are both dependent and independent in our own ways. She cooks for me, she waters all my plants once a week and she goes to the shops for me when I need something. In return I provide her with her own room upstairs' (Amira)

Co-homesharers have different needs at different times, often due to their various life stages (for instance lack of money or deteriorating health) and are likely to be homesharing for different reasons (for instance, care or housing provision). Yet Anya's quote points to the reciprocal and interdependent nature of homesharing. Her story shows the (albeit different) needs of each homesharer and reveals how they both provide and receive integral care to and from each other, even in the face of deteriorating health and difficult life stages. Thus, although they were motivated by economic and practical reasons to join a homeshare, Anya and Amira have formed a friendship based on reciprocity and their shared desire for their homeshare to 'work'.

Furthermore, the interdependency involved in co-homesharer relationships can break down barriers between assumed younger caregivers and older care-receivers, providing a supportive, reliable and caring relationship in challenging times. According to Bowlby (2011), reductions in the welfare state and the provision of public services may increase the salience of non-kin relationships in providing informal care and support. Bowlby studied the role of friendships in providing care and support amidst a backdrop of neoliberalism and austerity and found friendships to be vital in the provision of support. Anya and Amira's narrative shows that homeshare can provide the opportunity to create strong caring relationships with non-kin, demonstrating that it is possible to create networks of care with non-kin in precarious times. Co-homesharer relationships differ from the non-kin relationships in Bowlby's (2011) research however, because they are also intergenerational non-kin relationships. But how do homesharers

view the age differences between themselves and their co-homesharers? And do their age differences impact on the care they both provide and receive? The next section focuses on the differences between co-homesharers and considers how these influence co-homesharer relationships.

7.3   Relationships of Difference

We know from chapter 2 that older people and younger people are often pitted against each other in the media (Bristow, 2019). Intergenerational inequity is an emerging and defining contemporary issue and narratives of 'generations in conflict' are often used to conceal government failings in issues such as housing supply shortages (Christophers, 2018). With this in mind, it is imperative to examine the age differences (and other differences) between co-homesharers and the role that this plays in their relationships. Contrastingly to media portrayals, for Anya and Amira, their age gap plays an important and valuable role in their relationship:

> 'It's lovely having a young soul here with me, it does brighten things up. I showed her the way I like things and she responded very very well indeed. She's a very nice person. She's younger than my oldest grandchild you know' (Amira)

> 'I have opened up more to her [Amira] than I would to anyone my age and she's a very well-read experienced person… Amira has been very supportive and she knows about all my problems so I share a lot of things with her which I hadn't done with my [previous] age group flat mates so it is a very novel thing that I trust her more than people who are my age group I would say' (Amira)

Other participants also explained that they found the age difference between themselves and their co-homesharer beneficial:

> 'It is just nice having an older person in your life, like you know that they will like be at home for you when you get home from work or when you're out, and I know that she has read loads and knows so much stuff about like everything. So like I feel she's got a lot of wisdom which I really like and which I'm drawn to and we just love to natter about anything really' (Zaina, younger homesharer)

> 'Well, she's (co-homesharer) a lot younger you see so she is also teaching me how to do things like I've got a computer, I've got a keyboard, I've got a smart phone and I've got a printer. I've got all these things and don't really know how to use them and she knows how to and she is teaching me' (Carol, householder)

> 'Older people don't judge you, you know a lot of the younger generation judge you by how you talk, what you wear, you know, what you say, whereas they [older people] don't really care, as long as someone's there um you know, ready to sit and chat with them, give them a bit of time, sit and listen to music, you know' (Miranda, younger homesharer)

Literature examining ageism or generational differences typically explores the judgement of younger people on older people (Ayalon and Tesch-Römer, 2018; Crowley, 2005; Palmore, 2003). However, younger homesharer Miranda expressed a sense of security in living with someone of an older age group. The close co-homesharer friendships developed by many participants in spite of the age differences between them and their co-homesharers suggests that homesharing can transcend commonplace ideas about age divisions. Thus, support and care are not limited to kin or to people who are similar ages but can also be characteristics of co-homesharer relationships.

Yet co-homesharer relationships were not only marked by differences of age, but also involved differences in wealth, health, race and nationality. For example, younger homesharer Ahmed, aged 35, moved to the UK six years ago[6] and has been homesharing with Harold, aged 90, for one year. Ahmed cooks for Harold four to five times a week, watches TV with him on an evening and does the weekly food shop. Unlike the other participants, their homeshare began during the outbreak of COVID-19 and as Ahmed is working from home to finish his master's degree, they have spent most of their time together in their home during their homeshare. Ahmed explained that without his homeshare, he would not have necessarily mixed with someone like Harold:

> 'I can say that it's nice to stay with someone that he or she is mature and like sometime, I won't like meet some people like Harold in his age and get some experience from people like him, it's not something I would have in normal days or situation because my life circles tends to be different. So being with Harold all that time, I mean sometimes we have discussions about his past, I ask him, especially because I'm not from the UK, I was eager to stay with someone from the UK, so he helped me to understand the country more which makes me feel more settled or secure here, he gave me some advice from his own rich experience which has been really helpful and interesting. So, this kind of stuff I don't think I would have if I continued my [previous] daily life, like when I was living with

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[6] Ahmed asked for his nationality not to be disclosed.

> young people and people from my age and the social life I used to have with people who
> are young and immature so I feel it's a big difference' (Ahmed)

Homeshare therefore represents a method of intergenerational contact that counters against narratives of 'generations in conflict'. Ahmed specifically wanted to homeshare with a UK native so that he could learn more about the country and he appreciates the age difference between himself and Harold, finding benefit in living with a 'mature' older person. His story reveals that homesharers can forge new relationships through differences of age and through the practise of giving and receiving care. Further, his story shows that age differences between co-homesharers can also be raced differences, and that these differences can provide a ground for co-homesharers to bond over.

According to Askins (2015), meaningful encounters of difference occur where people recognise simultaneous similarities and develop new relationships that shift pre-existing stereotypes. Moreover, for some participants, homeshare represents a unique space where differences of age, race, nationality and socio-economic position are encountered. Through living together and caring for each other, homeshare can therefore provide an opportunity to break out of fixed patterns of interaction and develop valuable relationships with people from different social groups or life stages, providing 'companionship and bringing different generations together', as portrayals of homeshare claim (HL Deb 10 Oct 2018). Homeshare relationships thus have the potential to shift care and intimacy beyond biological kinship and to forge new relationships that not only transcend difference but are formed through and because of difference. In uncertain times or in unstable homeshares, the relationships that can develop between co-homesharers can therefore provide a support network which can help to counter against feelings of precariousness.

7.4   Conflict

Homeshare can represent a method of bringing generations and people of difference together in a way that can provide a supportive relationship, even if these people are going through difficult or uncertain times. However, the relationships between co-homesharers (and wider families) were not without their difficulties. Conflict between co-homesharers was also a key theme across participants' stories and this shaped how secure people felt in their homeshares. The following sections delineate participants' stories surrounding the shortcomings of their co-homesharer relationships and how this interweaves with precarity for homesharers.

7.4.1   Unequal Relationships

Unlike other shared living arrangements whereby co-residents share ownership or rental costs of the property, homeshares involve one homeowner and one lodger, and this can mark an unequal relationship between co-homesharers. While as shown above, homeshare can provide a platform for forging connections through differences, the differences between householders and younger homesharers could also create conflict. These issues can become more apparent where the householders' families are involved as this can make co-homesharer relationships feel unequal. For instance, as discussed in the previous chapter, younger homesharer Violet felt her personal privacy was being imposed upon by her householder's daughter Linda. Violet's tasks for her householder Ruth were to keep the house clean and tidy, buy her food shopping and make her a snack three times a week. During the interview, Violet expressed that:

> 'I'm honestly looking to move out because of her [Linda], she goes from room to room just like looking for dust, that kind of thing… like Ruth is more laid back but I also have to please Linda, which is literally impossible… all she can do is moan about dust and this little thing and that little thing and so I overheard her talking about me, saying like 'she [Violet] is not worth the money, she has to go'. So, like I fucking lost it. I was just like 'well if you think you can get better value for money elsewhere fucking do that' (Violet)

The concept of homesharing is based on a form of equal reciprocity – the older person provides the house, and the younger person provides the care. However, this chapter has shown that the care and reciprocity involved in homesharing is more complex than this. Furthermore, Violet feels that Linda does not regard her provision of care tasks for Ruth as equal to Ruth's provision of a room for Violet. Because of this, Violet felt that Linda had greater expectations of Violet and could play vigilante on whether she had adequately completed her homeshare chores. Thus, Violet expressed that she does not only need to please Ruth but must also please Linda, which emphasises an inequality in the relationship between co-homesharers. Not only does this narrative speak to wider issues about the low value placed on care work within society (Himmelweit, 2014), discussed further in the next chapter, it reveals how the differing positions of each homesharer and the involvement of the families of householders has the potential to create an unequal relationship between co-homesharers, highlighting the precarious nature of homeshares.

    This chapter has previously shown that the involvement of the householder's families can be beneficial to homeshares, for instance Amira's family have helped Anya to learn how to cope

with Amira's needs and to feel more settled in her homeshare. However, in the case of Violet, the involvement of the householder's family can actually be detrimental to people's homeshares. When the householders' families are involved, the relationship between co-homesharers is not two-way but triangular; between the younger homesharer, the householder and the householder's family. Negotiation of the younger homesharers' tasks and other elements of the homeshare therefore takes place not only between co-homesharers, but between this wider network of people and this can place strain on co-homesharer relationships.

Homeshares depends on co-homesharers constructing a mutually beneficial relationship. If this relationship is not felt to serve one's needs, then homesharers risk their household breaking down entirely, one homesharer leaving and the cessation of housing or care provision for those involved. Thus, the fact that homeshares are dependent on a working relationship between co-homesharers makes homesharers' housing and care provision unstable and precarious. Where householder's families are involved and this makes homeshares feel unbalanced for younger homesharers, this can contribute to them experiencing their homeshares as precarious and uncertain. Indeed, for Violet, the involvement of Ruth made her homeshare feel unbalanced and eventually led to the breakdown in her homeshare.

7.4.2 Power Struggles

Power struggles between co-homesharers can therefore lead to the breakdown of homeshares. Clark (2017) writes that an important aspect of shared living is household members having the same expectations of each other. Where these expectations do not match, conflict between household members will likely arise. Thus, Heath (2004) posits that effective communication skills are vital to ensure similar expectations and to uphold an effectively functioning household. While homesharing is underwritten by a contract stating the chores that the younger homesharer must perform each week, some participants still had different expectations from their co-homesharer about certain aspects of their homeshare. The degree of closeness between themselves and their co-homesharer, the amount of time co-homesharers spend together and the standards of the chores completed were all elements that participants could differ on and that could cause conflict between co-homesharers.

