Routledge Advances in Sociology

SHARED HOUSING, SHARED LIVES

EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE LIFECOURSE

Sue Heath, Katherine Davies, Gemma Edwards
and Rachael M. Scicluna

Shared Housing, Shared Lives provides important theoretical and ethnographic accounts of shared living arrangements, ranging from the familiar spare-room lodger, and multi-person house-share, to strong ideological commitment to values of collective living. In a climate of austerity, many more people in the UK find themselves sharing their homes and habits with housemates, and the authors of this book invite you to step inside the material spaces and social, sensory proximities of day-to-day sharing. At last, an incisive and nuanced analysis of shared housing.

Dr Helen Jarvis, *Reader in Social Geography, Newcastle University, UK*

While standard nuclear family households loom large in imaginings of contemporary domestic relations, not least among planners and policy makers, in recent years, sharing a home with strangers has become a more common experience. Across developed societies, supportive links between life-course transitions and ascent up a housing ladder have become increasingly fragile and movement, markedly non-linear, with this pattern exacerbated by recent economic crises. This book represents the most advanced and thorough analysis of the current conditions of sharing households. It builds on a deep contextual knowledge of the rise and conditions of contemporary sharers as well as important empirical insights from English cases.

Professor Richard Ronald, *Professor of Housing, Society and Space, Centre for Urban Studies, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Shared Housing, Shared Lives

With a growing population, rising housing costs and housing providers struggling to meet demand for affordable accommodation, more and more people in the UK find themselves sharing their living spaces with people from outside of their families at some point in their lives.

Focusing on sharers in a wide variety of contexts and at all stages of the life-course, *Shared Housing, Shared Lives* demonstrates how personal relationships are the key to whether shared living arrangements falter or flourish. Indeed, this book demonstrates how issues such as finances, domestic space and daily routines are all factors which can impact upon personal relationships and wider understandings of the home and privacy.

By directing attention towards people and relationships rather than bricks and mortar, *Shared Housing, Shared Lives* is essential reading for students and researchers in fields such as sociology, housing studies, social policy, cultural anthropology and demography, as well as for practitioners working in these areas

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Shared Housing, Shared Lives

Everyday Experiences Across the Lifecourse

**Sue Heath, Katherine Davies,
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Rachael M. Scicluna**

First published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Rachael M. Scicluna

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-67353-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-56188-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

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Acknowledgements

This book is based upon research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council: *Under the Same Roof: The Everyday Relational Practices of Contemporary Communal Living* (award reference ES/K006177/1). We are grateful to the ESRC for funding this research and are of course hugely indebted to all of the sharers who agreed to tell us about their experiences with such openness and generosity.

Throughout the project we received excellent advice and support from our advisory group members. Many thanks to the following people who were involved in the group at various points in the life of the project: Ella Wesolowicz and Rebecca Derham of Crisis, Matt Hutchinson of SpareRoom, Dawn Astin of St Vincent's Housing Association and Accent Housing, Julie Craik and Mike Wright of Salford City Council, Sarah Lowe of Bolton at Home, Maria Brenton and Jo Gooding of the UK Cohousing Network, Lucy Woodbine of New Economy, Cathy Ayrton of MHA, Safia Griffin, and Jennifer Mason of the Morgan Centre.

We would also like to thank Jen Kettle for her excellent assistance, Kirsty Morrin and Laura Fenton for their invaluable help at various points in the project's life, and Emily Briggs and Elena Chiu at Routledge for their part in bringing the book to fruition. Thank you, too, to all our wonderful colleagues in the Morgan Centre for Research into Everyday Lives who took an interest in our project right from its inception. We extend our warmest thanks to Hazel Burke and Vicky Higham who were such an important part of the team.

The quotation which appears on page 1 from Sarah Waters' 2014 novel *The Paying Guests* appears by kind permission of the author and the publishers, Little, Brown Book Group.

1 Shared living in context

Introduction

In the opening chapter of her acclaimed 2014 novel *The Paying Guests*, Sarah Waters vividly brings to life the sense of shame and embarrassment experienced by respectable middle class English families who, in order to make ends meet after the First World War, were obliged to take in lodgers. Her protagonist, Frances Wray, is awaiting the arrival of the Barbers, a brash young couple of a lower social status, and is anxious to get the moment over with as quickly and painlessly as possible. She hands over a set of keys to Mrs Barber, who in return hands over two weeks' rent in a brown envelope, which Frances tucks away in a deliberately casual manner whilst trying to downplay the significance of this exchange. Later, she hears the Barbers moving around, coughing, laughing, with each very ordinary sound seeming like an extraordinary intrusion. The next morning, the splashing of Mrs Barber in the bath tub is audible through the thin walls, and the reality of Frances' new domestic arrangements hits home to her:

This was what it really meant to have lodgers: this odd, unintimate proximity, this rather peeled back moment, where the only thing between herself and a naked Mrs Barber was a few feet of kitchen and a thin scullery door.
(Waters, 2014, p. 28)

This account beautifully conjures up the apprehension and sense of unease still felt by many at the prospect of having to share their living space with people to whom they are unrelated. This is a theme which has long featured in literary fiction (see Mulholland, 2016; Cumming, 2016), with many well-known nineteenth and twentieth century writers featuring boarding houses and lodgings in their work. H.G. Wells, for example, wrote compellingly of everyday boarding house life in novels such as *Kipps* and *Ann Veronica*, as did later writers such as George Orwell (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying*) and Lynne Reid Banks (*The L-Shaped Room*). More recent portrayals of shared living arrangements in popular culture have continued to stress the challenges arising from close proximity to relative strangers. In particular, the comic potential of life in shared housing is a staple theme of sit-coms and soap operas, whether in classic shows

2 Shared living in context

such as *Friends*, *This Life*, *Rising Damp* and *The Young Ones*, or in more recent examples such as *The Big Bang Theory*, *Crashing* and *New Girl*. Although some shows in this genre represent shared living as an aspirational and desirable lifestyle choice of the young and glamorous, most derive their comedy from the mishaps and misunderstandings that can arise when living with non-kin, whilst advice books on house shares and lodging arrangements invariably include chapters on potential problems and flashpoints (Hunt and Hutchinson, 2009; Shepperson, 2010). Cumulatively, these representations suggest that the phenomenon of shared living continues to be underpinned by widely shared assumptions about its transitory nature, its volatility, its likely success or failure, and even at times its slight oddness in comparison with living arrangements which are both more familiar *and* more familial.

Nonetheless, with a growing population, rising housing costs and housing providers struggling to meet demand for affordable accommodation, more and more people in the United Kingdom (UK) are sharing their living spaces with people from outside of their families at some point in their lives, however fleetingly. People's reasons for living in shared housing vary hugely, from unqualified financial necessity at one extreme through to a desire to embrace alternative and more communal living arrangements at the other. As popular representations make very clear, though, all shared living arrangements are united by the centrality of everyday relationships to their success or failure. If relationships are good, sharing can work really well; if they are bad, shared housing can become a nightmare. This applies as much to those who deliberately choose to live communally as it does to those sharing largely for reasons of constraint. Yet the quality of relationships in shared contexts is rarely a product of chance alone, and can be profoundly affected by the nature and quality of the practices of sharing which develop in any given household.

In this book we go through the front doors of shared housing to meet sharers of all ages and all motivations to explore the day-to-day practicalities of their living arrangements. Drawing on data from the *Under the Same Roof* project – a qualitative research project based at the Universities of Manchester and Sheffield involving residents of shared rentals, shared housing co-operatives, private lodgings and cohousing schemes – we focus in particular on how people's motivations for living together and the ways in which they organise the sharing of finances, domestic space and daily routines can affect the quality of their personal relationships. Our focus, then, is primarily on people and relationships rather than bricks and mortar as we seek to demonstrate how the mundane, everyday practices of shared living provide the key to whether they falter or flourish. Nonetheless, as we shall demonstrate, bricks and mortar are not irrelevant to these practices, as the physical architecture of shared housing can have a profound impact on the nature of the relationships and daily practices that emerge.

In this introductory chapter, we place contemporary shared living arrangements in the UK in their broader context, considering their incidence and some of the factors that have led to them becoming more common at particular

moments in people's lives. These factors include the state of the UK housing market in the years since the 2008 global financial crisis and the policy responses of successive UK governments. We then move on to provide an introduction to the *Under the Same Roof* project and outline its aims and objectives and the key features of its research design. Finally, we outline the structure of the book and summarise our overall argument.