As aforementioned in the previous chapter, at the time of interview, householder Blanche had been homesharing with younger homesharer Violet for just seven weeks (Violet had eventually left her previous homeshare with Ruth). But rather than the honeymoon period that Violet said occurred with Ruth, Blanche and Violet have had many disagreements, largely concerning the quality of the tasks Violet does for Blanche. Violet's tasks consist of cleaning the

house, getting the food shopping, making Blanche a snack three times a week and closing the curtains for Blanche at night. Despite confrontation about this, Blanche feels Violet does not complete these tasks properly or often enough and as a result, a friendship between them has not developed:

> 'She's a terrible cook. I don't ask her to cook, I ask her if she could do me some beans on toast, she can't really go wrong. Yes, she can. She poured olive oil onto the bread and I just thought [shakes head], she hasn't got a clue. I asked her if she could close the blinds because it got dark and she obviously didn't want to do it. I said, 'I don't like people looking in through the window', she said, 'oh what's the matter with that' and I just thought 'that is a stupid question'. I just, it brings out the worst in me you see, so I can't say that I can feel she's a friend' (Blanche)

Existing literature indicates that the main cause of interpersonal tension and discord in shared living arrangements is housework (Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Natalier, 2003; Williamson, 2006; Mause, 2008). In shared living arrangements, there are often no pre-determined rules concerning what tasks need to be completed and who they need to be completed by and this can cause interpersonal issues (Clark, 2017). However, in homeshares, the younger homesharers are expected to complete a certain number of tasks for their householder per week, thus, there is some degree of expectation when it comes to certain household chores. Nevertheless, these expectations can differ between participants and can cause issues for homesharers. When asked what her least favourite thing about homesharing is, Blanche replied:

> 'I think sorting out the power struggle, it's a power struggle. Because I can be, I am by nature fairly easy-going, but I am a Taurus and if you push me, I can be quite a powerful person and I won't have somebody become the more powerful in my house' (Blanche)

Chapter 3 showed that power inequalities are inevitable in caring relationships because while care-receivers may rely on their caregivers to undertake certain tasks, they may have power over their care-providers in terms of their social position or through control of the caregiver's employment (Kittay, 1999). Homeshares are marked by an unequal position between the homeowner householder and the lodger younger homesharer, as Blanche's referral to 'my house' highlights. As examined in the previous chapter, many younger homesharers, including Violet, are homesharing for economic reasons, which may mean that they cannot afford other living arrangements. Therefore, while in her homeshare, Violet relies on Blanche for the home she lives in and for economic reasons due to the cheaper rent she pays.

However, the recent changes to Blanche's health and mobility, outlined in the previous chapter, and her recent inability to access many parts of her home, mean that she is dependent upon Violet in many practical aspects. In this respect, their power struggle is a contest of who controls the tasks involved in homesharing and who controls the home space. Unlike the interdependency between Anya and Amira, discussed above, which is beneficial and valued, the interdependency between Blanche and Violet can make their homeshare feel more precarious and uncertain. Thus, while co-homesharers can form interdependent and reciprocal caring relationships, this does not mean that power and inequality are not involved or that the interdependency is always valued.

So why do homesharers, such as Blanche, not end their homeshare if they are not pleased, or try to get a new co-homesharer if they have not formed a friendship with them? Blanche explains:

> 'It nearly did come to a bit where I said, 'you know this really isn't working, you're going to have to give your months' notice', and then when I went to bed I thought 'oh god what am I going to do? I'll have nobody here'. I can't bear the thought of having nobody here, who's going to get my supper? I thought even if she doesn't do most of it [chores], it's worth having her here… the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know and I could get somebody who could be worse suited…when I think of not having it [homesharing], I feel a complete feeling of panic' (Blanche)

Moreover, while Blanche is unhappy about the quality of tasks that Violet completes for her and she has not developed a friendship with her, she would rather stay in her homeshare because the alternative – being without a homesharer/some form of care provision – is daunting and scary. This is similar to findings from Ward *et al* (2020) who examined older people self-funding their care from three local authority areas in England. These scholars found that people would often stay with their care providers, even if they were unhappy with their service, because they were worried that an alternative could be worse. Therefore, like the older people in Ward *et al*'s (2020) study, Blanche's narrative shows that homesharers may stay in unhappy homeshares due to anxiety about what will happen if their homeshare breaks down and perhaps due to a lack of other options in terms of housing or care provision.

Thus, Blanche's reluctance to end her homeshare due to this anxiety speaks to wider issues with care provision in the UK. Neoliberal agendas often emphasise self-responsibility in terms of care provision, yet austere measures and market issues mean that many older people are faced with a lack of options in terms of their access to care (Grenier *et al*, 2020). Blanche's narrative problematises the idea of 'choice' in relation to the marketisation of care and highlights

how wider market issues can have affective consequences on individuals, leading to increased feelings of precarity.

Homesharing therefore does not necessarily remove people from vulnerable positions in terms of housing and care provision and can in fact highlight their vulnerabilities. If people stay in their homeshares for an extended period, perhaps due to dependencies on the cheaper housing or care it provides, as well as the lack of other options, these vulnerabilities and dependencies could become heightened to a point that people could feel trapped in their homeshares. Moreover, not only do homesharers have to negotiate and manage their care and housing provision amid a potential lack of viable or affordable options, but they must also manage their relationship with their co-homesharer on which their care or housing depend. Because of this, as well as the transient nature of homesharing, homesharing may therefore create or further entrench precarity for people, rather than removing them from it.

7.5   Fleeting Friendships

Furthermore, while co-homesharers can develop strong relationships to the point they are considered family, these relationships are ultimately happening out of necessity. Because homesharing is dependent on a working relationship between co-homesharers, this can amplify unsettling, unhappy and precarious situations if a strong relationship is not developed between co-homesharers. Thus, while the relationship between co-homesharers can be beneficial and can make unstable homeshares feel more secure, these relationships are ultimately fleeting and transient. This is shown further in the case of Jocelyn and Daisy.

As explained in the last chapter, younger homesharer Daisy moved in with householder Jocelyn. Daisy, aged 25, had recently started a master's degree and began homesharing to save money on rent. At the time of interview, Daisy had been homesharing with Jocelyn for just two months. As Jocelyn has formal carers to cook her meals, buy her food shopping and clean, Daisy's tasks were to spend evenings with Jocelyn and to take her out for trips to places such as the cinema or garden centres. When asked to describe their relationship, Daisy replied:

> 'I would definitely say we're good friends. I would talk to her about anything I would talk to a good friend about and we share lots of things with each other. She's really like laid back and understanding and I think I am too. And I think she does confide in me with a fair bit, yeah she's quite open with me and it's really nice that we're close' (Daisy)

As with some of the other participants who had only been homesharing together for a short time period, Daisy explained that she and Jocelyn had already established a close relationship. However, when re-interviewing Jocelyn several months later, Jocelyn revealed that not long after the interview with Daisy, Daisy had left the homeshare:

> 'She was only here for three months I think, yeah about three months because she thought she was going to have more lectures, but although she was on a part time course, she found out that she had just one very long day at the university and she decided that she could be at [her family] home and just come up for that one day, so she didn't stay here very long in the end' (Jocelyn)

When asked if they kept in touch, Jocelyn replied:

> 'No, we haven't kept in touch at all actually. She wasn't here very long in the end and you know with things, no one seems to message, and you don't keep in touch' (Jocelyn)

This narrative shows that the relationships between co-homesharers may feel strong when co-homesharing together, but they are often fleeting, because when homesharing no longer suits someone's needs, the need to have a relationship with their co-homesharer is lost. That is not to say that lasting relationships cannot be made between co-homesharers, especially if their homeshares are longer-term, but this points to the fragile and often precarious nature of homeshare relationships. This story also suggests that homesharers may over-emphasise the value of their co-homesharer in their social network, knowing that a working (and perhaps close) co-homesharer relationship is vital to a successful homeshare. Thus, while these co-homesharer relationships can be beneficial in a time of need, they are also a requirement to homesharing and are often as transient as homeshare.

7.6   Conclusion

Relationships between co-homesharers are often formed in the face of declining health or lack of other options in terms of care and housing provision. The fictive kinship between many participants and their co-homesharers shows that homesharing can provide a platform for developing close relationships, and the stretching of this kin reinterpretation to householders' families suggests that homeshare has the potential for reforming family dynamics to include a wider network of support. In an insecure and austere time, homesharers can form strong relationships that provide a sense of closeness and comfort. These relationships involve both caring *about* as well as caring *for*, which emphasises the extent to which these relationships can

be beneficial in homesharers' support networks. Moreover, in forging relationships through difference, homeshare can provide security and support in a time of need, which could perhaps go some way towards countering the precarity associated with homesharing elucidated in the previous chapter. Overall, this chapter has shown that close personal relationships can emerge even in times of uncertainty and that there are moments where homeshare can open up new forms of attachment and relationality. Thus, this chapter contributes to literature that examines changing intimacies in times of austerity and precarity by adding a non-kin intergenerational dimension.

This chapter also reveals the fragilities of the interpersonal relationships of co-homesharers. The dependency of participants' homeshares on a working relationship with their co-homesharers can mean that homesharers over-emphasise the importance of their co-homesharer in their social network. Essentially, while co-homesharers can form close relationships that can stretch to wider support networks, these relationships are fragile and are happening out of necessity. Thus, portraying homeshare as a care and loneliness crisis solution overlooks the precarious and functional nature of homeshare relationships, which may involve an uneven balance of power. By studying co-homesharers, this chapter contributes to research which examines interpersonal relationships and reveals how power, interdependence and precarity are interwoven into these relationships (Bowlby, 2011; Hall, 2019). Overall, this chapter contributes to thinking around the formation of new relationships in a failing care system, showing that like homeshare homes, these relationships can be caring and beneficial but ultimately, they are also short-term and precarious.

Chapter 7

Chapter 8 **Labour**

From the previous chapter, it is clear that the relationship between co-homesharers plays a central role in how homeshares are experienced and in how precarity is entwined with homesharing. Yet omitted from the previous chapter is how the labour involved in homesharing shapes co-homesharer relationships and thus influences the relationship between homesharing and precarity. According to the Homeshare UK (n.d.) website: 'homeshare brings together people with spare rooms with people *who are happy to chat and lend a hand around the house* in return for affordable, sociable accommodation' (italics added). But is this how younger homesharers view the informal care tasks they complete? And is there any hidden labour involved in homesharing for householders? These questions will be addressed in this chapter.

Ample research on precarity focuses on how neoliberalism and widespread economic restructuring have produced an increasingly precarious labour market (Bentley *et al*, 2019; Choonara, 2019; Nowicki, 2017). Scant attention has been paid to *unpaid* labour and how this can entrench everyday precarity. This chapter examines the labour involved in homesharing and how this is interweaved with precarity. Through this, the chapter expands thinking about precarity and labour to include informal (and unpaid) care and household labour.

The chapter firstly analyses the role of homeshare for children of householders, asking if homeshare represents a shift in who provides informal care. This section moves on to examine the responsibility that this places on younger homesharers, who are untrained and perhaps inexperienced, questioning what this can mean for both younger homesharers and householders in terms of precarity. Then, the chapter explores how younger homesharers' feel that they are always working. This section points to the potential exploitation of younger homesharers for whom the boundaries between work/life become blurred. Finally, the chapter examines the emotional labour involved in homesharing, considering this from both the perspectives of younger homesharers and householders. Here, the chapter asks why homesharers feel the need to perform emotional labour and points to the uncertainty participants feel in the continuance of their homeshares.

8.1   Care Responsibility

Ongoing austerity means funding cuts to state care provision and additional pressure on publicly funded services (Clarke and Newman, 2012; Gray and Barford, 2018; Hall, 2020). While a neoliberal agenda pushes ideas of self-responsibility for care, austerity makes it harder to access state care provision which creates gaps in care for many people. In the UK, the growing gaps in care are typically filled by unpaid female labour (Pearson and Elson, 2015). As mentioned in chapter 3, this unpaid labour generally falls on adult daughters, who often have to juggle this labour with paid employment and household tasks. However, homeshare reflects wider shifts in who provides care from kin to non-kin (although care is still predominantly being provided by women) (Bowlby, 2011).

Not all householder participants had children or had children involved in their homeshares, but for a few of the participants, their children were integral in their decision to homeshare: telling them about homeshare, arranging their homeshares and overall playing a key part in their homeshare experience. For instance, Melody, aged 61, arranged a homeshare for her mother, Raegan, aged 90. Raegan was living in a nursing home but moved back into her previous home (which was being rented out to pay for the nursing home) to move into a homeshare. Melody, Raegan's only child, felt that the nursing home was understaffed and after Raegan's seventh fall, Melody decided that they would try homesharing. Raegan had dementia, used a wheelchair and had two carers in four times a day to feed, bathe and dress her, but Melody felt her mother needed some more company. Melody was also worried about her mother being alone overnight (a common worry expressed by the householder participants and their families), but found other care options, such as overnight carers, too expensive.

Raegan's homeshare was unusual because she homeshared with two younger homesharers: a mother and daughter named Miranda and Lexi. Originally, Lexi, aged 19, began homesharing with Raegan because she was struggling to settle into and enjoy university accommodation. Three months after their homeshare began, Miranda, Lexi's mother, moved in with the pair. Miranda, aged 47, wanted to be closer to her daughters as her youngest daughter, Tilly, had also recently started university in the area but was living in student accommodation. Melody found that homeshare lifted a weight off her shoulders, as she could pass some of the responsibility of care for her mother onto Lexi and Miranda:

> '[Homesharing meant] I could then be at home with my husband and my grandkids because beforehand I always like had the phone by the side of my bed; is it gonna ring? Do I have to come out in the middle of the night? Which I did have to do a few times. Whereas when they [Lexi and Miranda] were here, a lot of the time they could say 'you don't need to do anything, but this is happening', and 'it isn't a problem but just letting

you know'… I had a baby monitor as well, which I always used when I slept up here [at Raegan's] and they said 'put it in our room' so they could hear mum. And then one time she [Raegan] called out because her bedding had come off so they could come down and just put it on. It's just the little things because that would have been a trip up for me otherwise' (Melody)

In a time where care services are closing and access to publicly funded care is becoming more stringent (Himmelweit, 2014), homeshare thus represents an alternative method of care provision, as well as a shift in who provides care from kin to non-kin. Melody's narrative shows the role that homeshare can play in the daily lives of children who have care responsibility for their ageing parents. However, in homeshare, this care responsibility is being placed onto untrained people and people who may not have any previous experience in living with or caring for older people. What are the impacts of this on both those receiving care and on those providing it?

The story of Rita and Kelsey, told by Rita's daughter Sandra[7], uncovers the pressure and responsibility that can be placed on younger homesharers. Sandra wanted her mother Rita, aged 95, to join a homeshare to alleviate some of the pressure of caring for her, and so Kelsey, aged 32, moved in as a homesharer. Kelsey's tasks were to keep the kitchen tidy, clear unused food from the fridge, take the bins out and to take Rita to hairdressers' appointments. Kelsey and Rita homeshared together for one year, but during that time, Rita's memory issues progressed:

'I mean it's more short-term memory loss and she's had quite a few infections and her memory has got worse. Yes so she does have memory, when Kelsey first started, I mean she definitely had memory problems without a doubt, she would forget things, she would get confused and she was getting frailer um but [the memory problems were] not to the extent that they are now that it is' (Sandra)

Although Kelsey's care tasks for Rita were practical tasks, the progression of Rita's memory issues meant that Kelsey increasingly struggled with looking after Rita, as explained by Sandra:

'It didn't really work out for various reasons. I think my mother isn't, wasn't especially at the beginning wasn't the easiest person to live with because she had been used to just living on her own all the time. As time went on, she was hard to cope with, she is, she's

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[7] Rita was not interviewed.

> incontinent and that has gotten really bad and so Kelsey needed to be you know, taking
> the bins out a lot, on hand a lot for my mother, just making sure she was ok and the
> house was up together. I think really she was just somebody who had probably never
> really had to look after anybody or not be involved in looking after anybody much else
> before and although she said she had experience of dementia I don't really, I'm not all
> that sure if she did' (Sandra)

The narrative of Rita and Kelsey highlights a difference between the practical care homeshare advertises that younger homesharers do and the care responsibility that is actually placed on them. Their story reveals that some householders can need more than a 'hand around the house' (Homeshare UK, n.d.) and shows that homeshare can place extreme pressure on younger homeshares who are not trained or necessarily experienced. The three participants of this thesis who homeshared with someone with dementia (Miranda, Lexi and Nadia) had not lived with anyone with dementia prior to their homeshares and because on paper, homeshare only involves informal practical care tasks, these participants were not provided with any dementia training or guidance as to how to specifically support people with dementia or older people with any care needs.

Sandra's quote also points to a further issue that can impact the labour involved in homesharing – the fact that homesharers (particularly householders), may not have experienced non-kin shared living before and may need time adjusting to this. Sandra's quote of Rita not being 'the easiest person to live with because she had been used to just living on her own all the time' highlights this. Thus, adapting to everyday life with someone else, particularly a stranger at the beginning of the homeshare, can be difficult. For Rita and Kelsey, this was exaggerated by the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, which first came into place only three months into their homeshare:

> 'Well coronavirus came quite soon into the homeshare and I can't say it was easy for any
> of us. Mum especially because she doesn't really understand it all. I wasn't able to go over
> as often as I usually do and well Kelsey and mum were obviously locked down together. I
> suppose Kelsey did have to do a bit more you know, giving mum a bit more company,
> explaining to my mum why she couldn't go out and things like that really… To be brutally
> honest Kelsey did have a bit of a double whammy with mum's memory getting worse and
> with the coronavirus, and I do think that both of those factors did play a part in the
> homeshare not working' (Sandra)

During the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing restrictions and lockdowns, greater responsibility for informal care falls upon families and individuals (Phillips *et al*, 2020). As

these younger homesharers are taking on some of the responsibility of care for their householders, as well as being locked down with them, they are doing more work and are under more pressure. Particularly during COVID-19 lockdowns, younger homesharers have to 'step up' in terms of caring for their householders, as well as dealing with their own anxieties and issues of being in lockdown.

Overall, Rita and Kelsey's homeshare did not end well, with Kelsey emailing me that 'the situation with Rita has become sour to the point I do not want to be interviewed anymore'. In the end, Kelsey and Rita remained homesharing together for one year, despite the issues between the two occurring relatively early on. This may have been due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which may have made it more difficult for younger homesharers to find new places to live if they were no longer happy in their homeshares. Thus, for some participants, the outbreak of COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions exaggerated some of the issues they had with their homeshares.

Moreover, it is not unusual for a householders' care needs to progress over time. While younger homesharers do not complete formal care tasks and should not replace any formal help, the slow progression of certain needs may mean that over time, younger homesharers take on more and more care responsibility for their householders. For Zaina, the deterioration of her householder Penny's eyesight has placed increasing pressure on her. Zaina, aged 30, has been homesharing with Penny, aged 84, for one year. Zaina began homesharing because she had recently moved to the area and was looking for cheaper accommodation. She hopes that after homesharing for a few years, she will be able to save enough money so that she can afford a place of her own (discussed in chapter 6). Zaina's tasks are to tidy the house and keep Penny company. Over time, Zaina has witnessed Penny's eyesight decrease dramatically:

> 'It's bad. When I first started, ok yes she has issues with her eyes, not that bad. But, well for instance you see that lamp there, well she might be able to tell it's on, well she would, but there's no way she'd be able to find the switch. And for instance, anything in the fridge, well it all looks the same to her, you know jars of jam or pickle and that sort of stuff... It's a lot of work, a lot. You know sometimes she'll say I've moved something, and I haven't, she just can't see it' (Zaina)

Zaina explains that it was not until she went away on holiday and came back that she noticed that Penny's eyesight had deteriorated to such an extent. After this, formal care support was arranged for Penny:

'It's only been recently; I suppose its two months now that she's got carers in. But yeah, it's weird to go away and come back and see how someone's changed because once you're here all the time you don't notice it. Its only when I went for my holiday, went away and came back, I noticed the change in the person and I was just like taken aback really. Other people who, even the family they would notice it more than I would… Its set up now that she has the carer in four times a day and that carer can do personal care, which I wasn't, I'm not allowed to do because you don't have insurance for that, homesharers don't have insurance for that… Originally I was worried to tell the [Penny's] family about it [Penny's decreasing eyesight], it was stupid really but I didn't want to be replaced by someone that could do the personal care stuff as well. But after my holiday, Rachel [Penny's daughter] came round and we decided it needed to happen and so she sorted it all out' (Zaina)

Zaina is homesharing to eventually save enough money to buy a place of her own, therefore she feared that if Penny got formal help, she would be replaced or not needed and thus her goal of saving money would not be attained and her home would be lost. Even with Penny's formal carers, Zaina explains that she is doing more care work for Penny than she originally signed up for, not wanting to risk losing her homeshare: 'It's more [work] than in the [homeshare] contract definitely, but it's still a good arrangement. I don't want to lose it'. Moreover, due to the insecurity she feels with her homeshare, Zaina takes on more work and responsibility for no pay or additional benefit.