Twenty-first century shared living

Despite our focus on shared households, it is important to remind ourselves that most people, for most of the time, do not live with non-kin. In 2015, 57 per cent of all UK households consisted of a couple with or without children, and a further 29 per cent consisted of one person households (ONS, 2015a). These figures have remained relatively consistent since the mid-1990s. As for the proportion of households consisting of sharers, precise figures are difficult to come by, as government statisticians place shared living arrangements involving non-kin into an umbrella 'other household' category. This category, defined as 'a multi person household that is neither a couple household nor a lone parent household' (DCLG, 2013: 23), includes a diversity of household forms that do not conform to conventional couple or family-based living arrangements. It includes not only unrelated sharers, but also co-residents who are related to each other outside of a parent-child or couple relationship, such as siblings and cousins, as well as adult children living with just one parent. The proportion of households in the 'other household' category rose from 6.6 per cent of all households in England and Wales in 2001 to 7.9 per cent in 2011 (ONS, 2014, Table 4), and is predicted to rise further by 2021 (DCLG, 2013). This increase may appear modest in absolute terms, yet represents the largest percentage change compared with other household types over the same period (*ibid.*).

Two further household type categories used in government surveys include potential sharers: 'couple with other adults' and 'lone parent, with or without other adults'. Eleven per cent of households were in the former category in 2011, and 7.7 per cent in the latter, with both categories also predicted to rise by 2021 (DCLG, 2013). Any shared household involving at least one couple or a lone parent and dependent child(ren) in addition to any number of unrelated others, whether lodgers, joint tenants, or in some other form of sharing relationship, would come under these two categories. But as with the 'other household' category, these 'other adults' living alongside the couple or lone parent also include relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or nieces and nephews. Tellingly, the presence of the couple/lone parent and any children also takes precedence in the allocation of household type regardless of how many other (unrelated) adults reside within the household. For example, a shared housing co-operative of eight residents, two of whom formed a couple, would be classified as 'couple with other adults'.

Whilst definitive figures are hard to find, those working directly in the shared housing sector are strongly of the view that shared living arrangements have

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become much more common in recent years. One of the leading UK shared housing websites, SpareRoom, has seen the number of adverts placed on its site rise from 140,000 in 2010 to 700,000 in 2016, a five-fold increase, alongside a doubling of the proportion of those placing adverts in the 45-plus age bracket, rising from 3.8 per cent of all advertisers in 2007 to 8.6 per cent in 2016 (Hutchinson, 2017). Moreover, the insurance firm LV has suggested that the proportion of people in Great Britain letting a room almost doubled between 2009 and 2014 (Parkinson, 2015).

There is no doubt that these shifts are closely linked to dramatic changes in the housing market in recent years, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, and which have left many people struggling to meet their housing costs (Bone and O'Reilly, 2010; Stephens and Stephenson, 2016). Factors such as the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market, year-on-year house price increases, reduced mortgage availability and the breaking of the link between average house prices and average earnings have affected housing affordability for people of all ages (ONS, 2015b; Saunders, 2016). Nonetheless, they have had a disproportionate impact on younger people, to the point that more 25 to 34 year olds now live in rented accommodation than in houses of their own (DCLG, 2016) – hence the label 'Generation Rent' (McKee, 2012; Willetts, 2010; Howker and Malik, 2010). So whilst home ownership remains a common aspiration across all age groups, and continues to gain ideological support through various forms of government subsidy and Help to Buy schemes, it is increasingly beyond the reach of many, especially younger people (Hoolachan *et al.*, 2017; Walker and Jeraj, 2016; Dorling, 2014) as well as many members of socio-economic groups who have long been excluded from home ownership (Bone and O'Reilly, 2010). The costs of renting a whole house or even a small flat are equally prohibitive to many, especially to those who are reliant on a single income to cover their housing costs. Consequently, as the housing crisis has tightened its grip on the UK, living in shared tenancies in the private rented sector (PRS) has become a common feature of the housing pathways of many people, including but by no means confined to young adults seeking independence from the parental home. At the same time, renting out spare bedrooms to lodgers is a common response by those who have managed to get onto the housing ladder yet are struggling to otherwise meet their mortgage payments. Notably, in 2011 approximately 15 per cent of men and 9 per cent of women in the 25 to 34 year old age category were living in 'other, multi-person households' (ONS, 2012), many of whom were likely to have been situated in shared tenancies and private lodging arrangements.

Earlier research conducted by one of us in the late 1990s (Heath and Cleaver, 2003) suggested that shared tenancies were commonly viewed by young people as time-limited living arrangements prior to living on one's own or with a partner, and all within a relatively short-term time frame, yet today's sharers often feel that they have no such guarantees (Heath, 2017). The housing pathways of Generation Rent are instead frequently characterised by precarious movement through successive house shares in the PRS (Rugg and Quilgars,

2015). These moves are often interspersed by returns to the parental home (Sage *et al.*, 2013; Stone *et al.*, 2014; Lewis *et al.*, 2016; Roberts *et al.*, 2016) and by lowered expectations of gaining security of tenure through early access either to owner occupation or to the residualised social housing sector, unless in the case of owner occupation they are able to call on the resources of ‘the Bank of Mum and Dad’ (Hoolachan *et al.*, 2016; Heath and Calvert, 2013; Druta and Ronald, 2017). The PRS, not least in the form of shared tenancies, is then playing an ever greater role in younger people’s housing pathways, despite its many inadequacies as a tenure (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008; Walker and Jeraj, 2016).