In today's precarious society, younger people are often expected to take on extra work for free, for instance unpaid internships, free work in return for exposure etc (Holdsworth, 2017), and here homeshare reflects this idea that in order for younger people to advance certain areas of their lives, for instance housing goals for younger homesharers, they must provide their time and labour for free. Zaina's story also shows that in order to feel more secure in their living arrangement, younger homesharers may take on more work than set out in their homeshare contracts.

As argued in chapter 4, work within the private home space, such as that done by au pairs, is often invisible, precarious and low-paid (Cox, 2018), and here the work done by younger homesharers seems to echo this. Further, in homeshare, care is predominantly being provided by women (often migrant women or women of minority ethnicity) and not regarded as paid labour (Homeshare UK, 2018b). Thus, although homeshare may be contributing to shifts of who provides informal care from kin to non-kin, the care involved remains gendered, racialised and of low value. Like au pair work, the care tasks undertaken by homesharers are not regarded as 'real

work'. This is because such work has traditionally been regarded as a women's duty to perform unpaid for their kin. Therefore, while (usually female) carers and domestic workers can help the people they care for to lead potentially more stable and less vulnerable lives, these issues can become heightened for the care and domestic workers themselves (Buch, 2018). While younger homesharers are likely to join homesharing to save money on rent, this is often counteracted by more unpaid work. Thus, for younger homesharers, precarity becomes entrenched through the work they perform in their homeshares.

Furthermore, the fact that younger homesharers are untrained and unpaid (and potentially inexperienced) does not only have consequences for the younger homesharers in terms of pressure and difficulties in handling the work involved but may also have consequences for householders on how secure the provision of their care is. While Zaina took on greater responsibility because she was worried about the certainty of her homeshare if she shared some of the caring responsibility for Penny, Kelsey left her homeshare with Rita. This meant that Rita was left without the care provision she had become accustomed to. Fortunately, Rita's daughter Sandra was able to sort formal care provision for her mother not long after Kelsey left, but this may not be so straightforward for other householders who may not be able to easily access or afford other care options.

These issues speak to a broader indifference of a society that devalues both care and ageing, and subsequently intensifies precarity for both people who receive care and people who provide it (Buch, 2018). In the UK, the low pay and poor working conditions of care workers renders their lives precarious. In turn, care worker shortages and high turnover rates cause lower quality care and long waiting lists for older adults (Himmelweit, 2014). Homeshare reflects this amalgamation of precarity, labour and the low value of care. Moreover, because homesharing is based on the premise that younger homesharers do not get paid for the care work they do, instead paying cheaper rent, precarity is entwined into the very concept of homesharing.

8.2   Constantly Working

Furthermore, precarious working lives are often characterised by a need for people to constantly be 'furthering' themselves as 'masters of their own destiny and entrepreneurs of their selves and lives' (Armano *et al*, 2017, p. 4). This notion leads to an expectation that people should always be working (Holdsworth, 2017). Homeshare is effectively based on this principle – younger homesharers must be in paid jobs (to fund homeshare) or in education, as well as providing ten

hours of chores per week to their co-homesharers. Moreover, a common theme in younger homesharers' experiences was a difficulty in 'switching off' and a feeling that their homeshare is restrictive. For instance, although co-homesharers Anya and Amira have developed a close relationship (discussed in chapter 7), Anya found her homeshare routine limiting and onerous. For Amira, a main bonding experience is the time she and Anya spend cooking and eating together:

> 'I like Indian food, its usually dahl and rice which I love. I just watch her [Anya], last night I watched her cook my dahl and it was lovely. She's a great cook and she'll talk me through what she's doing and we might have a bit of a catch up, have a talk about what's going on, a bit of a natter one might say. We do that a few times a week, usually on a Thursday, Saturday and a Monday and we eat it together in the dining room. That's the bonding time we have together I would say' (Amira)

However, Anya suggests that this 'bonding time' is shaped more around Amira's needs and desires than her own:

> 'We eat together three times a week so sometimes I have to, I don't eat dinner very early, I eat at around 9 o'clock, 8 o'clock that's the time I like to have dinner so she [Amira] eats it around 7 o'clock. So, when I cook I have to start cooking at 6 o'clock and sometimes I'm not even hungry but I have to eat at 7 o'clock so these kinds of adjustments. Sometimes I feel the kitchen is a bit of a, that I feel a bit restricted in what I can do in the kitchen because she's always in those two rooms [the kitchen and the dining room] and I feel that I would like to be more free with the kitchen because I really like to cook but sometimes I feel restricted there' (Anya)

When asked if she prepares and eats her meals in the kitchen on the days she does not cook for Amira, Anya replied: 'I tend to eat outside on those days because those are my days of freedom'. Anya's use of the word 'freedom' shows the extent to which she feels her routine is restricted by her homeshare duties. This was also echoed by other younger homesharers:

> 'I mean on the surface it doesn't sound like too much, but when it's just like every day. Even if like I know I have to make her an evening snack so if I come in at like say 3 o'clock, if I come in like after uni and I'm really tired I can't just get my head down for a little while, cause I'm like no, because I'll need to make that snack in an hour and even stuff like that can be a little bit annoying or frustrating' (Violet, in reference to her first homeshare with Ruth)

'Well, I'm committed to her [Gloria], um, like being around and perhaps provide her with some food or talk to her or entertain her. So, for example before I lived here, I didn't have any commitment or responsibilities when I got back home from work but here, I do. For example, if I want to visit a friend over the weekend maybe it's better if I spend some time with Gloria at the beginning of the day or in the morning and then go out for lunch or dinner but to be on the safe side its better I spend some time with Gloria then go out' (Nadia)

'I won't lie, I'm finding the amount of time [completing homeshare chores] just a bit more than I can handle and just feeling a bit like run down recently and it's just starting to take a bit of a toll on me. Sometimes my [paid] work requires me to do shifts which can fall on a Saturday but Saturdays are the day that Irene likes me to take her out somewhere to like a garden centre or Christmas markets or something like that, so it can be really hard fitting it all in' (Hayley)

This last quote from Hayley points to the potential burnout of younger homesharers. As discussed in chapter 6, one of Hayley's motivations for homeshare was to live in a rural location. However, she now juggles with travelling to and from work, working full time and her caring responsibilities for Irene. Thus, these participants' quotes show the dual burden of younger homesharers who have to juggle with paid employment (which itself may be precarious) and the additional work involved in their homeshares. These quotes suggest that younger homesharers must adapt to the rhythms and routines which suit their householders, prioritising their householders' needs above their own.

Furthermore, the quotes also reveal that homeshare involves more labour than the set ten hours per week but shapes younger homesharers' day-to-day lives. Bauman (2007) has written about the demands for increased productivity in a precarious society, and the responsibility of individuals to live a flexible and productive life. Yet these demands can lead to fatigue and burnout (Umicevic *et al*, 2021). Needing to save money on rent, or not be able to afford other living arrangements, means that these younger homesharers are required to sacrifice a relatively large proportion of their time, and for some, their 'freedom' (Anya).

These narratives reflect the concept of the 'precariat' (covered in chapter 1) – a social class in the making who 'feel their living and identities are made up of fragmented and fractured elements, in which it seems impossible to construct a desirable narrative by weaving work and quality time for a life outside work' (Kosmala and Imas, 2016, p, 5). Thus, 'switching off' or

determining what counts as 'work' can be difficult for younger homesharers, and as mentioned before, money saved via homesharing is likely offset by unpaid work. This points to the potential exploitation of younger homesharers where boundaries between work/life become blurred, and where work becomes constant. Younger homesharers can therefore be seen to experience precariousness through living 'on edge' in the psychological sense of being 'mentally stressed and strained to and beyond breaking-points' (Philo *et al*, 2019, p. 150). The quotes show younger homesharers struggling to balance their own lives with their homeshare routines and highlight how this can lead to a sense of exhaustion and fatigue.

8.3   Emotional Labour

Furthermore, housework and caring tasks are not only physically but also emotionally challenging. The emotions involved in such work are often overlooked, and this is compounded by presumptions of this work as unskilled and the invisibility of domestic work as being located within the private home. As discussed in chapter 3, Hochschild's (1983) definition of emotional labour refers to the displaying of certain emotions in order to manage personal relationships, rather than showing how one actually feels. Hochschild examined the emotional labour performed by female flight attendants, highlighting emotional labour as often involved in typically feminised work. Through the interviews, it became clear that emotional labour is involved in homesharing for both younger homesharers and householders. This emotional labour is accepted by homesharers because their housing or care arrangements depend on developing and maintaining a working relationship with their co-homesharer. However, unlike the physical labour involved in homesharing, the emotional labour is an invisible and additional form of labour, overlooked in homeshare portrayals.

The emotional labour involved in homesharing was clear in this narrative from householder Edith. Edith, aged 92, is on her third homeshare and has been homesharing with Freya, aged 29, for one year. Edith has poor mobility and relies on a rollator to walk. She is homesharing because she needs assistance around the home and finds other care options expensive. Freya's tasks for Edith are to complete odd jobs such as opening cans and jars, keeping the house clean and doing the gardening. Edith's two previous co-homesharers only stayed with her for a couple of months each. Edith explains:

> 'The first one was a young lady who really just wanted to come to [this city] to get a rent-free place for her and live her own life. She didn't involve herself, didn't want to involve herself in any help for me. She hadn't realised she had to get involved for ten hours help a week. So obviously I mean when she wasn't working which was a full-time job she had,

she would be out with her friends so that was totally useless. And so, I said 'no, it wouldn't do' and the next person came was very, very, nice got on well together but she was looking for a new job when she came and eventually she found one but it was way over north [of the city], far too far a distance to travel from here to north [of the city]. So, she had to say, 'I'm sorry I can't stay'. So, she went and so it was a bit of time before Freya came and we get on very well we do. I like her and she likes me, and she's stayed the whole year so far. It's a very happy situation' (Edith)

As the quote shows, Edith is now very pleased with her co-homesharer Freya, who she refers to as family (see chapter 7). However, having a close relationship with one's co-homesharer does not mean that there is not emotional labour involved. Edith explains that she is very keen for her homeshare with Freya to work:

'I think because the others [previous homeshares] haven't worked out, I was, I am very keen for this one to. I have previously signed up with a care agency but it's just not affordable you see, well not compared to this [home]share anyway. So, when Freya does things that you know, I just keep my mouth shut… Well like I have got one little light in my hall which is quite a dull 25w bulb which I like but she replaced it with a 100w bulb and I didn't like it, far too bright for me anyway. And when she comes in [the room] during my [TV] programmes, I do feel awfully frustrated but again, I just keep my mouth zipped and put a smile on' (Edith)

As homeshare is one of the only affordable or accessible care options for Edith, and also because she has previously been in two homeshares that have not worked out, Edith is careful not to show any emotions to Freya that would upset the equilibrium. Edith recognises that she needs Freya for her care tasks and thus at times, she conceals her true opinions and emotions. This is similar to householder Blanche's worries in chapter 7 about not having Violet in her home at night, which means that she is wary over how she acts with Violet. Blanche recognises that putting up with Violet's lack of chores and curbing her irritation is integral to the continuance of their homeshare and thus the continued practical or financial assistance that homeshare provides. Furthermore, the uncertain nature of homesharing and the insecurity of both younger homesharers and householders of their homeshares ending against their will, means that participants may suppress their needs or emotions for the sake of their homeshare or their co-homesharer.

Another participant who struggles with balancing her own needs and that of her co-homesharers' is Nadia, who homeshares with Gloria. As discussed in chapter 6, Gloria has

dementia and although she can dress and bathe herself, she requires company and help with cooking. Nadia finds that living with and providing informal care for someone with complex care needs means that she often feels pressure to ensure Gloria is feeling happy, as Gloria's moods can change very quickly. Nadia struggles with these demands:

> 'Sometimes I really don't want to see anyone, it depends on my body, but I have to do it, still have to carry on and do the things, sometimes I have to talk about her favourite topics which are not my favourite at all. I don't like, for example, to talk about politics, which um I keep talking about it, it makes me a little bit nervous because I cannot do anything and its dirty things…If I come home a bit late I can see she is a little bit down or feeling a bit lonely and it makes me a little bit sad, feeling bad about myself or um these sort of things. If I come home tired or a little bit stressed, I still have to be there for Gloria and be a bit upbeat for her or she would get upset… I really want to be out of [this city] over the weekend, but I know she would get upset when she doesn't see me around that much and I don't want to put both of us in an uncomfortable situation' (Nadia)

Nadia's story reflects elements of the emotional labour of care. Nadia cannot go out on the weekends without spending at least some time with Gloria, as she has learned that Gloria gets very distressed when she does not see Nadia for at least some time on the weekends. Nadia also feels pressure to ensure that she gets home from work on time and is 'upbeat' so as to not upset Gloria. Moreover, Nadia often has to change her routine or conceal her emotions to ensure Gloria's needs are met before her own.

In a return interview of Nadia, Nadia explained how she left her homeshare after five months, one month earlier than the end of her contract, because she could no longer cope with Gloria's demands:

> 'The thing I didn't like is her manners sometimes. If you remember she has dementia and wasn't able to remember things properly. So yeah, it was like the third or fourth time she was quite upset about my working hours, me leaving home in the morning and I couldn't do anything to change that. It was just too difficult to keep her happy. When I come home from work, I like to relax or de-stress I would say but Gloria I found difficult to entertain and exhausting I would say, to act happy for her. She made me a little bit upset with it… I said to Kevin [Gloria's son] 'I can't stay here; it doesn't work for me anymore'… I wouldn't call it stressful I would just say a little bit of an insecure feeling and seeing myself in that fragile situation with your landlady [Gloria] talking to you in that way, I said 'no no no' in the end' (Nadia)

Nadia's narrative shows the extent to which performing emotional labour continually can take its toll on homesharers, describing her situation as 'fragile' because of the constant effort it takes to keep Gloria content. Moreover, the emotional labour involved in homesharing also relates to homesharers feeling 'on edge', discussed in the previous section. While homesharers may perform emotional labour to appease their co-homesharer in an attempt to prolong the longevity of their homeshares, this emotional labour can be burdensome to the point that homesharers feel they have little option but to move out of their homeshares. Furthermore, emotional labour is thus another example of the hidden labour involved in homesharing that is representative of precarious lives and overlooked in homeshare portrayals.

8.3.1   Householder Death

Narratives of emotional labour were not the only stories participants told about their emotions. Emotions concerning death of a householder were also poignant and emotionally laboursome. Of the sixty-eight homeshare matches from all Homeshare UK organisations that ended in 2018, 25% were because of the death of a householder (Homeshare UK, 2018b) and sadly, this was the reason behind the end of Raegan, Lexi and Miranda's homeshare. Raegan had vascular dementia caused by a heart attack, commonly had falls and had many urine infections. As mentioned above, her various care needs meant that she used a wheelchair and had carers in four times a day to help bathe, dress and feed her. Her complex care needs meant that Lexi worried about Raegan a lot:

> 'When she [Reagan] got more and more unwell you would worry, worry for her health
> and worried that you're gonna lose a best friend. Worried in that sense. I was worried like
> 'oh my god she's my best friend, what am I gonna do if she goes, or if she gets unwell and
> she has to go into a home, what if I never see her again' so you do worry, well I worried
> like that anyway, just because she did mean a lot to me' (Lexi)

Lexi's narrative shows another form of invisible emotion work involved in homesharing. Worrying about a co-homesharer's health was evident in a few of the participants' stories, from Amira worrying about Anya's depression to Zaina worrying about Penny's decreasing eyesight. Five months into her homeshare with Lexi and Miranda, Reagan passed away. This was difficult for Lexi who had grown so close to her:

> 'The hardest part can be, like Raegan, if they are older and they are going to die, you're
> building that bond and then you know you are gonna lose them. And having to lose them

and then move on to help someone else, adjusting to that change can be really hard, because especially if you've been with them for a long time, years, they're gonna be your family. So, then you've got to leave that house, that person behind and move onto someone else, so it can be quite hard, so that can be sort of a downside to it. But then it's also bittersweet because you know you've helped them and their last years or weeks or months of their life they were happy and you know that they were comfortable, so you know you've done something, it will just be hard for you to know that they've gone, that would be the hardest part I would say' (Lexi)

With most householders aged over 85 and homesharing due to health and care needs (Homeshare UK, 2018b), the social networks people may gain from homesharing (discussed in the previous chapter) are also at risk of ending due to the death of a householder. In a study of end-of-life nurses, Bailey *et al* (2011) found that some nurses avoid developing close relationships with people who are dying or bereaved due to the draining emotional labour associated with end-of-life care. Yet, for some homesharers whose householders near end of life during their homeshare, the option to avoid developing a close bond may be too late. The management of emotional labour is therefore imperative for younger homesharers to cope with their co-homesharer's health needs and particularly, their end-of-life care.

Lexi's story reveals the emotional turmoil she experienced and the adjustment homesharers need to make if one homeshare ends and they must begin another. Her narrative shows the grief she feels about losing Reagan and how difficult it can be to build new bonds with a new householder when the outcome could be similar. At the time of interview, Lexi and Miranda were in a new homeshare with a householder named Wilma who, like Reagan, had dementia and complex care needs. In a follow-up interview, Miranda explained that Wilma's dementia had deteriorated, and she had moved into a care home after six months of homesharing. Lexi and Miranda therefore moved out into a third homeshare:

'We're now homesharing with someone new, with an older lady named Gail. Basically, Wilma's dementia meant that she was too poorly to continue living in her own home really and so her family have moved her into a care home which is nearby, like not too far away from here. It's sad really and I will try and go and visit her as soon as these coronavirus restrictions allow me to... It was especially hard for Lexi because she went through so much with losing Raegan... So yeah, we're on our third homeshare now with a lady named Gail who has Parkinson's. Her husband died last, end of last September, so she was on her own for like five months, but she struggled and found it very very difficult because he was her carer mainly... We all get along well so so far it's going good yeah, I

just you know, I hope that Gail's condition is more stable than Wilma's [condition] so she doesn't also move into a [care] home' (Miranda)

Creating and rebuilding relationships when one knows they are at risk of ending is therefore also an invisible emotional demand of homesharing and this points to the precarious nature of homeshare relationships. Miranda recognises that Gail also has complex care needs and therefore may at some point also need to end her homeshare to potentially move into a care home as Wilma did. Moreover, homesharers must be able to develop a bond with one's co-homesharer while also acknowledging that the bond and homeshare may end due to a householder's death or their move into more formal care. This is also true for homesharers whose homeshares ends due to other reasons; they must be able to create working relationships with their co-homesharer even if they do not expect their homeshare to last for an extended time period. This echoes an argument made in the previous chapter of homeshare relationships being beneficial at the time but potentially precarious and short-lived. Here, it is shown that the rebuilding of new homeshare relationships can be onerous and emotionally burdensome.

Furthermore, while the practical care tasks that younger homesharers need to provide are discussed and decided in the initial interviews for homesharing and stated in the homesharers' contracts, the emotional labour of homeshare is effectively an 'invisible' requirement for both younger homesharers and householders. This shows how homesharing can normalise or entrench precarity because homesharers are required to undertake this additional work for free or for no extra benefit, whilst also juggling this with paid employment or whilst navigating increasing care needs. Further, this additional work must be satisfactory to one's co-homesharer because homesharers' housing and care arrangements depend on maintaining a working co-homesharer relationship. Thus, this additional work is being completed in an uncertain and precarious situation as we know from the previous chapter that co-homesharer relationships can end at any time. Moreover, although homesharers are coming to homeshare as a means of buffering against future precarity (chapter 6), homeshare may actually be adding to precarity for homesharers.

8.4   Conclusion

From the outset, potential homesharers are aware that homesharing involves younger homesharers completing ten hours per week of informal care tasks for their householder. These tasks are described as a 'helping hand' on the Homeshare UK (n.d.) website but this chapter has shown that there is more labour involved in homesharing than portrayed by homeshare

organisations or first apparent. While homeshare can take some of the care responsibility away from children of householders, this responsibility is placed onto younger homesharers who are untrained and potentially inexperienced. This can lead to resentment and unease, putting both householders and younger homesharers in precarious situations and highlighting the uncertainty of their care or housing provision.

The fact that the labour involved in homesharing is effectively unpaid speaks to wider issues for younger people – often expected to take on more work and responsibility, seemingly without much reward (Holdsworth, 2017). This chapter has uncovered that the additional responsibility and pressure that is involved in homesharing can reach a point where homesharers feel fatigued, burdened and restricted. This chapter therefore opens up debates surrounding labour and precarity and contributes to literature examining how precarity is infused into practices of the everyday (Holdsworth, 2017; Kosmala and Imas, 2016). Overall, by exploring the labour that is involved in homesharing, this chapter reveals how precarity is entwined into the very core of homesharing, therefore homeshare can be seen to compound precariousness for homesharers.