In the broader European context, this level of reliance on shared housing amongst young adults has, at least until recently, been largely specific to the UK (Arundel and Ronald, 2016). Although it is not uncommon for young people in some but by no means all European countries to live in shared housing as students (Steinführer and Haase, 2009), graduates and non-students in northern Europe and Scandinavia wishing to live independently from the parental home have largely been able to access affordable accommodation on their own rather than having to share (Albertini and Kohli, 2013). In many southern and eastern European countries, in contrast, it is much more common to remain within the parental home until a young person is able to afford a home of their own: young people from these regions of Europe are amongst the last to leave the parental home and display an ongoing dependency on parents even after having left (Kemeny, 2005). The material burden of independent home ownership in these countries is also more likely to be eased by family members helping with the acquisition of a site on which to build a house (Mandic, 2008 and 2010), donations of cash towards the payment of home loans or required deposits, and the allocation of family property, including through inheritance from both the parental and grandparental generation (Emmanuel, 2014; Allen *et al.*, 2004; Flaquer, 2000). Hence the family still acts as a backbone in helping out the younger generation in purchasing a home, reflecting differing intergenerational transfer regimes across different parts of Europe (Albertini and Kohli, 2013).

The ‘age of austerity’ ushered in by the 2008 financial crisis has also been accompanied in the UK by a series of reforms which have impacted upon the actual and potential incidence of shared living. In January 2012 the Coalition Government extended the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to single under-35 year old Housing Benefit claimants as part of its wider benefit reforms. SAR was originally introduced in 1996 as the Single Room Rent policy, restricting Housing Benefit payments for single under-25 year olds to the locally-assessed average cost of a room in a shared household. Its extension to under-35 year olds went ahead despite evidence of an existing shortfall in the availability of accommodation for under-25 year old claimants needing to share (Rugg *et al.*, 2011; Sanders and Teixeira, 2012). The extension was justified by Chancellor George Osborne on the grounds that it reflected ‘the housing expectations of people of a similar age not on benefits’ (Hansard, 2010, col. 958). Yet sharers dependent on Housing Benefit experience very different constraints and opportunities compared with non-claimant sharers, and accordingly have vastly different expectations and

experiences (Clarke and Heywood, 2016; Green and McCarthy, 2015; Ortega-Alcazar and Wilkinson, 2017). Osborne's justification was challenged at the time by Green Party MP Caroline Lucas for being completely out of touch with the reality of shared living:

The Government like to present the shared room rate proposal as an extension of the idea of a group of young friends living together as their children might after university. That is a seductive argument, but only because it is so simplistic.

(Hansard, 2011, col. 297WH)

Other housing reforms introduced by the Coalition Government and continued by the Conservative Government after the 2015 election are linked to an emergent politics of under-occupancy, whereby politicians and others have rendered the possession of spare bedrooms a moral issue for certain groups (Greenstein *et al.*, 2016). There are two main strands to these concerns. The first relates to under-occupancy in social housing and the introduction in 2013 of the Spare Room Subsidy (SRS). Colloquially known as 'the bedroom tax', SRS results in a reduction in Housing Benefit for working age social housing tenants if a household is deemed to have too many bedrooms for the specific number and configuration of people living in the house (Gibb, 2015). Claimants in possession of bedrooms deemed to be 'spare' after certain rules of acceptable occupancy are applied are then penalised: a 14 per cent reduction in Housing Benefit for one spare room and a 25 per cent reduction for more than one spare room. Architects of the policy assumed that tenants would either downsize their homes or be willing to rent out their spare room(s) rather than face a financial penalty. Yet successive evaluations have demonstrated a severe shortage of smaller properties (Gibb, 2015; DWP, 2015), an unwillingness to move away from close-knit communities even if the possibility of downsizing exists (Bogue, 2017) and little evidence of an appetite for sharing amongst affected tenants, despite efforts by social housing providers to encourage private lodging arrangements (DWP, 2015; Green and McCarthy, 2015). This highlights the undesirability of shared living arrangements for many people, even when having a lodger might ameliorate the financially crippling effects of the SRS. As one social tenant expressed it when interviewed for a government-sponsored evaluation, 'We wouldn't want a stranger in our home, no matter how much easier it'd be paying the bills' (DWP, 2015, p. 58).

The second strand of the under-occupancy debate relates to what has been termed 'the hoarding of housing' by older generations (Griffith, 2011). The Intergenerational Foundation has claimed that there are 25 million surplus bedrooms in England's housing stock and that 'the current housing crisis is not principally about Britain having enough housing but about the way it is shared between older and younger generations' (*ibid.*, p. 2). The Foundation asserts that 16 million people live in under-occupied properties in England, which is equivalent to 37 per cent of the total English housing stock. Older 'hoarders' are thus

exhorted either to downsize to smaller properties to make way for families, despite a chronic lack of housing choice (Park and Ziegler, 2016), or to rent out their spare rooms to lodgers, even though many of these rooms are regularly used by visiting family members, including as part of child care provision for grandchildren. Nonetheless, in some cases acquiring a lodger could make it possible for an older person to remain in their home against pressures to downsize or even to move into residential care. The organisation 'Homeshare International' has responded to these concerns by promoting mutually beneficial intergenerational sharing arrangements whereby an older person provides lodgings to a younger person for little or no rent in exchange for a set number of hours of assistance around the house. However, such schemes often prove difficult to get off the ground and so far the numbers involved in Homeshare schemes in the UK remain small (SharedLivesPlus, 2016).

In recent years there has also been a modest groundswell of interest in the UK in alternative housing provision such as cohousing, community land trusts and self-build schemes (Rowlands, 2010; Moore and McKee, 2012; Lloyd *et al.*, 2015). Cohousing is of particular interest here, as it a hybrid form of shared living, involving individual dwellings alongside the provision of shared facilities located in a 'common house'. At a minimum, the common house will usually include shared cooking and dining facilities for regular common meals, but often alongside much more extensive facilities such as shared laundries, workshops, playrooms, lounges and guest bedrooms (McCamant and Durrett, 2011, p. 25). As most cohousing schemes in the UK are based on a model of private home ownership, most cohousers are, unsurprisingly, from relatively affluent backgrounds. Nonetheless, supporters of cohousing point to its potential to engage with at least three key challenges: environmental sustainability and low-impact living (Williams, 2005a; Mulder *et al.*, 2006; Chatterton, 2015); financial sustainability (Sazama, 2003; LILAC Cooperative, 2011); and the creation of supportive and inclusive all-age communities (Brenton, 2011; Shin Choi, 2004; Graber and Wolfe, 2004; Wann, 2005).

For similar reasons, there has also been some wider interest in co-operative and mutual forms of housing as alternatives to mainstream models of private ownership. For example, a government-sponsored review of co-operative and mutual housing underlined the sector's potential to produce 'sustainable mutually supportive communities with less reliance on the state' which could potentially 'stimulate active citizenship and community resilience' (Bliss, 2009, pp. 6–7). The majority of existing stock in the co-operative and mutual housing sector consists of tenant management organisations and tenant-controlled (or community-based) housing associations managing large quantities of conventional housing stock on behalf of local councils and housing associations. However, the sector has long included a type of co-operative known as 'ownership housing co-operatives', which as the name suggests are based not just on mutual control and management but mutual ownership as well. These tend to operate on a very small scale, often consisting of a single shared property occupied by a group of unrelated members. This is arguably co-operative housing in

its purest form, and many existing ownership housing co-operatives have their roots in the UK squatter movement of the 1970s. Although the sharing of resources, the development of group identity, and a commonality of basic aims often emerged in these squats, the primary motivation for most squatters remained the pressing need for an affordable roof over their heads (Kearns, 1981; Harrison and Reeve, 2002), and this remains an important motivation for members of ownership housing co-operatives in the UK today.

All of the factors outlined above have created a situation whereby awareness of shared living arrangements has arguably increased in recent years, and where many people now find themselves – perhaps unexpectedly – sharing at diverse and multiple points in the lifecourse. Whilst living with non-kin for extended periods of time may be an expected rite of passage for younger sharers, older people may find themselves sharing for the first time at a point beyond which they would never have envisaged doing so, perhaps following a spell of unemployment or a relationship breakdown. Regardless of circumstances, relatively little remains known about the everyday experiences of sharers, especially older sharers whose lives are largely unexplored within sociological literature on personal life, and through this book we seek to step into that gap.