Chapter 9   **Conclusion**

This thesis has examined the lived experiences of homesharers through 16 in-depth interviews with both younger homesharers and householders, 5 follow-up interviews and 2 interviews with 2 daughters of householders. The thesis is set amidst the outbreak of COVID-19 and in the context of ongoing austerity. Within this landscape, it is vital to question dominant neoliberal practices which appear to embed precarity and widespread feelings of precariousness. With this in mind, this thesis had three research aims: to understand the everyday experiences of people who homeshare; to explore if the portrayal of UK homeshare as a solution to the UK's housing, care and loneliness crises is in line with homesharer experiences; and, to explore how the emergence of homeshare in the UK normalises precarity. This conclusion will first provide an overview of the central topics and findings of this thesis and will address the thesis' research aims. After this, I reflect back on the limitations of my research and I discuss areas of further study. Finally, the contributions and implications of this thesis are outlined.

9.1   **Overview**

Precarity is becoming ever more pervasive and entrenched in the UK. Stagnant wages, a rise in zero-hour contracts and an increase in gig employment mean that more and more people struggle to 'put down roots' and have to navigate daily life through financial hardship (Taylor, 2021). With rampant property inflation and the gradual decimation of council housing stocks over the past four decades, people's housing trajectories are increasingly defined by transience and insecurity. Enduring neoliberalism, cuts to welfare and ongoing austerity all make access to care provision and other services more unsecure (Hall, 2019). Everyday life in the UK is thus increasingly experienced as insecure, fragmented and precarious. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with rising costs of living and further austere measures, precarity is becoming even more commonplace and accepted. Unless we research precarity and understand how it is permeated into everyday life, how can we otherwise challenge precarity as the new norm? Moreover, this thesis into homesharers provides vital insight into precarity and how it is accepted and reproduced into everyday life, an imperative geographical concern in an increasingly precarious world.

Chapter 9

By examining precarity through the everyday lived experience of homesharers, this thesis has provided insight into precarity on a personal level, revealing how broader patterns and norms within labour markets and financial systems trickle down and feed into the everyday. This lens allowed me to listen carefully to the stories people tell about their everyday experiences while critiquing wider structures of inequality. Thus, by examining the intimate domestic lives of homesharers, I have provided original insight and understanding into the minutia of how precarity is normalised to the extent it is overlooked or accepted.

This thesis has an equal split between its literature and conceptual discussion and its empirical analysis chapters. This structure enabled me to contribute to a range of pertinent conceptual discussions surrounding the impacts of neoliberalism on widespread precarity in the UK and to place homeshare within these debates. Each empirical chapter of this thesis addressed each research aim, all focussing on the everyday lived experiences of homesharers (research aim 1), all examining if homeshare portrayals are in line with homesharer experiences (research aim 2) and all analysing how homesharing normalises precarity (research aim 3).

Chapter 6 revealed that motivations for homesharing are shaped around attempts to make the future less precarious in the context of present precariousness. In this chapter, I did find some evidence that homesharer experiences are in line with portrayals of homeshare as a housing crisis solution. For instance, the chapter revealed that younger homesharers are joining homeshare to address issues of housing affordability and to help attain their housing goals of future homeownership. Further, the chapter revealed that in coming to homeshare, homesharers may be seeking some of Young's (1990) normative values of home, specifically the value of privacy. However, as the participants' homeshares were characterised by insecurity and transience, it was clear that homeshare only addresses homesharers' short-term housing needs, rather than their longer-term needs, despite these initial motivations.

In chapter 7 I did find that some homesharer experiences were in line with the positive portrayals of homeshare, showing that there is nothing inherently wrong with sharing across generations and beyond kin. The strong bonds found between co-homesharers demonstrate that even in functional relationships developed amidst hardship, there are also moments of utopia whereby homeshare represents making connections and building community. Moreover, the chapter revealed that even in spite of a wider system that is deeply precarious there are still moments when genuine connection happens between co-homesharers, where co-homesharers encounter each other across difference and form strong, caring bonds. However, this chapter also uncovered that like homeshares, co-homesharer relationships can be fragile, precarious and uncertain. The relationships between co-homesharers are essentially happening out of necessity and most are likely to end when the homeshare ends. Thus, while homeshare can provide

valuable relationships in times of need, it only really addresses the short-term care needs of homesharers.

The labour involved in homesharing, discussed in chapter 8, is not in line with portrayals of homesharing. This chapter uncovered how homesharing was often experienced as continual work, both physical and emotional and for both householders and younger homesharers. Homeshare thus involves hidden labour that contributes to homesharers' feelings of precariousness and to feelings of being 'on edge'. Overall, I found that homeshare portrayals appear mostly to romanticise the lived experiences of homesharers. I only found evidence of homesharer experiences matching homeshare portrayals when it came to the short-term benefits of homesharing; I found little evidence of homesharing benefiting people in the longer run, and the long-term impacts of homesharing are omitted in homesharing portrayals. This highlights the extent to which precarity is embedded in the UK. Homeshare is portrayed as an ingenious 'crisis-solution', yet it only deals with people's immediate needs. Moreover, rather than helping people's long-term needs, homesharing works to mask government failings of adequate housing and social care provision and pushes responsibility for this onto homesharers.

Homeshare thus appears less of an innovative and timely solution to societal crises, and more of a result of neoliberal practice that is adding to growing precarity. This thesis has shown how homesharing can be considered another form of invisible work for people – homesharers must cope with the challenges that come with sharing a home, greater care responsibility for one's co-homesharer, building and maintaining social relationships with one's co-homesharer and the physical and emotional labour that is also involved. For younger homesharers, this is juggled with paid employment or education and for householders, the potential deterioration of health or increasing care needs. While there are benefits of homeshare to both individuals and society, particularly in its value of building social support networks, UK homeshare involves insecurity, labour and exploitation, which are both symptomatic of a neoliberal society and overlooked in portrayals of homeshare.

Therefore, rather than being a win-win crisis solution as UK homeshare and other sharing practices are portrayed (Ferreri *et al*, 2017; Homeshare International, n.d.c), homeshare can be seen as a method of normalising precarity into everyday life. By examining the precarity involved in homesharing, this thesis has shed light on wider patterns of precarity in the UK, showing how precarity is normalised, often to the extent that it is overlooked or accepted. The homesharers in this thesis appeared to accept precarity as an inevitable feature of their housing and care provision, and thus their daily lives. Most accepted the precarity involved in homesharing because

their immediate housing and care needs required urgent attention and there is a lack of other available housing and care options. Moreover, homeshare appears a short-term neoliberal solution to long-term neoliberal problems, a sticking plaster to wider social issues and a mask for real attempts to deal with societal problems (such as more affordable housing or social care welfare reform). With ongoing austerity, as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit, it is more vital than ever to critically assess so-called crisis solutions, such as UK homeshare, to question why they have emerged and what underlying motivations they may have, for instance, of pushing a neoliberal agenda that is adding to growing precarity.

9.2   Reflections

This thesis makes no claim to be representative of homesharer experiences and instead calls for a nuanced understanding of the lived and everyday experiences of homesharers. However, there are some clear limitations to the study. As highlighted in chapter 5, the challenges of data collection meant that there are fewer participants than originally intended. While my sample was fairly heterogenous in terms of ethnicity and class, had a mixture of householders and younger homesharers, and was comprised of a mixture of homeshare matches and single homesharers, the sample size remains small. And although this thesis examines homeshare in the UK, the sample does not geographically reflect this - all of the participants live in the South or West of England. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, which halted and changed the processes of data collection, gaining participants was difficult. Homeshare organisations were the only gatekeepers to homesharers and they were not so willing to advertise my research. The lack of transparency of the homeshare organisations and their unwillingness to ask their householders and younger homesharers if they would take part in my study is problematic. The gatekeepers may have hand-picked certain participants who have more positive experiences of homesharing and omitted homesharers who may have had more negative stories to tell. Therefore, it would be useful for further studies into homeshare to attempt to gain more participants from across the UK via other means than through gatekeepers at homeshare organisations. These studies would be able to help determine if my findings are transferable to a wider group of homesharers and will uncover perhaps some more varied homesharer experiences.

Future studies into homeshare could also include more data from the families or children of householders because these were found to be integral to many people's homeshare experiences. Greater understanding of the viewpoints of these family members would deliver further insight into how and if people organise care options for their elder parents or family members, the processes they go through and the barriers they may face in accessing the care their family

member needs. Insight into this could also reveal how family members of older people receiving forms of home care, such as homesharing, interact with their parents' caregivers, providing more information on how intimate lives are lived in the shared home space.

Covid-19 struck unexpectedly in the middle of this thesis, which allowed me to provide some insight into what it is like to be in a homeshare during a pandemic. However, greater research is required in this area – research which perhaps allows homesharers to reflect back on their experiences. During the pandemic, lockdowns ordered people to stay at home and all non-essential businesses were instructed to remain shut. Care services closed and issues of housing availability intensified (Tinson and Clair, 2020). Amongst all this, people's mental wellbeing dipped and loneliness levels increased (Kilgore *et al*, 2020). Not only did I struggle with the impact of COVID-19 on my research, I also had to consider the impacts of COVID-19 on UK homeshare. According to Homeshare UK (2021a), during COVID-19 lockdowns, homeshare organisations were instructed to prioritise supporting their existing matches rather than setting up new matches (for instance, ringing homesharers to check in on them). Homeshare UK distributed guidelines to its homeshare organisations outlining this new protocol and providing safety advice. These guidelines were updated regularly and explained additional checks that were to be made in the case of arranging a new homeshare match, for instance ensuring that there is no risk of the individuals involved being exposed to the virus.

Unlike care agencies who are required to have inspections by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), UK Homeshare's Quality Assurance Framework is self-regulated (Homeshare UK, n.d.c). I wondered how UK homeshare and individual homeshare organisations would deal with the impacts of coronavirus. I speculated that the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing measures may increase the numbers of people homesharing – more people may need care or housing provision and therefore may turn to homesharing. Alternatively, I also thought COVID-19 may decrease the numbers of people homesharing - people may worry about the risk of infection from a co-homesharer and be deterred from homesharing (coupled with the fact that homeshare organisations had prioritised supporting current homesharers over getting new homesharers). I now know that during 2021, the homeshare sector grew by 5%, with 1126 people homesharing (Homeshare UK, 2021b).

The outbreak of COVID-19 became an unexpected contribution of my research. I provided insight into the everyday life of homesharers in a pandemic, which offers some indication as to people's needs and priorities in a pandemic. Understanding the lived experiences of homesharers during COVID-19 restrictions generates deeper insight into shared spaces and intimate lives and

how these are negotiated and enacted in times of crisis. This has potential implications for councils looking at COVID-19 related housing and care needs and examining alternative methods of care and housing provision.