Introducing the *Under the Same Roof* project

This, then, is the backdrop against which we conducted the research for the *Under the Same Roof* project, in which we sought to explore and understand everyday practices of sharing in contemporary shared living arrangements. It is our strong contention that the capacity and appropriateness of shared living arrangements to rise to some of the challenges of current and future housing provision depends on the nature and quality of the relationships within them, which in turn are affected by the range of resources available to sharers in coping with the day-to-day realities of living with non-kin, whether financial, material, social or emotional resources. Accordingly, we set out to explore the ‘critical associations’ (Davies and Heaphy, 2011) which exist within different shared contexts, an idea we explore further in Chapter 2. We also wanted to explore the potential mismatch or fit between expectations of sharing and the actual practices which emerge within communal contexts. This is especially relevant to contexts where expectations may be particularly high, such as in a cohousing scheme or a co-operative, but is arguably an issue in all forms of shared housing. Ultimately, we wanted to explore the extent to which *the sharing of housing* implies *the sharing of lives*.

We defined shared living arrangements in terms of co-residence based on the full or partial sharing of domestic space by groups of people who were unrelated to each other, although not necessarily consisting *only* of non-kin. Accordingly, our sample included sharers living with partners and/or children alongside non-kin: for example, couples living in shared housing co-operatives, or single parent householders who had taken in lodgers. For the most part, though, the sharers included in our research did not have resident partners or children. Importantly,

our baseline definition did not assume that shared housing necessarily extended beyond the sharing of a roof. Rather, the extent to which other aspects of daily life were in practice shared formed the focus of our empirical enquiry and, as will become clear throughout the book, we found huge variation between and within different contexts. We nonetheless use the term ‘sharing’ throughout this volume, mainly because this was the term used by virtually all our participants throughout the research and which was most easily understood to mean ‘sharing with non-kin’ when explaining our research to potential participants and stakeholders. The fact that living with kin is *not* commonly referred to as ‘sharing’ conveys the taken-for-granted nature of familial living arrangements and relationships in comparison to sharing with non-kin. Whilst we find the term ‘sharing’ useful for these reasons, we are aware that its positive connotations can also obscure the power relationships, tensions and inequalities experienced by many of our participants and we endeavour to bring these aspects to light in the coming chapters.

We also excluded shared living arrangements in institutional or commercial contexts, such as halls of residence, care homes, guest houses, retirement villages or religious communities, mainly because we were primarily interested in shared households which are, for the most part, self-sufficient in terms of their daily routines, rather than reliant on paid staff who are either non-resident or who do not enjoy the same status as those in receipt of the services. We chose then to focus our fieldwork on four contrasting forms of shared living in private domestic settings: shared households in the private rented sector, private lodging arrangements, shared housing co-operatives, and cohousing, all four of which have been invoked in recent debates surrounding some of the challenges of UK housing provision. Each is briefly introduced below.

Shared households in the private rented sector constitute the most common form of sharing in the UK and are largely associated with the transitional living arrangements of single young adults, as they are often the only affordable option for those wishing to live independently of their parents (Heath, 2017; Roberts, 2013). This type of sharing is particularly common amongst higher education students in the UK, and generates lively debates about the ‘studentification’ of local neighbourhoods, often leading to attempts by local authorities to curb its proliferation (Kenyon, 1999; Munro and Livingston, 2012). Many students continue to share as graduates, placing particular value on the flexibility of shared tenancies in the PRS and the access they often afford to a ready-made social life (Kenyon and Heath, 2001; Heath and Kenyon, 2001). This segment of the shared housing market is well served by agencies providing so-called ‘professional house shares’ and a plethora of websites acting as brokers between landlords and potential tenants. For reasons outlined earlier, the population of sharers in the PRS also includes many young people on low incomes and in receipt of Housing Benefit, often living in sub-standard accommodation (Green and McCarthy, 2015). There is, then, considerable polarisation in this sector in the quality of housing experienced by sharers. Moreover, whilst the sector is mainly the preserve of younger adults, there is growing evidence that individuals in midlife

and beyond are also reliant on it for at least short periods of time, as a fall-back position for those who have lost their homes for reasons such as repossession, eviction or relationship breakdown. SpareRoom has, as noted, seen an increasing proportion of users who are searching for rooms via its website being drawn from the 45-plus age bracket, rising from 3.1 per cent of all searchers in 2006 to 8.6 per cent in 2016 (Hutchinson, 2017).

Private lodging arrangements are based on the renting of spare rooms to lodgers by a resident landlord or landlady who may be either the home owner or the tenancy holder. Lodgers may stay for all or part of the week and may be one of several lodgers. Lodging arrangements of this kind have a long history in the UK, including the boarding of apprentices in their masters' family homes during the medieval period, boarding houses for single men and women in Victorian and Edwardian England, seaside guesthouses from the 1930s onwards and student 'digs' of the 1950s and 1960s (see for example Walton, 1978; Pooley and Turnbull, 1997; Hamlett, 2010; Davidoff, 1995). Private lodging arrangements are actively encouraged by the 'Rent a Room' scheme, which allows householders to earn tax-free income by renting out furnished rooms in their homes, and has arguably provided an increasing number of householders with a means of holding onto their housing in the face of financial difficulties. In 2008, at least 260,000 people lodged in 198,000 households in England (Survey of English Housing, Table S563), rising to 227,000 households by 2012 (DCLG, 2014), with other sources suggesting the increase has been much bigger (Parkinson, 2015). It has also been suggested that the hitherto common arrangement of an older single woman renting rooms largely to single young men has been superseded by single young adults of both genders living with married couples of a similar age to them (LV, 2010). This has been attributed to the rise of the 'friendlord', with the majority of landlords and landladies apparently now renting to people already known to them rather than to strangers (*ibid.*).

The *shared housing co-operatives* included in our research are all examples of what are technically known as ownership housing co-operatives. In general terms, housing co-operatives are based on the democratic control and management by tenants of their homes. In the UK context, the term is often used quite loosely to apply to a range of schemes involving an element of mutuality, yet which operate on vastly different scales: as we noted above, ranging from community-based housing associations managing several thousand properties through to ownership housing co-operatives which often consist of a single shared property or a small number of adjacent shared properties. Ownership housing co-operatives are underpinned by a model of mutual ownership whereby all tenants are directors of the company owning the property; all directors are tenants; and all pay rent to the company. A shared housing co-operative run on this basis therefore provides 'rented housing without landlords, or rather the tenants are collectively their own landlord' (Radical Routes, 2015, p. 4). Ownership housing co-operatives, which are typically located in ordinary residential properties in urban areas, are the most overtly ideological form of shared living included in our study. Members share at least some commitment to co-operative

principles, whilst many are also involved in workers' co-operatives or share various other ideological positions (ibid.). Co-op members thus expect to live with and negotiate ideological influences on a daily basis in a way that is either absent or less transparent in other shared contexts.

Cohousing is relatively new to the UK. As previously noted, it is a hybrid form of communal living, with residents retaining separate residences yet sharing many other elements of domestic life, thus balancing privacy with communality (Williams, 2005b). Cohousing has several core features: resident management (including management of the initial planning and design process); architectural designs that facilitate community; extensive shared facilities in a common house and other on-site locations; non-hierarchical structures; and the retention of separate incomes (McCamant and Durrett, 2011, p. 25). As of spring 2017 there were 19 established schemes affiliated to the UK Cohousing Network, involving a mix of ages, household type and tenure (including some schemes which are run as co-operatives), with most existing developments located in small towns or in rural locations. At least another 65 schemes are in various stages of development, including a fair number now being developed in cities (cohousing.org.uk/cohousing-uk). Some cohousing schemes are specifically targeted at older people, and the members of the first UK cohousing scheme for older people – in this case, women only – moved into their new homes in late 2016.

Our research methods

Our research utilised a variety of methods. We first mapped the landscape of shared living in the UK. This involved bringing together information from directories and literature produced by organisations such as the UK Cohousing Network, Radical Routes, Co-operatives UK, the Confederation of Co-operative Housing and Diggers and Dreamers, and online searches for other forms of shared housing. We constructed a database containing details of a wide range of shared living arrangements: shared housing co-operatives and cohousing schemes, intentional communities such as religious and therapeutic communities, and other organisations which provide multiple shared living opportunities, including housing associations with shared properties in their stock, charities providing group homes to their clients, Homeshare schemes, and property guardian companies (England, 2015). We also constructed a database consisting of the website materials of many of these communities and organisations, in order to consider how they publicly represented themselves through language and visual imagery (for example, frequent references to group activities such as eating together, alongside photographs of home-grown produce).

The main phase of the research involved qualitative interviews with 64 individual sharers, mostly interviewed on their own but a few in pairs or larger groups. Interviews typically lasted between one and two hours and were held in participants' homes or local cafes and pubs. Each interview started by eliciting an unstructured account of the participant's housing pathway since first leaving home, which was particularly useful for shedding light on earlier experiences of

sharing and the place of communal living from within a lifecourse perspective. They then shifted to a semi-structured format to explore four interlinked themes: ideological and motivational aspects of shared living, its economic and material organisation, spatial aspects of sharing, and its temporal aspects, all of which are key themes that have emerged in earlier research on shared living arrangements and which we felt were worthy of further investigation. Each of these themes highlighted a distinctive aspect of sharing and together they provided contrasting but complementary ‘flashes of insight’ (Mason, 2011) into the overlapping dimensions of shared living. These facets of the research informed our analysis of the interview data, feeding into the coding process alongside themes arising from the data. We worked within and between these four dimensions of the research when making sense of themes and narratives arising from the data and the four themes provide the thematic structure of this book.