Also, because of COVID-19, I decided to re-interview homesharers and this gave my research a longitudinal element. This further highlighted the short-term nature of UK homeshare for many of the participants and helped me to understand more about the lives of homesharers. However, I only managed to re-interview five participants. It would be interesting for future research to include more longitudinal data that stretches over a longer time period and with more participants. Additional longitudinal research would also provide a deeper understanding into the lived experiences of homesharers, providing insight into how long people stay in their homeshares, what it is like to move in and out of different homeshares and also examining further people's reasons for ending their homeshares.

Understanding how people unmake and make new homeshare homes and how they build and rebuild new co-homesharer relationships would uncover more understanding of the labour and precarity involved in homesharing. With precarity an ongoing and pervasive condition, this would be vital in broadening understandings of everyday life in precarity. Furthermore, another benefit of my research is that it gives insight into precarity in older age, an area of study which is lacking within precarity scholarship (Greiner *et al*, 2020). Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for future studies into homesharing to take a life-course approach to provide greater insight into how precarity is compounded over the life course and experienced in older age for householders.

9.3   Contributions and Implications

A central contribution that this thesis makes is its expansion of the concept of precarity beyond labour market processes to include everyday home making/unmaking and intimate lives. This thesis thus adds to the growing geographies of precarity scholarship, emphasising the need to acknowledge the various ways in which precarity is reproduced and how it is normalised as an accepted feature of everyday life. By engaging the concept of precarity with literature surrounding geographies of home, everyday intimate relationships and informal labour within the home space, I have added to literature examining the multifaceted components of precarity. The processes of homemaking, home unmaking and anticipated future homemaking for homesharers reveals the ways in which precarity is embedded into everyday life experiences and decisions. This thesis has therefore opened up debates surrounding 'at homeness' in precarious situations, attesting that feeling 'at home' is more complex and problematic than policy or homeshare

portrayals presume and highlighting precarity as a pervasive and entrenched contemporary condition.

This research has also expanded literature into intimate home life in precarity by emphasising how everyday relationships interweave with austerity and precarity. Homesharers can create networks of care in precarious times, yet these care networks are fragile and are often happening out of necessity. This thesis has added homeshare as a case study for research into changing intimacies in times of austerity, and in doing so, has contributed to thinking around the formation of support networks in a failing care system, highlighting how precarity influences interpersonal relationships. Further, I have added to understandings of precarity by examining precarity and labour on an informal basis and within the intimate space of the home. I have revealed how precarity shapes unpaid labour within the home space and how this can impact on everyday feelings and emotions. Thus, this research expands understandings of the various formats and contexts in which precarity exists, showing precarity as co-constitutive of everyday life for homesharers. Overall, in examining the experiences of homesharers, I have expanded geographical and sociological debates around precarious lives and spaces, providing deeper understanding into how precarity is normalised across generations as well as insight into the everyday experiences of people who navigate precarious circumstances.

Furthermore, this thesis also provides implications for potential homesharers. My findings revealed why my participants began homesharing: householders generally wanted to receive some level of support while remaining in their own homes and younger homesharers generally wanted to save money on rent in order to save enough to buy a place of their own. In line with this, I recommend that potential homesharers be told in the initial interviews for homesharing that the average UK homeshare match is just 9 months long. This would ensure that participants' motivations for homesharing are in line with their reality and would make potential homesharers more aware of the precarious nature of homesharing. Additionally, there are not currently any support groups for homesharers, for instance email lists or Facebook groups. The creation and use of these may help homesharers to feel more supported through hearing about others with similar experiences, giving and receiving advice and feeling part of a wider community of homesharers.

Overall, while there is ample media coverage of UK homeshare, there remains little academic research, and with homeshare and other alternative forms of shared living on the rise (Homeshare UK, 2019), this research provides vital insight into the everyday life of homesharers. Additionally, through this research, I have highlighted the need to critically analyse portrayals of such living arrangements and encouraged the value of understanding people's everyday lives

across generations. Simple 'win-win' solutions or ingenious 'crisis solutions' require further examination and questioning; why is this arrangement being portrayed as such, what are the narratives that may be being pushed through such portrayals and what are the consequences? Moreover, we are only at the start of understanding the ways that precarity is interwoven and embedded within society. By critically examining so-called crisis solutions, we gain further understanding into how precarity is being driven and entrenched. It is only by uncovering this that we can begin to challenge the norm of precarity and the consequences of it.

Appendix A   Example Homeshare Contract

Homeshare Gloucestershire Agreement between Householder and Sharer

DEFINITIONS:

The Householder: The person who owns or is a tenant of the property and who is offering accommodation.

If there is more than one Householder (for example, a couple), this Agreement will be amended to make reference to **Householders**.

The Sharer: The person who is seeking accommodation and who will provide up to 10 hours a week of support on a voluntary basis. The Sharer will have sole occupancy of a spare bedroom, and share the kitchen, bathroom, living room and other areas of the property as agreed.

The Property: The property lived in by the Householder as owner or as tenant.

PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT

This Homeshare Agreement is between

The Householder :   of [address]

and

The Sharer:

THE AGREEMENT

This Homeshare Agreement will begin on [date   ]

This Homeshare Agreement cannot be treated as, and does not create, a contract of employment. A Homeshare is a voluntary and unpaid arrangement.

Under this Agreement the Sharer occupies the room with a 'licence to occupy' and pays no rent to the Householder. The Sharer's occupancy does not create a tenancy and the Sharer does not have exclusive use of any part of the house.

This Agreement sets out the expectations of the Homeshare arrangement. Where expectations change, these should be discussed, and the Agreement may need to be revised.

This Agreement should only be amended with the approval of the parties involved and of Homeshare Gloucestershire.

General Expectations

The Homeshare Arrangement

1. A Homeshare arrangement provides mutual benefit to both the Householder and the Sharer. It allows Householders and Sharers to share accommodation and be part of each other's daily life. The Sharer benefits from affordable accommodation and the Householder benefits from the Sharer's help with household and other agreed tasks. Both Householder and Sharer often benefit from companionship and the opportunity to learn from each other.

2. The Householder and the Sharer involved in the Homeshare arrangement are equal and respected partners. The interests and privacy of both are equally important, as are their rights to a peaceful living arrangement.

3. The Sharer does not act as a Carer for the Householder and does not:

- Undertake personal care (i.e. physical assistance given to a person in connection with eating or drinking, washing, bathing, dressing, oral care, care of skin, hair and nails).
- Administer medication.
- Undertake any childcare (i.e. grandchildren) without prior discussion with Homeshare Gloucestershire as this would require an additional DBS check.

4. The Householder and Sharer respect each other's privacy. The Householder reserves the right to access the Sharer's room if necessary (i.e. repairs to a radiator or window) giving reasonable notice.

Obligations and Responsibilities of Householder and Sharer

5. The Householder and Sharer are each responsible for insuring their own possessions. The Householder may wish to notify their Household Building and Contents insurers that a Sharer (in legal terms, regarded as a lodger) will be living at the property, so that their policies can be adjusted, as needed. This does not necessarily mean that the premium will be increased.

The Sharer's possessions are not covered by the Householder's insurance policy and the Sharer is responsible for arranging their own, separate cover.

Regarding Vehicle insurance, both Householder and Sharer should notify their insurance company if giving each other permission to drive the other's car.

6. The Householder is responsible for ensuring that their home is safe and free from hazards. This includes ensuring that Gas and Electrical safety checks are up to date and smoke and Carbon monoxide alarms meet standard requirements and are in working order. The Sharer also has a responsibility for safety in the home and is expected to act as a responsible household member.

7. The Householder should inform their local authority Council Tax department that a Sharer (regarded as a lodger) has moved into the property. The Householder may be in receipt of a 25% Council Tax discount due to being a sole occupant which may be affected by a Sharer moving in, depending on circumstances. Where the discount is removed, the Sharer would cover this as part of their contribution to Household costs.

8. The Householder supplies the Sharer with a set of keys for the property. The Sharer is responsible for these keys and must not make any copies of them. The Sharer may be asked to pay any associated costs connected with the loss of the keys they have been given (e.g. to replace keys and locks).

9. The Sharer keeps their room clean and tidy and avoids any damage to the Householder's home and possessions. If damage does occur, the Householder should be informed without delay.

10. The Householder and Sharer receive support from, and communicate with, the Homeshare Gloucestershire team through visits and phone calls as set out and agreed with Homeshare Gloucestershire. In addition, the Sharer is asked to periodically send updates to the Homeshare team showing how the Homeshare is going.

Mediation

11. In the unlikely event of a dispute between the Householder and the Sharer, this should be referred to Homeshare Gloucestershire, who will work with both parties to seek to resolve the dispute.

Future changes

12. This Agreement may be reviewed as required, or on request by either party and will be reviewed annually. Amendments to the Agreement can only be made with the approval of both parties and the Homeshare Gloucestershire Manager. If the arrangement lasts longer than three years, the Sharer's DBS check must be renewed. Any offence committed during the term of the Homeshare arrangement must be disclosed to the Homeshare Team.

Notices, duration and endings

13. In normal circumstances, the participants should give 28 days' notice in writing or by email to end the Agreement. In the event of the death of the Householder or their hospitalisation or moving into residential care the Sharer will be allowed to stay for a minimum period of four weeks. Any further stay would be agreed by the Householder and/or their nominated representative and Homeshare Gloucestershire.

14. The arrangement may be ended immediately if there has been unacceptable behaviour by either party, an irreconcilable breakdown, a serious breach of the Agreement or some other factor affecting the safe and satisfactory continuation of the Homeshare arrangement.

15. When the Homeshare Agreement comes to an end the Sharer vacates the property having removed their possessions and left their room and the Householder's home and possessions in good order and condition. The Sharer returns to the Householder all keys to the property and pays any money owing in respect of household bills and any other expenses. The Sharer arranges mail redirection and provides a forwarding address to the Householder and Age UK Gloucestershire.

Responsibilities of Homeshare Gloucestershire

16. Homeshare Gloucestershire is not an agent for either the Householder or the Sharer. The scheme acts as a facilitator, supporting both parties to fulfil this Homeshare Agreement and to experience a positive shared living arrangement.

17. Homeshare Gloucestershire, its management and staff, cannot be held responsible for any claims, damages or consequences that may arise from this arrangement.

Other

18. Any gifts that the Householder and Sharer exchange should be limited to inexpensive presents at traditional times.

19. The Sharer cannot be a beneficiary under the Householder's will and vice versa.

Expectations within this Homeshare arrangement

Each area below to be discussed and, as applicable, agreed between Householder and Share and recorded.