In addition to the interviews, some sharers also participated in one of two other methods. One group took photographs of shared and private spaces in their homes and the objects within them, and the images we received included the contents of fridges, cupboards, bathroom cabinets, bookcases, mantelpieces, notice boards, hallways, landings, gardens, garages and other external spaces. Participants were invited to discuss the significance of their chosen images as a way of exploring negotiations surrounding the use of communal versus private spaces and objects. Some of these images are reproduced in Chapters 4 and 5. We also received photographs from a small number of additional sharers who did not otherwise take part in the main phase of the research, including five people who took part in an extended photo elicitation interview and whose accounts are also drawn upon in this book to give us a total of 69 interview accounts. A second group of main phase participants was invited to keep a time-use diary in which they recorded interactions with co-residents on two separate days, noting the activities concerned, the amount of time involved and the people with whom they interacted, including the comings and goings of non-residents. The diaries also allowed participants to reflect on their personal networks, including the place accorded to co-residents and how living communally impacted upon their broader networks. This data was subsequently analysed to generate some revealing network diagrams, and this element of the project is alluded to in Chapter 6.

Turning to our sampling strategy, most members of housing co-operatives and cohousing schemes were recruited using contact details listed in publicly accessible directories, with additional participants recruited via snowballing. Sharers living in private lodging arrangements and house shares in the PRS were more challenging to locate as there are no sampling frames as such to use. Rather we used a variety of approaches, including asking house share agencies to pass on details of our research to their tenants, using personal contacts and snowballing, and contacting people advertising for new tenants. We recruited mainly in the north of England, but also included participants in London, the Midlands, the southeast, the southwest and Scotland. Members of co-operatives and cohousing schemes were most geographically spread, given their small numbers. Most of

the co-operatives represented in the study were located in large cities, whilst most of the cohousing schemes were in more rural locations. The house shares and lodging arrangements ranged across cities, towns and more rural locations. We aimed to interview between 15 and 20 sharers in each of the four categories, and achieved this in all but the cohousing category, where we only recruited ten people. As we had anticipated, cohousers proved to be hardest to recruit, as cohousing is currently a fashionable topic amongst housing researchers and many cohousing communities are suffering from ‘research fatigue’. In addition to the four main categories of house share, our sampling strategy gave us the chance to opportunistically include a small number of sharers living in other examples of house shares based on equal tenure status: two sharers living in social housing, two who had joint mortgages with friends, and five who lived together in a large house owned by a religious organisation. We had wanted to include more sharers living in social housing as joint or individual tenants, but only a relatively small number of social housing providers currently facilitate such arrangements, although this is slowly beginning to change (see Wesolowicz and Derham, 2017). The Appendix provides brief pen portraits of each of our participants in terms of their housing pathways: the 64 main phase interview participants and the five additional sharers who took part in extended photo elicitation interviews.

As for the broader characteristics of our participants, we recruited 46 women to 23 men, despite efforts to recruit roughly equal numbers, and achieved a good spread of ages: 25 sharers aged 20 to 34, 18 aged 35 to 49, another 18 aged 50 to 64, and eight aged 65-plus. Only a small number of our participants were first time sharers, whilst many – including a sizeable proportion of older sharers – had shared for all or most of their adult lives, frequently having moved between different categories of shared housing at various points in their lives. A small number of sharers also owned houses elsewhere in which they did not currently live. Most of our sample members were British, predominantly but not exclusively white British, whilst we also interviewed several participants who were from various mainland European countries as well as from other parts of the globe. The majority of participants were single, although around a fifth lived with a partner in their shared house and a small number had a partner living elsewhere. Around one in ten identified as LGBT, and a similar proportion had children living with them, with a high degree of overlap between these two groups.

The majority of our participants were in paid employment, several of whom were self-employed or were members of workers’ co-operatives, a small number were students (mainly postgraduates) or unemployed, and around one in ten were retired. In reporting our findings, we have tended not to give details of participants’ occupations, as in many cases this information in combination with other personal characteristics would render individuals more easily identifiable, especially sharers living in cohousing schemes and shared housing co-operatives, and the protection of anonymity has remained an important guiding principle in our analysis. In terms of socio-economic status, the majority of participants were or had in the past been employed in professional, skilled or semi-skilled occupations and a

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