The Householder and the Sharer agree:

Appendix A

1. To keep each other informed of normal hours of work/study/recreation and any anticipated periods of absence from home

2. To ensure that each knows when the other is going to be late or away

3. That the Sharer may have shared use of the following parts of the property and the Householder's equipment

4. That the Sharer will provide 10 hours a week of support and/or companionship to the Householder, in a flexible way that suits the requirements of both parties:

5. The following arrangements for the purchase of any food and/or household goods that are shared:

6. The following arrangements about internet services:

7. The following 'house rules':

8. The following arrangements for friends or relatives visiting the Sharer at the property, including overnight stays:

The Householder

Name:

I understand and agree to the expectations of the Homeshare Agreement.

Signature: Date:

The Sharer

Name:

I understand and agree to the expectations of the Homeshare Agreement.

Signature: Date:

Homeshare Manager witnessing agreement

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please sign two copies of this agreement, returning one to Homeshare Gloucestershire, keeping the other copy for your own reference.

Appendix A

Appendix B   Participant Information Sheet

<u>Participant Information Sheet</u>

<u>Study Title:</u> An Investigation Into The Lived Experiences of Homesharers

<u>Researcher:</u> Laura Paddon

<u>ERGO number:</u> 49117

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

<u>What is the research about?</u>

I am a researcher at the University of Southampton, funded by the Economic and Social Research Committee. I will be asking questions either about your experiences of homesharing, your social wellbeing, the home in which you live and your experiences of homesharing during lockdown.

<u>Why have I been asked to participate?</u>

My study is focusing on householders aged 65+ and homesharers aged 18+ who homeshare in the UK and families of people who homeshare. There will be approximately 30 participants in the study. The study is open to those who currently homeshare, those who have homeshared in the past and those whose family member homeshares. I would still like to interview you even if your co-

homesharer does not wish to be interviewed. If you would like another person present during the interview, such as friend, family, or homeshare contact (but not your co-homesharer) then that is fine. You must be able to give informed consent for yourself – this means that you fully understand what the study involves, what is being asked of you, and you are able to agree with and sign the consent form. I suggest that all homesharers with memory issues have someone present (a close friend or family member) present at the interview. If you are not able to give informed consent, your close friend or family member can on your behalf.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I would like to talk to you about your motivations for homesharing, your social wellbeing, your everyday experiences of sharing a home and your experiences of homesharing with COVID-19 restrictions. The interview should take around 45-60 minutes of your time and will take place either face-to-face or via telephone or online video call. Each interview will be audio-recorded. You will also be invited to take part in an optional emotion mapping exercise, photography-taking and a walking tour of the home. During this tour of the home in which you live, I will draw a brief floorplan of your home and you will take photographs of any objects or spaces you feel are significant to you. You will then note the emotions that each room evokes on the floorplan I have drawn and we will discuss why you have taken the photographs that you have.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There may be no direct benefit to you as an individual, and there is no financial reward in taking part. But it is a space to get your stories heard and recorded and it will enhance our knowledge about people's experiences of homesharing.

Are there any risks involved?

The interview will ask you a number of questions about your home environment, overall wellbeing, and experiences of homesharing before and during lockdown and there will also be space for you to talk freely about these issues. You are free to refuse to answer any questions. The interview will be guided by your stories, so it is up to you what you reveal. However, there may be a chance that you decide to

talk about something upsetting, therefore, if the interview leaves you feeling in any way upset or distressed then please contact any of the following organisations: AgeUK: 0800 0223 444, Samaritans: 0845 7909 090. If you feel you are unable to take part in the walking tour for any reason, then please let me know.

What data will be collected?

Interview data and optional photographs and emotion maps. These will be transcribed onto a password-protected laptop and the original recordings, maps and photographs will then be destroyed. Interview data will include questions about everyday living and your overall wellbeing. Emotion maps and photographs will record the emotions evoked by the home and the objects inside.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation and the information I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

Your name and details will not be included in the study, and I will make sure you are given a pseudonym. I will be audio-recording the interview, but after transcribing onto a password-protected laptop the audio-recording will be destroyed. Likewise, once scanned onto a password-protected laptop, the emotion map and photographs will be destroyed. Your interview material will be stored electronically and securely on a computer in compliance with the Data Protection Act and University of Southampton policy.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part. If you would like to take part, please inform your point of contact at your homesharing organisation or contact me directly at l.paddon@soton.ac.uk.

What happens if I change my mind?

I will ask you to sign a consent form when I come to interview you, which says that I can use the materials from your interview in my PhD. You will have a chance to ask any questions. You can, however, withdraw from the project at any stage prior to the final stage of write-up (January 2022). If you do withdraw, your data will be destroyed and not used in my study. Your rights with your Homesharing organisation will not be affected.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of the interview will be analysed and may be included in part of my analysis. Pseudonyms will be used and the data will be stored on a password-protected laptop. Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you (all place names and the names of people will be changed).

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about the research project and your participation, please contact me using the details at the bottom of this document. You can also contact your homesharing organisation who can contact me.

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%2 0and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20P articipants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information – may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research. If you would like to take part, please contact your homesharing organisation who can contact me or contact me directly at l.paddon@soton.ac.uk.

Appendix B

Appendix C   Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: An Investigation Into The Lived Experiences of Homesharers

Researcher name: Laura Paddon

ERGO number: 49117

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

I have read and understood the information sheet (08.07.2020, Version:6) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my rights being affected. If I do withdraw I know that my rights with my Homeshare organisation will not be affected.	
I understand that my interview will be audio recorded.	

I understand my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research.	
I understand that photographs of my home may be taken and used in this study.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that my name will not be used.	
I fully understand the details of this project, what is expected of me and what will happen to my data. I give full informed consent.	
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 ethically approved research studies.	

Name of participant (print name)……………………………………………………

Signature of participant…………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………..………………….

Name of researcher: Laura Paddon

Signature of researcher: Laura Paddon   Date 08.07.2020

Appendix D   Interview Schedule

About Homeshare Scheme

What made you become involved with the homesharing scheme?

What are your opinions of homesharing, would you recommend it?

What are the positive aspects of homesharing?

What are the negative aspects of homesharing?

In what ways do you think the scheme can be improved?

What were some other living arrangement options you have considered/would consider?

Has homesharing helped improve your everyday wellbeing?

General Questions

How old are you?

What other household arrangements have you lived in?

How long ago did you retire/ What is your job?

Do you have friends and family who live nearby?

Are you content with your social wellbeing? Has homesharing changed this?

What are your hobbies/interests?

How long have you lived in this area? What were your reasons for moving here/staying here?

What has been your most preferred living arrangement?

Relationship with Co-Homesharer

Tell me about your relationship with your sharer eg do you consider yourself as friends, can you trust them?

How much time do you spend together?

Do you have any shared interests with your sharer?

Do you spend much time with your sharer outside of the home?

Have you learnt new things from your sharer? Eg cooking skills, learnt about their culture

Do you share all the food and cooking in the house?

Chores/Privacy/Control

Where in the house do you spend the majority of your time? And where in the house do you spend the majority of time with your sharer?

Are the chores done in the way you like them?

Do you share a schedule? How do you work this out?

What are the tasks that are required of you / the lodger and how much time do they take?

How do you find completing these tasks? Are they easy or difficult? Are they enjoyable?

Would you like more help around the house/would you like to do less work around the house?

How much control do you feel in your living situation or housing tenure?

Do you feel a loss of control of some spaces of the home?

How do you manage privacy within the home? Are there spaces that are off limits? Where in the house do you feel most/least privacy?

Has there ever been any disagreements or tense or awkward experiences? How do you deal with this?

Do you think you'll still stay in contact when the arrangement ends?

Everyday Living/Home

Tell me a bit about your everyday/weekly routine, is it similar to your sharer? Did one of you change one of your routines more to merge them? Do you spend evenings together?

Tell me a bit about how you share tasks and spaces in the house

Do you feel the place you live is homely? What makes this home homely?

Do you consider this house your home? Do you feel 'at home'? Do you ever feel out of place in your home?

How did you find it transitioning from your previous living arrangement to this one?

What's your ideal living arrangement?

Do you feel your home represents your identity?

Does living in a homeshare impact your relationships with eg friends or family members?

Is this home a safe space for you?

Would you say you are content living in this house?

Would you every consider moving from the house?

Who makes decisions in the home e.g. what is for dinner, what you watch on tv?

Has the home ever been a lonely place for you, has the scheme helped in this?

Has the homesharing helped your day-to-day life?

How easy is it for you to navigate around the house? Stairs, mobility, garden etc

What are some of the uses of your home? Entertaining guests, security etc

What are some significant spaces in the house for you and why?

Has there ever been times when you wished you lived alone/could have some privacy/space? Do you get enough privacy/time together?

What has been the hardest thing to get used to since homesharing? What has been the most welcome change for you since homesharing?

Covid/Re-Interviewing

How has lockdown impacted your experiences of homeshare? In what ways?

Has lockdown and covid measures changed your opinion of homesharing?

Has your day to day or weekly routine changed?

Has your relationship with your co-homesharer changed?

Are you now working from home? Do you plan on continuing this and how will that impact you and your homeshare?

What were the challenges of lockdown in a homeshare?

How are covid measures impacting your everyday life?

Have there been any benefits of homesharing during lockdown? Or homesharing during these covid measures?

What would your situation have been like if you were in lockdown without your homesharer?

In what ways have you been supported by your homeshare organisation?

Has the length you intend to homeshare changed since lockdown?

I asked you last time but what are the positive aspects of homesharing for you?

What are the negatives?

Appendix D

Would you still recommend homesharing? Even if people still have to shield or working from home in the future?

Has there been more or less issues or disagreements since lockdown?

Do you spend more or less time with your sharer now?

Has your sharers' needs changed? How have you coped with this?

Is your sharers' family round more/less? How have you found that?

Do you spend more time in certain places of your home eg your room?

Have your tasks changed?

Have any of your feelings changed? Eg feelings of control, contentedness etc

Are you getting enough privacy?

Are you getting enough company?

Have you feelings towards your home space changed eg feelings of homeliness

What does the future hold for you in terms of housing and homesharing?

Has homesharing during lockdown influenced your relationship with your friends or family?

Who has more control of everyday decisions during lockdown eg what you watch on tv, what you eat?

What has been the hardest thing to get used to since lockdown while homesharing?

What has been the most welcome change for you since homesharing?

Glossary of Terms

Younger Homesharer .... Younger adult undertaking the informal care tasks in a homesharing arrangement.

Householder .... Older adult providing the home in a homesharing arrangement.

Homesharers .... Both the younger homesharer and the householder.

Glossary of Terms

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